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ADAPTING AUSTRALIAN JOINT AND LAND DOCTRINE

Maj Kristian Udesen

JCSP 44

PCEMI 44

SERVICE PAPER

ÉTUDE MILITAIRE

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ADAPTING AUSTRALIAN JOINT AND LAND DOCTRINE

Maj Kristian Udesen

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Word Count: 2245

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AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to underline the context in which Australia developed its joint and land doctrine, prior to trying to adapt it for Canadian purposes. While Canada and Australia have many attributes in common, there are stark differences in their positions that necessitate a divergence in their approaches to doctrine and organization.

INTRODUCTION

2. Australia and Canada both boast an enviably stable multi-cultural society that evolved from British colonies and are now closely allied with the United States. Each is a middle power roughly similar in terms of Gross Domestic Product and population size. On the surface, Australian solutions and military doctrine should be of the utmost pertinence to Canadian force development; however, there are important differences in the Australian geopolitical and strategic outlook that must be taken into account prior to attempting to import its doctrine and force structures to the Canadian Armed Forces.

3. The discussion will compare the two countries across three relevant parts: geopolitical, strategic military and army force structure. In each of the segments, Australia will be used as a baseline followed by a detailing of the similarities and differences to Canada and the subsequent consequences on doctrine adoption.

4. The geopolitical factors considered will include regional neighbours and each country's security relationship with the United States of America. The strategic military section will contrast the Australian 2016 Defence White Paper and Canada's comparable document, "Strong, Secure and Engaged" (SSE). This section will articulate the direction and focus each country's civilian government has placed on its military. The last part in the discussion will demonstrate the impact of the geopolitical and strategic military goals on each of the army's force structure. On the Australian side, Plan BEERSHEBA, the modernization and the restructuring of the Australian Army, will be addressed along with Canada's own evolved army structure.

5. The paper will establish that there exist important differences in the land and joint force doctrine development in each country. Once some of the dissonance between both countries' doctrinal context have been established, the paper will recommend what utility might be garnered from the Australian models and what pitfalls should be avoided when attempting to apply Australian lessons.

6. The document seeks to establish an overall baseline context by which to judge incorporating Australian doctrine into Canadian, but is not a review or a comparison of specific tactical doctrine or organization.

DISCUSSION

Geopolitical

7. Australia has been described as “a regional power with too large a region to maintain its own security,” while “Canada is a regional power without a region.”¹ This geopolitical description drives much of each country’s priorities with regards to military doctrine.

8. Australia possesses a population of approximately 24.8 million, about 12 million less than Canada.² Its per capita GDP is slightly higher than Canada and its dollar is roughly on par with Canada as well. Both countries are resource exporting nations and are tied to the economic trade brought about by the stability provided by a United States maintained global rule-based order.

9. Whereas Canada lives in a very stable North American region dominated by the United States to its South, Australia’s region is more contested and unstable. Australia’s immediate neighbours include Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island Countries.³ These nations are not hostile, but, mostly due to poverty, have been at times unstable, which can have impacts on Australian maritime approaches and trade. Consequently, Australia realizes that its

¹ Brenden O'Connor and Srdjan Vucetic, "Another Mars-Venus divide? Why Australia said 'yes' and Canada said 'non' to involvement in the 2003 Iraq War" *Australian Journal Of International Affairs* 64, no. 5 (November 2010): 540.

² Australia, Bureau of Statistics, “Population Clock” June 2017, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/1647509ef7e25faaca2568a900154b63?OpenDocument>

³ Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Sydney, 2016), 54.

“...strategic weight, proximity and resources place high expectations on [Australia] to respond to instability or natural disasters.”⁴

10. Additionally, Australia’s location means that “the geography of the archipelago to Australia’s immediate north will always have particular significance to [Australian] security. Any conventional military threat to Australia is likely to approach through the archipelago...”⁵ The impact on Australia is that it has a defined theatre of operations from which a threat could emanate. The Northern Archipelago helps frames the environment in which capability development occurs in Australia.

11. The United States has defence treaties with both Australia and Canada, but here again location creates a different effect for each nation.⁶ An invasion of Canada or a denial of its sea-ways would constitute a direct assault on American security due to proximity. The United States would not tolerate an adversary nation sharing the world’s longest undefended border in the world with it. Defence of North America would most likely be prioritized over any overseas conflict, with the American military benefitting from short supply lines while prosecuting operations. The United States thus provides an overpowering deterrence against land invasion of Canada.

12. Australia, conversely, would surely have the United States intercede on its behalf in order to maintain the global order; however, it would not be able to count on the same level of

⁴ *Ibid*, 56.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ Office of the Historian, “The Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS Treaty), 1951” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/anzus>.

immediate support simply because of the distance of the supply lines from the American homeland. Nor could it count on the United States prioritizing the defence of Australia over itself in the event that the American homeland was to be threatened.

13. This reality forces Australia to have greater emphasis on maintaining a “military force [that is] capable of the self-reliant defence of (Australian) territory from attack or coercion by another country.”⁷ The self-reliance is up to and including local defence against a major power adversary in their maritime approaches.⁸ The increased threat of a land invasion to Australia is manifested in a much larger defence budget, and, though possessing a smaller total military, a larger army than Canada.⁹

Military Strategic

14. The Australian 2016 Defence White Paper, takes the geopolitical threat to heart. The document is structured to focus on the strategic framework explaining the “why” of Australian defence and following with “what”, or the implications of its strategic position, and finally the “how” or the means by which it will achieve its unified strategic goals.¹⁰

15. Canada’s SSE comes with many of the same themes as the Australian 2016 Defence White Paper, but with a very different emphasis. Canada’s strategic aims do not frame the document at its beginning as in the Australian one, but arrive in the middle after personnel and

⁷ Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Sydney, 2016), 71.

⁸ Antony Trentini, “Manoeuvring in the Littoral: Prospects for the Australian Army’s Future Role” In *Projecting Force: The Australian Army and Maritime Strategy*, ed. Albert Palazzo et al (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2010): 19.

⁹ Note that the determination is made even after taking in to account that the Australian Aviation Brigade personnel fall under the army.

¹⁰ Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Sydney, 2016), 67.

industry initiatives.¹¹ The SSE seems to be driven more by the “how”, with its implications on domestic society in terms of personnel and industry benefits, than strategic threats.

16. SSE does follow the same categories of priorities as Australia, namely defending the nation, the region and the global order, but it is presented in a different light.¹² Domestic defence is blurry; compare the Australian priority strategic defence objective to “deter, deny and defeat attacks on or threats to Australia and its national interests, and northern approaches” with Canada’s “sovereignty well defended by a Canadian Armed Forces also ready to assist in times of natural disaster, other emergencies and search and rescue.”¹³ Defending Canada focuses more on surveillance and responding to domestic emergencies than a potential ground conflict.¹⁴

17. The ability to have land forces project regionally greatly bolsters Australia’s ability to defend its nation. In the North American Region, Canada’s defence focus does not greatly rely on the army but rather its air force commitments to NORAD.¹⁵ The effect is that the Canadian Army’s role in safe guarding Canada’s security domestically and regionally is much weaker when compared with the Australia, and Canada would never take the regional lead for defence.

18. The third priority for both countries is supporting the current rules-based global order. In this, both countries are prepared to lead contingents as well as contribute soldiers and resources.

¹¹ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017): 49–62.

¹² Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017): 59.

¹³ Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Sydney, 2016), 68; Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017), 59.

¹⁴ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017), 83.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 59.

In this priority, both Australia and Canada act very similarly in providing resources and soldiers to combating threats to global security such as terrorism.¹⁶

19. The contrast that doctrine makers in Australia and Canada have result from these geopolitical differences. Whereas Australia regards a requirement for self-reliance in its land-fighting force, arranges its forces to defend its continent and region, and then from that construct contributes to global security. Canada, meanwhile, does not view its land force as having the same weight in protecting its national borders and region. Canada is then free from being constrained to arranging a force and a doctrine to defend itself. Instead, Canada can determine whatever doctrine and organization it wants as long as it can support the global rules-based order through “contribution warfare.”¹⁷ This term means that Canada’s strategic goal is more often is to be seen to *contribute* to an alliance or coalition rather than accomplish any specific strategic military goal.¹⁸

Army Force Structure

20. The effects of the two approaches diverge in the focus of each country’s doctrine. Using the initiative titled Plan BEERSHEBA, Australia redesigned its land forces. Plan BEERSHEBA was based off of validated doctrine and an influx of personnel and resources in order to

¹⁶ M.A. Rostek, “Approaches to National Security: A Canadian-Australian Comparison,” (Occasional Paper Series, Queen’s University, 2006), 22.

¹⁷ “The force generation process (in Canada) is based largely on what is available to send, with strategic objectives linked more to the participation of the CF rather than their performance in attacking decisive points and centers of gravity to achieve a strategic outcome...” J.H. Vance, “Tactics Without Strategy or Why The Canadian Forces Do Not Campaign” In *Operational Art: Canadian Perspectives*, ed. Allan English et al (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2005), 283.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

modernize.¹⁹ It tailored its forces primarily to fight in littoral combat in its vulnerable Northern maritime approaches. To do this, however, the Australian Army had to make hard choices on its capabilities, such as initially de-mechanizing its infantry and divesting conventional airborne capability in favour of using amphibious forces to achieve strategic mobility.²⁰ These choices left the Australian Army with a coherent and viable joint force, but more focused on a defined theatre of operations.

21. Canada's geopolitical safety and preference for contribution warfare precludes it from following suit to develop a more rationalized conventional joint and land doctrine; the Canadian Army's Adaptive Dispersed Operations being well suited to counter-insurgency warfare, but somewhat lacking in a conventional context.²¹ Without a specific military land threat, the Canadian Army does not have the unity of purpose to consolidate its doctrine and force structures. An example question would be one on whether the Canadian Army should focus its resources on forward deploying coherent heavy armoured forces to Europe to counter Russian aggression, or develop a strategically mobile amphibious force for disaster relief and intervention in coastal areas, or develop lighter strategic airmobile forces for the Arctic and built-up areas? Could Canada mitigate risk to our soldiers by greatly enhancing our ability at cyber warfare and information operations while reducing our kinetic capabilities? All of these questions would require a sufficient reason to answer, as well as the time and resources to properly implement a change.

¹⁹ Australian Army, "Plan BEERSHEBA," last accessed 03 February 2018, <https://www.army.gov.au/our-future/modernisation-projects/plan-beersheba>.

²⁰ David Feeney, "Army's Future Force Structure Options: the Opposition Perspective," *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, 29 June 2015.

²¹ Walter Dorn and Michael Varey, "The Rise and Demise of the 'Three Block War'" *Canadian Military Journal* 10, no. 1 (2009), 44.

22. Australia has and is making doctrine and arranging forces based on a theatre of operations that it perceives as vital to defending its sovereignty and ensuring its region's stability. Canada does not have the same impositions and can generate whatever force it desires without worrying about its national safety.

23. Should Canada decide to define a region and consolidate its force structure, it would certainly mean shedding some capabilities in order to fully develop a coherent vision. This may not be in its interest. A broad range of capability components allows Canada to provide a myriad of contribution options to a coalition or alliance operation. Under the idea of contribution warfare, more important than Canadian Army self-reliance is its ability to interoperate with our allies and gain a "seat at the table" no matter what the force capability make-up is.

24. As almost any coalition that Canada would belong to would have American forces in a main role. Couple that with Canada's reliance on the United States for domestic and regional security, and Canada's primary concern should be how best to operate with the American military.

CONCLUSION

25. Geopolitical considerations cause Australia, more than Canada, to be more focused on land and joint forces to ensure national and regional security. Australia has developed doctrine focused on operating in the archipelago to their north in order to protect their vital maritime routes.

26. The Australian Army modernization has included a massive reorganization, new doctrine and new people and resources. It has gained coherence in its land force, but had to divest certain capabilities in order to optimize their amphibious littoral operations.

27. Canada does not perceive any direct land threat to itself. Its main uses of land forces are in domestic support and supporting global rules-based order through contributions to coalitions and alliances. It currently has a broad range of land capabilities, but ones that are not rationalized under one effective employment strategy. Although it means that the Canadian Army is more reliant on allies to fill gaps, it does allow more choice in deciding what capability components to contribute to coalition and alliance task forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

28. Australian littoral and amphibious doctrine would have great value to Canada should it begin to develop that capability. If Canada ever decides on an amphibious capability, it would face similar problems of scale and capacity as Australia.

29. The Canadian Army should maintain its preference for a broad range of capabilities components over a rationalized, more theatre focused force. Ensuring a breadth of capabilities, as long as they are fully interoperable with the United States military, will maximize our ability to practice contribution warfare.

30. Canada should pay close attention to the successful manner in which the Australian Army has designed and implemented its reformation. A review of Australia's process of validating,

costing, resourcing and executing its Plan BEERSHEBA provides a good roadmap for Canada should it require a similar restructuring and modernizing of its land forces and doctrine.

31. In the absence of a direct land threat, Canada should seek to parallel American doctrine as much as possible to ensure interoperability and its value when contributing forces. The example of Australia's land force rationalization should only be followed if the Canadian Army is given the strategic requirement, theatre of operations and sufficient resources to ensure that the restructuring is warranted and effective.

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