

Operational Art and the ADF Experience

A Monograph

by

MAJ Ian W. D. Sherman DSM
Australian Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Ian W. D. Sherman DSM

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Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Bruce E. Stanley, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
Philipp F. Leyde, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
James C. Markert, COL

Accepted this 25th day of May 2017 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Prisco R. Hernandez, PhD

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Abstract

OPERATIONAL ART AND THE ADF EXPERIENCE, by Major Ian W D Sherman DSM,
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In the 1980s the Australian Defence Force (ADF), along with other Western militaries, imported the concept of operational art from the US. Operational art is a well-studied and tested concept within the United States military, but Australia is a significantly smaller military, and operates in a different strategic context. The 2016 *Australian Defence White Paper* identifies three Strategic Defence Interests: a secure resilient Australia, a secure near region, and a stable Indo-Pacific region and rules-based global order which supports Australian interests. The white paper envisages two options for Australia: one where Australia contributes to a US led military commitment, and the other where the ADF leads a regional contingency operation. Since introducing operational art into ADF doctrine, the ADF has participated in multiple military commitments, including commitments as a junior coalition partner in US led commitments, as well as the lead nation of a number of major regional stability operations. This monograph asks if the ADF experience supports the applicability of operational art. To answer this question, two case studies are examined: Operation Stabilise, the 1999 intervention in East Timor and Operation Slipper, Australia's contribution to the US led operation in Afghanistan. This monograph concludes that operational art is an inevitable reality for operations where the ADF is the lead nation. However, when the ADF is contributing as a junior coalition partner, responsibility for operational art is held by the lead nation, with ADF objectives restricted to supporting the lead nation objectives. Operational art is not exclusively defined by techniques used to synchronize tactical actions; rather, it occurs where there is a dialogue between the policy makers and the tactical commander.

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Acronyms

ADDP	Australian Defence Doctrine Publication
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADFP	Australian Defence Force Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, and the United States
ASP	Australian Strategic Policy
C2	Command and Control
CDF	Chief of the Defence Forces
CJOPS	Chief of Joint Operations
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
DJFHQ	Deployed Joint Force Headquarters
DOA	Defence of Australia
EBO	Effects Based Operations
FALINTIL	<i>Forças da libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste</i> (Portuguese) translates into the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor
FM	Field Manual
FRETILIN	<i>Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente</i> (Portuguese) translates into the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor
HQAST	Headquarters Australian Theater
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
ISAF SOF	International Security Assistance Forces Special Operations Forces
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JTF	Joint Task Force
LWD	Land Warfare Doctrine

MDM	Multi-Dimensional Maneuver
MRTF	Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force
NCW	Network Centric Warfare
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OODA	Observe, Orientate, Decide, and Act
RC(S)	Regional Command (South)
RKKA	<i>Raboche-krest'yanskaya Krasnaya armiya</i> (Russian) Translates into The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group
TF(U)	Task Force (Uruzgan)
TNI	<i>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</i> (Indonesian) translates into the National Army of Indonesia
UNAMET	United Nations Mission East Timor
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor
USMC	United States Marine Corps

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Introduction

The 2016 *Australian Defence White Paper* identifies three Strategic Defence Interests: a secure resilient Australia, a secure near region, and a stable Indo-Pacific region and rules-based global order which supports Australian interests.¹ Underwriting these interests is Australia's "strong and deep alliance with the United States."² Inferred within these three strategic interests is an assumption that due to the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) limited size, it will primarily operate as part of a coalition force under US command and control (C2) structure. Additionally, for smaller regional contingencies, the ADF must maintain the capability for unilateral operations. This perspective correlates to Australia's perception of itself as a middle power and fits recent experiences. During the past 15 years, the ADF has undertaken three extended military deployments as a subordinate partner within a US led C2 structure.

Along with other Western militaries, the ADF has adopted the concept of operational art from the United States. Operational art is a well-studied and tested concept within the US military, but Australia is a significantly smaller military, and operates in a different strategic context. Understanding, comparing and contrasting Australia's use of operational art with the US context will test operational art's applicability for Australia.

Underlying Australia's application of operational art is an untested assumption that operational art, as employed by the United States, is applicable to Australia's context as a small middle power military. There is significant research supporting the US application of operational art, but there has not been the same detailed research into its applicability for Australia. Most literature on Australian operational art is founded on this untested assumption, which may prevent Australia from applying a more effective theory or even applying the theory of operational art in a

¹ Australian Government: Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), 17-18.

² *Ibid.*, 121.

different way. As a subordinate coalition partner, there is an argument that operational art is not required, especially if the principle policy objective is to fulfill the alliance commitment through participation. If, however, the ADF is required to undertake a major unilateral military campaign, is it capable of making the cognitive link between strategic objectives and tactical actions.

The purpose of this study is to examine the applicability of operational art to the ADF. This study reviews the theoretical and historical underpinnings of operational art in order to understand the purpose and context of its development. It then charts the inclusion and evolution of operational art in the ADF and its use during this time. Finally, this study tests the theory against the Australian context as outlined in the *2016 Australian Defence White Paper* to identify potential issues and make recommendations.

The significance of this study is in the potential to contribute insights into the application of operational art in the ADF. Previous studies in this field have examined the application of campaign planning and operational art as articulated in US military doctrine. These studies have used the assumption that operational art is suitable for the ADF and therefore limited their studies to the question of how to apply it, and the tools used for applying operational art.³

This study uses the theoretical framework of operational art to examine the issues researched. Operational art is defined by the ADF as “the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organisation, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major operations. Operational art translates strategic into operational and ultimately tactical actions.”⁴ This Australian definition is similar to the US Army definition of operational art – “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in

³ For examples see Chris R. Smith, *Design and planning of Campaigns and Operations in the Twenty-First Century* (Canberra, ACT: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2011). And, Trent Scott, *The Lost Operational Art: Invigorating Campaigning into the Australian Defence Force* (Canberra, ACT: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2011).

⁴ Department of Defence, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 3.0, *Campaigns and Operations* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Printing Service, 2013), 1-15.

time, space, and purpose.”⁵ The two definitions differ in their explanation of tactical actions. The ADF confines the link to campaigns and major operations, but the US Army definition places no limits on the size or level of tactical action. This study will use the common component of two definitions, the linking of tactical actions to strategic objectives, noting that there are differences within the level of tactical action that operational art relates to.

In order to determine the suitability of operational art and its method of execution for the ADF, this study tests three hypothesis. Firstly, when acting unilaterally or as a lead nation, operational art is required by the ADF. Secondly, when operating as a junior coalition partner, operational art is not required. Finally, regardless of the type of military operation, ADF tactical actions are planned and coordinated using the same tools and methods of operational art.

This study addresses the primary research question: how suitable is Australia’s application of operational art given the policy requirements of the 2016 *Australian Defence White Paper*? To address this question, this study utilizes a structured focused comparison of two case studies. Both case studies will be examined using four research questions. First, what was the ADFs concept of operational art at the time of the case study? Second, what were the strategic objectives for the case study and were they achieved? Third, what was the operational approach used in the case study? And finally, how was operational art applied in the case study?

The limitation of this study is access and use of classified documentation. This study will only consider sources that are unclassified. This prevents the inclusion of discussion of specific operational plans and contingencies. This does not have a major limiting impact, as the doctrine associated with operational art is unclassified. The delimitations used to scope this study are its restriction to discussion of operational art to the Australian context. This study will not attempt to make generalizations about its applicability to other medium sized nations.

⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), 9.

This study assumes that the Australia – United States alliance (the ANZUS treaty) that underwrites Australia’s national security policies will remain valid into the future. This study also assumes that the United States will continue to apply operational art as a core component of its approach to use of military force. Additionally, this study assumes that, in the future, Australia will conduct unilateral military operations.

Literature Review

This study examines operational art, a concept that was first discussed by Soviet military theorists in the early twentieth century. It was not until the 1980s and the publishing of FM 100-5 *Operations*, that the concept formally entered western military thought. The 1982 version of *Operations* introduced the operational level of war and by the 1986 version, it was termed ‘operational art.’⁶ The essence of operational art is the linking of tactical action with strategic objectives.⁷ This literature review examines operational art’s theoretical works, the conceptual documents that frame the Australian context for the use of operational art, and reviews literature that has critiqued the ADF use of operational art.

Early military theorists viewed warfare into two fields: strategy and tactics. Clausewitz stated “tactics teaches the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy, the use of engagements for the object of the war.”⁸ It was in the 1920s when the Soviet theorist A.A. Svechin first

⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington DC, DC: Department of the Army, 1986), 10.

⁷ The US Army defines it as, “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.” See Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC, DC: Department of the Army, 2011), 4-1. The Australian Army defines operational art as, “the intellectual ability to visualize and then orchestrate tactical actions to achieve a strategic objective.” see Department of Defence, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 3-0, *Operations* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Printing Service, 2015), 5-1.

⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Peter Paret, and Michael Howard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

developed the term operational art in his book *Strategy*. “In a cycle of lectures on strategy given at the Military Academy of the RKKA, Svechin introduced the term operational art as the bridge between tactics and strategy, i.e., the means by which the senior commander transformed a series of tactical successes into operational bounds linked together by the commander’s intent and plan and contributing to strategic success in a given theater of military actions.”⁹ The impact of Svechin’s theory is visible in contemporary definitions of operational art and his work established the foundation for other soviet theorists. G. S. Isserson was a key Soviet theorist who built on Svechin’s work in his 1936 book, *The Evolution of Operational Art*. In this work, Isserson combines the concept of operational art with the new technology of tanks, aircraft, and advanced weapons to develop the theory of deep operations.¹⁰ Deep operations theory focused on the methods of synchronizing tactical actions that are distributed in time and space to overcome the difficulties of exploiting through the depth of an enemy position that cannot be flanked.

Another key work relating to the evolution of operational art is Shimon Naveh’s *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*. Naveh, a retired Israeli general and military theorist charts the evolution of operational art from the nineteenth century to its articulation as a written theory in *AirLand Battle*. Naveh identifies four key points in the development of operational art theory. First, nineteenth century military thought that developed at the time of mass armies of the *levee en masse*, and what Naveh calls its roots of operational ignorance. Secondly, the emergence of *blitzkrieg* and its lack of true operational thought. Third, Naveh examines Soviet deep operations theory, which he identifies as a breakthrough in military thinking and the application of systems theory. Finally, Naveh identifies the development of *AirLand Battle* theory as the

⁹ Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, ed. Kent D Lee (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1992), 38.

¹⁰ Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, trans. Bruce W Menning (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2013), 43.

articulation of a new and more complete theory of operational warfare.¹¹ Naveh incorporates general systems theory¹² to the concept of operational art, identifying that military systems are an example of an open system where the environment interacts with and changes the system. Naveh professes that operational art is fundamentally dependent upon systems theory and therefore a cognitive tension exists between the strategic aims and the individual tactical actions. According to Naveh, unless actions are examined with a holistic scientific view the interactions between the different components will be viewed in a linear approach that fails to maintain the link between actions and their aim.¹³ Naveh's discussion of operational art is reflected in the US joint definition of operational art as "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment – to develop strategies, campaigns and operations."¹⁴

In his *Parameters* article, *The Loose Marble—and the Origins of Operational Art*, James Schneider provides another important contribution to operational art theory. Schneider conjectures that much of the confusion about operational art comes down to misunderstandings of the qualitative differences between classical strategy and operational art.¹⁵ The key difference between these two is the strategy of a single point in classical strategy, as opposed to operational art's lateral distribution of forces, where there is an integration of temporally and spatially distributed operations into one coherent whole.¹⁶ Schneider identifies the US Civil War as the key turning

¹¹ Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Art* (New York, NY: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), xiii-xx

¹² Naveh cites the Hungarian scientist Ludwig von Bertalanffy's General systems theory as his source for his application of systems theory in the study of operational art. *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 4-1.

¹⁵ James J. Schneider, "The Loose Marble – and the Origins of Operational Art," *Parameters* (March 1998): 85.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

point between classical strategy and operational art. He offers a number of characteristics that distinguish operational art from classical strategy, which includes:

1. The employment of independent field armies that are distributed in the same theater of operations;
2. The employment of Army headquarters to control these distributed armies;
3. Distributed logistical structures to support the operations;
4. An integrated design of a distributed campaign plan;
5. Distributed operations;
6. A strategic exploitation force such as cavalry;
7. Deep strike;
8. Joint operations;
9. Distributed free maneuver;
10. The continuous front;
11. The empty battlefield; and
12. Commanders exercising operational vision.¹⁷

The central thesis of Schneider's article is that operational art is about the synchronization of distributed operations (in time and space), across an entire theater of operations.¹⁸

Understanding the theoretical basis of operational art is important for this research as it is the primary lens through which the case studies are viewed. The literature reviewed on this topic illustrates that there are differing approaches to how operational art is understood and applied. Irrespective of differing views of operational art, the common aspect across all the theoretical literature is that operational art is the process by which tactical actions are arranged in order to achieve strategic objectives—operational art connects strategic objectives to tactical actions.

¹⁷ Ibid., 90-98.

¹⁸ Ibid., 87-88.

For the purpose of this research operational art is considered as a cognitive process that links the strategic objectives with the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. Operational art can thought of as a set of scales, balancing two sides of the problem. On one side is strategy where policy formulation and strategic objective setting takes place, and on the other side is tactics which concerns the arrangement of actions in time, space, and purpose. The value of this analogy is that it demonstrates that operational art involves both sides of the issue, strategy and tactics. Operational art is not a one way process where strategic objectives are provided and the operational artist only concerns themselves with the arrangement of tactical actions.

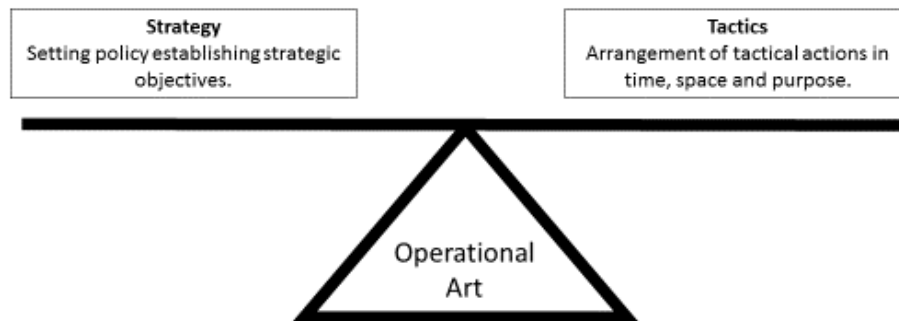


Figure 1 – Operational Art
Source: Created by author

The arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose is not unique to operational art, even at the lowest tactical levels, soldiers arrange their actions in time, space, and purpose in order to achieve some objective. Operational art is different from tactics because of the interaction with strategic objectives. Therefore, operational art takes place where there is an exchange between the strategic and tactical levels. As Stephen Lauer points identifies “[i]t is in the theater of

operations, where the joint force commander is in discourse with policy ... that strategy emerges and operational art resides.”¹⁹

The *2016 Australian Defence White Paper* provides the strategic direction against which the ADF prepares its force structure and doctrine. The *Australian Defence White Paper* specifies three strategic objectives for the ADF. The first is to deter, deny and defeat any attempt by a hostile country or non-state actor to attack, threaten or coerce Australia. The second objective is to support the security of maritime South East Asia and support the governments of Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and of Pacific Island countries to build and strengthen their security. The third objective is to provide meaningful contributions to global responses to address threats to the rules-based global order.²⁰ In addition to identifying these strategic objectives, the *2016 Australian Defence White Paper* identifies that “[a] strong and deep alliance is at the core of Australia’s security and defence planning.”²¹ Within the direction for the third strategic objective—global response—is the explicit expectation that these operations will be conducted as part of an international coalition.²² Conversely, it implies that the ADF needs to be prepared to lead or act unilaterally for regional security support operations, explicitly for “humanitarian and security assistance.”²³

Distilling the policy direction presented in the *2016 Australian Defence White Paper* into action is the Chief of the Australian Army’s intent, codified in *Army’s Future Land Operating Concept (Adaptive Campaigning 2009)* and *LWD 1: The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*. These

¹⁹ Stephen Lauer, “The Tao of Doctrine: Contesting an Art of Operations,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 82 (3rd Quarter 2016): 122, accessed March 16, 2017, http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-82/jfq-82_118-124_Lauer.pdf.

²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 17-18.

²¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 15.

²² Commonwealth of Australia, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 18.

²³ Commonwealth of Australia, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 16.

two documents provide the philosophy for land warfare in the ADF context and a common language for planning and force modernization. LWD 1 distills the strategic objectives from the white paper and identifies three strategic tasks for the Army: shaping Australia's strategic environment, denying and defeating threats to Australia and its interests, and protecting and supporting Australian and foreign populations.²⁴ LWD 1 specifies that the Australian Army's philosophy of warfare is manoeuvre theory. This theory is derived from the theories of William Lind and Robert Leonard.²⁵ It is essentially equivalent to the United States Marine Corps (USMC) theory as articulated in Marine Corps Doctrine Publication 1 *Warfighting*, where in the focus on defeating an enemy's will to fight rather than focusing on the enemy's forces. Additionally, both LWD 1 and *Adaptive Campaigning 2009*, incorporate a systems theory approach to the Australian Army's warfighting philosophy. The most evident example of this is the adaptive cycle, which shares similarities to John Boyd's observe, orientate, decide, act (OODA) loop but focuses on the process of adaption during the cycle. The adaptive cycle emphasizes the importance placed on systems theory rather than linear cause and effect approaches to planning and execution of operations, described as a competitive learning environment.²⁶

These conceptual references are important to understanding the basis of the primary research question. They articulate what the strategic preparedness requirements are for the ADF and specify the ADF's concept for operational art. Understanding these two elements allows this research to test the appropriateness of operational art through the two historical case studies.

²⁴ Department of Defence, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 1 *The Fundamentals of Land Power* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Printing Service, 2014), 31.

²⁵ Ibid., 57-58. Although LWD 1 does not formally acknowledge its theoretical basis for manoeuvre warfare, it lists both these authors in its bibliography.

²⁶ Department of Defence, *Adaptive Campaigning: Army's Future Land Operating Concept* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Printing Service, 2009), 32.

In 2004, Richard Dickson, a Canadian Army officer wrote a monograph on the applicability and use of operational art for middle-power nations. Dickson set out to answer the question of “are the operational level and operational art viable constructs for Canada and other middle-powers, and if so, what form should they take?”²⁷ Dickson postulated that operational art was conceived of in the context of large power nation states with mass armies. He observed that Canadian doctrine had imported the US concept of operational art without evaluating its applicability to Canada’s middle-power, small army context. Dickson identified a tradition of junior partner contributions to coalition operations as being a factor that has limited the acceptance of operational art in the Canadian military. Ultimately, Dickson concluded that in the contemporary strategic environment, there is greater pressure for Canada to take on more prominent roles and carry operational level responsibilities. He found that the concept of operational art is both feasible and suitable for Canada, however political and institutional resistance to change challenges its acceptability.

In a 2008 journal article, *The Closing of the Australian Military Mind: The ADF and Operational Art*, Michael Evans argues that although Australia adopted operational art from the United States in the 1980s, it has failed to keep up with conceptual development. Evans states that “a revival of Australian operational art is necessary because in the globalized conditions of the early 21st century, the ADF is faced by a simultaneous requirement to be a global ‘security contributor’ and a regional ‘security leader’.”²⁸ He argues strongly for the suitability of the operational art construct and offers a number of reforms required: improving joint doctrine, developing comprehensive campaign planning, and reforming the joint professional military education system.

Evans’ critique of ADF operational art is based around three issues; a tradition of tactical mindset, confusion of operational level command and a faulty warfighting philosophy. Evans

²⁷ Richard Dickson, “Operational Art in a Middle-Power Context: A Canadian Perspective” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2004), iii.

²⁸ Michael Evans, “The Closing of the Australian Military Mind: The ADF and Operational Art,” *Security Challenges* 4, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 105.

argues that the ADF has a history of contributing forces as a junior alliance partner and as a result has focused its intellectual development at the tactical level. He argues that the ADF's performance in East Timor and Solomon Islands has been camouflaged by tactical success which hides the lack of capability to conduct effective operational art.²⁹ Evans goes on to explain that during the East Timor intervention, the ADF circumvented the established operational level command (Headquarters Australian Theater). For Evans, this represents a cultural misunderstanding in the ADF where it conflates levels of war and levels of command.³⁰ Finally, Evans is critical of the adoption of an underlying warfighting philosophy that he describes as "overwhelmingly technocentric."³¹

Partly in response to Evans' article, Trent Scott, a serving Australian Army officer, published a study paper titled *The Lost Operational Art: Invigorating Campaigning into the Australian Defence Force*. Scott built on the view expressed by Evans and argues that the ADF lacks widespread understanding of operational art relevant to Australia's strategic and geopolitical context. "The ADF does not have a culture of campaigning; nor does it have relevant operational art codified in doctrine or within the Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) system that will provide a suitable foundation from which to develop operational excellence."³² Scott also argues that the ADF's approaches to warfare provide a flawed foundation to build operational art on because they are linear models that do not adequately account for the complex adaptive nature of contemporary conflicts. Scott offers three modifications for the ADF, including inculcating a campaign mindset through adapting a mature approach to joint warfare and overhauling the JPME system. Secondly, the ADF must ensure relevance by developing a more holistic understanding of

²⁹ Ibid., 105.

³⁰ Ibid., 118.

³¹ Ibid., 119.

³² Scott, 13.

war, acknowledging Australia's geostrategic reality and being human centric rather than technocentric. Finally, Scott offers that the ADF needs to embrace design as the core of operational art.

This research will build on these existing studies by testing the suitability of the operational art concept chosen by the ADF. The references reviewed in this section have all informed and influenced the present ADF concept of operational art. This research tests this updated concept against the most recent strategic requirements. This section examined the key literature that is relevant to this study. The literature reviewed is important because it outlines and defines the theoretical framework that this research uses—operational art. This review has also looked at some of the previous studies that have discussed similar areas of research, and built a basis on which this study will continue.

Methodology

The main purpose of this monograph is to answer the primary research question: how suitable is Australia's concept of operational art, given the policy requirements of the 2016 *Australian Defence White Paper*? This question will be answered using a structured focused comparison of two case studies in order to examine and test three hypotheses: first, when acting unilaterally or as a lead nation, operational art is required by the ADF; second, when operating as a junior coalition partner, operational art is not required; third, regardless of the type of military operation, ADF tactical actions are planned and coordinated using the same tools and methods of operational art. This section outlines the case studies to be used and the methodology of the structured focused comparison method used.

The case study methodology provides a means to test a hypothesis against. Alexander George and Andrew Bennett describe the structured focused methodology as, “‘structured’ in that the researcher writes general questions that reflect the research objective and these questions are asked of each case under study ...thereby making systematic comparison and culmination of the findings of the case possible. The method is ‘focused’ in that it deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases examined.”³³ This monograph examines two case studies of ADF operations. The first case study is the ADF Operation Stabilise in East Timor from September 1999 to February 2000. This case study provides an example where the ADF was the lead nation. The second case study is the ADF Operation Slipper in 2009, specifically from May 2009 to February 2010.³⁴ These two case studies provide examples of both potential scenarios that the 2016 *Australian Defence*

³³ Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 67.

³⁴ Although Operation Slipper was conducted from 2001- 2014, the specific case study is refined to May 2009-February 2010 as this coincides with a single rotation of forces under the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force 2. This provides a stable case study with a consistent strategic framework allowing for the application of operational art.

White Paper mandates for the ADF. Both case studies occurred at a time when the concept of operational art was well established in ADF doctrine.

The first hypothesis used in this research is that when the ADF operates in a unilateral or lead nation function, it uses operational art. The nature of being the lead nation means a nation is primarily responsible for the interface with strategic objectives and tactical actions. Unless the operational commander embarks on a series of tactical actions without any consideration of the strategic objectives, they are applying operational art. The expected finding is that the ADF use of operational art is appropriate for unilateral and lead nation operations.

The second hypothesis is that when operating as a junior alliance partner operational art is not used. When the ADF is deployed as a junior partner the strategic objectives are limited to being a participant, effectively subordinating the junior partner to the strategic objectives of the lead nation. As a junior partner the ADF is conforming to the lead nation's operational approach. The expected finding is that the ADF's strategic objectives in the junior partner paradigm do not link to tactical actions.

The third hypothesis is that the ADF applies the processes and methodologies associated with operational art even when its tactical actions do not link to strategic objectives. Operational art is defined by the function of linking tactical actions to strategic objectives, rather than by the techniques applied. The expected finding is that although the ADF might not use operational art as a junior partner, tactical actions are still planned and executed using processes and techniques that replicate operational art.

This paper uses four focused research questions to guide the collection of data and analysis of each case study. The same questions are examined for both case studies, thereby facilitating a structured comparison.

The first question is: what was the ADFs concept of operational art at the time of the case study? This question provides the basis against which to assess how operational art should have

theoretically been practiced in the case study. This question will also help to develop an understanding of any evolution that ADF doctrine has undertaken relating to the theory of operational art. The second question is: what were the strategic objectives for the case study and were they achieved? Understanding what the objectives were will provide the foundation to judge the effectiveness of any operational art practiced in the case study. The third question asks: what was the operational approach used in the case study? This question will facilitate understanding of whether there was a coherent method to synchronize tactical actions to achieving strategic objectives. In effect, this analysis seeks to identify if there was a campaign plan and how effectively it be articulated. This will reflect the effectiveness of any operational art and links to the final question. Finally, this research will ask how was operational art applied in the case study? Were there any specific tools or techniques that can be identified as central to the application of operational art?

The data collected for this research is a mixture of primary and secondary sources. It relies upon multiple sources, including doctrinal publications, parliamentary records, official ADF historical reports and operational histories, biographies and first-hand observations. These sources are used in conjunction to establish triangulation of data as referred to by John Creswell, ensuring the credibility and validity of the data used for qualitative assessments.³⁵

³⁵ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 208.

Case Studies

This section presents the two case studies used in this research. These case studies provide contrasting examples of ADF operational commitments. Both case studies occurred in the time period since operational art was included in ADF doctrine. The first case study is the ADF's 1999 intervention in East Timor known as, Operation Stabilise.³⁶ This case study provides an example of a multinational military operation where Australia was the lead nation. The second case study is the ADF involvement in Afghanistan during 2009 known as, Operation Slipper. it provides an example of a junior partner commitment by the ADF.

Case Study One—Operation Stabilise

Since 1702, East Timor had been a Portuguese colony. In 1974, in response to domestic concerns and mounting costs of maintaining the colony, Portugal withdrew from the island. Indonesia, who controlled West Timor, feared that the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) would seize control of East Timor.³⁷ FRETILIN was a Marxist leaning group and Indonesia had the tacit support of Australia and the United States in its occupation.³⁸ In December of 1975, the Indonesian National Army (TNI)³⁹ invaded East Timor and annexed the small island. This started a 24 year counter insurgency campaign for the TNI as they battled the

³⁶ Operation Stabilise was the codename used for the international coalition of 22 nations that conducted operations. The Australian troop contribution within this coalition structure was codenamed Operation Warden. This monograph will focus on Operation Stabilise and only consider Operation Warden as one element of the campaign.

³⁷ In Portuguese, *Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente* (FRETILIN) translates into the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor.

³⁸ Michael Pricor, "Regional Solutions for Regional Problems: East Timor and Solomon Islands" (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2012), 3.

³⁹ In Indonesian, *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI) translates into the National Army of Indonesia.

Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor (FALINTIL).⁴⁰ In January 1999, the Indonesian President, B.J. Habibie, called for a referendum on the autonomy of East Timor. This action surprised many members of the international community, including Australia. In retrospect, commentators have suggested that Indonesia believed that they would win the vote.⁴¹

A referendum occurred on 30 August 1999, under the supervision of the United Nations Mission East Timor (UNAMET), with the Indonesian Government responsible for security. In the lead up to the vote, there was an increase of pro-Indonesian violence and intimidation. Despite the attempt to sway the vote, an overwhelming majority of the population—78.5 percent—voted for independence. Immediately following the referendum result, pro-Indonesia militia groups with the backing, and at times, direct support of the TNI commenced a widespread campaign of reprisal attacks.⁴² More than 1,300 East Timorese were killed, infrastructure was destroyed, and 300,000 people (one third of the population), were forcibly relocated to West Timor.⁴³ The Indonesian strategy was to discredit and nullify the vote by provoking FALINTIL to react with violence and draw them out of their sanctuaries and destroy them.⁴⁴

In response to the widespread violence, the UN issued UN security council resolution 1264 (UNSCR 1264) authorizing “the establishment of a multinational force under a unified command structure ...with the following tasks: to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and

⁴⁰ In Portuguese, *Forças da libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* (FALINTIL) translates into the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor.

⁴¹ Patrick Lindsay, *Cosgrove – Portrait of a Leader* (Sydney, NSW: Random House, 2006), 112-113.

⁴² John Gordon IV and Jason H. Campbell, *Organising for Peace Operations: Lessons Learned from Bougainville, East Timor, and the Solomon Islands* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016), 38.

⁴³ Department of Defence, “Background” Australian Army, last modified February 29, 2012, accessed November 4, 2016, http://www.army.gov.au/Our-stories/Operations/East-Timor_Timor-Leste/Setting-the-scene/Background. and Pricor, 4-5.

⁴⁴ Lindsay, 121.

support UNAMET in carrying out its tasks and, within force capabilities, to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations.”⁴⁵ The UN Security Council accepted Australia’s offer to lead the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET). The Australian Government built a coalition consisting of 22 contributing nations. Australia was the lead nation, as well as the major troop contributing nation. The ADF was “now immersed in what the then Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie considered, ‘the most significant military undertaking we have had since World War II.’”⁴⁶

The ADF established a Joint Task Force (JTF) using its Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ) as the nucleus of the JTF. Major General Peter Cosgrove was appointed the JTF commander of INTERFET for what became known as Operation Stabilise. On 20 September 1999, INTERFET entered East Timor and commenced operations in accordance with UNSCR 1264. Operation Stabilise was conducted in four broad phases. The first phase was gaining control through securing points of entry and lodgment of INTERFET in East Timor. Phase two was the consolidation to establish a secure environment, support UNAMET, and provide humanitarian assistance. Phase three was the transition of responsibility from INTERFET to a United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET) peace-keeping force. The final phase was withdrawal of INTERFET.⁴⁷

The planning and execution of Operation Stabilise faced a number of significant challenges. These challenges included the friction of working in a coalition setting, where the

⁴⁵ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1264 (1999), September 15, 1999, accessed November 04, 2016, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/264/81/PDF/N9926481.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁴⁶ Department of Defence, “Introduction” Australian Army, last modified February 26, 2012, accessed November 4, 2016, http://www.army.gov.au/Our-stories/Operations/East-Timor_Timor-Leste/Setting-the-scene/Introduction.

⁴⁷ David Horner, *SAS Phantoms of War: A History of the Australian Special Air Service* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 490.

national caveats of 22 nations required careful balancing. Many of the nations did not include combat forces so Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom assumed responsibility for any operations that had the potential for direct combat.⁴⁸ Compounding this was a lack of operational experience in the ADF in addition to significant logistical shortfalls and restrictions. This manifested throughout the strategic and operational level planning and execution systems, described by one official as, “pretty messy and ad hoc.”⁴⁹ Despite these difficulties INTERFET organized and deploy forces that would total 11,500 personnel, within a two week period.⁵⁰

Initially INTERFET built up forces whilst simultaneously conducting security activities across East Timor. This enabled the full withdrawal of Indonesian forces, who covertly continued to provide support to the pro-Indonesia militias and deliberately destroyed barracks and other infrastructure.⁵¹ Over the course of the three week Indonesian withdrawal, there were a number of tense situations between TNI forces and INTERFET.⁵² Following this withdrawal, INTERFET was able to effectively suppress the pro-Indonesia militias and establish administrative governance over all of East Timor. By February 2000, INTERFET’s mission was complete and had transitioned to a peacekeeping mission under UNAMET. “Over a period of five months ... INTERFET had halted the militia violence, facilitated the Indonesian military withdrawal, disarmed the warring factions, and assisted approximately 200,000 displaced persons to return to their homes.”⁵³

⁴⁸ Alan Ryan, *Primary Responsibilities and Primary Risks: Australian Defence Force Participation in the International Force East Timor* (Canberra, ACT: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2000), 64.

⁴⁹ Gordon and Campbell, 45.

⁵⁰ Prictor, 9.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² For examples of INTERFET incidents with TNI forces see Horner, 498-499 and Lindsay, 130-131.

⁵³ Prictor, 10.

The first question is: what was the ADF's concept of operational art at the time of the case study? In 1999, the ADF concept of operational art was based on the standard western understanding—the link between strategic objectives and tactical actions. In practice this was influenced by the theoretical underpinnings of maneuver warfare theory, which was the ADF's principle theory of warfare. The primary ADF doctrine at the time defined operational art as “the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organisation, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major operations.”⁵⁴

Dr. Michael Evans, the former director of the Australian Army's Land Warfare Studies Center, wrote that in the 1980's, the ADF adopted operational art from the 1986 edition of *AirLand Battle*. The ADF's doctrine for operational art differed from the 1986 *AirLand Battle* concept by including the framework of an operational level of war.⁵⁵ ADF doctrine stated that “the focus at [the operational] level is on operational art.”⁵⁶ However, the use of levels of war focused operational art at a very specific level of command—Commander Australian Theater. “The theatre commander (Commander Australian Theatre) will design a campaign plan within a designated theatre, command assigned forces, and direct major operations of the campaign.”⁵⁷ As Evans discusses, this conflation of the levels of war with command influenced how operational art was conducted during Operation Stabilise.

At the time of Operation Stabilise the ADF was going through a period of intellectual development and strategic change. Evans identified two phases in the ADF's use of operational art, with transition occurring at the time of Operation Stabilise. At the time of operational art's

⁵⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Defence Force Publication (ADFP) 6, *Operations* (Canberra, ACT: Defence Publishing Service, 1998), 2-1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

introduction into ADF doctrine, the ADF's strategic concept was Defence of Australia (DOA).⁵⁸ DOA focused on "the defence of the Australian continent using the enduring features of geography as a force planning guide."⁵⁹ In practice this strategy was founded on the perceived natural defense offered from being an island continent. For land forces this focused their efforts on preparing to conduct defensive operations inside the Australian mainland. In 1997 the Australian Government published *Australia's Strategic Policy 1997* (ASP 97). The impact of this guidance for land forces was summarized by the Minister for Defence, Ian McLachlan, who articulated that "the land force must be capable of conducting offshore operations, either unilaterally or as part of a coalition."⁶⁰

This was a watershed moment for the ADF, as it now pursued an expeditionary focus. The Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, announced that the Army would pursue this new direction by adopting a maritime strategy along with the warfighting philosophy of the manoeuvrist approach.⁶¹ Implementing this change was supported by a series of doctrinal and organizational changes. In particular, the intellectual basis for this was published in March 1999 with LWD 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*. Organizationally, the establishment of Headquarters Australian Theater (HQAUST), established a standing organization charged with planning and commanding the operational level of war, and by extension, conducting operational art.

It was with this background that the ADF embarked on Operation Stabilise, supported by a doctrine that established operational art as a link between strategic objectives and tactical actions. The doctrine identified 16 components of operational art: operational objectives, end-state, center of gravity, critical vulnerabilities, decisive points, lines of operation, operational milestones,

⁵⁸ Evans, *Security Challenges*, 115.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Michael Evans, *Forward from the Past: The Development of Australian Army doctrine, 1972-Present* (Canberra, ACT: Land Warfare Studies Center, 1999), 52.

⁶¹ Ibid., 55-56.

sequencing, command and control warfare, manoeuvre, tempo, attrition, leverage, operational pauses, culminating points, and contingency planning.⁶² Additionally, the ADF established a command structure that identified HQAST as the primary operational headquarters responsible for the conduct of operational art.

The second question is: what were the strategic objectives for the case study and were they achieved? The strategic objectives for Operation Stabilise can be viewed at two levels: the UN Security Council mandated objectives and the less clearly articulated Australian Government objectives. The United Nations mandated strategic objectives were clearly articulated in UNSCR 1264, which included restoring peace and security in East Timor, protecting and support UNAMET in carrying out its tasks, and where there was capacity, facilitating humanitarian assistance operations.⁶³ Within the resolution the overarching objective was clearly focused on supporting humanitarian assistance to reach the devastated population of East Timor, along with its protection. Additionally, there was an emphasis placed on supporting the safe return of internally displaced persons.⁶⁴ These objectives were straightforward and formed the basis of the Australian Government strategic objectives, however there were less clearly articulated and more-nuanced objectives as well.⁶⁵

Australia's security had long been founded on the principle that having friendly and stable states on its northern approaches was vital to securing the northern maritime approaches to Australia.⁶⁶ The situation in East Timor complicated this objective. It was an implicit strategic

⁶² Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Defence Force Publication (ADFP) 45, *Operations* (Canberra, ACT: Defence Publishing Service, 1998), 3-2 – 3-3.

⁶³ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1264 (1999), September 15, 1999, accessed November 04, 2016, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/264/81/PDF/N9926481.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Gordon and Campbell, 52.

⁶⁶ Prictor, 5.

objective for Australia to maintain good relations with Indonesia and support Indonesia's position as a strong and stable state. This objective presented a complication for INTERFET as Indonesia was the provocative influence that opposed the achievement of the UNSCR 1264 objectives.

During the five months of Operation Stabilise, INTERFET achieved all of these strategic objectives. All 26,000 TNI troops were withdrawn from East Timor; the pro-Indonesian militias were suppressed, UNTAET was enabled as the administrative governance authority and 200,000 internally displaced persons returned to their homes.⁶⁷ While achieving these explicit objectives, INTERFET simultaneously achieved the implicit objective of maintaining good relations with Indonesia. This was accomplished through the careful management of interactions with the TNI on the ground in East Timor⁶⁸ and through management by the ADF staff from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.⁶⁹

The third question is: what was the operational approach used in the case study? Cosgrove developed a four phase operational approach to achieve the strategic objectives. Phase one was gaining control of the points of entry into east Timor. Phase two was the build up and consolidation of INTERFET forces in East Timor using what was described as an 'ink spot strategy.' Phase three was the deliberate transition of security responsibility to a UNTAET peace keeping force. Phase four with the withdrawal and redeployment of INTERFET forces. The historian David Horner described the operational approach in his book, *SAS: Phantoms of War*:

Cosgrove planned to conduct Operation Stabilise in four phases. The first phase (gaining control) involved securing the points of entry at Dili and Baucau and the initial lodgment of INTERFET. In phase two (consolidation) INTERFET would establish a secure environment to enable UNAMET to recommence operations and to facilitate humanitarian assistance. During this time the force was to reach its full strength. Phase three (transition) involved the transfer of responsibility to the UN Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET) peace-keeping force. Phase four would be withdrawal. Cosgrove identified a

⁶⁷ Pictor, 9-10. and Andrew H. Fowler, *Stability Operations in East Timor 1999-2000: A Case Study* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Press, 2016), 74.

⁶⁸ Gordon and Campbell, 53.

⁶⁹ Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of War*, 487.

number of essential tasks. The first was to establish liaison with all the key organisations, ranging from the TNI and the East Timor independence groups to the UN and the non-government organizations (NGOs). He had to secure the points of entry, protect and support UNAMET, protect and sustain his own force, create a secure environment to protect the East Timorese people, and facilitate NGO humanitarian assistance operations.⁷⁰

This operational approach is graphically represented in figure 2.0.

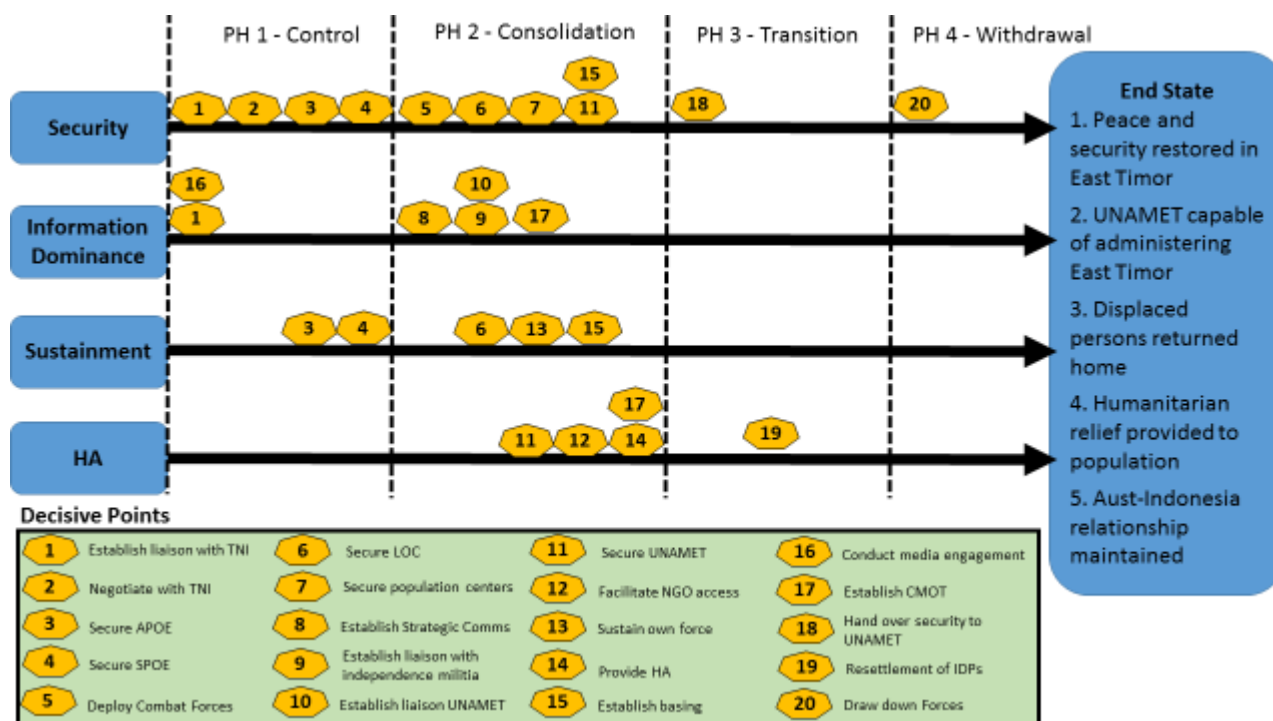


Figure 2 – The INTERFET Operational Approach

Source: Created by author

The fourth question is: how was operational art applied in INTERFET? In short, operational art was focused at the headquarters of INTERFET, and executed by the commander, Major General Cosgrove. The command and control structure was established to make the headquarters the juncture between strategic direction and tactical actions. Cosgrove interacted directly with the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and exercised operational control over all forces in East Timor. This was in conflict with the doctrinally anticipated model at the time, which would

⁷⁰ Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of War*, 490.

have established HQAST as the headquarters primarily charged with operational art.⁷¹ The CDF had directed this change in operational level command due to the complexities of leading a 22 nation coalition force. The CDF directed Cosgrove to report directly to the Head Strategic Command, cutting HQAST out of the operational level command, although it retained responsibility of logistical support to the Australian forces within INTERFET.⁷² In effect, this change of command relationship enabled a two way dialogue between the strategic decision makers and the operational artist.

By establishing INTERFET as the operational headquarters and directly linking it to the strategic guidance, Cosgrove maintained the ability to conduct operational art. As the commander with direct operational control over all INTERFET tactical forces in East Timor, he was able to directly synchronize effects in time, space, and purpose. The key limiting factors he had to contend with were the national caveats placed on different forces and the limits of logistics. National caveats primarily influenced the employment of combat forces, with the majority of combat operations being limited to forces from Australian, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.⁷³ Cosgrove acted to build an INTERFET headquarters that would integrate the coalition forces, but this was not fully effective, as evidenced by Cosgrove's deputy commander, Major General Songkitti from Thailand. Although Songkitti served as the Deputy Commander INTERFET, his dual role as commander of Thai forces kept him in the Thai military headquarters, rather than collocated in headquarters INTERFET.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Defence Force Publication (ADFP) 6, *Operations* (Canberra, ACT: Defence Publishing Service, 1998), 2-5.

⁷² Strategic Command was a component of the CDF's office that was responsible for strategic planning and guidance in the ADF. Lindsay, 142; David Horner, *Making the Australian Defence Force* (South Melbourne, VIC: Oxford University Press, 2001), 144.

⁷³ Ryan, 64.

⁷⁴ Ryan, 82.

Operation Stabilise was the ADF's largest undertaking since the Vietnam War and tested the capacity and capability of the ADF to project military power overseas. The ADF was the lead nation for a coalition operation and as a result was responsible for the conduct of operational art. The commander INTERFET, Major General Cosgrove was the primary operational artist during Operation Stabilise. Cosgrove maintained an open dialogue with the strategic policy makers, had clear strategic objectives and designed, planned and conducted a campaign that successfully achieved those objectives.

Case Study Two—Operation Slipper 2009

The ADF commitment to Afghanistan commenced following the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001.⁷⁵ This military commitment is still ongoing at the time of writing this monograph. This case study will focus on one specific period of the commitment that took place in 2009 under the title Operation Slipper. This commitment involved over 1500 personnel distributed across multiple locations. The central focus of Operation Slipper was Uruzgan Province in Southern Afghanistan, where the majority of Australian troops served.⁷⁶ Operation Slipper included the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force (MRTF) and the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG). In addition to these forces, the ADF provided embedded staff officers within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a medium lift helicopter group in Regional Command South (RC(S)), an airborne surveillance group, and artillery forces embedded within the

⁷⁵ Department of Defence, "The Longest War (The Australian Army in Afghanistan)," Australian Army, last modified August 17, 2016, accessed December 6, 2016. <http://army.gov.au/the-longest-war/>.

⁷⁶ Depending on the source document Uruzgan is also spelled Oruzgan.

UK commitment in Helmand Province. Supporting this commitment was a JTF headquarters and logistical support unit located outside Dubai, in the UAE.⁷⁷

In 2009, Uruzgan Province was a supporting effort in RC(S), which was commanded by a US Army Division headquarters. Uruzgan Province was controlled by Task Force Uruzgan (TF(U)), a brigade headquarters from the Netherlands. In addition to the TF(U) headquarters, the Dutch provided a battle group and provincial reconstruction team. The Australian MRTF operated under the control of TF(U). The SOTG, along with, US Special Forces Task Force (TF31), operated in Uruzgan but not under the direct control of TF(U) or RC(S). The SOTG was under the control of the ISAF Special Operations Forces (ISAFSOF) component, and TF 31 was under the control of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF). Although these task forces were under different operational control structures, there was a mutually beneficial relationship between them.⁷⁸ Outside of this command and control structure was the Australian national command structure, known as JTF 633. JTF 633 was commanded by Major General Mark Kelly in the UAE.⁷⁹ JTF 633 exercised command over all Australian forces in Afghanistan although it did not undertake day to day direction of forces or provide routine tasking of units. Its primary function was to act as a national approval authority, exercising a veto power of actions undertaken by Australian Forces in Afghanistan.

⁷⁷ Mark Evans, "Australia's Military Objectives." Speech, The International Conference on the Afghanistan Conflict and Australia's Role, October 22-23, 2009, accessed December 06, 2016, http://www.defence.gov.au/operations/afghanistan/docs/CJOPS_Speech.pdf.

⁷⁸ Peter Connolly, *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009* (Canberra, ACT: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2011), 6-7.

⁷⁹ Alastair McPerson and Graham McBean, "Change in Leadership," *Army: The soldiers Newspaper*, February 4, 2010, accessed April 6, 2017, http://armynews.realviewdigital.com/?xml=defencenews_army.xml&iid=32909.

At the strategic level, Australia's purpose for having military forces in Afghanistan in 2009 was articulated by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd in a press release that year:

In Afghanistan, Australia has two fundamental interests at stake. First, we need to deny sanctuary to terrorists who have threatened and killed Australian citizens. Second, we also have an enduring commitment to the United States under the ANZUS Treaty which was formally invoked at the time of the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington.⁸⁰

Rudd went on to discuss the US mission in Afghanistan and endorsed the mission as being acceptable for Australia's purpose. Rudd summarized Australia's mission as having three components: First, deny Afghanistan as a sanctuary for future terrorism; second, stabilize the country of Afghanistan; and third, in concert with allies, train and mentor the Afghan National Army and police forces to take over responsibility in Uruzgan Province.⁸¹ Whilst the stated objective of denying Afghanistan as a future sanctuary was important to Australia, it was not an achievable objective for the ADF. The ADF would contribute a small part of the wider ISAF campaign, with the intention that the wider ISAF campaign would achieve the objective.

The Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS), Lieutenant General Mark Evans, outlined the operational approach focused on mentoring the Afghan National Army and police forces in Uruzgan Province. This provided the purpose for the MRTF and SOTG deployments. The MRTF mentored the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade, as well as conducted reconstruction activities. The SOTG provided security and force protection for the MRTF, specifically by degrading the Taliban insurgency through targeting key leadership. Additionally, SOTG mentored elements of the police in Uruzgan Province.⁸²

⁸⁰ Kevin Rudd, "Troop Deployment in Afghanistan; COAG; Welfare; Tax Bonus Payments," Press Conference at Parliament House, April 29, 2009, accessed December 06, 2016, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressre1%2F12GT6%22>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Mark Evans, "Australia's Military Objectives."

The result of this strategic direction was a MRTF that pursued a counterinsurgency approach in the same location that SOTG conducted counter-terrorism operations.⁸³ There was no centralized command and control to synchronize these tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. Additionally, a variety of smaller troop contributions were made throughout the Afghanistan theater that included helicopters, intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and individual staff officers all without any central unifying purpose other than the strategic objective of contributing troops to meet treaty obligations.

The first question is: what was the ADF's concept of operational art at the time of the case study? Upon first examination, the definition of operational art in 2009 appeared to have changed little from ten years earlier. The capstone warfighting concept for the ADF, *Joint Operations for the 21st Century*, defined it as, "the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organization, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major operations. It translates strategy into operational and, ultimately, tactical action."⁸⁴ Although this definition is similar, the underlying approach to warfare—Multidimensional Manoeuvre (MDM) had changed. MDM derived from the concepts of network centric warfare (NCW) and effects based operations (EBO).⁸⁵ This change in warfighting philosophy for the ADF resulted in a shift from the 16 components of operational art that had supported its previous definition, and now identified NCW and EBO as the mechanisms for applying operational art.

There was also an additional concept of operational art that existed in Australian Army operations doctrine in 2009. This competing concept identified operational art as an "intellectual

⁸³ Connolly, 1: Ian Langford, "Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan: Supporting Australia in the 'Long War,'" *Australian Army Journal* VII, no 1 (Autumn 2010): 22.

⁸⁴ Department of Defence, *Joint Operations for the 21st Century* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Printing Service, 2007), 20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

ability or craft, rather than a process or trained skill, through which a commander conceives operations in order to accomplish strategic objectives.”⁸⁶ This definition of operational art used the framework of ends, ways, and means to explain how operational art fits into the process of conducting military operations. In this construct, strategic objectives were the ends, the tactical actions were the means, and the operational art was the ways that connect the two elements. It also introduced the concept of operational design into Australian Army doctrine, but did not exist in the joint operating concept. In this doctrine, design was a tool for framing the problem and identifying what needed to be done, whereas planning was described as problem solving.⁸⁷

The second question is: what were the strategic objectives for the case study and were they achieved? The ADF’s strategic objectives for Afghanistan in 2009 revolved around denying Afghanistan as a global terrorist base of operations and maintaining the ANZUS alliance that underpins Australia’s security. On April 29, 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd outlined these strategic objectives in a press release, describing them as Australia’s fundamental interests at stake.⁸⁸ In the same press release, Rudd reiterated President Obama’s defined mission for Afghanistan: “disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.”⁸⁹ Rudd went on to state, “Australia concurs with this mission.”⁹⁰ and articulate Australia’s strategy for Afghanistan as:

Strategic denial of Afghanistan as a training ground and operating base for global terrorist organisations; second, stabilization of the Afghan state through a combination of military,

⁸⁶ Department of Defence, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 3-0, *Operations* (Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 2008), 2-2.

⁸⁷ Department of Defence, Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 3-0, *Operations* (Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 2008), 2-4.

⁸⁸ Kevin Rudd, “Troop Deployment in Afghanistan; COAG; Welfare; Tax Bonus Payments” Press Conference at Parliament House, April 29, 2009, accessed December 06, 2016. <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressre1%2F12GT6%22>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

police and civilian effort to the extent necessary to consolidate this primary mission of strategic denial; and third, in Australia's case, to make this contribution in Oruzgan Province in partnership with allies, with the objective of training sufficient Afghan National Army and police forces and to enhance the capacity of the Oruzgan provincial administration in order to hand over responsibility for the province in a reasonable time-frame to the Afghans themselves.⁹¹

This articulation of the strategy can be viewed through the construct of ends and ways. The ends were articulated as the denial of Afghanistan as a global terrorist base of operations. The ways are through stabilizing the Afghan state, specifically in Uruzgan Province, and preparing the Afghan security forces to take over responsibility for provincial security. It was this final element preparing the Afghan security forces to take over responsibility for provincial security, that formed a measurable strategic objective for the ADF. This strategy statement also emphasized the coalition construct this would be pursued under, highlighting the subordination of Australia's strategy to that of the United States and ISAF.

This strategy demonstrates a disparity between the ends, ways and means. If the ends are the denial of Afghanistan as a sanctuary for global terrorist organizations as well as maintenance of the ANZUS alliance, then only the latter of these strategic ends could be achieved with the commitment of forces limited to Uruzgan Province. Denial of Afghanistan as a sanctuary for global terrorist organizations could only be achieved by the holistic ISAF campaign, and not the ADF's contribution alone.

With such broad strategic objectives, success may be measured subjectively. With respect to meeting ANZUS treaty requirements, it would be reasonable to conclude that the contribution of troops in a variety of positions within ISAF met those requirements. As for the more tangible objective of developing the Afghan security forces, post operational reports indicate that there was advancement towards fulfilling the objective, although it was not achieved during the time of the case study. It is noted that the capacity of the 4th Afghan National Army Brigade evolved to the

⁹¹ Ibid.

point where it may become capable of independent counterinsurgency operations in the future, but “it had a long way to go before it is complete.”⁹²

The third question is: what was the operational approach used in the case study? The operational approach for Operation Slipper in 2009 had four components to it. The first component was for the MRTF to conduct a counterinsurgency and reconstruction effort in Uruzgan Province. The second component to the operational approach was a counter-terrorism effort within Uruzgan and surrounding provinces by the SOTG. The third component, included augmentation of wider ISAF capabilities. This was a diverse range of contributions that included a medium lift helicopter squadron, airborne ISR capabilities, and a range of individual staff officers in ISAF organizations. The final and fourth component was the national support component that provided logistical support to all Australian forces deployed under Operation Slipper. The overarching operational approach that synchronized the efforts of these components was subordinated to ISAF. As the Chief of Joint Operations stated, “our military objectives sit within an Australian whole of government approach which is aligned to a broader coalition strategy with interagency lines of operation.”⁹³ Out of the four components, only the MRTF and SOTG may be considered to have their own operational approaches.

The MRTF’s operational approach was summarized in a press release from the Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, as having “two main tasks: to mentor the Afghan National Army, and to continue the outstanding work conducted so-far on reconstruction. Both [of] which are the hallmarks of an effective counter-insurgency campaign.”⁹⁴ The MRTF pursued this counter

⁹² Connolly, 73.

⁹³ Evans, “Australia’s Military Objectives.”

⁹⁴ Joel Fitzgibbon, “New role for diggers in Afghanistan”, Press Release, October 21, 2008, accessed December 06, 2016, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FH7WR6%22>.

insurgency campaign through four lines of effort: Firstly, mentoring and building the capacity of the 4th Afghan National Army Brigade; secondly, securing the population in Uruzgan Province; third, influencing the civilian population, insurgency and coalition forces; and fourth, developing infrastructure within the community. In effect, the work of the MRTF addressed two objectives: developing and mentoring the Afghan National Army, and providing stability to Uruzgan Province.

The SOTG had a much broader operational approach. The CJOPS highlighted that the work of the SOTG enhanced the security and force protection for the MRTF, allowing them to achieve their objectives.⁹⁵ In this regard, the SOTG could be viewed as a supporting effort to the MRTF. SOTG used an operational approach that consisted of four lines of effort. The first line of effort was support to counterinsurgency operations through training Afghan forces, selection of intelligence and tribal engagement. The second line of effort was force protection operations, disrupting threat forces that are planning or conducting attacks on ISAF and Afghan forces within Uruzgan Province. The third line of effort was conducting counter-leadership operations through targeting of insurgent leaders. Training, advising and assisting Afghan police forces within Uruzgan Province was the fourth and final line of effort.⁹⁶

Further complicating the development of a coherent operational approach for all ADF elements in Afghanistan was the multiple command structures that existed. An illustration of this is the mission approval requirements for an SOTG operation. The commander of the SOTG generated the operational approach and assigned missions to subordinate elements. Once a mission was planned, it was approved at headquarters ISAF SOF (the special operations component command for ISAF). Following that approval, the mission required approval by the commander of RC(S), the battlespace owner. The mission would then be briefed to TF(U) for the purpose of battlespace de-confliction. Concurrent to this approval process, the concept of operations was also sent to the

⁹⁵ Evans, “Australia’s Military Objectives.”

⁹⁶ Langford, 24.

Australian JTF in the UAE for Australian national approval. In some circumstances, this would also include gaining approval back in Australia due to technical control procedures.⁹⁷ Overall, there was no single operational approach for Operation Slipper. Although two the components (MRTF and SOTG) developed their own approaches, these were subordinate to the ISAF campaign plan.

The fourth question is how was operational art applied in Afghanistan? In this case study, the conduct of operational art is difficult to identify. As Australia was not the lead nation, no ADF elements were involved in the interaction with the strategic policy maker, the President of the United States. The Australian Prime Minister had concurred with the strategy adopted by ISAF and subordinated itself to the operational control of ISAF. The Australian JTF headquarters in the UAE was physically isolated from ISAF, and did not exercise any influence inside ISAF apart from its ability to veto ADF operations under national caveats. While the operational approaches of the MRTF and SOTG were admirable, it did not constitute operational art due to the lack of interaction with strategic policy.

Operation Slipper in 2009 provides an example of the ADF contributing forces as a junior partner in a coalition operation. The ADF's commitment to Afghanistan did not have any recognizable strategic objectives other than maintaining commitment to the ANZUS treaty, an objective that did not require any specific tactical actions. The Australian Government conceded its strategic interests to the US strategic interests and concurred with the ISAF objectives. As such the ADF did not practice operational art. The ADF elements committed to Operation Slipper used tools and techniques of campaign planning to conduct their tactical actions but these campaigns developed without any ADF strategic objectives.

⁹⁷ This description of the mission approval process is from the author's personal experience as a member of the SOTG in 2009.

Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this section is to conduct the structured focused comparison of the East Timor and Afghanistan case studies. The comparison of these two case studies will demonstrate trends in the ADF's use of operational art. The findings will review the research questions and summarize the results for both case studies. The analysis portion will review the three hypotheses to determine if the available evidence supported, did not support, or provided a mixed finding.

The first question is: what was the ADFs concept of operational art at the time? In both case studies the doctrinal definition of operational art was the same. It was defined as “the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organization, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major operations.”⁹⁸ What differed between the two case studies was the underpinning warfighting theoretical approach. In 1999, this was founded on a manoeuvre warfare foundation, incorporating the theories of William S. Lind and John Boyd. By 2009, this had been replaced by MDM, derived from the concepts of NCW and EBO.⁹⁹

The second question is: what were the strategic objectives and were they achieved? In East Timor the objectives included the three objectives from UNSCR 1264. Restore peace and security in East Timor, Secondly, protect and support UNAMET in carrying out its tasks, and facilitate humanitarian assistance operations.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, INTERFET needed to achieve the Australian strategic objective, which was to maintain good relations with Indonesia and support Indonesia's position as a strong and stable state. All of these objectives were achieved. In 2009, The ADF's strategic objectives in Afghanistan were to deny Afghanistan as a global terrorist base of operations and maintain of the ANZUS alliance that underpins Australia's security. The first objective was not

⁹⁸ Department of Defence, *Joint Operations for the 21st Century* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Printing Service, 2007), 20.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1264 (1999).

achieved but the second objective was successfully accomplished. The first objective; denial of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations was not an achievable objective, and reflected the absence of unique Australian strategic objectives.

The third question is: what was the operational approach used? In East Timor the operational approach employed a four phase campaign plan that linked decisive points to achieve objectives in a logical method. This operational approach reflected the components of operational art that were contained within the joint ADF doctrine at the time. In Afghanistan, the operational approach centered upon providing forces to ISAF, which was achieved in four components: the MRTF conducting counterinsurgency, the SOTG conducting counter-terrorism, augmentation of wider ISAF capabilities, and the national support component. Within these individual components existed operational approaches to achieve tactical objectives, but these objectives were produced by ISAF and not the Australian JTF. In effect, there was no operational approach outside of providing forces to ISAF.

The final question is: how was operational art applied? In East Timor, operational art was conducted by the JTF commander, Major General Cosgrove. It was at headquarters INTERFET where the interaction occurred between the strategic policy makers and tactical force commander. Operational art was applied through direct daily dialogue between Cosgrove and the CDF which established and continuously reviewed strategic objectives. Cosgrove was then able to apply the components of operational art to synchronize the tactical actions of INTERFET. In the second case study, it is difficult to demonstrate that the ADF practices operational art. The ADF's only real strategic objective was to contribute to the ISAF mission. Australia subordinated its strategic objectives to ISAF, along with responsibility for operational art.

The first hypothesis is that when the ADF operates in a unilateral or lead nation function, it uses operational art, the evidence supports this hypothesis. In East Timor, Australia took on a lead nation role. This was a significant and challenging task for the ADF and there is plenty of evidence

of the difficulties it faced, especially in force projection and sustainment. However, there was obvious operational art occurring, and the achievement of all strategic objectives demonstrates that the operational art was effective. This case study highlights Dickson's findings that operational art "does not depend upon the familiar grand scale of forces, area or intensity with which it is normally associated."¹⁰¹ INTERFET forces peaked at 5000 troops and were isolated to a peninsula that was 150 miles long and 45 miles wide at its widest point. This would indicate that operational art does not need to be viewed as a level of war and therefore is not dependent upon size of the force. This case study also found a differing result to Evans' journal article, *The Closing of the Australian Military Mind: The ADF and Operational Art*. Evans theorized that success in East Timor was the result of good tactical action but in spite of poor operational art.¹⁰² The crux of Evans' critique of operational art in East Timor is the decision to exercise command directly from the CDF to the Commander INTERFET, cutting out headquarters Australian Theater. This research finds that it was this direct dialogue between the strategic level and tactical command that probably contributed to what was highly effective operational art by Major General Cosgrove.

The second hypothesis is: that when operating as a junior alliance partner operational art is not used. The evidence provides a mixed result to this hypothesis. From the point of view of the ADF, operational art was not employed. Operational art was conducted at ISAF, however the strategic objectives pursued by ISAF were not specifically Australian. The Prime Minister did clearly endorse these objectives, but beyond that the ADF was not responsible for the ISAF campaign planning. This example supports Evans' thesis that Australia has a tradition of junior partner commitments to military operations and as such, the ADF focuses on tactical actions and abdicates operational art to the senior partner. This indicates that operational art is not a

¹⁰¹ Dickson, 50.

¹⁰² Evans, "The Closing of the Australian Military Mind: The ADF and Operational Art," 105.

requirement for the ADF when participating as a junior partner in an alliance. This is similar to contributing nations within INTERFET such as the United Kingdom, United States and New Zealand that did not practice operational art, but concurred with the strategic objectives set for INTERFET by the UN and Australian Government.

In the case of Afghanistan there were other potential methods that the Australian Government could have pursued in order to practice operational art more directly or at least influence. The ADF could have contributed a larger force and taken on the responsibility for all operations in Uruzgan Province. An option the Prime Minister dismissed in 2009, but was later reviewed and implemented in 2012.¹⁰³ Additionally, the national command component of Australia's commitment could have been embedded within ISAF, providing a senior representative to actively participate in the campaign planning and design. Any nation that contributes to a campaign as a junior partner has only three primary options with respect to pursuing strategic objectives. First, it can concur with the lead nation's objectives and therefore support the campaign as developed by the lead nation, as was the case for Australia in Afghanistan in 2009. Secondly, it can attempt to negotiate the strategic objectives with the lead nation in order to change them. Third, it disagrees with the lead nation and withdraws its contribution. Ultimately, the two case studies reviewed in this research indicate that in any military campaign, it will be the lead nation that undertakes the operational art and so long as the *Australian Defence White Paper* specifies the ADF is required to lead regional military contingency operations, the ADF will require the skills and resources to practice operational art.

The third hypothesis is that the ADF applies the processes and methodologies associated with operational art even when its tactical actions are not linking to strategic objectives. The evidence supports this hypothesis. The case study of Operation Slipper demonstrates that even in

¹⁰³ Kevin Rudd, "Troop Deployment in Afghanistan; COAG; Welfare; Tax Bonus Payments."

the absence of achievable strategic objectives, ADF elements used the tools of design and planning to develop their own operational approaches. The MRTF developed a counterinsurgency approach that had lines of effort, decisive points and operational objectives. Likewise the SOTG pursued a counter-terrorist campaign plan in pursuit of operational objectives. These findings demonstrate the intangible nature of operational art as described by Huba Wass de Czege in his article *Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is Not a Level of War*. Wass de Czege argued that operational art is not as clear and definable as a level of war, instead it is a cognitive process that is not as tangible.¹⁰⁴ The results of this research leads the author to describe operational art as an equation with one side being the process of developing policy and articulating strategic objectives and the other side of the equation is the planning and synchronisation of tactical action. Using this analogy, the Operation Slipper case study demonstrates the lack of operational art as there was no tangible strategic objectives for the ADF Afghanistan. This did not exclude the other half of the equation from being present. The tactical actions were carefully designed and planned but not to Australian strategic objectives.

The purpose of this research was to examine the suitability of Australia's definition and use of operational art given the requirements placed on the ADF in the 2016 Defence White Paper. This research conducted a structured focused case study analysis to examine three key hypothesis to demonstrate the applicability and relevance of operational art. Through reviewing the two case studies of Operation Stabilise, the intervention in East Timor in 1999 and Operation Slipper, the ADF contribution to operations in Afghanistan in 2009. This research supports the requirement for operational art in the ADF, finding that when the ADF is required to act unilaterally or as lead

¹⁰⁴ Huba Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is Not a Level of War," *Small Wars Journal*, March 14, 2011, accessed August 14, 2016, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/710-deczege.pdf>.

nation, operational art is essential, however when operating as a junior coalition partner operational art may not be required.

The 2016 Defence White Paper, specifies that the ADF is to be prepared to contribute forces to larger coalition operations as well as maintaining the capability to conduct unilateral regional operations. ADF doctrine has maintained a constant definition of operational art since its introduction in the early 1980s. “Operational art is the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organization, sequencing and direction of campaigns and major operations.”¹⁰⁵ Although both case studies occurred with a common definition and understanding of operational art, they were conducted under different warfighting philosophies. In 1999, the ADF prescribed a manoeuvre warfare theory and in 2009 this had been replaced by the MDM concept. There was no clear connection between the warfighting philosophies and the use of operational art, differing from the findings of Evans in his critique of the ADF and operational art.

The case study of Operation Stabilise in 1999 demonstrated a good example of Australian operational art that was conducted by the commander INTERFET, Major General Cosgrove. Cosgrove maintained an open dialogue with the strategic policy makers, had clear strategic objectives and designed, planned and conducted a campaign that successfully achieved those objectives. Operation Slipper in 2009 provided a contradictory example. The ADF’s commitment to Afghanistan was made with the only unique Australian strategic objective being the up keeping of the ANZUS treaty. The Australian Government conceded its strategic interests to the US strategic interests and concurred with the ISAF objectives. As such the ADF did not practice operational art. The ADF elements committed to Operation Slipper used tools and techniques of campaign planning to conduct their tactical actions but these campaigns were developed without any ADF strategic objectives.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Defence, ADDP 3.0, 1-15.

These case studies supported the hypothesis of the research. In particular, they indicated that operational art is relevant to the ADF for situations where the ADF is either the lead nation or operating unilaterally. It also indicated that operational art will not be used under the junior coalition partner circumstance. Additionally, the case study demonstrated that components of operational art will be used by the ADF in all circumstances but these components in isolation do not constitute operational art because of the lack of strategic objectives.

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