

# Australian Defence Force JOURNAL

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## CONTENTS

<b>CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Future of War Debate in Australia: Why has there not been one? Has the need for one now arrived?</b>	<b>5</b>
Dr Albert Palazzo, Department of Defence	
<b>The Japanese Soryu-class Submarine: its potential to meet Australia's requirement</b>	<b>21</b>
Colonel Mick Ryan, AM, Australian Army	
<b>US Alliances in the Asia-Pacific</b>	<b>34</b>
Commander Boonlert Srihachan, Royal Thai Navy	
<b>'Drones' or 'Smart' Unmanned Aerial Vehicles?</b>	<b>46</b>
Pilot Officer Gary Martinic, Australian Air Force Cadets	
<b>Revitalising 'Team US-Australia': Australia's greatest strategic challenge</b>	<b>55</b>
Major Ben McLennan, Australian Army	
<b>Australian Influence in the South Pacific</b>	<b>66</b>
Colonel Peter Brown, OBE, British Army	
<b>Towards an Expeditionary Army</b>	<b>79</b>
Lieutenant Colonel Ian D. Langford, DSC, Australian Army	
<b>A Joint Training Framework for an Amphibious Capability in the ADF</b>	<b>87</b>
Captain Scott Holmes, Australian Army	
<b>OPINION PIECE</b>	
<b>Increasing Competition in the South China Sea – need for a new game plan</b>	<b>98</b>
Commodore Sam Bateman, RAN (Retd)	
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	<b>101</b>



## Chairman's comments

Welcome to Issue No. 189 of the *Australian Defence Force Journal*.

For this edition, the Board again had before it a pleasing selection of articles, numbering more than double that needed for a normal issue. While it meant deferring several very worthwhile articles to the February/March 2013 issue, the Board decided to incorporate in this edition a selection of articles that should be of particular interest to our readers in the lead-up to the release of the 2013 Defence White Paper.

The first is a thought-provoking and somewhat controversial article by Dr Albert Palazzo. When it was published on-line as a Land Warfare Studies Centre working paper in late August, it attracted some media attention, including the claim that it was further evidence of 'political pressure and Defence culture ... stifling debate and putting national security and the success of the ADF at risk' (*The Australian*, 23 August 2012).

While there a number of matters in Dr Palazzo's article that Defence would not agree with, the Chief of Army has specifically stated that he refutes the assertion that 'directions emanating from the office of the Minister for Defence have imposed stringent message alignment requirements on all staff' (with the obvious exception of issues relating to national security considerations). Indeed, the Chief of Army has noted that the publishing of this work (by the Land Warfare Studies Centre and now the *ADF Journal*), 'confirms a willingness to allow potentially contentious views to be aired' and that 'its real value will be in the subsequent debate and dialogue that it is likely to generate'.

On that note, I would take this opportunity to reaffirm that the purpose of the *Journal* is to stimulate professional discussion and to encourage people both within and outside of Defence to contribute to the 'contest of ideas'. One of the reasons that the *Journal* is published under the auspices of the Australian Defence College is to foster its links with the professional military education environment, where we can contest professional concepts and ideas in a creative and 'safe' environment, and where we can write and be published even when we diverge from what might be perceived as the 'agreed' line.

In that regard, I am heartened by the second article—which has been awarded the 'best article' prize in this issue—by Colonel Mick Ryan on the potential of Japan's Soryu-class submarine to meet Australia's future submarine requirement. It is somewhat controversial in that it questions why this submarine was not included in the initial assessment of existing 'off-the-shelf' designs. Some may also be rather surprised that an Army officer is writing on a subject that traditionally would have been considered the purview of the RAN.

The following article by Commander Boonlert Srihachan of the Royal Thai Navy, on US alliances in the Asia-Pacific, was considered very favourably by the Board and effectively awarded 'runner-up' to the best article. It is pleasing that overseas officers are contributing to the *Journal* and, in this case, bringing particularly well-informed perspectives on regional security developments.

We then have five further articles on various geo-strategic and capability issues, concluding with an opinion piece on territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Of particular mention is the article by Pilot Officer Gary Martinic of the Australian Air Force Cadets on unmanned aerial vehicles, both in terms of its analysis and key messages, but also because it is encouraging and commendable that such relatively junior officers are writing for the *Journal*.

Finally, and as usual, we have a selection of book reviews, with an additional number in the on-line version. We remain keen to hear from readers wishing to join the list of reviewers, who are sent books provided to the Editor by publishers. If you are interested, please provide your contact details and area of interest to the Editor at [publications@defence.adc.edu.au](mailto:publications@defence.adc.edu.au)

As mentioned, our next edition will be February/March 2013. It will be a 'general' issue and contributions should be submitted to the Editor, at the email address above, by early December. Submission guidelines are on the *Journal* website [www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au](http://www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au)

I hope you enjoy this edition and I would encourage your contribution to future issues.

**Craig Orme, AM, CSC**  
Major General  
Commander, Australian Defence College  
Chairman of the Australian Defence Force Journal Board

# The Future of War Debate in Australia: Why has there not been one? Has the need for one now arrived?<sup>1</sup>

Dr Albert Palazzo, Department of Defence

## Introduction

Over the past several years, members of the US military and defence communities have participated in a robust, vibrant, sometimes painful but ultimately healthy debate over the changing character of war and the organisation, equipment and doctrine that the US Army requires to meet the challenges of future conflict. This has not been the first time that the US has shaped the future of its military in public view. The debates on the ‘revolution in military affairs’ in the 1990s and the implementation of rotary wing aviation in the 1950s provide other ready examples.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as the US Army wrestles diligently with fundamental questions about how it should prepare to fight wars of the future, the primary response to these same questions from within the Australian Army has been one of silence.

The lack of debate within the Australian Army is odd and worrying. After all, self-examination is one of the hallmarks of military professionalism and reflection is a key enabler when interpreting recent operations and predicting future requirements. The Australian Army is not without recent operational experience to draw from as a starting point for such a debate. The opposite is true; the last decade has been among the force’s busiest. The Australian Army has been a witness—if not accessory—to the US triumphs and tragedies in Iraq and Afghanistan, while operations in Timor Leste and elsewhere in the region add a further layer of experience. As is the case for their US counterparts, there is no doubt that members of the Australian Army have the operational experience needed to underpin a reflection on the art of war and to think on its future course.<sup>3</sup>

This article will explore the reasons for the lack of debate within the Australian Army on the future character of war. In doing so it will summarise the scope of the US debate in order to contrast it with the absence of a robust and open deliberation of this subject within this country. It will speculate on what cultural, bureaucratic and operational factors inhibit debate by the members of the Australian Army and suggest how these impediments might be overcome. Lastly, this article will highlight why such a debate is urgently needed by the Australian Army as its members adjust to a post-Afghanistan role, while facing emerging challenges to the nation’s strategic and operational environments.

While the article’s focus is on the Army, its conclusions could apply equally to the RAN and RAAF, and to the ADF as a whole. It appears that the entire Australian Defence organisation suffers from a deep-seated fear of allowing its members to engage in debate on the critical issues that affect the ADF’s future and the nation’s security. This is a policy which in the end is foolhardy, counterproductive and fiscally wasteful—and which should be changed. It is the opposite of what needs to be done; it was by openly encouraging debate, for example, that after its defeat in the First World War the German Army correctly identified and responded

to the changing character of war.<sup>4</sup> It is hoped that this article will spur the Australian Defence organisation to accept the necessity for debate in the US style and, in doing so, commit itself to facilitating the free and open sharing of ideas and opinions by its members.

## The US future of war debate

The most recent future of war debate in the US was held in public view, beyond the Pentagon's control, and was representative of the best traditions of that nation's belief in free speech and the exchange of ideas. It was conducted unchecked by senior officers and took place in widely available publications, including the online *Small Wars Journal*, the *Armed Forces Journal*, and the National Defense University's *Joint Forces Quarterly*, as well as in academic journals and books, and in other outlets such as online forums. In 2010, the US Army's Strategic Studies Institute held a public conference on the theme of 'war in the 21st century'. Its director described the issue as the most pressing question facing the international defence community.<sup>5</sup> The debate has involved serving and retired officers, usually with recent operational experience, as well as academics, security thinkers and defence bureaucrats. No-one has been afraid to challenge existing orthodoxies. Of additional significance has been that the debate has not been top-down driven. Rather, many of its participants have been mid-career officers whose positions of institutional influence still lay in their future.<sup>6</sup>

The debate has coalesced around the personalities of two individuals, Lieutenant Colonel John A. Nagl (Retd) and Colonel Gian P. Gentile. Both are smart, experienced combat veterans who have found themselves on the opposite sides of the issue. They are well educated and have PhDs from important universities. Nagl's is from Oxford and his thesis was published as *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: counterinsurgency lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*.<sup>7</sup> He was part of the writing team for the US Army/US Marine Corps' counterinsurgency manual (FM3-24), for which he wrote the foreword.<sup>8</sup> Gentile's PhD is from Stanford University and he too has had his thesis published.<sup>9</sup> The two have also held professorships at the US Military Academy.

Nagl and Gentile have squared off in the pages of *Joint Forces Quarterly* on more than one occasion and have been supported by allies or challenged by opponents elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> For example, *Small Wars Journal* hosted a 'point-counterpoint' discussion in response to Nagl and Gentile having published articles of opposing view in *Joint Forces Quarterly*.<sup>11</sup> This spawned a lengthy and frank debate on the *Small Wars Journal* website.<sup>12</sup> At its height, neither side showed any sign of shrinking away from the argument and at times hard feelings must have resulted, even if temporary. As one commentator noted, both men deserved great credit for their role in helping to shape the future of the US military.<sup>13</sup>

In brief, Nagl advocated that the future character of war would be asymmetric, with modern Western military organisations having to separate insurgents from the population, in complex terrain, in full view of the international media. He foresaw the future role of the US Army to be one of stabilisation and state building, with a strong element of social engineering. Implicit in Nagl's argument was a commitment to a vast military enterprise lasting decades, during which the US would remake targeted countries into a form in which the international forces of destabilisation would find little refuge.

Gentile, by contrast, feared that the US Army was at risk of becoming a constabulary force that knew how to build nations in the US image but possessed little capacity for conventional warfighting. Gentile was also unconvinced of Nagl's ability to forecast the future, and held serious concerns over force specialisation in a world in which there was a not insignificant risk of conflict resuming on the Korean Peninsula, the use of force to settle the 'Taiwan problem' or a clash occurring between the US and Iran. Emerging national security risks associated with the rise of China was another eventuality for which a counterinsurgency-focused force would have little utility. Gentile insisted that a single concept army would not prove to be the best choice for the future.<sup>14</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich divided those participating in the debate into two camps: 'crusaders' (Nagl) and 'conservatives' (Gentile).<sup>15</sup> 'Crusaders' seek to use the US defence force to remake the world, whereas 'conservatives' see a more limited role for its military power.

The intensity of the US debate on a counterinsurgency versus conventional future of war has begun to ebb, although a compelling case has been made for it to continue.<sup>16</sup> At times, Nagl's 'crusader' camp seemed to be ahead on points but, more recently, it has appeared that the 'conservatives' have come to the fore. The move by General David Petraeus, a counterinsurgency guru, to the Central Intelligence Agency may be suggestive of an institutional decision for a more conventional war future. Reinforcing this outcome would be the US Government's pledge to refocus its security primacy on the Asia-Pacific and to meet the challenge of a rising China.

Perhaps a 'conservative' victory would always have been the debate's outcome. As Colin Gray has pointed out, a long-term shift in the US Army's capabilities from regular to irregular war would have required the organisation to overcome deep cultural preferences.<sup>17</sup> Such a fundamental change may not have been possible, at least not without concerted pressure from both the defence and political hierarchies.

That the debate did not result in significant change—or at least it appears not to have so far—in the US Army's posture is immaterial to this discussion. It is the organisation's willingness to engage in honest self-reflection that is important. The Nagl-Gentile debate enabled the organisation to make sense of a decade of war and to reflect on which aspects of that experience were relevant for the future and which were not. The debate also encouraged the organisation to examine its experiences from the perspective of future requirements and to address issues of core values. War is not a static enterprise. It is only by bringing its study into the open that a military organisation can begin to understand its changing character.

### **Why has there not been a future character of war debate in Australia?**

There may be a temptation to dismiss the lack of a future character of war debate in Australia as a consequence of the Army's small size, especially relative to that of the US Army. It is worth asking if a middle power such as Australia can realistically discern and shape the future character of war on the international stage, especially when a great power struggles with this task. However, size should never be a prohibition on intellectual curiosity. The world is a potentially hostile place for all nations, and a country's relative size does not exempt the members of its defence force from treating their profession with the intellectual seriousness it deserves.

There is a related argument that the Australian Army's small size relative to that of the US Army means that everyone knows everyone, so a formal debate on emerging issues is not needed. This too is not a satisfying excuse. Heated discussions around a barbecue are a good way for thinking officers to blow off steam at the difficulties they face in challenging the force's orthodoxies but have no enduring value if such ideas do not reach a forum in which they can be challenged and scrutinised by others, including outsiders. Organisational inculcation of new ideas will not occur without dissemination throughout the organisation and beyond.<sup>18</sup>

A second tempting explanation for the failure of Australian Army members to challenge the existing orthodoxy is that the US debate was concerned with more than just the future character of war. There is an element of truth in this as the US debate does contain a parochial subtext on the utility of military power in the achievement of national aims. In advocating for or objecting to its transformation into a primarily counterinsurgency force, those debating the US Army's future were also questioning the nature of US grand strategy—the 'hows' and 'whys' of American behaviour on the world stage.<sup>19</sup> Stripped of its military terminology, a strong element of the Nagl-Gentile debate was actually about the purpose of the US in the world.<sup>20</sup>

Yet the underlying scope of the US-based debate does not lessen the importance of holding an Australian-based one—one that defines a future concept of war within an Australian context. Undoubtedly there will be overlap between the two. But only Australian military professionals and their civilian counterparts can debate the institution's own future and decide how it integrates into the nation's particular strategic situation, as well as the broader sweep of the evolving art of war. Thus debate on the future character of war must occur in Australia. But the question remains: why has it not? There are several reasons for this state of affairs and they can be characterised as cultural, bureaucratic and operational impediments. It is to their explanation that this analysis will now turn.

### ***Cultural impediments***

One of the predictors of the richness of any debate is the intellectual capacity of its participants. As noted before, Nagl and Gentile both hold PhDs from prestigious universities. To this list could be added Petraeus, who has a PhD from Princeton University. Officers with such backgrounds have the credibility and training to weather the sometimes brutal thrust and parry of a challenging and robust debate. They also have the knowledge and confidence to comment outside their Service cultures and to engage with thinkers from the broader defence and academic communities.

Yet it is all too easy to be dazzled by such credentials, and it should be recognised that most US officers do not have such high-level degrees, nor need they. Moreover, soldier scholars are not unknown in the Australian Army. One could point to a number of serving and former soldiers who have been awarded a PhD and some of these have gone on to distinguished careers in academia. A number of Australian officers have excelled at the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies and the US Marine Corps School of Advanced Warfighting, while the Army has allowed a couple of senior officers to attend the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington DC. Thus the force does possess a cadre of thinking soldiers.



Such opportunities as these do allow their recipients to think deeply about the profession of arms in a challenging intellectual environment. The point is that the existence of officers in possession of higher degrees is not what enables a debate to take place. An educated, intelligent and curious officer corps is important but such personnel must work within a welcoming cultural framework that creates a conducive environment for the development of challenging ideas and their frank debate. Unfortunately, such an environment does not currently exist in the Department of Defence. Admittedly, this state of affairs is not limited to Army or the ADF. Rather, it is a manifestation of the sense of anti-intellectualism that pervades the broader Australian society.

Australians tend to favour the 'happy larrikin' over the deep thinker. Within the defence realm this takes the form of a preference for 'doers' over 'thinkers' or, as one officer observed, the Army has a cultural fixation on delivering outputs rather than achieving outcomes.<sup>21</sup> Planning is a forte of military organisations but all too often the plan is seen as the end-point. What is really important is the context in which the plan sits and the goals it hopes to achieve. Being a 'thinker' requires a different intellectual skill-set, a breadth of knowledge, the ability to see nuances and shades of grey, and a willingness to challenge. The ADF is by no means unique in this weakness. For example, Huba Wass de Czege has commented that the US Army spends far too little time trying to understand a problem before trying to solve it, usually with unfortunate results.<sup>22</sup>

Periodically, the Army has launched initiatives for the promotion of study but all of these have quickly fallen away, unable to find a fertile patch in the force's culture in which to flourish. For example, towards the end of his tenure as Chief of the General Staff (the Chief of Army in today's parlance) Lieutenant General John Coates established an essay-writing program in military history, the discipline most vital in the education of a military professional.<sup>23</sup> Within weeks of his retirement, another general made sure the idea met a swift death. For this other general, 'intellectuals' and 'book learning' were terms of contempt.<sup>24</sup>

Intellectualism is an undervalued trait in the Australian Army, despite the presence of a small cadre of serving and retired 'soldier scholars'. It should be pointed out that the very existence of these soldier scholars was a result of their own efforts; they are not the product of institutional want and the Army does not have a program to support high-level research outside of military schools. At best, it is an ad hoc approach, with little institutional support beyond that of happenstance. This was also the case for the two senior officers who attended Johns Hopkins, as mentioned earlier.

Unfortunately, more recent efforts by other officers to secure support for participation in this program have failed; it appears that the Army's interest has proven all too brief. The organisation responsible for shaping the career of intellectually minded officers is the Directorate of Career Management (DoCM). This agency is in an unenviable position. In the absence of institutional direction—and funding—expediency wins out, with priority given to putting the best officers into billets with immediate needs, rather than looking to the long-term benefit of a better-educated individual. DoCM, which would be well-placed to drive an advanced education program, must respond to institutional priorities which continue to favour doers over thinkers and the practical over the conceptual.

The ability to perform a task is certainly an important part of being a soldier. But getting on with the job should not take second place to being able to put the job within the context of,

for example, why it is being done, how it will contribute to the goal and what might be the second-order consequences. One approach to accomplishing the Army's mission leads to task-focused work, the other to thinking-focused work. The Australian Army needs to empower the latter so that it is as valued as the former. If the Army is to become an organisation which facilitates the debating of ideas, it will need to attach greater importance to conceptual thinking and reallocate resources accordingly.<sup>25</sup> It will need to become more than an output-driven organisation.

### ***Bureaucratic impediments***

If culture serves as one form of impediment to debate, institutional barriers provide another. The Department of Defence has set in place policies that discourage access to forums in which personnel could participate in or hold debates. In fact, the institutional preference is to have full control of ideas and messages, particularly if they are unorthodox ones. This is accomplished through a number of internal protocols that serve to limit the exchange of ideas. For example, members of the Defence community are required to seek the approval of their chain of command prior to any public comment or the release of any images or information to organisations outside of the Department.<sup>26</sup> Control is appropriate in matters of national security but the Department of Defence's limitations on external contact go much further.

In an era when access to the internet and social media are taken for granted, and as information increasingly resides on the web, the Department of Defence continues to struggle with the idea of unfettered internet access for its members. Web-based applications that cannot be monitored, or where there is the ability to download information or participate in forums, remain prohibited.<sup>27</sup> Strangely enough, Defence even disables links to university databases from within the organisation because of difficulty in monitoring the sites that employees may investigate. Thus, ready access to the repositories of the nation's knowledge is considered too risky by those who determine or enforce the Department's information management protocols.<sup>28</sup>

Officers who have dared to publish memoirs of their operational service have encountered lengthy delays in obtaining Defence approval. Colonel Marcus Fielding, for example, served in a Coalition headquarters in Iraq and later recorded his experiences in *Red Zone Baghdad*.<sup>29</sup> After waiting for nearly 15 months for the Department to make a decision on the book's fate, Fielding was told that Defence would not allow him to publish it while he was a serving officer, a determination that made no reference to any security issues that the work may have contained. Another senior officer, Major General Jim Molan, also experienced considerable delay in obtaining permission to publish his memoir, *Running the War in Iraq*.<sup>30</sup>

It is unlikely that there was malicious intent in the prolonged struggle for approval that these officers experienced from Defence. Rather, it is more likely that the need to consider such approvals comes up so rarely that the Department does not have an established process for clearing publications authored by serving officers. This absence of process is a further indictment of the force's sense of anti-intellectualism but it also raises an additional concern. The knowledge and experience that officers such as Molan and Fielding obtained while on operations should be quickly, widely and openly disseminated throughout the ADF and elsewhere, if the organisation is to learn from its operations. Otherwise, such knowledge—obtained at such cost—will be squandered. In fact, not only should officers be encouraged—and even given time—to write about their experiences but Defence should implement procedures to expedite their publication and debate.

No individual or entity appears exempt from attempts by the Department to control the thoughts of its members. The *Australian Army Journal*, the Army's flagship publication whose mandate is to promote understanding of land warfare, has periodically been forced to fend off attempts by Defence mandarins to impose censure controls. This is despite a clear statement in every issue that the views expressed are those of the authors alone. Senior personnel are not exempt from the bureaucracy's drive to manage external expression. Past Chiefs of Army have even been asked to submit their public speeches for review, admittedly a requirement that never lasted for long, but one that the organisation deemed itself entitled to make nonetheless.

Instead of the situation getting better, it appears to be getting worse. Directions emanating from the office of the Minister of Defence have imposed stringent message alignment requirements on all staff, including the senior-most levels. It is hard to pin down exactly what the requirements are but the pervading sense is that comment that goes 'off-message' is to be avoided. The media appears to be aware of the engagement constraints under which defence thinkers labour. For example, journalist Ian McPhedran has stated that Defence now operates under a policy of censorship and its public messages are deliberately 'sugar coated'.<sup>31</sup>

Working in such an environment, it is unlikely that a serving member of the Australian Department of Defence would have the courage to write an article similar in tone to that of the US Army's Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling. In 2007, the *Armed Forces Journal* published his damning evaluation of the US political and military leadership in the lead-up to and during the waging of the 2003 Iraq War.<sup>32</sup> Although he took the US defence organisation to task, the US Department of Defense accepted that Yingling's motivation was not out of a wish to cause embarrassment or institutional harm.

Rather, what drove Yingling was his belief that something had gone seriously wrong in how the US planned and ran the Iraq war, and that these deficiencies needed to be exposed to scrutiny so that they would not happen again. His goal was to help make US national security stronger and more effective. Yingling spoke out from a desire to improve the security of his nation, a driving force that his superiors recognised and accepted. Of course, Yingling has not been alone in delivering his message but the point for the Australian Department of Defence to understand is that an insider can deliver an unpleasant message but one which the organisation can use to create a more effective defence force. Those who are the most knowledgeable of Defence are its insiders; they are also the very people who have the most at stake in making a better ADF. The US defence organisation may not have liked what Yingling wrote, and there would have been institutional pushback, but no one would have prevented him from speaking out.

In imposing the tight constraints that it does, Defence makes it unnecessarily hard for insiders to engage with external subject matter experts in academia and industry. The risk in limiting debate is that it fosters a narrow and blinkered perspective, while denying Defence members access to some of the country's best minds. In challenging fiscal times, the ability to exploit external expertise could prove a force multiplier and it is one that should not be missed.

Still, it should be admitted that there are good reasons for these controls—the danger of compromising national security or the protection of the integrity of defence systems, for example. However, there is also a suggestion of mistrust, that the senior hierarchy does not expect Defence members to do the right thing or that some personnel might be tempted

to go off-message, resulting in the most troubling of eventualities: media inquiry. What the organisation's leaders miss, however, is that officially promulgated concepts can just as easily be strengthened by being tested in an open debate than weakened by criticism. Besides, if debate reveals a concept as flawed it would be better—and cheaper—to discover this sooner rather than having it inevitably revealed at a later date.

Debates are time sensitive and move at a pace that does not easily fit within the timeline demanded by the need to obtain approval from the chain of command. They are fostered best in a climate that encourages the free engagement of ideas, not one that seeks to control, direct or monitor interaction and engagement. The current requirements for external comment support a policy that was not designed to promote curiosity and responsible thinking by the members of the defence community but it is one that would certainly find favour in Beijing.

Department of Defence policy has also hindered the development of Service-sponsored online forums and blogs similar to those that have proliferated overseas. By comparison, members of the US Army are relatively free to exploit such opportunities. Twitter, too, remains an 'out of hours' activity despite its growing utility in other sectors. Nor does Australia have a publication such as the US-based *Small Wars Journal*. As an online publication, *Small Wars Journal* provides a ready platform for debate and allows a rapid turnaround in the exchange of ideas through its articles, editorials and forums. The *Australian Army Journal* does provide a venue for contributors to air their views. But it is published only three times a year—frequently enough to highlight topics of emerging concern but not to sustain a debate on its own.

The Directorate of Army Research and Analysis (DARA) (formed from the merger of Future Land Warfare-Strategy and the Land Warfare Studies Centre) established an online publication called *Shortcasts* in 2010, which offers short concept pieces. Unfortunately, access remains limited to insiders. DARA also sponsors an online forum called 'FLW2G', which is available beyond the Defence firewall to select participants, a feature which should be encouraged and allowed to spread.

To attract commentators, FLW2G is unattributed, currently a necessity to ease contributor concerns over organisational push-back. Hopefully, one day *Shortcasts* will evolve into an Australian version of *Small Wars Journal*—but to do so it would need to re-establish itself outside of Department of Defence's control. This would be a useful step. But what is really needed to foster intellectual interaction within and beyond the defence community is not more internal outlets but rather unfettered access to the plethora of existing media that flourish outside of the Department's purview.

Despite the significant impediments to external engagement outlined above, such barriers remain a partial explanation for the failure of the Army's intellectually-minded members to debate the changing character of war. Being bureaucratic mandates they could all quite easily be removed, simply by the organisation's leaders deciding to do so. After all, a number of senior officers have found roles as defence commentators in retirement. Perhaps if these officers had begun to speak out while still members of the Army it would have demonstrated that officers can be trusted to engage with an external audience in an appropriate manner. The difficulties inherent in changing Defence's attitude towards external engagement should not be minimised but what has been done to create impediments can be undone to remove them. Hopefully, such a shift in policy will be forthcoming.

## *Operational impediments*

There is one further rationale that helps to explain the absence of an Australian-based debate on the future character of war. All organisations contain preferences—or ways of war—that permeate all aspects of their operations. For example, the US Army prefers to fight conventional state-based opponents against whom they can bring to bear overwhelming firepower; it likes to fight against a force that looks like itself. A critical reason why the Australian Army has not held a debate on the future character of war is internal to the organisation, not a function of external factors. More specifically, the force's leadership, and its intellectually-minded members who would take the lead in such a debate, do not—at least as yet—see sufficient value to the organisation in conducting it; the Australian way of war does not require it. This is not a result of a lack of capacity or facilitation for debate, although these are factors; rather it is a product of the Army's vision of itself.

Since its origins in 1901, the nation's ultimate security has rested on the guarantee of a great power ally. At first this was the UK, while for the past 60 years it has been the US. Throughout its history, the Australian Army has never needed, nor realistically had the ability, to wage war on its own. Instead, it has always fought in a coalition, invariably as a junior partner. As a consequence, the Army's focus has tended to be on the lower end of the art of war, primarily the tactical, at which the force has a well-deserved reputation for excellence. By contrast, its submission to the requirements of the coalition senior partner has meant that the Australian Army has had little opportunity, or necessity, to shape or influence the art of war at the operational or strategic level. This has not been an irresponsible defence policy. Instead, it has been a clever one that has allowed the nation to leverage a much greater defence capability than it would have been able to do on its own or, at least, not without a massively increased defence budget.

In fulfilling the role of a junior coalition partner, the Army has ceded a range of responsibilities. This has been a necessity as the force has never possessed the full range of capabilities and manpower needed to operate as an independent force. In recent years, this trend has become even more marked and it is now unlikely that the Army (or the ADF) could wage war on its own against a credible opponent, even if the government so desired.<sup>33</sup> Today, it has become common to describe the Army as a 'niche provider'. This has not necessarily been a negative development, rather it has brought considerable benefits to the Army while on operations, allowing Australia to maximise the strategic effect of its relatively modest manpower contribution to a coalition operation, such as was the case in the war in Iraq. However, one of the areas of military professionalism that is compromised by being a niche player is the necessity to interpret the changing character of war.

Thus, if the Australian Army wants to participate in or lead a debate on the emerging trends in the art of war, it will first have to change its perception of itself. Out of necessity, it may need to remain a niche provider of a limited range of capabilities but it will also have to endeavour to think more broadly beyond the range of just tactics.

This will require the force to excel on two levels. It must continue to strive for excellence in the tactical battlespace, as this will remain the force's primary focus for as long as it remains a junior coalition partner. Moreover, the organisation will also have to expand its intellectual remit to include the higher levels of the art of war. It will have to become comfortable with the idea of thinking broadly, even if it only acts narrowly. This needs to happen because changes

in the art of war that are now taking place and shifts in the strategic balance that are now emerging in the Indo-Pacific region will demand an army that can master the entire range of the art of war, even as it remains a small force. It is to why the Australian Army must develop the skills to engage in a future of war debate to which this article will now turn.

## **Why a ‘future of war’ debate is needed**

The Army needs a debate on the future character of war so that it is able to prepare itself for the changes in the operational and strategic environment that are now becoming apparent. These are the requirement to define an army for the post-Afghanistan era, including adapting the force to a maritime strategy; reinterpreting the strategic environment because of the rise of China; and understanding the potential of climate change to act as a threat to national security. This will also have to happen in a period that will be dominated by a need for austerity, itself a reason for considered introspection as the Army strives to balance capability and government requirements within a constrained budget.

The Australian Government has already announced that it will end its commitment to Afghanistan, while the Army’s lengthy deployments to Timor Leste and the Solomon islands are also in their terminal phases.<sup>34</sup> After more than a decade of having to manage a high tempo of operations, the Army may be able to enjoy a period of rest, reconstitution and, perhaps most importantly, reflection. Lieutenant General David Morrison, the Chief of Army, has highlighted this opportunity in his recent speeches. He makes the point that the nation needs an Army that is focused on the future, not the past. Morrison rightly believes that the Army became complacent after the end of the Vietnam War and became too comfortable resting on its accomplishments, instead of discerning the lessons that were of importance for the next campaign.<sup>35</sup>

The Army’s reshaping in the post-Afghanistan era is already underway. ‘Plan Beersheba’ will address problems in the Army’s force-generation cycle that placed the organisation under considerable strain during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Morrison has also stated that he believes that future wars in which Australia may be involved are most likely to be of a hybrid character. The widespread availability of advanced technology weapons has meant that highly lethal and effective ordnance is now within the reach of hostile irregular forces. One result of this trend is that the distinction between regular and irregular forces has blurred and has rendered the difference between conventional and guerrilla war almost meaningless.<sup>36</sup> Israel’s war with Hezbollah in South Lebanon demonstrates just how tough and dangerous a fight with a contemporary non-state actor can be.<sup>37</sup>

It is hard to fault Morrison’s conclusion—and he is not alone in this judgment. Numerous commentators have dispatched state-on-state war to ‘history’s dustbin’, although it must be recognised that the possibility remains; the ongoing potential for conflict on the Korean Peninsula, for example.<sup>38</sup> However, endorsing ‘hybrid’ as the probable form of war is not the end point. Hybrid war comes in many forms, as do potential opponents in Australia’s primary operational environment.

Moreover, the Australian Army will have to counter a possible hybrid threat within the limits of its means; great power assistance may not be available because such a conflict will not represent an existential danger to Australia. Thus, the Army must consider what it means by hybrid and how it will respond. Many of the questions that this requirement will generate

can rightly be addressed through the concept and doctrine development processes. However, why limit the force's access to expertise? Why not manage the security issue but still open the process of examination more widely and allow members of the Army to engage with each other in a way that will also allow the organisation to draw upon external thinkers?

The rise of China represents another major security challenge for Australia, as well as the other countries of the Asia-Pacific basin.<sup>39</sup> It is not possible to predict the end-state of China's rise or even if it will continue unabated.<sup>40</sup> But it is clear that the current strategic balance in the Western Pacific is under tension—a tension that will grow with China's expanding economy and modernising military, and as it gains the capability to challenge US dominance.<sup>41</sup>

Recently, China has demonstrated a willingness to employ its growing clout to gain its own way. For example, Chinese companies spontaneously decided to cease the export of rare earth elements to Japan after a diplomatic row occurred when a Chinese fishing boat collided with a Japanese vessel in disputed waters. Similarly, China has reiterated its claim to islands in the South China Sea. It has also sought to extend its influence into regions further afield. Recently, China defined itself as a 'near-Arctic state' with the intent of gaining permanent observer status on the Arctic Council. Australia has not been exempt from such assertive behaviour. During Foreign Minister Bob Carr's first official visit to China, his counterpart suggested that Australia could not indefinitely juggle its relationship with China and the US. The implication was that Australia would have to pick a side.<sup>42</sup>

It is by no means certain that conflict will be the necessary result of China's rise, despite the expectations of some. Certainly, comments in the US that attempt to paint China as a new 'Cold War' opponent are unwise and premature, unless of course one has a vested interest in the industrial-military complex.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, calls within Australia for the ADF to gain the ability to "rip an arm off" any major Asian power' are as unhelpful as they are fanciful.<sup>44</sup> At this point in the strategic transition in the Pacific, more restrained language is what is required, paired with cautious observation and quiet planning.

Australia is not presently under any threat from China—and how its rise will shape the strategic environment of the Asia Pacific is not fully known. This is precisely why the Australian Army needs to begin a debate on the subject and why it should do so now, rather than waiting. The Army needs to ponder what the Asian Century means for itself and the country. In the US, the debate has already begun and the 'air-sea battle' concept is receiving considerable examination as the replacement for the 'air-land battle' concept.<sup>45</sup>

Yet it would be a serious mistake for the Australian Army to again sit on the sidelines, as it did during the Nagl-Gentile debate, and wait for the US to reach a conclusion. While the US is Australia's great power protector it does not mean that the interests of the two countries are identical, particularly when China is our largest trading partner and the source of much of the nation's wealth. Australia is in the unenviable position of having to negotiate a course between its protector and its banker, and in the process try to balance its national and economic security. Surely, this requires a specifically Australian debate, one in which the Army has an important part to play.

Commentators all too often consider climate change from the perspective of an environmental or natural disaster or human security issue. This is a far too limited perspective, as it also has serious implications for national security. There is little doubt that climate events have been

a factor in the rise and fall of civilisations, destroying some polities while offering others the opportunity for expansion.<sup>46</sup> The effects of climate change are not uniform, as the evidence of the past suggests. Instead, it produces both winners and losers.<sup>47</sup> For Australian military professionals, climate change may be of even greater concern because some analysts believe that our primary operating environment will be among the worst affected.<sup>48</sup>

Researchers generally do not view climate change as a direct cause of war.<sup>49</sup> Rather, they see it as creating a situation in which societies will use war as a means to secure their requirements in order to survive. The primary threat to societies is that climate change reduces the carrying capacity of a country's resource base below the requirements of its population. In an era of globalisation, a country that is unable to meet its people's minimum requirements can enter the global market and obtain what it needs there. However, with the advent of global climate change, countries may prove unwilling to sell resources at any price, as did Russia when it closed its borders to grain exports due to a poor harvest in 2010.<sup>50</sup> Under globalisation, trade practices have worked well as a pressure valve because spare capacity exists in the system. If spare capacity was to be no longer available, it is likely that autarkical national tendencies will re-emerge.

Under the influence of climate change, countries whose resource bases are unable to meet their citizens' needs will face stark choices. Food availability provides a useful example. If people are no longer able to obtain food either locally or from the global market, they have limited options. Hopefully, their country has enough reserves to carry through to the next harvest, assuming it is a good one. However, as a country's stockpile of food is exhausted, the people will have to choose between starving in place and seeking the resources they need elsewhere. War will be the likely outcome. It may be comforting to continue to think of climate change in environmental terms but, for all states, there is a 'threshold below which survival interests can be asserted only by force'.<sup>51</sup>

For the Australian Army, therefore, climate change will represent a major future call on its resources. As the strain of climate change takes hold and the potential for states to collapse increases, the Australian Government will call on the Army to stabilise or deter. How the Army accomplishes this needs to be examined, preferably through open debate including free engagement with external experts.

## Conclusion

Australia and its Army are at a turning point. The winding-up of the war in Afghanistan may represent the end of a commitment but it is the developing changes in the nation's strategic environment that are the real game changers for the future. Over the course of its history, the nation has participated in wars both near and far. Most recently, the centres of world conflict have been at a distance, principally in the Middle East and Southwest Asia. This is now shifting and the focal point of international tension is returning to Australia's part of the world.

In the past, the Army has been able to concentrate its study of war at the tactical level. No-one disputes that this has paid dividends in the high regard the force is held by coalition partners. However, as risks emerge in Australia's primary operational environment, it will be advantageous for the Army to extend its intellectual curiosity to include the full extent of the art of war. To achieve the full benefit of such inquiry, the force's thinkers will need ready



access to external forums and experts—and the organisation will have to subject its ideas and concepts to robust and possibly painful examination. The Army and the wider Department of Defence need to embrace a culture of openness that has heretofore not been available to the organisation's members. The preference for 'making do' will need to be replaced by one that values thinking before acting. The force will need to become a true learning organisation in which 'intellectual' is no longer a term of derision.

There are risks and perhaps even embarrassments in such a course of action. But as the free-spirited willingness to debate in the US has shown, such concerns are greatly outweighed by the benefits. The time has come for those who lead the Department of Defence, the ADF and the Army to absorb a lesson from Australia's great power protector—that the free exchange of ideas is a force multiplier whose value, though hard to quantify, will strengthen the effectiveness of the entire organisation.

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## DISCLAIMER

The views expressed are the author's and not necessarily those of the Australian Army or the Department of Defence.

## NOTES

1. This is a slightly edited version of a paper by the same title, published by the Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra in August 2012 as Working Paper No. 140. It is republished with permission.
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# The Japanese Soryu-class Submarine: its potential to meet Australia's requirement

**Colonel Mick Ryan, AM, Australian Army**

The 2009 Defence White Paper, in reiterating that the ADF must be able to deter and defeat attacks on Australia, asserted the need to enhance Australia's naval capabilities, including the expansion of the submarine force to a fleet of 12 boats.<sup>1</sup> The rationale for this number was articulated as being able to sustain a submarine force at sea of sufficient size to defend Australia's approaches in a crisis or conflict (at considerable distance from Australia, if necessary), protect and support other ADF assets, and undertake certain strategic missions where the stealth and other operating characteristics of highly-capable advanced submarines would be crucial.<sup>2</sup>

In progressing this capability, the Australian Government in December 2011 released a 'Request for Information' to three European designers, all of whom offered off-the-shelf submarine designs, to inform the development of the submarine project.<sup>3</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, one off-the-shelf design not included was the Japanese Soryu-class submarine, although Rear Admiral Rowan Moffitt, Head of the Future Submarine Program in the Defence Materiel Organisation and its Chief Defence Scientist, Dr Alexander Zelinsky, reportedly were planning to visit Japan in July 2012 'to look at the country's new ... Soryu-class submarines'.<sup>4</sup>

The first of these submarines was commissioned by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) in March 2009. Previously known as the 'improved Oyashio' class, the *JS Soryu* is the first of at least seven of these submarines on order.<sup>5</sup> It is the most recent of a long line of Japanese conventional submarines and delivers enhanced operational capability in endurance, sensors and command systems, as well as improved signature control and reduced manning. This article examines its key design features, innovations and design trade-offs and concludes that the Soryu-class submarine may well fulfil Australia's requirement.<sup>6</sup>

## Submarine design

Submarine designs have long lives. From development to retirement, a class of submarines may last for up to half a century. This presents designers with considerable challenges, most particularly the need to balance initial capital expenditure against the cost of ongoing maintenance and mid-life upgrades. This is a dilemma shared by the designers of most other major military platforms. But getting the balance wrong in a multiple-boat submarine fleet can clearly be calamitous when such large sums of national wealth are involved.<sup>7</sup>

One trade-off is to truncate service life and spare the cost of mid-life updates, which has been the approach taken by the JMSDF in recent decades.<sup>8</sup> Shorter service life, and hence shorter time between new classes, allows the Japanese to more quickly incorporate new propulsion, sensor, weapon, communications and stealth technologies into their boats. However, each successive class of submarine is based on its predecessor, thereby continually evolving capability while minimising risk. This approach offers the potential for maintaining a submarine fleet on the 'cutting edge' of underwater warfare capability.

Design of a submarine is like a jigsaw puzzle.<sup>9</sup> No particular feature can be enhanced without considering its interaction on all other features of the design; failure to do so can result in a deterioration of the particular desirable feature and, as with altering the shape of one piece of a jigsaw, the overall design no longer works. It is an obvious principle of successful design that no particular feature can be considered in isolation.<sup>10</sup>

Priorities in design need to be clearly stated at the start of the design process to ensure all elements of the jigsaw puzzle are considered at the first opportunity. These priorities will force the design with regard to internal volume and all that is needed on-board. For example, range will determine the fuel load, the operating depth will determine hull strength, and technology will play a large part in determining the crew requirements, including their feeding and accommodation; these and similar interactions will have to be fitted into the jigsaw.<sup>11</sup>

In the design of a conventional submarine, there are many design parameters that must be considered. The most important—listed below—will be applied in this article’s examination of the Soryu-class submarine:

- Secrecy, including detectability and acoustic quietening
- Offensive and defensive weapons, in combination with information systems
- Manoeuvrability and high propulsion qualities (high speed at low power expenditure)
- Minimisation of the crew, in order to minimise investment in personnel, and
- Cost.<sup>12</sup>

### **Design parameter 1: Secrecy**

The submarine was the first technologically-stealthy weapon system.<sup>13</sup> Current and future designs are focused on minimising the ability of sensors to detect the boat when submerged or snorkelling. Noise generation is reduced with extensive isolation of vibration noise through rubber mountings of individual machines or complete rooms, and with other stealth improvements such as adapted geometry of the submarine’s hull to minimise flow noise, specifically designed rudders and propellers, suppressed underwater electrical and magnetic potentials, and anechoic tiles.<sup>14</sup>

Anechoic tiles are rubber or synthetic polymer tiles containing thousands of tiny voids, applied to the outer hulls of submarines. They have two functions: to absorb the sound waves of active sonar, reducing and distorting the return signal, thereby reducing its effective range; and to attenuate the sounds emitted from the vessel to reduce the range at which it can be detected by passive sonar.

The Soryu’s hull is clad in anechoic coating. This has a major impact on the avoidance of detection but involves a design trade-off, because of the added weight, which means that additional buoyancy has to be added into the submarine design.<sup>15</sup> The interior of the Soryu reportedly also contains acoustic isolation of loud components. This involves another design trade-off because it requires ‘rafting’ major machinery, where it is mounted on flexible mounts to isolate it from the hull. However, this in turn necessitates flexible hoses and pipes which are not as reliable as metal fittings. This risk was demonstrated in 2003 when a flexible seawater pipe on HMAS *Dechaineux* burst while it was submerged, reportedly nearly resulting in loss of the submarine.<sup>16</sup>

The Soryu is also likely to possess systems to minimise its magnetic signature. A vessel travelling on the surface or under water is a detectable disturbance in the earth's magnetic field. This can be avoided by demagnetising the vessel by generating a counteracting magnetic field. A trade-off is required if a boat is to contain this capability within the hull, as it requires large numbers of individually controlled groups of coils arranged in perpendicular planes. This imposes additional weight which must be compensated to maintain buoyancy.

Propeller design is another aspect of increasing stealth. A skewed composite propeller offers significant noise reduction and lower weight. The most recent innovation in this field is a seven-bladed, highly damped composite propeller. A final measure is minimising a detectable submarine's wake/scar generated by an exposed mast. Special radars for submarine mast detection are countered with advanced coatings, special domes and arrangement of the masts.<sup>17</sup>

## **Design parameter 2: Weapons and information systems**

### ***Sensors***

For submarines, sensing means seeing without being seen.<sup>18</sup> Passive sonars have always been, and are likely to remain, the primary submarine sensor. The secondary sensor is a non-hull penetrating optronic sensor to replace the traditional periscope. In the field of radiation observation, emphasis is moving from radar electronic support measures (ESM) to communications ESM, with a focus on civilian communications lines. Most of a submarine's sensor information can contribute to broader military situational awareness, so immediate transmission of data is vital, with high-speed data links, link integration and data fusion and documentation.<sup>19</sup>

The Soryu class is equipped with a large, flank array sonar which contributes to its increase in displacement. This is a trade-off between enhancing situational awareness with sensors and the size of the boat. The sensor package includes Hughes-OKI ZQQ7 medium/low frequency hull and flank arrays with active/passive search and attack capability. It is reported that the ZQR-1 towed array is also to be fitted to the submarines.<sup>20</sup> The command system selected has not been announced but is likely to follow previous examples and be based on US systems.

### ***Weapons***

Torpedoes remain the primary weapon for submarines and are supplemented by submarine-launched anti-ship missiles.<sup>21</sup> The Soryu class incorporates six 21-inch (533mm) bow torpedo tubes. The Soryu class' weapon load is larger than its predecessors (30 torpedoes compared to 20 in the Oyashio and Harushio classes), with a mix of Japanese Type 89 heavyweight torpedoes, as well as the tube-launched McDonnell Douglas Sub-Harpoon.<sup>22</sup>

The Soryu submarine's principal weapon is the Type 89 torpedo, which is wire-guided with active/passive homing to a range of 50 kilometres (27 nautical miles). It was developed in the early 1980s, entered service in the 1990s and is similar in capabilities to the US Mark 48 torpedo. It is believed to have a speed of up to 70 knots (130 km/h) and an operating depth of 900 metres. According to the 2012 Japanese Defense budget, a replacement for the Type 89 will be developed.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Soryu-class submarines from 2012 onwards will also be equipped with unspecified torpedo counter-measures.<sup>24</sup>

## Design parameter 3: Manoeuvrability and propulsion qualities

### *Hull and hydrodynamics*

Submarine hull form reflects the central choice of underwater or surfaced performance. On the surface, resistance comes from hull friction and waves; the longer the hull, the more this resistance is reduced. When submerged, a submarine is subjected to hull resistance, turbulence due to hull projections and hull form drag. The sail and propellers also have a large influence on submarine hydrodynamics. Despite efforts to achieve laminar flow in submarine hull design (smooth flow of water along the hull), the numerous impurities in seawater make this impossible.<sup>25</sup> More efficient and quieter hull forms are generally achieved through streamlining, better propeller design and special coatings.

The hull of the Soryu class retains the same cigar-shaped hydrodynamic design as its predecessor. It has a larger displacement than any other submarine class in the JMSDF. The hull form is made of high tensile steel, with a reported operating depth of 650 metres.<sup>26</sup> Compared to the Oyashio class, the new design is larger, with the most evident innovation being the X-shaped tail planes.<sup>27</sup> The computer-aided X-rudder configuration was first developed by the Swedish firm Kockums for the Gotland class submarines, and is also used on the Australian Collins class. The X-rudder provides the submarine with extreme manoeuvrability by providing four separately steerable rudders; and because they do not project beyond the hull, it enables submarines to operate very close to the seabed in shallow waters.<sup>28</sup>

### *Propulsion*

The Soryu class is powered by a diesel-electric propulsion system, comprising two Kawasaki diesel engines and four Stirling engines. The Kockums Stirling air independent propulsion (AIP) system is a silent and vibration-free external combustion engine that reduces the need for frequent battery charging when surfaced and thus increases the submerged endurance of the submarine. These engines permit up to two weeks of AIP at 5 knots, using liquid oxygen and traditional diesel fuel in an inert gaseous environment. After extensive trials with the Stirling AIP in the Harushio class boat *Asashio*,<sup>29</sup> the JMSDF opted for Stirling engines to be fitted to the Soryu class. This is the first Japanese submarine class fitted with AIP from build (using four Stirling engines in each) and the boats boast almost double the range and endurance of the older Oyashio class.<sup>30</sup>

The Stirling engine involves a design trade-off of diving depth versus submarine quietness. The limited pressure in the Stirling engine combustion chamber reportedly results in limited exhaust pressure, which directly limits maximum diving depth as long as no exhaust gas compressor is used. However, the engine is quieter than the closed-cycle diesel.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, conventionally-powered non-AIP submarines normally have an underwater endurance of 4-5 days, while most AIP-equipped boats can remain submerged for around 14 days. The electric propulsion motor drives a propeller through a single shaft and provides a maximum speed of 20 knots.



## **Design parameter 4: Minimisation of crew**

Crew size and crew endurance both impact overall submarine endurance, with the provision of space, amenities and facilities helpful in maintaining crew morale. Improving space for crews can be achieved by automation, which in turn can reduce crew size requirements and associated food and other stowage space requirements.<sup>32</sup> Reduction of crew in contemporary submarines has been achieved by adopting an extensive automation of not only data-handling, sensors and weapons, but also platform control.

Control and surveillance of the boat, as well as sensors, weapons and command, have been centralised in the control room of submarines such as the Dutch Walrus class.<sup>33</sup> However, if not implemented appropriately, high levels of automation can increase the risk of accidents in modern submarines, as the Russians found during an investigation into the accidental use of a fire suppression system in 2008 that killed 20 sailors.<sup>34</sup>

The Soryu design incorporates highly automated systems. The crewing numbers of Japanese submarines has steadily decreased from 75 in the Harushio Class to 65 in the Soryu class. This process of automation involves design trade-offs because key boat functions, such as trimming and surfacing, can be automated to reduce crew size but at the risk of uncontrolled surfacing in unsafe situations. While the technology of automation in conventional submarines is constantly improving, there is likely to be a limit on the level of automation able to be achieved versus an appropriate level of human supervision.

## **Design parameter 5: Cost**

Submarines are increasingly expensive; their unit costs are at least comparable to those of well-armed frigates and destroyers. Submarine numbers have therefore fallen in most navies. The US Navy has found one way of decreasing the unit costs of submarines is to increase yearly production from one to two.<sup>35</sup> However, this is not an option available to most navies.

The 2012 Japanese Defense budget papers available publicly list the cost of one conventional Soryu-class submarine as 54.7 billion Japanese yen.<sup>36</sup> The Soryu-class submarine funded in the previous year cost 54.6 billion Japanese yen.<sup>37</sup> As at early April 2012, this translates to US\$665.2 million per boat. In Australian dollars, the cost would be around A\$650 million.

The Soryu class is now one of the most advanced in the world and builds on the experience gained from operating the Oyashio-class submarines. In trading off each of the key design parameters examined here, the Soryu submarines appear to have achieved a high level of operational effectiveness at the cutting edge of conventional submarine technology. Their innovative design may be an ideal solution for the Australian future submarine.

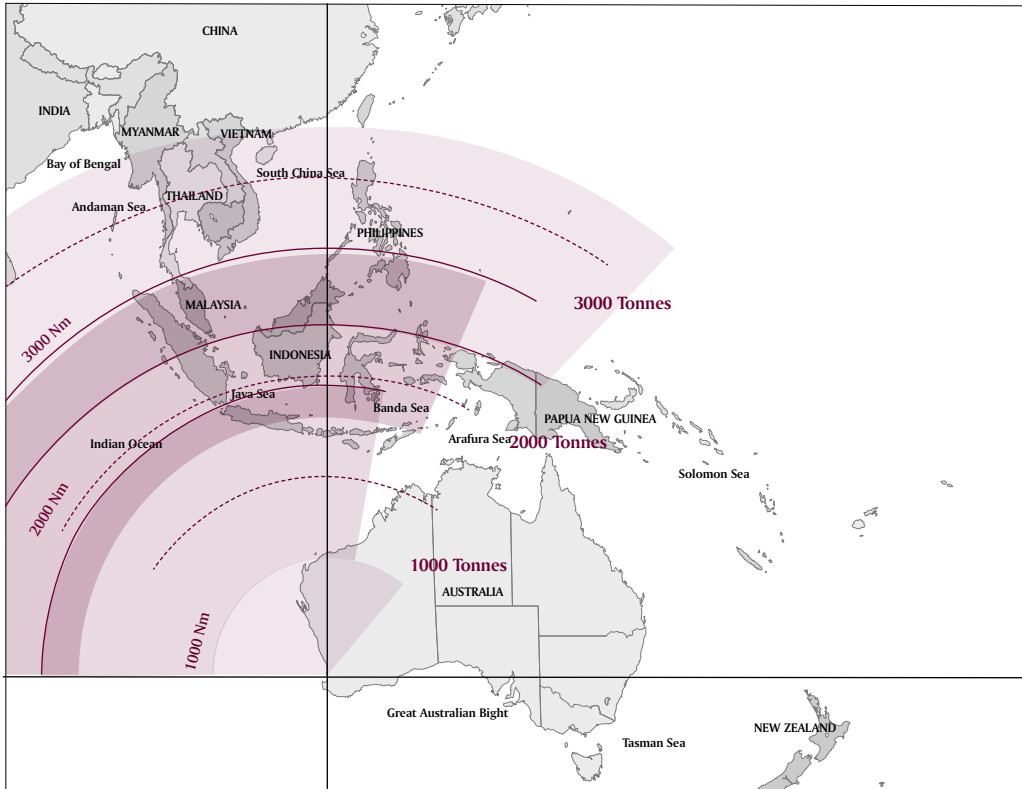
## **The Australian future submarine requirement**

The future expansion of Australia's submarine fleet will involve replacing the existing six Collins-class boats with 12 long-range submarines. The 2009 Defence White Paper mandated that they will not have nuclear propulsion,<sup>38</sup> but will possess greater range, longer endurance and expanded capabilities over the Collins-class submarines.<sup>39</sup> The specific requirements outlined in the Defence White Paper are:

- Anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare capable
- Capable of conducting strategic strike
- Able to conduct mine detection and mine-laying operations
- Capable of intelligence collection and gathering battlespace data in support of operations
- Capable of supporting special forces (including infiltration and exfiltration missions)
- Includes air independent propulsion
- Able to be built or assembled, and maintained, in Australia
- Very secure real-time communications and able to carry different mission payloads, such as uninhabited underwater vehicles
- Long transits and potentially short-notice contingencies
- Able to undertake prolonged covert patrols, with low signatures across all spectrums, and
- Option to build additional submarines.<sup>40</sup>

The nature of submarine design dictates that achieving an optimal balance of these requirements will be highly complex and challenging. Moreover, transit distances and patrol areas are much greater in the Australian environment than Japan's. The sea states commonly encountered in Australia's maritime approaches also create difficulties for submarines not designed for snorkelling in rough seas, and not adapted to operations in warm waters. Together, these factors mean that in a submarine designed for Australian service, size does matter.<sup>41</sup> But this will involve trade-offs. If a submarine is designed to have a range that is longer than normally expected for a given size, some other characteristic will need to be sacrificed.

A recent Australian study collected data from the public domain for several modern conventional submarine designs, plotting their radius of operation against their displacement tonnage.<sup>42</sup> The data can be used to illustrate the indicative submarine sizes that would be required for Australian submarines, based on the southern coast of Western Australia, to operate effectively at varying distances in the Indo-Pacific region (see Figure 1). The obvious conclusion is that longer ranges require larger boats.






**Figure 1. Indicative displacement tonnages required for Australian-based submarines to operate effectively in the Indo-Pacific region**

(Source: B. Pacey, 'Sub Judice: Australia's future submarine', Kokoda Paper No.17, Kokoda Foundation: Canberra, 2012, Figure 6)

### Assessment of Soryu against the Australian requirement

Notwithstanding the clear guidance articulated in the 2009 Defence White Paper, there is not yet a basic design for Australia's future submarine. The Australian Government will obviously need to examine closely the priority capability requirements, the costs and the risks. What is certain, not least given the experience of the Collins-class submarines and foreign submarine development projects more broadly, is that there will be many trade-off decisions needed along the way.<sup>43</sup>

While the German HDW U-216<sup>44</sup> and Spain's S-80<sup>45</sup> designs have been proposed as potential solutions, the Soryu design also appears to meet most of Australia's stated requirements (see Figure 2), although much additional work would need to be done before it could be assessed accurately. Also, there are some characteristics, such as crewing, range, strategic strike and the ability to deploy underwater unmanned vehicles, which may demand an evolved version of the Soryu rather than the current baseline version.

Requirements	Australian Future Submarine	Current Collins Class	Soryu Class
			
Range	Same as Collins as minimum, prefer enhanced range	11,000 nm (surfaced) 9,000 nm (snorkel)	6100 nm
Crew	YES	58	65
Anti-ship capability	YES	YES	YES
Anti-submarine capability	YES	YES	YES
Strategic strike capability	YES	NO	Unknown
Mine detection and mine-laying operations	YES	YES	YES
Intelligence collection	YES	YES	YES
Support special forces	YES	YES	Unknown but likely
Air independent propulsion	YES	NO	YES
Secure real-time communications	YES	YES	YES
Able to carry different mission payloads such as uninhabited underwater vehicles	YES	NO	Unknown
Low signatures across all spectrums	YES	YES	Unknown but likely

**Figure 2. Future Australian submarine requirements against the Collins-class and Soryu-class submarines**

## Beyond technical requirements

### *Japanese export controls*

In the past, a key obstacle to the Soryu class filling Australia’s future submarine requirement would have been Japan’s defence exports control regime. Japan is the only major nation that has sought to manufacture most of its own weapons but not export them.<sup>46</sup> The only exemption has been to the US, where the transfer of military technologies was agreed under their Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement.<sup>47</sup> However, in December 2011, the Japanese Government officially relaxed its ban on the export of weapons, with the current policy now allowing joint development projects on everything from fighter jets to equipment for humanitarian purposes.<sup>48</sup>

During the recent visit to Japan by Defence Minister Stephen Smith, it was announced that he and his Japanese counterpart, Satoshi Morimoto, had positive discussions on the issue of ‘equipment technology cooperation’,<sup>49</sup> with Minister Smith confirming that submarine technology was mentioned in their bilateral meeting:

We have had longstanding maintenance and sustainment challenges with the Collins-class. They have expertise in non-nuclear subs in maintenance and sustainment. So, obviously, having a conversation with them is something that we have on the table.<sup>50</sup>

### *Submarine cooperation as a means to enhanced strategic cooperation*

In a recent paper, Yoichiro Sato noted that Australia occupies a unique position in Japan’s evolving security partnerships. The two countries’ bilateral alliances with the US and their common desire for a US presence in the Asia-Pacific region has resulted in their seeking enhanced ties.<sup>51</sup> The Australian Government has reinforced this in official speeches<sup>52</sup> and in the 2009 Defence White Paper.<sup>53</sup> Australian-Japanese collaboration on the development of a Soryu variant for Australia would provide welcome opportunities for industrial cooperation and the exchange of technology. It also has the potential to evolve into a trilateral submarine partnership with the US which, for example, might see a Japanese baseline Soryu being used by Australia as the basis for an enhanced model incorporating a US combat system and other Australian innovations. The economies of scale and logistic advantages in a fleet of 20+ Soryu variants in the Pacific is another imperative for examining this approach.

### *Build versus assemble in Australia*

The Collins project offers lessons in the design and construction of what is one of the most complex pieces of military equipment. The Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC) website<sup>54</sup> includes a comparison of different military equipment and the complexity involved in their design and construction (see Figure 3). It is interesting to note that while the ASC is a strong advocate for the design and construction of the future submarine in Australia, none of the other items in the diagram—which are all less complex than a submarine—is designed in Australia. This begs the question of why Australia would seek to design and build such a capability, given the lessons of the Collins class and the manufacturing complexity of contemporary conventional submarines.

Platform Complexity Metrics	Battle Tank	Boeing 777	Frigate	Collins Class Submarine
Weight (tonnes)	30	250	3,600	3,000
Length (metres)	7	60	118	78
Number of systems	25	40	60	108
Number of suppliers	600	550	600	1,600
Crew size	4	10	163	43
Number of parts to assemble	14,000	100,000	170,000	500,000
Number of person hours to assemble	5,500	50,000	1,200,000	2,500,000
Construction time (months)	7	14	22	60
Price (AUD \$M)	4	300	600	1,000

**Figure 3. The relative complexity of submarines**

(Source: ‘Submarine Complexity’, Australian Submarine Corporation website: <[http://www.asc.com.au/asp/submarines\\_complexity.aspx](http://www.asc.com.au/asp/submarines_complexity.aspx)> accessed 2 October 2012, noting that the crew size of the Collins class submarine has since been increased to 58)

A 2010 RAND study concluded that a workforce of roughly 1,000 skilled draftsmen and engineers in industry and government would be needed to create and oversee the design of a new, conventionally-powered submarine for Australia.<sup>55</sup> A workforce of this size and capabilities does not exist in Australia today, although one arguably could be cultivated over the next 15 to 20 years. RAND also concluded that the Australian Government could significantly shorten the duration and lessen the costs of designing a new submarine if it were to collaborate with foreign design partners rather than relying exclusively on a domestic design.<sup>56</sup>

## Likely trade-offs

The requirements for the Australian future submarine are highly ambitious and being able to meet them within anticipated budget constraints is unlikely.<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, trade-offs in capability are likely to be required in some of the following areas:

- Cost versus capability
- Required in service date versus availability
- Known, proven technology versus innovative new (and unproven) technology
- Crew size versus safety levels (notwithstanding that reduced crewing is required compared to the Collins class)
- Range versus breadth of capability
- Anti-ship and anti-submarine weapons capacity versus strategic strike
- Australian designed and built versus Australian assembled, and
- Single-block build versus iterative, multi-block build.

## Conclusion

The Japanese Soryu class is an innovative submarine design that, with the information available publicly, appears to deliver an excellent operational capability. It seems to provide an optimum balance of capabilities, trading off in some areas to achieve overall operating efficiency and effectiveness.

The Japanese design philosophy of iterating designs every 15 years (half the normal submarine life) trades off return on investment over a longer period to ensure that its submarines remain on the cutting edge of underwater warfare capability. This design philosophy would seem to make the Soryu an attractive potential contender to fill the Australian future submarine requirement. And importantly, collaboration between Japan and Australia—and potentially the US—on such a project also offers an opportunity to enhance strategic and industrial ties between all three nations.

A number of Indian and Pacific Ocean rim nations are acquiring sophisticated submarines at the cutting edge of exportable capability. For Australia, a failed or compromised future submarine development project could lead to a permanent loss of our regional comparative advantage in submarine warfare.<sup>58</sup> Hence, it is essential for Australia to be extremely thorough and wide-ranging in its examination of the capability required in its submarine fleet. The examination of the Soryu class in this article is designed to further inform such consideration.

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# US Alliances in the Asia-Pacific

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## Introduction

The Asia-Pacific is one of the most important regions in US strategic policy. It contains half the world's population, and six of the ten most populated countries in the world.<sup>1</sup> It also consists of several 'flash points', notably the North Korean nuclear crisis, China-Taiwan tensions, competing claims in the South China Sea and the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.<sup>2</sup> Although the US remains the dominant strategic power, the Asia-Pacific security environment has become increasingly dynamic and uncertain. As the key security guarantor for its allies in the region, Washington has pro-actively adjusted its strategic policy accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

In 2009, President Barack Obama formally promised to 'rebuild the alliances, partnerships and institutions necessary to confront common threats and enhance common security'.<sup>4</sup> He implied that most traditional US alliances, typically established to meet the threat of Soviet communism, were largely outdated and required changes in the form of increased burden-sharing and enhanced cooperation to deal with the contemporary environment.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the US needed to ask more of its allies in the Asia-Pacific region to facilitate US influence and help stabilise the region.

This article will argue the changed US strategic policy has become necessary because of America's economic problems, the war on terrorism and an increasingly dynamic and uncertain regional environment, exacerbated by the rise of China. It will also argue that the Obama Administration has been successful to date in shaping the policies of key US allies, notably Australia, Japan and South Korea. However, in the case of Thailand and the Philippines, the application of US strategic policy has been less successful because of domestic instability and a preference for 'hedging' in Thailand, and internal problems in the Philippines.

The article is divided into four sections. The first defines the term 'alliance'. The second examines what exactly has changed in American policy and the third explores the reasons behind the shift. The final section assesses the success of the Obama Administration in shaping the policies of its key allies, notably Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines.

## Definition of 'alliance'

There have been various definitions of the term 'alliance' over the years. Salmon asserts there is no single definition that can summarise the wide range of past or existing alliances.<sup>6</sup> Walt provides the definition of an alliance as 'a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states'.<sup>7</sup> One somewhat idealistic definition is that 'nations commit themselves to fight alongside each other because of shared values and ideas'.<sup>8</sup> Another is more realistic and rests on costs-benefit analysis to acknowledge that 'alliances can save costs and multiply benefits through the division of responsibilities, the sharing of common assets, or simply the protection provided by having a stronger country as an alliance'.<sup>9</sup>

Leeds et al assert that alliances should be regarded as:

... written agreements, signed by official representatives of at least two independent states, that include promise to aid a partner in the event of military conflict, to remain neutral in the event of conflict, to refrain from military conflict with one another, or to consult/cooperate in the event of international crises that create a potential for military conflict.<sup>10</sup>

This article will use the definition that alliances are formal written agreements, which commonly take the form of treaties that are ratified by appropriate political authorities in each signatory state.<sup>11</sup> The ANZUS Treaty, for example, is an obvious such alliance.

## **The revised US strategic policy**

Before President Obama took office, a number of commentators were articulating their thoughts on what changes should be made to US strategic policy in the Asia-Pacific region. McDevitt, for instance, suggested the US had to be more cognisant of the changing strategic environment because China had started to intrude into maritime areas which previously had been regarded as the purview of the US and its allies.<sup>12</sup> According to McDevitt, the US needed to do more to assure the region that US military capability is a viable tool to 'manage' China's military assertiveness, while avoiding the perception that the US is trying to contain China.<sup>13</sup> Coming from another angle, Tow and Loke suggested the US needed to continue its bilateral arrangements but, at the same time, engage more actively in regional multilateral institutions to accommodate a rising China.<sup>14</sup>

The Obama Administration would undoubtedly have taken the various views into consideration. In November 2009, President Obama gave a major speech on US strategic policy in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>15</sup> It was reaffirmed by Secretary of State Clinton in 2010.<sup>16</sup> She framed the policy as 'forward-deployed' diplomacy that would involve the US continuing to employ the full range of diplomatic assets to address the rapid and dramatic shifts in the region.<sup>17</sup> She outlined six key lines of action as 'strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening working relationship with emerging powers, including China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights'.<sup>18</sup>

Clinton also reiterated the importance of existing US treaty alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> She noted, however, that the US needed to update them for the evolving security environment and that Washington would be guided by three core principles. First, the US has to maintain political consensus on the core goals of its alliances. Second, the US has to make sure that the alliances are sufficiently agile and adaptive to successfully address new challenges. Third, Washington must work to ensure that, where appropriate, the military capabilities and response agreements within such alliances are capable of deterring the full range of potential provocation from both states and non-state actors.<sup>20</sup>

Clinton reasserted that the US alliance with Japan is 'the cornerstone' of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, because both nations share a common security vision, ranging from freedom of navigation to open market and fair competition.<sup>21</sup> She also stated that the US appreciated Japan's contribution to ensuring a continuing US military presence in Japan and in expanding joint operations in order to deter and react to regional security challenges.

Similarly, she noted that the US alliance with South Korea has become stronger and more operationally integrated, focusing on developing a combined capability to deter and respond to any threat from North Korea.

In the case of Australia, Clinton articulated that the aim is to expand the US alliance with Canberra from an Asia-Pacific to an Indo-Pacific focus, as well as being a global partnership. She also noted that the US needs Australia's help to strengthen the regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>22</sup> In Southeast Asia, she noted that the US is renewing and strengthening its alliances with Thailand and the Philippines. Specifically, she cited that Washington is working with Thailand to establish a regional centre for humanitarian and disaster relief, and that the US will increase the number of ship visits to the Philippines and work closely with Manila in counter-terrorism operations.<sup>23</sup>

The US also has been linking bilateral alliances with multilateral arrangements in the region in order to hedge against an undesirable multilateral security order. In doing so, the US has been asking for support from its allies to act as regional facilitators for US interests in the Asia-Pacific region, especially for those arrangements where the US is (or at that stage was) not yet a member, such as the ASEAN Plus Three and the East Asia Summit.<sup>24</sup>

In the case of China, Clinton acknowledged that Beijing represents one of the most challenging and consequential bilateral relationships the US has ever had to manage. However, she downplayed the perception that Americans see China as a threat, and that Beijing worries that the US seeks to constrain the rise of China.<sup>25</sup> She reaffirmed that the US is trying to cooperate strategically and economically with China in order to build mutual trust and encourage China's efforts in assisting to address a range of global issues. However, she took the opportunity to express concerns about the transparency of China's military modernisation, human rights in China, and China's stance on a range of significant challenges, such as North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, the South China Sea and freedom of navigation more generally.<sup>26</sup>

## **The reasons for the policy shift**

There arguably are three reasons behind the Obama Administration's decision to revise its strategic policy towards the Asia-Pacific region.

The first and foremost is America's economic downturn, partly because of the global financial crisis.<sup>27</sup> In January 2011, the US Government announced cuts to its military budget of US\$2 billion over five years, followed by a further cut in April of US\$400 billion over the following 12 years (which, in January 2012, was increased to ≤US\$450 billion).<sup>28</sup> The US Navy has suffered most, with significant impact on its long-term plan for modernising and replacing its submarines, aircraft carriers and destroyers.<sup>29</sup> The Obama Administration has also struggled to fund the US\$25 billion needed to restructure/relocate its military bases in Guam, Japan and South Korea.<sup>30</sup>

Secondly, although economic conditions have played a large part in the shifting of US strategic policy, the so-called 'war on terror' has also been a significant factor. Between 2002 and 2008, around 30,000 US military personnel had already been redeployed from Pacific Command to counter-terrorism operations elsewhere, including the redeployment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet's carrier battle groups to the Arabian Gulf.<sup>31</sup> This was followed, for example in 2009, by the redeployment to Afghanistan of the Fifth Stryker Brigade and 8,000 marines, as well as 24 Apache helicopters stationed in South Korea.<sup>32</sup>

The third reason is that the strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific region has become increasingly uncertain, much of it related to the rise of China. With the benefit of impressive economic growth, China has significantly increased its military budget, focusing on the modernisation of its naval and air capabilities, particularly anti-satellite weapons, strike aircraft, submarines, ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles and sea mines.<sup>33</sup> China's immediate objective is undoubtedly to deny its maritime approaches to hostile external forces, including developing the capability to target, if necessary, major US bases in Japan, South Korea and Guam, as well as US aircraft carriers and other major platforms operating in East Asian waters.<sup>34</sup>

The bottom line is that the US is understandably keen to garner more support from its allies in the region, not least in terms of facilitating and supporting an increased US presence and influence.<sup>35</sup> It is also keen for its allies in the region to bolster their military capabilities and share more equitably the burden of securing common interests in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>36</sup>

## Assessing the success of the revised policy

### *Australia*

Australia seems fully supportive of the changed US policy and has aligned various elements of its strategic policy in support of US efforts. At the Australia-US ministerial-level talks in 2010, for example, Prime Minister Gillard promised that Australia would do what it could do to strengthen US relationships with key partners in the region, such as Japan, South Korea, India and Indonesia.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in addressing the US Congress on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ANZUS Treaty, Prime Minister Gillard expressed enthusiasm for improving US-Australia strategic cooperation and raising Australia's profile and status in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>38</sup>

From a US perspective, the ADF's capability to interoperate with counterpart forces from the US, Japan and South Korea is no doubt important. In particular, new military capabilities identified in the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper, such as the Joint Strike Fighter, airborne early warning aircraft, new submarines and air warfare destroyers would enable Australia to more effectively conduct joint operations with the US and other allies (notwithstanding that a number of those capabilities are now facing significant delays and cost overruns).<sup>39</sup>

Importantly, President Obama announced during his visit to Australia in 2011 that he and Prime Minister Gillard had agreed to 2,500 US marines undertaking training in northern Australia on a rotational basis.<sup>40</sup> The two nations also decided to establish a force posture working group to mutually explore strategic options for enhanced defence cooperation in Australia, including increased access for US forces to Australian bases and support facilities.<sup>41</sup> While both Australia and the US have been careful to avoid any suggestion that those commitments relate to the rise of China, or are intended to 'contain' China, most regional countries—including China itself—would likely draw that conclusion.

Australia also assisted the US in relation to its admission to the East Asian Summit, which is an annual multilateral forum involving the ten ASEAN nations and China, Japan and South Korea, as well as Australia, New Zealand and India. While China was keen for the US not to be offered membership, Australia, Japan and several countries in Southeast Asia recognised that a broader spread of Asia-Pacific states, including the US, would better balance China's influence on the forum.<sup>42</sup> To improve its prospects, the US in 2009 signed the Treaty of Amity

and Cooperation (in Southeast Asia), which most ASEAN states saw as a necessary prerequisite for membership, leading to its eventual acceptance into the Summit in 2011.<sup>43</sup>

Domestically, Australia's longstanding alliance with the US has strong popular support. The 2009 Defence White Paper stated that 'the Government will always weigh up very carefully any request to send the ADF to fight alongside the armed forces of the US'.<sup>44</sup> That is understandable language in a major public document. However, a Lowy Institute opinion poll in 2011, analysing public attitudes towards the US alliance and China, indicated increased support for the US alliance, up from 60 per cent in 2007 to 70 per cent in 2011.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, 59 per cent of respondents said the alliance with the US is 'very important' to Australia's security, up from 36 per cent in 2007, while 55 per cent said they would support basing US forces on Australian soil. The survey also found that 52 per cent of respondents supported the notion of sending Australian troops to assist in defending South Korea should it be attacked by the North; and, in a scenario where Beijing provided Pyongyang with military support, that support increased to 56 per cent.<sup>46</sup>

## *Japan*

Japan continues to remain a 'cornerstone' of US strategic policy in the Asia-Pacific region and the US has been successful in encouraging a more active role for Japan. For its part, Japan has also been influenced by coincidental tensions within the region, notably North Korea's sinking of a South Korean corvette and its shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, and the ongoing flare-up between Japan and China, in particular, over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

Those incidents—and Japan's broader concerns about China—have engendered a suitably-favourable domestic sentiment for the Japanese Government to be able to reassert publicly the significance of the US-Japan alliance,<sup>47</sup> as well as reaching agreement on relocating the US base in Okinawa. The Japanese Government has also agreed to continue contributing towards the cost of maintaining US bases in Japan, allocating US\$2.33 billion annually from 2011 to 2015.<sup>48</sup> It is also giving consideration to easing the restrictions currently imposed on its military in supporting US military operations.<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding the relocation of a number of major US bases, there seems little doubt that the US will retain a considerable military presence in and around Japan and that it will seek to enhance even further its cooperation and interoperability with the Japan Self-Defence Force (JSDF), aimed in part at balancing the rise of China.<sup>50</sup> However, the US has also pressured Japan to do more towards its own defence,<sup>51</sup> including intensifying the trilateral relationship between the US, Japan and South Korea through military exercises in order to deter any threat from North Korea.<sup>52</sup>

In its 2010 equivalent of a Defence White Paper (the National Defence Programme Guidelines), the Japanese Government made important changes in its defence policy, including a shift in threat perception to express more boldly 'that China posed a source of concerns for regional and global security'.<sup>53</sup> The previous concept of 'basic defence force' was abandoned and a new concept of 'dynamic defence force' introduced to counter specific sources of threat and contingencies with upgraded military capabilities, such as the acquisition of Lockheed Martin F-35 fighters, Euro-fighter *Typhoons*, F/A-18 aircraft, light helicopter carriers, destroyers and new submarines.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Japan has reorganised and improved its sea-land militia to work more closely with US forces.<sup>55</sup>

## ***South Korea***

The sinking of the South Korean corvette *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island by North Korea in 2010 provided an opportunity for the US to reassure its allies that it was committed to working with them to deter any North Korean threat and the Chinese challenge to US power.<sup>56</sup> The US responded to those crises by conducting large-scale military exercises with both South Korea and Japan. Despite opposition from Beijing, the US-South Korean exercises sent a message not only to North Korea but also to other East Asian countries about the limitations of Chinese military and its influence. China-South Korea relations remained strained by China's refusal to condemn North Korea for the two incidents,<sup>57</sup> notwithstanding that South Korea has established strong economic ties with China over the past two decades.<sup>58</sup>

Conversely, America's firm military response has likely helped consolidate South Korea's strategic assessment of its relations with the US and China, most likely leading to a further strengthening of military ties with the US.<sup>59</sup> Particularly in terms of public sentiment, the incidents highlighted the military threat posed to South Korea by North Korea and the benefits to Seoul of its strong alliance with Washington.<sup>60</sup>

One particularly symbolic outcome was that President Lee Myung-Bak and President Obama agreed to postpone the transfer of wartime operational control from the US to South Korea from its intended year of 2012 to 2015.<sup>61</sup> Seoul also established a presidential commission to review national defence reform, as well as doubling the force protecting its western islands. It also declared a new policy of 'proactive deterrence', meaning that 'if there is a provocation, we will respond very strongly'.<sup>62</sup>

In 2011, the commander of US forces in South Korea robustly articulated the US position in relation to the defence of South Korea and the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella over the Korean peninsula, highlighting that the alliance provides insurance against any North Korea aggression, especially involving the use of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>63</sup> Reassuringly for Seoul is the appreciation also that the alliance is the underlying fallback option should the current 'Six Party Talks' and associated 'Proliferation Security Initiative' result in stalemate or failure.<sup>64</sup>

## ***Thailand***

The US alliance with Thailand has been in a rather long, awkward and transitional pause, primarily because of Thai domestic political crises and the preference of the Thai Government for a policy of hedging its options, both of which have largely thwarted America's efforts to shape Thai foreign policy. Following the 2006 coup against the elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra, Thailand has been preoccupied with domestic issues relating to national governance, political power, stability, national justice and the viability of its political institutions, which has left little focus on the US-Thai alliance.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, domestic problems in Thailand have provided a platform for the US and China to compete with each other to preserve their strategic relationship with Thailand.<sup>66</sup> For example, in 2010, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs proposed a meeting between government and opposition representatives concerning the escalating political conflict, contending US involvement on the basis that Thailand was a treaty ally of the US. However, Thailand's political leadership saw the situation differently; that Washington wanted to intervene for its own advantages.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, China adhered to a policy of

non-interference, providing Beijing with strategic gains and enabling it to consolidate its ties with Thailand,<sup>68</sup> culminating in an agreement in April 2012 to upgrade their relationship to a 'comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership'.<sup>69</sup>

Some US scholars warn that this should be a cautionary lesson for US policy makers and that the US 'should not take access to Thai bases or Thai support for a policy of containment of China for granted'.<sup>70</sup> It certainly seems unlikely that Bangkok would allow the US to use its air and sea bases for China-related contingencies (noting, by way of history, that Thailand refused US requests to pre-position supply vessels in the Gulf of Thailand in 1994, 1996 and 2001).<sup>71</sup> More recently, the US was forced to withdraw a request to use the U-tapao air base for a short-term 'climate study' by NASA, after opposition lawmakers in Bangkok warned that approval could compromise Thailand's trade ties with China,<sup>72</sup> even though US troops have traditionally had access to the base as part of the annual 'Cobra Gold' multinational war games—and that it has been used by the US to support post-disaster humanitarian efforts and certain military operations in Afghanistan.<sup>73</sup>

Thailand has a long tradition of 'bending with the wind' and seeking advantage from both the US and China. And of the US allies, Thailand is the most likely to accommodate the rise of China. Bangkok seems likely, therefore, to continue progressing a range of economic and security-related arrangements with both Washington and Beijing but, at the strategic level, will continue to 'hedge' between the two.<sup>74</sup>

### *The Philippines*

The US has made some progress in shaping the Philippine's foreign policy, although it has been hampered by problems of internal instability. As in Thailand, the Philippines' political leaders have often needed to focus on internal challenges, with President Aquino putting great effort into dealing with corruption, economic issues and internal insurgencies and terrorism, notably the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayaff group.<sup>75</sup> And although the Philippines has expressed some desire in recent years to strengthen security relations with the US, this has mainly been because Manila wanted US support to assist with internal insurgencies.<sup>76</sup>

For its part, Washington has been appreciative of Manila's position and has provided limited budget and military assistance, and second-hand military equipment aimed at improving the basic counter-terrorism capabilities of the Philippine Armed Forces.<sup>77</sup> The US and the Philippines have also undertaken a number of small-scale, somewhat symbolic, bilateral military exercises aimed at improving counter-insurgency or -terrorism capabilities.<sup>78</sup>

However, over the past year in particular, tensions over disputed islands in the South China Sea have heightened Manila's concerns about China.<sup>79</sup> In April 2012, two US submarines made port calls at Subic Bay and at least five American ships held two military exercises with the Philippines.<sup>80</sup> In July, President Aquino announced that Manila may ask the US to deploy spy planes to help monitor disputed waters.<sup>81</sup> And the level of US military assistance has tripled to US\$30 million in 2012, including the transfer of a patrol ship.<sup>82</sup> Whether the US is able to obtain more formal transit access to bases in the Philippines remains to be seen.<sup>83</sup> However, the level of military-military cooperation is certainly on the increase.



## Conclusion

This article has examined the success or otherwise of the US in shaping the policies of its treaty allies in the Asia-Pacific region, notably Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the Philippines. It has argued that the Obama Administration has been successful in shaping the policies of Australia, Japan and South Korea. In the case of Thailand, however, the US has not been successful because of domestic instability and the preference of Bangkok to 'hedge its bets'. Similarly, the Philippines has not been particularly supportive, primarily because of Manila's consuming focus on internal stability, although this seems to be gradually changing because of recently-heightened tensions in the South China Sea.

There are, of course, a number of other states in the region which have been impacted by a range of 'overtures' from both the US and China, notably Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia, with all affected to varying degrees by the strategic competition between the two. However, on balance, this article would argue that from a region-wide perspective there seems little prospect, at least in the foreseeable future, of China undermining the US alliance framework and progressively 'wooing' traditional US allies to its side.

That seems unlikely for three reasons. Firstly, although the region has experienced strategic competition between great powers in the past, no US ally would see China as a viable alternative for the foreseeable future. And while most US allies readily cooperate with China in terms of economic trade, they recognise that the US is the only nation with the capabilities to balance China and that US power usefully limits China's dominance of the region.

Secondly, they are assured by US commitments to the region, as well as the message that the US needs its allies and vice versa. This gives US allies the confidence to interact with China on a range of issues, backed by the assurance of their alliance arrangements and that the US has committed to remain engaged in the region. Effectively, they are able to benefit from relationships with both the US and China, without having to choose between them.

Finally, it is true that some US allies have become more sensitive to China's position on its self-defined 'core interests' of Taiwan, Tibet and the South China Sea, which perhaps has led to a 'softening' of approach by some US allies.<sup>84</sup> The positive is that this has reduced the confrontational rhetoric often associated with such 'flashpoints'—thereby providing less reason for states to feel obligated to 'take sides' on contentious issues—although recent rhetoric between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands remains worrying.

The important conclusion is that the US seems to have well appreciated the need for carefully-crafted messages during a time of regional transformation. Its focus will continue to be 'ally-centric' rather than 'adversary-centric', not least because Washington seems very mindful that its allies prefer strategic ambivalence and do not want to be seen to be part of any policy of containing China.<sup>85</sup>

Yet, at the same time, what some might see as a paradox is that most US allies are quietly strengthening their bilateral relationships as a hedge against a more assertive China. Similarly, the increased capabilities of the Chinese military are arguably bolstering the importance of key US alliances with Australia, Japan and South Korea, as well as facilitating military-military links between the US and a number of Southeast Asian states.<sup>86</sup>

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81. See, for example, Manuel Mogato and Stuart Grudgings, 'Philippines may ask for U.S. spy planes over South China Sea', *Reuters*, 2 July 2012: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/02/us-philippines-aquino-southchina-idUSBRE8610H020120702>> accessed 4 October 2012.
82. See Trajano, 'US Alliances with the Philippines and Thailand'.
83. Davies and Scheer, 'Whither US Forces? US Military Presence in the Asia-Pacific and the Implications for Australia', p. 4.
84. Medeiros, 'The New Security Drama in East Asia', pp. 38-9.
85. R. Lyon, 'US Strategic Priorities in Asia', ASPI: Canberra, 2011, p. 3: <[http://www.aspi.org.au/publications/publication\\_details.aspx?ContentID=312](http://www.aspi.org.au/publications/publication_details.aspx?ContentID=312)> accessed 15 April 2012.
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# 'Drones' or 'Smart' Unmanned Aerial Vehicles?

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## Introduction

Over the past decade or so, it has become commonplace to refer to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as 'drones', no doubt in reference to the bee-like, deep humming sound they supposedly emit as they fly endlessly along programmed routes in search of potential targets. However, the term 'drone' has a number of less favourable connotations—notably 'idling', 'monotonous' and 'non-working'<sup>1</sup>—which depreciate and disparage the increasing utility and cost-effectiveness of UAVs in modern warfare.

For a number of years, UAVs—characterised by the highly-effective 'Predator' (see Figure 1)—have been used in combat missions with some visually-spectacular and well-publicised results, notably in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen.<sup>2</sup> UAVs can undertake a large range of tactical missions, often with superior strike accuracy to manned aircraft. They are also smaller, more economical and typically can fly longer without refuelling or the risk of pilot fatigue.<sup>3</sup> Because their operators do not need flying experience, their training is some ten-fold less expensive than pilot training for manned aircraft.

Currently, the US Air Force trains more UAV operators than both fighter and bomber pilots combined; UAVs also fly more combat mission hours than any manned aircraft.<sup>4</sup> Larger, more sophisticated and more lethal UAVs are continually being developed, such as Northrop Grumman's 'Global Hawk' and General Atomics' next-generation 'Avenger'.<sup>5</sup> A recent US Air Force report asserts that planning for the next five decades will focus on building 'total flexibility' into UAV airframes, allowing future models to be used for defensive and offensive roles, including air superiority, anti-missile defence, air-to-air refuelling, medium-to-long range bombing and even air lift.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 1. Predator MQ-1 unmanned aerial vehicle

(Source: US Air Force website: <<http://www.af.mil/information/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID=122>> accessed 25 October 2012)

The military application of UAVs continues to grow as many countries invest in their research and development (R&D), with future models proposed that will likely achieve ‘hypermanoeuvrability’, have stealthy airframes and be more rugged, giving better battle-damage survivability.<sup>7</sup> Military futurists envisage multiple UAVs being operated via a single operator which, in a conflict scenario where both sides possess the same technologies, would make it seemingly plausible to fight future wars by ‘remote control’. It is also highly probable that as a result of the increasing variety of roles now possible by UAVs, the role of the military pilot will become far less critical to mission requirements.

This article argues that defence planners can no longer think of UAVs only as ‘drones’, primarily suitable for surveillance and remote interdiction of opportunistic ground targets. Particularly in the context of the forthcoming Defence White Paper, we need to be thinking of UAVs as ‘smart’ capabilities, with considerable potential to provide highly cost-effective, low manpower solutions to the challenges facing Australia ‘in a neighbourhood that is growing more complex and more dynamic.... [and as] we ... accommodate constraints on the resources we have available to do this’.<sup>8</sup>

## The development of robotic technologies

Modern UAVs, with the ability to identify targets and launch air-to-ground missiles with lethal accuracy, are regarded as a relatively recent phenomenon. However, their development can be traced to around 1940, when Reginald Denny, a former British pilot in World War 1, developed the first radio-controlled aircraft. He initially intended it as an aerial target for the Army but, with the outbreak of World War 2, the UK Government manufactured some 15,000 units, making them the first mass-produced UAVs in history.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest use of unmanned radio-controlled weaponry was arguably by Germany. In World War 1, it used electronically-controlled motorboats to patrol its coastline.<sup>10</sup> Germany also deployed a small unmanned tank, the ‘Goliath’, armed with explosives, which was detonated when it came close to enemy forces.<sup>11</sup> With its tradition of investing heavily in military R&D for strategic gain, Germany was a keen participant in the development of revolutionary military technologies in both World Wars, exemplified in the closing stages of World War 2 by the production of the first fighter jets (Messerschmitt 262 and 263) and the first ‘cruise missiles’, the V-1 and V-2 rockets.

Today, broader robotic technologies are no longer the ‘stuff’ of science fiction novels. A variety of systems—ranging from robotic planes (including both UAVs and miniature aerial vehicles) to all-terrain ground vehicles, ground-dwelling robotic quadrupeds and marine submersibles—are now becoming a reality, with a number already deployed for both surveillance and offensive purposes in military operations. In particular, the US military’s use of unmanned air and ground robotic systems has seen a dramatic rise in their application, including in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and more recently in Yemen.

Armin Krishnan, in *Killer Robots: legality and ethicality of autonomous weapons*, confirms this ‘explosive growth in unmanned systems as fielded in US- and NATO-led operations’.<sup>12</sup> His book provides a timely overview of the issues surrounding the use of autonomous weapons systems (AWS), including the legal and ethical considerations. In particular, he discusses the issues relating to ‘moral disengagement’ and ‘automated killing’, concluding rather cautiously with a range of measures for regulating emergent and future systems, including that the

proliferation of AWS should be slowed and that they should be defensive in posture, limited in their firepower, and fitted with neutralising mechanisms.<sup>13</sup>

All the while, military scientists continue to develop these technologies, increasing their sophistication, applicability and lethality, not to mention gradually increasing their level of artificial intelligence, which one day may give them the capacity for complete autonomy from the human operator. This raises a host of critical ethical, legal and political issues, which arguably will need to be resolved before further levels of autonomy are considered.

While most of the discussion has centred thus far on ‘macro’ robotics, or larger machines in the scale of small aircraft and the like, it should not be forgotten that these new robotic technologies have also produced micro-sized devices, similar in size to a tennis ball or even a golf ball. Fitted with imaging and/or surveillance technology, these small sophisticated devices, some of which are designed to have the appearance of small animals, could well be beaming back images and other information to their central operating base as they perch on a window ledge or even crawl inside a house.<sup>14</sup>

Then there are the slightly larger airborne platforms, the size of small ‘toy’ helicopters, which are being successfully used as surveillance systems by some police departments, particularly in the US. Such contemporary micro-technologies illustrate the use of robotics beyond just military applications, showing that they are not only reshaping the conduct of modern war but that they also have universal applicability within other industries. As a case in point, some real estate agents in the US are today using tiny robotic helicopters fitted with miniature cameras to photograph the properties they are marketing.

## **The development of UAVs**

While robotic technologies have advanced significantly across all three environments, they arguably have been most pronounced in the air. Militarily, the use of UAVs (or UCAVs—unmanned combat aerial vehicles—as they are sometimes called) have already been a reality for over a decade. However, further research continues not only into their form, shape and size, but into finding a range of new functions, both in warfare and the civilian arena alike.

The Boeing aircraft company, for example, is currently working on aircraft that will have the ability to take off, fly and land to pre-programmed flight paths, without human intervention via a remote joystick or control input.<sup>15</sup> The logical extension of this technology is its applicability to civil aviation although, because of safety and legal concerns, it seems unlikely for the near future that civil aviation authorities would be willing to allow the operation of UAVs in close proximity to airliners carrying hundreds of passengers.

Moreover, the military application of UAVs continues to grow, with the US leading the rest of the world in production and deployment by almost an eight-fold margin over China, followed closely by Israel.<sup>16</sup> And the current massive investment in UAV R&D looks set to continue. The US Air Force’s 2009 report ‘Unmanned Aircraft Systems Flight Plan 2009-2047’, in addition to outlining the conventional defensive and offensive roles expected of UAVs, speculated on operations where massed UAVs would be deployed in formations or ‘swarms’, with the primary aim of knocking out the air defence systems of opposing forces.<sup>17</sup>

Looking at the US Air Force’s long list of proposed functions, it is apparent that the US military is intending to employ UAVs in many areas of its force structure. Furthermore, it is also



envisaged that future UAVs will have increasing levels of artificial intelligence built into their operating systems, giving them a considerable degree of operating autonomy. Hence, in the coming years, it seems likely that UAVs will have all the capabilities of today's manned aircraft, as well as the capacity to make decisions that today can only be made by those onboard a manned aircraft.

Mention has already been made that the US Air Force is currently training more UAV operators than traditional pilots. Considering that a UAV is capable of staying in the air for up to 24 hours (and sometimes more), continuously over an 'area of interest', while relaying to mission headquarters precise video footage of suspect activity, it is not surprising that UAVs have many supporters. There is also little chance that a manned aircraft could achieve the same kind of mission without the need for re-fuelling or pilot fatigue. Indeed, large UAVs, such as the 'Global Hawk', can reportedly fly between continents and then scan some 53,000 square miles of earth per day via an array of electro-optical cameras, synthetic aperture radar and/or infra-red sensors.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, despite the reduction in 'traditional' military capabilities announced by the US Government in early January 2012, it was made clear by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta that such cuts would not apply to 'drones', which the Obama Administration clearly sees as being extremely effective against terrorist groups and the fight against terrorism more generally.<sup>19</sup>

**The ADF's capability**

The RAAF operates its own 'Heron' UAVs, acquired from Israeli Aerospace Industries under Project Nankeen. It is a medium-altitude, long-range aircraft with high-resolution ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) capability, which can fly for more than 24 hrs at a speed of 180km/h and a ceiling of 33,000 ft.<sup>20</sup> Weighing more than a tonne at take-off, it has a wingspan of over 16 metres and navigates using GPS.



**Figure 2. The RAAF's Heron UAV**

(Source: <http://www.airforce.gov.au/News/Archive/2009/December.aspx>)

Allowing Australian ground troops to 'see beyond the next hill', the Herons are regarded as a valuable military asset. They are flown by remote control by a two-man team (a pilot and a payload operator), typically at a considerable distance from the front line. The operators are supported by military specialists trained in imagery and sensor capabilities. The Heron's main functions are to perform ISR, monitor enemy movements and help protect Australian forces against improvised explosive devices.

## The pros and cons

One of the major advantages of UAVs is that they are considerably cheaper than manned aircraft, both in terms of acquisition and ongoing maintenance, as well as training.<sup>21</sup> Simple comparisons cannot easily be made—and it is not particularly meaningful to compare how many Predator-type UAVs could be acquired for the cost of a single Joint Strike Fighter. The other important issue is that the cost of UAVs is not necessarily increasing exponentially as new capabilities are developed. Again, one needs to compare 'apples with apples'. But it is interesting to note that whereas each Global Hawk UAV currently costs around US\$65m, the estimated cost of the next-generation Avenger UAV, with broadly similar capabilities, is US\$15m.<sup>22</sup>

At the tactical level, one of the benefits of UAVs is that they can carry out a broad range of tactical reconnaissance missions, including 'dirty' missions involving the monitoring and sampling of areas subjected to biological or chemical weapons attack. They can also be used in highly-dangerous or politically-sensitive situations where the loss or capture of a military pilot would further complicate offensive operations. They also can often provide more detailed targeting information than manned aircraft, giving them superior strike accuracy. And as they are smaller and without the space required for aircrew, they can fly for longer than manned aircraft and are also much more economical to operate.<sup>23</sup>

From a mission point of view, their use is also much more discreet, particularly for counter-insurgency operations, where their smaller profile makes them more difficult to detect. Also, unlike manned aircraft in war zones, they do not need to be rotated as often. From a cost effectiveness point of view, a very significant advantage for armed services is that UAV operators essentially require no previous flying experience, which means their training is some ten-fold less expensive than that of today's fast jet pilots.

Military scientists and engineers predict that UAV designs of the future will likely be capable of 'hyper-maneuvrability' (or extreme lateral acceleration), achieved through advances in avionics and the use of composite materials and stealthy airframes, which would give them considerably enhanced ability to avoid detection by radar.<sup>24</sup> Contrarily, the extreme g-forces generated could not be withstood by a human pilot sitting at the controls. UAV designs of the future will also likely be more rugged, giving them enhanced levels of 'battle damage survivability' in situations of air-to-air combat. Even more futuristic, although technologically plausible, is the concept of multiple UAVs being operated by a single operator, fighting wars of the future by 'remote control'.

Most critics of UAVs do not believe that robotic technologies are the way of the future, for a number of reasons. The most common argument is that only a trained pilot, sitting in a cockpit, can react instantly to a threat and take appropriate evasive or defensive action. Others believe that even though the use of UAVs will increase in the future, correct decisions can only

be made in a combat environment by a human being, which 'puts the pilot in the best position to make decisions about using lethal force'.<sup>25</sup> Along similar lines, other commentators assert that 'in a dynamic [combat] environment, where things are changing by the second, sensors [UAVs] cannot replace the judgment call of a human being'.<sup>26</sup>

There is another problem with UAVs, known in defence circles as 'latency'. This is the time delay between when an operator sends a signal to a UAV and the time it takes to respond. While this would usually only be a matter of seconds (or micro-seconds), it is relevant to the argument as to the responsiveness of UAVs versus the reaction time of onboard pilots. Along similar lines is the concern that a UAV is critically dependent on easily-disrupted data links. Finally, UAVs are at significant risk (and much higher than manned aircraft) of being intercepted by surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), as occurred in the conflict over the former Yugoslavia, when a number of Predator UAVs were downed by ground forces using early-generation Russian-made SAMs.<sup>27</sup>

Proponents of UAVs see these and similar problems as easily addressed. They argue that with continuing technology developments, future UAVs will be fitted with in-built artificial intelligence systems, providing them with a significant degree of operating autonomy, including the ability to activate self-defence systems, including against ground-to-air threats. Countering the argument of data link failure, proponents argue that UAVs can continue to operate by relying on GPS guidance or even pre-loaded software, such that a data link failure is not necessarily a 'fatal' outcome. The issue of latency could also be addressed by the deployment of a series or chain of small, solar- or laser-powered ultra-long-endurance UAVs, along which satellite signals could be bounced to the primary vehicle.<sup>28</sup>

Despite these likely technological advances, it is evident that the primary issue remains the moral question regarding the fully autonomous use of UAVs where 'man is taken out of the loop'. It is true, as often witnessed throughout history, that the speed of technological development frequently outpaces our ethical and policy responses. As one author puts it, these advancements have always tested societal paradigms.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, these questions need to be resolved and for good reason.

The potential risks become clear when one considers that some UAVs can carry up to four highly-destructive air-to-ground missiles, being fired by an operator located in a separate continent. Whether because of malfunctioning systems onboard the UAV or simply human error, the potential exists for the operator to lose control of the UAV and its weapon systems. The added dimension is the moral perspective of being able to assess the *proportionality* of an attack, in accordance with the international Law of Armed Conflict, which is currently done by a human operator.<sup>30</sup>

This raises some very important issues which, among others, are the reason why countries operating UAVs have introduced legal guidelines for their employment. Most Western countries already have their own similar versions; the RAAF's is titled 'Operations Law for RAAF Commanders (AAP 1003)'.<sup>31</sup> However, with the increased capacity and power inherent in newer and future generation UAVs, it becomes imperative to question whether current laws are adequate. And because many will have the ability to operate 'inter-continently', it is necessary also to apply principles of international humanitarian law; again, whether these laws have kept abreast of technological developments is doubtful.

It becomes evident that UAV operators, both now and in the future, will need a thorough understanding of the legalities of operating such weapon systems in conflict zones. That will include the need to correctly identify potential targets, decide on appropriate weapons selection and the degree of proportionality to be used in order to avoid ‘collateral damage’ and, lastly, to have the ability to abort attacks in the case of erroneous targeting information or a change of mind by strategic planners.

It will be interesting to see what happens when these decisions are transferred from the current generation UAV operator to the autonomous UAV of the future. In his article in a 2009 issue of the *ADF Journal*, Dale Hooper discusses the many complex legal and ethical questions, concluding his analysis by emphasising the importance of the law being consistently applied both in the planning and execution stages of UAV missions in order to reduce inadvertent civilian casualties.<sup>32</sup>

Hooper also highlighted the potential of software malfunctions in UAV targeting systems to result in collateral damage. He also reminds us that UAVs can potentially become an unlawful means of combat, in a scenario where there has been inability to control targeting as a result either of human operator error or systemic failures, rendering the whole process ‘indiscriminate’.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusions

Mankind is at the cusp of a new revolution, a relatively silent ‘robotic revolution’ in modern warfare. These new robotic technologies, because of their sophistication and lethality, are changing the rules of warfare. How mankind further develops these technologies, while at the same time addressing the many legal and ethical implications, will remain a critical challenge for developers of these technologies and military planners alike, as well as for politicians and policy makers.

In contrast to earlier major conflicts fought on a world-wide scale, ‘war is today less a matter of applying massive force across a wide front as it is of applying intelligent force at carefully selected points’.<sup>34</sup> It seems likely that both manned and unmanned aircraft will continue to operate concurrently in mission- and role-specific tasks over the next decade and beyond. However, over the next half-century, it is highly probable that the future battlespace will be dominated by remote-controlled unmanned weapon platforms in the air, sea and land environments.

This will require major legal and ethical hurdles to be overcome, which inevitably they will be. It also seems highly likely—and indeed inevitable—that these technologies will replace the role of many existing manned air, sea and ground weapons platforms, evidenced by the proliferating use of robotic technologies in an increasing number of armed forces around the world. This will likely result, among other things, in a rapid decline in the production of manned strike fighters. These changes will be opposed, as change always is. However, the takeover by the ‘machines’ will occur regardless. As history has often shown, revolutionary technological advances cannot be prevented.

Some commentators have recently questioned whether autonomous unmanned systems will control all future warfare and remove human decision-making altogether. The answer is undoubtedly ‘no’. Although unmanned weapon platforms and systems will continue to evolve over time in form, function and level of intelligence, it is precisely because such advanced

weapons technologies are prone to abuse that complete autonomy makes them far too dangerous. This is also the reason why a significant degree of human decision-making must remain, if only to monitor or intervene, complemented by the legal and ethical constraints written into the targeting processes.<sup>35</sup>

For Australia, the forthcoming Defence White Paper provides the opportunity to review our longer-term requirements for aerial platforms and to consider carefully the role and capabilities that future UAVs might provide. As the Chief of the Defence Force has indicated:

... we need to get more capability out of each Defence dollar, which means we have to be more efficient but also, more importantly, more thoughtful in the choices that we make about the nature of the capabilities that we develop.<sup>36</sup>

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## NOTES

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# Revitalising ‘Team US-Australia’: Australia’s greatest strategic challenge

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## Introduction

2012 has witnessed a spike in the debate over the future direction of Australia’s defence policy. In recent months, there has been a flurry of opinions concerning this issue expressed by many of Australia’s eminent academics, current and former politicians, and senior-ranking military officials—both serving and retired. Strip away the hyperbole, theoretical parochialism<sup>1</sup> and partisan politics and one is left with an altogether vital and compelling discussion concerning the policy options for confronting the nation’s likely future strategic challenges.

So what is a strategic challenge? In the context of this article, it is defined as a risk—immediate and/or long term—to Australia’s security and prosperity.<sup>2</sup> Necessarily, a nation’s strategic challenges drive its defence policy. Put another way, the *raison d’être* of defence policy is to provide a feasible, acceptable and suitable plan that reconciles the strategic challenges confronting a nation.<sup>3</sup> By articulating a clear hierarchy of strategic challenges, policy makers are empowered to both discern and rank the strategic objectives (ends) and the cost-effective capability choices (ways and means) that form the foundation of a nation’s defence policy.

So what is Australia’s most pressing strategic challenge? The majority of commentators define Australia’s most significant future strategic challenge as the increasing prominence of China and the impact that this will have on the direction of Australia’s strategic policy.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, these commentators have got it wrong. In many cases, they have overestimated the dazzling rise of China on the one hand and erroneously assumed the inevitable waning of America’s primacy on the other.

This article will argue that the most significant strategic challenge confronting Australia is a decline in its relative value as a strategic partner to the US. Australia’s vaunted ‘middle power status’ is not at risk of being eroded by the emergence of China, nor by any other apparent challenge in its area of interest. Paradoxically, its relative strategic influence is threatened by the rapprochement that is currently occurring between its closest ally, the US, and other nations in the region.

As the value of these relationships increase to the US, Australia’s relative worth to its ‘great and powerful friend’ will diminish.<sup>5</sup> The consequences of such a decline would prove deleterious to Australia’s security, prosperity and longstanding strategic approach. To arrest this decline, this article argues that Australia must pursue increased US military presence in Australia in order to buttress its position as America’s pre-eminent partner in the region.

In order to validate Australia’s foremost strategic challenge, this article will enumerate the importance of the US alliance to Australia’s longstanding security and prosperity. Subsequently, the adverse impact that Washington’s ‘pivot’ towards Asia will likely have on Australia’s relative value to the US will be analysed. Finally, discernible and pragmatic options will be proposed that will enable Australia to maintain its value as America’s premier ally in the region.

## The US: Australia's superpower benefactor

The US has provided the strategic backstop to Australia's security, prosperity and influence since World War 2. Indeed, Australia would not possess the strong economy, leading military and influential diplomacy that it practises today without the direct and indirect support provided by Washington over the last 70 years. The respected academic Robert Ayson claims that Australia has flourished in every aspect of its national power under the 'munificent glow' of the US.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding the often-animated debate concerning the definition and prioritisation of Australia's current and future strategic challenges, there is unanimous agreement on the intrinsic link between America's alliance with Australia and Australia's security, prosperity and status as a middle power.

There is broad agreement that Australia's security has benefited immensely from the pervasive influence of the US, both regionally and globally. Such a claim is routinely cited in Australia's decennial declaratory defence policies. Australia's 1956 *Strategic Basis of Australia's Defence Policy* argued that Australia's defence was dependent 'in particular [on] the United States'.<sup>7</sup> The 1968 version cited the 'fundamental importance of the United States' in underwriting Australia's security in the face of an increasingly aggressive China and the potential proliferation of state-based communism in Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> More recently, the 2009 Defence White Paper described the contribution of Australia's alliance with the US as both 'vital' and 'indispensable to our security'.<sup>9</sup>

The intrinsic link between Australia's longstanding security and its alliance with the US is unequivocally supported by Australia's leading academics. Peter Abigail, then head of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), asserted in 2011 that the US alliance constitutes 'a key pillar' upholding Australia's enduring security.<sup>10</sup> Hugh White contends that it is 'American leadership that has kept Asia peaceful and Australia secure for many decades'.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the Lowy Institute's Andrew Shearer notes that the unprecedented era of regional stability that Australia has benefited from is attributable to its alliance with the US and the exercising of 'Pax Americana' in the Asia Pacific.<sup>12</sup>

Australia's economy has flourished over the last 3-4 decades due, in large part, to the direct economic benefits and broader trade opportunities Australia has derived through its bilateral relationship with the US. Moreover, Australia's economic wealth has prospered from the influence that America has had on the stability of the region in which many of Australia's key trading partners reside.<sup>13</sup> Hugh White contends that the US-China détente of 1971-72 and enduring American influence in the region has underpinned Australia's 'remarkable development ... and economic growth'.<sup>14</sup> Andrew Shearer argues that the 'surge in intra-regional trade' and economic growth that has characterised Southeast Asia, and more broadly the Asia Pacific, over the last 3-4 decades has been guaranteed by the US.<sup>15</sup>

Australia's diplomatic success, both regionally and globally, has been bolstered through its close relationship with the US—and Australia's vaunted middle-power status is contingent on its special bilateral relationship with America. Hugh White argues that Australia's close bilateral relationship with the US, plus the regional impact achieved by America on the stability, economic growth and political evolution of nations in the Asia Pacific, have underpinned 'Australia's [diplomatic] enmeshment with Asia'.<sup>16</sup>



He also contends that the Australia-US relationship, and the broader impact that the US has had on the shaping of a benign Asia Pacific, 'have been the permanent central pillars of Australian foreign policy since we first started to think about our place in the world'.<sup>17</sup> The decisive influence that the US has had on Australia's capacity to engage, influence and shape in the realm of foreign policy was exemplified by former US President George W. Bush's 2005 description of Australia as a 'sheriff' in the region.<sup>18</sup>

Since the signing of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951, Australia has derived enormous security, economic and foreign policy advantage from direct American benefaction and the stability that 'Pax Americana' has facilitated regionally and globally. Australia's close bilateral relationship with the US has endured for over 70 years. This period constitutes almost two-thirds of Australia's post-Federation history.

However, like any long-term relationship, over time it becomes easier to become dismissive, and even contemptuous, of its value. Hugh White contends that '[thanks to the US], Australia has enjoyed the longest period of prosperity and peace since the late 19th century. When peace lasts a long time like this, it becomes easy to take for granted'.<sup>19</sup> In response to this trend, US Army Colonel Mike Angevine warns that the health of the alliance 'cannot be taken for granted' and that to do so would put 'the alliance at risk'.<sup>20</sup>

### **The paradox of the US pivot to Asia**

Arguably, the zenith of Australia's relative value to the US occurred during the years that Prime Minister Howard held power and President George W. Bush occupied the White House. It was during this period that John Howard invoked the ANZUS Treaty for the first and only time in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Moreover, it was during this period that President Bush publicly referred to Australia as its regional 'sheriff'.<sup>21</sup>

The comforting words expressed by President Obama during his November 2011 address to the Australian Federal Parliament would seem to confirm a continuance of the 'special relationship' that Australia has shared with the US for over 70 years.<sup>22</sup> This, however, is not necessarily the case. It certainly should not be assumed. America's recent 'pivot' towards the Asia Pacific presents a paradox for Australia. The increased regional engagement by its longstanding benefactor risks diminishing Australia's relative value to the US and, by consequence, its capacity to shape and influence its strategic environment as a middle power.

The Obama Administration has made it abundantly clear that America's statecraft is now oriented towards the Asia-Pacific region. In October 2010, Secretary of State Clinton asserted that the US was 'back in Asia'.<sup>23</sup> In his November 2011 address to the Australian Parliament, President Obama conveyed the same narrative. The increased diplomatic and military engagement exercised by the US in the Asia-Pacific region over the last three years is clear evidence of the shift in strategic locus expressed by Obama, Clinton and other key figures in the US political and military hierarchy.

The US has embarked on a purposeful diplomatic effort as one of the 'key lines of action' underpinning its strategic 'pivot' towards Asia.<sup>24</sup> While there is no suggestion that America ever left Asia, the scale and urgency of its stepped-up diplomatic engagement in the region has been astonishing. According to Secretary of State Clinton, the 'touchstone' of America's strategic shift 'is to build a web of partnerships and institutions across the Pacific'.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, she contends that Washington's 'treaty alliances ... are the fulcrum of our strategic turn to the Asia Pacific'.<sup>26</sup>

Professor Carlyle Thayer provides telling evidence of the boost in American diplomatic effort in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years. He asserts that, since 2009, the US has forged far closer relationships with Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam.<sup>27</sup> It is equally telling that many of the comforting sentiments expressed by President Obama in his speech to the Australian Parliament were conveyed by Obama to subsequent sittings of the Indonesian and Indian Governments. It should not be lost on Australia that the US has actively sought closer bilateral ties with the nations that fringe such strategically important locations as the South China Sea, the Straits of Malacca, the internal waters of China's so-called 'First and Second Island Chains' and, of course, the world's emerging pre-eminent trade and energy conduit that is the Indian Ocean.<sup>28</sup>

Forging a broad-based military presence is another key 'line of action' in the pivot in America's strategic re-focus towards the Asia Pacific.<sup>29</sup> Former US Defense Secretary Gates expounded this key feature of the US pivot by stating that Washington is seeking 'a defense posture across the Asia Pacific that is more geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable'.<sup>30</sup> Gates further identified an enhanced US military posture in 'Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean' as fundamental to America's Asia-Pacific strategic locus.<sup>31</sup>

Australia is well aware of this key feature of the US pivot. In Australia's case, this line of action has manifested in the form of a US Marine Corps force element deployed to Darwin on a rotational, yet indefinite, basis. There has also been recent conjecture in Australia's media about the likelihood of Australia allowing the US to project military capability from the Cocos Islands.<sup>32</sup> However, the implementation of this key line of action is not limited to Australia.

The degree of bilateral military engagement, dialogue and military procurement between the US and Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia is on the rapid rise. In light of continued concern over China's enforcement of claims in the South China Sea, there is even talk of the Philippines inviting the US to base military elements out of Subic Bay again.<sup>33</sup> Secretary Clinton has confirmed that the US is already conducting joint littoral patrols with the Singaporean Navy in the strategically-vital Malacca Straits.<sup>34</sup>

The Obama Administration's determined approach to forging a growing 'web of partnerships'<sup>35</sup> across the region has necessarily reduced the lustre of Australia's role as a regional 'sheriff'. Consequently, the status of Australia's special relationship with the US has diminished. This may well prove damaging to the economic, security and diplomatic leverage that Australia has derived from its longstanding relationship with the US. While Australia has previously basked foremost in the 'munificent glow', it is now witnessing its 'great and powerful friend'<sup>36</sup> actively courting other nations.<sup>37</sup> Australia can either accept the likely negative implications of its waning relative value to Washington or it can seek to renew its special relationship with an Asia-Pacific-focused US.

## **Revitalising Australia's special relationship with Washington**

Australia's most significant strategic challenge is a decline in its relative value as a strategic partner to the US. Paradoxically, the cause of this abatement is America's enhanced strategic engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. The good news is that Australia can readily arrest and reverse this challenge. There are immediate, relatively low risk and low cost options that Australia can implement. Overall, they are relatively simple, speedy and inexpensive. They all relate to enhancing US military presence—both permanent and rotational—in Australia.

According to Andrew Shearer, the 'United States is looking to diversify its regional military footprint, with less emphasis on large bases in Northeast Asia and more [focus] on other forms of access south and west'.<sup>38</sup> This development is, according to Shearer, 'bringing Australia into the frame as a possible location for supporting US forces'.<sup>39</sup> Andrew Davies and Ben Schreer agree; in their 2011 article, 'Whither US Forces', they contend that 'Australia is of increasing interest to the American Government as a location from which to project power in the region'.<sup>40</sup> Statements from former Secretary Gates support their argument. Speaking at the 2011 Shangri-La conference, Gates defined Washington's intent to enhance its 'defence posture ... in Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean'.<sup>41</sup>

In order to bolster Australia's alliance with the US, Davies and Shreer conclude that Australia should pursue additional permanent basing options for American force elements and enable greater US military access to Australian facilities and support arrangements.<sup>42</sup> In his comprehensive review of the 2009 Defence White Paper, Angevine is explicit in his recommendations to rebalance Australia's contribution to its alliance with the US.<sup>43</sup> Among other suggestions, Angevine contends that Australia should consider establishing a joint US-Australian naval base in Western Australia; develop 'joint basing for submarine repair, maintenance and training facilities';<sup>44</sup> invite the US to base a strike aircraft squadron in Australia;<sup>45</sup> and create a mutually beneficial and 'seamless US-Australian defense industry community'.<sup>46</sup>

Students of the history of Australia's strategic policy will identify key parallels with these recommendations and the 'main support area' concept promoted in the 1947 Strategic Paper.<sup>47</sup> While this concept sought greater permanent presence from Australia's then 'great and powerful friend' Great Britain,<sup>48</sup> the underlying rationale for the concept was to perpetuate Australia's security and prosperity in the face of what was considered Australia's greatest threat at the time—the emergence of communist China.

There are substantial advantages to be gained from the implementation of the solutions prescribed above. Firstly, the permanent basing of additional US military elements in Australia would significantly enhance Australia's security from external threat. Shearer contends that 'having US forces regularly present at Australian ports and airfields will provide a level of conventional deterrence that is well beyond what the ADF can generate on its own'.<sup>49</sup> Such an outcome would assuage the acute sense of vulnerability that lies at the core of Australia's strategic culture and national identity.<sup>50</sup>

Secondly, given the longstanding alignment of Australian and US strategic interests in the region, the presence of US forces in Australia, on both a permanent and transient basis, would significantly enhance the weight of Australia's statecraft in the pursuit of its strategic interests.

Thirdly, it would significantly enhance the depth and expertise of Australia's fledgling defence industry. When one considers that the majority of current and forecast significant platform acquisitions leverage US military technology, this would be a substantial advantage. Consider for a moment the potential improvements to the maintenance, serviceability and capability of Australia's planned Joint Strike Fighter fleet that could be derived from the basing of a like US squadron in Australia.

Fourthly, the potential positives for Australian doctrine and capability development are considerable. What better way to progress the ADF's fledgling amphibious capability than by

increasing the regularity of exercises with the US Marine Corps. And consider the additional enhancement to Australia's embryonic amphibious capability that could be drawn from the permanent or temporary basing of a US Marine Corps 'Marine Expeditionary Unit' at an Australian naval base.

Finally, the pursuit of greater US military basing in Australia would likely facilitate considerable savings in government expenditure on defence. According to Shearer, 'the capabilities that the US can bring to the party would provide a huge boost to Australia's own capability at little financial cost'.<sup>51</sup> Against the backdrop of the recent deep cuts in Australian defence spending and the ongoing requirement for fiscal frugality in government expenditure, this benefit would prove to be both highly relevant and timely.

Of course every strategic decision incurs risk. The identification and management of risk is intrinsic to the astute application of strategy. So what are the likely risks of seeking greater permanent and temporary basing of US military forces in Australia as the means of buttressing Australia's relative value to Washington? Just as importantly, can they be mitigated? A number of Australia's leading defence policy academics and former political figures consistently identify four key risks to Australia from seeking increased permanent and rotational military presence.

The first is the potential adverse diplomatic 'blowback' from other nations in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly China. According to former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, a strategy promoting increased US military presence in Australia would send 'the wrong message, not only to China, but to countries like Indonesia'.<sup>52</sup> Former Australian Chief of Army (now Professor) Peter Leahy agrees, arguing that expanded military ties between Australia and the US have the potential to 'lead to increased tension and even conflict [with China]'.<sup>53</sup>

However, numerous academics contest the significance of this risk. Andrew Shearer infers that it is overstated. He contends that the nations of the region, including China, fully appreciate the strength of the 61 year-old Australia-US alliance and would likely consider the pursuit of increased US military presence on Australian soil as a natural corollary of America's pivot towards Asia.<sup>54</sup> Davies and Schreer concur. They argue that 'Australia is ... already in the American camp and the debate about increasing the US military footprint in Australia is really about increasing a pre-existing commitment'.<sup>55</sup> They cite the fact that 'Australia already hosts joint Australian-American [defence and intelligence] facilities', which have not prejudiced relationships with the nations of the region.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, Davies and Schreer contend that the 'tendency in the past for Australians to regard its alliance with the US with suspicion ... [is] ... much less of an issue [today] due to increased uneasiness about the rise of China'.<sup>57</sup> The results from a recent Lowy Institute survey of Indonesians support their view. According to the poll, 56 per cent of those surveyed believe China will pose the most significant military threat to Indonesia over the next 20 years.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, 72 per cent of respondents expressed trust in the role of America's increasingly prominent role in the region.<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, critics of increased US basing in Australia argue that such an approach will prejudice Australia's economic relationship with its largest trading partner, China, thereby threatening Australia's economic prosperity.<sup>60</sup> Those who promote this risk arguably oversimplify the praxis of economics, as China has pursued strong trading links with Australia in the full knowledge of Australia's longstanding alliance with the US.

Moreover, in the wake of the Australian Government's decision to allow US Marine Corps personnel to rotate through Darwin, there have been no public threats from China of trade repercussions. The veracity of this risk is further disputed by the strong bilateral trading relationships between South Korea, Japan and China. South Korea, for instance, retains China as its strongest trading partner, but also maintains over 25,000 US military personnel at permanent military bases.<sup>61</sup> For its part, Japan maintains over 4,000 US military personnel at permanent bases, yet preserves China as its most important trading partner.<sup>62</sup>

Thirdly, there are those who contend that the development of a closer strategic relationship with the US is tantamount to backing the losing side in a future strategic power struggle between the US and China. The proponents of this risk seem enamoured with the apparent straight-line ascendancy of China.<sup>63</sup> However, their arguments are increasingly undermined by the extent and success of the US pivot to the region to date. Furthermore, the facts do not support the thesis of waning US influence.

According to Alan Behm, 'while the growth rates of China and India are impressive ... the per capita GDP of the US will be almost three times that of China or India by 2050'.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Behm contends 'that the US will continue to enjoy global military dominance' for decades to come.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the final word in response to the credibility of this risk should be left to US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who remarked in November 2011 that

There are those who question our staying power around the world. We've heard this talk before. At the end of the Vietnam War, there was a thriving industry of global commentators promoting the idea that America was in retreat, and it is a theme that repeats itself every few decades .... Our capacity to come back stronger is unmatched in modern history.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, there are those who contend that Australia should pursue statecraft with other nations in the region independent of the US. The purveyors of this view overestimate Australia's innate strategic weight and conveniently ignore that Australia's middle power status has been, and continues to be, underpinned by the US. The foundation of this risk is twofold.

Firstly, it reflects a deep-seated fear that the basing of additional US military forces in Australia will entrap the nation in an egregious alliance situation. The exponents of this risk contend that such a situation will inevitably result in servile behaviour by Australia towards its 'great and powerful friend'.<sup>67</sup> Kilcullen disagrees. In describing Australia's longstanding pattern of 'forward statecraft', he argues that such a strategic approach 'need not imply craven, lapdog-like or uncritical support for allies'.<sup>68</sup>

Secondly, advocates of this view dismiss the high esteem in which Australians hold the alliance with the US. The results from last year's Lowy Institute poll of Australian attitudes towards the US prove them wrong. According to the poll, 'more than 80 per cent of those surveyed say the alliance is either very or fairly important for Australia's security'.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the survey also indicates that '55 per cent would support basing US military forces in Australia ... with the attendant danger that these facilities would be targeted in any conflict involving America'.<sup>70</sup>

While Australia's most pressing strategic challenge would, if left unattended, prove potentially ruinous to its security and prosperity, the nation is well poised to implement relatively low cost, low risk, yet highly effective measures to arrest and reverse the decline in its relative importance to the US. These measures all relate to increasing US military permanent and

rotational presence in Australia. Of course, that is not to say that there is neither risk nor cost involved with such an approach. It is clear, however, that many of the risks identified with this approach are either overestimated, baseless or can be readily managed.

## Conclusion

Australia's most significant emerging strategic challenge is the decline in its relative value to the US. The cause of this challenge is, paradoxically, the pivot in Washington's strategic focus towards the Asia Pacific. As the US expands its 'web of partnerships and institutions across the Pacific',<sup>71</sup> it follows that Australia's pre-eminent status within 'Team US-Australia' will necessarily diminish. A decline in the relative value of Australia as an ally to the US would prove detrimental to Australia's security, prosperity and to its status as a middle power.

In view of America's recent pivot to Asia, Australia cannot afford to be blithe about its relationship with the US. Rather, it must actively seek to enhance its value as Washington's leading ally in the region. It must re-energise its special relationship with its 'great and powerful friend'.<sup>72</sup> Failure to do so could forfeit the very foundations of Australia's enduring security and prosperity. Yet Australia is well poised to arrest and resolve this strategic challenge by encouraging greater US military permanent and rotational presence in Australia. The risks are manageable. The costs are acceptable. The approach is feasible.

It is all too easy to become enamoured with the dazzling rise of China on the one hand and assume the inevitable waning of America's great power on the other. Australia's strategic planners must avoid the trap of subscribing to such shibboleths when identifying and prioritising Australia's strategic challenges and then aligning the objectives and capabilities that will resolve them. They should reflect on Colin Grey's astute counsel to avoid being 'captured by the bright and shiny-looking concept [or warnings] du jour',<sup>73</sup> but instead endeavour to 'assess which among the decisions to be made today might, if they turned out to be wrong, be most heavily regretted tomorrow'.<sup>74</sup>

A relative decline in the special relationship between Australia and the US would prove profoundly regrettable for Australia's long-term security and prosperity. Reversing this trend, and revitalising the Australia-US alliance, must be the key focus of Australia's defence planners.

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69. Shearer, 'Unchartered Waters', p. 5.
70. Shearer, 'Unchartered Waters', p. 6.
71. Clinton, 'America's Pacific Century', p. 58.
72. Kilcullen, 'Australian Statecraft', p. 50.
73. Gray, 'Strategic Thoughts for Defence Planners', p. 166.
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# Australian Influence in the South Pacific<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Peter Brown, OBE, British Army

## Introduction

The South Pacific is viewed by Australia as its 'Near Abroad' and, as such, part of Australia's natural sphere of influence.<sup>2</sup> It is an area of key strategic importance to Australia, which has a longstanding concern over what has been termed the 'arc of instability' to its north, extending from the South West Pacific through archipelagic Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup>

While there have been some improvements in the security landscape over recent decades, instability and the potential for fragile states to fail continue to be a feature of the region. Indeed, since 2001, Canberra has attempted to play a more assertive role in the region, not least out of a desire to prevent further destabilisation that could foster international crime or terrorist activity. As then Australian Prime Minister John Howard stated at the time:

It is in Australia's interests and in the interests of our Pacific Island neighbours to strive for a region that is economically viable, politically stable and free from crime. The financial costs and potential threats to Australia from failing states, including transnational crime and international terrorism, would be immense.<sup>4</sup>

This article will argue that despite a more assertive role and notwithstanding some notable achievements<sup>5</sup>, Australia's influence in this region is gradually being eroded. That sentiment was foreshadowed by Kevin Rudd, then Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, when he asserted in 2006 that:

The arc of instability to our north a decade ago was an academic notion. Now it is a security policy reality. And within this arc of instability, Australia's strategic and economic influence relative to other external powers is declining.<sup>6</sup>

## The South Pacific component

While many commentators have talked about an 'arc of instability' to Australia's north, there are few definitive geographical definitions as to its exact limits. This article will focus on what might be termed the 'South Pacific' component of that arc, a culturally and economically diverse group of islands (excluding Australia and New Zealand [NZ]) covering 52 million square kilometres of ocean but only 300,000 square kilometres of land, 80 per cent of which is Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Collectively, the islands have a population of nearly nine million, spread over 14 independent states.<sup>7</sup> They are populated predominantly with indigenous peoples, namely Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians. These three groups differ historically by geography, language, culture and physical characteristics. Most of the states, with the exception of Fiji, PNG and the Solomon Islands, have limited natural and human resources with which to support sustained development. Prevalent features include weak resource and skilled labour bases, lack of economies of scale, primitive infrastructure, poor government services, and remoteness from international markets.

The fragility of many of the states has created potential havens for transnational crime, money laundering, illegal immigration, arms smuggling, drug trafficking and terrorism.<sup>8</sup> These issues have been exacerbated by the general inability of governments to control their respective borders, as well as the susceptibility of any economically weak state to the malign influence of well-funded criminal and terrorist organisations.

This vulnerability, in combination with a unique array of regional circumstances, has contributed to a number of intra-state conflicts in recent decades.<sup>9</sup> And, although it was referring to the ‘arc of instability’ more broadly, the 2009 Defence White Paper noted that instability is likely to be characteristic of Australia’s immediate region for the foreseeable future.<sup>10</sup> However, while the change in the geopolitical environment—in combination with the strategic impact of an unstable neighbourhood—has been clearly recognised by successive Australian Governments, Australia’s ability to shape events throughout the arc—including the South Pacific—arguably continues to trend downwards.

### **Australia’s strategic perceptions**

Australia has enduring strategic interests in the South Pacific and has sought to influence the Pacific island nations accordingly, with the emphasis clearly shifting over time. During the Cold War, the focus of Australia’s policy was one of ‘strategic denial’. Given the experience of World War 2, Australia did not want a potentially hostile foreign power to be able to set up bases in the region from which Australia could be attacked.

During the same period, Australia and NZ took a lead in campaigning against French nuclear testing in the Pacific. In parallel, Australia was able to influence the island nations to adopt more ‘moderate’ approaches than might have been the case, one example being the ‘South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone’ under the Treaty of Rarotonga in 1985, which was eventually framed in a manner that minimised any problems for the US, particularly in relation to freedom of movement of the US Pacific Fleet.<sup>11</sup>

Between the end of the Cold War and the events of 9/11, there was no perceived threat from the region, or even through the region, and the Australian view of the South Pacific seemed largely influenced by its cost on the Australian taxpayer.

Over the last 10 years, Australia’s focus on the region has reinforced the themes of supporting democracy, ‘good governance’ and enabling sustainable economic development. However, in addition, there has been a new focus on addressing the risk of weaker states failing to govern their territory, which could create a power vacuum into which terrorist or organised crime organisations could step, putting a security threat on Australia’s doorstep. More recently, reviving the theme of ‘strategic denial’, a number of commentators have been examining the emergence of closer relations between island nations and states that could challenge Australian influence, such as Fiji’s growing relationship with China.<sup>12</sup>

### **The view from the region**

In recent years, a number of South Pacific states have consistently raised their concerns, notably through the Pacific Islands Forum, seeking a collective and thus stronger voice on the real difficulties they face in terms of environmental protection, fishery and resource security, and increasingly transnational crime issues.<sup>13</sup> From their perspective, Australia listens but has a patchy record of taking tangible action to address the issues.

Environmental issues are particularly of concern to the low-lying island states, already affected by climate change and rising sea levels. In opposition, the Australian Labor Party produced a report titled 'Our Drowning Neighbours'<sup>14</sup> in 2006, which called for a stronger focus by Australia on the climate change concerns of the affected states. When Labor won the 2007 election, it immediately ratified the Kyoto Treaty, which was well received in the region.<sup>15</sup> In 2009, the Pacific Islands Forum agreed a 'call to action' on climate change, the detail of which showed Australian influence. Since then, however, there has been little evidence of significant progress.

Most of the Pacific island nations have significant fishery resources, including globally significant stocks of tuna. However, their ability to benefit appropriately from those resources is limited by their ability to fully regulate and enforce their exclusive economic zones through effective maritime surveillance and enforcement capability. Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing has been estimated to cost the Pacific islands nations as much as US\$1.7 billion of lost licensing revenue each year, which is nearly 40 per cent of the value of the regional catch.<sup>16</sup> Here, Australia is in full agreement with the Pacific states, and actively supports their efforts with real measures, including the 'Pacific Patrol Boat' program.

The Pacific islands are relatively sparsely populated, with isolated coastlines and limited policing. About 8 per cent of the land is arable. Their geographic position between Asia and South America potentially makes them attractive places to tranship illegal drugs, with contraband and money flowing in both directions. The UN office on drugs and crime has reported that fishing vessels, with their legitimate presence at sea and distribution networks—but often opaque ownership and lack of supervision—have often been key enablers in the smuggling of drugs, guns and people.<sup>17</sup>

Australia's security interests align very closely with the Pacific island nations on transnational crime, with Australia putting real resources on the ground and seeking to strengthen regional cooperation and structures. From a Pacific nation viewpoint, some of Australia's responses and initiatives have seemed heavy handed, with Australia rather too keen on initiating criminal proceedings against certain government members and officials. Such incidents immediately hit the headlines, and the public as well as private rhetoric on both sides inevitably strains inter-governmental relations.

Clearly, Australia holds many interests in common with the Pacific island nations themselves. But there are some differences between what the island members want to achieve from a regional forum and Australia's goals. A good example was the 'Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration', known simply as the Pacific Plan, which was endorsed at the 2005 Pacific Islands Forum meeting.<sup>18</sup>

As the 'master strategy for regional integration and coordination in the Pacific', it was cast as 'a regional response to the challenges that Pacific island countries face'.<sup>19</sup> Initiated largely by Australia and NZ, the concept is based on four pillars: economic growth, good governance, security and sustainable development, and was an attempt to galvanise the Pacific island response, with implementation meant to be taken by members, supported by development partners and other stakeholders. Arguably, however, the Pacific Plan has done little to enhance Australia's influence in the region.<sup>20</sup>

## Australian intervention

Australia wants a stable region, where the Pacific island nations will continue to mature into peaceful and democratic counties with sound economies. The key enablers are seen as a representative government committed to improving health and education, and maintaining law and order, thereby inspiring external investment in trade and industry, including the sustainable exploitation of natural resources for the good of the nation and its people.<sup>21</sup>

In furthering these aims, Australia has actively encouraged good governance and sustainable economic development in individual nations, as well as the collaborative benefits deriving from membership of regional bodies. It has also promoted the aims through its aid assistance program and, increasingly, through bilateral partnerships tailored to the different needs of each nation. However, when considered necessary, Australia has been prepared to intervene unilaterally, although it has been careful not to appear too willing to do so; it has also preferred that there be a regional and/or international mandate for any such intervention.

By way of example, Australia has a long history of extensive diplomatic engagement with PNG—and has provided considerable training and support for the PNG Defence Force over many decades. But the civil war in Bougainville had been running for 5 years before there was any direct Australian intervention. When Australian troops finally deployed to Bougainville, it was as part of an unarmed peacekeeping mission, alongside personnel from NZ, Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu, to monitor the UN-mandated Bougainville peace accords.<sup>22</sup>

Earlier, at the 2000 Pacific Island Forum summit—against a regional context of the Fijian *coup d'état* and internal conflict in the Solomon Islands—the leaders had held a closed-door negotiating session and framed the 'Biketawa Declaration', which called for the Forum to 'constructively address difficult and sensitive issues', and set out a series of guidelines that could inform regional responses to crises that might arise.<sup>23</sup>

From an Australian perspective this shift was welcome, as it was a key step in legitimising future military, police and civilian deployments, often including significant numbers of Australian and NZ personnel. Then Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer hailed the declaration as 'a milestone in Forum relations'.<sup>24</sup> The declaration was used to sanction subsequent regional peacekeeping and stabilisation operations—all of which involved an Australian contribution—in the Solomon Islands from 2003, Nauru from 2004 to 2009, and Tonga in 2006.

### *Intervention in the Solomon Islands*

The 'Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands' (RAMSI) in 2003 serves as a useful case study of external intervention, including subsequent stabilisation and nation-building efforts, and the effect of such interventions on Australia's influence in the region.

The initial objective of the intervention was to restore law and order, including removing weapons from the various militias and gangs. This was largely successful, allowing the military component to be largely drawn down in early 2004, leaving a regional mission of about 200 police supported by a smaller military contingent, and a contingent of public servants.

Among the people of the Solomon Islands, there has been a consistent level of popular support for the intervention. In a 2011 survey, 86 per cent of respondents supported the

RAMSI presence; 65 per cent were of the opinion that the Solomon Islands was not ready for RAMSI to leave, and 58 per cent thought that it would be at least another 5 years before that time came.<sup>25</sup>

The RAMSI mission has set an expectation within the region that Australia can and will be prepared to lead such interventions, and can be expected to contribute the majority of the funding, as well as uniformed and public service personnel as appropriate. Australia's leadership of RAMSI has been generally well received and has probably increased Australia's reputation and influence in the region, notwithstanding the considerable cost and the setting of a perhaps unintended precedent.

### ***Fiji as a case study***

Fiji's central location and abundant natural resources have always made it an important player in the South Pacific. Its ability to exert regional influence was further augmented by the creation in the early 1980s of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), a new sub-regional grouping of the four Melanesian states (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS), a pro-independence party in New Caledonia.<sup>26</sup> Its role as a counterweight to Australian influence has taken on even greater significance since the Fijian coup in 2006 and Fiji's suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum in 2009.

In assessing the Australian Government's response to the coup, it is clear that the responses employed to date have failed to achieve their aim. Despite pressure from Australia—and additional pressure imposed by the Commonwealth's decision to suspend Fiji in September 2009—Prime Minister Bainimarama remains resolute that new elections will not be held until 2014.<sup>27</sup> Australia's failure to coerce the Fijian government into holding elections reflects poorly on its reputation and diplomatic influence within the region but also as a 'middle power' seeking a temporary seat on the UN Security Council.<sup>28</sup>

Initially, the majority of Australia's traditional partners supported its policy towards Fiji. However, there are signs that this support is wavering and that, increasingly, the Australian Government risks becoming isolated in its position. Australia's stance has arguably impaired its relations with PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. And the dispute has given those Pacific island states which already had doubts about Australia's motives towards the region a further issue on which to voice their unease. None of that is useful for Australia's strategic interests, particularly at a time when other major players are taking increasing interest in the region.

## **The other major players**

### ***China***

The past decade has seen a notable challenge to Australian influence in the South Pacific from China, as well as a resurgence of interest from the US. Some Pacific island leaders have argued that foreign assistance is not a 'zero-sum game' and that increased aid, trade and investment from China and Taiwan neither exclude the influence of Australia and NZ nor preclude US re-engagement in the region.<sup>29</sup> While Australian economic and diplomatic influence has not been excluded, it may have been eroded by the 'soft power' use of aid by other nations.

The motivation for China's increased interest in the South Pacific can only be speculated and, given that Beijing does not publish official aid statistics, quantitative estimates relating to its aid program are largely indicative. Moreover, any figures reported are likely to be an underestimate given that much of China's overseas investment is conducted by state-owned and -subsidised enterprises, which does not necessarily reflect in official statistics.

Initially, and particularly in the mid 1990s, China's agenda no doubt related to blocking similar moves by Taiwan, as well as garnering the support of a bloc of votes in influential international organisations such as the UN. Since 2009, this has been augmented by the desire to secure supplies of raw materials and sales markets to sustain China's economic growth.<sup>30</sup>

China now has more diplomats than any other country in the South Pacific (although Australia has more diplomatic missions) and more than 3000 Chinese state-owned and private enterprises have been registered in the Pacific region.<sup>31</sup> Collectively, these enterprises are estimated to be worth around A\$2 billion (having increased from ±A\$800 million in 2006) including in energy production, garment factories, fishing and logging operations, plantations, hotels, restaurants and grocery stores.<sup>32</sup> Two key investments are the US\$1 billion Ramu nickel mine in PNG and a new bauxite mine in Fiji, both Chinese owned.

The governments of the largest Pacific island countries—PNG, Fiji and the Solomon Islands—have welcomed investment from China and Taiwan as part of their 'look north' foreign policies. PNG and the Solomon Islands, whose exports of timber to China grew by 26 and 29 per cent respectively in 2006, run large trade surpluses with China.<sup>33</sup> Its investments in PNG include mining, logging, gas production and tuna processing. Chinese demand for timber has fuelled large-scale illegal logging in Indonesia and PNG.<sup>34</sup> And China operates a large tuna fishing fleet in Fijian waters and has agreed to help develop a hydroelectric power plant.

The Chinese approach to aid to the South Pacific follows the example set in earlier decades by Japan. Like Tokyo, Beijing is keen on 'showpieces', notably large public buildings and sports stadiums, where the donor typically builds the project, hands over the key and leaves after the opening ceremony, with no responsibility for future maintenance or operation. China is now considered to be the third largest aid donor to the region (after Australia and the US), with an annual aid budget of ±US\$200 million.<sup>35</sup> That figure does not take into account in-kind support, including scholarships, training and technical assistance. By comparison, Australia's development assistance budget was >A\$1 billion in 2010/11.

Chinese assistance consists mostly of loans, infrastructure development and large construction projects which, unlike Australian aid, are free from conditions (the one exception being adherence by receiving countries to the 'one-China' policy of non-recognition of Taiwan). The lack of conditions accompanying Chinese aid is particularly problematic from the Australian Government's perspective as it has the potential to frustrate Australia's efforts to link the provision of development aid to improved governance. A recent example is Fiji, where Chinese aid has complicated attempts by Australia and NZ to tie aid to reforms and a process for the return of a democratically-elected government.

The medium- to long-term consequences of the increased influence of China is debatable. However, it is likely that any increase in strategic rivalry between China and the US would, to some degree, exacerbate regional instability.<sup>36</sup> From an Australian Government perspective, there perhaps are two choices: increase aid in an attempt to counter Chinese influence and

persuade Pacific island governments to adopt policies it sees as best for the region; or work cooperatively with China and the South Pacific states to deliver development that benefits and preserves all parties' national interests through a degree of compromise.<sup>37</sup>

### ***The United States***

Revitalised US interest in the region is also important to note. Speaking in Honolulu in January 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton discussed the Obama Administration's intent to revitalise the US' relationship with the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>38</sup> In November 2011, President Barack Obama stated in his address to the Australian Parliament that his goal was to ensure 'the US will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future'.<sup>38</sup> The goal, according to National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, is to promote US interests by ensuring that 'international law and norms be respected, that commerce and freedom of navigation are not impeded, that emerging powers build trust with their neighbours, and that disagreements are resolved peacefully without threats or coercion'.<sup>40</sup>

Underlying the 'pivot' is a belief that the centre of gravity for US foreign policy, national security and economic interests has shifted towards Asia, and that US strategy and priorities need to be adjusted accordingly. For many observers, it is imperative that the US gives more emphasis to the Asia-Pacific. Indeed, for years, a number of countries in the region have encouraged the US to step up its activities to provide a balance to China's rising influence.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the reassertion of US engagement in the South Pacific is unlikely to be just about China. The US is reluctant to openly criticise Australia's handling of regional relations. But it is clear that there are genuine doubts about Australia's capacity to lead regional opinion on relations with China, as well as concerns over Australia's wider approach in the region, both of which are seen as unhelpful to US interests in the Pacific.<sup>42</sup> In a 2011 report, Richard Herr and Anthony Bergin contended that:

The US is taking on a more direct role in protecting its own interests in the region, just as it did in the mid to late 1980s when it felt that managing Cold War challenges in the Pacific Islands was beyond the capacity of Australia and New Zealand.<sup>43</sup>

Notwithstanding the underlying rationale behind the change in US policy, its increased influence is already being felt across the region. For example, Washington dispatched an unprecedented number of senior officials to the 2011 Pacific Islands Forum leaders' summit. Deputy Secretary of State Tom Nides and Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell headed the delegation, which included some 50 personnel from the White House, Departments of State, Defense and Commerce, the US Agency for International Development, the Coast Guard and the Peace Corps, in addition to the US ambassadors from Fiji, PNG, Palau, Australia and NZ,<sup>44</sup> who together conducted more than 110 meetings with representatives of other governments.<sup>45</sup>

While the US is not explicitly seeking to erode Australia's influence in the region, the potential impact of Washington's re-engagement in the region cannot be ignored.

### **Bilateral relations: aid and trade**

The Pacific islands include some of the poorest and least developed nations in the world. Almost all the Pacific island nations have found it challenging to sustainably exploit their natural resources and use the proceeds effectively. Where onshore natural resources have



existed, the 'resource curse' has too often seen unprincipled or unsustainable exploitation as in, for example, Nauru's exhausted phosphates and the imminent end of logging in the Solomon Islands. In some places, intensive mining has led to perceived inequalities, unrest and a combination of corruption and a 'compensation' (or extortion) culture, with the clearest examples coming from Bougainville and the southern highlands in PNG.

Annual GDP per capita is low, ranging from around US\$1,200 in the Solomon Islands and PNG to US\$3,600 in Fiji, compared to around US\$46,000 in Australia and US\$29,000 in NZ.<sup>46</sup> One important but highly variable source of income to families and clans is from the export of labour, notably involving Tonga and Samoa, where remittances account for 39 and 23 per cent of GDP respectively. Fiji similarly now has 15 per cent of its population living overseas. The Melanesian countries generally have much lower levels of remittances but these could rise if there were greater opportunities for labour migration, particularly to Australia.<sup>47</sup>

Rapidly growing and urbanising populations, particularly in Melanesia, are making the development challenges greater. The relatively large Melanesian populations of PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are forecast to double (from the 2000 level) by 2050.<sup>48</sup> Sustained population growth is creating a 'youth bulge', adding to demand for already inadequate health and education services.<sup>49</sup> In a number of countries, poverty has gone backwards, with the number of people living below national poverty lines having increased in Fiji, PNG and Samoa.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, it was predicted in 2006 that urban poverty would become 'the most important development in the Pacific over the coming decade'.<sup>51</sup>

## *Aid*

The Pacific islands have received more international aid, on a per capita basis, than any other region of the world.<sup>52</sup> While that aid has provided considerable development assistance, it clearly has not been able to markedly improve the underlying issues for the more severely challenged nations. Australia contributes more than half of all overseas development assistance, with only the contributions from Japan, France, US and probably China on anyway near the same scale (and the French and US programs are heavily weighted to their territories and states).<sup>53</sup>

Following an independent review of Australian aid effectiveness carried out in 2011,<sup>54</sup> the Government accepted nearly all of the report recommendations and recast the strategic objective of the aid program as follows:

The fundamental objective of Australian aid is to help people overcome poverty. We work to improve the lives of those living in conditions far below what Australians find acceptable. We focus our resources and effort on areas of national interest, and where Australia can make a real difference.<sup>55</sup>

The overall Australian aid program is forecast to grow from 0.35 per cent of gross national income to 0.5 per cent by the end of 2016, even after the 2012 federal budget slowed the rate of growth in the aid budget.<sup>56</sup> Aid to the Pacific and Asia currently accounts for 70 per cent of Australia's aid budget, although the forward program will see funding to Africa almost double by 2015-16, with more modest growth in other regions. While this expansion of aid to Africa is presumably largely related to Australia's bid to secure a seat on the UN Security Council, Australia's longer-term national interest would arguably be better served by increasing aid to its immediate region.

Moreover, while the 'Pacific Partnerships for Development' initiative, unveiled as the 'Port Moresby Declaration' in March 2008 was presented as a fundamental rethink of Australia's development assistance strategy, the fact remains that the majority of power and influence in international aid relationships remains with the donor. This was well illustrated in the words of then PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare in 2003, indicating how he viewed such an imbalance in power:

[Australia's] aid money is totally controlled by them. They decide how much money they want to spend on PNG and on what projects. They keep the money in Australia. They manage it through AusAID. They appoint their own companies in Australia to manage the projects. They decide on who carries out the projects.<sup>57</sup>

It is very rare for such views to be publically expressed. However, it shows that in the minds of the Pacific islanders at least, there is a fine line between dominance and partnership.<sup>58</sup>

## ***Trade***

Australia has consistently encouraged the island nations to organise and liberalise trading arrangements among themselves and with Australia and the rest of the world. Under the 1980 'South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement' (SPARTECA), most Forum members obtained preferential access to the markets of the Australia and NZ. However, the comparative advantage to the island countries reduced over time as Australia and NZ concluded similar arrangements with other countries outside of the region. In 2001, the Forum endorsed the 'Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations' (PACER), which established 'a framework for cooperation leading over time to the development of a single regional market'.<sup>59</sup>

Australia has recognised the scale of the challenge for the Pacific island nations and, to its credit, has publicly acknowledged that:

Australia's approach to the PACER Plus negotiations is different to that taken in traditional free trade agreement negotiations. Australia's primary objective is to promote the economic development of Forum Island Countries through greater regional trade and economic integration.<sup>60</sup>

Parliamentary Secretary for Development Assistance Bob McMullan summarised Australia's interests when he said in a radio interview in 2011 that:

This is not about Australia, there's nothing in [PACER Plus] for us, we think it's good for the region. And it is an initiative that we want to extend because it is beneficial to reduce poverty in the region ... it doesn't have any economic significance for us; it's just good for the region as a whole and that's why we're doing it.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a clear risk that through its economic strength and influence, Australia might negotiate a PACER Plus deal that looks right for the region, and fair to all parties, but which in its detailed implementation may have thoroughly negative implications for the Pacific island states, and thus Australia's reputation in the region.

## Conclusion

The South Pacific continues to play an important role in Australian security thinking, with a stable neighbourhood being seen as critical to Australia's wider strategic interests. In support of this goal, Australian Government policies for the region emphasise security, economic development and the provision of aid. In the execution of these policies, Australia is cognisant of respecting the 'Pacific way' and has, for the most part, been wary when directly intervening in the internal affairs of its smaller neighbours, preferring to retain regional influence through collaborative initiatives.

Membership of the Pacific Islands Forum has allowed Australia to better understand the issues facing its South Pacific neighbours and, subsequently, to influence the way ahead via both national leader engagements and the wide range of specialist supporting bodies. However, as evidenced in its advocacy of the Pacific Plan, Australia does not always get it right. The relatively recent initiative to focus on bilateral relations through the 'Pacific Partnerships' program is probably better policy, although with both arrangements now running in parallel, they are demanding attention and staff capacity that the smallest nations simply do not have. Arguably, Australia is at risk of overwhelming its Pacific audience in a storm of meetings, plans, partnerships and new initiatives.

Australia's central role in the region has been complicated by significant and dynamic changes in regional geopolitics. The increasing influence of China and the acrimonious dispute with Fiji are the most visible developments, and have served, both domestically and globally, to raise serious questions about Australia's continuing influence in the region. China's growing engagement in the region has given the Pacific island nations new confidence and diplomatic assertiveness. They have new potential sources of foreign direct investment and offers of bilateral development aid, both of which come with no immediate strings attached.

The growth of Chinese influence in the region has contributed to the US 'pivot' back to the Pacific. US regional engagement is expanding, including diplomacy with the Pacific Islands Forum and with Fiji, potentially undermining Australia's stance. In this newly-contested diplomatic and strategic environment, Australia will have to work hard and reassess the effectiveness of its current policies if it hopes even to maintain its traditional influence in the region. To increase its influence, it will need to do much more.

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## NOTES

1. This is an abridged version of a paper by the same title developed by the author while attending the Defence and Strategic Studies course at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College, in 2012. The original paper will shortly be available on the Australian Defence College website, published as a Commander's Paper: see <<http://www.defence.gov.au/adcc/>>.
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5. An example is Australia's 'Defence Cooperation Program', which provides considerable and welcomed support for the security and development of Pacific island nations, including particularly (but not limited to) the 'Pacific Patrol Boat program'.
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7. Lum and Vaughn, *The South West Pacific*, p. 20
8. Elsinia Wainwright, 'Responding to State Failure – the Case of Australia and Solomon Islands', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3, November 2003, p. 485.
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16. Sam Bateman and Anthony Bergin, *Staying the Course: Australia and Maritime Security in the South Pacific*, ASPI: Canberra, 2011, p. 6.
17. Cited in Bateman and Bergin, *Staying the Course*, pp. 6-7.
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# Towards an Expeditionary Army

Lieutenant Colonel Ian D. Langford, DSC, Australian Army

Word came on May 27 that another revolution was in full swing at Bluefields on the east coast of Nicaragua. We received orders to leave at 0830 hours that morning and by 1130 hours we were on our way to go—two hundred and fifty officers and men. Mrs Butler had gone to do some shopping. When she returned at noon, I was gone.

Smedley D. Butler, US Marine Corps<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Defining national security priorities is a difficult and problematic challenge, particularly in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world. Australia's national security involves a dynamic group of internal and external pressures and risks. In part, the defence of Australia has always relied on its advantages as a result of geography (on the rims of both the Pacific and Indian Oceans), geo-political ideology (manifestly demonstrated through alliances and security treaties) and economic ability to resource sensible and appropriate defence strategies that maximise capability, particularly considering Australia's very small population compared to other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Traditional threats, as well as emergent security challenges, such as piracy and trans-national crime, now compete in seeking to access or influence Australian interests throughout the vast land, maritime and air approaches. The Australian Government, in its development of Defence White Papers since 2000, has focused significantly, if not predominantly, on Australia's maritime security as integral to sovereign defence.<sup>2</sup> The White Papers have described a fundamentally maritime strategy by affirming Australia's core defence priority as the defence of Australia against direct attack.<sup>3</sup> This core task requires, as outlined in the 2009 Defence White Paper, the capacity for the ADF to:

... act independently where we have unique strategic interests at stake, and in relation to which we would not wish to be reliant on the combat forces of any foreign power; lead military coalitions where we have shared strategic interests at stake with others, and in relation to which we would be willing to accept a leadership role, in part to compensate for the limited capacity or engagement of others; and make tailored contributions to military coalitions where we share wider strategic interests with others and are willing to accept a share of the burden in securing those interests.<sup>4</sup>

It is expected that the 2013 Defence White Paper will reinforce Australia's principle focus for national defence on the 'primary operational environment'—or better termed the 'strategic centre'—the air-sea gap north of Australia that traces the archipelagic line and surrounding waters from northern Australia to Southeast Asia. If this is reaffirmed, Australia must be able to operate and project military power into the 'strategic centre' by possessing:

... the strategic agility to respond to more than one event, especially given [the ADF's] experience on the often extended duration of many regional operational commitments to date.<sup>5</sup>

These tasks—and the uncertainty of the timing and location of future missions—require the Australian Army to become an ‘expeditionary Army’, capable of operating as part of a joint force in the context of a maritime strategy. For the purposes of this article, an expedition is defined as ‘a military operation conducted by an armed force to achieve a specific objective in a foreign country’.<sup>6</sup> An ‘expeditionary Army’ is therefore a:

... joint deployable land force, inherently modular and scalable, that is inter-operative and surge-capable, with the ability to sustain, terminate and transition combat actions to a non-military lead.<sup>7</sup>

Yet evolving into an expeditionary force is not an easily-achieved outcome. Armies all over the world struggle with balancing the requirements of remaining capable of continental defence, ‘air-land battle’ (originally an attritional counter-Soviet concept), peacekeeping and providing support to non-military functions, such as policing, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

As the Australian Army shifts from its current operating paradigm to a more expeditionary-orientated force, it is necessary for it to consider what guiding principles it must follow (in addition to the traditional principles of war) as it shapes itself into the Australian Army of the future. As a first step, this article proposes that the Australian Army should embrace four ‘expeditionary principles’ to assist its evolution into an expeditionary force.

### **Principle 1: operating methodologies**

The military forms one of four elements of Australia’s national power. Diplomacy, information, the military and economic power are the resources that give Australia its ability to influence the international system and enforce its sovereignty. The military (and therefore the Army) will almost certainly be subordinate to a diplomatic, informational or economic policy objective in any conflict or undertaking. This acknowledges the obvious point that military force is not the sole means to provide security or to defeat Australia’s adversaries. However, the military component of national power is vastly capable, relative to other governmental stakeholders.

While the Army is primarily designed for conventional combat (and must retain this vital skill), it nonetheless has the essential skills, personnel and materiel to successfully perform other ‘non-core’ functions in support of a diplomatic, informational or economic policy objective. Examples include security support in support of a national election (diplomatic), the promotion of a military alliance, giving Australia access to science and technology (informational) and security support for economic forums, such as APEC (economic). Almost all Australia’s future military commitments will involve all core elements of national power. Interoperability and integration of all these elements must be achieved if Australia is to effectively shape its security environment.

An expeditionary Army must be able to operate as part of an integrated element within the national security framework. As part of the joint force, Army must contribute to the ‘all-of-nation’ system of emergency preparedness and response mechanism that forms part of any strategic response to an attack on sovereignty. Contributions from Army covering prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery force options would be expected as part of this national response. Army can contribute through a combination of warfighting, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, disaster relief and international engagement skills, either as the ‘supported’ element (such as in a declared conflict) or as a ‘supporting’ element (such as the provision of disaster relief within a diplomatic response option).



An example of Army supporting a non-military element of national power was the ADF's response to the 2004 Asian tsunami. Known in American parlance as a 'Phase 0' operation, Army—as part of a joint effort—contributed to an 'all-of-nation' (involving whole-of-government, as well as non-government organisations) relief operation in Asia in the wake of the tsunami that killed and injured several hundred thousand people. 'Phase 0' activities are defined by the US Department of Defense's Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operations Planning*, as the:

... conduct of shaping actions that are designed to influence both governments and people in order to encourage and deter them towards addressing problems issues before they become significant security problems.<sup>8</sup>

These operations are characterised by the provision of support to other nations in assisting them in maintaining their own security and enforcing their own rule of law. This may include support in the form of mentoring and training by various government departments and agencies, and the provision of specialised skills and technologies, as well as the sponsorship of personnel in essential skills training to enable them to address various challenges through locally-designed plans and solutions. It may also include the provision of targeted development and infrastructure aid, including health care, education, micro-finance and local government initiatives. In all these areas, Army—as part of a whole-of-government or all-of-nation effort—must contribute if it is to form a relevant component of Australia's ability to manage security challenges throughout its strategic centre of gravity.

## **Principle 2: 'single battle concept'**

The 'single-battle' concept describes the acknowledgement of the connection between all actions throughout the operating environment (the adage that 'actions anywhere mean effects everywhere').<sup>9</sup> In this construct, commanders view the battlespace in its entirety, understanding its inter-connectedness and that military operations are not unique to a time and a place. This unifies all planning towards a single goal and directs the entire power and synergy of the force towards the achievement of the common objective.

Importantly, the 'single-battle' philosophy allows commanders to extend their design 'inside and outside' any declared military operation. It allows them to 'operationalise' all actions in preparing the operating environment throughout periods of peace and then to continue to positively influence this space post conflict, through indirect actions such as security dialogues, training serials and alliance development.

The concept recognises the notion of 'persistent conflict', requiring an acceptance that the international system (lately characterised by nation-states acting in their own self-interest) concurrently hosts elements of peace, conflict and war. It in turn means that all actors within the system should expect to be simultaneously challenged by the need to manage elements of peace, conflict and war (like a 'three-block' war, albeit at the nation-state level), requiring active foreign policy and possible military commitments in order for that state to maintain an element of positive control.<sup>10</sup>

The conduct of all Army actions inside the strategic centre (including international engagement) must therefore adopt a single-battle concept approach—and work towards making it more agile and capable of operating throughout the region, regardless of the current security state.

This would be achieved principally through the maintenance of a high-readiness expeditionary joint force, the regular conduct of combined training events (aimed at benchmarking, providing security force assistance or interfacing with other military partners), key leader engagement (such as military-to-military dialogues) and support assistance (such as humanitarian and disaster relief assistance).

As Army increasingly operates throughout Australia's strategic centre, it must continue to contribute to the development of deeper relationships with allied and other foreign forces, as well as improve Army's contribution to joint expeditionary manoeuvre across all environmental domains, including space and cyber domains.

The Army's existing transformational efforts (such as 'Adaptive Campaigning: Army's Future Land Operating Concept'<sup>11</sup>) are consistent with the single-battle concept and evolution towards an expeditionary force. The creation of modular Army formations (as described within 'Plan Beersheba') provides responsive, multi-role organisations that can be tailored and scaled to respond to unforeseen contingencies.

A re-balancing of capabilities between the active and reserve components of the Army will also add flexibility to Army, ensuring more of the force is expeditionary-capable, regardless of its readiness notice or position in the Army force-generation cycle. The effects of this will also have obvious benefits for training, personnel management and materiel systems.

### **Principle 3: fuse command and control, and integrate intelligence and communication systems**

All Army headquarters, from battle group level and above, must be capable of commanding and controlling joint forces. They must be campaign-capable, meaning an ability to command and coordinate the full spectrum of tasks required within the framework of a multi-dimensional conflict, including warfighting, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid distribution and disaster relief, and support to other agencies as a supporting component to non-military action.

But is it possible to better enhance the current ADF command and control systems to make them more suited to expeditionary operations? In considering this, Army should ponder the following additional questions. Is there still a need to maintain 'environmental compency' in operations or is there a better way of organising command and control? Is it still necessary to think in terms of strategic, operational and tactical levels of command, or can these now be compressed? And to what extent can command and control be geographically separated in the networked era?

These questions are difficult to ponder, let alone answer. But what is clear is that in any expeditionary force, command and control systems must be capable of certain core functions in their exercise of the command, leadership and management of the deployed joint force.

As a minimum, and in some ways as a means to address the aforementioned questions, it is worth validating our current system against the requirements of any modern command and control architecture, namely:

- **Global command and control systems** capable of providing an integrated and automated information system for strategic and operational commanders, joint force commanders and tactical commanders;

- **Manoeuvre control systems** that provide a universal ‘common operating picture’, decision support tools and geographic overlay capabilities that interface with other battlespace awareness systems in support of an integrated, ‘on-the-move’ and timely information system that services the needs of combat, combat support and combat service support force elements;
- **Combat service support control systems** that provide quality automated combat service support information (including all classes of supply, field services, maintenance, medical, personnel and movements);
- **Advanced field artillery tactical data systems** as a fully integrated fire support system, giving the fire support coordinator automated support for planning, coordinating, controlling and executing close support, counter-interdiction and suppression of enemy air defences;
- **Air and missile defence planning and control systems** that integrate active and passive air defence, sensors and command-and-control centres into a single system capable of defeating aerial threats (including unmanned aerial vehicles, helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft and other platforms);
- **All source analysis systems**, consisting of evolutionary fusion models that perform system operations management, system security, collection management, intelligence processing and reporting of high-value/high-payoff target processing and nominations, and communications processing and interfacing;
- **Integrated meteorological systems** capable of providing general weather forecasting, severe weather warnings and weather effects analysis; and
- **A digital topographic support system** capable of providing tactical and operational commanders with geospatial information to support terrain and environmental parts of the commander’s visualisation.<sup>12</sup>

These are the minimum functional requirements of any expeditionary command and control system. An additional point to also note is that these systems are critical to achieving the ‘single-battle’ concept as described in the previous principle.

#### **Principle 4: develop the expeditionary mindset**

Being ‘expeditionary’ is, above all else, a mindset. All soldiers must think of themselves as part of a fundamentally deployable organisation capable of being force-projected at little notice. Additionally, soldiers must also maintain an expeditionary mindset by developing a global perspective on issues that relate directly to Australia’s national security. Commanders are primarily responsible for reinforcing the importance of imparting and maintaining this attitude, which can be achieved by a variety of means.

The use of structured, deliberate seminars across all functional commands, from brigade battle group and above, where commanders (including Service-level headquarters) give the opportunity for all ranks to directly and internally communicate to senior personnel is fundamental to mentoring and encouraging the expeditionary mindset. This could be structured as a part of a monthly forum, where personnel can use the opportunity to seek and receive guidance on a variety of issues. It would also embrace the tradition of the ‘Napoleonic corporal’, allowing commanders to receive direct, unadulterated feedback from trusted subordinates, instead of having to rely only on routine staff officers.<sup>13</sup>

The development of the expeditionary mindset can also be achieved through joint professional military education. However, Army must change its leader development processes to grow agile and adaptive leaders, as well as provide appropriate forums and mentoring programs for personnel selected for rapid advancement in critical areas.

Importantly, Army must concentrate on preserving its warfighting functions, as well as ‘up-skill’ its knowledge of the strategic centre and near region through greater emphasis on language (Tok Pisin/Place and Bahasa Indonesian/Malay must be the priority), peer-to-peer relationship development (through initial entry and intermediate professional development courses) and placement of personnel in embassies as part of an increased emphasis on using the Defence Cooperation Program as a means of educating Australian Army personnel, as well as achieving its traditional international policy objectives and outcomes.

Mentoring of leaders could be achieved through the formation of an ‘Advanced Warfighting School’. As much as the current higher Defence Colleges provide an appropriate level of training for senior personnel selected for the highest commands in Army, the current level of joint professional military education at the intermediate level provides only a rudimentary opportunity to teach Army planners how to think as planners with an expeditionary mindset.<sup>14</sup>

At its most basic level, an Advanced Warfighting School could draw four to six personnel from each Service (as well as additional inter-agency and international students) for 12 months and educate them in advanced planning skills. The overall opportunity cost for Army would be predominantly salaries, with the present facilities (and even possibly staff) throughout the Canberra area probably sufficiently capable of absorbing the course without significant additional resourcing.

An Advanced Warfighting School would not supplant the role of the Australian Command and Staff College; it would instead provide Army (and other stakeholders) with a repository of personnel capable of leading difficult planning events throughout the functional commands, in turn proliferating these advanced planning skills throughout Army. It would also give the functional commanders a ‘core’ planning group, as well as diffusing these skills down to and across battle group levels.

## Conclusion

Australia’s national security is determined by a combination of geography, political ideology and economic circumstance. To fulfil its part in Australia’s maritime security strategy, as articulated in every Defence White Paper since 2000, the ADF must do more towards the ambitious and achievable objective of better integrating itself to become a more ‘joint’ force.<sup>15</sup> For the Australian Army, its obligation in meeting this challenge is to become an ‘expeditionary Army’.

In evolving to an expeditionary force, Army should consider adopting four ‘expeditionary principles’ as a first step towards becoming the ‘Army of the future’. These steps, as described in this article, will make Army more expeditionary, more joint, better integrated into the national security architecture, and more relevant to strategists as they consider—particularly in the context of the forthcoming Defence White Paper—how to confront the mixture of traditional and non-traditional security threats that face Australia in the ‘Asia-Pacific century’.

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7. This definition is derived from my own observations of Australia's expeditionary concepts, as well as the experiences and concepts from the UK and US.
8. US Department of Defense Joint Publications 5-0, *Joint Operations Planning*, 2006 defines Phase 0 activities as the 'various interagency activities [that] are performed to dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assure or solidify relationships with friends and allies. They are executed continuously with the intent to enhance international legitimacy and gain multinational cooperation in support of defined national strategic and strategic military objectives. They are designed to assure success by shaping perceptions and influencing the behaviour of both adversaries and allies, developing allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations, improving information exchange and intelligence sharing'.
9. US Marine Corps, *MCWP 5-1- Marine Corps Planning Process*, US Marine Corps: Quantico, 2010, p. 6.
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12. US Department of Defense, *United States Army Field Manual 6-0*, US Army: Washington DC, 2003, Chapter 5: see <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/6-0/chap5.htm>> accessed 18 May 2012.
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14. This statement is an anecdotal conclusion based on my conversations with more than 100 graduates of various Staff Colleges over a number of years. While the Colleges deliver a very good standard of instruction, they do not give students an advanced education in critical military planning skills. Army will require some of its staff to possess these skills if it is to evolve its force into a robust, expeditionary force. It currently does this through the raw talent of its personnel, which may (or may not) be appropriate for the future. It is also worth noting that a number of other first-world militaries do have such advanced warfighting schools; this is something for Army to consider as it seeks to maintain its reputation as an Army that represents 'best practice'.
15. Morrison, 'The Australian Army after Afghanistan'.

# A Joint Training Framework for an Amphibious Capability in the ADF

**Captain Scott Holmes, Australian Army**

## **Introduction**

The arrival of the new landing helicopter dock (LHD) capabilities in 2014 and 2015 will see an increase in the joint training requirement across the ADF, especially between Army and Navy to create an Australian amphibious capability.<sup>1</sup>

The development of this capability provides the opportunity for the ADF to create a significant level of joint force operability. This will be somewhat enhanced from the more traditional level of interaction between the three Services, which has involved cooperation but has often fallen short of true joint operability.<sup>2</sup>

The amphibious capability will be achieved through joint training involving force certification.<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive joint training framework has the potential to enable flexible training, assessment and certification across the three Services through joint training design. Currently, the ADF training framework lacks fidelity and does not provide sufficient detail to enable robust training design. This article offers a perspective on what is required of a framework to support training design and ensure that the ADF's desired level of joint operability is developed effectively and efficiently.

## **Background**

'Certification for deployment' in the ADF is a stated requirement of Commander Joint Operations. Each Service has a requirement to demonstrate certification of individuals and collective force elements deploying on operations. At present, the process for Army and non-Army groups attached to ground force operations occurs through Headquarters 1st Division as the 'mounting authority' in Army.<sup>4</sup>

The amphibious capability is being developed under the command and control of the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ) which, although currently a component of Headquarters 1st Division, is being reinvigorated in both manning and capability as a key element of the joint amphibious capability. As such, it appears likely that Headquarters 1st Division will act as the mounting authority for the collective amphibious capability in the short term, with DJFHQ assuming this role in the near future.

Within this construct, it is likely that the Service capability contributions will be certified individually by each Service under current certification arrangements, with only the joint operability aspect of the force becoming the certification responsibility of DJFHQ.<sup>5</sup>

## The ADF's amphibious training environment

The amphibious training concept developed to date consists of five joint enabled training blocks, supported by single-Service training. The capability will be developed in a rolling, two-year cycle between the Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG) and the smaller Amphibious Readiness Element (ARE), whose smaller capability is developed over three rather than the full five training blocks of the ARG.<sup>6</sup>

Both concepts are being planned to align with existing ADF exercises. The ARG will align the fifth training block to the biannual Talisman Sabre exercise series and the ARE will align the third training block to Army's Hamel exercise series in the alternate year to Talisman Sabre exercises.

There are three macro forms of training available to meet the amphibious capability requirements, namely:

- **Decentralised single-Service training.** Training conducted under extant Service training conditions and standards that do not require interaction with force elements from other Services.
- **Joint enabled training blocks.** Finite periods of time where the required amphibious forces, platforms and capabilities from across the three Services are available to enable specified joint training outcomes.
- **Joint exercises.** Exercises that require interaction between forces, platforms and capabilities from across the three Services to enable training and assessment outcomes for the whole amphibious capability.

The joint training environment required to achieve the amphibious capability is complex. The design of the training concept must broach physical and cultural barriers to interoperability, and efficiently design, align, resource and certify amphibious training. Physical barriers include existing single-Service training, operational and international engagement commitments, platform maintenance schedules and the geographic disposition of the amphibious force elements.

Cultural barriers include the three independent Service means and policies for training, evaluation and certification; inconsistent training terminology between the Services, a lack of detailed capability awareness outside of parent Services and the cross-Service command involved in amphibious decision-making.

The training environment is also limited, which adds to complexity. Two notable examples include the few Australian training areas available for amphibious training at an appropriate scale, particularly given the environmental restrictions within these training areas, and the paucity of key assets such as ship, helicopter and training support staffs because of competing operational, training and maintenance requirements.

The purpose of summarising the amphibious training environment is to set the context that faces amphibious planners. Regardless of the difficulties and complexity that will initially face the ADF, particularly for those charged with the planning and execution of the training, two simple facts remain; the amphibious force will be trained and the amphibious force will be certified. Ensuring that the training and the certification are efficient, aligned and make best use of the three available training mediums is the challenge.



## Certification

Certification in the ADF is a process for verifying the readiness standard of forces prior to deployment on operational service.<sup>7</sup> The process also applies to high-readiness contingency forces. Certification across the ADF is designed around a framework that provides sufficient guidance to align training and assessment to achieve capability (certification) requirements at the Service level.

The extant construct currently works in single-Service environments because the individual Services have extended the framework to meet their respective needs. The system is not well suited to joint capability development, as it is missing key components that define the capability requirement. This is clearly observable in the current land force certification system, which is based on a framework that relies on both joint and Army framework elements to form a complete system.

The amphibious training requirement is unique in ADF certification to date as it requires not just single-Service force elements to reach training proficiency within joint conditions, certified under single-Service arrangements, but it also requires training and certification under joint command, control and operability standards. This places additional requirements on the existing joint training framework to provide a new level of guidance to the three Services that defines the training need, aligns the training effort and provides commonality where required between the distinct Service perspectives.

### *The current system*

To discuss certification in detail, it is important to have a clear definition of the key components that comprise the macro system in which certification currently resides. The definitions listed are joint and Army-focused, as they most closely relate to the proposed training and certification model for the amphibious capability.

- **Mounting authority (joint).** The mounting authority is responsible for the preparation of forces to the level of capability required by the Chief of Joint Operations.
- **Mounting headquarters (joint).** The mounting headquarters is responsible for coordinating the preparations of the deploying force elements and certifying that the desired standards of preparation have been achieved.
- **Mounting objectives (joint).** The operation's mission determines what mounting objectives need to be achieved. The purpose of the mounting process is to confirm the standards achieved during the raise, train and sustain cycle and complete any additional training, including team building. In addition, administrative matters are finalised, including equipment issues and personnel, medical and administration checks
- **Joint certification.** Joint certification is the formal and detailed review of a deploying force element to verify compliance with deployment standards for personnel, equipment and training. Certification is the key outcome of the mounting process
- **Training assessment (Army).** Training assessment is the measurement of individual and force element performance under prescribed conditions to assigned standards.

- **Army certification process.** Once individuals and force elements have been deemed competent through training assessment, they are ready for certification. The process of formally certifying individuals and force elements as 'ready' for force assignment to Commander Joint Operations resides with Commander 1st Division.
- **Australian joint essential tasks.** This is a list of joint operational tasks, linked to ADF capability requirements, which derive the requirements of the ADF in any given mission or contingency.
- **Mission essential tasks (Army).** Mission essential tasks are the system of functional tasks that align to the Army's land combat operational tasks. They in turn align Army to the joint essential tasks, forming a system that allows articulation of land force roles in achieving the prescribed tasks.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation is defined differently by two key references in the Army system:
  - Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Division describes evaluation under the guidance provided by Land Warfare Doctrine 7-1 Collective Training. In this context, evaluation is defined as 'the process to assess and improve the relevance, accuracy and currency of collective training'.<sup>8</sup>
  - Headquarters Forces Command describes evaluation more ambiguously within the context of certification. It asserts that as a general rule, commanders will formally conduct assessment one command level down. This is intended to ensure effective evaluation of command-driven training influences and allow for a manpower-sustainable approach to assessment and evaluation within the resources of appropriate command levels.<sup>9</sup>

The context of evaluating collective training design is important to evolving and improving joint training. As such, this article will use the Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Division definition of evaluation and clearly delineate between evaluation of the training design and the assessment of forces undergoing amphibious training.

- **Assessment (Army).** This is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competency has been achieved. Within the Army context, it involves evaluation occurring 'one-down', as described in the Forces Command definition. For the purposes of this article, assessment is inherent of the assessing authority being the 'one-up' of the force in training and the term 'evaluation' will not be used in this context.
- **Army training levels.** These are a means of defining the scale and capability of a force being generated.
- **Army training standards.** These are a means of defining the operating conditions and level of assessment a force being generated is required to achieve at the designated training level.
- **Mission specific training (Army).** This is the training for directed tasks that delivers the knowledge, skills and attitudes to prepare the individual, team or task force to conduct operations in a specific theatre, role or environment. The content is driven by the mission, environment and threat.
- **Training assurance (Army).** This defines the link between training, capability and resources. It is articulated through clearly-defined training metrics, which allow resource use or the impact of resource deficiency to define capability achievement. The training metric applied by Army is the combination of mission essential tasks and training levels and standards.

The components of the framework described are split between joint and Army elements. The framework currently works for land forces because the joint framework has been extended by Army to include additional key elements of guidance. This guidance is primarily expressed through the development of mission essential tasks, training levels and training standards, supported by clear articulation of responsibilities across the Army command structure.<sup>10</sup>

The joint training framework currently lacks fidelity as a stand-alone system, independent of the three Service means of certification, as it does not provide the additional level of guidance required to easily enable joint certification outcomes. This is problematic in aligning the three Services, as it relies on the application of single-Service extensions to the joint framework and acceptance of any extension by the other two Services. The joint environment is already complex, so adding unnecessary friction does not aid in reducing the complexity.

### ***A joint training framework***

The amphibious capability will extend joint certification requirements beyond single-Service certification into truly joint requirements. Up until now, certification has simply not required certification of the 'joint' aspects of the whole force and, hence, a more detailed level of guidance at a joint level has not been required.

The existing joint training framework provides the intent and requirement for certification. It also provides guidance to the Services about the responsibilities of the mounting headquarters, as well as direction for force element certification requirements. The guidance for certification of joint forces, where the force is required to be certified against joint criteria rather than single-Service criteria within a joint environment, is lacking and provides insufficient information to de-conflict the complexity of the three independent Service perspectives.

The current framework requires review and extension to ensure that it provides robust guidance for joint training design. In particular, three additional components are suggested additions to the current framework, as follows:

- The joint essential tasks or equivalent system be adopted and published to define the joint capability requirement
- An ADF system of training levels be adopted and published, and
- An ADF system of training standards be adopted and published.

Adding these elements to the existing joint training framework provides sufficient guidance to de-conflict Service perspectives on training, readiness and certification, and allow clear articulation and alignment of effort. It is noted that these three elements are suggested as only the start of a holistic joint training framework and not the end game, as additional components will likely be required.

### **Linking certification and training**

Certification includes the readiness of training, equipment and personnel to meet performance requirements for a designated operation or contingency. The achievement of certification within Army has gradually come to represent 'pass' and 'fail' criteria in the minds of many personnel and forces deploying on operational service. This has led to a negative perception of certification as a barrier.

Negative connotations are reinforced by a distinct sense of separation between force training, force assessment and certification; a perception that positions certification as a final barrier or 'gate' post training, rather than as an integral component of the Army training continuum. This perception reinforces the gap between certification and training design in Army, creating a risk that joint training design for the amphibious capability will similarly position assessment and certification as elements distinct from training, rather than as an integral component. This is certainly not the intent of the Army training continuum.

Ideally, the training aims, assessment metrics and certification aims for any force undergoing mission specific training should be aligned in a single continuum, ensuring that the required capability is being developed and resourced efficiently. Achieving alignment of the certification and training requires sound training design that embodies progressive assessment, set within a sound training design framework.

### Training design

The Defence training model is the ADF system for designing and implementing joint training. The model defines five phases as shown in Figure 1.<sup>11</sup>

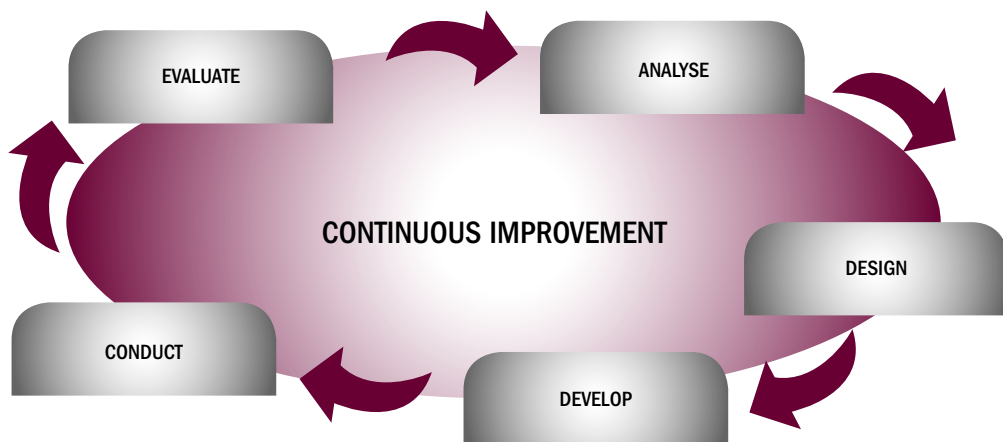


Figure 1: The Defence training model

The design phase involves making decisions about what is to be done, when and where, by whom, with what resources, and how the outcomes are to be measured and evaluated. It is during the design phase of the amphibious training concept that the fidelity of training requirements need to be made clear to the three Services. The amphibious training design is being developed through Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Division and, to date, has involved a series of engagement workshops/conferences with key stakeholders.<sup>12</sup>

## Designing amphibious training

Sound training design at the joint level has the potential to overcome some of the joint environment complexity through alignment of amphibious training. In order to overcome these complexities and enable flexible training design at Service level, the following key alignments are required:

- Alignment of single-Service training readiness standards to joint training block requirements
- Alignment and scheduling of joint training blocks to enable sufficient time for single-Service training, and
- Alignment of training block objectives to meet assessment and certification requirements.

The output from the first step of the training model (analyse) is a training requirement specification. It informs the design phase of the training model. The complexity of the amphibious training design compared to single-Service training design requirements will likely make the 'analyse and design' phases iterative, allowing additions as the Services analyse and develop their single-Service requirements.

It is therefore important that a joint training framework be established to provide a backbone architecture against which the joint training model can be developed. Based on the requirements developed to prepare and certify land force elements, the following minimum requirements of a training requirement specification are suggested as follows:

- **Defined training environment.** A clearly defined training environment for the amphibious force element encompassing the following components:
  - Joint essential tasks or equivalent system to define the capability output requirement
  - A defined training level for the amphibious force from which to determine the joint and single-Service training requirements, and
  - A defined training standard for the amphibious force to provide context to the training, assessment and certification of the whole force and its subordinate force elements.
- **Defined training requirement.** A clearly stated training requirement for each of the five proposed joint enabled training blocks. Each block should have the following information defined through the iterative training requirement specification and training design processes:
  - The training intent for each block, clearly articulated through purpose, method and end-state
  - The joint essential tasks that each block contributes to achieving, including the appropriate training level and standard for each force element. This will require a progressive deconstruction of the tasks from block five casting backwards to block one, providing measurable outcomes for training and assessment within each block, that is, into Service-directed mission essential tasks by Army and potentially 'readiness levels' by Navy and RAAF,
  - The appropriate training level and standard for the whole force and each subordinate force element in order to contextualise training and assessment within each block, and
  - A statement of critical resources by Service that enable each joint training block to achieve its intended training outcomes. In this context, the critical resources are the physical capabilities from each Service that form or enable joint training of the amphibious capability.

- **Scheduling.** A statement of the constraints, limitations and freedoms afforded to planners with regards to known ADF commitments and platform maintenance requirements, allowing efficient use of existing ADF training opportunities and efficient scheduling of training.

From this information, each Service should be capable of defining a clear single-Service training requirement for each individual force element that comprises the amphibious capability. This work has been done to some extent, defining the five training blocks and a macro time-scale. The current planning has progressed into training design, however, the complexity of the training requirement reinforces the less linear and more iterative approach required between the analysis and design phases of the training model.

### Training design within a joint training framework

The joint training framework requirements discussed in this article are intended to provide centralised control at the joint level and clear guidance to the three Services to allow decentralised execution. Creating a prescriptive framework at the joint level enables flexible training design by the three Services and breaks down much of the complexity experienced by planners currently attempting to find solutions to the amphibious problem that encompass the requirements of all three Services.

The purpose, training outcomes, conditions and standards of each joint enabled training block within the amphibious training concept are critical information to determining the single-Service training requirements. This information is what allows flexibility at the single-Service level and provides unity of purpose during the joint training block periods.

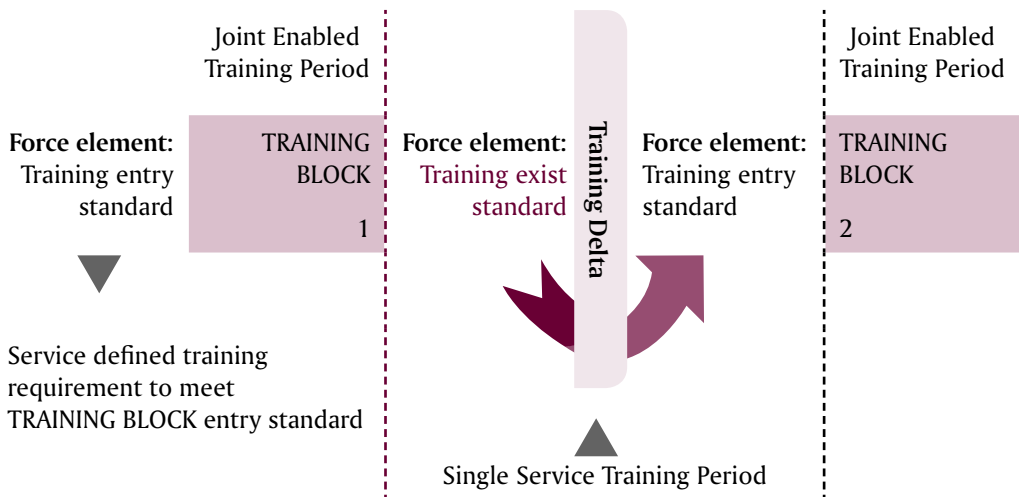


Figure 2: Training design concept

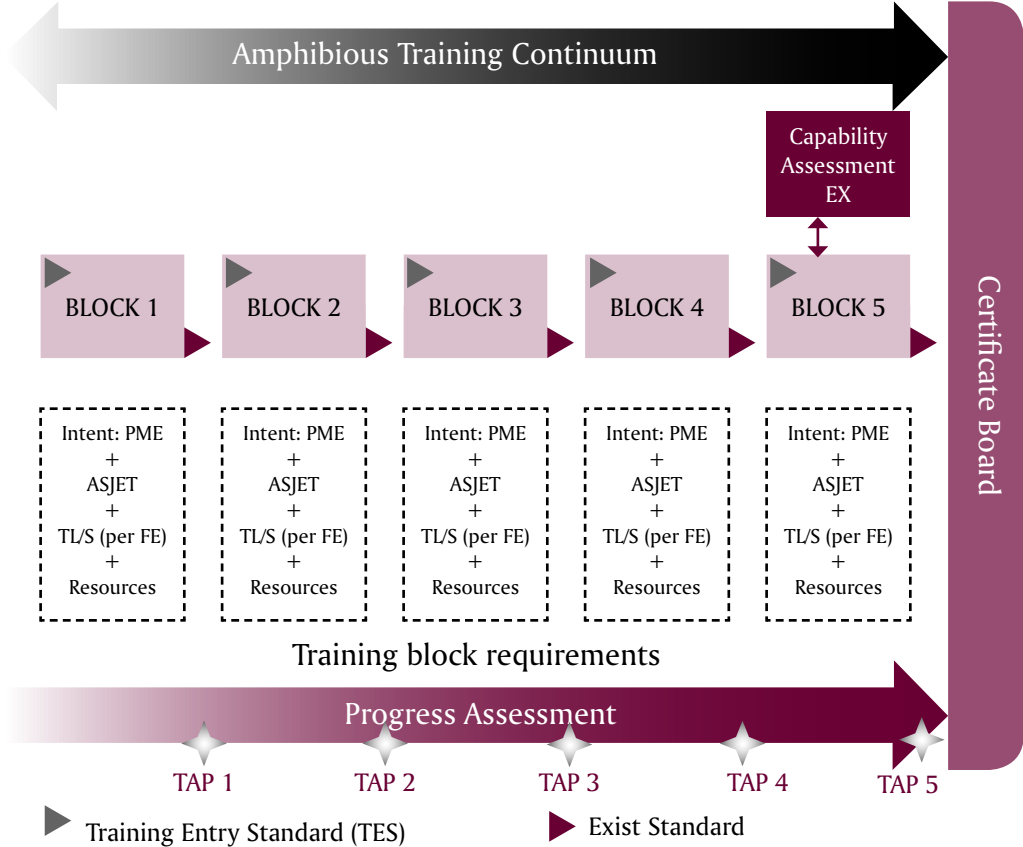
Figure 2 provides a graphic representation of the training design enabled through a comprehensive joint training framework. The sequencing of the model is driven by the single-Service training requirements' pre- and post-training blocks, with the flexibility for remediation training to be added to the 'training delta' between them.

Importantly, for this model to work, current gaps in the ADF's joint training framework need to be addressed. Of greatest urgency is the need to ratify joint essential tasks or a suitable alternative that provides commonality of purpose to the three Services and a clear articulation of joint training levels and standards.

**Integrated training and certification model**

Figure 3 represents a training design model that integrates training, assessment and certification utilising the proposed joint training framework. The model is premised on the existing amphibious training concept of five joint enabled training blocks and incorporates the training design concept (Figure 2).

The model articulates a progressive build up of capability across the five blocks, noting that assessment of capability is an ongoing requirement against the training levels and standards of each force element. In effect, this makes the end of each block a training assurance point, represented by the stars along the progressive assessment arrow. This model merges the training plan and assessment plan into a single training continuum aligned to certification (capability) requirements.



**Figure 3: Outline training design framework**

(ASJET are Australian joint essential tasks; TL/S are training levels/standards; FE are force elements)

While this model is not definitive, it acts as an example of how joint training design can be achieved if the joint training framework gaps are filled.

## What are the benefits of a joint training design framework?

A joint training framework is a critical requirement for integrating certification, training and resources with enough fidelity to allow decentralised execution while retaining centralised control. The framework provides enough information for every element of the amphibious group to complete the necessary requirements flexibly while ensuring that training outcomes are maximised during joint enabled training blocks. This is achieved through several outcomes enabled by joint training design within a joint training framework, as follows:

**Common standards.** The framework allows clear definition of the entry and exit training standards of each force element in relation to a particular joint enabled training block. This allows clear understanding of assessment requirements for the force elements leading into and exiting a training block. From this, remediation training can be managed between joint enabled training blocks by each Service to ensure that identified training risk is not carried throughout the duration of the training continuum.

**Common language.** The framework provides common lexicon that ensures that disparate force elements from across differing Services and commands have a clear understanding of force training requirements.

**Resources.** Each Service is able to define which capabilities, platforms and resources are required to attend each joint enabled training block as 'critical' elements as opposed to desirable force elements. This results in a means of defining the resource to capability output and identifies critical vulnerabilities in the training design.

**Flexibility.** The framework allows adaptation to environmental changes annually at both joint and Service levels, ensuring that opportunities, threats and weaknesses can be seized or mitigated without a need to redesign the overarching training concept.

Providing a robust training design framework increases training flexibility, allows linkage of tri-Service resources to capability outputs, enables suitable management of training risk and provides commonality of approach between the three Services. In achieving these outcomes, a sound training framework helps to reduce the complexity associated with the initial development of the amphibious training concept and will provide a model that enables continuous improvement in joint operability.

## Conclusion

The introduction of an amphibious capability provides the ADF with an opportunity to generate significant improvement in joint operability between the three Services. Sound training design set within a clear joint training framework has the capacity to overcome cultural and physical barriers to joint operability, allowing joint capability to develop largely within extant Service training policies and means.

In time, the framework has the potential to provide the three Services with an architecture from which to test, validate and eventually align Service policy and processes. Such an outcome will allow the ADF to continuously improve joint operability.



Captain Scott Holmes graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon in 2004 and has served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, School of Infantry, Adelaide Universities Regiment, Headquarters 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the Combat Training Centre-Live, where he is currently employed as the training analyst. Captain Holmes has served operationally in Timor Leste on Operation ASTUTE and in Afghanistan on Operation SLIPPER. He has a Bachelor of Professional Studies from the University of New England and a Masters of Emergency Management from Charles Sturt University.

## NOTES

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2. Palazzo et al, *Projecting Force*, pp. 41-2.
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12. For example, the Australian Army Combat Training Centre's 'Amphibious collective training conference', held from 28 May to 1 June 2012 at Lavarack Barracks, Townsville.

## Opinion piece

# Increasing Competition in the South China Sea – need for a new game plan<sup>1</sup>

Commodore Sam Bateman, RAN (Retd)

Increasing competition is evident in the South China Sea between China on the one hand, and the US, the Philippines and Vietnam on the other. This competition makes the development of effective regimes for managing the sea and its resources more difficult.

In early August 2012, the US State Department issued a comprehensive statement on the US position in the South China Sea.<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly, China responded shortly afterwards with a robust statement strongly condemning the US position.<sup>3</sup>

This exchange is yet another demonstration of the game of ‘tit for tat’ in the South China Sea—one player replies to another player’s action and the other responds in turn. Unless the players demonstrate some common interest and mutual understanding, the game can spiral out of control, leading to a ‘lose-lose’ outcome.

None of this is helpful for regional stability or the development of effective regimes for managing the sea and its resources. These regimes are becoming even more necessary as competition for marine resources increases, shipping traffic grows, and there is further degradation of sensitive marine habitats.

## The US and China

While the US ‘pivot’ towards Asia has been welcomed in the region, it is equally true that most Southeast Asian countries are apprehensive about growing tensions between China and the US. They don’t like the way great power politics have intruded into the region.

US initiatives, such as the projected deployment of littoral combat ships to Singapore, increased naval exercises in the region, naval assistance to the Philippines, public articulations of the aggressive ‘AirSea Battle’ concept and a growing defence relationship with Vietnam, inevitably provoke responses from China. They have the unfortunate consequence of fuelling the arguments of the more aggressive military planners in Beijing.

As Henry Kissinger pointed out in his book *On China*, the game of *wei qi* (or ‘Go’) and the fear of strategic encirclement play a key role in Chinese strategic thinking.<sup>4</sup> The South China Sea is of great strategic importance to China; accordingly, the US initiatives there can only be seen in Beijing as part of a US plan to contain China. The entry of India into the South China Sea adds to this appreciation.

While the US claims to take no side in the sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, recent American initiatives look like it has taken sides. This is how the US position can be viewed in the streets of Beijing, Hanoi and Manila. US engagement has had the unintended consequence of boosting nationalistic fervour in all three capitals.

## **China and Vietnam**

A similar game of 'tit for tat' is evident in relations between China and Vietnam. In June, Vietnam's National Assembly passed a new maritime law that included a clear statement of Vietnamese sovereignty over insular features of the South China Sea.<sup>5</sup>

This action was highly provocative to China. China's subsequent release of oil concession blocks off the coast of Vietnam and recent moves to establish Sansha City and a military garrison in the Paracels were likely responses to this Vietnamese provocation.

## **Who is to blame?**

Most Western media comment on developments in the South China Sea puts the blame on China for acting assertively and provoking retaliation. However, in most recent instances, it has been China that has been provoked first by actions of another party. This was the case in recent developments between China and both Vietnam and the US. It was also the case in 2009, when Vietnam and Malaysia lodged their joint submission for an extended continental shelf in the South China Sea, effectively claiming all mineral resources of the southern part of the sea as their own.

Putting the blame on China overlooks a basic consideration with the sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea: that China's sovereignty claims there are at least as good as the claims of other parties. This is the objective opinion of many independent international lawyers. For example, in a substantial paper in 1999, the late Professor Christopher Joyner, Director of Georgetown University's Institute for International Law and Politics, found no strong legal support for any of the claims.<sup>6</sup> He noted, however, that China's case was 'well documented', while the Vietnamese case had major weaknesses as did the Philippine and Malaysian claims.

## **What is needed**

The game of 'tit for tat' in the South China Sea benefits nobody and has to end. Diplomacy by all parties has been ineffective so far in improving the situation. The US and China are not working well together. ASEAN is divided, and the lack of support within ASEAN has driven Hanoi and Manila towards the US.

Attempts to define areas of dispute are futile. Even the search for a 'code of conduct' will not succeed if it places emphasis on dispute resolution and concessions on sovereignty as confidence-building measures, rather than on cooperation. Cooperation must be put back on the agenda. This is an obligation of all parties under the 1982 'UN Convention on the Law of the Sea', although this obligation has been overlooked in recent years.

A cooperative management regime is required, based on a functional approach that exploits the common interests of claimant countries. A first step would be to set up a management body for the South China Sea comprised of all bordering countries. ASEAN and China should negotiate the establishment of such a body. The US can bring the 'carrots' of experience in oceans management to the table rather than the 'sticks' of increased military engagement.

*Sam Bateman is a senior fellow in the Maritime Security Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. He is a former Australian naval commodore with research interests in regimes for good order at sea.*

## NOTES

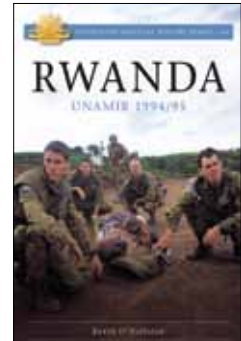
1. This is a slightly edited version of an opinion piece published by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University ([www.rsis.edu.sg](http://www.rsis.edu.sg)) as *RSIS Commentary* No. 157/2012 dated 21 August 2012. It is republished with permission of RSIS.
2. US State Department press release 3 August 2012: see <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/08/196022>> accessed 27 September 2012.
3. See, for example, Tania Branigan, 'China lambasts US over South China Sea row: Beijing accuses Washington's intervention in the region of "fanning the flames and provoking division"', *The Guardian*, 6 August 2012: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/06/china-us-south-china-sea>> accessed 27 September 2012.
4. Henry Kissinger, *On China*, New York: Penguin Books, 2012, pp. 23-5.
5. See, for example, 'China says Vietnam claim to islands "null and void"', *Reuters*, 21 June 2012: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/21/us-china-vietnam-sea-idUSBRE85K0EM20120621>> accessed 27 September 2012.
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## Book reviews

### *Rwanda: UNAMIR 1994/95*

Kevin O'Halloran  
Big Sky Publishing: Newport NSW, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-9219-4148-1

Reviewed by Officer Cadet William Leben, Australian Army



Kevin O'Halloran's volume represents the first in the Australian Army History Unit's 'Australian Military History Series' focusing on support missions, complementing the existing 'Campaign Series' of publications. The 210 pages of *Rwanda: UNAMIR 1994/95* are slickly published, featuring abundant maps and photographs, supported by details of various facts, weapons and personalities throughout the text. However, it is a publication of mixed offerings; doing some things very well, while falling rather short of the mark on others.

As a soldier's history, an exposition of the perspective of those on the ground, the book does nicely—as one may expect from O'Halloran as a veteran of Rwanda. Indeed, the book is written almost entirely in the first person, an immediate indication of the already obvious stand point of the author. The numerous 'Soldiers Reflect' sections neatly capture the thoughts and frustrations of the soldiers on the ground, ranging from their overarching opinion of the UN to their feelings of helplessness under restrictive rules of engagement, as well as their vivid recollections of the horrors of the experience, including a detailed account of the notorious Kibeho massacre, in particular.

On the other hand, as a general history or even as a general history of Australian involvement, the book performs less impressively. While it touches on some important issues regarding the UN, a number of overly simplistic analyses of the political problems surrounding UNAMIR (manifesting, for example, in the highly restrictive rules of engagement) frustratingly run throughout the text. Chapter 5, titled 'UN Mandate UNAMIR', features a much more explicit examination of these issues but does not achieve a satisfying level of complexity and fails to link well its brief conceptual analysis into the Rwandan context.

Moreover, one frequently feels as though the entire book is centred on the events at Kibeho and that the narrative surrounding this event could neatly be divided into 'before and after Kibeho'. While no doubt a horrifying imprint on the lives of those involved—and a useful salient point from which to extrapolate the dreadfulness of the Rwandan genocide and the Australian experience of it—this overwhelming focus detracts from the holistic account implied by the book's title.

Of course, these flaws should not be taken as necessarily detrimental to the utility of O'Halloran's work. While perhaps lacking the rigour or depth of an authoritative work on the Rwandan saga generally, or the Australian involvement in it, *Rwanda: UNAMIR 1994/95* does

provide a good introductory account of both. The wide, if frustratingly shallow lens, ranging from an introduction to Rwandan history and ending with an examination of the pursuit of legal justice in the aftermath of the events, is both interesting and educative—and those uninitiated in the subject will certainly be better off for its reading.

A note is also warranted on the book's format and editing, as the flaws in this area significantly detract from the readability and value of the text. The extensive inclusion of 'fact' boxes throughout the book seems unnecessary. The information included tends to be simplistic and, at times, more akin to conjecture than solid background information. Moreover, their seemingly arbitrary inclusion produces a large degree of repetition.

Similar comments are applicable to the 'key weapons' factsheets, which add little to the narrative or analytical value of O'Halloran's work. These format issues ultimately mean a significant number of pages are wasted, at the expense of text that potentially could have contributed to a more nuanced analysis or in-depth general history. Finally, a number of small grammatical and finishing errors were identified throughout the text and, while not a major issue, they inevitably detract from the overall presentation.

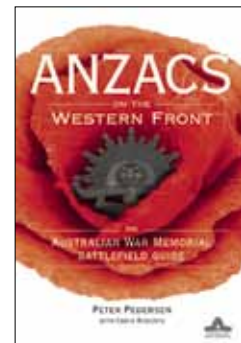
Those looking for personal Australian accounts of the Rwandan tragedy will be well served by *Rwanda: UNAMIR 1994/95*. However, readers looking for a comprehensive analysis of the events and their context will likely be better off looking elsewhere.

A second volume in the series, *Reconstruction Task Force 4, Afghanistan*, is slated for publication. One would hope that the Army History Unit capitalises on the success of the first volume and sharpens the focus of the second on this strength, as well as rectifying the less-than-ideal format and editing of the text. Moreover, if the sequel is to be written as another largely personal account, it should be more explicitly marketed as such.

### ***Anzacs on the Western Front: the Australian War Memorial battlefield guide***

Peter Pedersen, with Chris Roberts  
John Wiley & Sons: Richmond Victoria, 2011  
ISBN: 978-1-7421-6981-1

Reviewed by Air Commodore Mark Lax, OAM, CSM (Retd)



The growing propensity for Australians to visit the World War 1 battlefields of both Gallipoli and the Western Front has led to the release of a plethora of guide books and campaign maps in recent years. Most of these are British in origin and naturally focus on the British aspects of the campaign. However, the recent awakening among a younger generation of the ultimate sacrifice of nearly 60,000 Australian soldiers and airmen during the 'war to end all wars'—almost 20 per cent of those who went over to France and Belgium—has meant the need for a comprehensive and authoritative guide which not only covers the cemeteries but the battlegrounds, the townships and landscape as viewed from an Australian historical perspective. The discovery in 2008 of the 'missing diggers of Fromelles' and the tracing of living descendants further sparked renewed interest, and battlefield tours are now very popular.

Although many Australians equate the Anzac legend to Gallipoli, the appalling number of casualties on the Western Front makes the losses on the Gallipoli peninsula, in numerical terms, pale into insignificance. By Armistice Day, almost every family in Australia had lost a father, brother, son, cousin or uncle or, worse still, several male family members. Many descendants now seek to visit where their forebears fought. Like many, both my grandfathers served on the Western Front (with one becoming a prisoner of war), so such a professionally produced Australian guide book piqued my interest and is now a most welcome addition to my bookshelf.

The introduction congratulates the purchaser for, among other things, 'bringing it [the Western Front] out into the sunlight [after the focus on Gallipoli]'. It goes on to explain how the book is set out—in chronological order and by grouping the battles into four operational sectors: Flanders (1916), north of the Somme (1916-18), south of the Somme (1918) and the Hindenburg Line (1918). The suggested sequence for touring follows those run by the Australian War Memorial, which have proven to be very successful. They cover the main places of interest as well as the memorials to the fallen. By way of example, a typical chapter (Number 7: Bullecourt) of the 28, starts by introducing the reader to the battle, 'breakout' boxes give brief biographies of the commanders, there is a long section on walking the battlefield, then follows an end section with local information on cemeteries, memorials, museums and nearby places of interest.

With an interest in the Australian Flying Corps, I was pleased to find at least a very brief reference (at page 363) to one of the three Australian Flying Corps squadrons that fought the air war over the Western Front. Their actions were no less daring or courageous as those on the ground. However, their airfield locations and the flying corps memorial at Arras, which recognised those airmen who have no known grave, are not mentioned. There is the almost obligatory entry on the Red Baron and readers wishing to see where he was shot down by Australian gunners should turn to page 319.

The author of *Anzacs on the Western Front* is Dr Peter Pedersen, a former Army officer and now head of the Research Centre at the Australian War Memorial. He has had full access to the Memorial's research facilities and has personally walked much of the ground. He was assisted by Brigadier Chris Roberts (Retd) and full credit for the numerous maps must go to Keith Mitchell, Australia's premier military cartographer. The book is extremely well researched and goes into fine detail, so it makes for an excellent driving and walking companion.

The 574-page book is printed in colour on good quality paper, cased in a stiff card cover that will stand the rigours of a backpack and traipsing across the French and Belgian countryside. It comes fully illustrated with extensive diagrams explaining the lay of the land as it was back then, but using present-day photographs overlaid with markers and descriptors to give the reader a clear insight into what went on. Included are items on key military personnel, places of interest, local museums and photos taken at the time of the battles. Completing the work is a short section of useful information on tourist centres and websites, a glossary, bibliography and index.

If you intend on visiting the battlefields of France and Belgium, then this book is a must. But read the introduction on how to use the book before you go—pre-planning can save a lot of wasted time and effort. Highly recommended.

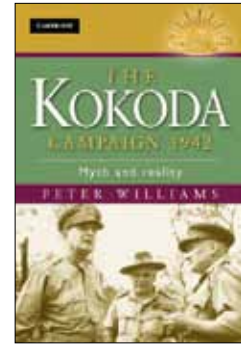
## *The Kokoda Campaign 1942: myth and reality*

Peter Williams

Cambridge University Press: Port Melbourne, 2012

ISBN: 978-1-1070-1594-4

Reviewed by Jim Truscott



This book is salutary reading and a rare read in the annals of Australian military history, as it calls to account the mythical status that the Kokoda campaign has been accorded in national consciousness. The book provides historical balance by focusing on the Japanese version of events, drawn from their military archives. It is packed with so much revealing information from the Japanese perspective that you have to read some sections twice in order to be able to absorb it all.

The author argues with much comparative evidence that past accounts of the Kokoda campaign are burdened with exaggeration. The notion that the Australians were outnumbered is simply wrong, as Australia had 9,000 fighting troops compared with 4,660 Japanese. Even though it is a normal condition of war for commanders not to know the strength of the enemy, the author argues with evidence that past war studies have inflated the size of the four main Japanese battalions to around 1,000 each, compared with the reality of 500, 630, 744 and 795.

The author describes the danger of believing one's own propaganda and that this situation has led to the myth about enormous battle casualties and Australians killing more Japanese than they did. Ioribaiwa was an extreme example of the phenomenon of over-estimating casualties. The sobering conclusion is that the main reason for the Australian victory was superior numbers, as more than twice as many Australians than Japanese fought on the Kokoda Track.

It is also illuminating to learn that the Japanese advance to Papua was actually just an attempt to seize links in the new defensive line. Papua was actually a defensive battle and not an attack on Port Moresby. The 'take Port Moresby' strategy was only in place from 18 July through 16 August and the town was only to be seized to protect the Japanese base at Rabaul if possible. From this 'air cover perspective', Kododa was just as important an airbase as was Port Moresby. It was the American landing at Guadalcanal that ultimately saved Port Moresby.

The author argues that in the engagement at Isurava, where there were at best equal numbers, the Japanese just missed the opportunity to press southwards, as they received orders to postpone the attack on Port Moresby because of the loss of Guadalcanal. Furthermore, the supposition that the Japanese were ignorant about this theatre of war is a simplistic and inaccurate assessment, given the documented reconnaissance reports and mapping available to them.

The technical arguments denouncing other logistic myths are equally powerful insights. The author argues it was a myth that disease had more of an impact on the Japanese until towards the end. He demonstrates that the Japanese did have an effective supply system and that it was myth they ran out of food. The supply crisis they had was caused by the ongoing flooding



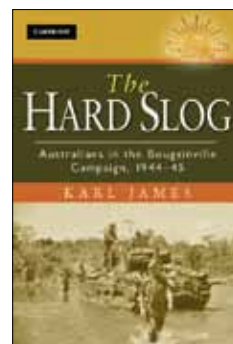
of supply routes, which was a bigger problem than interdiction by bombing. The efforts of the allied air force are hard to judge but they did not seem to be all that successful, certainly compared with the 100-kilometre mud lake and extraordinary flooding that disrupted the Japanese supply routes.

The chapter devoted to artillery and comparative strengths is most telling and Australia's early losses over eight weeks were probably more due to fighting without artillery than any other single reason. The imbalance in firepower was a decisive factor. The crux of the Japanese defeat stemmed from Oivi-Gorarai, where the author argues that while mountain fighting is very complicated and rarely decisive, it was superior Australian generalship and morale that won the day and forced the Japanese back to the low-lying coast.

The author rightfully concludes that the campaign does not deserve the epic descriptions that it has attracted and that any explanation for the battles that Australians lost can no longer rely on this excuse. This book must be read by every military officer, past and present, to ensure the truth prevails. It is also a 'must take' book on any battlefield bushwalk along the Kokoda Track.

### ***The Hard Slog: Australians in the Bougainville campaign, 1944-45***

Karl James  
Cambridge University Press: Melbourne, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-1070-1732-0



**Reviewed by Commander Robert Woodham, RAN**

*The Hard Slog* is a thoroughly absorbing read, which deals expertly with every aspect of the campaign to liberate the island of Bougainville from Japanese occupation during 1944-45. It left me eager to learn more about the Australian Army in the Pacific War, and in the Second World War more generally.

Early in the book, the Bougainville campaign is set in the wider context of the Army's operations in the Second World War and its organisational structure. It addresses the rivalry, generally not constructive it seems, between the 2nd AIF and militia forces, as well as providing sufficient background on the key commanders for the reader to appreciate their personal experiences prior to the campaign. Insights are given into their personalities, whether tough or timid, and the interactions between them. The author does not shrink from commenting on the inevitable human weaknesses and inadequacies which come into play, and how they affected the campaign, although such analyses are presented dispassionately. He has drawn widely from personal documents in order to present a range of viewpoints, including those of the front-line soldiers, in their weapon pits and on patrol, as well as troops in rear areas.

A central theme of the book is the strategic context of the campaign, which was often belittled at the time in the press, and even by participants, as merely a 'mopping up' operation. Karl James argues forcefully against this view, explaining the necessity for offensive operations,

and how this fitted with the grand strategic policy of the Australian Government. In putting forward this conclusion, he confronts head-on the thesis set out by Peter Charlton in his 1983 book, *The Unnecessary War*, which regards the Bougainville campaign, and others in the South-West Pacific, as a pointless waste of Australian lives.

Although not explicitly speculated on in the book, I was struck by the parallel with the end of the First World War in Europe, where the belief developed that Germany had signed a grossly unfavourable armistice, although its army was undefeated in the field. If Japan had surrendered without military defeat, especially on territory as far from Japan and close to Australia as Bougainville, the risk of a similar circumstance must have played on the minds of the Australian Generals, all of them veterans of the First World War. In addition, Australia clearly felt a responsibility to liberate the Bougainvilleans, who suffered under the Japanese occupation, and without exception resisted it.

Whether or not an offensive campaign against the Japanese was necessary—and this book convinces me that it was—it is clear that the Australian Army was very good at it. It seems that the Army's ethos at the time demanded offensive action, possibly part of a wider national mindset which preferred action to inaction. The book explains how this offensive campaign was prosecuted, describing in detail the tactics of jungle warfare. It includes comprehensive accounts of the principal actions, as well as the more routine operations such as patrolling, deep penetrations by commandos, aerial reconnaissance and defensive techniques. Tactical considerations, such as the use of Matilda infantry-support tanks, artillery and air power, are also presented.

It is clear that the campaign had its darker side, and the author is not afraid to present this aspect of the story. The harrowing nature of jungle warfare, the enormous obstacles presented by the natural environment, and the starving condition of the Japanese troops all contributed to generating the campaign's horrors, which were perpetrated by both sides. The book clearly brings out the enormous psychological strains, such as those felt by a digger listening to jungle noises, any one of which could indicate impending death, yet also within range of domestic radio broadcasts from Queensland.

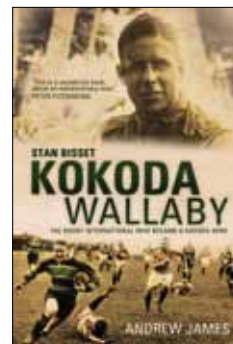
The book is well laid out and generously furnished with maps and photographs. My only complaints are very minor: I found some of the maps difficult to read, due in part to the use of unnecessarily small fonts and poor use of the available space; and I would prefer a labelling convention in the text that distinguishes between explanatory notes and simple literature references, so that interruptions to the reader's flow are minimised.

This is an excellent book which uses a readable prose style to deal with the many facets of the Bougainville campaign. I am inspired to read more about this period of the Australian Army's history and will look for more from the same pen.

***Kokoda Wallaby:  
the rugby international who became a Kokoda hero***

Andrew James  
Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 2011  
ISBN: 978-1-7423-7696-7

Reviewed by Robert S. Bolia, Office of Naval Research Global,  
Tokyo, Japan



There has been a massive resurgence in interest in the Kokoda campaign in recent years, helped along by the comprehensive volumes produced by Paul Ham and Peter FitzSimons, as well as an increase in Kokoda track tourism. *Kokoda Wallaby* begins with a hike along the track with veteran Bisset, 57 years after the battle, conjuring memories of his brother's death—Butch had died in his arms there, leaving Stan to fight on. Thus are we introduced to the life of a remarkable man.

Stan Bisset was good at whatever he did. He played cricket and tennis, boxed, sculled and even sang. He simply excelled at everything. Growing up in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, Stan of course played Aussie Rules. He was good enough, in fact, to be offered the opportunity to train with both South Melbourne and St Kilda. But a friend introduced him to rugby union and he was hooked. He played for the St Kilda Rugby Club and then for Power House, which he captained in 1934. He was selected to play for Victoria in only his fourth season and was selected to play for Australia on their tour of England in 1939. Before him, only one other Victorian had ever played for the Wallabies—Weary Dunlop, an Australian whose war service would make his a household name.

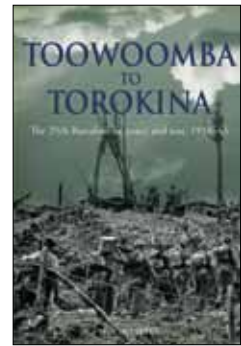
Stan unfortunately never got to play against England. The ship carrying the team docked in Southampton on 3 September 1939, the day the UK declared war on Germany, and the tour was cancelled. It was a massive disappointment but Stan moved on. He returned to Australia, where he decided that there were ways other than playing rugby by which he could serve his country. He joined the 2/14th Battalion, composed mostly of Victorians, among them his brother. The brothers Bisset had demonstrable leadership abilities and quickly became officers, serving with the battalion in North Africa and Lebanon before being called back to Australia to meet the Japanese threat.

*Kokoda Wallaby* does not add significantly to the scholarship of the New Guinea campaign nor does it seek to. What it does is trace the route taken by Stan Bisset from the playing fields of St Kilda to the rugged jungle of the Owen Stanley's. It is a personal narrative, based in no small part on discussions with its subject—who sadly died before it was published—dealing with the choices that led ultimately to Stan's heroic actions at Kokoda. And yet, at the same time, it could depict any one of the thousands of Australians who volunteered to leave their homes and families and fight the Germans, the Italians, the Vichy French or the Japanese in places most of them had never dreamed of travelling to, the training they undertook, the feelings of mateship, and the experience and horrors of war.

Andrew James is uniquely qualified to write a biography of a Kokoda hero. Enlisting in the Australian Army at the age of 18, he served as a soldier in Afghanistan before studying history and English at the University of Sydney, and is intimately familiar with the Kokoda landscape, having worked as an expedition leader on the track. The book he has written is beautiful and evocative, not only of the harsh reality of war but of the character of its protagonist. James seeks meaning for the present out of the sacrifices of the past—an important aim, especially as more veterans of the war are lost with each passing year. Yet more important than any specific acts of heroism in 1942 are the personal qualities that Stan Bisset exhibited from his days as a footy player to the end of his life, which James superbly conjures throughout the narrative. As a study in character, *Kokoda Wallaby* should be mandatory reading for junior officers in all the Services.

***Toowoomba to Torokina:  
the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion in peace and war, 1918-45***

Bob Doneley  
Big Sky Publishing: Newport NSW, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-9219-4158-0



**Reviewed by John Donovan**

Having been born in Toowoomba, I was attracted by this book about the local Citizen Military Forces (CMF)/Army Reserve unit and found it enjoyable to read. Bob Doneley covers the difficult inter-war years in reasonable detail, and the wartime service of the battalion in Papua, New Guinea and Bougainville comprehensively.

Doneley's discussion of the inter-war years focuses on the problems on maintaining unit strength and the soldiers' interest under financial restrictions. A familiar story (certainly to those involved with the reserve forces in the 1970s) is recounted of general stability among officers and senior NCOs, combined with high turnover of junior personnel. Many of the inter-war officers and NCOs, including one member of the Queensland Parliament, appear again in Papua or Bougainville.

As with many other CMF battalions, as well as supplying volunteers for the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF, the 25<sup>th</sup>'s wartime service included a combination of extensive garrison duty and some active campaigning. The battalion served in action at Milne Bay in August/September 1942 and on Bougainville from November 1944. Its overseas garrison service was in Papua before and after Milne Bay, and for five months of 1944 at Madang, before moving to Bougainville.

The descriptions of the battles in which the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was involved are written at a fast pace. Doneley's descriptions of these engagements are clear and effective, and give a good understanding of the events. At Milne Bay, the battalion was perhaps fortunate not to have been heavily engaged until the Japanese approached Number 3 Strip, where the troops could bring the advancing Japanese under fire from prepared positions. The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion lost eight men killed and ten wounded at Milne Bay (although two of the wounded subsequently died from their injuries).

The descriptions of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion's actions on Bougainville take up about a third of the text. The battalion's principal engagements during the Bougainville campaign were the capture of Pearl Ridge in December 1944/January 1945 and the defence of Slater's Knoll (after which Corporal Reginald Rattey was awarded the Victoria Cross) in March/April 1945. Both actions showed the battalion to be well trained and effective.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was in constant contact with the Japanese between Pearl Ridge and Slater's Knoll. That it did not suffer the morale, leadership and discipline problems experienced by the other battalions in the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade might be credited to the leadership of its commander since January 1944, Lieutenant Colonel John McKinna. However, some credit must also go to McKinna's predecessor, Lieutenant Colonel Ted Miles, who commanded the battalion from January 1942 until January 1944, including at Milne Bay.

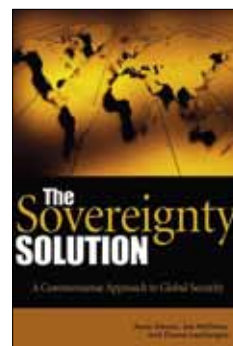
Doneley misses an opportunity to give readers a feel for the wider impact of the war on Australia. He describes the action that led to the award of a Military Medal to Sergeant Stephen Sullivan, but could have mentioned that Sullivan was one of five brothers who served during the Second World War. All survived the war, although one was captured in North Africa, and another in Singapore.

The writing style of the book can be somewhat eccentric. The sections dealing with training in Australia, particularly during the period between the wars, often seem like a précis of unit training reports, while the sections on the battalion's period on active service are written in a much livelier style. There are also some factual issues. As examples, the figures given on page 156 for Japanese losses during the battle of the Bismarck Sea are well above their actual losses, while the corvette *De La Rone* mentioned on page 186 was probably HMAS *Deloraine*.

### ***The Sovereignty Solution: a commonsense approach to global security***

Anna Simons, Joe McGraw and Duane Lauchengco  
Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2011  
ISBN: 978-1-6125-1050-7

**Reviewed by Brigadier Chris Field, Australian Army**



Anna Simons, Harvard-educated Professor of Defense Analysis at the US Naval Postgraduate School, combines with Joe McGraw and Duane Lauchengco, both US Army lieutenant colonels and special forces officers, to write *The Sovereignty Solution*. The book thoughtfully articulates an alternate future US foreign policy supporting a new US grand strategy. This book is suitable for higher Defence College consideration, as it tests and stretches important international norms, while proposing policy choices impacting not only the US but also most nations of the world. In addition, it includes more than 65 pages of comprehensive notes from research, which add significant value and are usefully read alongside each of the book's nine chapters.

Echoing US President George Washington's 1796 farewell address, Simons, McGraw and Lauchengco are weary of 'untenable foreign entanglements', as well as long US-led wars.<sup>1</sup> They

argue that long wars ignore the strengths of the US—transparency, consistency, dependability, liberty, equality of opportunity, constitutionalism, liberalism, limited government, private enterprise, actions based on formal declarations of war by Congress, and the decisive application of overwhelming force.

Simons, McGraw and Lauchengco also accept that the US lacks ‘virtues of ... statecraft and warmaking’ in ‘forbearance, personnel continuity, foreign language skills, cross-cultural understanding, historical knowledge, minimal employment of force, and robust interagency involvement and cooperation’.<sup>2</sup> Their view is that today’s ineffective efforts by the US government at nuanced diplomacy and an inconsistent and extended application of US military force can be eliminated through one simple, easy to understand US foreign policy: ‘don’t violate US sovereignty, or else’.

*The Sovereignty Solution* emphasises to all nations—including the US and the closest allies of the US, including Australia, as well as the enemies of the US—that the privilege of national sovereignty involves two key elements: national accountability and national responsibility. Simply stated, ‘sovereignty is not a matter of degree ... it is categorical: either/or’.<sup>3</sup> According to *The Sovereignty Solution*, the failure of any nation to maintain the twin requirements of national accountability and national responsibility will elicit a swift and decisive response from the US. This response will, Simons, McGraw and Lauchengco argue, be based on US strengths, especially the ability of the US to apply overwhelming force, and the pace, tempo, duration and intensity of that force.

*The Sovereignty Solution* takes careful account of non-state actors and their state sponsors. The view of Simons, McGraw and Lauchengco is that ‘one of the most under-appreciated realities of modern existence is that there is not a space on the planet that does not nominally belong to a government somewhere’. Therefore, under the aegis of *The Sovereignty Solution*, non-state actors remain jointly accountable and responsible with the state to which they are connected. According to the book’s policy framework, the US can hold governments accountable and responsible, including the US government, for taking action to eliminate threats from non-state actors. By definition, under *The Sovereignty Solution*, if a government cannot eliminate a threat, the US reserves the right to swiftly intervene and take actions required to destroy threats to its interests.

In peace, the book argues that the US should maintain a ‘foreign policy based on principled non-interference’. However, in the event of any attack on the US, *The Sovereignty Solution* offers nations four options to respond to the US: as a partner state, struggling state, failed state or adversary. In short, after an attack on the US, the US will inform a nation: ‘we’ve been attacked, you own the problem’ ... what is your response to the problem?

For example, following an attack on the US, under *The Sovereignty Solution*, the US might demand: (1) destruction of the organisation responsible for the attack; and (2) redress whatever intelligence lapses allowed the attack to occur. How another nation complies with these demands would be up to it; that a nation complies is the immediate concern of the US—and the degree of compliance will define a nation as a US partner, a struggling state, a failed state or an adversary.

Regardless of how a nation's relationship is defined with the US, under *The Sovereignty Solution*, if the US is attacked or threatened, nations will be held accountable and responsible for these actions. Simons, McGraw and Lauchengco do not resile from the simplicity of this alternate future US foreign policy. Their view is that present US foreign policies are too complex, too compromised and too erratic, and therefore undermine an effective US grand strategy. They argue the need to focus US foreign policy so that both the US and other nations can unambiguously understand US intentions and actions.

One self-described limitation of the book is that Simons, McGraw and Lauchengco have 'missed numerous corroborating points of view, as well as arguments that conflict with [their own]'. This statement is true—and a 143-page book on an alternate future US foreign policy or new US grand strategy can only briefly explain complex ideas and concepts. The brevity of *The Sovereignty Solution* may therefore frustrate some readers. However, if frustration causes people to think about alternate US foreign policies or a new US grand strategy, then *The Sovereignty Solution* has achieved its purpose of commencing a debate on these important ideas.

## NOTES

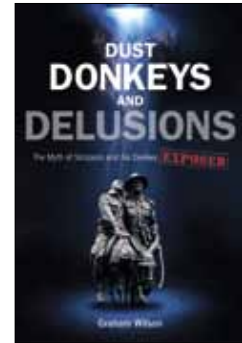
1. In 1796, US President George Washington said 'Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?': George Washington, *Washington's Farewell Address 1796* (at the Yale School of Law), Lillian Goldman Law Library: New Haven, Connecticut, 2008: <[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp)> accessed 11 October 2012.
2. Quoting Jeffery Record, 'The American Way of War: cultural barriers to successful counterinsurgency', *Policy Analysis*, No. 577, September 2006, p. 17.
3. Quoting Robert Jackson, *Sovereignty: the evolution of an idea*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 2007, p. 16.

## On-line book reviews

### *Dust Donkeys and Delusions: the myth of Simpson and his donkey exposed*

Graham Wilson  
Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2012  
ISBN: 978-1-9219-4156-6

Reviewed by Jim Truscott



This comprehensive exposé seeks to determine who the real John Simpson Kirkpatrick actually was. There seems to have been a spate of these myth-busting books recently; almost a cause célèbre among military historians, as they seek to undo and rewrite the past.

Simpson landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 as a stretcher bearer with 3 Field Ambulance, found a donkey the next day and was killed by a sniper on 19 May. The author meticulously argues that he was just another soldier deserving his Mention in Dispatches, which was recommended on 29 April, but no higher award. While the author is clearly vehement in mounting his case, the book contains so many almost tedious arguments discounting the ‘Simpson for VC campaign’ that I found it more like a legal brief for a court martial than a military history for public consumption.

The author’s arguments are many and mostly revolve around the physical impossibility of Simpson and his donkey actually evacuating anything like the number of casualties that others have claimed. The claimed numbers do not stack up against time and space, nor casualty counts. He further points out that even with four Field Ambulances at Gallipoli, there was a shortage of stretcher bearers; nevertheless, it would have been inefficient to evacuate the wounded using a donkey. Simpson’s efforts are summarised as useful but not lifesaving. There is also some contributing ill-feeling between the Commanding Officer of 3 Field Ambulance and the Assistant Director of Medical Services at the time, who was a VC winner, which helps obscure the facts about Simpson.

The author describes how the many myths seem to have been rolled into one story and he explains how each is easily proven to be totally false. There were few documented records, with most of the myths deriving from unsubstantiated anecdotes, made up by jingoistic commentators to be palatable to a home readership and to encourage recruitment—‘psychological operations’ in modern parlance!

The author claims that many of the stories were started by the war correspondent and historian CEW Bean and that they were compounded by others, with poor research skills, to the point that the myths have become historical facts. There has been a decoration of the myth but not of the man. I found the telling of Simpson’s actual life to be a personal and interesting history. The author argues that he was neither larrikin nor of ill-kept discipline, and that he has been more than sufficiently honoured. Tragically, he is totally blameless in the establishment of the myths; may he and his donkey rest in peace.



## *The Human Factors of Fratricide*

Laura A. Rafferty, Neville A. Stanton and Guy H. Walker  
Ashgate: Farnham UK, 2012  
ISBN: 978-0-7546-7974-5

Reviewed by Dr Saša Baškarada, DSTO



Fratricide (also referred to as 'blue-on-blue' or 'friendly fire') involves unintentional killing or wounding of friendly personnel by friendly firepower while intending to engage the enemy. The definition does not cover accidents, intentional friendly attacks (for example, green-on-blue) or collateral damage. In addition to the obvious point of causing casualties, fratricide may also negatively affect operational effectiveness, morale, public support and coalition cohesion.

It is a serious problem, as reportedly the US casualties due to fratricide during the first Gulf War reached almost 40 per cent (comprising 24 per cent killed and 15 per cent wounded). More recently, it has been reported that >40 per cent of UK deaths in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM were due to fratricide. The apparent increasing rate of fratricide has been attributed to the complexities associated with contemporary theatres of operation, as well as the increasing usage of modern weapons, many of which operate beyond visual range. Human error has been identified by the US Department of Defense as a significant causal factor in approximately 80 per cent of fratricide incidents.

This book explores fratricide in the context of human factors (or ergonomics), which is a broad discipline concerned with human-system interaction, aiming to optimise human well-being and overall system performance. The book is based on the lead author's doctoral research project (completed in 2011 at the University of Southampton), as well as on work conducted within the Human Factors Integration Defence Technology Centre, a collaborative centre comprising a number of leading UK universities and defence companies. Importantly, the book approaches fratricide from a systems rather than a reductionist perspective. As such, the authors aim to identify multiple causal factors interacting in non-linear ways.

Chapter One critically reviews the key literature, expectations (confirmation bias), situational awareness and teamwork. The literature review is well written, easy to follow and appears comprehensive. The authors explain how confirmatory bias may lead to selective perceptions and biased decisions; and that prior beliefs/expectations may affect sense-making and situational awareness (which is heightened in high-stress situations). As expectations may affect the way in which people search for and perceive information, they therefore tend to accept evidence supporting prior beliefs, ignoring contradictory evidence.

The authors also stress the relevance of teamwork and choose it as their unit of analysis. They go on to identify 40 factors (based on a review of more than 80 papers) that may impact on effective team performance. Based on their interactions, the five key factors are integrated into a theoretical model of fratricide causality. The five factors are:

- Communication: the transfer of information and related meaning
- Cooperation: the active and persistent pursuit of the goals of the work group

- Coordination: the ability to sequence, synchronise and integrate
- Schemata: pre-existing structures which direct perceptual activity and are modified as it occurs, and
- Situational awareness: a dynamic collaborative process binding agents to tasks on a moment-by-moment basis, whereby the information which individuals require is distributed across the system.

Chapter Two applies the theoretical model to two scenarios, an actual incident of fratricide in which two British Challenger II tanks engaged each other in Basra during Operation TELIC and an ideal scenario that would have ensured the incident could not have happened. The two scenarios are analysed and compared against each other in terms of the five causal factors previously identified.

Chapters Three to Six use hierarchical task analysis, coordination demand analysis, communication usage diagrams, social network analysis and information networks to analyse a number of fratricide case studies, including an example from the 1994 Operation PROVIDE COMFORT, a British Army tank crew training simulation scenario, a joint fires cell pre-deployment training scenario and a fire support team pre-deployment training scenario. Chapter Seven compares the earlier case studies and derives a number of core principles. Chapter Eight identifies a number of core issues and provides recommendations.

While the book covers a lot of ground and contains a wealth of information, the authors also apply a number of questionable analytical methods and draw what seem to be a number of unsupported conclusions. In terms of theoretical model development, the authors claim to have reviewed more than 80 papers, however, only approximately 40 papers seem to be referenced. Furthermore, as the core factors were identified through a literature review, the novelty of the theoretical model contribution is perhaps dubious.

In other words, it is not clear that the authors have identified any new and interesting factors. In fact, it appears that they may have simply renamed or aggregated factors previously identified in the literature (such as in Table 2.4, where the authors provide a mapping of their factors to the more specific factors identified by a Ministry of Defence Board of Inquiry). In addition to having been previously identified by a range of other authors, the five core factors were already discussed in detail in a book, published in 2009 and co-authored by Stanton and Walker, titled *Distributed Situation Awareness*.

While the authors focus on teamwork as their unit of analysis, it seems reasonable to argue that situational awareness is the only relevant factor (situational awareness itself being dependent on the other four factors). In other words, it is difficult to conceive of a fratricide scenario where the relevant person (or team) had accurate, comprehensive and timely situational awareness. Similarly, if a person (or a team) maximises coordination, communication, cooperation and schemata relevance, but has a low level of situational awareness, it follows that the potential for a fratricide incident is likely elevated.

The authors even argue that ‘adequate levels of communication, cooperation and coordination could have created correct schemata and situational awareness and prevented the shooting of friendly troops. All troops ... would have known that the movement detected was friendly personnel’. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the authors later conclude that the link between communication and situational awareness is a key factor in fratricide.

The approach of contrasting the real incident with an ideal scenario in Chapter Two is not entirely convincing, as the ideal scenario was created with the benefit of hindsight. That is, actions identified as inappropriate and/or missing by the Board of Inquiry were rectified and/or added in the ideal scenario. Hence, it is not surprising that the ideal scenario produces higher interactions between factors. Since both scenarios were to a large extent documented by the authors (the analysis was not based on raw data), the resulting conclusions do not appear objective, as different descriptions of scenarios (for example, at a different level of detail) would have produced different results.

The methodology used throughout the book arguably is only applicable to *post hoc* analysis of fratricide events and seems of little use to operational planning. While the authors make a major claim that the methodology is able to provide quantitative measurements of the five factors, which enables statistical comparison between teams and scenarios, the exact meanings and relevance of the measures presented are questionable.

For instance, hierarchical task analysis counts the number of completed goals and tasks. Also, the authors do not explain how exactly coordination demand analysis is used to derive the mean total coordination score; they only state that each teamwork task was rated on a series of coordination dimensions. And, while the communication usage diagrams presented show the frequencies of communication that occurred in each team, it is not clear how this is supposed to relate to communication effectiveness.

The approach to measuring situational analysis is not convincing either, as it relies on *Leximancer's* (a text analysis and data mining tool) analysis of communication transcripts. Since *Leximancer* has certain stochastic features, the representations generated by the tool are different each time the tool is run. However, this limitation is not discussed in the book. The authors also seem to completely ignore a large number of situational awareness measurement techniques reviewed by Stanton and Walker in *Distributed Situation Awareness*.

Furthermore, it is not clear why centrality of elements in an information network should be related to situational awareness. High-mean centrality implies that there are a large number of concepts, which frequently co-occur with other defined concepts. This probably says something about the language used (the communication protocol) but appears to have little relation to situational awareness.

Finally, the core principles derived in Chapter Seven are obvious and/or vague. They include the following:

- Non-mission related communication should be minimised (this is obvious).
- The frequency of communication should be increased within small collocated teams (this is too vague).
- A hierarchical communication structure should be utilised within small collocated teams (this is too vague).
- The number of task steps taken to complete goals or sub-goals should be reduced to an efficient number (this is obvious).
- The number of inappropriate task steps should be reduced (this is obvious).
- Relevant information should be made more salient (this is obvious and vague).
- The quality of coordinated activities should be improved (this is obvious and vague).

Additional obvious and/or vague statements include ‘between teams, less communication is beneficial in the context of the distributed environment’ (too vague) and ‘it is important to be concise so as not to overload individuals’ (obvious and vague). As these statements are not quantifiable in any way, it could be argued that they are not truly meaningful. For instance, by how much should communication be reduced in a distributed environment; down to zero? The authors also state that ‘higher quality, rather than quantity, of teamwork’ is preferable. Again, they are making an obvious point without exactly explaining how higher quality teamwork may be achieved.

### ***The Ashgate Research Companion to War: origins and prevention***

Hall Gardner and Oleg Kobtzeff (eds.)  
Ashgate: Farnham UK, 2012  
ISBN: 978-0-7546-7826-7



**Reviewed by Dr Dominic Katter**

The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars—must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

Martin Luther King, Jr, ‘Loving Your Enemies’ sermon, delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery Alabama, Christmas 1957, as quoted in this *Companion* at p. xvii.

Ashgate normally publishes more than 60 titles in each calendar year, across a broad range of social science and humanity topics. In that context, the ‘Ashgate Research Companion’ sub-series, of which this book is a part, is intended to provide a detailed analysis of current research in a specific area, assembling experts to provide chapters on key areas related to their individual specialisation.

In this research companion, Professor Hall Gardner and Assistant Professor Oleg Kobtzeff have edited some 22 articles for publication, as well as contributing seven of their own. Professor Gardner states in the preface that in ‘many ways, this book came about through sheer serendipity ... [whereas my] previous edited books were the result of planned conferences’. Dr Kobtzeff, as the author of four articles in the book, also assisted in the translation of some original French-text articles by Jean-Paul Charnay, the Director of Research at the National Center for Scientific Research in France. Both editors are currently academics at The American University of Paris, in the International and Comparative Politics Department.

The 29 articles in this publication are arranged into four parts: Part I, alienation, legitimacy and the roots of war; Part II, major wars in history; Part III, the Cold War and beyond; and Part IV, long cycles and major power conflict. The topics of each essay, within each part, are various and do not by their titles alone indicate contiguity of content. For example, Part III includes chapters on ‘NATO’, ‘Child Soldiers’, ‘Cyberconflict’, ‘Assymetric Warfare’ and the ‘Instrumentalization of Gender in War’.

Generally, the chapters are (unsurprisingly) detailed and well-referenced throughout. Understandably, by virtue of the fact that this is an edited book, the text has limited consistency between chapters. However, the reader is rewarded with various innovative topics of a contemporary nature that can be read discretely.

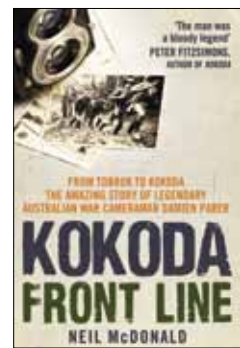
This work is challenged by its Europe-centric focus and contains no significant Australian references: indeed, Australia is not mentioned in the index. Not only is the book European in focus but it is a continental work, which can be critical at times of English actions on specific issues (for example, the articulation of Sir Winston Churchill's consideration of détente with Germany in the period 1912-13).

The book contains an index, occasional figures and tables, notes on the contributors and a comprehensive general introduction by the two editors. It would be well-suited to anyone with an interest in polemology (the study of human conflict and war). The book is, however, primarily a theoretical publication, rather than a practical one, of benefit to specialists in these areas more so than general readers.

***Kokoda Front Line: from Tobruk to Kokoda, the amazing story of legendary Australian war cameraman Damien Parer***

Neil McDonald  
Hachette: Sydney, 2012  
ISBN: 978-0-7336-2960-0

Reviewed by Jim Truscott



War photographers are a rare breed, none more so than Damien Parer. This is one of the most comprehensive biographies that I have ever read; regrettably, his life was relatively short as he was shot dead in battle by the Japanese in September 1944. The book is a travelogue of another kind, replete with much interpretation of the 'dope sheets' or story boards his profession used to document their stills and films.

Parer's photographic career began at school with a Box Brownie, followed by a three-year apprenticeship in Melbourne and several jobs in Sydney. He was 28 when he went off to war with the 6th Division in Egypt and Palestine. There are accounts of digging out the Turkish trenches at Beersheba, images of brothels, generals, the Sphinx, everyday life in camp, including men in the showers, interspersed with descriptions of camera equipment.

He described the power struggle for the control of information to the public, which seems to have changed little. He recorded the 6th Division's attack at Bardia and Australia's first victory in World War 1, as well as action from a British gunboat, expressing that battle is difficult to photograph because of the noise, confusion and clouds of smoking dust. At Tobruk, he experimented with different photographic compilation techniques and recorded the difficulty of filming dispersed infantry in the desert. He openly admitted fear but was adamant that he had to be 'out front'.

He travelled on a freighter to Greece before the Australian forces arrived to record civilian casualties and the images of crowded humanity. He recorded action on Crete but some material was censored because it supposedly jeopardised Anglo-Australian relations. He again recorded his fear as he filmed attacking infantry in Syria and action at Tobruk, including from the gun turret of a bomber. Parer did not stage anything, seemingly resigned to whatever fate might befall him.

Back in the Pacific, his filming of the Japanese bombing of Port Moresby was censored. He then embarked on an incredible trek along a transport supply route up a river to join the 2/5th Commandos and, interestingly, visited his parents deserted former home in Wau. There he stumbled on a Japanese patrol and hid in a tree to avoid detection. Back in Port Moresby, he filmed burning US aircraft following a Japanese raid.

In the advance on Kokoda, he recorded lines of exhausted carriers and was forced to start discarding some of his own equipment. It is really quite an amazing collection of experiences. The images of the depleted 39th Battalion are the climax of his career, when the *Kokoda Front Line* film was aired in Australia. I did not realise that so many images that I have seen in books over the years belonged to Parer.

He recorded the dive bombing of Japanese ships and even went back a second time just to get a photo. He received little financial support from the Department of Information and changed employers to work with Paramount and the US forces in the Pacific islands. Remarkably, he got married in almost a bizarre way before witnessing Japanese atrocities and he himself coming to grief in the amphibious assault on Peleliu Island. This biography simply gets even better page-by-page. It is almost like a race to the end, testament to a brave and passionate artisan. His free-ranging access along the front line in many theatres of war enabled him to experience conditions and capture images that few servicemen or -women could ever contemplate.