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UNDERSTANDING MARITIME DOCTRINE

- Maritime doctrine contains the principles by which maritime forces guide their actions in support of national objectives.
- Maritime doctrine is derived from hard-won national and international experience.
- Comprehensive maritime doctrine is a key element of RAN capability.

THE PURPOSES OF MARITIME DOCTRINE

The Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) mission is to:

- be able to fight and win in the maritime environment as an element of a joint or combined force;
- assist in maintaining Australia's sovereignty; and
- contribute to the security of our region.

The RAN is developed, structured, trained and supported to deliver combat power at and from the sea. The Navy also needs to balance the maintenance of its combat preparedness with the many requirements of peacetime operations and future capability development. The successful fulfilment of every one of these elements depends upon comprehensive and thoroughly understood maritime doctrine. As the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) keystone document on the subject states:

'Military doctrine helps planners and commanders approach stressful, dangerous, chaotic and unfamiliar situations with a clarity of thought based on rigorous analysis, and comprehensive knowledge of hard-won lessons from human history and national military experience'.¹

The ADF's definition of military doctrine is:

'...the body of thought on the nature, role and conduct of armed conflict...[which] contains, among other things, the fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of national objectives'.²

¹ ADFP-D—*Doctrine* p. 1-1.

² *ibid.*

Military doctrine provides a basis for action founded in knowledge. Maritime doctrine is that component of military doctrine which sustains the employment of armed forces at and from the sea. This definition recognises the inherently joint nature of maritime operations and the fact that operations at or over the sea are only of utility so far as they can affect the fundamental outcome of a campaign, whether directly or indirectly.

This book, RAN Doctrine 1—*Australian Maritime Doctrine* explains the key concepts for the conduct of maritime operations. This chapter explains the nature and the importance of maritime doctrine.

THE ORIGINS OF AUSTRALIAN MARITIME DOCTRINE

One of the principal themes of the RAN's experience of doctrine is that its origins have been largely international for most of its history. As a smaller navy, and one which had its roots in the Royal Navy and which has since frequently operated as part of alliance forces, it is impossible to expect the RAN to develop its doctrine wholly from first principles. Rather more than air forces and considerably more than armies, almost all modern navies operate from a very large base of shared international doctrine, allowing a level of mutual understanding that also manifests itself at much higher levels of command. All of Australia's allies at sea operate with *Allied Tactical Publication 1* as a standard reference when manoeuvring and communicating with each other. Most friendly navies have access to earlier but still valid versions of the same document, while those that do not are able to utilise an expurgated version which allows any



Replenishment at sea is a skill shared by many navies

warship to communicate and manoeuvre safely with another. Replenishment at sea is also a generally shared skill that is the result of the extensive development, practice and dissemination of agreed allied procedures over the last half century. Australian warships can and have replenished under way with or from those of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia, as well as with those of Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom. There are more than twenty other navies with which such operations either have been or could safely be conducted at little or no notice.³ Thus, Australian maritime doctrinal development is a synthesis—not just in a joint sense—of national effort with that derived not only from the country's major allies but a wide range of other sources.

A second theme of maritime doctrine is one of complexity. Many different elements go to make up the fundamental components of maritime doctrine, components which include many factors not apparently related to warfighting. These range widely. One example is that there are logistic and maintenance procedures which combine to determine whether ships are capable of extended activities at considerable ranges from their bases or whether they must confine themselves to coastal operations. Another is that the RAN ascribes to and has developed for its own use the concepts of ship navigation and pilotage laid down within the Royal Navy's Manuals of Navigation. These give it a capacity for operations in shallow water and within the littoral generally that some other naval forces might hesitate to attempt. Thus, an activity related ostensibly to the safe passage of ships has direct implications for the Navy's combat potential in a key environment.

The Levels of Maritime Doctrine

ADF doctrine is a hierarchy of *keystone doctrine*, *philosophical doctrine*, *application doctrine* and *procedural doctrine*. Although these different levels of doctrine bear some relation to the levels of command—strategic, operational and tactical—the point at which one level is subsumed by another is rarely clear. That maritime warfare does not itself readily allow for clear distinctions between the levels of command complicates the issue further. Elements of procedural doctrine can have fundamental implications for every other level, just as changes in philosophical doctrine will have ramifications elsewhere.

Maritime Application and Procedural Doctrine

Application and *procedural* doctrine, which relate to the operational and tactical levels and the detailed mechanics of operations at sea, have a long professional history,

³ This includes the member navies of NATO, South Korea, Japan, South Africa and a number of Middle Eastern and South American states.

starting with the Royal Navy's *Fighting Instructions* of 1672. The RAN employed the modern British versions of *Fighting Instructions* as a primary doctrinal source for the operational and tactical levels of warfare until well into the 1970s. Other important sources of guidance for operations and tactics were found in a range of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), United States Navy (USN) and Allied publications to which the RAN had access. In the case of operations with the United States under ANZUS and with Singapore and Malaysia under the Five Power Defence Arrangement, considerable effort went into the development of mutually agreed procedures and tactics, effort validated by the regular exercises in which the various nations participated and which provided the basis for combined operations in the event of contingencies.

When Australia's strategic situation demanded a more self-reliant approach, the need for guidance tailored to the Australian circumstance was met at the tactical level by the development of *Australian Fleet Tactical Instructions*. Although this remained under the editorial guidance of the RAN's Maritime Command, it transmuted in 1994 into *Australian Maritime Tactical Instructions*, thereby recognising the inherently joint nature of all maritime operations and the extent to which it received Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Army input. The issue of the *Australian Defence Force Publication (ADFP)* series, notably ADFP 6—*Operations* and ADFP 6 Supplement 1—*Maritime Operations* has created important linkages at the operational level, which will be completed by the forthcoming RAN Doctrine 2—*Australian Maritime Warfare*.



The *Collins* class submarines will be an important component of the ADF's strike and interdiction capabilities

Higher Level Maritime Doctrine

Keystone and *philosophical* doctrine have not enjoyed so long a formal existence as *application* and *procedural* doctrine but they are important in many ways. Higher level doctrine has educational purposes in addition to its direct utility for the employment of military force. It not only serves to educate and motivate personnel and improve their understanding of the roles and functions of their services, but can be used to inform those within government and the wider community of the ways in which military force can be applied by the nation in exercising its national power.

The first comprehensive analyses of maritime strategic doctrine in the western world date to the late nineteenth century and the work of historians and commentators such as the British Vice Admiral Philip Colomb and the American Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan. Further assessments in Britain included Sir Julian Corbett's *Principles of Maritime Strategy* and the works of Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, while later in the century there were increasingly sophisticated contributions from France in the work of Admiral Raoul Castex in the 1930s and from the Soviet Union by Admiral Gorshkov in the 1970s. These joined continuing efforts by American analysts such as Rear Admiral J.C. Wylie and Admiral Stansfield Turner to define maritime strategic concepts and match them to contemporary requirements. The post-war British *Naval War Manual* (the original BR 1806, issued in 1948, 1958 and 1969) was the principal source of higher level doctrine for many of the Commonwealth navies, including the RAN, in the period after World War II.

The body of higher level maritime strategic work has been extended further by contemporary thinkers and writers from Britain such as Professors Ken Booth, Colin Gray, Eric Grove and Geoffrey Till, and Rear Admiral Richard Hill. Within this country, Commodores Alan Robertson and Vernon Parker did pioneering work in the 1970s. More recently, Commodores Sam Bateman and Jack McCaffrie and Commander Dick Sherwood, partly through the mechanism of the RAN's Maritime Studies Program (now the Sea Power Centre) have done much to develop and enunciate Australian maritime strategic concepts and ideas.

RAN Doctrine 1—*Australian Maritime Doctrine* draws on all these sources and many others as the keystone doctrinal publication for the RAN. It stands at the summit of naval doctrinal effort and fits alongside such publications as Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) 1—*The Fundamentals of Land Warfare* and Australian Air Publication (AAP) 1000—*The Air Power Manual*, as well as the major elements of the *Australian Defence Force Publication* series. This book is designed to be read not only by those in the RAN and other elements of the ADF who have direct professional concern with it, but by all those with an interest in and a concern for the issues of Australian security.