AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE

Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies

Vol. 2 No. 1

Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies

Vol. 2 No.1

ADC Publications
Centre for Defence Research
Australian Defence College
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Designer: Directorate of Publishing, Library and Information Service: Corporate Graphics
Printed in Australia by: Clarke Murphy Print
Front cover image under license via Shutterstock

Acknowledgements

The *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies* wishes to thank the chairman of the editorial board Major General Mick Ryan for his ongoing support of the journal and the editorial board and peer reviewers who have so generously given their time.

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National Library of Australia
ISSN 2652-3728 (Print)
2652-3736 (Online)
DPS: JUN007-20

The paper used to produce this publication is FSC® Mix Certified.

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Editorial

It should go without saying that 2020 has been unusual. As we have prepared this second issue of the *Australian Journal for Defence and Strategic Studies* (AJDSS) many of us have been experiencing the most disrupted period in our living memory, from the unprecedented bushfires in January to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. Both have challenged our national and civil security and brought the professionalism and capability of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to the fore. Operation Bushfire Assist 2019–2020 drew upon our active and reserve members to ensure the safety of people, homes, businesses, townships and our native wildlife throughout the summer; and again, before we had seen the fires finally put out, our ADF have been called upon to support community, state and national resilience as we have worked to contain the spread in Australia of the Coronavirus. Given just the last six months, one could be forgiven if one thought national security and defence could do with a bit of down time—but not in 2020.

The challenge for Australian national security and defence remains, as has been increasingly evident for some years, navigating geopolitical competition in our region and the rising position of China under Xi Jinping. In this issue, we consider this challenge and what it could mean for the Indo-Pacific from a few different angles.

Bates Gill, Adam Ni and Dennis Blasko lead off with a broad overview of the PLA's ambitious structural reforms and modernisation program to develop a highly joint 'world-class military' by mid-century. These developments underscore the need for Australian defence planners to carefully assess the implications for Australia's security and how we should respond in both the near and long-term. This article leads to Ross Babbage's challenging discussion highlighting ten questionable assumptions that underpin much Western thinking and strategic planning about future war in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, the author argues '…strategic planners

in the west routinely perceive the primary elements of power in a more shallow and limited manner than do the Chinese'. And, 'if core assumptions are not subjected to thorough review there is a strong possibility that the United States and its allies and partners will be vulnerable to surprises, which could prove to be disastrous'.

Given this discussion, Jonathan Earley offers another perspective. In *Aiding our ally…some options for Australia*, Earley examines the context surrounding the Trump Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy Report and the US appeal for allies and partners to share more of the regional security burden, particularly as the dominance of the US Navy in the Pacific comes under challenge.

Disruption can unleash creative change as often as chaos, and 2020 has brought transformation in many forms; what is our new normal? In our next article, Paul Davidson and Jane Tsakissiris, drawing on their management and business expertise, contend that military leaders need to be educated in disruption, so that they not only understand it and but can also take advantage of it.

Cooperation among our allies and partners is not just rooted in our interoperability from a warfighting perspective. Soft power assurances such as the importance of collaborative medical assistance across our region are examined in this issue's Focus section. We have two articles that offer ways the ADF could contribute to regional resilience while at the same time improving the ADF's own capabilities. Since the recognition of the Oslo Guidelines Australia has come to rely on civilian AUSMAT teams to provide the health component of Australia's humanitarian and disaster relief response. This has left ADF clinicians with few deployed operational roles and struggling to maintain the skills essential to clinical operational readiness. Michael C. Reade proposes a comprehensive way forward for the ADF through the adoption of a model similar to the US Humanitarian Civic Assistance program, which could bring significant mutual benefits. This is followed by Adam Mahoney, Scott Squires and Andrew Pearson outlining the benefits to Australia's national security and standing within the region that could be gained from leveraging the ADF's existing and sometimes under-utilised medical capability to build greater mutual capacity.

In our Commentary section, Donna Boulton addresses the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure and globalised supply chains to external shocks and the strategic risks these may have on our capacity for rapid national mobilisation. A coordinated national response is required, she argues, to strengthen ties between Defence and local industry so we can be truly prepared to fight. Michael Hatherell, Katherine Mansted and Jade Guan offer our readers a commentary on ways we construct our view of national security. The authors examine the

distinction between information and ideas and consider the strategic and ethical application of ideational power.

In our Reviews section, Iain Henry considers Vince Scappatura's findings on the influence of the US Lobby in Australia; Ben Ascione reviews Sheila A. Smith's *Japan Rearmed*; Tom Uren critically examines *The System: who owns the internet and how it owns us* by James Ball; Jo Brick reflects on Samatha Power's memoir, *The Education of an Idealist*; and Jeffrey Wilson discusses *Contest for the Indo-Pacific* by Rory Medcalf.

As 2020 continues to test Australia and indeed countries around the world, great power politics, humanitarian disasters and pandemics equally will test global co-operation and the international system and structure. It is against this backdrop that we realise national security and defence, both domestically and internationally must never be taken for granted. This issue features peer reviewed articles and commentary from voices across academia, the ADF and the Department of Defence and we encourage this vital contribution to continue in future issues.

Fostering scholarship, challenging discussion, and original thinking on these matters is critical for the ADF and strategic thinkers across the Indo-Pacific as we face an uncertain future.

Dr Cathy Moloney

Editor

The ambitious reform plans of the People's Liberation Army: Progress, prospects and implications for Australia

Bates Gill, Adam Ni and Dennis Blasko

Introduction

In late 2015, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) launched its most extensive and potentially transformative set of reforms since the 1950s. These reforms have had immediate and far-reaching effects on the PLA's organisation, force posture, command and control structures, and internal politics. Looking ahead and over the longer term, these reforms will likely help the PLA become a far more capable fighting force. However, according to its own estimates, the PLA is now only about halfway through its modernisation timeline, and decades—and many obstacles—still remain in this long-term process.

Given these important developments for Australian defence and security interests, this article considers the critical advances and ongoing challenges for current reform and reorganisation plans of the PLA. The article will focus particularly on how and whether the PLA is making progress in joint operations and the development of deterrent and coercive capabilities across multiple domains. In order to do this, the article will first review the strategic rationale, structural changes and operational aspirations of the reforms. Second, the article assesses the progress and challenges faced by the PLA across several warfighting domains: land, sea, air, aerospace (missiles), space and cyber. The article concludes by highlighting some key challenges these developments present to Australian defence and security.

Overview of the reforms

The basic contours of the PLA reforms have been made clear by the authorities in China and further elaborated by subsequent research.[1] Broadly speaking, two important objectives drive the reforms. The first, a political objective, aims to strengthen Chinese Communist Party (CCP) control over the PLA. The second, an operational objective, seeks to transform the PLA from an untested, degraded and stove-piped military to a force increasingly capable of conducting joint operations, fighting and winning intensive conflicts against technologically sophisticated foes, and doing so farther from Chinese shores.

To achieve these objectives, the PLA reforms are shaped and driven by: (1) a set of overarching strategic guidelines; (2) important political motivations; (3) operational and capabilities-based aspirations; and (4) the fundamental changes in organisational structure. The following sections take up these important drivers, all of which intend to transform the PLA into a more effective military force.

Strategic guidelines

While the PLA is in the midst of an organisational transformation, its underlying military strategy has remained relatively constant. This consistency in overall strategy can change in the future, but in reviewing authoritative statements and assessments of PLA strategy, several key points stand out.

To begin, China's national strategy remains primarily strategically defensive in nature, prioritising deterrence and defence of the homeland and China's near seas over global expansion of its military capabilities. As such, 'active defence' is still considered one of the PLA's most basic and longstanding strategic guidelines.[2] In a nutshell, China's national strategy is to 'win without fighting', that is, to achieve its national objectives without going to war. However, it is critical to understand that the doctrine prepares and allows for offensive action at all levels of war if and when the situation demands.

A key operational aspect of this strategy is the importance it places on deterrence. As Dennis Blasko, has pointed out, 'most foreign interest naturally focuses on developments in PLA warfighting and technological capabilities and does not explore with equal enthusiasm the deterrence effects of the same developments'. This is true, he writes, even though authoritative Chinese writings on mil-

1 See for example, Phillip C. Saunders et al., eds., *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019); Bates Gill and Adam Ni, 'China's sweeping military reforms: implications for Australia,' *Security Challenges*, 15, 1 (2019): 33–45; Michael S. Chase and Jeffrey Engstrom, 'China's Military Reforms: An Optimistic Take', *Joint Forces Quarterly* 83 (2016): 49–52; Roger Cliff, 'Chinese Military Reforms: A Pessimistic Take', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 83 (2016): 53–56.

2 M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy Since 1949* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), doi:10.2307/j.ctv941tzj.

itary strategy place 'military deterrence' on a par with 'warfighting' and 'military operations other than war' (MOOTW, 非战争军事行动) as one of the three basic ways by which militaries use force.[3]

Political motivations: reaffirming PLA commitment to the Party

In addition to such strategic guidelines, the reforms are also driven by several more specific political aims. To begin, it is important to recall that the Chinese armed forces are a Party army, required to be loyal first and foremost to the CCP and to its defence.[4]

As such, the reforms have the important political aim of asserting stronger CCP control over the PLA. Prior to Xi Jinping's appointment as CCP General Secretary in late 2012, corruption was widespread in the PLA, particularly in the Army, and the military leadership had become resistant to restructuring and reform. Corruption remains a problem in the PLA, but Xi Jinping, once in office, sought to combat it at the same time as consolidating his personal power within the military. Since coming to power in late 2012, Xi has purged more than 100 high-level military officers and the PLA has investigated 4,000 cases, resulting in disciplinary actions against 13,000 officers.[5]

Beyond these purges, Xi has consolidated power over the PLA by promoting a new generation of military leaders and installing his allies in key positions. The year 2017 was the critical period for these changes, with widescale replacements at the top of PLA organisations, including all four service heads, three of the five theater commanders (Southern, Northern, and Central), and leaders of nine of the Central Military Commission's (CMC) 15 functional organs.[6] Further, a remarkably high number—87 per cent—of PLA delegates to the 19th Party

3 Dennis J. Blasko, 'China's Evolving Approach to Strategic Deterrence,' in Joe McReynolds, ed., *China's Evolving Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 335–356. In recent years, the term MOOTW has been used less frequently than during the years when Hu Jintao was chairman of the Central Military Commission. The Chinese armed forces still prepare for and conduct MOOTW missions, but the more common, and restrictive, term 'humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)' (人道主义援助和灾难救援) was used in the 2019 PRC defence white paper.

4 According to the 1997 National Defense Law, the Chinese armed forces consist of the active and reserve units of the PLA, the People's Armed Police (PAP), and the people's militia.

5 Adam Ni, 'The Death of Zhang Yang and China's Military Purge,' *The Diplomat*, 2 December, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/the-death-of-zhang-yang-and-chinas-military-purge/; '在新起点上把军队党风廉政建设和反腐败斗争不断引向深入' ['To increasingly deepen the construction of party discipline and anti-corruption struggle from a new starting point'], *PLA Daily*, 20 September 2017, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2017-09/20/content_188439.htm.

6 Adam Ni, 'The Death of Zhang Yang and China's Military Purge.'

Congress in 2017 were first-timers, representing a new generation of PLA leadership.[7]

In addition to controlling personnel, Xi has centralised authority by reinforcing the importance of the 'CMC Chairman Responsibility System', under which he is imbued, supposedly, with absolute military decision-making power.[8] Unlike Xi, his predecessors Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin were more hands off when it came to military affairs, leaving their CMC vice chairs to run the PLA. Xi has downsized the CMC from eleven to eight members and then stacked the body with his allies, further consolidating his control of the military.

Beyond Xi's anti-corruption and power consolidation measures, Xi has also overseen a renewed emphasis on ideological and political education in the military with focus on the absolute power of the CCP over the gun. Kicked off at the Gutian Conference (古田会议), the PLA's political work conference, held in late 2014, this focus has continued unabated as a key part of Xi's military reform and construction agenda. The effects of these ideological campaigns on military reform and modernisation remain somewhat unclear and beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to note that the resources and time dedicated to ideological education are substantial.

Moreover, the reforms have the broad political intention of integrating military modernisation more tightly with overall national economic and technological advancement. For example, the establishment as part of the reforms of the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF), the PLA's information warfare force, includes the organisation's mandate to take a key role in civil–military integration. In doing so, the PLASSF, working in collaboration with researchers and businesses in the civilian economy, aims to generate synergistic technological advancements for both the civilian and defence sectors, thereby contributing to comprehensive national strength.

Operational motivations: addressing shortfalls

A long-term, multi-decade, multi-generational, and complex process is needed to overcome a wide range of operational problems that the PLA itself recognise, and this drives the reforms. While the PLA is making progress addressing these shortcomings, in their totality such problems present some critical obstacles to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) quest to build the PLA into a 'world-class

7 Bates Gill and Adam Ni, 'Expect a shakeup of China's military elite at the 19th Party Congress,' *The Conversation*, 16 October 2017, https://theconversation.com/expect-a-shakeup-of-chinas-military-elite-at-the-19th-party-congress-84060.

8 '中央军委印发《关于全面深入贯彻军委主席负责制的意见》['Issued by the Central Military Commission: "Directive on the Implementation of the Central Military Commission Chairman Responsibility System"'], *PLA Daily*, 5 November 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2017-11/05/c_1121908242.htm.

military' by mid-century. As such, any serious analysis must take these problems into account.

Evidence for such shortcomings is widespread. Official self-assessments of PLA capabilities emanating from Xi Jinping and his predecessor Hu Jintao are found in a large body of open-source materials, mostly written in Chinese and directed at the domestic Chinese audience. Often, these critiques are expressed in pithy formulas, consisting of a few characters, that identify problems such as insufficiently developed operational capabilities compared to those of advanced foreign militaries, shortcomings in battlefield leadership and the lack of modern combat experience.[9]

Moreover, these senior-level assessments are supplemented and supported by innumerable media reports describing military exercises and after-action sessions that follow field training of all types. In these internal after-action meetings, operational leaders enumerate specific shortcomings in personnel qualities, organisation, training, doctrine and tactics, equipment and logistics. Taken as a whole, the evidence found in these general and specific evaluations of current capabilities supports the overall conclusion that the PLA, by its own assessment, has not yet reached the level of an 'advanced military' relative to the capabilities of the United States, Russia and several countries allied with the United States.

For example, China's 2019 PRC defence white paper on national defence cites significant improvements in overall PLA capabilities. But revealingly—and for the first time in a Chinese defence white paper—it also admits to PLA warfighting and technological shortcomings relative to advanced militaries.

> Great progress has been made in the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) with Chinese characteristics. However, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has yet to complete the task of mechanization, and is in urgent need of improving its informationization. China's military security is confronted by risks from technology surprise and growing technological generation gap. Greater efforts have to be invested in military modernization to meet national security demands. The PLA still lags far behind the world's leading militaries.[10]

This recognition is also evident in the formulations the CCP CMC, the PLA and other authoritative military sources use in internal writings to describe the problems the Chinese military needs to address. During Xi's tenure as CMC

9 On official self-assessments of the PLA, see Dennis J. Blasko, 'PLA Weaknesses and Xi's Concerns about PLA Capabilities,' testimony before the US–China Economic and Security Review Commission, 7 February 2019.

10 State Council Information Office, *China's National Defense in the New Era*, July 2019, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2019-07/24/content_4846443.htm.

chairman, numerous formulations of PLA shortcomings have been referenced hundreds of times in the official Chinese media. The new assessments criticise PLA warfighting capabilities and operational leadership, and, significantly, reveal anxieties about the Party's grip on the armed forces. The following are the most prominent of these formulations.

'Two Incompatibles' (两个不相适应)
This assessment states the PLA's 'level of modernisation (1) does not meet the requirements of winning local war under informatised conditions and (2) its military capability does not meet the requirements of carrying out its historic missions at the new stage of the new century'.[11] This formulation has since been repeated hundreds of times in the official Chinese media.

'Peace disease' (和平病), 'peacetime habits' (和平积习), and 'peacetime practices [or problems]' (和平积弊)
Having last been in a war in the early 1980s, the PLA has very little to no wartime experience. These terms are shorthand to criticise unrealistic actions and shortcuts some personnel and units take during training because they think they will never have to go to war. As a result, unit operational readiness suffers when personnel are not mentally prepared to fight at all times.

'Two Inabilities' (两个能力不够)
This term assesses (1) the PLA's ability to fight a modern war is not sufficient and (2) the ability of officers at all levels to command in modern war is insufficient.[12]

'Two Big Gaps' (两个差距很大)
This phrase identifies big gaps between the PLA's military modernisation level and (1) the requirements for national security and (2) the level of the world's advanced militaries.[13]

'Three Whethers' (三个能不能)
This formulation asks (1) whether the PLA can constantly maintain the Party's absolute leadership, (2) whether it can fight victoriously when needed by the

11 '我军加紧战争准备 当务之急是造"撒手锏"武器' ['The PLA Steps Up Preparation for War, the Most Urgent Task is to Build "Assassin's Mace" Weapons'], *China.com*, 22 March 2006, http://news.china.com/zh_cn/domestic/photo/11026066/20060322/13186012.html.

12 '学习习近平总书记关于强军目标的重要论述' ['Study General Secretary Xi Jinping's Exposition on the Goal of Strengthening the Military'] *People's Daily*, 22 July 2013, http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/0722/c40531-22275029.html.

13 Ibid.

Party and the people, and (3) whether commanders at all levels are competent to lead forces and command in war.[14]

'Five Incapables [Cannots]' (五个不会)
This formulation assesses that 'some' commanders cannot (1) judge the situation, (2) understand the intention of higher authorities, (3) make operational decisions, (4) deploy troops, and (5) deal with unexpected situations.[15]

Overcoming these problems is an explicit goal of much PLA training undertaken in the post-reform period.

Structural overhaul

Several important structural changes to the PLA aim to achieve the political and operational objectives of the reforms while abiding by the overall strategic guidelines noted above. These changes were foreshadowed in November 2013, when the Third Plenum of 18th Party Central Committee announced the decision to 'optimize the size and structure of the army' and to improve the 'joint operation command authority under the CMC and theater joint operation command system'.[16] Two years later, on the last day of 2015, structural reforms to achieve these objectives began, starting with a range of 'above the neck' (脖子以上) national- and theatre-level reforms.

To begin, the PLA's command structure was completely reorganised. The command structure is now flatter and has clearer lines of authority. The revamped command structure is defined by Chinese authorities as 'CMC in overall command, theatre commands operations, service headquarters direct force development' (军委管总, 战区主战, 军种主建). Post-reform, the CMC has asserted more direct command authority and oversight over the PLA. Theatre commanders lead peacetime and wartime operations and have authority over units from different services and branches, which are to intended to operate jointly. The services headquarters have assumed the 'man, train and equip' mission.

Second, the organisational structure of the PLA has been dramatically changed. Under the new structure, the four PLA General Departments were disbanded and their work was mostly subsumed within 15 new functional organs (15个职能

14 '按能打仗打胜仗要求阔步前行——党的十八大以来全军和武警部队贯彻落实习主席重要指示大抓战斗力建设述评' ['Stride Forward to Meet the Requirement to Fight and Win: Comments on Chairman Xi's Important Guidance on Building the Military and People's Armed Police Forces' Combat Strength Since the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party'], *Xinhua*, 14 January 2016, http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/14/c_128626915_2.htm.

15 '破解 "五个不会" 难题要从源头入手' ['To Crack the "Five Incapables" Problem Start with the Source'], *PLA Daily*, 13 October 2015, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2015-10/13/content_125880.htm.

16 'China to optimize army size, structure: CPC decision,' *China Daily*, 16 November 2013, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013cpctps/2013-11/16/content_17109773.htm.

部门), including the Joint Staff Department, under the direct control of the CMC. These sections comprise seven departments or offices, three commissions and five affiliated bodies.[17]

In addition, the seven Army-centric Military Regions (大军区) were dismantled and replaced with five joint theatre commands (战区). The new joint theatre commands are: Eastern Theatre Command (headquartered in Nanjing); Western Theatre Command (Chengdu); Southern Theatre Command (Guangzhou); Northern Theatre Command (Shenyang); and Central Theatre Command (Beijing). The reorganisation established a new Army Headquarters (陆军总部); upgraded the former Second Artillery Force to a fully-fledged service arm with a new name, the PLA Rocket Force (火箭军 or PLARF); established the PLASSF (战略支援部队) for national-level cyber, space, electronic warfare, and other information-related operational support; and created the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force (联勤保障部队 or PLAJLSF). The restructuring also resulted in 300,000 personnel cuts, half of them officers.[18]

These 'above the neck' reforms have centralised command, control and military modernisation authority within the CMC and to the CMC Chairman, Xi Jinping. They have established a flatter command structure by abolishing the four general departments which had become an overly powerful and Army-centric layer of authority between the CMC on the one hand and the military regions and services on the other. In dismantling the four general departments and reorganising the seven military regions into five joint theatre commands, these former bodies were stripped of power which in turn has devolved largely to the 15 functional organs under the CMC.

In April 2017, the PLA began its 'below the neck' reforms (脖子以下' 改革) focused on transforming operational and tactical units from army to division, brigade, regiment and battalion levels. Nearly every unit in all services and forces has been affected by 'below the neck' reforms. This tranche of reforms was expected to be completed by 2020, but additional adjustments and reforms are expected over the following three decades.[19]

17 These are: General Office, Joint Staff Department, Political Work Department, Logistic Support Department, Equipment Development Department, Training and Administration Department, National Defense Mobilisation Department, Discipline Inspection Commission, Politics and Law Commission, Science and Technology Commission, Office for Strategic Planning, Office for Reform and Organisational Structure, Office for International Military Cooperation, Audit Office, and Agency for Offices Administration. For more details, see the Chinese Ministry of Defence website section on the CMC, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/cmc/index.htm. The 15 units are listed above in the same order as they appear on the website.

18 '"Solemn" retirement ceremony called for PLA officers,' *PLA Daily*, 14 June 2016, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/pla-daily-commentary/2016-06/14/content_7099482.htm.

19 'China aims to complete military reform by 2020,' *PLA Daily*, 13 May 2016, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2016-05/13/content_7052671.htm.

Towards greater jointness?

One of the most important long-term operational goals of the reforms is to improve the PLA's joint capabilities across multiple warfighting domains. This has been a traditional challenge for the PLA. That said, the process is moving ahead, albeit slowly, and the PLA can point to areas of progress. The following pages will highlight some of the areas of progress as well as continuing problems across various domains and services.[20]

Land domain

The PLA Army (PLAA or Army) has the primary responsibility for military operations on land, particularly in the defence of China's territory and sovereignty and to deter further steps towards Taiwan independence.[21] After the latest reforms and personnel reductions, the Army remains the PLA's largest service with less than half of the PLA's total 2 million-person force.[22]

Organisational reforms are intended to enable the PLAA to improve its abilities to conduct combined arms and joint operations. In addition to increasing the PLAA's abilities in the land domain, the reforms will increase its capacity to support the other services in maritime, air, and information/cyber operations. It is important to note that the Army continues to develop and experiment with tactics, techniques and procedures that advanced militaries have performed in combat for decades. These include battalion-level combined arms operations, airmobile operations, SOF operations, close air support and amphibious operations.

For more than four decades, PLAA infantry and tank battalion commanders were trained primarily to lead companies and platoons only of their own arms while regiments and brigades integrated multiple arms into combined arms operations. Battalion commanders conducted tasks according to plans developed by their higher regiment or brigade headquarters. Beginning around the turn of the century, the PLAA began to test how to fight using combined arms battalions. After a decade of experimentation, recent reforms codified many lessons

20 Space considerations limit a more in-depth examination here. For a more detailed and lengthy assessment, a full report entitled *Assessing the Ambitious Reform Plans of the Chinese People's Liberation Army: Progress, Problems, Prospects*, is available from the authors upon request.

21 The PLA Navy Marine Corps augments operations in the land domain, specifically in defence of islands and reefs claimed by the PRC, and increasingly in expeditionary operations beyond China's borders. The PLA Air Force Airborne Corps is capable of conducting land operations within China and potentially beyond the nation's borders. Other branches of the PLA Navy, Air Force, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force, and Joint Logistics Support Force will be tasked to support operations in the land domain.

22 '中国军队大步向前，外媒怎么看?' ['The Chinese Military Strides Forward, What Do the Foreign Media Think?'], PLA Daily, 31 July 2017, http://www.81.cn/jwgz/2017-07/31/content_7697830_2.htm. For the PLAA to number less than a million, it likely means that those personnel who still wear Army uniforms in the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF), Joint Logistics Support Force (JLSF), the five joint Theatre Command headquarters, and the Central Military Commission are *not* included on the Army's roster.

learned from training and studying the actions of other militaries. New weapons and equipment provide commanders mobility and firepower capabilities previously unavailable as computers and advanced electronics increase command, control, communications, and intelligence and reconnaissance abilities. Nonetheless, PLAA battalion commanders and their new staffs are still learning to integrate long-range firepower, UAVs and air support into their operations. It is unclear if the PLA education system has yet caught up with the requirement to prepare sufficient numbers of battalion-level personnel for their duties under the new structure.

One of the most important Army reforms has been to designate combined arms battalions (合成营) as the 'basic combat unit' (基本作战单元) to conduct independent missions (独立遂行任务) within combined arms brigades.[23] This development is the result of a decade of experimentation that demonstrated battalion commanders, political instructors and their deputies must be assigned a staff to assist them in the performance of their duties.[24] As a result, reporting indicates that battalions are adding a chief of staff, battalion master sergeant, and four officers or non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to provide support across operations and reconnaissance, artillery/firepower, engineering, and information and communications.[25]

Even with this limited number of staff personnel, units are having difficulty manning these positions with qualified officers and NCOs from company and platoon positions.[26] Furthermore, like the master sergeants being assigned to assist battalion and company commanders, staff NCOs sometimes encounter problems

23 '自主实兵对抗锤炼合成 "铁拳"' ['Independent Live Confrontation Tempers Combined '"Iron Fist"'], *PLA Daily*, 11 November 2018, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2018-11/11/content_220344.htm; '把握合成营训练实质内涵' ['Grasp the Essence of Combined Arms Battalion Training'], *PLA Daily*, 5 June 2018, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2018-06/05/content_207876.htm. Combined arms brigades are designated as 'basic tactical units' (基本战术单位).

24 Traditionally battalions executed plans formed by regiment and brigade headquarters in the style of the Soviet military. Battalion commanders received orders from above but had no organic staff to assist them in commanding current operations or planning for the future. With the development of combined arms battalions, in which units and soldiers with up to 10 different specialties were to work as a team, it became apparent that battalion commanders were not educated or trained sufficiently to employ so many different types of units and required additional personnel to control all of the battalion's subordinate units. See '合成营由"接受指令型"向 "独立作战型"转变' ['Combined Arms Battalions Change from "Receiving Orders" to "Independent Operations" Type'], *PLA Daily*, 9 September 2016, http://www.81.cn/lj/2016-09/09/content_7249484.htm.

25 '合成步兵营有了"中军帐"' ['Combined Infantry Battalion as a "Command Tent"'], *PLA Daily*, 27 May 2015, http://www.81.cn/jwgz/2015-05/27/content_6508696.htm; for the new chief of staff terminology, see '一场对抗演习"打痛"指挥机构' ['Confrontation Exercise "Pains" Leadership Structure'], *PLA Daily*, 20 April 2018, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2018-04/20/content_204240.htm. Some reports indicate staff responsibilities may be divided differently in some units.

26 '合成营参谋纳入首长机关集训' ['Battalion Staff Officers included in Command Staff Training'], *PLA Daily*, 3 June 2018, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2018-06/03/content_207669.htm.

in their interactions with officers in the course of their duties.[27] The PLA will likely require several more years to establish the education and training programs necessary to adequately prepare battalion staff officers and NCOs, as well as battalion and company master sergeants, to perform their new duties and be comfortable in dealing with their commanders.

As a result of the many changes that every PLAA brigade and battalion underwent, units have focused on establishing individual soldier and small unit proficiencies from squad to battalion level during the annual training cycles since 2017. While there have been some larger-scale combined arms and joint exercises in the past three years, the number of these larger, named exercises has decreased significantly from pre-reform levels. It is nearly certain that most units' near-term combat readiness suffered during the years of reform. This was a risk the PLA senior leadership undoubtedly expected and was prepared to accept in order to achieve its mid- and long-term objectives of raising the PLA's warfighting capabilities.

Sea domain

The PLA Navy (PLA-N or Navy) has the primary responsibility for military operations in the sea domain, including surface, sub-surface and air operations. According to China's 2019 defence white paper, the PLA-N is speeding up the transition from near seas defence to far seas protection missions and is 'improving its capabilities for strategic deterrence and counterattack, maritime maneuver operations, maritime joint operations, comprehensive defense and integrated support'. These missions also include a variety of non-traditional security functions such as anti-terrorism, emergency evacuation, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance tasks.[28]

The Navy, whose units generally are more technologically advanced and have a larger proportion of NCOs than the Army, has been busy over the past decade integrating new ships and capabilities into the fleets. Given the number of new ships entering the force, much of the training on shore and at sea is intended to develop initial crew proficiency, refine operational procedures, and establish the ability for the new ships to operate with others in task force or strike group formations.

27 '士官长选拔有了"能力模型"' ['"Capability Models" for the Selection of Master Sergeants'], *PLA Daily*, 16 June 2015, http://www.81.cn/jwgz/2015-06/16/content_6541880.htm; '"士官参谋" 走进"中军帐"' ["'Staff NCOs' Enter the 'Command Tent'"], *PLA Daily*, 20 November 2018, http://www.81.cn/lj/2018-11/20/content_9350965.htm.

28 State Council Information Office, *China's National Defense in the New Era*, July 2019, http://eng.mod.gov.au/news/2019-07/24/content_4846443.htm.

Nevertheless, at present, the bulk of the PLA-N's force structure is organised, equipped and trained mostly for near seas defence and to deter further steps towards Taiwan independence, while simultaneously increasing the number of units capable of far seas protection or expeditionary missions. Ships capable of far seas protection also may be employed in, and strengthen, near seas defence. Over time, the balance between forces with these two missions will shift more heavily towards 'blue water' and expeditionary missions.

As new ships achieve operational readiness after commissioning, their crews receive combined arms training incorporating different types of ships operating as task forces. Many of the larger new ships also participate in real-world missions and training with foreign navies, both in waters close to China and beyond. New ships and missiles have resulted in anti-surface warfare capabilities similar to or better than many potential foes, but carrier-based air operations, integrated anti-submarine warfare and long-range air defence skills are still under development.

Each of the PLA-N's three fleets annually conduct task force training that brings multiple types of ships together that may last up to several weeks, such as the Mobility (机动) series of force-on-force exercises. In January 2019, the Southern Theatre Command Navy dispatched a destroyer, frigate, amphibious transport dock, and supply ship for an exercise focused on 'anti-terrorism, anti-piracy and joint search and rescue missions under real combat scenarios.'[29] A few months later the Eastern Theatre Command Navy conducted a single-day 'joint fire strike and sea assault' exercise east of Taiwan involving a destroyer, frigate, fighters, bombers, and reconnaissance, early warning and electronic warfare aircraft.[30]

At the same time, the PLA-N is working towards the objective of 'joint operations at sea' by increasing training with elements from the Army, PLA Air Force (PLAAF or Air Force) and Rocket Force. Army helicopters now practice operations over water, sometimes working in cooperation with PLA-N ships.[31] PLA-N and PLAAF aircraft have begun training together and air defence elements from all services also conduct joint training.[32] Perhaps most significantly, as early as 2014, prior to

29 'PLA South China Sea Fleet sets sail for far-sea drill,' *PLA Daily*, 18 January 2019, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-01/18/content_9407645.htm.

30 'PLA holds joint drills in waters to the east of Taiwan island,' *PLA Daily*, 4 April 2019, http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/16/content_9479909.htm.

31 'PLA's aviation brigade holds live-fire exercise,' *PLA Daily*, 19 April 2018, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-04/19/content_8008925.htm; '武直-10机群带弹出动 低空火力打击画面震撼' ['Shocking Image of WZ-10 Group Firing at Low Altitude'], 21 May 2018, http://tv.81.cn/roll/2018-05/21/content_8044390.htm.

32 '聚焦打赢砺雄师' ['Focus on Building Elite Forces to Win Wars'], *Xinhua*, 21 September 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-09/21/c_1121704641.htm; '与兄弟单位打得难解难分' ['Difficult to Distinguish Brother Units During Joint Combat Training'], *PLA Daily*, 29 May 2018, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2018-05/29/content_207316.htm.

the current reform effort, Navy units have begun to command joint training. One of the first such PLA-N led joint training exercises was 'Joint Action-2014A' held in the South China Sea involving PLA-N, PLAAF and Second Artillery units.[33]

Compared to other advanced navies, the PLA-N's experience over the past decade in training and operations falls short in many significant ways. Similar to the other parts of the PLA, the PLA-N has undertaken training to overcome the problem of the 'Five Incapables' among its commanders and staffs.[34] Ship crews now may perform their duties without direct supervision from higher headquarters in order to solve 'deep-rooted problems, old, major, and difficult problems, and the problems behind problems' and to update 'outmoded procedures' and 'sort out manifestations of peacetime problems.'[35] Though the PLA-N may be more technologically advanced than other PLA services such as the Army, it shares many of the same leadership challenges found across operational units of the Chinese military.

Air domain

The PLAAF is principally responsible for conducting air operations for the PLA.[36] The PLAAF is the largest air force in the Asia–Pacific region and the third largest in the world, estimated to have over 2,500 aircraft, including 1,700 combat aircraft.[37] However, despite the PLAAF's large number of aircraft, more than half of the PLAAF's fighters, fighter-bombers and bombers are considered legacy models.[38] The PLAAF's weaknesses are especially pronounced in the areas of strategic airlift and aerial refuelling.

Like the rest of the PLA, PLAAF is focused on reforming training practice by reducing and eliminating unrealistic training, formulating training systems, improving the use of technology in training and introducing realistic scenarios.[39] Overall, the PLAAF has gradually increased the difficulty as well as realism of its exercis-

33 '"Joint Action-2014A" exercise held in South China Sea,' *PLA Daily*, 24 September 2014, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2014-09/24/content_6152740.htm.

34 '努力把人民海军全面建成世界一流海军' ['Strive to Build the People's Navy into a World-Class Navy'], *Qiushi* Theory, 31 May 2019, http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2018-05/31/c_1122897922.htm.

35 '破除惯性，解决"问题背后的问题"' ['Eliminate Inertia, Resolve "the Problems Behind the Problems"'], *PLA Daily*, 16 April 2019, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2019-04/16/content_231768.htm.

36 The PLA Army and PLA Navy also have aviation units but are principally focused on their respective domains. For the purposes of this section on the air domain, the focus will be on the PLAAF.

37 Defense Intelligence Agency, *China's Military Power: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win 2019*, DIA-02-1706-085, (Washington DC: DIA), 83, available via https://www.dia.mil/Military-Power-Publications/

38 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *2019 Military Balance* (online), https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance/the-military-balance-2019.

39 '空军迎来成立70周年纪念日 看如何打造"世界一流空军"' ['PLAAF welcomes its 70th anniversary - look at how "world-leading air force" is to be built'], *People's Daily*, 11 November 2019, http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1111/c1011-31448242.html.

es. Despite gradual improvement, the key weakness of the current PLAAF training program continues to be unrealistic training with exercises that are scripted to one degree or another. But recent trends indicate the PLAAF aims eventually to move to unscripted exercises. In addition, the PLAAF is increasingly seeking to engage with foreign air forces, including through participating in international military competitions, such as the Russian Aviadarts air-to-ground competition.

Moreover, the PLAAF's combat patrols have an important training aspect in addition to their operational and deterrence utility. Since 2015, PLAAF has sent strategic bombers (the H-6K) on long-range over-water flights throughout the Asia–Pacific region on at least 40 occasions.[40] These flights have gone beyond the first island chain, and in some cases have focused on Taiwan and Japan. These flights provide PLAAF personnel with important opportunities for realistic training, not to mention generating propaganda and deterrence value.

At the PLA leadership level, it is not yet clear whether the PLAAF is represented in a way that contributes fully to the concept of 'jointness'. In recent years, the Theatre Commands have become increasingly more joint. One aspect of this is high-level personnel appointments. For instance, out of the five Theatre Command commanders, three are from the PLAA (Eastern, Western, and Northern Theatre Commands), one from the PLA-N (Southern Theatre Command), and one from the PLAAF (Central Theatre Command). However, ground force officers continue to dominate leadership positions of the 15 functional organs under the CMC. Only two PLAAF officers hold leadership positions in these organisations. That being said, with time we should expect to see an increasing degree of jointness and integration between the PLAAF and other parts of the PLA, especially the PLASSF and the PLA-N.

Aerospace (missiles) domain

The establishment of the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) and the modernisation of China's conventional and nuclear missile forces are important developments in China's military modernisation and its evolving approach to joint warfighting and deterrence. Since its creation in late 2015, the PLARF has shown notable progress in improving training of its missile forces and upgrading land-based missile capabilities, both nuclear and conventional, giving China's leaders and

40 For a detailed study, see Derek Grossman, Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, Logan Ma, Michael S. Chase, *China's Long-Range Bomber Flights: Drivers and Implications* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2567.html.

military planners a range of new conventional and strategic coercive options and increasing the credibility of China's nuclear deterrent.[41]

At the conventional level, efforts have been underway to integrate PLARF missile bases (divisional size elements) with theatre commands under the new command structure to improve joint operations. Since late 2017, the PLA has run pilot programs on integrating the information and command systems of PLARF missile bases and theatre commands to facilitate joint theatre-level exercises. This includes the integration of missile bases into the 'theatre joint operations command structure' (战区联合作战指挥体系) and the 'theatre joint operational command information system' (战区联合作战指挥信息).[42] PLARF missile bases have also apparently created 'operational clusters' (作战集群) to improve joint effects (联合效能) for joint exercises.

PLARF leadership, like many other parts of the PLA, has been pushing to introduce a more realistic and practical training regimen.[43] In recent years, the PLARF has stepped up the pace of realistic combat training, with one source emphasising that 'realistic combat training' (实战化训练) and 'operational testing and exercises' (作战检验演习) have been 'normalised within the PLARF'.[44] The PLARF's training and exercises have focused on joint operations, brigade attacks, sustained offensive operations, long-distance and cross-regional mobility operations, and operations in complex terrain, weather and electromagnetic environments.[45] Since 2016, the PLARF have formalised and regularised the 'Heaven Sword' (天剑) series, consisting of ten missile force combat training exercises annually, including joint operations training with other services. Interser-

41 For a concise analysis on China's nuclear forces, see: Hans M. Kristensen, 'Military Might Takes Center Stage at Chinese 70-Year Anniversary Parade', *Federation of American Scientists*, 1 October 2019, https://fas.org/blogs/security/2019/10/china-military-parade/. See also Adam Ni and Bates Gill, 'China's New Missile Force: New Ambitions, New Challenges (Part 1)', *China Brief* 18, 14 (10 August 2018), https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-new-missile-force-new-ambitions-new-challenges-part-1/; Bates Gill and Adam Ni, 'China's New Missile Force: New Ambitions, New Challenges (Part 2)', *China Brief* 18, 15 (13 September 2018), https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-new-missile-force-new-ambitions-new-challenges-part-2/.

42 '习主席视察过的部队：潜心砺剑，战略铁拳越练越硬' ['Troops inspected by Chairman Xi: Concentrate on sharpening swords, strategic iron fist gets harder'], *PLA Daily*, 6 May 2018, http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2018-02/06/content_4804300.htm.

43 '火箭军 "实战化军事训练的文化思考"系列报道之二' ['PLARF's "Practical Military Training thinking culture" Series Report 2'], *PLA Daily*, 8 March 2018, http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2018-03/08/content_4806251.htm.

44 '火箭军按照随时能战准时发射有效毁伤标准练兵备战' ['PLARF trains and prepares for combat according to the standard of all-times combat ready and effective destruction or damage'], *People's Daily*, 17 December 2017, http://military.cctv.com/2017/12/17/ARTI5aGsliegUl8kSbBz5crH171217.shtml.

45 Adam Ni and Bates Gill, 'China's New Missile Force: New Ambitions, New Challenges (Part 2),' *China Brief (n. 41).*

vice interoperability and coordination, and joint strike campaigns are highlighted as priority areas for this series.[46]

In addition to developing more realistic training, the PLARF also faces a human talent and resources challenge. Missile force operations require high-quality human input in the form of experienced commanders, operators, technicians, scientists and other support staff. According to one PLARF officer, 'the Rocket Force has vigorously implemented its talent development project and achieved fine results', and that the 'transformation of the Rocket Force' is based on the increasing pool of talent and innovation. However, reports suggest that PLARF units still suffer from a shortage of high-quality personnel, including junior commanders, NCOs and technical staff to man its new equipment.[47]

Outer space and cyber domains

Newly created at the end of 2015, the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF), is among the most groundbreaking institutional changes in the current round of PLA reforms. As the PLA's strategic information force with a mandate to support joint operations, and conduct military space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare operations, the PLASSF will be crucial to warfighting, coercion and deterrence. The PLASSF is both the product and driver of China's shifting military thinking, which emphasises the importance of technology and information systems and the integration of capabilities.[48]

The PLASSF has two primary missions. First, it is to provide the PLA with integrated strategic information support through space- and network-based capabilities, including communications, navigation and positioning, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and the protection of military information infrastructure. Second, the PLASSF works to conduct integrated strategic information warfare operations in the space, cyber, electromagnetic and psychological warfare spheres.

As the PLA's space corps, the PLASSF has consolidated nearly every aspect of China's military space operations, including space launch, telemetry, tracking and control; satellite communications, space intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and space-related military research, development and support. It

46 '火箭军常态开展 "天剑" 系列演训' ['PLARF normalises "Heaven Sword" exercise series'], *PLA Daily*, 30 May 30 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-05/30/c_129882940.htm.

47 '火箭军某训练区：不等不靠解决 '人才荒'" ['PLARF Training Area: Taking Proactive Measures to Solve the "Talent Shortage" Problem'], *PLA Daily*, 30 May 2018, http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2018-05/03/content_4812296.htm.

48 John Costello and Joe McReynolds, *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, September 2018); Adam Ni and Bates Gill, 'The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force: Update 2019,' *China Brief* 19, 10 (29 May 2019), https://jamestown.org/program/the-peoples-liberation-army-strategic-support-force-update-2019/.

also appears to have administrative responsibilities for China's astronauts, who are now all PLASSF officers. On the cyber side, it is responsible for executing the PLA's network mission, which includes and potentially integrates, a diverse range of operations, including signals intelligence, cyber espionage, computer attack, electromagnetic warfare and psychological operations.

As with other parts of the PLA, the PLASSF is struggling to come to grips with the massive organisational changes, the integration of new technologies, and leadership and other human resource challenges. The PLASSF is still very much a work in progress as it continues to reorganise and consolidate the numerous space and information units that it has inherited, while working to strengthen its institutional identity and introduce new leadership and managerial structures.[49] Human talent development (人才建设) is prominently flagged in PLA-related sources as a major challenge for the PLASSF. This is entirely understandable given the knowledge- and technology-intensive skills needed for operating within the space and information domains. Additional institutional growing pains have resulted as diverse units from disparate parts of the PLA are working together for the first time.[50]

The PLASSF is also working on improving the quality and realism of its combat training. According to PLA sources, it is doing so by developing a 'new training system' (新型训练体系), which highlights certain high priority areas where, presumably, critical improvements are needed. These include command and control systems, technical skills and joint training.[51] The PLASSF appears to be taking the training challenge seriously, claiming to have participated in 20 field exercises involving elements from other PLA services in the first year since its establishment.[52]

Implications for Australia

The PLA's ambitious reform agenda thus far exhibits both steady progress and persistent problems. The reforms are designed to strengthen the Party's leadership of China's armed forces, improve command and control systems, and allow for improved joint operations, and steps are being made in this direction. Looking ahead, if the reforms are sustained, they are likely to help the force lev-

49 '组建一年多，战略支援部队这样备战打仗' ['One year since establishment, this is how the Strategic Support Force prepares for battle'], *China Military Online*, 5 June 2017, http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2017-06/05/content_7627841_4.htm.

50 Author interviews with PLA and defence community scholars, Beijing, April 2018.

51 '战略支援部队：锻造新型作战力量的尖刀铁拳' ['Strategic Support Force: build new-type combat power's sharp iron fist'], *Xinhua*, 5 June 2017, http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0605/c1011-29317562.html.

52 '组建一年多，战略支援部队这样备战打仗' [One year since establishment, this is how the Strategic Support Force prepares for warfighting], *China Military Online* (n.49)

erage greater technological capabilities and create a pathway by which the PLA can develop more effective warfighting and deterrence tools, especially within the 'near seas' around China's immediate periphery. By mid-century, according to Beijing's officially stated timetable, the PLA aspires to become a 'world-class military', presumably meaning on a par with other great powers such as the United States.[53]

However, at the same time, the reforms so far have also exposed ongoing weaknesses for the PLA. As former US Army Attaché to China, Col (ret'd) Larry Wortzel, has concluded, 'even after a long period of high-intensity training for the PLA, there does not seem to be much improvement in the ability of their commanders and soldiers to operate on the modern battlefield….[W]hile the PLA understands multi-domain warfare conceptually and has a robust doctrine for these forms of operations, it is stymied in attempts to apply such operations in practical scenarios.'[54]

Current capabilities and persistent challenges

Based on the reforms thus far, where do PLA capabilities stand? Nearest to home, within the first island chain, the PLA is capable of employing large formations from all services to conduct extensive, prolonged surface, sub-surface, air defence, and conventional ballistic and cruise missile operations against foreign forces. It can conduct amphibious and special forces operations on small or medium-size islands employing multiple Army and/or Marine brigades supported by organic and reinforcing artillery, aviation and other combat support. Widespread electronic warfare and cyber/information operations, including political warfare operations, will be integrated into any campaign.

53 The white paper, *China's National Defense* in 2006, described a 'three-step development strategy' for military modernisation and set the ultimate goal of 'mid-century' to build 'informationized' armed forces 'capable of winning informationized wars' (the date is understood to be 2049, corresponding to the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China). The white paper also included two vague intermediate goals (steps) for the years 2010 and 2020. The next white paper, *China's National Defense* in 2008, retained the 2010 and 2020 steps but changed the final objective to reaching the 'goal of modernization of national defense and [the] armed forces by the mid-21st century.' Nearly a decade later, five years after he became the chairman of the CMC, Xi Jinping further revised the timeline by adding a new date, 2035, for completing the modernisation of national defence and the armed forces, and changed the mid-century goal to transforming the armed forces into a world-class force, with no further explanation. See Xi Jinping, *Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, report delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 18, 2017. It is likely that further adjustments to these goals will be made in the coming three decades in reaction to potential changes to either China's internal or external environments and as new technologies become available.

54 Larry M. Wortzel, 'What the Chinese People's Liberation Army Can Do to Thwart the Army's Multi-Domain Task Force,' *Land Warfare Paper* 126 (Arlington, Virginia: Association of the United States Army, July 2019): 10–11, https://www.ausa.org/sites/default/files/publications/LWP-126-What-the-Chinese-People%27s-Liberation-Army-Can-Do-to-Thwart-the-Armys-Multi-Domain-Task-Force.pdf.

Beyond the first island chain to the second island chain, the PLA-N can deploy multiple surface ship task forces, supported by conventional and nuclear attack submarines, and protected by minimal at-sea aviation forces from aircraft carriers and using ship-based helicopters. If all large amphibious ships are used, the PLA-N could transport approximately a full brigade of Marines on an extended mission, but smaller deployments are more likely. Smaller numbers of the China Coast Guard and maritime militia can support these operations. The PLAAF and PLA-N can employ limited numbers of long-range bombers capable of anti-ship and land attack, supported by fighter, command and control, and refuelling aircraft. PLARF mobile ballistic and cruise missile units are capable of limited anti-ship and precision land target attacks. Beyond the second island chain, the PLA-N's capabilities are more limited, capable of deploying occasional surface task forces and conducting operations by conventional and nuclear attack submarines.

At a global level, the PLA has significant cyber assets capable of global reach and a limited anti-satellite capability. Space-based capabilities are expanding with the Beidou positioning system reaching near-worldwide coverage. PLA ground operations at a global level have been mostly limited to battalion or smaller United Nations peacekeeping operations and participation in training or competitions with foreign militaries, with the major exception of a few larger-scale exercises with Russia. The PLA-N has proven capable of providing uninterrupted three-ship anti-piracy task forces off the east African coast for over a decade. Small numbers of ships and submarines occasionally conduct long-duration deployments beyond the Pacific and Indian Oceans. One permanent military base in Djibouti has been established primarily to support the anti-piracy task forces, but additional bases may be built as Chinese interests expand.

While these current capabilities demonstrate progress for the PLA, it is also true that large portions of all services retain the primary mission of continental and near seas defence. These units include border and coastal defence units, local air defence, and near seas naval patrol units, and probably account for around 70 per cent of the PLA's combat force. Moreover, in spite of the current round of reforms, a significant percentage of weapons and equipment (from 30 to 50 per cent depending on type and service) continues to be based on old technologies.

Senior Chinese military leaders recognise that PLA modernisation is now more dependent on human (including leadership), doctrinal, and organisational factors than equipment and technological factors, which underscore the long-term nature of military modernisation. In terms of developing greater jointness across the military services, the PLA still lags behind advanced Western militaries, which took decades to develop such capabilities in combat. Authoritative PLA writings

make clear that much more work is needed, especially in more realistic joint training, improved leadership and greater communications integration across the services in theatre. The problems described in PLA internal evaluations—such as the 'peace disease', the 'two incompatibles', the 'two inabilities', and others—suggest the Chinese political and military leadership may lack confidence in the PLA's current ability to achieve victory if they were to initiate combat against a strong adversary.

All of that said, the PLA recognises these and other limitations and is working to remedy them. China is steadily evolving from a continental to a hybrid continental-maritime power, increasingly capable of projecting power over, on and under water. China's longer-term strategic requirements to project power beyond the first and second island chains will be a powerful driver of stepped-up maritime operations and capabilities.

PLA training will focus on preparing tactical and operational commanders and staffs (from battalion to theatre level) to plan, support and lead large-scale joint and combined operations. The PLA Rocket Force, PLA Strategic Support Force, and political, propaganda, and information warfare capabilities will continue to grow and be integrated with the other services to provide the Chinese leadership with kinetic and non-kinetic options out to greater distances than the majority of the Chinese conventional forces.

Key concerns for Australia

These findings underscore the need for Australian defence planners to carefully assess and respond to the PLA reform process over the coming decades, and particularly over the next 15 to 20 years. Given this relatively short timeframe, the ADF needs to seriously consider the following developments for its own defence planning and procurement cycles.

In spite of the near to medium term obstacles for PLA modernisation, it would be prudent to expect that the reforms can succeed with time, transforming the PLA to a far more capable force between 2035 and 2050. At a minimum, Australian defence planning should anticipate a much higher threat environment in contingencies involving the PLA. Given the importance of these developments for Australian security, greater investments will be needed to expand understanding of PLA strategy and evolving operational concepts, Party-military relations, internal politics and capabilities, especially in relation to more effective force projection within and beyond the first island chain.

For example, in the maritime realm at present, the PLA's far seas and expeditionary capabilities beyond the first island chain do not meet the standards of a 'world-class military.' However, looking ahead, the ADF should expect a stead-

ily increased focus of Chinese military activity in the Southwest Pacific, Indian Ocean and eastern part of South China Sea.

In addition, the PLA's likely advances in 'new' strategic realms—such as in space and cyber—demand the attention of Australian defence planners. Investments by the PLA in the advanced missilery, hypersonic, cyber, outer space, electromagnetic and information realms can contribute to developing greater jointness across the force. These capabilities can also pose greater offensive and deterrent challenges to Australian homeland interests and assets (and those of its allied partners) through the use or threat of long-range strikes, cyberattacks, counterspace operations, and strategic information disruptions (including PLA-led cyber intrusions and disruptions in peacetime). The PLA in 2035 will likely extend its anti-access/area denial envelope beyond the first island chain, enhance its long-range strike capabilities capable of reaching Australia, including hypersonic weapons, and advance its undersea and amphibious warfighting capacity.

Australian defence planners will need to collaborate with the United States and other close allies to develop both defensive and offensive systems to anticipate, identify, disrupt, deter and shield against Chinese conventional missile, cyber, counterspace, and disinformation threats and attacks. It will be particularly important to keep close track of the PLA's missile, space and cyber warfare capabilities—most prominently housed within the PLARF and PLASSF—not only to evaluate the PLA's progress in joint operations but also to identify vulnerabilities and ascertain possible targets for monitoring, pre-emption, deterrence and disruption.

Overall, current PLA training is focusing on developing functional proficiencies in newly reorganised units, while decreasing the number of large-scale combined arms and joint exercises compared to pre-reform years. The number of PLA large-scale combined arms and joint exercises is expected to increase after large units have established proficiency in their subordinate small units. Looking ahead, it will be important to follow the available after-action assessments by the PLA as to joint command successes and shortcomings as the Chinese military expands the size, tempo and realism of its training regimens.

Increasing scrutiny of and preparing for defence against PLA military capabilities will also carry political risks. In response to certain Australian security-related decisions—such as agreeing to a rotational US Marine presence in the Northern Territory or disputing Beijing's claims in the South China Sea—statements from the PRC have strongly criticised Australia and issued veiled threats against Aus-

tralian interests.[55] China has also reacted coolly to Australian steps which could strengthen security and defence ties with others in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, China's strong opposition to the first attempt in 2007 to establish the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the 'Quad') among Australia, India, Japan and the United States was a factor leading Australia to withdraw from the consultative mechanism in 2008. China has likewise criticised the newly established iterations of the Quad[56], though in this instance the Australian government has remained a supportive participant, including at the group's first ministerial-level dialogue in September 2019.

China will always be wary of Australian steps to advance its military readiness and capabilities whether they are unilateral measures or done in concert with Australia's US ally and/or other partners. Beijing has a number of diplomatic and economic levers it can push to express its unhappiness with such steps, they have in the past and should be expected to do so in the future. Australian leaders and defence planners must continue to mitigate those potential near-term threats while preparing for the longer-term challenges the PLA's modernisation drive presents to Australian security interests.

55 'Australia could be caught in Sino–US crossfire', *Global Times*, 16 November 2011, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/684097.shtml; '"Paper Cat" Australia will learn its lesson', *Global Times*, 30 July 2016, https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/997320.shtml.

56 'Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on November 13, 2017', *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks*, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 14 November 2017, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t1510216.htm.

Ten questionable assumptions about future war in the Indo-Pacific

Ross Babbage

Are the Indo-Pacific allies certain that their defence planning for the coming two decades is built on sound foundations? Many Western security analysts assume that a modernised version of their highly networked, combined arms operations will be able to prevail in any major conflict in the Indo-Pacific.[1] But is this right?

If there is to be a major war in the Indo-Pacific, it is likely to involve a struggle between China and a small number of supporters on the one hand and the United States and its allies and partners on the other. The precise sequence of events in such a catastrophe is difficult to predict but it is certain that Beijing will have as much, or even more, say over the shape of the conflict as Washington. This is a serious problem for the West because the core agencies of the Chinese government bring strategic cultures, strategies, operational concepts and priorities to the Indo-Pacific that are markedly different from our own. When viewed in this context, even an advanced version of conventional Western strategies and operations could prove seriously inadequate.

The Western allies need to ensure they plan to deter and, if necessary, to fight and win a future war, not just a part of a war, or even the wrong war.

There are at least ten reasons for doubting that the West's perception of future war in the Indo-Pacific is sound.

1 This central assumption is clear from the priorities that allied defence and national security departments accord to advanced, highly networked, combined arms capabilities in their strategic plans, in their budgets and also in their public justifications for new capability acquisitions. These priorities dwarf those given to countering authoritarian state political and hybrid warfare operations or to the types of military and non-military resilience measures that would be essential to ensure continued theatre leverage in the event of a major conflict continuing for an extended period.

Assumption 1: The Chinese way of war is similar to the West's

Western analysts often assume that Chinese strategic culture, campaign planning and military orders of battle are simply an oriental version of their own.[2] Nothing could be further from the truth.

China has a markedly different strategic and operational mindset that springs partly from the country's status as a continental power, partly from its long history of fending off foreign invasions through the extensive use of political and psychological as well as kinetic operations,[3] and partly from the powerful influence of the strategic thinking developed by Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong.

Early in the 20th century, Mao Zedong was taken by Lenin's logic that if war was politics by other means then the reverse was also true: aggressive political action could be considered war by other means.[4] Mao noted that this thinking helped the Soviet leaders conceptualise how they could defend against and ultimately defeat the conventionally structured and technologically superior forces of the major Western powers. Through many subversive means and mechanisms they worked to foment revolutions in other countries without triggering a military invasion by their capitalist enemies. For example, in countries possessing few Russian speakers, they would encourage a revolt of the working classes and generate dissension within the ruling government. In countries containing significant Russian-speaking or multi-ethnic populations, they would foster a 'fifth column' to operate in support of Russia's interests within the society. They actively exploited the gap between what the capitalist societies called 'war' and what they called 'peace'.[5]

Mao Zedong drew extensively on this thinking as he developed, tested and refined his own concept of revolutionary war to overthrow the technologically advanced forces of the nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek and then Japan's

2 This is most obvious when Western analysts compare US and Chinese strategic capabilities, especially interesting are the dimensions they omit or mention only in passing. One of the more detailed unclassified comparisons has been undertaken by the Rand Corporation. It leaves little doubt about what the authors consider the primary currency of strategic power in the Indo-Pacific. It concludes, as follows: 'Although China's capabilities fall behind those of the United States, it is now able to pose significant challenges to U.S. operations. China has made tremendous strides in its military capabilities since 1996.' See: Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.–China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR392.html.

3 The continued prominence in China of the strategic and operational thinking of Sun Tzu and other early proponents of indirect strategy is notable in this context. See: Sun Tzu, Sun Pin, *The Complete Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996)

4 Thomas G. Mahnken, Ross Babbage and Toshi Yoshihara, *Countering Comprehensive Coercion: Competitive Strategies Against Authoritarian Political Warfare* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2018), 10–11.

5 Ibid., 26.

Imperial Army.[6] The importance of early and sustained political and subversive operations throughout the theatre of operations, including in enemy strongholds, was powerfully reinforced as a foundation of Chinese military doctrine, not only for revolutionary war but also for a wide range of other operations.[7]

Once the Chinese Communist Party seized power in 1949, it immediately set about consolidating its position by subverting and then seizing Tibet, actively supporting revolutionary movements in neighbouring countries and undermining the regional operations of the technologically superior United States, Japan and other 'enemy' states. During its first 30 years, the regime achieved some notable successes, especially in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

In consequence, offensive political warfare and the many subversive instruments for its use became even more deeply etched into China's strategic culture. Although the circumstances of mid-20th century revolutionary war differ from the situation in most theatres today, the habit of early, intense and enduring offensive political operations has continued. Indeed, from the perspective of a Chinese strategic planner, it is difficult to conceive of large-scale operations against foreign powers that do not involve intrusive political and psychological operations from an early stage that are structured to continue indefinitely.[8]

These are the sorts of operations that Chinese government agencies and associated entities have been conducting in recent years against the leaderships and populations of the United States, its close allies and those countries adjacent to China's borders.[9]

The Chinese have launched five major categories of political warfare operation in recent years.[10] The first has been intensive information and propaganda activities. The second has been the use of diplomacy, technology exports and the Belt and Road Initiative to win geostrategic gains. The third has been the extensive use of economic instruments to build dependencies, to coerce political compliance and to secure strategic positions. Within this category have been extensive programs to steal and/or purchase intellectual property to accelerate China's efforts to lead the world in key technology and industry sectors. The fourth has been the use of military, paramilitary and cyber forces to occupy va-

6 Ibid., 26.

7 Ibid., 27. See also: Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice* (London: Paladin, 1970), 32–33.

8 See this argued in some depth in: Ross Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting: Chinese and Russian Political Warfare Campaigns and How the West Can Prevail*, Vol. 1 (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), 49–54.

9 For details see: Mahnken et al., Countering Comprehensive Coercion, (n. 4) and also for a more detailed examination including eight case studies: Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting*, Vols. 1 & 2.

10 See a more detailed discussion of these five categories in: Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting* Vol. 1, 35–42.

cant or contested spaces, to deter escalation, to spread disinformation and to help coerce political actions that accord with Beijing's interests. And finally, the fifth has been China's use of legal and paralegal instruments to assert territorial and other claims, intimidate smaller countries and shape international debates.

So, while China and the Western allies are all investing in modern conventional military capabilities, Beijing is simultaneously expending substantial energy on penetrating and undermining its rivals through highly sophisticated, diverse and persistent political and hybrid warfare operations.

In Western countries, by contrast, political and hybrid warfare capabilities either don't exist or are rudimentary.[11] This means that in the event of a future crisis or war, the primary Western instruments will be standard diplomacy and kinetic military forces. This is a very traditional 'steam age' approach to the multidimensional complexities of Chinese strategy and operations. A key consequence is the West's acceptance of a much narrower concept of war, a far more limited set of campaign instruments and a strategic posture that contrasts starkly with that of the Chinese Communist Party regime.

Assumption 2: The West is currently in a 'competition'

Western leaders routinely describe the rivalry with China as a 'competition'.[12] This Western allusion to a sporting contest or a rivalry between business enterprises has very little relevance to the strategic situation in the Indo-Pacific. In the sporting and business domains a competition presumes the involvement of clearly identified actors, agreed rules, defined boundaries, common timeframes, similar sets of playing equipment and the existence of an independent umpire (in the case of businesses, regulatory authorities and the courts) that both sides obey. None of these things apply to the strategic contest between the West and China in the Indo-Pacific.

The Chinese political and military leaderships rarely talk about a 'competition' with the West. The leadership in Beijing considers their country to be in a continuous 'struggle' and engaged in 'a new Long March' against the West.[13] The current state-of-play is routinely described as being 'united front' political warfare,

11 Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting* Vol 1, 11–19, 49–54 (n.8).

12 See, for instance. Jim Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington DC: United States Department of Defense, 2018). https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf

13 Zhou Xin, 'Xi Jinping calls for "new Long March" in dramatic sign that China is preparing for protracted trade war', South China Morning Post, 21 May 2019, https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3011186/xi-jinping-calls-new-long-march-dramatic-sign-china-preparing. Also, Mahnken et al., *Countering Comprehensive Coercion*, 54 (n. 4).

'new generation war' or 'non-war warfare'.[14] Xi Jinping has reportedly stated that he regards the new normal for the relationship with the West as 'embracing while fighting'.[15]

Language is important in security policy. There is certainly rivalry between China and the West and this rivalry is intensifying. There are also some aspects of both sides' behaviour that can be described as being competitive in nature. But what we are seeing is much more than a benign 'competition'. In an attempt to reflect this more complex dynamic, the final report of the United States National Defense Strategy Commission describes the security challenges the US and its allies currently face as 'competition and conflict'.[16] However, using 'competition' to describe the full range of Chinese operations and Western counters is misleading. The campaigns that the regime in Beijing has been conducting against the Western allies and their partners are political warfare. They are being conducted to undermine the independence of targeted states, destroy the network of Western and partner alliances, and win strategic advances. James Burnham summarised the case succinctly when he wrote:

> Political warfare is a form of war. It is strategic in nature. Its objective, like that of every other form of war, is to impose one's own will on the opponent, to destroy the opponent's will to resist. In simplest terms, it aims to conquer the opponent.[17]

A strong case can be made that China's extensive political warfare operations are no more a competition than the Cold War was a competition. There is a need for the leaders of allied and partner countries to describe these operations with care and precision.

There are many consequences that flow from the West's poor choice of language. One of the most important is to mislead the publics of Western countries into believing that their relationship with the Chinese regime is normal, largely benign and not warranting serious concern. Another consequence of visioning the challenge as a 'competition' has been to encourage some Western allies to adopt timid and reactive modes, which have almost always ceded the initiative

14 Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* (Dehradun, India: Natraj Publishers, 2007), 36–45, 107–110, 123–125.

15 See the commentary: Bill Bishop, 'Two sessions; Controlling core technologies; Socialist market economy in the New Era', *Sinocism*, 20 May 2020, https://sinocism.com/p/two-sessions-controlling-core-technologies.

16 National Defense Strategy (NDS) Commission, 'Executive Summary', *Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace [USIP], November, 2018), p. v, available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/providing-for-the-common-defense.pdf

17 James Burnham, 'Sticks, Stones and Atoms' in Franklin Mark Osanka (ed.), *Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 422.

to Beijing. This, in turn, has resulted in China winning substantial territorial, psychological and political gains through its political and hybrid warfare operations without encountering robust resistance.

In summary, continuing to apply the concept of 'competition' to China's recent political and hybrid warfare activities risks misdiagnosing Beijing's operations. They are better described as comprehensive and persistent coercion—a long-standing habitual form of Chinese warfare.[18]

Assumption 3: China is not a serious rival because its defence spending is a quarter the size of the United States' defence budget

Think tanks, media commentators and others sometimes downplay or dismiss China as a military threat because, they say, China's defence spending is only a quarter or a third that of the United States. The following remarks are typical:

> China today has the largest military on the planet, with two million active personnel in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). However, China only spends slightly over one-third as much as the United States, accounting for 13 percent of annual global military spending in 2017, compared to 35 percent by the United States according to SIPRI.[19]

If one compares China's official defence expenditure with that of the United States using market exchange rates for the respective currencies, China's spending is, indeed, about 26 per cent that of the US.[20] However, a strong case can be made that a more accurate measure of Chinese defence spending is gained by applying the Purchase Power Parity methodology. This formula accords equal value to the production of like products and removes the vagaries of international currency distortions. Using Purchase Power Parity calculations, China's defence spending rises to about 70 per cent that of the US. If, in addition, adjustments are made for the real level of Chinese defence spending (as against the official figure) and the markedly lower costs of Chinese personnel, the figure rises further, to between 90 and 120 per cent of the US defence budget. Indeed, using similar reasoning, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley has testified to Congress that there is a strong possibility that China is spending more on defence than the United States.[21]

18 Mahnken et al., *Countering Comprehensive Coercion*, 3–8 (n. 4).

19 Sebastien Roblin, 'Superpower Military Showdown: China vs. America: Which Nation Would Win a War?' *The National Interest*, 10 June 2018, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/superpower-military-showdown-china-vs-america-land-sea-the-26217

20 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2019* (London: Routledge, 2019), 513–514.

21 Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., 'US Defense Budget Not That Much Bigger Than China, Russia: Gen. Milley' *Breaking Defense*, 22 May 2018, https://breakingdefense.com/2018/05/us-defense-budget-not-that-much-bigger-than-china-russia-gen-milley/

These comparisons still, however, fall short of an accurate comparison because they fail to take account of Beijing's spending on the vast array of non-military and paramilitary instruments that are the regime's weapons of choice in the layers of war other than intensive conventional conflict.

A key conclusion is that accurately comparing United States and Chinese defence spending is like comparing apples with oranges. They are substantially different entities, structured and trained to conduct markedly different types of war, using dissimilar mixes of instruments over different timeframes. Certainly, China's level of investment is sufficiently large to pose a serious challenge to the Western allies. Underestimating its scale and sophistication risks generating complacency in the West.

Assumption 4: Beijing's initiation of a major war against the Western allies would be so risky that it is very unlikely to happen[22]

There are great dangers in Western security analysts making firm judgements about the levels of risk that Xi Jinping and his successors will be prepared to accept. An obvious problem is the ethnocentric tendency of Westerners to conclude that because a US president might not initiate a risky action, the Chinese regime would not do it either. In fact, the history of the last decade shows that the regime has been prepared to take highly assertive and risky actions in the South China Sea, the Senkaku Islands and elsewhere that few Western leaders would contemplate in similar circumstances.[23]

A Chinese decision to initiate a conventional kinetic war with the Western allies may result from a set of circumstances where Xi Jinping or his successor is placed under exceptionally strong domestic and/or international pressure. Were the regime confronted by a failing economy, a rapidly ageing workforce, a resurgent United States, rising dissent in the Party or any other direct challenge to its survival, the leadership might conclude that drastic action was needed to unite the country and deliver the 'China dream', 'reunify Taiwan with the motherland' or launch another international adventure. Such a step would likely be a product of the dynamics at the top of the regime.[24] It would probably be driven

22 For example, the primary conclusion of a Rand Corporation Study was, as follows: 'Even as China becomes a near peer competitor, armed conflict between China and the United States will be unlikely.' For details see: James Dobbins, David C. Gompert, David A. Shlapak, Andrew Scobell, *What's the Potential for Conflict with China, and How Can It Be Avoided?* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 2012), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9657.html.

23 For details see: Ross Babbage, *Stealing a March: Chinese Hybrid Warfare in the Indo-Pacific—Issues and Options for Allied Defense Planners* Vol. 1 & 2 (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019).

24 For an excellent discussion of the dynamics within the Chinese regime see: Richard McGregor, *Xi Jinping: The Backlash* (Sydney: Penguin Books, 2019).

by a perceived need to reinforce the Party's legitimacy and authority in tough times rather than by simplified strategic judgements that may be front-of-mind in Western capitals.

The track record of Western analysts predicting the decisions of authoritarian regimes in crises is patchy at best. Great caution is needed.

Assumption 5: The West has superior strategies, operational concepts and forces

For most of the period since the Cold War, the predominant Western assessment concerning the strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific has been that while China had modernised and expanded its military, the US and its allies remained clearly superior. For instance, in 2015 the Rand Corporation's US–China Military Scorecard report concluded that:

> Over the past two decades, China's People's Liberation Army has transformed itself from a large but antiquated force into a capable, modern military. Its technology and operational proficiency still lag behind those of the United States, but it has rapidly narrowed the gap.[25]

Assessments such as these understate the challenge posed by China but they have been sufficient to shake Western complacency and stimulate efforts to design, develop and test a range of new strategies and operational concepts for the Indo-Pacific.[26] American and allied staffs have displayed innovation and a laudable sense of entrepreneurship. Numerous approaches have been gamed and many lessons learned, some of which have been debated publicly. As a result of these efforts, greatly improved theatre strategies and operational concepts have been developed and significant changes made to both acquisition and training priorities.[27] Indeed, there is a strong prospect that by the mid-2020s the capabilities of the Western allies to conduct intensive conventional operations will be sufficiently enhanced to restore clear conventional military superiority to the allies in the Indo-Pacific.

There is a danger, however, that Western decision-makers will assume that these greatly improved capabilities for advanced conventional operations promising favourable exchange ratios and other traditional measures of combat performance

25 Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR392.html (n. 2)

26 See, for instance: Thomas G. Mahnken, Travis Sharp, Billy Fabian, Peter Kouretsos, *Tightening the Chain: Implementing a Strategy of Maritime Pressure in the Western Pacific* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/implementing-a-strategy-of-maritime-pressure-in-the-western-pacific/publication/1.

27 See this discussed in the aerospace domain in Steve Trimble 'Back to the Future' *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, (23 December 2019–12 January 2020), 32–35.

will produce victory in a major war. If the opponent loses 50 ships but you only lose 10, it does not necessarily mean that you are winning the war. Body count and equipment loss comparisons have borne little relationship to the achievement of theatre victories against determined opponents in Korea, Vietnam and a number of other conflicts.

A large part of the problem is that strategic planners in the West routinely perceive the primary elements of power in a more shallow and limited manner than do the Chinese.

The West, for its part, routinely describes the primary dimensions of power in its international 'competition' with China as diplomacy, information, military and economic forces—frequently abbreviated as DIME. Sometimes this acronym is extended to DIMEFIL, standing for diplomacy, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement. What's more, when Western analysts consider these categories they often view them in isolated 'stovepipes' rather than in multidimensional combinations.

Chinese strategic thinking, by contrast, views the 'correlation of forces' in the struggle with the West to include DIMEFIL but it goes much deeper into each of these factors, extends the list substantially and then considers highly creative combinations of such elements to achieve tailored effects in each environment. For instance, in the information domain the Chinese carefully weigh the power of public statements together with disinformation, the roles of 'agents of influence', the coercion and bribery of individuals and key groups, and several other components in various mixes. In addition to much more detailed consideration of each of the components of DIMEFIL, the Chinese pay great attention to many political, ideological, psychological, resilience and other factors. They have not forgotten that during the wars in Korea and Vietnam, as well as in a number of more recent conflicts, leadership strength, national unity, human resilience, propaganda leverage, capacity to conduct rapidly paced political warfare operations and related capabilities were at least as important as those factors traditionally given prominence in the West. Addressing these more fundamental aspects of the 'correlation of forces' is rare in allied defence planning.

There is a sense in which the Chinese and Western conceptions of conflict and war in the Indo-Pacific have sets of goalposts that are of different shape and size and are positioned in different locations. The mixes of weapons, the concepts of operations and the investment priorities are also markedly different. The Chinese Communist Party regime simply plans to fight a different kind of war.

In the event of a major conflict in the Indo-Pacific, the outcome is most likely to be determined by the relative strength and resilience of the two sides' political

will. The West's relative inattention to this foundational dimension needs to be remedied if effective preparations are to be made to deter and fight a major war in this theatre.

Assumption 6: A major war will be geographically confined

There is a tendency by many in the United States and the other Indo-Pacific allies to assume that the kinetic effects of a major war in the Indo-Pacific would be confined to the sea, land and air space in the Western Pacific and that allied homelands would be spared direct attacks. This assumption is demonstrated by the fact that nearly all allied military bases and key elements of support infrastructures are highly vulnerable to even simple, low technology attacks. Were a major conflict to erupt with little notice, many strategic assets would probably be damaged or destroyed by the kinds of surprise 'assassin's mace' strikes that have long been championed by Chinese strategic leaders. Any presumption that the United States and its allies would be immune from such attacks would be heroic.

China's defence development and capability acquisition programs make clear that, at a minimum, the PLA and associated agencies plan heavy cyber offensives, attacks on space assets, sabotage operations conducted by 'fifth column' and inserted special force operatives, long-range missile and air attacks, the mining of ports and many other types of threat wherever allied assets are located.[28] While most attacks would likely be directed against military targets, key parts of civilian infrastructures and some strategic personnel would also be in the firing line.[29]

The post-World War Two habit of assuming that allied homelands will be immune from attack, short of a major nuclear exchange, is no longer valid. Homeland resilience and strategic asset protection deserves more serious attention.

28 These matters are discussed at some length in: Ross Babbage, *Australia's Strategic Edge in 2030* (Canberra: Kokoda Foundation, 2011) and Babbage, Stealing a March, Vol. 1 (n. 22).

29 For an excellent discussion of the flaws in this assumption see: Thomas G. Mahnken, Grace B. Kim and Adam Lemon, *Piercing the Fog of Peace: Developing Innovative Operational Concepts for a New Era* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), 42–44, available at https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/piercing-the-fog-of-peace-developing-innovative-operational-concepts-for-a-/publication/1.

Assumption 7: A future war in the Indo-Pacific will probably be short

The United States and its Western allies have a long-standing habit of underestimating the likely length and complexity of major wars.[30]

This Western predilection is driven in part by its almost universal focus on advanced technology conventional forces, mostly manned by full-time personnel. Western militaries have a driving interest in planning any war to be fast-moving, clinical, militarily decisive and short. When arguing the case for new military systems before congressional or parliamentary committees, there is a strong tendency to over-emphasise the technological superiority of particular systems and underestimate the much more diverse political, ideological, social, economic and other forces that often coalesce to force Western militaries to struggle in drawn-out quagmires.

The short war assumptions prevalent in the West are also demonstrated by the limited reserve forces that are raised and trained and the modest stocks of key munitions, spare parts and even fuels. The Western allies have mostly given scant attention in recent decades to wartime mobilisation planning and preparations. The implicit, if not the explicit, assumption is that a major war in the Indo-Pacific will fit the short war paradigm.

The Chinese, by contrast, prepare extensively for a future war to be extended, multidimensional and very complex. They have vast military reserve and paramilitary formations, they have moved many strategically important military assets underground, they have hardened strategic communication systems and they have developed large reserves of fuel, spare parts and even food. They have also propagated a powerful nationalistic narrative, built formidable information control mechanisms and taken steps to prepare the Chinese population psychologically for a long struggle.

The Western allies need to ensure that their timeframe assumptions are soundly based. Failure to give adequate attention to combat endurance and broader national resilience undermines allied deterrence and war-fighting capacities.

30 See, for example, the results of the British Mass–Observation survey that was conducted in November 1939. Only 19% thought that it would last three years (considerably more than before the government's prediction of a three-year war was publicised), whereas 21% expected it to last 'nine months to two years' and the same proportion thought that the war would be over in less than six months, only two decades after the 52-month Great War! The report noted 'the exceptionally high proportion [29 percent] who can't answer', many of whom had 'thought there would never be a war and since its outbreak have been wishfully thinking it away' Similarly there were predictions from 1942 at least that the war would end within the year, while battlefield victories boosted confidence in an imminent peace.
Harrison and Madge, eds. 'War begins at home by mass observation.' cited in Stuart Halifax, "When will this war end?" *Great War London: London and Londoners in the First World War* (4 Jan 2015), https://greatwarlondon.wordpress.com/2015/01/04/when-will-this-war-end/

Assumption 8: It is sufficient for the West to plan for a single-phase kinetic conflict rather than a conflict continuum

As argued earlier, almost all Western preparations for a future major war in the Indo-Pacific involve heavy investments in advanced, highly networked, combined arms military capabilities designed for intensive kinetic conflict. The dominant allied view is that if Western forces can track all hostile forces in the theatre and strike them very rapidly, while maintaining a controlling presence in and around the first and second island chains, opposing forces will soon be defeated.[31] The strong implication is that if the PLA suffers heavy losses in a conventional force exchange, the Chinese regime would then sue for peace.[32] The logic of these assumptions is highly questionable and needs to be assessed against the Chinese Communist Party's history of suffering heavy losses in conventional battles against the Kuomintang, the Japanese Imperial Forces and the United States and its allies in Korea and then in each case fighting on to win either a complete or partial victory.

This article is not arguing that American and allied efforts to re-establish clear conventional force dominance in the Indo-Pacific are of little value. To the contrary, current and planned advances in allied conventional military capabilities are to be welcomed and strongly encouraged.[33] However, given the Chinese regime's track record and the asymmetric nature of its military and political doctrine, there must be serious doubt about whether a succession of allied campaign victories at sea, in the air or elsewhere would necessarily result in the regime's surrender or collapse.

In contrast to the dominant Western view of major war, the Chinese concept is a multi-layered continuum that parallel's Mao Zedong's model of revolutionary war. Mao argued that if communist forces are to fight a major war with powerful advanced technology opponents they must ensure that the conflict is protracted. For a start, he believed that the theatre should always be prepared by intensive political warfare operations conducted in the enemy's camps, in neutral communities and also in one's own population. The primary goals of these efforts were to gain detailed intelligence, foster local agents and other supporters, undermine and divide enemy communities, delay the opponent's campaigns and simultaneously reinforce the morale and resilience of one's own forces.

31 See, for example: William S. Murray, 'Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy,' *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 12–38; or Jeffrey E. Kline and Wayne P. Hughes Jr., 'Between Peace and the Air–Sea Battle,' *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2012): 35–41.

32 Ibid and also David Ochmanek et al., *U.S. Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World: Rethinking the U.S. Approach to Force Planning* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017).

33 See these advanced concepts discussed in Mahnken et al., *Tightening the Chain* (n.25).

Then Mao insisted that there must be three kinetic phases of operation on the pathway to victory.[34] In the first kinetic phase, the advanced technology enemy would be on the offensive and would throw all of its energy and resources into winning a rapid and decisive victory. During this phase Mao's forces would conduct a fighting retreat, inflicting serious casualties while trading space for time. Enemy forces would be drawn into energy-sapping extended operations for little substantive gain.

Mao's second kinetic phase of war was an extended stalemate in which the enemy was denied victory, suffered continuing losses and the revolutionary forces won time and space to prepare for the strategic offensive that would follow.

In the third kinetic phase, Mao's forces took the enemy by surprise by launching strategic offensives, often in unexpected areas. They forced the enemy onto the defensive, imposed further serious losses and drove home to enemy publics and leaders the futility of continuing. Eventually the enemy would collapse politically and look for a way out of the war. As Katzenback and Hanrahan have explained, this deeply etched strategic logic of the Chinese Communist Party rested on two key assumptions.[35] First, that China's loss of initial conventional battles and some means of production did not mean the loss of the war. And second, that the enemy would be committed to a quick war and would strike from the outset with the totality of its power. Mao believed that so long as the communist forces survived and remained united and determined, they were winning—even if they suffered serious losses on the battlefield. He sought to prolong the war and imbue his forces with a 'monopoly on patience'.[36] Eventually, the enemy would be defeated because even the most powerful advanced nations could not sustain a long, costly, drawn-out war, especially when the alternative of a negotiated peace would not threaten the enemy's homelands.

Given the depth of Chinese strategic logic and doctrine it is perhaps not surprising that Beijing's planning for a future major war resembles a 21st century version of Maoist strategy. A strong case can be made that, like Mao's revolutionary

34 'On the Protracted War' Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. 2 (London, 1954), 183ff. See also the excellent discussion of these issues in Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr. and Gene Z. Hanrahan 'The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-Tung' in Franklin Mark Osanka (ed) *Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 138–143.

35 'On the Protracted War' Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, 135 and Katzenbach et al., 'The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-Tung' in Osanka (ed) *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, 138, 139 (n. 33).

36 Katzenbach et al., 'The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-Tung' in Osanka (ed) *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, 144–146, (n. 33).

war strategy, it also comprises one preliminary political and hybrid warfare layer and three kinetic layers.[37]

As discussed above, the preliminary political and hybrid warfare layer involves the use of a wide range of coercive instruments to shape the operational environment and to penetrate, weaken, disrupt, divide and corrupt strategically important countries and international institutions.

The first kinetic layer of the Chinese wartime plan appears to involve intensive surprise attacks on allied forces, bases and supporting infrastructures throughout the Indo-Pacific region. The PLA is structured for heavy pre-emptive ballistic and cruise missile strikes as well as bombing raids, naval attacks and cyber assaults.[38] These intensive strikes could be expected to inflict major damage on allied facilities and forces in the first hours. However, the Chinese expect that allied forces would strike back strongly and do serious damage to PLA forces and facilities, especially in the maritime environment. The Chinese realise that they will suffer heavy losses and would probably need to retreat from a range of positions, imposing costs on enemy forces and buying time as they go.

Diminishing munition and fuel stocks, damaged basing and other factors are likely to slow the pace of such exchanges after a few days. In consequence, this intensive conventional layer would probably not extend for more than a month.

Chinese planning presumes that fighting in the first kinetic layer would be unlikely to bring an end to the war unless the United States and its allies back down or surrender. Hence, in line with long-standing Maoist doctrine, Beijing plans two further layers of kinetic conflict.[39]

In the second kinetic layer of war the Chinese appear to envisage an extended period of attrition, punctuated periodically by localised conventional exchanges.

37 Please note that when describing the different elements of Chinese campaign strategy, the term 'layers' is used rather than phases or stages. This is because Chinese strategy clearly envisages political warfare to be conducted simultaneously with all of the kinetic layers. Moreover, Mao made clear that he fully expected that, if pressed, communist forces might need to revert from the third kinetic layer to the second stalemate layer for a time. In other words, movement between the different layers of conflict could be two-way. This did, in fact, happen in the wars against the Nationalist Kuomintang and Imperial Japanese Armies and also, arguably, in both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

38 Defense Intelligence Agency, *China Military Power: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win* (Washington DC: US Department of Defense, 2019), https://www.dia.mil/Military-Power-Publications/; and Thomas Shugart and Javier Gonzalez, *First Strike: China's Missile Threat to U.S. Bases in Asia* (Washington DC: Center for New American Security, 2017).

39 Chinese planning for phases three and four is reflected in occasional public statements about their determination to survive and fight on beyond the initial phases of a conflict to outlast their enemies and their heavy investments in both military and civilian installations, supply chains and other capacities that are highly protected, dispersed and duplicated. This planning is also prominent in Chinese strategic doctrine, which emphasizes extending the length of conflicts to exhaust the enemy and making advanced preparations to cycle from the strategic defensive to stalemate and then to strategic offensive operations and then back again as required.

During this long and draining strategic stalemate the two sides' leadership and public determination, ideological strength, industrial mobilisation, rates of resupply and force expansion would be influential in determining who emerges with the upper hand. While not excluding the prospect of allied missile and air strikes deep into Chinese territory, the PLA does not expect substantial allied ground assaults on the Chinese homeland.

Towards the end of the second kinetic layer, both sides may be seriously wounded and the PLA may have lost most of its naval assets and overseas outposts. China would probably also be increasingly isolated with its access to international finance, technologies, resources and international markets severely constrained. Nevertheless, the regime in Beijing seems to assume that its core land-based facilities, industrial capabilities and population mass would still be largely intact and it could fight on. In accordance with Maoist strategic logic, so long as the country remained united and defiant, it could not be defeated.[40] In consequence, the regime could be expected to 'hunker down', rally its citizens and revert to using whatever military and non-military assets that remained in order to continue the struggle.

In the third kinetic layer, Chinese forces could be expected to launch offensive operations. Many are likely to be unconventional, possibly including terrorist-style attacks and the use of chemical, biological and radiological weaponry. All of these operations would be supported by intensified propaganda and other political warfare activities. Beijing's aim would be to exhaust and outlast the United States and its Pacific allies militarily, economically and, most of all, politically. This would be a 21st century version of the strategy that China used in Korea and Hanoi used to defeat the United States and its allies in Vietnam.

A key conclusion is that China's strategic doctrine and planning for a major war in the Indo-Pacific are very sophisticated. They draw extensively on the lessons from the repeated victories of communist forces over advanced technology enemies during the last century.

Chinese preparations for a multi-layered conflict continuum pose markedly different challenges to those generally assumed in Western security planning. There is a need, as a consequence, to review many of the priorities of allied defence and broader national security planning and stress-test their effectiveness in the types of war the Chinese appear to be planning.

40 See: 'On the Protracted War' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Vol.2 (London, 1954), 183. See also Katzenbach et. al., 'The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-Tung' in Osanka (ed) *Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 131-146 (n 33).

Assumption 9: Non-military capabilities will be peripheral in future major war

The discussion above makes clear that the United States and its Western Pacific allies are making rapid progress in developing and fielding very strong 'tool kits' for conducting advanced conventional military operations. The main problem here is that these capabilities are likely to be fully effective only in the first kinetic layer of a future major war. The West's capabilities to deter and win in all of the other layers of such a struggle are much more limited.

In the current phase of the 'continuous struggle', characterised by extensive political and hybrid warfare, the Western allies have relatively weak capabilities and are often reluctant to use those they do possess. This has not always been the case. In the last decade of the Cold War, the United States and its allies conducted formidable political and economic warfare operations that substantially undermined the credibility of the Soviet regime and contributed to its collapse.[41] However, those capabilities were mostly disbanded in the early 1990s and the West is now poorly equipped, organised and resourced to win in the initial political and hybrid warfare layer of the struggle.

As discussed above, both sides have powerful capabilities to fight in the first kinetic layer and each side is likely to suffer heavy combat losses. In the second and third kinetic layers of a major war, Beijing might receive substantial support from Russia and possibly from Iran and North Korea. Together with its own mobilised society this may be sufficient for the Chinese regime to sustain effective resistance against the West for an extended period. Most importantly, it may make feasible Beijing's goal of fostering deep war-weariness and a climate of collapse in allied capitals.

By contrast, the West's preparations for an extended and draining conflict are comparatively limited and with some rare exceptions they do not extend far beyond their national defence organisations. Should the West focus more attention on these non-military elements, it does have the potential to mobilise powerful instruments that could be used to apply great pressure on Beijing, including by isolating China from its distant suppliers. These types of civilian and paramilitary operations would be very important to success in the second and third kinetic layers of a major war.

So while the United States and its allies may well be on the way to fielding superior capabilities for the first kinetic layer of the Chinese conception of war, it would be unwise to neglect the many military and non-military capabilities that would

41 For a discussion of this history and its primary lessons for security planners see Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting* Vol. 1, 11–20 (n.8).

be crucial to gaining the upper hand in the other layers of a future conflict. Effective mobilisation, organisation and deployment of these whole-of-nation and whole-of-alliance capabilities will be essential to deter and prevail in a drawn-out major conflict in the Indo-Pacific.

Assumption 10: The West has the best structures for planning, preparing and commanding next-generation warfare

The United States and its allies possess substantial government and private sector organisations that are capable of planning and preparing for highly networked, combined arms combat. When partnered with well-trained military personnel, the resulting forces can dominate most battlefields in conventional military operations.

Nevertheless, Western forces do have their weaknesses. For a start, the United States and other allied armed forces have had no experience of fighting a major power opponent since 1951. The very concept of a major war that could be fought against a superpower rival over an extended period is far removed from their recent experience of expeditionary wars fought far from allied homelands against non-conventional opponents. In consequence, the allies have largely neglected the hardening, dispersion and protection of their key personnel and systems.

The allies are also burdened by capability acquisition systems that are mostly slow, cumbersome and difficult-to-manage.[42] Except in unusual circumstances, a new capability requirement for aircraft, ships or tanks typically takes 20–40 years to deliver into service.[43] These long timeframes render the allies vulnerable to the comparably fast-moving acquisition systems of the PLA and some other authoritarian state militaries.

Even more serious are the West's structural, capability and command weaknesses in preparing for operations in the initial political warfare layer and the second and third kinetic layers of a major conflict. Operating in these spaces China has several very large and highly skilled organisations including the Propaganda Department, the United Front Work Department, the Ministry of State Security, the Cyberspace Administration, the PLA, the Peoples' Armed Police

42 Moshe Schwartz, Kathryn A. Francis and Charles V. O'Connor, *The Department of Defense Acquisition Workforce: Background, Analysis, and Questions for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 29 July 2016).

43 For an informed discussion of this challenge see: Norman Augustine, Gary Hart and Warren Rudman, *Getting to Best: Reforming the Defense Acquisition Enterprise. A Business Imperative for Change from the Task Force on Defense Acquisition Law and Oversight* (Washington DC: Business Executives for National Security, July 2009).

and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.[44] These agencies operate at the heart of the Chinese regime and they all report to the Politburo Standing Committee, chaired by Xi Jinping.

In the United States and its allies there is no array of similarly focused organisations. No Western ally currently has a centralised planning and command organisation for combating China in the political and hybrid warfare space. And their planning and preparations for long duration operations are also limited and poorly coordinated.[45] Much remains to be done.

The need for rigorous testing of Western assumptions

The primary conclusion of this article is that there is a need for greater rigour in allied planning for deterring and winning a major war in the Indo-Pacific. If core assumptions are not subjected to thorough review there is a strong possibility that the United States and its allies and partners will be vulnerable to surprises, which could prove to be disastrous. Key vulnerabilities include:

- the danger of misperceiving the nature of the multidimensional challenge posed by the Chinese Communist Party regime and attempting to address it by investing almost entirely in modernised versions of conventional diplomatic and military instruments
- misjudging the extent to which China and other authoritarian states have penetrated allied and partner societies and are positioned to conduct 'fifth column' operations to seriously disrupt Western activities in future crises and conflicts
- the possibility that the publics of the United States, allied and partner countries have such a shallow understanding of the challenges they would face in a future conflict that their resilience would be weaker than is often assumed
- the risk that largely unseen pressures on the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party could trigger a decision to launch a pre-emptive strike against allied forces in the Indo-Pacific that would take the Western allies by surprise
- the possibility that the allied preference for a swift and decisive victory in such a conflict would be thwarted and that the Western allies may be forced to fight a long, expensive and draining war

44 For an excellent discussion of these arrangements, see: Peter Mattis, 'Form and Function of the Chinese Communist Party', 28 September 2017, published via *LinkedIn* see https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/form-function-chinese-communist-party-peter-mattis

45 The case for a strong whole-of-government working group to deal with these and related issues has been made in London. See: Alexi Drew, John Gerson, Charles Parton and Benedict Wilkinson, 'Rising to the China Challenge: The Case for an Enhanced All-government China Strategy Group', *News Centre, King's College London*, 7 January, 2020, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/rising-to-the-china-challenge

- the prospect that the physical and psychological damage to Western homelands caused by such a war could shock allied electorates, induce war-weariness and result in eventual political collapse
- the danger of underestimating the importance of economic, infrastructure, social, ideological, political and other non-military factors to the course of such a war (There are questions about whether allied planning of these and other non-military dimensions is in a fit state and is sufficiently exercised to perform effectively in a major conflict.)
- the strong possibility that it may be much more difficult to negotiate a reasonable settlement during such a conflict than most Western decision-makers anticipate.

This discussion suggests that there is a need to review these and related matters as a priority. Stress testing core assumptions in realistic competitive exercises should generate new insights and inform future priorities. We need to be sure that we get these judgements right.

Aiding our ally...some options for Australia

Jonathan Earley

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific regional order is under significant strain. The relative influence of the United States is in decline and an increasingly assertive China is leveraging its economic rise and growing military capabilities to challenge existing norms and impose its own rules as the new regional hegemon.[1] President Xi has openly stated the US-led security architecture and order has 'outlived its utility' in stabilising the region and is actively promoting China as an alternative to US leadership.[2] On the other hand, the US has yet to implement an effective strategic response that closes the gap between its 'ends and means' in addressing China's rise. For decades the US has relied on naval mastery of the maritime domain as one of the key pillars to sustain its global hegemonic status.[3] But with China modernising its military capabilities and projecting presence well beyond its territorial waters, the dominance of the US Navy is now under contest and a new policy approach is needed.

The 2017 release of the Trump Administration's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) vision was an attempt to reaffirm US primacy across diplomatic, economic and military domains. Although a positive step forward, its sparse detail

1 John Schaus, 'The Limits of Good Strategy: The United States in the Asia Pacific in 2018', *Commentary*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2 February 2018, accessed 10 March 2019, https://csis.org./analysis/limits-good-strategy-united-states-asia-pacific-2018.

2 Gary Schmitt, 'Challenges to the US Rebalance in Asia' in *Asia Pacific Countries and the US Rebalancing Strategy*, ed. D. Huang (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 31-47, DOI doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-93453-9

3 Thilo Schroeter, Matthew Sollenberger and Bastiaan Verink, 'Challenging US Command of the Commons: Evolving Chinese defense technologies as a threat to American hegemony?', *The SAIS Bologna Center, Journal of International Affairs* 13, 1 (Spring: 2010): 41–56, accessed 15 May 2019, https://www.saisjournal.eu/DOCUMENTS/VOLUMEPDFS/B0FB41C8-97D2-DD97-D94C87A75A944357.pdf.

led many Indo-Pacific nations to question the resolve of the US to remain committed to the region. It would not be until mid-2019 that an 'implementation strategy' was released that sought to 'operationalise' the FOIP vision. Named the *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* (IPSR), it identified how the rapid growth in Chinese military power would require the US to think differently about how it bases, moves and fights its forces in the Indo-Pacific.[4] More importantly, the IPSR also signified an 'inflection point' for the US, reflecting a hardening of its security posture in response to the changing balance of power in the region.

This strengthening of US security posture suggests a potential increase in US military presence across the Indo-Pacific. While Northeast Asia is well served by a number of established US bases in Korea and Japan, the US will be keen to extract greater utility from the key security relationships it holds in the southern region of the Indo-Pacific to enable a more distributed posture of its forces. Whether regional nations remain willing to support an expanded US security footprint will ultimately be subject to the influence such a decision may have upon the national interests of the country in question. In Australia's case, with our national interests of security and prosperity largely dependent upon the US-led order, I argue that this renewed US approach to security in the Indo-Pacific offers an opportunity for Australia to modify its future defence policy, posture and force structure to attract greater US interest and engagement in our near region.

Ends and means

The release of the IPSR on 1 June 2019 was the first document of its kind in many years to provide specific context on how the Trump administration intended to assert its security posture in the region, reflecting a step-change in US declaratory.[5] Drawing from the National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS), the IPSR sought to articulate the security aspects of the FOIP vision for the Indo-Pacific. It signified a hardening of US security posture towards its 'strategic competitors', specifically identifying China and its 'revisionist' agenda as a key focus. Until recently, the US and other nations in the region

4 Peter Jennings, 'America's New Asia Strategy Opens Doors for Australia', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 22 June 2019, accessed 3 July 2019, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/americas-new-asia-strategy-opens-doors-for-australia/

5 Ian Storey, 'Contending US and Chinese Visions for Regional Order at the Shangri-La Dialogue: A Mixed Reception from Southeast Asia', *Perspective, ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute*, 2019/59, Singapore, 7 August 2019, accessed 24 August 2019, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/item/10136-201959-contending-us-and-chinese-visions-for-regional-order-at-the-shangrila-dialogue-a-mixed-reception-from-southeast-asia-by-ian-storey; Ashley Townshend, Brendan Thomas-Noone and Matilda Steward, 'Averting Crisis: American Strategy, Military Spending and Collective Defence in the Indo-Pacific' (online analysis report), *United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney*, 19 August 2019, accessed 22 August 2019, https://www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/averting-crisis-american-strategy-military-spending-and-collective-defence-in-the-indo-pacific.

had shown little willingness to seriously confront China over its coercive actions, particularly in the contested maritime domain. This was in part due to China's adroit use of grey-zone tactics that enabled it to gradually increase influence and advantage without inciting a more robust military response from the US.[6] Without the US directly confronting China about its island building and militarisation in the South China Sea, apprehension was fuelled over whether the US security assurance remained valid. However, the language used in the IPSR now suggests US tolerance for Chinese behaviour has lessened, with the US more determined to compete directly with China in what Henry Kissinger labelled 'the key problem of our time'.[7] At the 2019 AUSMIN conference, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reflected this shift in tone when discussing how the US sees the future of the region and its role in it:

> We stand firmly against a disturbing pattern of aggressive behavior, destabilizing behavior from China. This includes weaponizing the global commons, using predatory economics and debt for sovereignty deals, and promoting state-sponsored theft of other nations' intellectual property. In the Indo-Pacific, power should not determine position and debt should not determine destiny. The United States will not stand by idly while any one nation attempts to reshape the region to its favor at the expense of others, and we know our allies and partners will not either.[8]

Notwithstanding this reinforcement of the US narrative to confront China more directly, whether the US is able to effectively translate intent into action will be crucial to its success.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy Report

The IPSR was unveiled by then US Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan during his address at the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue conference. The timing and venue for its release provided an ideal opportunity for the US to publicly assure the regional defence establishment of its commitment to the region as

6 Andrew Erickson, 'Shining a Spotlight: Revealing China's Maritime Militia to Deter its Use', *National Interest, Center for the National Interest*, 25 November 2018, accessed 20 September 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/shining-spotlight-revealing-china%E2%80%99s-maritime-militia-deter-its-use-36842.

7 Henry Kissinger, 'The Key Problem of Our Time: A Conversation with Henry Kissinger on Sino–U.S. Relations', *Wilson Center,* 20 September 2018, accessed 22 August 2019, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-key-problem-our-time-conversation-henry-kissinger-sino-us-relations.

8 US Department of State, 'Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marise Payne and Australian Minister of Defense Linda Reynolds, *Remarks to the Press at a Press Availability'* (New South Wales Parliament House, Sydney, Australia), US Department of State, 4 August 2019, https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-state-michael-r-pompeo-and-secretary-of-defense-mark-esper-australian-minister-of-foreign-affairs-marise-payne-and-australian-minister-of-defense-linda-reynolds-at-a-press-availability.

its 'priority theatre'.[9] But its arrival was more noteworthy for the fact that it cemented geopolitical competition as the core determinant of how security would be organised in the region. Secretary Shanahan's remarks make clear the US view that 'no one country can or should dominate the Indo-Pacific'—drawing reference to China's recent actions to reshape the regional order.[10] Not surprisingly, the IPSR is quite explicit in detailing where the US will direct its security effort, devoting four pages to a 'revisionist' China—whereas the threats posed by North Korea, Russia and transnational crime only manage one page each.[11] This focus on China also acknowledges concern regarding the modernisation and expansion of Chinese military forces, particularly those that might negate the technological and operational advantages that the US military has enjoyed since the end of the Cold War.[12] To that end, the IPSR ominously concedes that China is 'likely to enjoy a local military advantage at the onset of conflict' in East Asia, suggesting a possible admission by the US that its military superiority might not be as dominant as it once was. Jennings postulates that such an admission may have been the impetus for it 'to restructure how it will base, move and fight its forces in Asia' to better realise the dynamic and distributed presence envisioned for US forces as part of the FOIP vision.[13]

To that end, the IPSR has sought to reprioritise the efforts of the 375,000 personnel, 2,000 aircraft, 200 ships and submarines that constitute INDOPACOM to better compete against the security challenges posed by China.[14] It aims to achieve this through three 'lines of effort', namely: preparedness; partnerships; and a networked region. The first line emphasises the need for competent and capable forces, matched to innovative operating concepts that are designed to enable smarter distributed force posture and employment of US forces across the region. Evidence of this effort has already been seen through the highly successful US Force Posture Initiative underway in Australia and the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement in the Philippines, although recent reporting

9 Lucio Blanco Pitlo III, 'Preeminence or Partnership—The US in the Indo-Pacific', *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 19 July 2019, accessed 19 July 2019, https://amti.csis.org/preeminence-or-partnership-the-united-states-in-the-indo-pacific.

10 Storey, 'Contending US and Chinese Visions for Regional Order at the Shangri-La Dialogue', (see n.5); United States of America Department of *Defense, Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, 1 June 2019, Ref ID: 0-1C9F36A, (USDOD, published 31 May 2019), accessed on 15 July 2019, https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/department-of-defense-indo-pacific-strategy-report-2019.pdf.

11 US DoD, 'Indo-Pacific Strategy Report', 7–13.

12 Townshend, Thomas -Noone and Steward, 'Averting Crisis', (see n.5).

13 Jennings, 'America's New Asia Strategy' (see n.4)

14 United States Indo-Pacific Command (USPACOM), 'About INDOPACOM' (web page), U.S. Department of Defense, accessed 25 August 2019, https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/.

suggests this latter arrangement may now be at risk.[15] The second line focuses on the need to modernise and strengthen America's alliance network and partnership arrangements. The IPSR places significant importance on this aspect as a fundamental enabler of the FOIP vision, noting how US allies offer an 'unparalleled advantage that no competitor or rival can match'.[16] Reinvigoration of these relationships through increased engagement and interoperability training will help build capacity and trust among like-minded nations to assist the US in countering malign Chinese behaviour. The final line of effort relates to the promotion of a networked region. Here, the US seeks to amass its various alliances and partnerships into larger, more integrated coalitions (e.g. tri-lateral arrangements) to help share the security burden against common threats. But, while these lines of effort may serve to crystallise broader US intent for the region, the IPSR is less clear about how the limited resources available will be apportioned to deliver sustainable action—an issue that has not gone unnoticed by regional states.

Importance of the US Navy to IPSR

The US has long relied on naval mastery of the maritime domain as one of the pillars that underpin its global hegemonic status.[17] With the IPSR focused on sustainment of US influence via its three lines of effort, the utility of the US Navy remains fundamental to its success. Its value as a visible representation of US commitment to a region helps ensure US influence remains relevant to the decision-making of allies, partners and potential adversaries as well as enabling opportunities for additional political, economic and military access.[18] But none of this is possible unless the US Navy maintains a persistent and effective presence in the region, a challenge it is finding increasingly difficult to achieve. In early 2017, this concern was most noticeably demonstrated when the US was unable to deploy any of its aircraft carriers for the first time since World War Two.[19] High tempo operation cycles, shrinking fleet sizes, tired platforms and use of status

15 Department of Defence, 'United States Force Posture Initiatives in Australia' (web page), Bilateral Initiatives, Department of Defence, accessed 27 August 2019, http://www.defence.gov.au/Initiatives/USFPI/Default.asp; USPACOM, 'About INDOPACOM'; see also Jason Gutierrez, Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt, 'Philippines Tells U.S. It Will End Military Cooperation Deal', *The New York Times*, 11 February 2020, accessed 27 February 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/11/world/asia/philippines-united-states-duterte.html.

16 US DoD, 'Indo-Pacific Strategy Report', 16.

17 Schroeter, Sollenberger and Verink, 'Challenging US Command of the Commons', (see n.3).

18 CDR Jennifer S. Couture, 'Smarter Naval Power in the Indo-Pacific Region May 2016', *Alliance Requirements Roadmap Series*, (Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, published online 13 June 2016), accessed 17 April 2019, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/smarter-naval-power-in-the-indo-pacific-region.

19 The Heritage Foundation, 'An Assessment of US Military Power: US Navy' in 2020 Index of *U.S. Military Power* (The Heritage Foundation: 30 October 2019), 348, available at https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessment-us-military-power/us-navy.

quo operational concepts have all led to a reduction in US Navy effectiveness in the Indo-Pacific.[20] Given the importance of the US Navy (USN) to the success of the IPSR, closer analysis of issues related to the capacity, capability and readiness of the USN can provide some insight as to whether the IPSR is likely to be another US policy destined to provide 'lip service' to its interests or one that successfully demonstrates real US commitment to the region in matching intent with actual effects.

Fundamental to the debate about declining USN influence has been the question of capacity and whether the USN has enough platforms to meet the demands placed on it. According to the NDS, fleet numbers matter significantly when it comes to maintaining presence and influence in vital areas and the USN has fewer ships now than at any time since 1914.[21] As of October 2018, the USN had 286 'battle force' ships available to support US interests around the globe, a number many analysts believe is insufficient to meet forward presence and other maritime requirements, particularly when the People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) and its 'white fleet' of maritime law enforcement vessels are expected to number 650 by 2020.[22] However, of those 286 ships, the USN has had to continuously sustain 95 to 100 ships forward deployed around the globe (despite a 20 per cent decrease in fleet size since 2001). This has not been without costs, as evidenced by increased higher tempo deployment cycles, deferred maintenance and reduced training time as well as overworked crews.[23]

Consequently, US Navy leadership has stated it cannot meet its deployed requirements with its existing fleet force structure.[24] Naval analysts Callander, Ross and Johnson agree there is a capacity issue and advocate a 400-ship Navy will likely satisfy the growing demand for maritime responses providing there is a

20 Townshend, Thomas -Noone and Steward, 'Averting Crisis', (see n.5).

21 US Navy Office of Information, 'Navy Releases Collision Report for USS Fitzgerald and USS John S McCain Collisions', Story Number: NNS171101-07, United States Navy, 1 November 2017 9:01:00am, accessed 24 April 2019, https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=103130; see also David Axe, 'US Navy Nightmare: The Chinese Fleet Doesn't Have 300 ships, it has 650', *The National Interest*, 30 January 2019, accessed 17 April 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/us-navy-nightmare-chinese-fleet-doesnt-have-300-ships-it-has-650-42822.

22 Axe, 'US Navy Nightmare'; also Daniel Whiteneck, Michael Price, Neil Jenkins and Peter Swartz, 'The Navy at a Tipping Point: Maritime Dominance at Stake?', Ref: CAB D0022262.A3/1REV (CNA, March 2010), accessed 27 April 2019, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/D0022262.A3.pdf.

23 Whiteneck et al., 'The Navy at a Tipping Point'.

24 Office of Budget—2018, 'Highlights of the Department of the Navy FY 2019', Financial Management and Comptroller, US Department of the Navy, accessed 14 May 2019, https://www.secnav.navy.mil/fmc/fmb/documents/19pres/highlights_book.pdf.

stable funding commitment.[25] But, despite Trump signing a defence authorisation bill in late 2017 that endorsed a fleet of 355 'battle force ships… as soon as practicable', an increase of 40 per cent over current numbers, there still remains doubt over whether this figure can actually be achieved, due to funding, shipyard capacity and workforce concerns.[26] A 2018 Government Audit Organisation (GAO) report on Navy shipbuilding emphasised such concerns, noting 'ship construction during the last 10 years had not achieved their cost, schedule, quality and performance goals'.[27] Furthermore, concern over the emerging threat environment, where large warships may become more vulnerable to attack in contested areas, is also likely to alter the 355 target and possibly reflect a higher build of smaller surface ships and unmanned vessels.[28]

Notwithstanding the argument to build capacity, the ability of the USN to exercise influence in the maritime space is also driven by capability. While China may have more capacity in terms of ship numbers, it is argued the US still retains the edge in capability for now, noting its 2018 defence budget of approximately US$700 billion still dwarfs China's US$250 billion.[29] But, advancements in Chinese technologies, including anti-access area denial (A2AD), submarines and long-range precision strike weapons as well as its exploitation of grey-zone tactics, such as the 'cabbage' strategy of wrapping disputed islands in layers of civilian, paramilitary and military protection, have complicated the ability of the USN to unilaterally exercise sea control and undermined its dominance in the

25 Thomas Callander, *Special Report No. 205: The Nation Needs a 400-ship Navy?* (Washington DC.: The Heritage Foundation, 26 October 2018), accessed 28 April 2019, https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-nation-needs-400-ship-navy; Robert Ross, 'The End of U.S. Dominance in Asia', *Lawfare* (The Lawfare Institute in cooperation with The Brookings Institute, 18 November 2018), accessed 4 April 2019, https://www.lawfareblog.com/end-us-naval-dominance-asia; see also Justin T. Johnson, 'Politicians and Analysts Call for a Larger Navy: Can We Afford It?', *Commentary, The Heritage Foundation*, 28 August 2015, accessed 17 April 2019, https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/politicians-and-analysts-call-larger-navy-can-we-afford-it.

26 US Department of the Defence, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019*, [pdf online], RefID: E-1F4B924, 2 May 2019, https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf (accessed 15 May 2019); Axe, 'US Navy Nightmare' (see n.21); Bradley Martin et al., *A Strategic Assessment of the Future of U.S. Navy Ship Maintenance*, RR-1951-NAVY (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), accessed 20 April 2019, https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1951.

27 US Government Accountability Office, *Navy Shipbuilding: Past Performance Provides Valuable Lessons for Future Investments*, GAO-18-238SP (GAO, 6 June 2018), accessed 10 August 2019, https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-238SP#summary.

28 Dave Majumdar, 'U.S. Admiral Richardson: 355-Ship Navy is "Insufficient"' (Thanks to Russia and China)', *The National Interest*, 17 May 2017, accessed 24 August 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/us-admiral-richardson-355-ship-navy-insufficient-thanks-20704.

29 Ian Livingston and Michael E. O'Hanlon, 'Why China isn't ahead of the US Navy, even with more ships', *The Brookings Institute*, 10 September 2018, accessed 4 April 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/09/10/why-china-isnt-ahead-of-the-us-navy-even-with-more-ships/; Ross, 'The End of US Naval Dominance in Asia' (see n.25).

Indo-Pacific.[30] In 2018, the National Defense Strategy Commission, a bipartisan US defence committee, released a report stating US military superiority had eroded to a 'dangerous degree'.[31] Although the report verified US capability was not diminishing, it did identify that China was in fact 'catching up'—suggesting the relative capabilities between the two militaries are drawing closer.[32] Peterson labelled this development the 'tipping point' in 2010 and stressed that the US needed to re-think its strategy and force structure to mitigate the rapid growth of the PLA-N.[33] There is widespread agreement that the inability of the US to retain a comfortable margin ahead of China is mainly attributed to funding issues. Ross and Callander have argued strongly for greater funding stability to support ship building plans to bolster numbers and capabilities to regain US maritime dominance. But, the aftermath of the Budgetary Control Act sequestration measures, shipyard capacity and the legacy of previous force structure decisions have all hampered advancement of US military capability.[34]

Former Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis once said, 'the surest way to prevent a war is to be prepared to fight one'.[35] While having capacity and capability is important, Mattis's key point of being prepared alludes to the need to be 'ready', as it contributes to the deterrence effect in exerting influence and dominance. Readiness of naval forces is a function of three components: people, material and the time needed to both train and maintain people and platforms.[36] There is a growing consensus that this aspect has suffered the most dramatic and visible decline in recent years.[37] Over a period of 70 days during 2017, the USN suffered its worst peacetime surface ship collisions and groundings in over

30 Weston S. Konishi, 'China's Maritime Challenge in the South China Sea: Options for US Responses', *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, 10 January 2018, accessed 17 April 2019, https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/chinas-maritime-challenge-south-china-sea-options-us-responses.

31 National Defense Strategy Commission, *Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 13 November 2018), accessed 19 April 2019, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/providing-for-the-common-defense.pdf.

32 Ross, 'The End of US Naval Dominance in Asia' (see n.25).

33 Zachary M. Petersen, 'Five options outlined: New Report Examines "Tipping Point" When U.S. Navy Could Lose Influence', *Inside the Navy*, Vol. 23 No. 13 (5 April, 2010): 6–8, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24846445

34 Ross, 'The End of US Naval Dominance in Asia'; Callander, *The Nation Needs* (n. 25); Jim Garamone, 'Mattis Says DoD Needs Years to Correct Effects of Sequestration', *DOD News, US Department of Defense*, 13 June 2017, accessed 16 August 2019, https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1213034/mattis-says-dod-needs-years-to-correct-effects-of-sequestration/.

35 Callander, 'The Nation Needs' (n. 25).

36 Heritage Organisation, An Assessment of US Military Power, 359 (see n.19).

37 Thomas Callander, 'Is the US Navy Dying a Slow Death?', *The National Interest*, 16 October 2017, accessed 17 April 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-us-navy-dying-slow-death-22753.

41 years, resulting in the loss of 17 sailors.[38] Subsequent inquiries found a culmination of factors ranging from insufficient training, overworked sailors, deferred maintenance and high operational demands led to the accidents.[39] Of note, China was quick to exploit the USN mishaps, using the opportunity to label the USN as 'dangerous and unpredictable' in an effort to discredit their professionalism and reliability as a security partner in the region.[40] A GAO Audit in 2018 re-affirmed how enduring personnel and maintenance challenges were severely impacting the readiness state of the USN, with several retired admirals labelling the Service as 'too small, too old, and too tired'.[41]

Implications for Australia

As the US attempts to refocus its security efforts to better engage in great power competition with China, it is becoming increasingly evident that its ability to independently underwrite regional security is waning. While the US still remains a significant military power, the rapid modernisation and expansion of the PLA have reduced its technological and operational advantages, meaning US forces will now need to work harder to sustain predominance in the region. With the US Navy facing major capacity, capability and readiness challenges into the foreseeable future, we should expect the US to look to its allies and partners to help share more of the security burden.[42] The IPSR places considerable emphasis on these relationships and the value they add to US military power as 'force multipliers'.[43] For Australia, this emphasis represents a significant opportunity to further develop its longstanding alliance relationship with the US across several

38 Thomas Callander, 'The Navy is Having Collisions at Sea. Here's Why it's Happening and What Should Be Done', *Commentary, The Heritage Foundation*, 6 September 2017, accessed 17 April 2019, https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/the-navy-having-collisions-sea-heres-why-its-happening-and-what-should-be-done.

39 US Navy Office of Information, 'Navy Releases Collision Report' (see n.21).

40 Huileng Tan, 'Collision of USS John S. McCain is met with 'applause' in China, according to state media', *CNBC*, 21 August 2017 10:45 PM EDT, updated 22 August 2017 10:02 EDT, accessed 27 April 2019, https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/21/uss-john-s-mccain-accident-created-applause-chinese-state-media.html.

41 Michael Peck, 'The 7 Biggest Problems Facing the US Navy, According To A New GAO Audit' (article originally published by The National Interest), *Task & Purpose*, 19 December 2018, 9:43 am EST, accessed 17 April 2019, https://taskandpurpose.com/7-biggest-problems-us-navy; Thomas Donnelly, 'The Status of U.S. Navy readiness: Too Small, Too Old, and Too Tired', *Strategika*, 16 January 2018, accessed 18 April 2019, https://www.hoover.org/research/status-us-navy-readiness-too-small-too-old-and-too-tired, (also available via American Enterprise Institute https://www.aei.org/articles/the-status-of-us-navy-readiness-too-small-too-old-and-too-tired/).

42 James Holmes, 'It's Time for a Massive U.S. Navy Base in Australia', *The National Interest*, 17 November 2019, accessed 25 February 2020, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/its-time-massive-us-navy-base-australia-97051; also Scott W. Harold et al, *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation: Deepening Defense Ties among U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2019), accessed 2 September 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3125.html.

43 US DoD, Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, 5.

fronts, particularly towards drawing US interest closer to Australia's immediate region. But while Australia may share a common desire to uphold the US-led order, it has been less vocal about labelling China—its largest trading partner—as a 'strategic competitor', as the US has done in its FOIP vision. But given the success of Prime Minister Morrison's recent visit to the White House in September 2019 and the obvious mutual admiration between Trump and his Australian counterpart, the US may be shaping Australia to increase its level of military engagement. While there may be an active debate in Australia about the value and nature of the relationship with the US, there remains a bipartisan consensus, backed up by majority support in opinion polls (e.g. 72 per cent support in the 2019 Lowy Institute Poll), that the US alliance is still important to maintain in support of Australia's interests.[44]

Importance of the US–Australia relationship

Recent commentaries from analysts such as Hugh White have questioned the longevity and ability of the US to maintain its strategic primacy in the Indo-Pacific.[45] A combination of factors, ranging from a rising China through to the volatile actions of an isolationist US President, have meant the US will not only have to work harder to sustain its predominance but will need support from its allies and partners to preserve the stability and security of the current order.[46] In this regard, Australia has remained a firm supporter of the US, undertaking a dual-track approach that seeks to both strengthen the ADF and improve regional relations consistent with the tenets of the US-led order. In recent years, Australia has reinforced its own defence capability through the purchase of advanced capabilities, including Landing Helicopter Docks and F-35A tactical fighters, as well as expanding its defence engagement with regional partners via activities such as the Pacific Step-Up initiative and Indo-Pacific Endeavour naval task group deployments.[47] Australia has also continued to demonstrate support for US predominance in the global domain, as evidenced by the recent decision to contribute a frigate and P8A surveillance aircraft to the US-led Maritime Security

44 Natasha Kassam, *Lowy Institute Poll 2019*: Importance of the *US Alliance* (Sydney: The Lowy Institute, June 2019), accessed 18 January 2019, https://lowyinstitutepoll.lowyinstitute.org/themes/united-states/.

45 Hugh White, 'Without America. Australia in the New Asia', *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 68 (Melbourne: Black Inc, November 2017) accessed 27 April 2019, https://www.quarterlyessay.com.au/essay/2017/11/without-america.

46 Commonwealth of Australia, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* (Canberra: DFAT, November 2017), accessed 11 June 2019, https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper

47 Scott W. Harold et al, 'The Thickening Web' (see n.42).

Construct effort in the Strait of Hormuz.[48] But aside from these efforts, Australia and the US have also sought to strengthen and deepen the alliance commitment through other initiatives.

Australia maintains a comprehensive but evolving alliance relationship with the US. Arising from President Obama's 'pivot' speech to the Australian Parliament in November 2011, the announcement of the US Force Posture Initiative marked a significant upgrade in the level of engagement between the two nations.[49] Under a shared facilities and costing arrangement, the USFPI consists of rotational deployments of US Marines (USMC) and US Air Force (USAF) capabilities to Australian military bases each year, as a means to not only visibly demonstrate the strength of the Alliance but also to improve interoperability and conduct regional engagement. The primary value of the Initiative, according to Crane, is that it supports the IPSR through its contribution 'to a geographically dispersed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable military presence in the Indo-Pacific'.[50] The USMC activity commenced in 2012 with 200 Marines deployed to Darwin, but since being deployed in 2019 it has risen to a 2,500-man high-readiness Marine Expeditionary Unit.[51] The USAF activity commenced in 2017 and is known as the Enhanced Air Cooperation initiative. It involves various USAF aircraft undertaking short deployments to airbases in northern Australia to conduct independent and combined training with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Interestingly, no naval initiative was included at the time the USFPI was introduced. Although the 2013 Defence White Paper stated there would be interest in 'potential opportunities for additional [US] naval cooperation at a range of locations, including HMAS Stirling' under the USFPI construct, no such statement appeared in the 2016 iteration for reasons unknown, suggesting Australia may have gone 'cold' on the idea.[52] Nonetheless, having now operated for several

48 Prime Minister of Australia The Hon Scott Morrison MP, 'Australia Joins International Maritime Security Construct in the Gulf', Joint Media Release of Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, 21 August 2019, accessed 7 September 2019, https://www.pm.gov.au/media/australia-joins-international-maritime-security-construct-gulf.

49 Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament', The White House, 17 November 2011, 10:42am AEST, accessed 10 August 2019, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament.

50 Michael Crane, 'Boosting the US presence in northern Australia—slowly but surely', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 21 March 2019, accessed 4 May 2019, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/boosting-the-us-presence-in-northern-australia-slowly-but-surely.

51 Department of Defence, 'United States Force Posture Initiatives', (see n.15).

52 Peter Jennings, 'The 2016 Defence White Paper and the ANZUS Alliance', *Security Challenges*, 12, 1 (2016), (Canberra: The Institute for Regional Security), accessed 28 August 2019, http://www.regionalsecurity.org.au/security_challenge/the-2016-defence-white-paper-and-the-anzus-alliance/

years, the USMC and USAF initiatives continue to serve both countries very well in terms of supporting their respective strategic objectives.[53]

Notwithstanding the mutual benefit gained from the USFPI, Australia remains under pressure from the US to contribute further to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. During the 2019 AUSMIN meeting, this expectation was clearly evident from US Secretary of State Pompeo, who observed how 'the time is now right for the United States and Australia to do much more together in the region and beyond'.[54] Such remarks not only provide a reassurance of ongoing US interest in the region but also open a significant strategic opportunity for Australia to help offset the costs borne by the US to maintain regional peace and security, which in turn helps preserve Australia's strategic interests too.[55]

How can Australia be expected to help?

The advent of the Indo-Pacific concept has arguably elevated the strategic relevance of Australia in how it might help support US efforts in managing the 'ends–means gap' towards preserving regional stability and security. Situated at the fulcrum between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Australia's strategic geography represents an opportunity to assist the US towards sustaining its predominance in the region, particularly into the Indian Ocean. With its main naval bases located in Northeast Asia, the US Navy has no significant basing options in South or Southeast Asia to support a persistent presence where most of the emerging tension and threats are present, either due to political sensitivities or the lack of suitable infrastructure. Although Guam might be the closest US naval port to this area, it not only lacks the necessary infrastructure to support significant numbers of naval platforms but also remains within range of the Chinese DF-26 'Guam Killer' intermediate ballistic missile threat.[56] Similarly, the Naval Support Facility at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean serves mainly as a logistics base and has even fewer facilities than Guam to support maritime assets.

Outside of these basing options, the US would need to sail its limited number of naval assets from either Japan or Hawaii to respond to a crisis, resulting in increased deployment times and placing additional strain on already tired plat-

53 Jennings, 'America's New Asia Strategy' (see n.4); Michael Shoebridge, 'Two ideas to help Trump and Morrison reinvigorate the US-Australia alliance', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 28 August 2019, accessed 2 September 2019, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/two-ideas-to-help-trump-and-morrison-reinvigorate-the-us-australia-alliance/.

54 US Department of State, 'Remarks to the Press' (see n. 8)

55 Scott W. Harold et al, 'The Thickening Web', (see n.42)

56 ABC News/Reuters, 'China puts intermediate range 'Guam killer' DF-26 missile into service', *ABC News* [online], 27 April 2018, 5:04pm, accessed 21 August 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-27/china-flexes-muscles-with-guam-killer-missile/9704306.

forms and crews. Faced with such circumstances, the advantages of posturing additional US forces in Australia is an attractive option, particularly when complemented with excellent relations at the political, operational and strategic levels.[57] Furthermore, Australia's closer proximity to potential crisis areas, availability of supporting military and civilian infrastructure, unrestricted training/weapon ranges, and modern transport networks, as well as being remote from potential threats like the DF-26 and other striking arms of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), make it a highly suitable location for the deployment of additional forces.[58]

While the permanent basing of US forces in Australia is not likely to be palatable in the current political climate (noting the sensitivity of the economic relationship with China), other options exist where Australia could support an increased rotational US security presence. Following AUSMIN 19, it was evident discussion did take place between US and Australian officials concerning the USFPI, but other than the acknowledgment of a future AUS$2 billion infrastructure spend by both nations to support the current USFPI arrangements (including airfield enhancements, accommodation and training range developments) no specific comment was made about any adjustment to US force posture in Australia.[59] Notwithstanding the lack of detail offered, a positive narrative to further develop the alliance was intimated by officials. In response to Secretary Pompeo's call to 'do more' together, Foreign Minister Payne noted how 'the presence of the US and its military forces in this region has been a force for stability for decades' whilst also making the point that Australia has consistently 'welcomed' such a presence, suggesting an evolution of the security relationship may already be under consideration.[60] One option might be to extend the USMC rotation from six months to twelve. Although this would overlap with the wet season in northern Australia, training value could still be gained through the deployment of US forces to alternative locations around the country.

Naval options

Despite the official statements downplaying any increase in the US military presence in Australia, there remain several options in which Australia could deepen engagement with the US and support its continued presence in the region. With land and air elements already covered under the USFPI, commentators agree

57 Toshi Yoshihara, 'The US Navy's Indo-Pacific Challenge', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 9:1, 2013, 90-103, DOI: 10.1080/19480881.2013.793914.

58 Yoshihara, 'The US Navy', DOI: 10.1080/19480881.2013.793914.

59 Senator the Hon Marise Payne, 'AUSMIN Press Conference Transcript, E&OE 4 August 2019', Minister for Foreign Affairs, accessed 6 September 2019, https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/transcript-eoe/ausmin-press-conference

60 Payne, 'AUSMIN'.

the next logical choice for expansion should focus on options related to naval posture as a new phase of cooperation.[61] With the US adopting its distributed forces concept across the Indo-Pacific, it now faces greater intra-theatre logistics and lift challenges in having to move and sustain its forces when required. As an example, the 2,500 high-readiness US Marines in Darwin are in location without amphibious shipping or strategic air to move them and their equipment around the region, with the nearest ships based in either Yokosuka or Sasebo—several days sailing away. Such challenges have prompted renewed discussion about the potential option of homeporting USN assets in Australia, with HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia as a possible alternative due to the limited nature of the naval infrastructure in Darwin.[62] The USN regularly visits *Stirling* as a recreational, logistics and maintenance port for its ships and submarines transiting either to or from the Middle East. In the early 2000s, the base hosted the USN 'Sea Swap' initiative, an activity that witnessed the USN undertake major maintenance activities and crew swaps in Western Australia rather than have the ship return to the US. This endeavour not only provided various benefits to the local economy through industry and recreational gains but also saved the USN up to six weeks transit time in fuel and platform availability costs, enabling the USN to increase the number and efficiency of its ships to undertake more operations at sea.[63]

Although the Sea Swap activity has since ended due to a US decision to conduct them elsewhere, additional studies into the feasibility of using *Stirling* to 'homeport' USN ships/submarines have been directed by the US Department of Defense. Conducted by the Centre for Strategic and Security Studies (CSIS) in 2012 and the RAND Corporation in 2013, these studies examined opportunities for re-posturing US forces around the world.[64] The CSIS study considered various homeporting options from single platforms up to the basing of an aircraft carrier strike group (consisting of up to eight ships, submarines and an air wing) at the base.[65] Although the latter option was discounted due to the excessive

61 Clive Brown, 'Sea Swap to Boost Local Economy', Media Statement from Clive Brown, Former Minster for State Development, Government of Western Australia, 19 January 2003, accessed 7 September 2019, https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/Gallop/2003/01/Sea-Swap-to-boost-local-economy.aspx; Peter Jennings, 'Mr Morrison Goes to Washington', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 14 September 2019, accessed 18 September 2019, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/mr-morrison-goes-to-washington/; Shoebridge, 'Two ideas to help Trump and Morrison', (see n.53).

62 Crane, 'Boosting the US presence' (see n.50); Jennings, 'Mr Morrison Goes to Washington'.

63 Brown, 'Sea Swap' (see n.61).

64 David J Berteau and Michael J. Green (co-directors), U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment, August 2012 (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Security Studies, 2017) accessed 3 September 2019, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/120814_FINAL_PACOM_optimized.pdf; Jennings, 'Mr Morrison' (see n.78).

65 Berteau and Green, 'U.S. Force Posture', 74.

costs involved to construct the supporting infrastructure, estimated at US$6.5 billion in 2012, it did demonstrate the seriousness with which the US was considering its posturing options.[66] While the presence of a strike group was obviously not feasible, both reports did discuss options to homeport a US nuclear submarine at *Stirling*. Noting *Stirling* is already an approved port for nuclear vessels and features significant and secure maintenance and training facilities designed to support submarine operations, it presents as an attractive option for the US to strengthen its presence in the region. However, the basing of a US nuclear capability in Australia is not without risk. Although political and social sensitivities might negate such an option, the rotational basing of conventionally powered warships or auxiliaries could prove to be more palatable for the local community.

One option to increase the operational presence of the USN could involve the rotational deployment of amphibious shipping to Australia. As already identified, the USMC presence in Darwin does not have sufficient lift capabilities in situ to project them into the region at will. A recent Centre for International Maritime Security report highlighted the existential issue of lift for USMC and US Army operations in the Pacific.[67] Due to the distances involved, likely threats and questionable availability of airfields, there is a strong preference for sealift as a means to ensure forces can be rapidly moved in a survivable way that is consistent with the new US 'distributed operations' doctrine.[68] While Australia might possess sealift capabilities, guaranteeing their availability to support a US operation would be difficult to predict. Recent news reporting revealed the US may be preparing to spend approximately US$305.9 million on naval infrastructure in the Northern Territory—leading some to speculate it will involve an upgrade to port facilities for future basing of USN ships.[69] Although this proposed expenditure has yet to be approved by Congress, there are few details on what it will actually be spent on.[70] Nonetheless, HMAS *Stirling* still remains a viable basing option for the USN that warrants further consideration, as it would serve the interests of both nations in not only strengthening US posture in the region but also enabling increased interoperability/training opportunities for the ADF. Furthermore,

66 Berteau and Green, 'U.S. Force Posture'.

67 Walker Mills, 'No Free Ride in the Pacific: The Case for Investing in Mobility', *Center for International Maritime Security*, 24 July 2019, accessed 8 August 2019, http://cimsec.org/no-free-ride-in-the-pacific-the-case-for-investing-in-mobility/41048.

68 Mills, 'No Free Ride in the Pacific'.

69 Andrew Greene, 'America's $300 million push to expand naval facilities in northern Australia', *ABC News Online*, 29 July 2019, 4:54am, first posted 4:04am, accessed 16 September 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-29/americas-push-to-expand-naval-facilities-in-northern-australia/11354926.

70 Jack Derwin, 'The US military is planning a secretive new $305 million naval expansion in Australia but no one wants to talk about it', *Business Insider Australia*, 30 July 2019 11:48am, accessed 15 September 2019, https://www.businessinsider.com.au/us-military-plans-secretive-new-305-million-naval-expansion-australia-usfpi-2019-7.

the ability to project US and Australian naval power from *Stirling* would 'help reset the maritime security agenda in a big, positive way' and re-establish US and allied initiative in the Indo-Pacific once more.[71]

Conclusion

The release of the IPSR heralds a hardening of US security posture in the Indo-Pacific as the US attempts to reaffirm its primacy in this dynamic region. Unlike previous approaches, the US has clearly expressed its concern about China's hegemonic aspirations and is now adjusting its policies to better posture for the reality of great power competition. An increasingly assertive and confident China is determined to assume its 'rightful' place as the hegemon in the Indo-Pacific and has rapidly modernised its military capabilities to such an extent that it can now legitimately contest the USN for the command of the commons. Although the region appears receptive to this latest change in US policy towards the Indo-Pacific, apprehension remains as to whether the US can operationalise the IPSR without raising tensions or pre-empting conflict with China. As this paper has attempted to illustrate, the US and more specifically the USN face some significant internal and external challenges towards meeting this aim, meaning the US will need to not only work harder to sustain its predominance but rely more heavily on support from its key allies and partnerships. Noting a US-led order is critical to Australia's national interests, this presents an ideal opportunity for Australia to review how it might choose to assist the US in sharing the security and stability burden in the Indo-Pacific.

Although the recent visit to the US by Prime Minister Morrison may have reaffirmed the strong relationship Australia shares with its powerful ally, there is a growing appetite within the Trump administration for Australia to contribute more. The IPSR places considerable emphasis on the value key allies and partnerships have in acting as 'force multipliers' for US military power. In recent years, Australia has actively demonstrated its value through the modernisation of its defence force, reinvigoration of its regional defence engagement effort and ongoing support for the USFPI. But, while these commitments are significant, the findings of this paper offer some suggestions where Australia could be expected to do more. Although a permanent US military base on Australian soil may be a political step too far, expansion of the USFPI to encompass a maritime element represents a feasible alternative. The naval base at HMAS Stirling presents as an attractive option to establish a rotational presence of USN assets from which both nations would be able to draw significant advantages, not the least of which would be a firm demonstration of IPSR intent. Nonetheless, the

71 Shoebridge, 'Two ideas to help Trump and Morrison' (see n.53).

viability of such options warrants serious consideration by Australia as do the potential implications an increase US military presence may have on its own regional relationships.

Professional military education in the context of disruption

Paul Davidson and Jane Tsakissiris

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
the blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

W.B. Yeats

Introduction

In 1919, the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats reflected on the dreadful afterglow of the worst war the world had known.[1] Disruption, even if of lesser magnitude than that of the First World War, continues to pose a threat to peace and prosperity. The destabilising global impact of the COVID-19 virus in 2020 is a calamitous example of disruption wrought by unpreparedness and overwhelming threat. In any nation or organisation, decision-makers strive to minimise uncertainty amidst environmental turbulence so that their predictions may be more accurate, and thus allow better decision-making. Uncertainty is a product of disruption brought

1 William B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming', in Jim. Haughey (ed.), *The first world war in Irish poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1920), 161

about by the demands and effects of change. The familiar rules no longer apply, and as Yeats wrote, anarchy brings chaos.

However, there is a distinction between the disruption in 'normal' environmental turbulence, even that brought on by crisis and unpredictability, and the disruption deliberately brought on by organisations as part of competitive strategy. Military leaders both initiate and respond to disruptive environments. Because of the role of disruption as both an environmental reality and on occasions an intended effect, Professional Military Education (PME) needs to address disruption in the development of effective military leadership competencies in its officers. It can do this through creating awareness of the nature of disruption and the options for response that it presents. This is not straightforward. The demand to understand disruption without necessarily controlling or removing it is counterintuitive to military leaders whose default approach is to opt for linear command, even in the context of non-linear complexity. Only by being open to the discomfort of its inherent threat, by understanding its nature, can disruption become an ally rather than an enemy.

Disruption appears ubiquitous in both the past and the present. It manifests in new forms of warfare, from unconventional and asymmetric to cyber and space, to conflict between non-state actors and nebulous forces, A shadowy enemy may be a citizen shopkeeper by day and terrorist by night.[2] The 'grey-zone' has governments and forces operating below the threshold of declared war, all struggling for legitimacy, power and hegemony.[3] The negotiated conventions of armed conflict are frequently disregarded in the fog of war, and the resulting disruption threatens the prospect of any rule-based international order.[4]

This paper examines the nature of disruption and our instinctual resistance to tolerating it and proposes that an understanding of disruption should be designated as a key priority for PME.

The context of disruption and the need for new strategy

In management theory, the concept of 'disruptive innovation' was famously popularised by Harvard University Business Professor Clayton Christensen and colleagues. They described it as a deliberate process in which 'a smaller company

2 Eliot Cohen, 'Civil-military relations in a disruptive world', *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies* 1, no.1 (2019): 11–21.

3 Joseph L. Strange and Richard Iron, 'Centre of gravity. What Clausewitz really meant', *Joint Force Quarterly 35* (October 2004): 20–27.

4 Stephen Frühling, *Defence planning and uncertainty: Preparing for the next Asia Pacific War* (London: Routledge, 2014).

with fewer resources is able to challenge successful incumbent businesses'.[5] In the business world, proponents of creative disruption observe that market entrants often succeed by targeting overlooked segments with products or services offering more suitable and lower-priced functionality.

This challenges our typical view of disruption, suggesting it can serve as a strategy to drive adaptation and innovation. The start-up successes of Amazon, Alibaba, Atlassian and Facebook are examples of companies that have intentionally created disruption and benefited as a result. They brought deliberate and enterprising disruption to their markets, and they continue to do so.

More generally, formulated strategy aside, disruption in international relations has been a more or less constant dynamic in human history. The challenge is how to manage such disruption rather than to simplistically avoid it in, especially in international conflict where understanding the centre of gravity of friendly and hostile forces has become critical in campaign planning.[6]

What distinguishes intentional disruption from its effect in unintended chaos? Certainly, this is one model for disruptive innovation in the wider environment. It turns on its head the notion that disruption is necessarily undesirable, but this notion is not new. In the classical work on military strategy attributed to Sun Tzu (519-476 BC), it is counselled that: 'in the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity. Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak'.[7] This cryptic advice is aimed at obtaining benefits from disruption, whether one is innocently experiencing it, or deliberately causing it. Insights for the military and the non-military strategist can be gained by examining disruption as both a part of the environment and a potential strategy.

It is not difficult to find examples of disruption in our contemporary environment. The old order in society struggles for continuity as its institutions are no longer trusted. Reports of alleged widespread sexual abuse of children by priests have compromised the church's historic moral legitimacy. Similarly, much publicised scandals and the findings of royal commissions have eroded trust in the corporate and finance sectors. The phenomenon of 'fake news' has brought a loss of respect for even the concept of truth in the broadcast media. 'Fact-checking' has become a speciality option for only selected news items, thus allowing the perception that unselected items may be of dubious veracity. News 'outlets' are

5 Clayton M. Christensen, Michael. E. Raynor and Rory McDonald, 'What is disruptive innovation?', *Harvard Business Review* 93, Iss. 12, December 2015, accessed 22 November 2019, https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation.

6 Aaron P. Jackson, 'Center of gravity analysis 'down under': The Australian Defence Force's new approach', *Joint Force Quarterly 84* (January 2017): 81 –85.

7 James Clavell and Sun Tzu, *The art of war* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1981).

seen uncritically as instruments of their owners, rather than as objective and impartial sources of information and professional journalism. Media commentary is not trusted as once it was for its balance and accuracy. People appear to believe what they want to believe, with little regard for evidence. Societal values and widely-held beliefs are increasingly challenged—if not discarded altogether, and reasoned debate is drowned out by populist revolt and totalitarian constraint.

Some of these broader disruptions facing society are also evident in the business world. Disruption and downsizing with automation are used by companies ostensibly in the interests of productivity, yet too often they yield only anxiety and malaise. The evidence is that many around the world have lost trust in their leaders and their purpose of work, and so disengage into idleness, resistance and 'empty labour'.[8] It is more than the few bosses exploiting their workers; it is a failure by business leaders to do the hard labour of coming to a respectful appreciation of what it is that their customer actually values and may therefore wish to purchase as part of a sustainable commercial relationship.

Just as this understanding of the customer's needs and wants is critical to developing a value proposition in business, so a deep understanding by military leaders of the enemy's intentions, grand strategy and centre of gravity is essential for strategy development and implementation.[9] The commander's intent must be built on an accurate estimate of the enemy's intent. Without it, disruption in the logic of decision-making about meaning and purpose can result only in adhocracy and anarchy. As Yeats wrote, 'Surely the Second Coming is at hand?'[10] Is rescue possible? Different voices offer different solutions. Some look to new technology as a panacea, arguing that big data will yield productive insights.[11] Some expect that education and infrastructure spending of themselves will bring social order and sustainability.[12] Economists hold, unsurprisingly, that rising prosperity will lead to global harmony. Others are optimistic that negotiated political solutions will yield an adjusted rules-based international order.[13] The different perspectives on the best way to manage during the contemporary period of disruption are very relevant considerations for those preparing to take

8 Roland Paulsen, *Empty labor: Idleness and workplace resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

9 Australian Government Department of Defence, *Joint military appreciation process, ADF5.0.1. Plans Series*, Edition 2 AL3 (Directorate Publishing, 2016).

10 Yeats, 'The Second Coming'.

11 Anthony G. Picciano, 'Big data and learning analytics in blended learning environments', *International Journal of Interactive Multimedia and artificial intelligence* 2, no.7 (2014): 35–43.

12 Bashir Ahmad and Ahmed Saeed Minhas, 'Business schools for global harmony and co-existence: Curriculum, a common language for developing relationships', *International Journal of Higher Education Management*, 6, no. 1 (August 2019): 10–20.

13 Anthony De Jasay, *Against politics: On government, anarchy, and social order* (London: Routledge, 1997).

up strategic roles within the realm of national security and strategy. The stakes are high, indeed.

Yet, beyond these different potential solutions, it is evident that the nature of disruption must become a central priority for the military professional and for the PME system that seeks to develop these leaders. This will, however, not be straightforward. To manage productively amid chaos demands new models and ways of behaving, as well as a counterintuitive readiness to *unlearn* what has taken so much time to learn. However, like the word 'disruption', the term 'unlearning' can be misleading and may trigger resistance, as in being required to cede precious territory. This oppositional resistance can be dealt with by defining 'unlearning' as 'not about forgetting but choosing an alternative mental model or paradigm to add to the skills or knowledge we have'.[14] It takes a certain maturity and personal security to let go of familiar behaviours that previously had priority in bringing success. Consider the following insight from the business sector:

> What once made companies powerful, like ownership of assets, expertise, large workforces, and historical brands, are to some extent paradoxically becoming liabilities that make change harder. Often the metrics that once mattered most—profitability, revenue—seem to have become less vital than potential for the future.[15]

Disruption requires decision-makers to develop new and different criteria for evaluating success and to design innovative approaches to achieve it. Similarly, organisations risk being caught out by the 'unknown unknown', the unanticipated risk, like the 'black swan' whose very existence was not anticipated.[16] In an environment of disruption, new mental models need to be continually developed and tested. The disruptor catches on, and catches up, before it is realised that the old ways have not been disposed of quickly enough, and attachment to the old has slowed down adoption of the new. This requires a readiness to step out into the unknown, building on history but not confined by it. These lessons are important for all organisations but are especially true of the historically orientated profession of arms. The regimental silver in the officers' mess is a cultural icon of a unit's identity and may rightfully be retained to lionise former victories and a continuity of culture but pride in the past should not encourage backward-looking blindness at the expense of preparing for the future.

14 Mark Bonachek, 'Why the problem with learning is unlearning', *Harvard Business Review*, November 2016, accessed 22 November 2019, https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-the-problem-with-learning-is-unlearning.

15 Tom Goodwin, *Digital Darwinism: Survival of the fittest in the age of business disruption* (London: Kogan Page, 2018).

16 Nassim N. Taleb, *The black swan: The impact of the highly improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).

One example of an innovation in management decision-making is the use of design thinking. This approach relies on a structured approach based on sense-making through immersion in user experiences to yield deeper insights into what is required in the exchange of value and meaning. Design thinking has the potential to deliver superior outcomes, lower risks and reduced costs of change, even though it may also demonstrate that 'uncertainty is unavoidable in innovation'.[17] In the military, it requires an understanding and appreciation of the perspectives held by enemy forces and the drivers in their decision-making. This almost certainly requires moving outside of one's conceptual and cultural comfort zone. A preparedness to think outside the square is fundamental to leadership in decision-making, especially in a disruptive environment.

In this environment, risk tolerance by itself is not enough, and, indeed, risk seeking may be a more adaptive behaviour. For example, British First Sea Lord Admiral Sir John Fisher was known for his statement in 1915 that 'in war the first principle is to disobey orders. Any fool can obey an order'. He was criticising the Royal Navy's rigid command and control culture, enforced by its senior leadership, thereby wasting an invaluable operational opportunity in the battle of Jutland to defeat the German High Seas fleet[18].

The benefits of leaving old mindsets behind should not, however, mean acting without due thought. There is a need to apply standards regarding what is ethical, and sustainable.[19] Affirmation of values in an intelligent military is likely to address the stoic virtues of courage, justice, temperance and wisdom.[20] The challenge here is thus not to just ask 'what?' but 'why?' (so that everything that is proposed is subjugated to the organisational purpose, not just to preserving current status or familiar doctrine). This can be dangerous and unpopular, but it may be critical to open the way for enlightened dialogue at a depth previously unexplored because it is, in essence, a respectful question about purpose.

In the disruptive environment, all conclusions are interim, and not all disruption is creative, innovative and beneficial. Thus, making a significant contribution has to be in the service of some acceptable purpose and end-state. As von Clausewitz warned, the military commander's strategy must serve the political object in the

17 Jeanne Liedka, 'Why design thinking works', *Harvard Business Review*, September–October 2018, available at: https://hbr.org/2018/09/why-design-thinking-works accessed 22 November 2019.

18 Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1996).

19 John R. Schermerhorn, Paul Davidson, Peter Woods, Ahron Factor, Fatima Junaid, Alan Simon, *Management, 7th ed*. (Brisbane: John Wiley and Sons, 2020).

20 Michael Evans, 'Captains of the soul: Stoic philosophy and the western profession of arms in the twenty-first century', *Naval War College Review* 64, 1 (2011): 31–59.

nation's grand strategy.[21] Similarly, the fact that an action produces disruption doesn't mean it is right and proper, or that it is therefore justified as yielding constructive outcomes. The English philosopher, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) observed that 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others'.[22] The virtue of any intent must be assessed in the context of the merit of its motive and its consequence. Some disruption is painful, unjustifiable and merely disruptive; it may also be judged to be plainly wrong in its intent and effect. Disruption of itself is morally neutral. It should be evaluated carefully for its historical antecedents and its actual consequences, as well as the intent it serves. Acting 'in good faith' though with disruptive consequences, may still be unethical, or ethical, depending on the situation.

The new strategy that may develop from this dialogue can then begin with the clarity of intent to which all else can now be directed.[23] Paradoxically, it may be the disruption itself that it is the catalytic enabler. The decision-maker who is sufficiently secure to risk even their own security will likely be the one who invites old lines to be crossed as staff ask 'why?' The genuinely well-intentioned challenge can serve to sharply refocus and even to unlock stored-up organisational capability.

This section has provided a summary of some of the key challenges emerging from an environment of disruption. It has argued that developing strategies for organisations in a disruptive environment requires a process of unlearning and detachment, along with making apparently perverse and contradictory non-linear moves (as shown in Figure 1). Positional awareness is critical for strategic purpose.

The following broad steps are proposed as essential to decision-making, especially in conditions of disruption.

1. *Knowing the current position.* This requires an accurate assessment on current capability in terms of competence and resources that can be brought to bear, and a sound appreciation of the organisation's history, present mission and culture, especially its risk tolerance. At first glance the necessity for such knowledge seems self-evident. The warning is that, as with self-awareness, our capacity for self-serving self-deception is limitless. History is littered with military tragedies stemming from hubris and unchallenged incompetence.

21 Carl von Clausewitz, *On war* (London: N. Trubner & Co, 1832).

22 John S. Mill, *On liberty* (London: John W. Parker & Son, 1859).

23 Eliyahu M. Goldratt and Jeff Cox, *The goal: A process of ongoing improvements*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004); Gerry Johnson, Kevan Scholes, Duncan Angwin, Partick Regner and Richard Whittington, *Exploring strategy: Text & cases*, 9th ed. (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2011).

Disruptive environments easily stimulate panic and a counterproductive urge to be seen to be doing something, almost anything, when a cool-headed if discomforting assessment is needed.

2. *Knowing why a course of action is proposed.* This may include reference to a problem statement, or a description of the desirable end-state or destination. This can be expressed in terms of achievable objectives, which serve to make real the intended benefits of the decision-making process. This requires vision and communication. Effective communication underlies the consultation process necessary to build the vision and to incentivise collaboration with critical stakeholders.
3. *Formulating a strategy about how to get from the current position to the desired destination.* The options here may be many and the preferred alternative will depend on the unique situational realities. It is critical that the strategies transparently serve the organisational objectives. In the military, strategies must serve the political objectives.

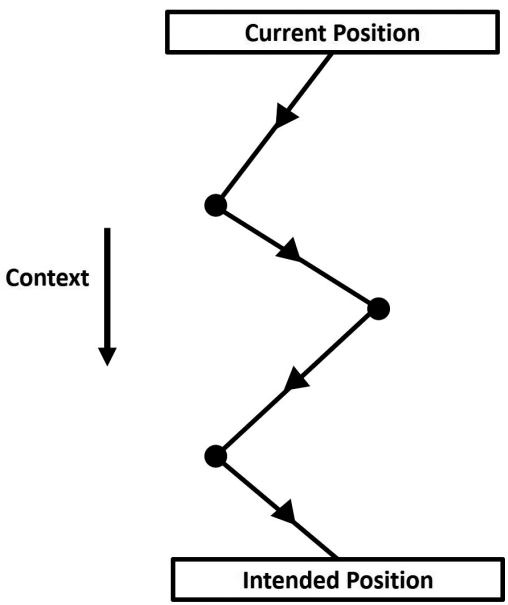


Figure 1: Decision-making in the context of disruption

While this model aligns with many well-known ways of thinking about strategy, it is important to point out that effective strategies may need to be radical, both to bring about disruption and to defend against it. To use the sailing metaphor,

a tacking strategy may be necessary, one in which direction and heading are constantly changing, as tactics are set and reset to deal with disruptive local conditions, but the destination remains the same.

The captain may tack with new sail settings to cope with variable winds or to stay 'close hauled' just long enough to extract maximum boat speed. Then, the boat comes onto a new, and again temporary heading to achieve the desired position over time—even if it means that the new heading appears at first unlikely to do so. It is a change of direction but not a change of destination. The metaphor teaches that this requires a clear understanding of strategic intent and a preparedness to adapt to changing conditions.

Implications for professional military education

Where does this leave the professional military educator? The broad trends noted above are evident in the national security context. Conventional warfare is intersecting with new forms of conflict in cyber and space domains, so traditional command and control structures are under challenge from developments in technology and complexity.[24] As in the business and political worlds, national security professionals will need to adapt to the environment of disruption. This means, too, that professional military educators will need to navigate this period of change. They will need to consider what the conditions of disruption demand in response and what opportunities they may offer.

Importantly, this means encouraging students to think of themselves as operators in an environment of disruption who also have the potential to become a disruptive force. For example, disabling the adversary's communication and supply lines may be the only sensible strategy in an environment of disruption, rather than frontal assault. The presence of non-state actors in asymmetric conflict may make major land battles with clear-cut Mahanian victories militarily desirable but impracticable and elusive. The battlelines are no longer as clear as they were when wars were formally declared. Even the identity of the protagonists, along with their objectives, may not be obvious. War, in general, has become increasingly complex.[25] Engaging with this context as well as the challenges and opportunities that it presents should form the starting point for PME.

This endeavour is not completely new for PME or education in general. Educational curricula need to be in a constant state of flux, balancing opposing views,

24 Alexander Franks, 'Complexity, psychology and modern war', *Small Wars Journal*, 17 November 2015, accessed 22 November 2019, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/complexity-psychology-and-modern-war.

25 Williamson Murray, *Military adaptation in war*, Paper, P-4452 (Virginia: Institute for Defense Analyses, 18 September 2009), accessed 22 November 2019, available at: https://www.ida.org/-/media/feature/publications/m/mi/military-adaptation-in-war/ida-paper-p-4452.ashx.

and adapting to new ideas and developments, while also adhering to core truths and enduring wisdom. This means that established theories must be continually examined for their value as well as for their capacity to deceive and distract by irrelevance brought by the passage of time. Enduring wisdom must be progressively updated and remythologised in terms of present and future thought forms. These qualities of education and the skills of those who specialise in providing it can be leveraged in a demanding time of disruption.

As providers of PME come to grips with the demands of the disruptive environment, there is a need to leverage changing social trends in its pedagogies and content (e.g. blended learning, collaborative learning and work-integrated learning). Educators serve as change agents in the process of learning[26]. Using traditional lecturing merely to transfer information is an inefficient and ineffective way to learn about one's place and potential in a disruptive environment. New technologies need to be incorporated into PME and used appropriately, to increase student engagement while also building the skills required of future leaders. PME is likely to make increasing use of realistic simulators, although they are not the whole answer. The caution is made by Clerkin:

> Digitisation of information has made knowledge easy, fast, and cheap. It has made rote information less valuable and routine skills replaceable. Abilities that are not easily programmable, such as to create and innovate, and connect with others as social beings, will become some of the most important skills in business and leadership.[27]

More than anything, understanding our place and potential in a disruptive environment will demand that PME is directed to ensuring the profession of arms is not so much a 'learned' profession, as a learning profession.[28] Isolated learning experiences can provide key skills and knowledge but, as this article has argued, periods of disruption require a constant negotiation between the environment as it changes and those facts that are enduring, such as the nation's goals of security. This process demands that the military professional becomes a lifelong learner. This places additional emphasis on the working relationship between military and academia, to create an innovative culture that encourages critical thinking and collaboration rather than traditional instructional techniques.

26 Douglas Bourn, 'Teachers as agents of social change', *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning 7*, Iss. 3 (2016): 63–77.

27 Cathleen Clerkin, 'Creative leadership and social intelligence: The key to leading in the digital age' in Mathew Sowcik, Anthony C. Andenoro, Mindy McNutt and Susan E. Murphy (eds.), *Leadership 2050* (Bingley: Emerald Group, 2015), 175–185.

28 Michael Evans, Russell Parkin and Alan Ryan (eds.), *Future armies, Future challenges: Land warfare in the information age* (Allen & Unwin, 2004), 203.

PME places an additional emphasis on developing the skills of leadership, and these will be particularly tested in an environment of disruption. To this end, leadership education should focus less on management control and more on the communication of intent.[29] Working environments governed by a commander's intent that is fully understood will provide the best possible environment for the necessary independent and original thought from all members of a team to be fostered. To maximise engagement and contribution, the old command and control model must be replaced by consultation and power-sharing. Appointed leaders who espouse disruption while constraining any question of their authority will need to share power and encourage leadership by coaching, rather than try to hold on to power by restraint and formal regulation. This will likely mean the pain of short-term loss with long-term gain. It is always an unpalatable message for appointed leaders to hear: 'Your time is up, your way of thinking is no longer appropriate, and your leadership style is no longer acceptable'. Nevertheless, in the current circumstances, with the enduring unprecedented effects and demands of disruption caused by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, this message may need to be delivered to particular decision-makers.

Those holding power will need to be educated in how to let that power go when appropriate.[30] A renewed focus on intent, rather than control, may need to be an explicit emphasis in PME to make it both normal and practicable. PME needs to provide opportunities to develop the interpersonal skills required for authentic consultation with subordinates. This requires explicit training in coaching. Leadership education in PME must be aligned with the latest insights from management theory. Leadership in conditions of disruption requires a different kind of thinking and acting than in conditions of business as usual, and this needs to be reflected in leadership education. Leadership education must allow for students to develop tolerance for ambiguity for the benefits of diversity to be realised[31].

Beyond the skills of leadership in disruptive environments, students of PME will need to become better analysts of such environments, and better at finding the opportunities and constraints that they provide. Curricula need to encompass learning activities that highlight the importance of addressing environmental risk, where alternatives and probabilities are not known. There may be a need to focus on techniques to generate novel alternatives, such as scenario analysis and stakeholder engagement. Scenario analysis can elicit creative solutions by

29 David Marquet, *Turn the ship around! A true story of turning followers into leaders* (New York: Portfolio Penguin, 2013).

30 Abraham Zaleznik, 'Power and politics in organizational life', *Harvard Business Review*, May 1970, accessed 22 November 2019, https://hbr.org/1970/05/power-and-politics-in-organizational-life.

31 Norman F. Dixon, *On the psychology of military incompetence* (London: Jonathan Cape,1976).

examining possible futures with varying uncertainties. Stakeholder engagement facilitates strategy building to include reference to all those affecting and affected by any plan. Both of these approaches must be enriched with challenging problem sets, providing students with the opportunity to apply their critical thinking skills to the environment that we are increasingly facing.

Conclusion

Educating leaders to manage in conditions of disruption is not simple. Decision-making in increasingly disruptive contexts calls for continual re-examination of purpose and intent and a readiness to move beyond the familiar. The implications for PME include explicit attention to unlearning as well as to learning, and to the professional development of the military leader and their leadership style. This requires skill in managing in conditions of disruption and uncertainty. Steps to be taken include knowing the present position, the purpose of the mission, and the strategy developed to ensure success. Decision-making needs to incorporate both the methodical and the unconventional. This demands an organisational culture of innovation, agility and flexibility, and tolerance for ambiguity and risk. To prepare for such an environment, PME needs to incorporate these learnings. There is a need for specific work to achieve this and foster a culture where creativity and innovation, balanced against the discipline for military operations, prepares people to prevail in the uncertainty of future warfare.[32]

32 The Scherger Group, 'Future workforce 2025', *The Forge*, Department of Defence, Australian Government, 6 September 2019, accessed 22 November 2019, https://theforge.defence.gov.au/publications/future-workforce-2025-scherger-group.

Focus

...on strengthening relationships
through medical exchange

Building Australia's defence relationships with Pacific Island nations through Enduring Health Civic Assistance (EHCA)

Michael C. Reade

Introduction

ADF policy for foreign 'Humanitarian Assistance' is limited to crisis response, including famine, natural disaster, terrorist events and war.[1] Equally, although engaged in numerous long-term development projects, the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) 'Humanitarian Strategy' is entirely focused on the preparation for, response to, and recovery from crises.[2] ADF policy recognises the 'Guidelines on the use of foreign military and civil defence assets in disaster relief' (the Oslo Guidelines), which prioritise a civilian response to overseas disaster relief, assigning military responsibilities only where there is no civilian alternative that can meet a critical humanitarian need.[3] Introduced in their current form in 2007, the Oslo Guidelines have had a profound effect on ADF and Australian Government international engagement, leading to the creation and frequent deployment of civilian Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AUSMATs). The ADF essentially no longer contributes substantial medical support to HADR operations, with only two limited exceptions in the last

1 *The Military Contribution to Humanitarian Operations*, Australian Defence Doctrine Publications 3.20 (Canberra, Australia: Defence Publishing Services, 2013).

2 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Humanitarian Strategy', Australian Government, https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/humanitarian-strategy.

3 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief — "Oslo Guidelines"', Revision 1.1 November 2007, UN MCDA Project, Civil-Military Coordination Section (Geneva, Switzerland: OCHA United Nations, 2007), https://www.unocha.org/publication/oslo-guidelines-use-foreign-military-and-civil-defence-assets-disaster-relief

decade: in response to an earthquake in Pakistan (2010)[4] and a typhoon in the Philippines (2013)[5].

In contrast, US military doctrine distinguishes non-disaster Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA) activities from HADR. HCA is development work that 'serves the basic economic and social needs of the host nation', 'promotes the security and foreign policy interests of the United States ... and the country in which the activities are to be performed' and enhances the 'operational readiness skills of the Service members who participate'.[6] HCA activities are explicitly not characterised as foreign aid operations; rather they must be of benefit to both the host nation and the United States, and their primary purpose must be the training of US military personnel or the conduct of a military operation with another purpose. Examples of the types of project that can be funded are defined in policy:

(1) medical, surgical, dental and veterinary care provided in areas of a country that are rural or are underserved, including education, training, and technical assistance related to the care provided, or

(2) construction of rudimentary surface transportation systems, or

(3) well drilling and construction of basic sanitation facilities, or

(4) rudimentary construction and repair of public facilities.

Lacking equivalent policy to cover such activities, the ADF has, since 2007, arguably over-extrapolated the underlying principles of the Oslo Guidelines to mean that all forms of medical assistance to a foreign nation should be undertaken by civilian agencies. This paper argues that this has led to opportunities lost, and so proposes a health-focused HCA doctrine for the ADF that meets all the best-practice criteria built on US expertise. It further argues that the benefits of brief HCA engagements, such as those most commonly conducted by US teams, could be enhanced for both Australia and partner nations by deploying smaller teams, on rotation, to produce an enduring near-continuous presence of ADF personnel.

4 Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, 'Operation Pakistan Assist 2: "The Most Successful Australian Deployment of a Combined Humanitarian Task Force"', *Feature Interview, Future Directions International*, 16 September 2011 http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/operation-pakistan-assist-ii-the-most-successful-australian-deployment-of-a-combined-humanitarian-task-force/.

5 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Australia provides surgical hub in typhoon affected region', *News, speeches and media,* DFAT, 19 November 2013, https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/news/Pages/australia-provides-surgical-hub-in-typhoon-affected-region.

6 Department of Defense (USDoD), *Instruction DoDI 2205.02: Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) Activities*, 23 June 2014 [incorporating change 1, 22 May 2017] (Washington DC: US Department of Defense, 2017), available at https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=801360

A history of Australian HADR operations in the Pacific

Table 1 outlines the major HADR operations conducted by Australia in the Pacific region in approximately the last 20 years. Notably, all four major HADR operations between 1998 and 2007 had a health focus and were centred on ADF medical assets, while none of the ten Pacific HADR operations since that time has had a substantial ADF health component. The role of ADF health assets has been demonstrably taken over by the civilian AUSMATs[7], nonetheless supported by ADF logistic, transport and engineering elements. The AUSMATs are teams of doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals and logisticians who undergo one to two week blocks of training similar to that provided for Defence Health Reserve Officers, albeit without the same opportunities for attendance at subsequent collective training exercises to reinforce individual skills, build teams and develop leaders. Approximately 700 team members have been trained. Presumably noting the substantially reduced opportunity for HADR work within Defence, many ADF Reservists, including several senior officers, have volunteered for AUSMAT deployments in addition to their Defence service. Training and operational employment of the AUSMATs is coordinated by the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, based in Darwin, which also maintains the equipment required to generate a light surgical capability and inpatient facility approximately the equivalent of a NATO Role 2 hospital. The AUSMATs fulfil Australia's obligation to provide a civilian-based HADR capability under the Oslo Guidelines and, although objective assessments of each of these deployments have not been published, there is general recognition in the Australian civilian disaster assistance professional community that these have been effective. These teams are staffed and equipped for brief (approx. one month) deployments, and there is an understanding that an enduring hospital effect could be more the domain of the ADF.

7 National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre, 'AUSMAT' (web page), NCCTRC, https://www.nationaltraumacentre.nt.gov.au/what-we-do/disaster-management/ausmat.

Table 1. Major Australian HADR Operations in the Pacific since 1998 [8]

Year	Location	Event	Response
1998	Aitape, PNG	Tsunami 2200+ killed immediately 500+ survivors with infected wounds, fractures, aspiration pneumonia	OP SHADDOCK. The ADF, augmented by NZ, US and civilian personnel, deployed a light field hospital to Vanimo, PNG, 3 days after the tsunami. 209 surgical operations performed in the ADF hospital in 10 days.
2004	Niue	Cyclone Heta, one killed, with substantial property loss destruction of the island's only hospital.	OP NIUE ASSIST. 17-person ADF medical team replaced local hospital primary care and minor surgical functions for two weeks.
2004–2005	Aceh, Indonesia	Earthquake 100km off northern Sumatra, causing tsunami that killed 230,000 people in 14 countries around the Indian Ocean.	OP SUMATRA ASSIST. 1100 ADF personnel deployed a surgical field hospital (staffed also by NZDF members) to Indonesia for 3 months. In this time, 3700 medical treatments were provided, along with 2530 aeromedical transports, and engineering works providing 4.7 million litres of potable water and clearance of 9000 m3 debris.
2005	Nias Island, Indonesia	Earthquake	OP SUMATRA ASSIST II. 570 medical treatments provided by an ADF medical facility, food distribution, water purification, engineering works. Nine ADF members killed in helicopter crash April 2005.
2009	Samoa and American Samoa	Earthquake and tsunami. 180 killed (+9 in Tonga) with major infrastructure damage	Australian civilian paramedics, doctors, nurses and rescue specialists. ADF response limited to logistic support and aeromedical evacuation.
2011	Tohoku, Japan	Earthquake and tsunami	Australian civilian rescue specialists. ADF response limited to logistic support.
2011	Christchurch, New Zealand	Earthquake. 185 killed. Major infrastructure damage.	Australian civilian police, medical and rescue teams. ADF response limited to logistic support.
2013	Honiara, Solomon Islands	Dengue Fever outbreak post tsunami	AUSMAT team deployed.
2013	Tacloban, Philippines	Cyclone Haiyan. 7415 deaths.	Initial ADF primary care medical response, along with extensive logistic and engineering support. AUSMAT team deployed to form the core Australian medical response.
2014	Solomon Islands	Floods	AUSMAT team deployed. ADF response limited to logistic support.
2015	Tanna, Vanuatu	Cyclone Pam	AUSMAT team deployed. ADF response limited to engineering, logistic and limited primary care support.
2016	Fiji	Cyclone Winston	AUSMAT team deployed. ADF response limited to engineering, logistic and limited primary care support.
2018	Sulawesi, Indonesia	Earthquake. 2000 killed, 4600 severely injured.	ADF response limited to logistic support.
2019	Apia, Samoa	Measles epidemic	AUSMAT team deployed.

8 Steven Bullard, *In Their Time of Need. Australia's Overseas Emergency Relief Operations, 1918–2006* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108225441.

The effectiveness—or ineffectiveness—of HADR as 'soft power' diplomacy

There is little doubt that the patients treated on each of these HADR operations derived benefit from Australia's contributions and that they remain grateful for this clinical care. However, disaster relief efforts have short-term effects and, as is apparent from Table 1, the health care component is frequently less important to the recipient nation than logistics and engineering assistance. Indeed, the World Health Organization publishes several recommendations for disaster assistance, amongst which is that 'it is unlikely that medical personnel will be required from abroad', and if they are, 'the need for life-saving first aid and other immediate medical procedures is short-lived'.[9] Long-term investment in disaster recovery, and in development in general, is usually of much greater benefit to an affected population. Consequently, even if the only goal is to enhance the social stability and physical wellbeing of Australia's Pacific neighbours, basing Australia's plan for future health engagement with Pacific Islands solely around a strategy of providing health-focused HADR whenever required—either military or civilian—would appear unwise.

However, the Australian Government recognises that engagement in the Pacific has goals that go beyond improving the living standards of our neighbours. Exercise of Australian influence through the use of 'soft power' diplomacy is explicitly recognised in the Australian Government's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper[10], which defines this concept as 'the ability to influence the behaviour or thinking of others through the power of attraction and ideas'. Several examples are highlighted in this document, including the provision of scholarships allowing students from the Pacific to study in Australia, placement of Australian students in Indo-Pacific countries under the New Colombo Plan, scientific collaborations and international sporting competitions. Notably, no health projects are mentioned in this section of the document, and there is no mention of the soft power benefits of HADR. This might not be an error. While the US military has objectively documented increased support for its activities in Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan immediately after military HADR interventions, the same study noted 'the up-and-down nature of US–Indonesia ties shows that HADR cooperation is not in itself enough to overcome all the problems that can plague a bilateral

9 Pan American Health Organization, *Humanitarian Assistance in Disaster Situations: A Guide for Effective Aid* (Washington DC: PAHO/WHO, 1999), https://www.paho.org/disasters/dmdocuments/pedhumen.pdf.

10 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, November 2017), available in pdf format at https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf

relationship. Gratitude and admiration may fade with time'.[11] HADR operations offer brief opportunities for intense, usually positive, publicity. However, there is almost never an opportunity to form an enduring relationship with individuals or institutions in a host country and, hence, little opportunity to 'influence the behaviour or thinking of others'.

Accordingly, while HADR, including a health component in circumstances when this is appropriate, will continue to be an essential contribution by Australia to the physical and social security of Pacific nations, it should not be a focus of military health assets or the primary means by which Australia plans to exercise soft power diplomacy. Alternative employment of ADF health assets offers greater potential benefit.

US military HCA projects

Table 2 lists several examples of health-focused projects undertaken under the US military HCA program, the legal authority for which is contained in Title 10, Section 401 of the US Code (abbreviated as '10 U.S.C. 401 operations', or 'Section 401 appropriations'), for which detailed conditions are defined in US Department of Defense Instruction 2205.02.[12] The primary purpose of funding under 10 U.S.C. 401 must be to train US Armed Forces personnel. The US military first allocated funds under this mechanism in the 1980s. As a result of operational experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, similar projects, with operational rather than primarily training objectives, can now also be funded under the Combatant Commanders Initiative Fund and US Special Operations Command project funding. ADF members will be most familiar with Exercise Pacific Partnership, as Australia has contributed to each of these exercises since their inception in 2006. Average annual global HCA expenditure grew from US$47 million in 2004 to US$109 million in 2010, supporting approximately 200 activities per year.[13] Detailed guidance for operational planners is freely available.[14] Surprisingly, few formal evaluations of these programs have been made.[15]

11 David Capie, 'The United States and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in East Asia: Connecting Coercive and Non-Coercive Uses of Military Power', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, 3 (2015): 309–331. DOI: doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.1002914

12 Humanitarian and Civic Assistance *(HCA) Activities*, DoDI 2205.02.

13 Michael Baxter and Charles Beadling, 'A Review of the Role of the U.S. Military in Nonemergency Health Engagement', *Military Medicine* 178, no. 11 (Nov 2013):1231–40.

14 'Navy Humanitarian and Civic Assistance Operations', US Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps, 3 Nov 2009, https://www.jag.navy.mil/distrib/instructions/NTTP%203-57.3Humanitarian_and_Civic_Assistance_Ops_(Nov2009).pdf or https://usnwc.libguides.com/c.php?g=866733&p=6228504

15 Erik J. Reaves, Kenneth W. Schor, and Frederick M. Burkle, Jr., 'Implementation of Evidence-Based Humanitarian Programs in Military-Led Missions: Part I. Qualitative Gap Analysis of Current Military and International Aid Programs', *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* 2, no. 4 (Dec 2008):230–6, DOI: doi.org/10.1097/DMP.0b013e31818d3c80

Table 2. Examples of US military Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA) projects

Year	Location	Description
2006–p resent[16]	EX PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP Various locations throughout the Pacific	Aim: to improve US interoperability with Pacific military forces during disaster relief operations Method: Usually, but not always, involves the deployment of a US hospital or amphibious warfare ship to several developing countries in the Pacific, providing medical, dental, veterinary and engineering assistance during brief (approx. 1 week) port visits. This is the largest US military medical HCA activity, e.g. in 2011, the USS Cleveland treated 38,000 patients in five countries.
2011[17]	Trinidad	Aim: to enhance relationship with the government of Trinidad Method: Introduction of a new method for treating cataracts by a visiting US Army team at a Trinidad government hospital, resulting in enduring improved service provision and long-term partnership between a US civilian university, US Army Reserve unit and Trinidad civilian hospital.
2004[18]	Senegal	Aim: To enhance relationship with the government of Senegal and knowledge of its armed forces Method: 60 US Navy personnel deployed to a military clinic in Senegal for 12 days, augmenting local clinicians in providing treatment for 6200 patients.
2007–present[19]	OP PACIFIC ANGEL	Aim: Enhance relationship with partner nations Method: Build capacity in host nation health, dental, veterinary and engineering sectors by short-term (approx. 1-2 week) deployments of subject matter experts to work in host-nation facilities.
2007–present[20]	OP CONTINUING PROMISE	Aim: Enhance relationship with partner nations Method: Deployment of US hospital, amphibious warfare or Expeditionary Fast Transport Ship to several developing countries in Central and South America, providing medical, dental, veterinary and engineering assistance during brief (approx. 1 week) port visits.

16 Erik J. Reaves, Michael Termini, and Frederick M. Burkle, 'Reshaping US Navy Pacific Response in Mitigating Disaster Risk in South Pacific Island Nations: Adopting Community-Based Disaster Cycle Management', *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 29, no. 1 (2014), DOI:10.1017/S1049023X13009138.

17 Maela C. Haims, Herbert C. Duber, and L. P. Chang, 'Enhancing the Effectiveness of the U.S. Army's Participation in Medical Diplomacy: Implications from a Case Study in Trinidad', *Military Medicine* 179, no. 6 (2014).

18 Norman L. Johnson, Martin J. Livingston and Thomas S. Novak, 'A Cost Analysis of Training Expenses Versus the Value of Medical Care Provided During West Africa Training Cruise 2004: Senegal', *Military Medicine* 171, no. 12 (2006).

19 Mikaley Kline, 'Pacific Angel Provides Aid, Builds Partnerships Throughout Indo-Pacific Communities', Pacific Air Forces Public Affairs, 30 Sept 2019, PACAF, https://www.pacaf.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1975329/pacific-angel-provides-aid-builds-partnerships-throughout-indo-pacific-communit/.

20 US Southern Command, 'Continuing Promise 2018' (web page), *Media, Special Coverage*, https://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Continuing-Promise-2018/.

A common feature of most HCA projects is their average duration in each location of approximately one to two weeks. The short-term gains achieved by such projects compared to the potentially greater enduring beneficial effects—to all parties—of much longer-term engagement of health professionals has been noted by many. For example, the Director of the Global Health Program at the US Uniformed Services University noted 'hospital ship cruises and (short-duration health HCA operations) establish access, foster individual relationships and engender goodwill. But they do not do much to build capacity, and … it is unclear how long the goodwill might endure. The relationships are very short-lived.'[21] In an insightful comparison of short vs long-term engagements, the globally recognised success of Cuban doctors sent to work for two year deployments in developing countries has been noted.[22] However, even this approach was found to be flawed, as the Cuban doctors were sent primarily to deliver services not available in the host developing countries—all of which were lost when the Cuban economy contracted and the doctors withdrew. The optimal model proposed is one in which US military clinicians would work alongside local health professionals, assisting them to develop their own skills and infrastructure. Implicit in this development assistance model is the understanding that improvements take months to years, and so cannot be accomplished with visits of only two weeks.

Examples of enduring US military global health engagement projects

The best examples of enduring US military engagements with developing partner nations are the five Overseas Medical Research Laboratories of the US Army and Navy, located in Thailand, Kenya, Cambodia, Peru and, until 2016, Egypt.[23] The first of these was founded in 1946, and each focuses on epidemiology, treatment and vaccine development for infectious diseases relevant to their local geographic areas. When the program was first established, the core scientific staff were from the US military, with locally employed staff mostly employed in supporting roles; however, more recently this balance has shifted, with most of the scientific output now driven by host-nation scientists and doctors. The largest laboratory is the US Army Medical Research Unit–Kenya, which employs 600 local staff and only 15 US military staff and two US civilians, at a total annual cost to the US Government of only US$36.3 million. The US Overseas Medical

21 Bradley J. Boetig, 'Bilateral Institutional Relationships: A New Mission for U.S. Dod Medical Capabilities in Support of Health Diplomacy', *Military Medicine* 177, no. 7 (July 2012): 763–5.

22 Asad Moten, Daniel Schafer and Edwin K. Burkett, 'Global Health Engagement and the Department of Defense as a Vehicle for Security and Sustainable Global Health', *Military Medicine* 183, no. 1–2 (Jan/Feb2018) DOI: doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usx044.

23 James B. Peake et al., 'The Defense Department's Enduring Contributions to Global Health', ed. Center for Strategic and Interational Studies (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

Research Laboratories boast several major medical and scientific achievements, including development of the first effective malaria and HIV vaccines, and detection of the first cases of H1N1 influenza during the 2009 pandemic. Less obvious achievements have been training generations of host-nation physicians and scientists in infectious diseases, ethical research governance and in negotiating appropriate relationships with sponsoring pharmaceutical companies. The diplomatic effectiveness of the laboratories was evident in 1967 in Egypt, when all US Government representatives were expelled from the country due to US support for Israel in the Six-Day War. The single exception was US Navy Medical Research Unit 3 in Cairo, which remained open and acted as a de facto US Embassy for several years. The value of a mutually beneficial medical and scientific engagement to the soft power engagement between the US and these developing countries was clearly evident.

A selective history of Australian civilian health HCA projects in the Pacific

Australian civilian institutions have built a good name for Australia through medical engagement in the Pacific over the last century. The number of projects is so large that any attempt to be comprehensive would almost certainly still omit major contributors, and therefore only a representative sample is presented here. The Australian Government Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security recently reported on the 'State of the Region 2019', identifying numerous infectious disease threats, infrastructure in each country to combat these, and detailing co-operative strategies for improvement that involve international organisations, Australian Government programs, corporations and host-nation institutions.[24] More specifically, since 1995, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Pacific Islands and Papua New Guinea Programs, with the support of DFAT and other Australian specialist medical colleges, have been sending visiting medical teams to undertake direct clinical care, medical education including postgraduate examinations, clinical governance and workforce planning assistance. While each of these team visits are brief, they recur at frequent intervals, building trust amongst individuals. The Australian Society of Anaesthetists sponsors senior trainees and consultants to work in Fiji or East Timor for three months each, providing both direct clinical care and teaching to local anaesthetists and technicians. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has the highest Maternal Mortality Ratio in the Pacific. From 2012 to 2013, DFAT sponsored the University of Technology, Sydney to place 11 midwife facilitators and two obstetricians in PNG hospitals

24 Melanie Bannister-Tyrrell et al., 'Health Security in the Indo-Pacific: State of the Region 2019', Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security (Canberra: DFAT, Australian Government, 2019).

to provide clinical care and teaching. Substantial progress in the professionalisation of midwifery practice was documented at the completion of the project.[25] The University of Melbourne Department of Psychiatry has partnered with the only psychiatric hospital in Fiji, St Giles Hospital, in a 10-week exchange clinical training program for Australian and Fijian clinicians, and to develop training resources and research collaboration.[26] Operation Smile is a US-based organisation of plastic surgeons who undertake brief (1–2 weeks) visits worldwide to correct craniofacial deformities. An Australian-based subsidiary has operated since 1999.[27] Similarly, the Sydney-based Open Heart International has operated on patients with mostly congenital heart disease (but also burns and ophthalmology patients) throughout the Pacific and elsewhere since 1985, with 200 deployments and 7,399 patients treated.[28] Each of these programs describes its desire to build the local capacity of the host-nation health facilities, but the objective evidence that this has been achieved is sometimes not present in published material. In some cases, this is understandable, as the resources required to maintain a service such as cardiothoracic surgery in the absence of the visiting team are greater than is present in many of the host-nation hospitals. These projects therefore represent a mix of direct aid and capacity-building work, but they all have built Australian clinicians and their supporters a good reputation amongst our Pacific neighbours, which must be carefully maintained.

ADF capacity-building health projects in the Pacific

The ADF has recognised for many years the value of collaborative engagements with Pacific partners in areas other than health. Examples include Exercise Crux de Sud and Exercise Mhanuu (HADR and security assistance exercises hosted by New Caledonia), and ADF Support to the Pacific Island Forum through activities such as Operation Solania (maritime surveillance in the Pacific to protect fisheries and other resources). Each builds relationships at the government and military level, but none provides a lasting health effect. There is one outstanding exception: the series of enduring health projects throughout the Asia–Pacific region led by the ADF Malaria and Infectious Disease Institute (ADF MIDI).[29]

25 Amanda Neill, Caroline Homer, Michele Rumsey and Mary Kililo, *Papua New Guinea Maternal and Child Health Initiative Phase II: Final Report*, DFAT WHO CC UTS, 30 June 2016, https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/png-maternal-and-child-health-initiative-phase-2-final-report.pdf.

26 "Fiji–Melbourne Alliance for Mental Health', Asia Australia Mental Health, https://aamh.edu.au/post-program/fiji/.

27 'Operation Smile' (webpage), https://www.operationsmile.org/.

28 *Open Heart International Annual Review 2018–2019*, Open Heart International, Wahroonga, NSW https://ohi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018-2019_Annual_Review.pdf.

29 Until 2017, the ADF MIDI was known as the Australian Army Malaria Institute. See G.D. Shanks et al., 'Army Malaria Institute—Its evolution and achievements fifth decade: 2006–2015', *Journal of Military and Veterans Health* 24, no. 1 (2016).

Numerous research projects co-funded by the World Health Organization, US Department of Defense and National Institutes of Health, DFAT and private industry throughout the region have in recent years been augmented by reinvigorated training relationships with military and civilian colleagues in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Although the primary mission of the ADF MIDI is to provide ADF members with the best possible protection against malaria and other vector-borne diseases, the collaborative relationships built with both the armed forces and civilian institutions of partner nations are an excellent example of the potential for enduring health projects to achieve positive influence for Australia in our region.

ADF operational health readiness requirement

The ADF provides ab initio training for its medics at an 18-month course at the Army School of Health, but for all other health professions it relies on civilian universities and hospitals to provide the bulk of clinical training for both Permanent and Reserve personnel. Military-specific expertise in penetrating trauma and tropical diseases of military relevance is acquired on short courses and through experience on major exercises. However, none of these Defence training activities provide experience with 'real' patients, leaving a substantial training gap. The Australian civilian hospital system provides few opportunities for training that mirrors the scope of practice required in ADF deployed Role 2E hospitals.[30] Civilian clinicians now work in a system that is reliant on sub-specialisation, advanced technology and minimally-invasive surgery, none of which is available on military deployment. ADF Role 2E hospitals have no CT scanner, no endoscopic instruments, and no sub-specialist surgeons (such as neurosurgeons) or physicians (such as specialists in infectious diseases). Consequently, the ADF must seek a different employment model that engages its clinicians in a way that better prepares them for military deployment.

Following the drawdown of military operations in the Middle East, the ADF has struggled to engage its clinical workforce in duties that genuinely enhance clinical operational readiness. Fewer than 40 per cent of Army's SERCAT 5 (Reserve) medical officers worked their mandated 20 training days in FY 2018–19. Most Army SERCAT 7 (Regular) clinical staff do not meet the criteria for Tier 1 readiness[31], due to difficulties in securing time for placements in civilian hospitals. By developing an enduring medical engagement program in the Indo-Pacific region, the ADF would significantly enhance its engagement with current and prospec-

30 Kyle Bender, 'Training War-Time Surgeons in a Peace-Time ADF', 2019 *AMMA Conference Abstracts, Journal of Military and Veterans' Health* 27, no. 4 (2019): 27–76.

31 'Clinical Readiness Standards for Army Health Services Personnel', *Army Standing Instruction (Personnel)* Part 8, Chapter 9 (2019).

tive clinicians, and their competency, in an operationally relevant environment. The workforce available to undertake such an activity is large: Army has 835 SERCAT 5 and 1,562 SERCAT 7 clinicians; Navy has 212 Reserve (SERCAT 3 & 5) clinicians and 388 in SERCAT 7; RAAF has 378 in SERCAT 7 and 426 in its Reserve (SERCAT 3, 4 and 5)—making a potential workforce of approximately 3,800. Employing an element of this workforce in continuous clinical operations in a relevant environment would not only place the ADF in the best possible position to deploy a surgical capability in support of operations when next required, but it would additionally provide greater certainty to health planners that this would indeed be possible.

The 'humanitarian' controversy

Before making any proposals for an evolution in ADF doctrine, it is essential to recognise differing perspectives on the use of the term 'humanitarian'. ADF and DFAT documents make extensive use of this word, albeit limited to the context of crisis response. Quoting DFAT, 'humanitarian action... is designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of conflict, disasters and other humanitarian crises, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations'.[32] The four 'humanitarian principles' defined by the United Nations, International Committee of the Red Cross and others, are 'humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence'.[33] Most non-government organisations consider military forces, and indeed even civilian government agencies such as AUSMAT, incapable of delivering 'humanitarian' aid as defined by these principles because they are inherently not independent (of government) and might not be impartial or neutral under all circumstances. Any proposed ADF project that did not exclusively aim to deliver health care for the benefit of recipients, but incorporated training and diplomatic outcomes as well, would be liable to criticism for misappropriation of the term—as indeed have been the US HCA programs. Therefore, the term should be avoided.

A proposal for the ADF: Enduring Health Civic Assistance (EHCA)

This paper proposes a novel concept, *Enduring Health Civic Assistance*, that would enhance ADF capability, exercise beneficent Australian soft power, and build the health capacity of Pacific nations in a respectful and collaborative man-

32 *DFAT Humanitarian Strategy* (n. 2).

33 OCHA, 'Humanitarian Principle', United Nations https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf.

ner. Teams of 4–6 ADF clinicians would work in a host-nation hospital for periods of four weeks each, with rotations of teams such that there would be a near-continuous presence throughout the year. Composition of the teams would be guided by the requirements of the host hospitals but, given the most critical capability constraints in many Pacific Island countries, this is likely to mean a focus on surgery, anaesthesia and emergency medicine. However, given the high prevalence of tropical and other infectious diseases, dental morbidity, complex obstetrics and untreated chronic illness, there would be ample scope for essentially all ADF medical, dental, nursing and allied health specialties. The complex logistic and organisational challenges of the health systems of many Pacific nations also suggest valuable potential work by ADF pharmacists and health General Service Officers.

Several key relationships would need to be built to make such a program possible. The host-nation hospital clinicians and executive team would need to identify service delivery and training priorities and contribute to the detailed planning of the program. All health professionals would need to be registered to practise in the host country, which would be considerably assisted if the relevant professional boards agreed to recognise Australian qualifications and registration. Procedures for clinical governance and medical indemnity would need to be agreed, and there would need to be a mechanism for the host hospital to approve the scope of practice of visiting ADF clinicians. The host-nation Ministry of Health would ideally oversee the project and, as this would be a military endeavour, ideally clinicians from the health service of the host-nation's armed forces would participate alongside visiting ADF members. Mechanisms for formal evaluation of the project should be established, including the extent to which the host nations' capabilities would be enhanced upon the withdrawal of the ADF team. A formal public relations plan should be agreed with the host nation from the outset, highlighting the collaborative nature and mutual benefit of the endeavour and making the specific point that the project is not an 'aid program', as traditionally understood.

Relevance of EHCA to HADR, using COVID-19 as an example

While Australian medical HADR tasks will almost certainly remain the primary responsibility of AUSMAT, relationships fostered by Defence EHCA projects could potentially facilitate the effectiveness of an Australian whole-of-government disaster response in the Pacific. A topical example is to consider how Australia might respond to a Pacific Island nation overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. Although the AUSMATs are focused exclusively on HADR, they have no enduring presence in any overseas country. How much more rapid and effective might an

Australian response be if, during planning and execution, we could draw upon a cohort of ADF members with detailed knowledge of the host-nation health system, contemporaneous health intelligence from those deployed, and personal influence with clinicians from the host nation? Even if the Australian HADR response were to be entirely from AUSMAT, an in situ Defence EHCA team could assist the host nation make valuable preparations to ensure the greatest value was extracted from this response.

Criteria for appropriate capacity building in Civic Assistance programs

Many civilian aid programs of the 20th century created what has become known as a 'donor-recipient aid trap', in which the economic priorities of less developed countries became tailored around the continued receipt of external assistance, such as donations of food, equipment or personnel. This is acknowledged to have created a persisting culture of dependence rather than encouraging self-reliance. US military doctrine recognises this potential problem and lists several requirements for successful HCA projects, all of which should be met by this proposal.[34] These include ensuring 'that the project does not drastically exceed the standard of care already provided by the host nation' (it explicitly would not); it must not 'discredit national and local governance' (it would work within these constructs by registering ADF officers with local boards and by empowering local hospital authorities in the clinical governance of ADF practitioners); and it must not cause economic displacement of local providers (it would not; rather it would assist them in their work). The project must have the approval of the Ambassador or High Commissioner and be coordinated with existing civilian development assistance programs.

The former administrator of the US Agency for International Development defined 'Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development' by which a project such as this might be assessed.[35] These are:

1. *Ownership. A country must drive its own development needs and priorities, and projects must build on the leadership, participation and commitment of a country and its people.* The project must be developed in close collaboration with host-nation colleagues and fill clear, evidence-based needs as articulated by them. It must empower the existing leadership structures within the host-nation hospital by making it clear that ADF clinicians are coming to learn from their expertise, not to dispense aid.

34 *Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA) Activities*, DoDI 2205.02.

35 A.S. Natsios, 'The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development', *Parameters* 35, no. 3 (2005).

2. *Capacity building. Strengthen local institutions, transfer technical skills and promote appropriate policies.* There will be no attempt to replace local institutions or to introduce new clinical services. Rather, ADF clinicians would augment the existing workforce in delivering their current level of service, at times allowing them time for professional development leave. While the primary intent is not that ADF clinicians will teach host-nation colleagues, there will no doubt be opportunities for a two-way exchange of skills.
3. *Sustainability.* Funding for clinician salaries will come from the training budgets already allocated. Funding for travel and incidentals would be low and could come either from funds allocated to enhancing cooperation and interoperability between the ADF and the defence forces of partner nations if their health staff were integrated into the project or from the A$1.4 billion allocated to development projects by the Australian Government as part of the 'Pacific Step-Up'.[36]
4. *Selectivity. Allocate resources based on need, local commitment and foreign policy interests.* The Australian Government has identified several countries of strategic importance as part of the 'Pacific Step-Up'. PNG is the most populated Pacific nation next to Australia (8.6 million) and is of great strategic interest to Australia, receiving A$600 million in aid in FY 2019–20, along with close Defence cooperation including frequent combined land exercises in East Sepik Province and naval exercises from Lombrum Naval Base on Manus Island. Fiji (880,000), Solomon Islands (650,000) and Vanuatu (300,000) are the next three most populous Pacific nations after New Zealand, all with longstanding defence, cultural and business ties with Australia and of strategic significance given their proximity and availability of port facilities. Each has a sufficiently developed and busy hospital system to support a project such as that proposed.
5. *Assessment. Conduct careful research, adapt best practices and design for local conditions.* A thorough assessment must be made of the operational conditions required for the project to succeed, through on-site visits and subsequent engagement between ADF and host-nation officials. The ADF has conducted frequent exercises in each of these countries and has an ongoing Defence Cooperation Program presence that could facilitate local contacts and logistics.
6. *Results. Direct resources to achieve clearly defined, measurable and strategically focused objectives.* The main immediate objective from an ADF per-

36 Pacific Step-Up' (webpage), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/pages/the-pacific.aspx.

spective is increased engagement of clinicians in a relevant operational environment, which will be quantified readily by reporting numbers and types of patients treated. Longer-term objectives are enhanced relationships between the two countries, and augmented capability of the host-nation health system, which must be quantified by indicators of success defined at the start of the project.

7. *Partnership. Collaborate closely with governments, communities, donors, non-profit organisations, the private sector, international organisations and universities.* Any project must be coordinated with DFAT and any of its existing programs in the host nation, including (for example) those of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons described above.

8. *Flexibility. Adjust to changing conditions, take advantage of opportunities and maximise efficiency.* The project must be responsive to changing circumstances. For example, if the quantity or nature of clinical work in the host-nation hospital is not as projected, there must be the option to move the ADF team to a more suitable location. The composition of the team must be able to change in response to the requirements of the host nation—for example, to cover periods of leave of specific host-nation clinicians, the ADF might agree to send an officer of a particular specialty between certain dates.

9. *Accountability. Design accountability and transparency into systems and build effective checks and balances to guard against corruption.* Mechanisms for clinical governance of ADF clinicians must be agreed with the Director of Medical Services of the host-nation hospital, including direct oversight by a senior ADF clinician who would have the authority to remove an ADF officer from the deployment immediately if this is required. Principles of rostering must be agreed that will ensure ADF clinicians do not take over only the less pleasant aspects of the work of host-nation doctors, such as after-hours on call, but rather that all will share an equal patient load. The clear intent is that the ADF clinicians are deploying to learn from their host-nation colleagues, not to teach them or replace them.

Potential concerns

Several potential concerns can be anticipated and mitigated:

1. *Creating an unsustainable and undesirable dependency on the ADF.* Dependency can be avoided in several ways. First, no clinical service would be introduced that is not already provided in the host-nation hospital. Unlike visiting civilian specialist teams that perform, for example, cleft palate surgery or cardiac surgery, ADF clinicians would only undertake the type of proce-

dures that are already performed in the host-nation hospital. Second, each rotation would comprise clinicians of different specialties, each present for only one month, so although the ADF presence would endure, no clinical specialty would always be present. Third, ADF clinicians would be forbidden from bringing equipment or consumables, avoiding the possibility that the hospital would replace its own medical supply chain with this source of free health materiel. Fourth, ADF clinicians would receive thorough training that their role was to work in partnership with host-nation clinicians, not to replace them. Fifth, the ADF would never take a leadership role within the host-nation hospital; consistent personal and public relations messaging would reflect the reality that their presence was as an adjunct to the excellent health services that existed before they arrived. The ADF has experience of successfully achieving this type of collaborative engagement without creating dependency, albeit on a smaller and less formalised scale, using essentially these rules. ADF clinicians performed surgery in the Solomon Islands National Referral Hospital, Honiara, during Operation Anode, and in Moleana Hospital, East Timor, during Operation Citadel to the mutual benefit of all involved.

2. *Inability of the ADF to support the project indefinitely.* Deployment rotations of one month are compatible with maintenance of a private practice and with the military leave provisions of Australian civilian public hospitals. Provision of 'real' clinical work, as opposed to training scenarios with little clinical fidelity, would be expected to increase the number of competent clinicians wishing to deploy through augmented recruiting and retention. Even were this not to eventuate, it is difficult to argue that from the approximately 3,800 existing ADF clinicians approximately 10 annual rotations of four to six personnel (i.e. 40 to 60 per year, or approx. 1–1.5% of the total) would be unsustainable. Should ADF operational requirements necessitate cessation of deployment of certain types of clinician (e.g. surgeons or general practitioners) for prolonged periods, the enduring relationship could be maintained in professions in which the ADF retained spare capacity. It is unlikely that every ADF health profession, including health General Service Officers, would be required simultaneously on operations elsewhere.

3. *Personal risk to ADF clinicians.* PNG has the highest prevalence of HIV in the Pacific, with a prevalence in the adult (15–49 years) population estimated to be 0.8%.[37] This is eight times higher than Australia, but less than one-twentieth that of South Africa and only double that of the USA. The incidence of tuberculosis (TB) in PNG is 333 per 100,000, the highest in the Pacific and

37 'HIV and AIDS Estimates: Papua New Guinea 2018' (Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS Secretariat, 2019), https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/papuanewguinea.

amongst the highest on the world.[38] However, TB can be avoided by careful respiratory precautions. Trauma from interpersonal violence is the greatest risk to civilians. Advice from Pacific Island military colleagues is that ADF personnel in uniform would be protected by their association with host-nation military forces.

4. *Reputational and legal risk to the ADF in case of adverse events.* ADF clinicians registered in some Pacific Island countries (such as PNG) are covered by professional indemnity insurance provided by their governments, or else must have individual practitioner insurance as a condition of their registration (e.g. doctors in the Solomon Islands and Fiji). Additionally, the Status of Forces Agreements that exist between Australia and most Pacific Island nations outlines the legal responsibilities of each nation with respect to civil claims made involving members of the ADF acting in an official capacity, as would be the case for clinicians working in this program. In brief, the host-nation legal system adjudicates any claim, and the host-nation government must pay any financial damages. These must in turn be reimbursed by Australia. In addition to any financial consequences, adverse outcomes to any patient treated by an ADF clinician might cast the ADF in a negative light. This risk would be lessened by the team nature of the work involved and the close working relationship with host-nation clinicians. Further, it should be noted that decades of Australian civilian medical aid experience in the Pacific, combined with careful ADF team selection, suggest the risk of a negative outcome is substantially less than the likelihood of benefit.
5. *Displacement of trust in local clinicians amongst the host-nation civilian population.* It is possible that ADF clinicians might be incorrectly perceived as being more competent than their host-nation colleagues simply by virtue of their training in a developed country. Hence their presence in the hospital or clinic might erode confidence in local practitioners. This perception would be fought at every opportunity by reinforcing to patients that the intent of the ADF team is to 'learn from the experts' in tropical disease and penetrating trauma.

Naturally, before any commitment to a program of this nature could be made, detailed consideration of operationally sensitive projected competing priorities and the fitness and availability of the ADF's employed clinicians would have to be assessed.

38 Paul Aia et al., 'Epidemiology of Tuberculosis in Papua New Guinea: Analysis of Case Notification and Treatment-Outcome Data, 2008–2016', *Western Pacific Surveillance and Response Journal 9*, no. 2 (June 2018): 9–19, DOI: doi.org/10.5365/wpsar.2018.9.1.006.

Conclusion

Australia's capability to staff a Role 2E hospital, in the South Pacific or elsewhere, relies mainly on clinicians whose experience is almost exclusively in large developed-world hospitals that treat few patients with penetrating trauma or tropical diseases. The health services of our nearest neighbours are overstretched in treating exactly these conditions in hospitals that very closely resemble an ADF Role 2E facility. Australia has a clearly articulated foreign policy objective to work more closely with Pacific neighbours to enhance regional security. *Enduring Health Civic Assistance* presents an invaluable opportunity to achieve substantial outcome benefit for both Australia and the Pacific.

Doing well by doing good: Mutual capacity building through strategic medical engagement

Adam Mahoney, Scott Squires and Andrew Pearson

Introduction

Historically, one of the ways that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has furthered Australia's interests has been through its humanitarian assistance to neighbouring nations. As Australia faces a complex and challenging geostrategic environment, its security and prosperity depends increasingly upon the stability and resilience of our regional partners.[1] Their stability is threatened by a range of factors from competition for finite natural resources to the potential consequences of climate change, including increased incidence of natural disasters. However, for several reasons, Australia's civilian-led Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AUSMAT) have become Australia's primary instrument of medical-assistance diplomacy. This paper argues that ADF medical teams could make a significant contribution in support of civilian humanitarian efforts and further Australia's national interests, while at the same time benefiting both ADF and host nation preparedness.

Australia has an ethical obligation to render humanitarian assistance in our region and beyond; however, as acknowledged by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2015:

> [Australia's] aid program is not a charity; it represents an investment in the future of the Indo-Pacific region. Well-targeted Australian aid complements our diplomatic and security efforts to promote regional stability.

1 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper: Opportunity, Security, Strength* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, November 2017), https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf; Department of Defence, 2016 *Defence White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), https://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf

The Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) represents a major contribution by the ADF to the whole-of-government international aid program. The objective of the DCP is:

> …to maximise Australia's security through developing close and enduring links with partners that support their capacity to protect their sovereignty, work effectively with the Australian Defence Force and contribute to regional security.[2]

DCP-funded activities include bilateral and multilateral training exercises, the building and/or refurbishment of infrastructure, donations of materiel and joint maritime security operations. The DCP also enables military personnel from partner nations to access learning opportunities at Australian military and civilian educational institutions. At present, around 2,000 DCP students come to Australia for training each year. Additionally, DCP relationships are strengthened by a network of internationally seconded officers posted throughout Australia and Defence cooperation education officers posted to partner nations.

Notwithstanding longstanding support and considerable funding for the DCP by all sides of politics, at present the DCP is not purposively funding any regional engagement by ADF medical personnel; rather, medical teams are deployed in support of training, construction or security tasks. On occasion ADF medical teams are given orders that specifically preclude practical engagement with host nation health services. Moreover, with reference to DCP-assisted opportunities for study in Australia, there are few training targets that specifically relate to medical education. Consequently, medical engagement is limited both at home and abroad in the sense that clinicians lack a formal framework for mutual capacity building and the strengthening of professional bonds. It would not be going too far to state that opportunities for medical strategic engagement are largely overlooked.

This paper proposes that by failing to promote strategic medical engagement in our region the ADF is missing two key opportunities:

- the first of these is to achieve Australia's stated aim of enhancing the capacity and resilience of our neighbours
- the second being to promote the ADF's aim of creating a 'capable, agile and potent force structure'.

The paper begins with a precis of ADF medical operations in our region and then seeks to establish the imperative for strategic medical engagement while

2 Department of Defence, *Defence Cooperation Program (webpage), Annual Report 2015–16*, Australian Government, Canberra [cited 22 March 2019]; available from: http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/15-16/Features/20-DefenceCooperation.asp.

considering its potential deleterious unintended consequences. The paper then provides examples of how strategic medical engagement may be applied in practice.

The case for strategic medical engagement

Strategic medical engagement is a logical extension of extant foreign policy

Australia is often described as a 'middle power', whose diplomacy emphasises the development of multilateral coalitions and mutual cooperation in order to promote regional stability. This approach both enhances Australia' own security and reduces the requirement for Australia to commit finite military and diplomatic resources to address near neighbours' domestic catastrophes, which may threaten our interests.

Globalisation has rendered Australia's application of soft power increasingly important.[3] Soft power takes many forms, some of which have been termed 'defence diplomacy': the 'nonviolent use of a state's defence apparatus to advance the strategic aims of a government through cooperation with other countries'.[4] Contemporary examples of defence diplomacy include Operation Render Safe, Exercise Pacific Partnership, Exercise Olgeta Warrior and Exercise Harii Hamutuk. These deployments, tailored to the needs of both Australia and individual host nations, involve joint planning, training and engineering tasks; though with the exception of Exercise Pacific Partnership, there is limited formal contact between Australian and host nation medical personnel.

Clearly there are immediate benefits to both ADF clinicians and host nation practitioners that result from formal regular contact. But beyond this, medical strategic engagement could enhance the effectiveness of existing programs that are already a feature of the DCP. By coming to know practitioners in key clinical and administrative roles, ADF clinicians can make recommendations to Defence Cooperation Education Officers, who may then offer targeted learning and networking opportunities to those individuals within existing frameworks. In this manner, the collective subject matter expertise that may be found within the ADF is applied to ensure optimal allocation of finite foreign aid resources.

3 DFAT, 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*.

4 Gregory Winger, 'The Velvet Gauntlet: A Theory of Defense Diplomacy. In: What Do Ideas Do?', ed. A. Lisiak, N. Smolenski, Vol. 33. (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, 2014), https://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxxiii/the-velvet-gauntlet/; Rhett Mitchell, 'Pacific partnership: Australia's contribution and benefits' [online], *Headmark*, No. 14 (March 2013): 9–14, https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/documentSummary;dn=258255537653528;res=IELHSS *also available via* https://navalinstitute.com.au/headmark-back-issues/

The 2016 Defence and 2017 Foreign Policy White Papers both affirm the government's commitment to capacity building defence engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. We contend that ADF medical clinicians and units represent a significant vector for defence diplomacy. Enduring ties between both individual clinicians and deployable health units will enhance both host nation capacity and interoperability with the ADF in a way that is entirely consistent Australia's stated foreign policy.[5]

Strategic medical engagement is consistent with Australia's humanitarian obligations

Australia has a long history of humanitarian engagement with other nations and actively seeks to promote its humanitarian credentials. From 19th Century relief for the Indian famines, to recent support provided to Indonesia, Fiji and Pakistan, Australians have been generous contributors of funds and physical assistance, both private and public.[6]

Humanitarian assistance denotes the actions taken to alleviate suffering and preserve life in the aftermath of social crises and natural disasters. For this, the government increasingly relies on AUSMAT, which comprise a federally funded civilian organisation. However, humanitarian assistance also embodies measures taken to enhance preparedness for catastrophic events and ADF clinicians are ideally positioned to contribute to this function.

ADF clinicians provided with the opportunity to work and learn alongside host nation counterparts outside of times of catastrophe would be afforded the opportunity to analyse local health systems. They could then, in light of their experiences, make suggestions as to how best practice from Australia's highly developed health system could be applied within local resource constraints. Further, the knowledge acquired through the ADF's partnerships with host nation health systems, and captured through formal health intelligence reports, could be passed to organisations such as AUSMAT to facilitate improved interoperability in the event of future humanitarian assistance missions.

Military partnerships do not challenge civilian primacy in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, as espoused by the 2007 Oslo *Guidelines on the use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief*.[7] Rather, such relation-

5 DFAT, 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*.

6 Jacinta O'Hagan, 'Australia and the promise and perils of humanitarian diplomacy', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, 6 (2016): 657–669.

7 United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief*, March/May 1994, DHA/94/95, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [cited 2019 22nd March]; available from: https://www.refworld.org/docid/4289f0114.html.

ships could function as an enabler of civilian agencies and thereby contribute to Australia's ability to meet its humanitarian obligations.

The Oslo guidelines are often cited as the basis for using civilian medical teams, such as AUSMAT rather than Australian military teams. Items 5 and 32 (ii) of the guidelines require Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) be used as a last resort and Item 32 (iv) recommends that MCDA should be used, as much as practicable, in indirect roles. Item 38 explains that, 'In principle, unarmed UN MCDA, accepted as neutral and impartial and clearly distinguished from other military units, can be used to support the full range of humanitarian activities. However, their involvement in direct assistance should be weighed on a case by case basis'. Thus, logistic and force protection support appears to be the current role of ADF medical personnel deployed for Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR).

Key considerations underpinning the formulation of the Oslo guidelines were the perceived neutrality of aid, the need to enhance civilian capability and the need to prevent dependence upon military forces. We acknowledge that the same principles should be applied to disaster relief in our region. Nevertheless, the Oslo guidelines were written to provide guidance on the role of foreign military and civil defence forces in large scale UN-run disaster relief missions, not to proscribe opportunities for mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. It may be argued that Australia's humanitarian obligation to our neighbours is not activated by crisis alone, but rather extends to ensuring readiness of partner nations to cope with such eventualities. Aid organisations, both government and non-government may lack the mandate and resources to mount protracted operations outside the context of a humanitarian emergency. In contrast, even on operations, the ADF is an organisation devoted to training. To that extent, the needs of ADF clinicians to experience diverse practice environments and the need of partner nation clinicians for ongoing professional development are aligned. Targeted engagement by ADF clinicians before, during and after major events that threaten public health could ensure that partner nations are at their most capable when their systems are put to the test.

Strategic medical engagement will generate regional goodwill

Strategic medical engagement represents a commitment to our neighbours and an investment in their collective wellbeing. In contemporary diplomacy, compassion has come to be seen as a status symbol and states compete to be recognised for their generosity.[8]

8 O'Hagan, *Australia and the promise and perils of humanitarian diplomacy*.

Natural disasters often promote an outpouring of sympathy and acts of generosity from the international community. It is widely recognised that Australia's open-handed response to the 2004 tsunami helped repair Australian-Indonesian relations, which had been severely damaged by Australia's involvement in East Timorese independence.[9] However, the value of long-term partnerships that are not contingent upon catastrophe should not be overlooked.

Speaking about the Pacific Partnership, the US ambassador to Cambodia once said, 'This type of mission builds the U.S. relationship here tenfold over a lot of other things we do'.[10] Further, by making medical interaction a key feature of the relationship between the Australian military and local communities, Australia could reinforce the benign intensions of our regional engagement.

The efficacy of this form of military diplomacy is underscored by attempts by our regional competitors to establish programs akin to Pacific Partnership. Over at least the last five years, China has developed regional forums for interaction of clinicians and health logisticians; the Peace Train series of exercises facilitates medical exchanges between China and Laos, while China's *Peace Ark* has provided medical services in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga. Many of the nations targeted by China's medical diplomacy are considered important Australian regional partners.

Australia has the capacity to mount medical engagement activities in its own right, building upon historical relations with its neighbours that potential competitors such as China do not possess. However, nations such as Papua New Guinea and Fiji are not in a position to be selective about the aid they receive and will likely accept any partnerships arrangements that are offered. Australia should not thoughtlessly cede its natural advantages in this field but should embrace strategic medical engagement as an opportunity to enhance our national image in pursuit of our foreign policy objectives.

Strategic medical engagement enhances the resilience of partner nations

Many of our most significant regional partners are vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Medical systems in these nations are often

9 Ilan Kelman, *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011).

10 Kristopher Regan, 'Pacific Partnership Wraps up Mission in Cambodia', 12 August, 2012, *Commander United States Pacific Fleet* (https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/030045) quoted in Daniel Baldino and Andrew Carr, 'Defence diplomacy and the Australian Defence Force: smokescreen or strategy?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, 2 (April 2016):139–158, DOI: 10.1080/10357718.2015.1113229

barely sufficient to meet the daily needs of their dependencies; natural disasters cause swift decompensation and many casualties may want for adequate care.

While strategic medical engagement cannot ameliorate shortfalls in capacity without substantial additional funds, and at risk of undermining sustainable indigenous health capability, there are many ways it can help to enhance partner nation system resilience, such as through training in corporate governance and major incident management.[11] Programs such as the Major Incident Medical Management and Support (MIMMS) could be delivered to key staff to improve collective understanding of triage and casualty disposition. Airway management and vascular access skills could be taught to nurses in order to increase the number of trained assistants available for resuscitation teams. Crew resource management skills could be imparted through multidisciplinary simulation to improve the efficiency of communication and clinical decision-making. Medical engagement teams facilitate such education in two ways: first, they have the benefit of having received formal instruction through their military medicine training, and second, and more importantly, they are supernumerary to the normal working of the health facility. Often health facilities in the Pacific have only one doctor from each specialty and limited nursing staff, meaning that all available time is devoted to service delivery, with professional development a distant second. This is not to devalue the clinical expertise of clinicians in these countries, as their case volume in certain areas far exceeds that of their Australian colleagues. Rather, it demonstrates that the presence of Australian medical teams can enable education and training beyond that which would be possible if these nations were to rely solely on their own resources.

A further benefit of collaborative education programs is that they foster direct clinician-to-clinician relationships that can provide a source of counsel in unfamiliar circumstances. Almost every Australian clinician can count on a pool of colleagues to whom they could turn if they were uncertain how to manage a clinical scenario. Our colleagues in the Pacific are not always so fortunate. From the authors' own experience, opportunities to consolidate a professional network are taken avidly and it has well been said that 'the time to exchange business cards is not during a disaster'.

Importantly, international engagement by Australian clinicians should be supported by opportunities for colleagues in partner nations to gain experience and qualifications in Australia. With appropriate training targets, this outcome could be achieved within the existing DCP framework. Communities in partner nations

11 Jordan S. Kassalow, *Why Health Is Important to U.S. Foreign Policy* (pdf), 19 April 2001 (Washington: Council on Foreign Relations), https://www.cfr.org/report/why-health-important-us-foreign-policy

will benefit significantly from the enhanced skills of returning clinicians, but more importantly, regular exchange opportunities will develop the robust professional networks that support best practice response to health crises as outlined above.

Strategic medical engagement promotes the safety of ADF members deployed in host nations.

Acceptance by the host nation community and a comprehensive appreciation of local threats to health support the safety of ADF members deployed overseas; strategic medical engagement furthers both these ends. As outlined above, medical engagement is able to promote good will. An act of caring for one person is readily communicated to their extended community, thereby promoting Australia's benign reputation. Moreover, local clinicians are often best placed to advise on common hazards to the deployed force, including zoonoses, communicable diseases and the threat of interpersonal violence.

Additionally, although the ADF aims to be self-sufficient in treating its members injured overseas, it is important to understand the capabilities present within the host nation health system. If Australians were later deployed to the same location for humanitarian assistance or warlike service, local hospitals or clinics may provide redundancy where ADF facilities are insufficient to meet clinical demand. A thorough understanding of host nation capability is difficult to achieve from a single visit, but is readily achieved through a clinical placement or observership. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose that local clinicians are more likely to provide a candid assessment of their institution's capabilities to other clinicians with whom they have a working relationship.

Thus strategic medical engagement can help to build a safer foundation for future operations by enhancing the local reputation of the ADF and supporting rigorous assessment of host nation health capabilities.

Strategic medical engagement is cost-effective and sustainable

China has already provided over $600 million towards development of infrastructure within PNG;[12] it is also the largest foreign aid donor to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. While Australia remains the largest overall donor to the Pacific, it is likely that this pre-eminence will not be indefinite, and it is important that Australia seeks cost-effective means of generating goodwill and maintaining regional influence.

12 Philippa Brant, Pan Jiawei and Danielle Cave, *'Chinese aid in the Pacific'* [interactive website project], 21 March 2016, Lowy Institute; available from: https://chineseaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/ Further references via https://www.lowyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/chinese_aid_in_the_pacific_data_references.pdf

It would be possible to significantly increase strategic medical engagement without significantly increasing costs to the ADF. This is because many of the ADF's medical costs are fixed. Medical teams are frequently deployed in support of non-medical engagement activities such as explosive ordnance disposal, engineering works and live fire weapons training. Given the highly professional character of the ADF, it is unsurprising that on most occasions, there is no need for these medical teams to apply their training to treatment of exercise casualties. Understandably, in the absence of objectives relating to medical engagement, commanders planning multilateral exercises tend to maintain their medical assets in the form of a 'break glass in case of emergency' capability. Indeed, even where provision for medical engagement has been made at a higher level, individual commanders have vetoed clinical observerships because of a perception that 'health is there to support the main effort'. In consequence, a large proportion of time for medical contingents is spent attending internally organised professional development programs or engaging in non-medical activities such as labour assistance to engineering detachments.

A superior course of action would be to recognise the value of strategic health engagement and to assign it a similar priority to other regional engagement activities. Provided that health elements deployed in support of an exercise do not take on a clinical burden that would preclude them from leaving a local facility in the event that an Australian casualty requires treatment, health engagement and force preservation are not mutually exclusive. The primary purpose of such an interaction would be the exchange of knowledge or assisting local clinicians, rather than assuming primary responsibility for performing medical procedures; therefore, Australia would incur a negligible cost in consumable medical supplies.

It can be seen that, in cases where a medical team is to be deployed in a health support function for non-medical engagement activities it is possible for Australia to reap the benefits of medical diplomacy without specifically allocating funds to that purpose. An even better approach would be to augment this sort of opportunistic medical engagement with carefully considered long-term clinical relationships between ADF health units and specific host nation health care facilities. Sending individual nurses and medical practitioners, or small clinical teams, to a Pacific nation with the objective of mutually beneficial knowledge exchange would incur no greater cost than the reconnaissance parties sent to plan engineering works or a bilateral combined arms exercise. Yet in some ways, the value to Australia of medical engagement eclipses these other activities because of the potential for clinicians to engage not only with fellow clinicians but also directly with local civilians. The presence of an Australian in uniform during

a medical procedure, even if only in an assisting role, has the potential to inspire lifelong gratitude from a person suffering illness. Sadly, the same lasting goodwill is unlikely to follow from even ambitious infrastructure projects because such acts of beneficence are less personal in nature.

Strategic medical engagement is also sustainable. The ADF has a highly skilled, committed body of reservists who compete for opportunities to participate in operational deployments and exercises. Large combined arms training activities such as Talisman Sabre and Hamel do not test clinicians in the same way as many other military disciplines because of the need to maintain an out-of-exercise health support role to the exercise dependency. Even the simulated clinical training performed is unlikely to provide learning experiences significantly outside the scope of reservists' civilian practice. In contrast, exposure to the penetrating trauma and advanced surgical pathology seen in our near neighbours represents a unique opportunity for professional development. It is likely that the limited opportunities to participate in regional medical engagement activities would be oversubscribed. Further, block attendance is easier for some clinicians to integrate with their civilian practice and the total workforce model would allow strategic medical engagement to become the primary form of military participation for some reservists.

The ADF also has a permanent cadre of specialist clinicians distributed across the three services employed under the auspices of the Medical Specialist Program (MSP), which includes surgeons, anaesthetists, intensivists and emergency physicians. These doctors are full-time members of the ADF but are placed in civilian institutions when they are not engaged supporting ADF activities. As full-time members, they guarantee the ability to mount an immediate medical response. Therefore, they require clinical exposure sufficient to gain the skills needed to treat battle casualties. Such exposure is difficult to obtain in Australia. Like the health contingents deployed in support of regional engagement activities, the medical specialist program is a fixed cost for the ADF and therefore the return on the ADF's investment varies only with the extent and value of the activities in which members of the MSP participate. Our regional partners can offer us unique, and necessary, learning opportunities, while ADF clinicians both permanent and reserve can offer host nations insight into the practices of a highly developed health system such as Australia's.

Strategic medical engagement will create capable and agile ADF clinicians, units and systems

Australia remains one of the safest countries in the world with limited interpersonal violence and a low volume of penetrating trauma seen in our medical

facilities. It is exceedingly difficult if not impossible for a doctor trained solely in Australia to become highly practiced in the skills needed to manage injuries sustained in armed conflict. One of the authors undertook a trauma fellowship at one of Australia's largest trauma centres for a year and yet saw more penetrating trauma wounds in two weeks of intermittent attendance in a regional hospital in Papua New Guinea.

The practice of medicine and surgery in Australia has increasingly become sub-specialised, with trauma care being mostly managed in large and extremely well-resourced tertiary centres. The trend towards non-operative and minimally invasive management of trauma has resulted in fewer surgeons feeling comfortable with the management of a wide variety of trauma presentations. There is an ever-widening gap between the provision of medical and surgical care in a first world tertiary trauma hospital and that required in a resource-limited military deployment. By allowing ADF clinicians to work in a resource constrained facility, which sees a high volume of penetrating trauma, front-line clinicians can be provided with the best possible exposure to prepare them for the next military conflict.

At present the ADF has no similar opportunity allowing clinicians to regularly provide emergency damage control resuscitation and surgery in austere conditions. Even in remote hospitals, where clinicians might be expected to gain such exposure, the absolute number of patients presenting with major injuries is low, particularly with regard to penetrating trauma. Thus far, capability has been generated through ad hoc opportunities arranged by individual clinicians; however, this approach does not befit a professional military. In order to meet the objective of becoming a capable and agile defence force, the ADF is now required to provide opportunities for exposure of both full-time and reserve clinicians to trauma medicine and surgery. Our regional neighbours have much to offer Australia in this area. Temporary medical registration allowing ADF surgeons to operate alongside their colleagues in the Philippines or Papua New Guinea would vastly increase their ability and confidence in managing injuries uncommon in Australia. Similarly, exposure to the emergency room in these countries would help to acclimatise Australian nurses and medics to the sometimes confronting appearance of severe trauma casualties, helping them to maintain their composure when encountering similar injuries when deployed in support of Australian soldiers.

The ADF must also acknowledge that the Australian medical system possesses only a small pool of suitably qualified, motivated and engaged clinicians prepared to perform forward damage control resuscitation and surgery in austere conditions. Multiple organisations now compete for the services of these clini-

cians. These organisations include both government (AUSMAT), non-government (International Committee of the Red Cross, Medicines Sans Frontiers) and private (Aspen Medical) organisations. Although many factors are considered when an individual chooses which organisation to work for, the ability to provide acute surgical and critical care in remote and poorly resourced regions is normally a key motivation. The development of a suitable medical engagement program with one of our near neighbours would result in a significant boost to both recruitment and retention of medical personnel. A suitable program would allow ADF clinicians to develop both individual and collective skills and corporate knowledge. The combination of technical skill development, the acquisition and maintenance of corporate knowledge and improved recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff would result in the ADF medical community being exceptionally well placed to deal with any military or civilian medical contingency in the future.

Risks and limitations of strategic medical engagement

Even recognising the potential benefits of medical strategic engagement, some stakeholders have raised practical and ethical objections to the employment of ADF clinicians within regional partnership arrangements. The principle arguments are briefly outlined below.

Medical strategic engagement diverts ADF assets from their core tasks

Medical partnerships should not be developed in isolation of the ADF's strategic goals. However, mutual capability generation through enduring partnerships with near neighbours is entirely consistent with Defence's role in the Pacific Step-up.

Medical strategic engagement engenders dependency

Short term medical engagement programs are sometimes accused of being 'medical tourism', of benefit to the developed-world clinician but only providing temporary, geographically circumscribed benefits to the partner nation, while 'de-skilling' local proceduralists and burdening the local system with aftercare for which it is unequipped.

However, sustainable medical engagement can be achieved by following two core principles. Firstly, partnerships should be enduring. This does not mean that the engagement team should always include the same clinical disciplines, nor does it mean that an engagement team should always be present; rather, programs should commit to engagement over a period of years rather than weeks, in a manner tailored to the changing needs of both partners. Secondly, engagement teams should not introduce new clinical services and should use

local equipment. This reduces the risk of creating a 'capability vacuum' if ADF clinicians are redeployed to other tasks.

Medical strategic engagement is unsustainable

The ADF has a relatively small pool of clinicians from which to draw; therefore, lack of suitable personnel is a risk to enduring medical engagement. However, sustained partnerships also represent an excellent opportunity to enhance the joint integration of full-time and part-time clinicians. Also, by exercising the ADF's ability to plan sustained clinical services for the purposes of regional engagement, chain of command at all levels is afforded the opportunity to rehearse the process of identifying, readying and deploying clinicians for other operations; this is corporate knowledge that might readily atrophy in an era of reduced operational tempo.

Medical strategic engagement exposes the ADF to reputational risk

Undeniably, medical misadventure has the potential to damage the reputation of the ADF. This risk can be mitigated in several ways. Firstly, ADF clinicians should not be 'parachuted' into a hospital to provide an independent clinical service; rather they would partner with an existing clinical team. This ensures that the partner nation retains primacy and that practice is in accordance with local mores. Secondly, as mentioned above, partnerships should be enduring, thereby reducing the likelihood that the ADF will be perceived as having 'left its complications behind'. Thirdly, ADF clinicians should be formally integrated into the clinical roster of the partner nation facility and should undergo medical registration and credentialing in the same manner as local practitioners; again, this will help to broadcast ADF clinicians' willingness to accept clinical accountability, rather than to act as 'medical tourists'.

Medical strategic engagement is the responsibility of other organisations

On first consideration, medical strategic engagement might be considered to be the province of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). However, engagement as outlined in this paper has a different focus to that routinely taken by DFATs main medical asset—AUSMAT. AUSMAT were created as self-sufficient, rapid response teams that can be sent in support of local health resources. Between disasters, there is likely to be informal liaison between clinicians and the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC) in Darwin hosts international students on many of its courses; however, the NCCTRC does not possess the ADF's existing network of Defence Cooperation Education Officers and DCP alumni, who are best placed to identify meaningful engagement opportunities in their region. Nor does DFAT have the same corporate experience

of delivering training en masse that is possessed by Defence, one of Australia's largest registered training organisations. Ultimately, AUSMAT and the ADF are not competitors, rather each offers distinct strengths that allow a more holistic governmental approach to the issues of health and security in our region.

Conclusion

Australia has made important contributions to health outcomes in our region, but medical engagement has often been ad hoc and consequently we have failed to capitalise upon many potential benefits, both for Australia and for our regional partners. This paper has focused predominately on the benefits that accrue from ADF clinicians' relationships with host nation clinicians and health facilities. However, the true potential of strategic medical engagement can be unlocked when such clinical placements are part of a broader scheme that capitalises upon the strengths of existing programs such as the DCP, making full use of student exchanges, opportunities for secondment and maintenance of alumni networks.

Strategic medical engagement offers the potential to leverage an existing and sometimes under-utilised capability within the ADF that can also provide unique learning opportunities for both ADF and host nation clinicians, while remaining a cost-effective and enduring font of goodwill. We do not propose to undermine the primacy of AUSMAT or DFAT in providing the clinical component of humanitarian assistance missions. Rather we are advocating enduring partnerships of mutual benefit whose primary purpose is capability building, rather than clinical service provision. We believe that medical strategic engagement is wholly consistent with the Australian Government's Pacific Step-up. We further assert that if the ADF does not grasp the present opportunity to gainfully employ its clinicians in meaningful clinical activities, it is likely that these clinicians will be underprepared for future deployed practice.

Commentary

Commentary

National mobilisation: What are the strategic risks to Australian national security planning?

Donna Boulton

Introduction

In the Australian context, national mobilisation has only occurred during the World Wars when the nation enjoyed the luxury of relatively long mobilisation lead times. Now, for the first time since the Second World War, Australia is challenged by a major power capable of projecting force constituting an existential threat into our near region.[1] Compounding this challenge, political, economic and societal changes have altered the context in which future Australian mobilisation might occur. Even a crisis such as COVID-19 and the establishment of the National Coordination Mechanism in response to what is primarily a public health crisis, is not a national mobilisation committee akin to the Advisory War Council of the Second World War.[2]

Mobilisation is the process of generating military capabilities and marshalling national resources for the conduct of military operations to defend the nation and its interests.[3] For Australia, mobilisation can occur as a graduated response across four stages.[4] In its most fulsome fourth stage, national mobilisation occurs in the face of a significant threat to the nation and requires total Defence mobilisation and government coordination of a national effort to enable profound increases in Defence capability to achieve national objectives.[5]

1 Paul Dibb and Richard Brabbin-Smith, 'Australia's management of strategic risk in the new era', *Strategic Insights* 123, *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, 17 November 2017, https://www.aspi.org.au/report/australias-management-strategic-risk-new-era

2 Michael Shoebridge, 'Australia needs a national mobilisation committee to navigate the coronavirus crisis—now', *The Strategist, Australian Strategic Policy Institute,* 19 March 2020, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-needs-a-national-mobilisation-committee-to-navigate-the-coronavirus-crisis-now/

3 Vice Chief of the Defence Force Group, Defence, *Defence Preparedness Handbook*, 1st ed. (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), 17.

4 Ibid.

5 Defence, Executive Series 2004, *Preparedness and Mobilisation*, ADDP 00.2 (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2004), 7.

In this commentary, I argue that Australia has unconsciously permitted its mobilisation base to atrophy as the world has changed around it. Globalisation has brought great wealth to Australia. However, the issues noted above are generating security concerns not seen in a generation. Australia faces several challenges should it be required to effectively mobilise for a future major conflict or national security crisis. Nonetheless, this commentary will constrain itself to consideration of mobilisation relating to Australia's industry base and critical infrastructure. These two fields are intertwined and require national planning and coordination across multiple layers of government and the private sector. This requires the commitment of State and Territory governments, the private sector and citizens if Australia is ever to succeed in protecting the nation and its interests from an existential threat.

Australia and the world today

Australia's industrial base has changed. Global supply chains are interdependent networks optimised around the flow of goods and services, businesses are smaller, automated and often only produce 'niche' components[6] or are focused on service delivery.[7] The workforce too has changed. Employees are technically skilled and often drawn from a global workforce. Large employers training 'on-the-job' in simple repetitive skills and producing finished goods appear to be a thing of the past.[8] States and Territories have sold off critical infrastructure and essential services, often to multinational firms[9], with little in the way of a long-term plan for replacement or increases to capacity of that nationally significant infrastructure. The upside of this is an Australian economy that has enjoyed 28 years of uninterrupted growth[10] and a high standard of living. The flipside is a loss of sovereign control over this infrastructure and concerns that the nation may not be particularly resilient if this very infrastructure and the essential services it provides are disrupted for any length of time. Steps to nationalise privately owned infrastructure would likely introduce 'sovereign risk' to foreign

6 Cathy Foley and Keith McLean, 'Australian manufacturing is not dying, it's evolving', *The Conversation*, 28 November 2016, https://theconversation.com/the-australian-manufacturing-industry-is-not-dying-its-evolving-csiro-study-69398.

7 Phillip Lowe, 'Address to the Australian Industry Group 12th Annual Economic Forum' (Speech), *Reserve Bank of Australia*, 07 March 2012, https://www.rba.gov.au/speeches/2012/sp-dg-070312.html.

8 Michael Collins, 'Why the USA has a shortage of skilled workers', *Education/Training, Industry Week*, 12 April 2015, https://www.industryweek.com/talent/education-training/article/22007263/why-america-has-a-shortage-of-skilled-workers.

9 The Hon Scott Morrison, 'Critical asset sales to fall within foreign review net' (media release), *The Treasury*, *Australian Government*, 18 March 2016, http://sjm.ministers.treasury.gov.au/media-release/031-2016.

10 Editorial, 'Coalition must explain then grow our 1 per cent economy', *Australian Financial Review*, 23 July 2019, https://www.afr.com/opinion/editorials/coalition-must-explain-then-grow-our-1-per-cent-economy-20190722-p529n4.

investment[11] undermining our hard-won wealth, and for this reason they do not present as a terribly attractive option.

Defence business has also changed profoundly. Much of Australia's Defence capital equipment is purchased from US and European firms with some recent increases in Australian Industry Content.[12] This same capital equipment is sustained by small to medium enterprises providing services such as software development, specialist engineering and precision manufacturing.[13] These firms do not directly work with Defence, but as part of a supply chain leveraging the intellectual property of larger companies to assist with Defence contracts.[14] Together these factors challenge our historical conceptions of mobilisation.

What are the strategic risks to mobilisation?

On his return to Canada from a year as the deputy commander of the United Nations Command in Korea, Lieutenant General Wayne Eyre is reported as stating: 'Our splendid isolation that we have enjoyed for so long in Canada is a thing of the past...We really do need a mindset of being ready to fight tonight'.[15] Like Canada, and perhaps even more so, Australia is a globally connected country dependent on the rules-based global order established at the end of the Second World War for its wealth and influence in global affairs. As the traditional barrier afforded by our geographic isolation is reduced by the growing force projection capabilities of regional strategic competitors, Australia is unable to rest on the assumptions of the last 70 years. To sustain this global order and our place within it, Australia must think through and understand its mobilisation risk if it is to prioritise its approach to mobilisation.

To think effectively about mobilisation, we need to be clear-eyed about the strategic risks Australia faces. One of the challenges in doing so is that discussion often returns to the tactical or operational level. Prominent national security thinkers like Dibb, Jennings and Brabbin-Smith, for instance, have argued that Australia needs to increase its preparedness, making reference to capabilities (maritime, air, cyber), stock holdings (fuel, munitions, spare parts), personnel (training,

11 Morrison, 'Critical asset sales to fall within foreign review net'.

12 Andrew Greene, 'US weapons spend tops billion dollar', *ABC News*, 28 December 2017, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-28/us-weapons-spend-tops-billion-dollar/9287170.

13 Department of Defence, *Defence Industrial Capability Plan* (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 2018), 124–126.

14 Australian Industry and Defence Network (website), 2018, https://www.aidn.org.au/Whats-New/Defence-Information.

15 Murray Brewster, 'Canada must prepare to defend itself in an increasingly 'volatile' world', *CBC News*, 20 June 2019, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/wayne-eyre-canadian-forces-north-korea-china-iran-1.5183978.

trades or numbers) and estate.[16] It is as though Australia has not moved on from the issues, uncertainties and risks described by Alan Hinge in his book *Australian Defence Preparedness*.[17] To mitigate a number of these operational and tactical risks, we need to address the true strategic risks around manufacturing, production, and ownership and management of critical infrastructure. These issues need to be addressed if we are truly to be prepared to 'fight tonight'.

Industrial capability risk

National mobilisation is inherently strategic. It requires a considered policy to Australia's manufacturing base. Despite many factory closures, Australia still possesses a manufacturing base.[18] However, Australian manufacturing has diversified.[19] What remains is no longer founded on repetitive industrialised mass production. Manufacturing is a sector characterised by a highly skilled workforce designing and producing highly developed 'value added' products connected to finely tuned global supply chains.[20] These are often a small part of a broader international manufacturing effort.[21] From a Defence Industry perspective there are many examples of this—the small Australian companies that have won significant contracts manufacturing components associated with the US F35 program[22] and CEA Australia's manufacture of high-end radar components[23] for the US Navy are just two. However, this shift has resulted in the loss of the capacity to mass produce the capital equipment required to prepare for and sustain a major conflict. Australia's reinvigorated ship building industry is often cited as a

16 Peter Jennings, 'Preparing for the war of 2020', *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, 18 November 2017, https://www.aspi.org.au/opinion/preparing-war-2020.

17 Alan Hinge, *Australian Defence Preparedness*, 1st ed. (Canberra, Australian Defence Studies Centre, 2000), x, xvii, xviii.

18 Jim Stanford and Tom Swan, 'Manufacturing: a moment of opportunity', Briefing paper for the National Manufacturing Summit 2017, Centre for Future Work (Canberra: The Australia Institute, June 2017), 4, 17, http://www.tai.org.au/sites/defualt/files/Stanford%20Swann%202017%20Manufacturing%20A%20Moment%20of%20Opportunity.pdf.

19 Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), '*Advanced Manufacturing Road Map*', November 2016, CSIRO, https://www.csiro.au/en/Do-business/Futures/Reports/Advanced-manufacturing-roadmap.

20 Cathy Foley and Keith McLean, 'Australian manufacturing is not dying, it's evolving', *The Conversation*, 28 November 2016, https://theconversation.com/the-australian-manufacturing-industry-is-not-dying-its-evolving-csiro-study-69398.

21 Ibid.

22 Robert Nutbrown, 'Australia secures F35 component repair work', *Australian Defence Business Review* (ADBR), 08 November 2016, https://adbr.com.au/australia-secures-f-35-component-repair-work/; 'Canberra company to deliver JSF tech', *Defence Connect*, 18 Sept. 2017, https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/strike-air-combat/1259-canberra-company-to-deliver-jsf-tech; The Hon Christopher Pyne, 'Australian company leading from the tail in global F-35 Program' (media release), Department of Defence Ministers, Australian Government, 24 January 2018, https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/christopher-pyne/media-releases/australian-company-leading-tail-global-f-35-program.

23 CEA Technologies, DSTG Research Agreement CEA technologies, 28 February 2018, https://cea.com.au/News+Media/Attachments/2019-0002.pdf.

concrete step to regain this capacity, at least as it relates to maritime power.[24] Arguably, it is too little too late to support either industrial mass production or a sustainable Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (PSTS) sector. This sector prior to the collapse of the Australian Car Industry employed more than one million people, or around 8.5% of the total workforce.[25]

Effort by the Australian Government in recent years to establish a sovereign Australian Defence Industry and increase Australian Industry Content (AIC), to extend past components or subcontract arrangements[26] do not constitute a mobilisation silver bullet. Mobilisation requires planning to afford and sustain the military capabilities we need to defeat or at the very least deter existential threats. It also needs to be acknowledged that industry is currently 'designed for peacetime efficiency, not mass wartime production, given the expense of maintaining the unused capacity for mobilisation is expensive'.[27] In recent years, Australia has sought to obtain more 'bang for our buck'. The result has been a difficult balancing act around the high costs of sustaining an Australian Defence Industry[28] that is able to manufacture in its own right, increasing access to established lower cost capability through the United States Foreign Military Sales (US FMS)[29] program and access to foreign intellectual property to support capability sustainment. Finding this balance is not easy.

Australian Defence Industry sees the Australian Government drive to gain a 'better bang for the buck' via FMS as resulting in the marginalisation of the industry. Australia's increasing appetite to acquire and sustain capability through the US FMS program supports Industry's argument. The lack of sustainment work being completed in Australia does little to build Australian Defence Industry capability or capacity[30] and as stated by a participant at a public meeting in Adelaide in 2015, 'Sustainment should be Australian at all costs, whereas capability

24 Giselle Rampersad, 'Building our own warships is Australia's path to the next industrial revolution', *The Conversation*, 28 November 2018, https://theconversation.com/building-our-own-warships-is-australias-path-to-the-next-industrial-revolution-105984.

25 David Mariuz, 'Collapse of Australian car manufacturing industry', Swinburne of Technology, 21 October 2016, http://www.swinburne.edu.au/news/latest-news/2016/10/collapse-of-australian-car-manufacturing-industry-.php.

26 Department of Defence, *Defence Industrial Capability Plan* (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 2018).

27 Mark Cancian, 'Long Wars and Industrial Mobilisation; It won't be World War II again', *War on the Rocks*, 08 August 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/long-wars-and-industrial-mobilization-it-wont-be-world-war-ii-again

28 Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), *Australian Naval Construction Programs – Mobilisation* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2018), 47.

29 Gavin Dunck, 'Australian Defence Industry—going, going, where?', *Asia Pacific Defence Report* 42, 7 (September 2016): 42–44.

30 Ibid.

acquisition should be based on value for money'.[31] LAND 907 and 8160[32] may be opportunities for Australia. The US has identified that should their Army be fully mobilised they would not be able to sustain their own Armoured Brigades, there would be a need to accept an inferior capability and that it could not fulfil its FMS tank orders (to allies such as Australia).[33] LAND 8160 offers Defence an opportunity to upgrade and sustain the tank fleet in Australia, rather than shipping them back to the US[34], thus developing our capability and increasing our capacity. Australia may even potentially assist the US to surge tank production, should the US agree to a further request by Australia to access the relevant intellectual property[35] given Defence has the required facilities. More recently, Australian industry has talked up the 2018 Defence Industry Capability Plan with business confidence growing, adding to the competitive national industrial base required to support the ADF[36] by increasing industrial self-reliance in key areas of defence procurement and sustainment.

Both Defence and industry need to do more. Firstly, Defence may need to accept that at a time of a major conflict, the 'gold plated' solution will be a thing of the past. Australian industry must continue to address the strategic military need, moving past production of components and competition for a greater 'cut' of capability or platforms. Government and industry must be genuine partners in co-developing intellectual property, continuously pushing for 'all sustainment' of capital equipment to be done in Australia and normalising this in procurement processes. The trade-off: Defence may need to accept that one-off procurement of 'exquisite' platforms with lives of 30 years or more will not justify large-scale local industry investment in Defence and dual use critical infrastructure. The answer may be continuous rolling procurement of select capital equipment fleets to support a sustainable Defence Industry Base.

31 Peter Jennings, A Davies, Stephen Frühling, James Goldrick, Mike Kalms and Rory Metcalf, *Guarding against uncertainty: Australian Attitudes to Defence* (Canberra: Department of Defence, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015), 62.

32 LAND 907 — Main Battle Tank upgrade and LAND 8160 — Under Armour Breaching and Bridge

33 Cancian, 'Long Wars and Industrial Mobilisation; It won't be World War II again'

34 Mark Abernethy, 'Army Plans for more and better tanks', *Australian Financial Review*, 07 March 2017, https://www.afr.com/news/special-reports/defence-and-national-security/armys-plans-for-more-and-better-tanks-20170303-guqamb

35 Dunck, 'Australian Defence Industry—going, going, where?'.

36 Graham Turner, 'Another milestone for the Defence industry: Release of the Defence Industrial Capability Plan', Australian Industry Group, 24 April 2018, https://www.aigroup.com.au/policy-and-research/mediacentre/releases/Defence-Industrial-Capability-Plan-24April.

Critical Infrastructure and essential services risk

The Australian, State and Territory governments define critical infrastructure as:

> those physical facilities, supply chains, information technologies and communication networks which, if destroyed, degraded or rendered unavailable for an extended period, would significantly impact on the social or economic wellbeing of the nation or affect Australia's ability to conduct national defence and ensure national security.[37]

The National Infrastructure Plan does not offer a coordinated national approach to critical infrastructure planning to support mobilisation. The Plan's subordinate priority list recommends 121 proposals for funding driven by State and Territory governments, business and the community priorities.[38] Twelve are titled 'national projects'.[39] National critical infrastructure is not prioritised, as the Plan's emphasis is to 'support(s) economic and productivity growth', and improve 'quality of life for all Australians, by providing a credible pipeline of future investments'—even though it suggests it 'sets out the infrastructure challenges and opportunities Australia faces over the next 15 years'.[40] Consequently, critical infrastructure is not viewed through the prism of a 'national effect' or supporting Defence mobilisation. Tellingly, Government's much touted Trusted Information Sharing Network (TISN), built with the aim of ensuring the continued operation of critical infrastructure, does not include Department of Home Affairs or Defence representation.[41] Neither are part of the Industry Consultation on National Security (ICONS). Perversely this is, 'the primary business-government engagement mechanism at the CEO level on national security matters'.[42] These disconnects highlight the negligence of our national approach to integrating critical infrastructure and essential services into national security and mobilisation planning.

Disruption of essential services results in more than economic detriment. From a national mobilisation perspective, the provision of essential services is an interconnected system of systems and relies upon the global supply chain for liquid fuels, civil engineering supplies and material, specialist parts and equipment for Australia's infrastructure to continue to operate and not suffer deg-

37 Australian Government, *Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2015), 1.

38 Infrastructure Australia, *Priority List 2019* (Canberra: Infrastructure Australia, 2019), 6.

39 Ibid, 11, 12 and 14.

40 Ibid 6 and 2.

41 Australian Government, *Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy*, 2 and 3.

42 Ibid, 3.

radation.[43] COVID-19 has demonstrated that while finely tuned supply chains typically differentiate the best from the rest, they can also be one of the biggest sources of vulnerability. Nonetheless, Australian industry is inherently resilient and often responds innovatively when challenged.[44] Australians have a history of adaptability: rationing during the Second World War resulted in all types of innovative approaches to resource shortages. The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that when required Australian industry is capable of organising for purpose in support of the maintenance of essential health services. Engineering and medical supplies firms have shifted focus to rapidly prototype and produce ventilators and medical equipment. This latter example has seen competitor firms collaborate in a manner that could be expected in a broader national mobilisation scenario. In response, Government has had to adapt laws to facilitate 'COVID mobilisation', specifically when 'on 25 March 2020, the ACCC granted an authorisation allowing members and other groups of the Medical Technology Association of Australia, such as suppliers or distributors of medical equipment, to share information between each other, coordinate orders and supply requests, prioritise requests, and jointly tender to supply COVID-19 medical equipment'—behaviour that ordinarily might be regarded as 'cartel conduct' under the *Competition and Consumer ACT 2010* (Cth).[45] However, given the continuum of interrelated activities of the four phases of mobilisation how resilient will contemporary Australians be or become and for how long if critical infrastructure fails or is disrupted?

Australia's privatisation of public assets brings economic benefit. It introduces national security risk too. Since the 1990s, Governments, at all levels, have sold critical infrastructure as part of economic reforms to recover from '*the recession we (Australia) had to have*'.[46] Government has focused on leveraging market economics to make essential service delivery more efficient and affordable. In doing so it has forfeited control of them.

43 Engineers Australia, *Industry Responses in a Collapse of Global Governance* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2019), 4.

44 Department of Home Affairs, *Profiling Australia's Vulnerability: the interconnected causes and cascading effects of systematic disaster relief* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2018), 11–16; David Parsons, *National Organisation Resilience Framework Workshop: the outcomes* (Victoria: National Resilience Network, 2007), 11.

45 Australian Competition & Consumer Commission, 'Cooperation to Aid Supply of COVID-19 Medical Equipment' (media release), 25 March 2020, https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/cooperation-to-aid-supply-of-covid-19-medical-equipment.

46 Paul Keating, National Museum of Australia (NMA), Prime Ministers of Australia—Paul Keating, https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/features/prime-ministers/paul-keating.

Government has in places attempted to mitigate this risk by negotiating provisions to use privately owned infrastructure and services in moments of crisis.[47] It does not follow that national strategic imperatives are accounted for in the private sectors long-term planning and investment. Owners and operators of critical infrastructure are required to maintain the infrastructure; however, there is little evidence that Governments require improvements or increases to capacity.[48] The recent Telstra infrastructure business is an example.[49] The relationship between Governments and the owners or operators of critical infrastructure extends beyond a non-regulatory partnership.[50] Infrastructure owners and operators have a role in national preparedness[51], with the key challenge being how to integrate this responsibility into a national strategy.[52]

The management and prioritisation of critical infrastructure, at a time of mobilisation requires balancing the needs of all sectors and the community, against national security imperatives. Disrupting an interconnected system of systems creates vulnerability in times of rapid change that cascade quickly and amplify across all the systems.[53] Poor planning could see Australia suffer upheaval within a week, bring social unease and hoarding.[54] Decisions and priorities will need to be made to ensure that the interconnected systems flow aligns to the greatest need, with consideration to consolidation prior to distribution to or determining a need for redundancy to respond to alternate crisis. Unity of effort, if not central management will be essential to ensure priority of access and flow of material and equipment[55], with specialist medical supplies and liquid fuel[56] being two critical examples.

47 *Defence Act 1903*, 132; *Airports Act 1996*, 64.

48 Australian Government, *Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy*.

49 Chris Pash, 'Why Telstra is spinning off a new $11 billion infrastructure business', *Business Insider Australia*, 20 June 2018, https://www.businessinsider.com.au/telstra-new-infrastructure-business-2018-6.

50 Ibid, 1.

51 Elvia Kaneberg, Susanne Hertz and Leif-Magnus Jensen, 'Emergency preparedness planning in developed countries: the Swedish case', *Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management* 6, no. 2, 145–172, 154.

52 Christian Fjader, 'The nation state, national security and resilience in the age of globalization', *Resilience* Volume 2, pp. 114–129, 124.

53 J O'Connell, D Grigg, N Meharg, J Williams, R Dunlop, M Edwards, *Supporting the Australian Vulnerability Profile: Summary of typical system patterns, Appendix to Technical Report* (Canberra: CSIRO, 2018), 9.

54 Engineers Australia, *Industry Responses*, 6.

55 M Morales, and D Sandlin, 'Managing airborne relief during international disasters', *Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management* 5, no. 1, pp. 12–34.

56 Engineers Australia, *Industry Responses*, 9.

Conclusion

There is enough evidence to support the proposition that Australia is not likely to get a long lead time for any next 'Great War'. Australia has a history of adaptability and, as the current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, Australian industry is capable of organising for a purpose when required. The Australian public expects the Government to defend the nation even if they do not fully understand what this means. This paper has highlighted the need for a national approach to support manufacturing and managing critical infrastructure and essential services in support of national mobilisation. Without it we risk possessing a Defence Force built on exquisite capabilities which we can neither deploy, nor sustain nor reconstitute. To be clear: this would be a historic failure. Mobilisation is a strategic enterprise. Australia needs a strategic approach to fit a wide spectrum of circumstances by making small yet smart investments now. It is time to acknowledge the need to truly integrate industry and business in any national security or resilience plan—'*to fight tonight*'.[57]

57 Brewster, 'Canada must prepare to defend itself in an increasingly 'volatile' world'.

Commentary

National security, information and ideas: Time to think about ideational power

Michael Hatherell, Katherine Mansted and Jade Guan

Introduction

In the fictional world of Christopher Nolan's epic 2010 film, *Inception*, technology exists that allows one human to enter the dreams of another. Specialists in entering dreams are hired to conduct various forms of espionage, using the dream world to access the secret information of their targets. Yet the team assembled in the film is asked to do something that some of them believe to be impossible—to place an idea within the mind of a target. This notion of 'inception' not only gives the film its title but also a key source of dramatic tension. The main character, Cobb and his team must work out how to introduce a compelling idea without the target being conscious of the intrusion. To achieve the mission, the team must make the target believe that the idea came to them organically. The team's expert in forgery, Eames, captures the difficulty of doing so: 'You need the simplest version of the idea in order for it to grow naturally in your subject's mind. It's a very subtle art'.

Inception provides a powerful metaphor for thinking about the difference between information and ideas in a fast-changing strategic environment. While access to and control over information has been a priority for militaries and defence departments for some time[1], there is a need to better understand the cognitive dimension of conflict and competition. For this reason, contemporary analysis of concepts like political warfare, information warfare and strategic narrative has begun to focus more on the role of cognition, ideas and narrative. Australia's head of information warfare division, Major General Marcus Thompson, divides

1 John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, eds., *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1997), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR880.html.

his concept of information warfare into technical and cognitive elements.[2] And, studies of changing technology, like Sanger's *Perfect Weapon* and Singer and Brooking's *LikeWar*, have heightened attention on ways in which digital systems might be weaponised to impact not only flows of information but also the beliefs that we hold.[3]

While specialists have a good sense of the challenges faced in the ideational realm, the role of ideational power is yet to feature in broader discussions about how to defend Australia and advance its security interests. In War College curriculums and strategic discussions, analysis of the 'I' component of the 'DIME' framework (shorthand for the diplomatic, informational, military and economic aspects of national power) frequently focuses on protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information—often in reference to a specific operational theatre or political event such as an election. Much less attention is paid to the nature of the ideational realm, how ideas form and influence beliefs and behaviours through time, and what it means to protect or influence ideas.

We argue in this commentary that defence and national security professionals must combine concern for the role of information with an appreciation of the impact of ideas. Humans do not have a simple relationship with information. Instead, the contemporary scientific literature on human cognition demonstrates that we extensively filter information through our own beliefs. The dream-infiltrating specialists of *Inception* understand that their objective cannot be achieved just by sharing deceptive information. Instead, they need to construct a powerful idea that will be processed by the emotions of their target and change the target's behaviour. Cobb's team are not practicing 'informational power' in the way that we typically understand it: they are employing something that could be better thought of as the power to influence behaviour through ideas, or ideational power. After exploring this concept, we sketch some strategic and ethical questions that can inform our study of the ideational realm.

Information and ideas

Concepts like political warfare, societal warfare and information warfare have increasingly focused on the methods employed by strategic actors to influence

2 Marcus Thompson, 'Information Warfare—A New Age?' (speech transcript) *iWar Five Eyes Principals Forum* (Joint Capabilities Group, Department of Defence, Canberra, 31 October, 2018), https://www.defence.gov.au/JCG/docs/Head_Information_Warfare-iWar_Five_Eyes_Principals_Forum_Speech-Canberra.pdf.

3 David E. Sanger, *The Perfect Weapon: War, Sabotage, and Fear in the Cyber Age* (New York: Broadway Books, 2018); Peter W. Singer and Emerson T. Brooking, *LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), 154.

the political dynamics of other nations.[4] But while studies of influence often include a recognition of the role of narrative or cognition, they rarely unpack how information is processed by societies. This step is important, as the collection of human minds in a society constitute an ideational realm much more than an informational one. This point has been demonstrated across a substantial field of psychological research. In the *Political Brain*, Westen notes that 'the … capacity for rational judgement evolved to augment, not replace, evolutionarily older motivational systems… [T]he neural circuits activated during complex human decision-making do not function independently of these more primitive systems'.[5] In *The Believing Brain*, Shermer draws on a review of empirical research to argue that the brain is a 'belief engine' that searches for patterns, gives those patterns meaning and then, lastly, seeks to rationalise this meaning.[6] The work of Kahneman and Tversky has perhaps been the most influential in pointing to the impact of bias and beliefs in shaping how humans perceive and interpret the information that reaches us.[7] Other recent works have demonstrated the extent to which human decision-making is based on a much richer array of inputs—such as values, emotions, cultural beliefs and social identity—than just a point-in-time assessment of information.[8]

Information can be thought of as observable facts about the world around us. These facts tell us about the nature of a thing (its size, state, cost, location etc.) and about occurrences (a movement, an action, a speech act). Information may tell us how many people were at a rally, what the Prime Minister said on Tuesday, or the level of spending a nation commits to defence. Information thought of in this way has significant value, and human history exhibits a trend of empires and states seeking to develop a more commanding grasp of available information.[9] Information can be falsified and it can be verified, and the ongoing tug of war between these two efforts will increasingly need to deal with new techniques like

4 Linda Robinson et al., *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1772.html; Michael J. Mazarr et al, *The Emerging Risk of Virtual Societal Warfare: Social Manipulation in a Changing Information Environment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2714.html.

5 Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007).

6 Michael Shermer, *The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies—How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truths* (New York: Times Books, 2011).

7 Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Farrar: Straus and Giroux, 2013)

8 Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach, *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2017); Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, The Enigma of Reason (Harvard: Harvard Univ Press, 2019); Hugo Mercier, Not Born Yesterday: *The Science of Who We Trust and What We Believe* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020).

9 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

the use of deep fake technology.[10] For militaries, the notion of achieving a winning edge through collecting more and better information, and quickly integrating it into decision-cycles, has animated concepts like America's 'revolution of military affairs'[11] and the PLA's drive for 'informatised warfare'.[12] The information environment is important, and our ability to assure its integrity and functionality should remain an ongoing emphasis in national security policy and practice.

Yet we cannot stop there. While information matters to military operations, it is also crucial to understand the potential—and limits—of information to shape the ideas present in societies. This is an important matter because by 'shaping or changing the beliefs and perceptions of opinion leaders or specific political or social groups, adversaries can bend Australia to their will—and achieve their foreign policy goals without firing a shot'.[13] China's approach to national strategy places a strong emphasis on discourse and ideas, with a focus on influencing public opinion and the beliefs of decision-makers at home and abroad.[14] There is also an emerging recognition that 21st century competition and conflict is 'society-centric'[15] —ordinary citizens, businesses and community organisations are targets and agents in security matters—making the full gamut of a nation's ideational realm an important subject of analysis for strategists.

It is essential that we develop a better understanding of how ideas shape the way in which humans behave, including the way in which they process the information around them. Ideas can be defined as the beliefs we possess about our world, be they causal beliefs (x causes y), principled beliefs (x is good, y is immoral) or worldviews (foundational visions about how the world is structured and what is possible for the future).[16] Information and ideas come from very different places: information emerges from the observation of our environment,

10 Hannah Smith and Katherine Mansted, *Weaponised Deep Fakes Policy Brief*, Report No. 28/2020, International Cyber Policy Centre (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020), https://www.aspi.org.au/report/weaponised-deep-fakes.

11 Norman Davis, 'An Information-Based Revolution in Military Affairs', *Strategic Review* 24, No. 1 (Winter 1996): 43–53.

12 Elsa Kania and John Costello, China's Quest for Informatization Drives PLA Reforms, *The Diplomat*, 4 March 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/chinas-quest-for-informatization-drives-pla-reforms/.

13 Katherine Mansted, 'The Public Square: The Next Theatre of Conflict in the Digital Age', *The Strategist, Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, 6 August 2018, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-public-square-the-next-theatre-of-conflict-in-the-digital-age/.

14 Nadege Rolland, 'China's Vision for a New World Order', *NBR Special Report* 83, (The National Bureau of Asian Studies, January 2020); Peter Mattis, 'China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspective, *War on the Rocks*, 30 January 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/.

15 Ariel E. Levite & Jonathan (Yoni) Shimshoni, 'The Strategic Challenge of Society-centric Warfare', *Survival* 60, no. 6 (November 2018); Maryanne Kelton, Michael Sullivan, Emily Bienvenue, Zac Rogers, 'Australia, the Utility of Force and the Society-centric Battlespace', *International Affairs* 95, no. 4 (July 2019).

16 Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993)

while ideas originate within our minds or the minds of others. Both underpin human decision-making. As De Bono argues:

> there are people who believe that if you get enough information then the information will do your thinking for you…Of course, if information really could make the decisions then we should not need people, because information in a computer would flow along to give the decision output. This may happen in the future. For the moment, the human being is a sort of junction who adds to the information, ideas, values and politics and then passes on to a decision.[17]

The below examples highlight the difference between a piece of information and an idea. While the information and idea could be related in each set, the idea presented here is not the only one that could be arrived at upon receiving the information, which is filtered through our judgement, biases, values and interests. The relationship between the information and idea is also not a linear one—the information may be collected or deemed significant in the first place because of 'selection bias' shaped by pre-existing ideas.

Information	Idea
North Korea tested a nuclear weapon	North Korea is an irresponsible international actor
China's economy has demonstrated a sustained period of growth	China's governance model is superior to liberal democracy
President Trump made critical comments about allies	Australia should become a more independent power and rely less on the US alliance
The Minister was involved in a scandal	The Minister is not fit for office and should resign

A greater focus on ideas in strategic affairs allows students of national security and defence to benefit from literature on the power of narrative, storytelling and identity. In his influential books on the history and future of humanity, Harari has focused consistently on the notion that *homo sapiens* is a 'storytelling animal, that thinks in stories rather than in numbers or graphs'.[18] Strategic narrative scholars and practitioners from the fields of communications, political science and business management have significantly increased our understanding of the

17 Edward De Bono, *Parallel Thinking* (Penguin Book, 1995), 137.

18 Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (Jonathan Cape, 2018), 269.

way in which narrative can serve strategic ends.[19] The study of culture and identity has provided important answers for why some political movements succeed and others fail, and Fukuyama's work on identity has noted the way in which dignity and resentment shape contemporary political dynamics.[20] By engaging directly with the role of ideas, we are in a better position to learn from this valuable literature.[21]

Ideational power

Grasping the role of ideas in strategic affairs means considering the ability to shape ideas as a form of power in itself. Ideas have power because they fundamentally shape the behaviour of humans and affect how we process information. Through history, ideas have bound communities together and allowed them to achieve significant endeavours together.[22] Tilly argues that stories 'do essential work in social life, cementing people's commitments to common projects, helping people make sense of what is going on, channelling collective decisions and judgements, spurring people to action they would otherwise be reluctant to pursue'.[23] Some of the more important shifts in history have been because of the power of ideas rather than of information. John Stuart Mill presented a theoretical 'defence' of liberty rather than 'evidence' for liberty. French revolutionaries were animated by the compelling ideas of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*. We make decisions, we sacrifice, we put ourselves at risk, we shift allegiance and even die for ideas.

Carstensen and Schmidt have provided a foundation for understanding the concept of ideational power and applied it to domestic policymaking.[24] The authors define ideational power 'as the capacity of actors (whether individual or collective) to influence other actors' normative and cognitive beliefs through the use of ideational elements'. They go on to note that ideational power can work 'directly through persuasion or imposition or indirectly by influencing the ideational context that defines the range of possibilities of others'. Through basing their definition on 'ideational elements', Carstensen and Schmidt separate this

19 Lawrence Freedman, 'Networks, Culture and Narratives', *The Adelphi Papers* 45, no. 379 (2006); Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon and Ben O'Loughlin, 'Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power' *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 1 (March 2014).

20 Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

21 Kathleen J. Micinnis, Strategists have Forgotten the Power of Stories, *Foreign Policy*, 19 May 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/19/national-security-policymaking-mythos-logos-strategy/

22 Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens*: *A Brief History of Humankind* (Harper, 2015).

23 Charles Tilly, *Stories, identities, and political change* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) 27.

24 Martin B. Carstensen & Vivien A. Schmidt, Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism, *Journal of European Public Policy* 23, no. 3 (2016): 318–337.

concept from other forms of power that shape normative and cognitive beliefs. The application of military power in war, for instance, aims ultimately to persuade or compel the population and decision-makers of the adversary to accept a desired political end-state—it is a 'diplomacy of violence'.[25] Ideational power as a way to achieve a change in beliefs is based on the use of non-material (ideational) means.[26]

For strategists in the 21st century, the concept of ideational power is important because it asks quite directly how a strategic actor can use ideas to change the beliefs (and thus the behaviour) of human beings. As the need to better grasp the role of ideas and narratives has become clearer, the concept of informational power has been stretched to accommodate this challenge.[27] The Royal College of Defence Studies Handbook, for instance, groups issues of strategic narrative, media and public opinion under its section on informational power.[28] Within broader frameworks of informational power, concepts such as psychological operations and cognitive warfare demonstrate a deep interest in the human mind.[29] However, the problem with subsuming the role of ideas within the concept of informational power is that we cannot treat ideas in the way that we treat information. Partly, this is because of the skills needed to understand and wield ideational power. While information flows and technical systems are the main tools of informational power, identity, values, emotion, beliefs, culture, shared history and perceived interests are the tools of ideational power. This reflection dovetails with arguments about the need for students of defence to engage with the arts and humanities with as much of a sense of purpose and mission as 'STEM' subjects.[30] Secondly, current conceptions of informational power tend to assume that cognition processes follow after the collection and reception of information, but ideas are not simply a dependent variable of information. It may be that the realms of ideas and information are sufficiently different to warrant a 'conscious uncoupling' in the way we think about them. To this end, we explore factors

25 Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

26 In this way, the concept of ideational power resembles Joseph Nye's concept of soft power. Yet while soft power focuses on a very specific set of ideas related to the attractiveness of a state and its resulting persuasive potential, ideational power can employ a much broader range of ideas.

27 Donald Bishop, 'DIME, not DiME: Time to Align the Instruments of U.S. Informational Power', *Strategy Bridge*, 20 June 2018, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/6/20/dime-not-dime-time-to-align-the-instruments-of-us-informational-power.

28 Royal College of Defence Studies, *Getting Strategy Right Enough* (Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 4 September 2017), https://www.da.mod.uk/Portals/0/Documents/RCDS/20170904-RCDS_Getting_Strategy_Right_Enough_Final.pdf?ver=2017-09-08-090748-807

29 Daniel Ventre, *Information Warfare* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2016); Emily Bienvenue, Zac Rogers and Sian Troath, 'Cognitive Warfare', *The Cove*, 19 September 2018, https://cove.army.gov.au/article/cognitive-warfare.

30 Kathleen J. Micinnis, 'Strategists have Forgotten the Power of Stories', *Foreign Policy*, 19 May 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/19/national-security-policymaking-mythos-logos-strategy/

impacting the successful use of ideational tools in the next section alongside some related ethical questions.

The strategic and ethical application of ideational power

In *Inception*, Cobb captures the power of ideas: 'An idea is like a virus, resilient, highly contagious. The smallest seed of an idea can grow. It can grow to define or destroy you'. The potency of ideas and the harm that they can cause should necessitate a careful analysis of the application of ideational power by students of national security and defence. Used effectively, governments and their agencies can employ ideational power to advance security interests and improve the conditions of the society they serve. On the other hand, it is important to understand the impact of the ideational power employed by other actors, be they state or non-state. In this section, we sketch three factors that are valuable for thinking about the effectiveness of ideational power, including *context*, *resonance* and *virality*. The harmful potential of ideas should also remind us that ethics also matter. We propose three lenses for considering the ethical application of ideational power: *intent*, *authenticity* and *consequences*.

Firstly, ***context*** matters because power is best considered in a relational sense, meaning that for a 'sender' to have power they must have the ability to change behaviour in a specific relationship with a recipient, rather than simply possessing power resources.[31] This is especially important when it comes to ideational power, given the cross-cutting role of history, identity, culture, values and interests in shaping how successful a sender will be. The temporal context also matters. Ideas can endure over longer periods of time, longer than most pieces of information are relevant for. And as Carr has pointed out, stories often commit a 'temporal sleight of hand' by presenting a simplified narrative, bringing to our mind a sense of order in complex circumstances.[32] This is most needed for communities experiencing events that are 'unprecedented,' in the sense that they are difficult to compare to recent lived experiences. As Bottici argues: 'complex and vast political phenomena that transcend the individual's horizon of experience need to be imagined even more in order to be experienced'.[33] Moments that are collectively perceived as periods of crisis or transition, such as the current global COVID-19 pandemic, may provide particularly fertile opportunities

31 Robert A. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', Behavioral Science 2, No. 3 (July 1957); Darren J. Lim & Victor A. Ferguson, 'Power in Australian foreign policy', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72, No. 4 (2018): 306-313.

32 Andrew Carr, 'It's About Time: Strategy and Temporal Phenomena', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 17, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2018.1529569,

33 Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

for ideational power to be employed. As Ikenberry argues, in the aftermath of large-scale crises,

> structures of power and interests matter—just as they always do. But at these turning points, uncertainties about power structures and unhappiness with past or current definitions of interests provide openings for rethinking.[34]

Just as Cobb's team require a deep understanding of their target, actors in the real world seeking to change beliefs and behaviour through ideas must know the recipient. We can see the extent to which an understanding of the recipient mattered in Russia's use of ideational power during the 2016 US presidential election, where the Russian campaign effectively engaged with deep rooted identity-based cleavages within American society. But there are other examples too. Australia's use of narrative accompanying its actions in the South Pacific, for instance, must consider factors like the role of family and religion. Nunn has noted, for instance, that:

> …one reason for the failure of external interventions for climate change adaptation in Pacific Island communities is the wholly secular nature of their messages. Among spiritually engaged communities, these secular messages can be met with indifference or even hostility if they clash with the community's spiritual agenda.[35]

To be successful in the ideational domain, senders must also understand themselves and how they are perceived. The capacity and resources of the sender matter, as they do in the use of other forms of power.[36] But the extent to which the sender is perceived as being authentic and consistent in their use of ideas is likely to shape the effectiveness of their ideas. This is why, for instance, Russia's Internet Research Agency did not tweet in its own name in election-influence campaigns in 2016 and instead used fake accounts to mimic real Americans. It is also why political advertisements seek to use spokespeople that resemble the communities that are the target of the advertisement. Here we can learn from a range of international and domestic actors—from political leaders to Instagram influencers—regarding the power of perceived authenticity.[37]

34 G. John Ikenberry, 'Creating Yesterday's New World Order: Keynesian "New Thinking" and the Ango-American Postwar Settlement' in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert Owen Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 59.

35 Patrick D Nunn, 'Sidelining God: Why Secular Climate Projects in the Pacific Islands are Failing', *The Conversation*, 17 May 2017, https://theconversation.com/sidelining-god-why-secular-climate-projects-in-the-pacific-islands-are-failing-77623.

36 Social media has to some extent lowered the cost of sharing ideas, opening up the ideational realm to more actors.

37 Singer and Brooking, *LikeWar*,154.

Secondly, the ***resonance*** of the idea itself is an essential factor in its success. In order to influence beliefs, an idea needs to connect with the interests, culture, history, emotions and values of the target audience.[38] This is more likely to be the case where the sender adopts an idea that is already influential within the recipient community (as Russia did in 2016), or connects their idea directly to interests and cultural realities already present (as Australian foreign policy seeks to do in the South Pacific). It is useful here to consider the example of Martin Luther, who so fundamentally shifted the history of Europe and the Christian faith. Luther was aided by technology (the printing press) and was a prolific writer and orator. But, he would not have been successful if his ideas did not connect directly with an audience in Europe that had a troubled relationship with its rulers and particularly with the indulgences of the dominant Catholic Church.[39]

Finally, the effective use of ideational power depends in part on the ***virality*** of the idea. Where ideas connect with a community, they are likely to be shared and championed by individuals and networks. The ideas underpinning the major monotheistic religions, for instance, are so powerful today not only because of the prophets who apparently shared them but because subsequent generations championed and spread those ideas. Successful political or propaganda campaigns in history are effective not because they are a one-way broadcast from state to society but because they spread through networks. In the digital era, there is further potential for these patterns.[40] Wanless and Berk's notion of 'participatory propaganda' helps to understand how virality can amplify messages beyond the agency of the author of the idea, drawing on the authenticity of other actors in the community to further reinforce the message.[41]

We might also consider how ideas can become embedded within our worldview and institutions to such an extent that they come to define what we consider to be right and wrong, desirable or undesirable. Here, Greer has recently observed how these deeply institutionalised beliefs are an important focus for the Chinese government:

> They are not fond of the military machines United States Pacific Command has arrayed against them, but what spooks them more

38 Olivier Schmitt, 'When are Strategic Narratives Effective? The Shaping of Political Discourse through the Interaction between Political Myths and Strategic Narratives', *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, 4 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2018.1448925

39 Joan Acocella, 'How Martin Luther Changed the World', *The New Yorker*, 23 October 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/30/how-martin-luther-changed-the-world

40 Jarred Prior, 'Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare', *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 11, 4 (2017): 50–85, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26271634

41 Alicia Wanless and Michael Berk,'The Audience is the Amplifier: Participatory Propaganda', in *The SAGE Handbook of Propaganda*, ed. Paul Baines, Nicholas O'Shaughnessy and Nancy Snow (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2020), 85–104.

> than American weapons and soldiers are ideas—hostile ideas they believe America has embedded in the discourse and institutions of the existing global order.[42]

In a recent report, Rolland refers to calls by a senior official in China's State Council for Chinese intellectuals to 'build a persuasive, causal, and internally consistent discourse system that can make others understand why China is on the right path' and to shape discussions so as to 'define the criteria for right and wrong, true and false, good and evil, beautiful and ugly'.[43]

Embedding ideas is the ultimate potential of ideational power. Here, it is important to recall Carse's observation that 'a finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing the play'.[44] Given that national or grand strategy is about continuing to play in a world that is conducive to our interests, ideas that become embedded within the system are the most influential. To this end, we should pay close attention to, and exercise agency in, ideational contests to shape the political, economic, social and technological systems that make up the international order, and work to create a 'shared vision of the good that binds otherwise feuding polities together'.[45]

Despite the importance of ideational power, the concept is liable to face a wary reception in democracies. Democratic political systems possess political traditions based on notions of popular sovereignty and a free 'marketplace of ideas', which mean that appeals to ideational power risk being perceived as illegitimate or Orwellian. To paraphrase Robert Menzies, for a nation to defend its liberty but lose its own in the process would be the greatest tragedy. Grappling with the ethics of ideational power, then, is essential not only for normative reasons but also because it opens up discussion in democracies as to how they can compete in what is an increasingly contested global ideational environment. As a starting point, we think that three ethical issues merit consideration.

Firstly, it is important to focus on the ***intent*** of the actor seeking to employ ideational power. Are they interested in the pursuit of worthy and ethical outcomes through their use of ideas? This question follows a similar logic to the principle of 'right intent' within the just war standards of *jus ad bellum* in the use of mili-

42 Tanner Greer, 'China's Plans to Win Control of the Global Order', *Tablet*, 18 May 2020, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/china-plans-global-order.

43 Cited in Nadège Rolland, 'China's Vision for a New World Order', *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, Special Report 83 (January 2020), 13.

44 James Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

45 Andrew Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire: The Transformation of International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 8.

tary power.[46] There are some purposes for which the use of ideas are generally accepted in liberal democracies, such as in open political contests between political parties and candidates, in issue advocacy by NGOs and lobby groups, and attempts by religious organisations to spread their faiths. But there are other uses of ideas, such as in the radicalisation of communities towards violence and the silencing of dissent that are generally considered unethical. The means of disseminating ideas is also important—causing ideas to be amplified via covert, coercive or corrupting methods such as blackmail, non-transparent funding or impersonation is widely considered unethical, and in some cases is illegal.[47]

Secondly, there is value in examining the extent to which ideas display ***authenticity***, in the sense that they embody genuinely held beliefs of the actor rather than simply being 'ideational weapons' used cynically to exploit a target. This is where much of Russia's use of ideas might be critiqued through an ethical lens. As Shevtsova has observed in Russia's use of contradictory ideas to sow confusion: 'ideas are instrumental. If an action is deemed necessary, ideas will be found to justify it'.[48] Here measures such as consistency between word and deed through time matter to the ethical question just as much as they do the strategic one. We might also consider the jus ad bellum criterion of 'legitimate authority' as especially important in the deliberate shaping of ideas, given that in democracies political ideas are usually deemed legitimate when they have the chance to be broadly judged by the public. If governmental institutions have a role in shaping ideas or narratives, a process of public engagement and deliberation may provide increased legitimacy to these efforts.

Lastly, it is important to consider the ***consequences*** of the way in which ideational power is employed. Consuming the system to achieve one's narrow ends may lead to short-term success but will also result in lasting damage for society and its institutions. Playing a finite ideational game in an infinite context could be seen as highly unethical. An actor who creates distrust in the legal system to benefit their own immediate legal fortunes, for instance, should be seen as unethical. Other techniques, such as drowning out the views of others, relying on disinformation, or using deception may lead to gains for a strategic actor but risk damaging the open debate of information in the future and faith in the

46 David Whetham, '"Hybrid Warfare" and the Continuing Relevance of the Just War Tradition in the 21st Century', *Ethics and Armed Forces*, Issue 2015/2 (2015), http://www.ethikundmilitaer.de/en/full-issues/20152-hybrid-warfare/whetham-hybrid-warfare-and-the-continuing-relevance-of-the-just-war-tradition-in-the-21st-century/.

47 Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 'Countering Foreign Interference' (website), last updated 27 February 2020, https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/national-security/countering-foreign-interference.

48 Lilia Shevtsova, 'The Authoritarian Resurgence: Forward to the Past in Russia', *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 2 (2015): 22-36, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/578605.

nation's public square. And while ideas and stories appeal to our emotions rather than our sense of scientific proof, we may imagine an ethical duty for strategic actors to employ narratives that are grounded in available evidence, rather than baseless claims that are calibrated to appeal only to the emotions and prejudices of the audience.

The contemporary ideational environment

Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic heighten demand for ways to help frame non-routine, once-in-a-generation information. In this moment, Australia needs to come to grips with the impact of ideational power. One of the states that matters most to the future of the Indo-Pacific, China, is clearly thinking about ideational power.[49] If the Australian public and leaders disagree with the aims and method of China's use of ideational power, they will need to decide how we can leverage our own ideational power in a strategic and ethical manner.

But ideational power will matter in so many other ways to our security and national interests. Political leaders during the pandemic have already needed to draw on ideational power to change the daily behaviour of citizens.[50] The use of ideas by citizens and organisations in society matters because it influences how we organise politically at a national and international level to tackle important issues like climate change. Ideational power matters because it helps to maintain the cohesion of societies, including efforts to strengthen and renew the social contract, or to tackle harmful misinformation and baseless conspiracy theories, such as recent claims about COVID-19 and 5G.[51] Finally, developing and nurturing an effective understanding of ideational power will also be an important aspect of addressing the 'military software gap' as part of broader efforts to develop the Australian Defence Force's 'intellectual edge'.[52]

49 Rolland, 'China's Vision for a New World Order', 5.

50 Costanza Musu, 'War Metaphors used for COVID-19 are Compelling but also Dangerous', *The Conversation*, 8 April 2020, https://theconversation.com/war-metaphors-used-for-covid-19-are-compelling-but-also-dangerous-135406.

51 Fergus Hunter, 'Government Lashes 'Utterly Baseless' 5G-Coronavirus Conspiracy Theories', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 2020, https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/government-lashes-utterly-baseless-5g-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-20200518-p54u06.html

52 Michael Ryan, 'An Australian Intellectual Edge for Conflict and Competition in the 21st Century', *The Centre of Gravity Series* (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU College of Asia & the Pacific, March 2019).

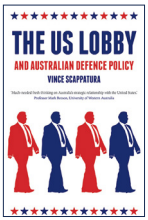
Reviews

The US Lobby and Australian Defence Policy

Vince Scappatura

Monash University Publishing (June 2019)

Reviewed by Iain D. Henry



The quality of strategic debate in Australia often disappoints, especially when it comes to the most sensitive of contemporary subjects: Australia's relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), Canberra's alliance with Washington, and the interplay between them. Books such as *Dangerous Allies* (Malcolm Fraser) and *Silent Invasion* (Clive Hamilton)[1] advance important arguments, but they often gloss over contestable assumptions and assume convenient connections rather than establish them.

In *The US Lobby and Australian Defence Policy*, Vince Scappatura, a lecturer at Macquarie University, works to break these trends.[2] In Part I of the book, he argues that an 'Alliance Orthodoxy' influences Australian thinking on alliance issues, then in Part II he argues that the US–Australia alliance now largely serves to support US domination of Asia. These chapters are well researched, clearly argued, and written in a lively and accessible manner, but they mainly cover well-trodden ground from a left-leaning perspective. The book's more significant contribution is in Part III, where Scappatura sets out to explore the alliance orthodoxy in elite Australian opinion. The case study examined is the little-known Australian American Leadership Dialogue (hereafter: the Dialogue). Scappatura sets ambitious and difficult research questions: does the Dialogue work to maintain elite support for the alliance? If so, how, and with what result?

Scappatura argues that within Australia, there is a 'loose network of elites and institutional relationships' that dominate discussions of Australian strategy.[3] This 'pro-US security consensus' operates through institutions such as the Dialogue, which 'facilitates the socialisation of Australian elites into the alliance orthodoxy'.[4] But identifying how this orthodoxy

1 Malcolm Fraser and Cain Roberts, *Dangerous Allies* (Carlton VIC: Melbourne University Publishing, 2014); Clive Hamilton, *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia* (Richmond, VIC: Hardie Grant Books, 2018).

2 Vince Scappatura, *The US Lobby and Australian Defence Policy* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing: 2019).

3 Ibid., xxiv.

4 Ibid., xxiv and xxvi.

came about, and is sustained, is no easy task. Scappatura's work on this delicate and difficult subject is more satisfying than many other treatments. Methodologically, the Dialogue is a difficult subject to research: Scappatura notes that his requests to interview organisational leaders, and survey Dialogue participants, were refused.[5] However, he was able to interview 40 Dialogue participants, and these interviews provide a rich dataset for the argument he advances.

The Dialogue was founded by an Australian businessman, Phil Scanlan, who established it due to a concern that 'diminishing personal bonds between the leaders of both nations would create a distance neither wanted, but may occur as each nation took the other for granted'.[6] Dialogue events invite elite figures, as well as younger achievers of obvious ambition and future potential, to workshops and conferences emphasising the importance of the US–Australia relationship.

Scappatura argues that Dialogue events serve to reinforce an orthodoxy of thought on the alliance. He cites several former participants, one of whom believes that the Dialogue is intended to 'ensure a deeper body of support [for the alliance] amongst informed and elite opinion'.[7] This accords with Scanlan's original intent, but it is possible that over time the Dialogue has taken on a more significant role, affixing Australian politicians with 'an official stamp of approval as a person able to handle the US alliance'.[8] One former participant noted that it was common to see ambitious politicians with leadership potential at Dialogue events: you might 'see five future Prime Ministers sitting there'.[9] Along this vein, Scappatura's analysis of Mark Latham, Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard's attendance at the Dialogue is fascinating. For cunning politicians, the Dialogue might be an opportunity to signal their reliability to a US audience and also to be anointed as a capable alliance manager.

Scappatura does not exaggerate this argument—Washington is not picking Australian leaders—but attendance at the Dialogue encourages future leaders to think about the alliance in a particular way. One participant, journalist Peter Hartcher, noted that 'radicals or opponents or critics probably don't get invited to join. I haven't noticed any turning up'.[10] Several interviewees noted the mood of comity at Dialogue events and thought that this inhibited frank discussion. The re-

5 Ibid., 118.
6 Ibid., 122.
7 Ibid., 127.
8 Ibid., 186.
9 Ibid., 184.
10 Ibid., 157.

sult seems to be that Dialogue events focus not on substantive discussion but affirmation about the importance of the alliance, which is premised on the assumption that Australian and US interests will always converge.

This behaviour might be unproblematic if it is limited to Dialogue events: most alliances feature summits 'designed for the ritual incantation of unifying rhetoric'.[11] But if this tendency bleeds over into policy, it could serve to dangerously limit Australian thinking. Hartcher reveals this risk in his assessment that the purpose of the Dialogue:

> is not to have robust discussion and debate about whether we should have an alliance. It's to have robust discussion and debate about how to make the alliance work better and work in the national interest.[12]

This kind of sentiment aligns closely with the alliance orthodoxy described by Scappatura and epitomised in a report from the National Security College, which claims that Australia has 'no realistic alternative' to its alliance with the US.[13] This kind of framing allows for the neat and reflexive characterisation of different perspectives on the alliance: either one is in favour of it—after all, there is 'no realistic alternative'—or one is a 'radical or opponent or critic'. Even if one believes that Australia has 'no realistic alternative' this pithy conclusion offers leaders no guidance on how to actually manage the alliance, especially on occasions when Australia's interests diverge from those of the US. If Paul Dibb is correct—that anyone at the Dialogue who makes the 'slightest criticism of the United States… [is] not invited again'—then these events seem more sermon than dialogue.

This raises the question of whether the Dialogue remains fit-for-purpose in a period of great power competition, when Australia's choices within the alliance are going to grow more difficult. Scanlan's decision to form the Dialogue was driven by his concern that each nation would take the other for granted, and drift apart, in the post-Cold War environment. But it is possible that because of Australia's alliance orthodoxy—supported by mechanisms such as the Dialogue—this risk is intensifying. Australian leaders don't know how to talk maturely about the alliance today: they continue to use outdated talking points emphasising shared values and mateship, even while areas of undeniable divergence become more obvious. Exam-

11 Stephen M. Walt, 'Why alliances endure or collapse', *Survival* 39, 1 (1997):170, DOI: 10.1080/00396339708442901

12 Scappatura, *The US Lobby*, 157.

13 Rory Medcalf, Ryan Young, Marina Tsirbas and Matt Sussex, 'The Trump presidency and Australia's security: don't panic, don't relax', *Policy Options Paper*, no.1 (Canberra: National Security College, Australian National University, January 2017), 2.

ples abound: Washington concertedly lobbies Australia to conduct Freedom of Navigation operations, but we repeatedly decline; Canberra decides to join China-led institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, despite US encouragement to abstain; Australia elects not to endorse the numerous hawkish speeches delivered by Vice President Pence and Secretary of State Pompeo.

In prematurely concluding that Australia and the US will one day be 'celebrating an even greater second hundred years of mateship', Australian leaders take for granted that the alliance can persist, in good health, despite these emerging differences.[14] If these divergences grow then we may look back and agree with Hugh White's assessment: that the Dialogue is 'bad for the alliance' because it works to 'conceal…rather than identify and address' alliance disagreements.[15] Perhaps it would be beneficial for both the Dialogue, and the broader US–Australia relationship, if the 'doubting Thomas' types were also invited. Decisions to deepen or strengthen the alliance are, in any period of great power competition, unlikely to be costless. To defend such decisions, Australian leaders will need better justifications than soppy appeals to mateship, sentimentality and shared values.

Some readers will dismiss this book because of its title, or the familiar left-leaning critique in Parts I and II, but either response would be a mistake. It is entirely possible to disagree with some of Scappatura's analysis in the first two parts, agree with the thrust of his argument about the Dialogue, and also support the alliance. This book highlights a need for Canberra's elite—and interested Australians generally—to think more seriously about the alliance and be better prepared to openly debate its risks and benefits. Different perspectives on the alliance should not be denounced as radicalism or dismissed without engagement. In the 1980s, fierce debate over the role of the joint facilities actually produced a stronger alliance, underpinned by informed public support. But such crucial discussions can occur only if Australia's political leaders, and other influential elites, abandon reflexive adherence to the alliance orthodoxy. In identifying and analysing this phenomenon, Scappatura's book is an important contribution to better-informed discussions of Australian strategy.

14 Malcolm Turnbull, 'Remarks at the National Governor's Association, Washington DC', Trans ID 41470, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 24 February 2018, https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-41470.

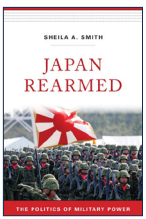
15 Scappatura, *The US Lobby*, 159.

Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power

Sheila A. Smith

Harvard University Press (April 2019)

Reviewed by Ben Ascione



In *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power*, Japan specialist Sheila Smith (senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations) traces the evolution of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and 'Japan's increasing embrace of the military as an instrument of statecraft'.[1] Smith weaves together the myriad influences on Japan's defence policymakers to explain the circumstances under which the roles and missions of the SDF have been incrementally expanded through to the present day. The analysis begins with the influence of Japan's wartime legacy, the establishment of the SDF as an exclusively defence-oriented military in 1954, and the gradual expansion of SDF capabilities in the late Cold War period to support the US military presence in East Asia. Subsequently, in the post-Cold War era amidst the rise of China and North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development, Smith examines the dispatches of the SDF overseas in non-combat roles, measures to mobilise the SDF to defend Japan, constitutional restrictions on Japan's use of force, and management of the US–Japan alliance.

Smith's analysis of Japanese military power comes at a timely moment. The balance of regional power in East Asia is shifting with the rise of China, the Trump administration in the United States is retreating from multilateralism, US–China rivalry in trade and technology is intensifying, and discussion of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and Indo-Pacific security cooperation is attracting renewed interest. Against the backdrop of this increasingly uncertain security environment and debate over how Japan might respond, *Japan Rearmed* helps illuminate the long arc of change in politics over Japan's military power since the end of the Second World War and the crossroads Japan is now approaching over the future development of its military posture.

One strength of *Japan Rearmed* is the analysis of Japan's defence policy evolution during the Cold War. The enactment of Japan's post-war Constitution—and the Article 9 'peace clause' which forswears force as a

1 Sheila A. Smith, *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 17.

means of settling international disputes —as well as the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the US–Japan Security Treaty, shaped the position from which Japan established the SDF and designed it as an exclusively defensive military. Externally, Smith highlights Japan's balancing act between US demands to play a greater role in the battle between the free world and communism and Japan's need to reassure its Asian neighbours that it no longer harboured hostile intentions. Domestically, political debate focused on civilian control while a desire for greater self-reliance remained an unrealisable but powerful undercurrent in conservative Japanese thinking. In balancing these demands, Japan kept the SDF at home throughout the Cold War, but gradually expanded its capabilities. By the end of the Cold War, even though the SDF operated under rigid legal strictures and with significant gaps in defence planning, it was one of the most technologically advanced militaries on the planet.

Many analysts tend to neglect the late-Cold War period in Japanese history and focus on the fall of the Soviet Union and the role of the Gulf War in forcing Japan to expand the SDF's activities. For instance, former Japan Defense Agency Director-General Shigeru Ishiba once quipped that the SDF could lay down on the job during the Cold War as Japan knew the US military would come to its aid against any potential attack by the Soviet Union.[2] Smith's analysis shows that such a portrait of SDF complacency was far from the case. The story of SDF General Hiroomi Kurisu's call to Japanese civilian political leaders in 1978 to address gaps in planning in case of an armed attack against Japan, and his subsequent firing, demonstrates the significant contestation over the politics of military power that took place in this period. It also shows that the SDF did not use strict civilian control as an excuse to slack off from its mission to defend Japan. Similarly, Smith's description of the increasing capabilities of the SDF and its deepening complementarity with US military forces in the Pacific towards the end of the Cold War shows that the SDF was already making significant and critical contributions to the US–Japan alliance, such as in protection of sea lanes and intelligence gathering, before the fall of the Soviet Union.

Another strength of *Japan Rearmed* is the analysis of the US–Japan alliance, the question of Tokyo's expectations, and the complications inherent in 'relying on borrowed power'.[3] The US–Japan strategic bargain of bases for a defence guarantee has been maintained for over seven decades underpinning Japanese and East Asian regional security and the United

2 Shigeru Ishiba, *Kokubo* [National Defence] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2005), 87.

3 Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 173.

States' position as a Pacific power. However, as Japan's economy grew, this strategic bargain came under increasing scrutiny. The solution to dealing with domestic resistance to US military bases in local communities, Smith explains, saw a reduction of US forces on Japan's main islands and a concentration in Okinawa prefecture. Managing relations with the Okinawan people continues to be a major challenge for Japan's defence policymakers today.

Smith's analysis of Japan's growing fear of being abandoned by the United States provides a key contribution to the literature. A number of English language scholarly works on the US–Japan alliance fall into the trap of viewing policy primarily through the lens of US interests. However, by highlighting the combined effect of a rising China and an increasingly unpredictable United States, Smith provides a fresh and up-to-date look at the alliance from the Japanese perspective. The sharpening of tensions surrounding the disputed Senkaku Islands (known in China as the Diaoyu Islands) since 2010 raised questions about the reliability of the US security guarantee. The election of the mercurial US President Donald Trump has intensified Japanese anxieties. The credibility of the US nuclear umbrella has come under doubt and the long-term sustainability of the US–Japan strategic bargain has been put under the spotlight as Trump demands a huge increase in host-nation support under threat of terminating the alliance. The risk that the United States could sacrifice its allies for its own interests is also highlighted, especially with regard to Trump's stance on the question of North Korean missiles. The reality of Japan's abandonment fears should serve as a wake-up call to alliance managers in Washington.

Smith devotes a chapter to Japan's post-war Constitution. This is a worthy inclusion. Security generalists advocating for a more rapid expansion of SDF roles, missions and capabilities have often failed to understand the critical role of the Constitution in the politics of Japan's military power, at least as far back as Herman Kahn.[4] At the same time, constitutional politics has heated up since 2014 as the Abe government reinterpreted Article 9—to enable the SDF to engage in limited forms of collective self-defence in situations when Japan's survival is threatened—and now seeks its formal revision.

Smith identifies two key issues in the constitutional debate over security policy. The first concerns the proper scope of the SDF's roles, missions and capabilities. This has shifted over time to include participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations since 1992, rear-area and logistics

4 Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970).

support for the United States military in areas surrounding Japan since 1999, and limited forms of collective self-defence since 2015. The second concerns 'responsibility for making decisions about the use of force and monitoring SDF compliance'.[5] Smith summarises the continual process of government reinterpretations of Article 9, the new laws that have been passed and the old laws that have been amended to implement these reinterpretations. With the passage of the security-related bills in September 2015, Smith concludes, 'Japan has stretched its interpretation of the constitution to the fullest'.[6]

A weakness in the analysis is a lack of deeper probing into public opinion on constitutional politics and how this might affect the possibility of revising Article 9. Smith canvasses Japanese public opinion as a break on constitutional revision and concludes that 'it remains to be seen whether [the Abe government] has the support of the Japanese people'.[7] To be fair, going deeper than this is not without its challenges given that significant segments of the Japanese public lack understanding of the intricacies of Article 9 and opinion polls often show different answers depending on the exact wording of questions and the ideological bias of the relevant polling organisation. Yet given that any revision of Article 9 requires a two-thirds vote in both houses of the Diet and a majority of votes in a national referendum, public opinion is absolutely critical to any potential revision. Any future SDF posture outside the framework of Article 9 must first be convincing to the public.

Connected to this point, another weakness in the analysis is the omission of the deep historical revisionist and nationalist wellsprings that belie Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's thinking. Smith notes that Abe's mixed messaging has 'often confused the Japanese public on his real ambitions' and that he has proven incapable of separating 'a realist call for greater military power with a revisionist desire to free Japan from American influence'.[8] However, this does not fully acknowledge Abe's motivations. Abe's pre-existing desire to revise Article 9 is more a result of his ideological proclivities, inherited from his grandfather (former prime minister Nobusuke Kishi) as well as his association with the historical revisionist right-wing lobby group Nippon Kaigi (Japan Conference), rather than a well-thought out strategic response to the changing external security environment. Indeed, the historical revisionist assertions of the Abe government unnecessarily dump

5 Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 140.

6 Smith, 162–63.

7 Smith, 171.

8 Smith, 172.

complicated political baggage into an already fraught defence reform debate and constitute a self-inflicted hurdle in persuading the public on the necessity of constitutional revision.

Smith concludes that Japan's growing fears of being abandoned by the United States and the worsening regional security environment mean that Japan faces tough choices ahead and that 'limiting Japan's military power may no longer make Japan feel safe'[9] in the 21st century. This conclusion may be interpreted by policymakers in Australia, India, the United States, ASEAN nations—and others keen on promoting increased security cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific—as an encouraging sign that Japan is likely to continue to expand its military capabilities in the future. Yet the domestic political constraints that continue to keep Japan inside the framework of Article 9—including the brake of public opinion and public distrust of the Abe government's historical revisionism and its rationale for constitutional revision—should not be forgotten in predictions on the future posture of the SDF.

Overall, in *Japan Rearmed* Smith provides an excellent analysis that will be useful to both novices and specialists alike. Smith achieves a rare balance in her writing style making the book both eminently digestible but also loaded with insight. Anybody interested in the post-war history of Japan's evolving defence policy and the security challenges Japan now faces will benefit from reading Smith's expert scholarship.

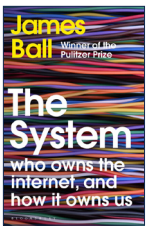
9 Smith, 240.

The System: Who owns the internet, and how it owns us

James Ball

Bloomsbury Publishing (August 2020)

Reviewed by Tom Uren



Left unchecked, the internet is a monopoly-making machine that elites are using to gather more wealth and power. This is the conclusion of James Ball, an accomplished author and Pulitzer prize winning journalist, formerly of the *Washington Post, WikiLeaks* and *The Guardian* (where he was involved with the Snowden leaks), in his recently published book The System, an ambitious attempt to write an unauthorised biography of the internet.

At its best the book educates and entertains with illuminating, well told stories about poorly understood corners of the internet: how it was created; how it is run; how new companies are financed through venture capital; and its darker aspects like user tracking and the world of targeted advertising. These stories lay bare the underlying incentives that exist online and shape behaviour. But ultimately, this book fails to weave Ball's many varied strands together into an entirely compelling argument.

The creation of the internet

Ball describes in broad strokes the very beginnings of the internet in the ARPANET project, funded by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the Department of Defense (DoD).

ARPANET involved three factions collaborating: ARPA, who wanted new communication technologies for military command and control; university research scientists, who wanted to be able to use the massively expensive computers of the 1960s more efficiently; and a selection of young graduate students who actually built the protocols and technologies of the internet.

During this embryonic time, it was, ironically, the paths not taken and the decisions not made that have defined the character of the modern internet.

This first non-decision was project management. Although ARPA (and therefore DoD) ultimately provided funding for the project, it didn't manage the project in a hands-on way. Stakeholders across the three factions collaborated, but none were in charge. Given so much of the development work was done by relatively junior staff who felt they lacked hier-

archical authority, a culture was built around collaborative multi-stakeholder control. This paradigm endures to this day in the management and governance of the internet—all the organisations involved are collaborative and consensus-based.

Being government funded there was no requirement to recoup costs, so a second key non-decision was to not build a billing system to charge users. This meant that voice, video, audio and files were all just bits that were transmitted regardless. In-built billing would have resulted in telecommunications and ISP companies stifling innovation, through differential pricing, and placed them in a gatekeeper role, where they could have dictated terms for internet access. The lack of a billing mechanism has allowed an explosion of businesses to flourish and resulted in the tremendous proliferation of new apps as computers, smartphones and telecommunications became faster and more capable.

Perhaps the most consequential non-decision, at least from a national security point of view, was to not build ARPANET with a focus on security and identity. This made perfect sense in the context of a network of trusted researchers that were focused on solving the immediate problem of how to create a network of computers.

Although ARPANET was initially a research project it evolved and grew into what we now call the internet, and these key non-decisions still shape the internet of today.

Fifty years later, collaborative multi-stakeholder cooperation is still the model for internet governance. Ball explores how the organisation responsible for managing the internet's naming system operates, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). The costs of the consultative multi-stakeholder model of governance is in full view. Despite pressing security flaws in key internet protocols improvement happens at an agonisingly slow pace.

ICANN has technical expertise but because of its governance model no political agenda, no clout and no capacity for implementing it even if it did have one. Change only occurs when many different stakeholders with different motivations can agree. This conservatism has at least one significant benefit—it is difficult for ICANN to be captured to benefit malign actors.

Venture capital and financing

After tackling the origins and management of the internet, Ball explores how internet companies are financed through venture capital (VC), providing a short introduction to the VC industry and describing the perverse incentives that result from this financing model.

The Silicon Valley venture capital world, as Ball describes it, is a circle.

People who have made boatloads of money from fast-growing global internet businesses are well placed to then make early-stage investments in other fledgling fast-growing global internet businesses.

The expectations of investors coupled with the possibility of massively profitable global internet businesses results in start-ups that consume cash to grow fast, building 'minimum viable products' without thought of the broader consequences. That these companies often don't consider the ways that their technologies can be abused is exemplified by a former Facebook motto: 'move fast and break things'. Ball reports that Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, initially found it inconceivable that Facebook would be manipulated in an attempt to steal an election, an amazingly naïve position given the years of Russian effort to stoke division and influence in American audiences.

In addition to contending that the VC system entrenches and centralises power in a wealthy elite, Ball also examines how power has accrued to a handful of extremely large technology companies such as Google, Facebook and Amazon. He relays interviews from venture capitalists who argue that cookies, which started as small text files to keep track of interactions with websites, enabled the tracking that has so empowered these large companies.

In chapter five, the most interesting part of the book, Ball also examines the targeted advertising businesses that operate behind the scenes on the web. These businesses hold auctions, within fractions of a second, for the opportunity to advertise to you whenever you visit a website. Data is exchanged and gathered to determine what sort of user you are and what you are after—so buyers can determine how much to pay for you.

Rather than helping quality publishers achieve higher ad rates and earn more revenue, Ball's interviewees argue that the effectiveness of tracking has allowed the opposite to occur *The New York Times* site, for example, runs nine different tracking services that aim to track your movements across the web. But rather than paying top dollar to advertise on the *Times* website to reach a reader, an advertiser can target that exact same reader on a lower quality and therefore cheaper website. Certainly, the data is irrefutable—advertising money has disappeared from traditional publications and migrated towards Facebook and Google.

The weakest section of the book deals with state espionage and cyber operations and this is where Ball's tendency to reflexively blame Western intelligence agencies for the internet's poor cyber security shines through. Ball primarily discusses the activities of US and UK intelligence agencies, relying heavily on the Snowden dis-

closures, and (ironically, for a book that emphasises the system of incentives on the internet) holds Western intelligence agencies responsible for the bad behaviour of foreign intelligence services.

For example, Ball discusses the 'WannaCry' ransomware attack, a destructive hard disk wiping attack launched by the North Korean government, but he focuses blame mainly on the US intelligence community because a sophisticated software capability was stolen from them and used in the construction of the WannaCry malware. It is a complex tale, and certainly the US government deserves *some* blame, but a balanced discussion would also examine the motives of those who stole the code and posted it to the internet as well as the motives of the North Koreans themselves.

Destructive attacks, state interference in democratic elections, rampant espionage and intellectual property theft—certainly there is much to dislike about the current state of play in state cyber operations. But this all stems from the third non-decision in the early days of the internet, to not incorporate robust security into internet protocols.

Much of the online behaviour that Ball describes has the feeling of inevitability. For instance, it was probably inevitable, given the increasing availability and sensitivity of information online, that intelligence agencies the world over would seek to gather intelligence through the internet. It is where valuable intelligence is. And, this is not new. Clifford Stoll, in his 1989 book, *The Cuckoo's Egg*, describes his quest to capture a hacker who was breaking into the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory computer systems to extract military secrets on behalf on the KGB.[1] Chinese hackers have been operating to steal intellectual property since the early 2000s. Despite Ball's assertion, foreign intelligence agencies did not need the 2013 Snowden revelations to justify their own behaviour online. Intelligence agencies have probably been among the first government entities to understand the internet—from the narrow perspective of intelligence collection—because they have been among the first forced to migrate online.

Similarly, the underlying economics of online businesses has also, perhaps inevitably, encouraged the growth-at-all-costs behaviour Bell describes. Upfront costs to build online businesses are large, but the marginal costs for additional clients are very low. Coupled with this, many online businesses exhibit what are called 'network effects' and become more valuable the more users they have. Facebook, for example, is valuable

1 Cliff Stoll, *The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage*, Reissue edition (New York: Gallery Books, 2005).

because your friends and family are there—more users on Facebook makes it more valuable to more people. In the absence of a social network layer built into the fabric of the internet, it seems inevitable that an aggressive grow-at-all-costs company would come to dominate social networking, while making numerous missteps.

In other words, Ball too often reverses causality. Groups behave badly on the internet because of the incentives that the internet provides, incentives that often stem from the early non-decisions, especially regarding security, billing and collaborative decision-making. Supporting systems coalesce around these incentives to reinforce or reject them: venture capitalists, advertising and tracking industries, intelligence agencies, regulators and advocates.

Ball also seems to overestimate the capacity of governments to understand and rationally respond to the changes that the internet has brought. Governments still struggle to conceptualise how online businesses differ from traditional ones, and decisions have not been made recklessly or with wilful blindness—they've been taken in ignorance. Just as the early creators of the internet could not forecast the ramifications of some of their early non-decisions, government regulators don't yet have the understanding and frameworks to know how to make sensible decisions.

Ball raises the possibility that Chinese internet giants will have more influence over the future internet, but it is worse than that. There is now a clear and present danger to the internet's current governance models. The Chinese government is seeking to dominate global networks and platforms by influencing standards—'China Standards 2035'.[2] Huawei has already proposed a 'New IP' protocol that reportedly allows more centralised control[3], and the Chinese government is certainly seeking to mould the internet in its favour.

Ball's solution to the internet's problems is to, firstly, recognise and understand the problem, and secondly to look for lots of small fixes: protecting and valuing personal data; taxing multinationals; tackling bias; encouraging transparency; and improving security.

2 Emily de La Bruyère and Nathan Picarsic, 'China's next Plan to Dominate International Tech Standards', *TechCrunch*, 12 April, 2020, https://social.techcrunch.com/2020/04/11/chinas-next-plan-to-dominate-international-tech-standards/ .

3 Madhumita Murgia and Anna Gross, 'China and Huawei Propose Reinvention of the Internet', *Financial Times*, 4 May 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/c78be2cf-a1a1-40b1-8ab7-904d7095e0f2 .

The internet has grown organically and to some extent reflects the libertarian ideals so eloquently captured in '*A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*':[4]

> Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.

Now, however, there is a competing vision, an internet modified to suit the needs of authoritarian states that quash dissent. For several years, Australia and other Western nations have been promoting a 'free, open and secure' internet. We need to decide, at a detailed technical level what that actually means and engage with internet governance bodies to promote that future.

This may mean re-examining the close relationship between our national intelligence and information security apparatus. Guilt-by-association from the Snowden disclosures may make it difficult for our national information security authorities to have influence in sceptical multi-stakeholder organisations if mixed motives are suspected, making it difficult to advance much needed security improvements.

To manage the future development of the internet we need to truly understand how the internet operates and the incentives it provides to businesses, governments and citizens. This book goes part way and sheds light but not always understanding.

4 John Perry Barlow, A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace (Davos, 1996) available via the John Perry Barlow Library, Electronic Frontier Foundation, see https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence

The Education of an Idealist

Samantha Power

William Collins (October 2019)

HarperCollins Publishers (October 2019)

Reviewed by Jo Brick

> It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again…
>
> Theodore Roosevelt, 23 April 1910[1]

> 'I believe that dignity is an underestimated force in politics and geopolitics.'[2]
>
> Samantha Power

Samantha Power is a person who truly lives in the world. She is a woman who has fought in the arena and led a life that epitomises Roosevelt's appeal to citizenship. She has taken determined action, both in her personal actions and her attempts to influence the use of national and institutional power; and she has strived, throughout her career as a journalist, human rights advocate, author, academic, adviser to President Obama and as US Ambassador to the UN, to make a difference.

In her 2019 memoir, *The Education of an Idealist*, Power relates with engaging candour and wit what has informed and influenced her idealism and her determination to uphold human dignity and alleviate suffering. From her early childhood in Dublin and migration to the US through formative years at Yale and early career as a freelance correspondent in war-torn Bosnia to walking the halls of the White House and taking part in some of most critical foreign policy challenges of the Obama Presidency she tells an inspiring life story. But perhaps more importantly, it is a story about the importance of mastering cognitive dissonance as an essential skill in strategic policymaking and in the preparation for the accompanying internal personal struggle between

1 Theodore Roosevelt, *Citizenship in a Republic*, 23 April 1910. Full text available from The Roosevelt Centre (accessed 10 April 2020), https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Learn-About-TR/TR-Encyclopedia/Culture-and-Society/Man-in-the-Arena.aspx.

2 Samantha Power, *Education of an Idealist*, (William Collins, 2019), 551.

ideals and the revelation that bargains are required to realise them.

Idealism, dignity and action

> It just feels like I should be doing something more useful than thinking about sports all the time.[3]

Perhaps Power's most formative experience was on 4 June 1989. The then 18-year-old had notions of becoming a sports journalist and that summer was interning at the local Atlanta CSB sports affiliate[4]. In her memoir, Power describes watching the raw footage coming in of the Tiananmen Square protests that day. The now iconic images of 'Tank Man'—the man carrying plastic shopping bags, standing in the middle of the road in front of the first tank in the armoured column—have remained with her as the epitome of quiet, powerful resistance. As she explains, 'The stark image arrested my attention. *That*, I thought, was an assertion of dignity'.[5] For Samantha Power, Tank Man was the catalyst for her development of a global consciousness and a life dedicated to the protection of human dignity around the world. 'For the first time, I reacted as though current events had something to do with me. I felt, in a way that I couldn't have explained in the moment, that I had a stake in what happened to the lone man with his shopping bags'.[6]

Power complemented her tertiary studies while studying for her BA at Yale with travel to Europe in 1990. She visited the Anne Frank house and Dachau concentration camp, where accounts of the lived experiences of the Second World War instilled in her the gravity of the Holocaust. She then witnessed the first free election in Czechoslovakia, which again highlighted to her the importance of dignity as a historical force.

Power's engagement with the world was consolidated by her time as a junior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington think tank, soon after graduating in 1992. There she was mentored by the likes of Morton Abramowitz (former US Ambassador to Turkey) and Fred Cuny (humanitarian relief worker). Under Abramowitz's influence Power's interest in the Bosnian conflict intensified, culminating in her primer about the conflict for Carnegie, *Breakdown in the Balkans*.[7] This gave her a renewed sense of purpose and a drive to 'make a difference', as she recalls in a frustrated journal en-

3 Power, *Idealist*, 43.

4 'Ambassador Samantha Power's 2016 Class Day address', *YaleNews*, 22 May 2016, https://news.yale.edu/2016/05/22/ambassador-samantha-powers-2016-class-day-address

5 Power, *Idealist*, 41.

6 Power, *Idealist*, 42.

7 Samantha Power (compiler), *Breakdown in the Balkans: A Chronicle of Events, January 1989 to May 1993* (Carnegie Endowment for international Peace, 1993).

try from the time, which simply said: '…Act, Power.'[8]

People matter

Power went on to spend the next two years as a freelance war correspondent filing stories from Sarajevo on the suffering of the people in the Bosnia conflict. She hoped that such stories would pressure the United States into taking action. This experience galvanised Power's interest in the law, which she went on to study at Harvard, as a means to a possible new career prosecuting alleged war crimes at The Hague. Instead, however, she became the executive director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government and focused on the question of genocide—what did US policymakers themselves think when responding to genocide? When is military force justified; how does one measure the risks of action and inaction before deciding what to do (on the basis of incomplete information); what would it mean if countries could act unilaterally to use force without any rules?[9] The answer manifested in Power's 2003 Pulitzer Prize winning book, *A Problem from Hell—America and the Age of Genocide*.

This was to bring Power to the attention of then Senator Barack Obama, who would later appoint her Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights on the National Security Council in his Presidential Administration from 2009 to 2013. It was an opportunity to directly influence the development and implementation of American policy and her insider's account of the Obama administration relates many examples of the challenges that exist in reconciling the ideals of protecting human dignity with the practical aspects of statecraft.

An apt vignette of this challenge is revealed in Power's attempts to highlight the genocidal nature of the killing of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Power included the word 'genocide' in Obama's speech to an annual commemoration of the event by Armenian Americans, but it was removed by other staffers as the use of the word had been avoided since 1981 so as not to offend Turkey, a NATO ally. She ultimately conceded: 'I would never be able to put myself in his shoes or appreciate the variables he was weighing'.[10]

Cognitive dissonance

On 21 August 2013, the Syrian regime used sarin gas weapons against its own civilian population, killing more than 1,400 people in one of the most horrific war crimes of the conflict. Power's involvement in Obama's deliberations on how to respond saw

8 Power, *Idealist*, 61.

9 Power, *Idealist*, 120.

10 Power, *Idealist*, 243.

her directly face circumstances that pitted the protection and enforcement of human dignity against hard power. She had only recently been appointed US Ambassador to the UN and her role was to galvanise international diplomatic efforts. Obama had established his 'red line' one year previously, when the Syrian government first used such chemical weapons. The question was would Obama act. Air strikes against the Assad regime in response to the attack risked drawing the US into an expanding conflict in Syria and would call into question US credibility in addressing other attacks by Assad against the Syrian population. Obama considered unilateral military action but then switched course, choosing to obtain Congressional support for any use of force. Power recounts the myriad other non-military efforts—diplomatic efforts with Russia and Iran, economic sanctions and asset freezes against Syrian government officials—that were attempted. However, Russia used its veto power to prevent sanctions. Power arrived at the realisation that even if all her efforts at the UN worked, it would only remove one weapon from Assad's arsenal and the greater issue of the Syrian conflict would continue. This experience demonstrated to Power the importance of cognitive dissonance in her work. Being able 'to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time' is an essential foundation for exercising judgement at the strategic level.

There were many other instances at the UN, however, where Power was able to protect human dignity; including galvanising UN support for a resolution that brought together international resources to counter the Ebola epidemic in 2014. However, in 'Toussaint', perhaps the most poignant chapter of the book, Power relates a tragic incident that occurred in 2016, which also provides one of the best metaphors for problem-solving on the global stage. When travelling to Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria to understand the ground-level fight against Boko Haram, Toussaint Birwea, a local six-year-old boy was struck and killed by a car in her motorcade as they passed through a Cameroonian village. His death haunted Power and emphasised the fact that sometimes trying to do the right thing ends up making matters worse. Yet she resolves that inaction is not the answer: 'The road to hell is paved with good intentions, to be sure. But turning a blind eye to the toughest problems in the world is a guaranteed shortcut to the same destination'.[11]

Conclusion

> 'And I certainly had not entered government expecting that it would be easy to fulfil every campaign pledge or win every battle to inject concern for human con-

11 Power, *Idealist*, 487.

> sequences into high-level decision-making… I was profoundly privileged to be in a position where I could at least try to make a difference.'[12]

Some of us have the privilege of watching the world from the sidelines, with wars, genocide and their attendant suffering outside our boundaries. These events happen at the periphery of our daily existence and we can commentate on these world events from the luxury of our armchairs. People like Power, however, have reported on these events from firsthand observation or have negotiated and written papers on which national and international action is founded.

The Education of an Idealist does not provide a handy manual for how to work as a global or national policy-maker, as Power provides only one perspective to many complicated and controversial events of the last 20 years. This is the primary limitation of Power's book, but it does not make it any different from any other autobiographical accounts by other statesmen. Arguably, such books are not read as 'how-to' guides but as a means to seek insights and counsel from others who have preceded us in their efforts to make change. It would be easy to criticise someone like Power as one who has sold out her idealism amidst the dust, sweat and blood of international relations. However, this is a criticism often levelled through naiveté and a lack of appreciation of the requirement to take a proportionate, rather than binary, approach to wicked global problems where all actions have unintended consequences. Many of us in national security, probably started our careers because we wanted to make a difference. As we have progressed, we are likely to have been stymied or defeated by realism from daring to act valiantly.

The strength of Power's work is that her book can provide our shrinking idealism with a renewed inspiration. Samantha Power is a role model to me and I had the privilege of meeting her when she was in Australia promoting this book. She is a passionate speaker and brought her story to life in a manner that was inspirational and infectious. She is the exemplar for a passionate and driven statesperson who cares for human dignity and who provides us with the impetus and inspiration to act as positive stewards of our world.

Oppression, tyranny and war create circumstances in which there seems no hope for individual dignity. The true value of this book is that it encapsulates one person's determination to protect dignity in places and situations where it does not start with a fighting chance. How can the idealistic words in international treaties and conventions prevail against the pragmatism

12 Power, *Idealist*, 249.

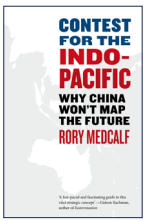
of force? Because driven individuals continue to grapple with these seemingly insoluble and intractable global issues. The advice given to Power by Jonathan Moore, a former US State Department official, articulately captures the moral of Power's story: 'You can use your position to help a lot of people out there. The world is filled with broken places. Pick your battles, and go win some'.[13]

Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China won't map the future

Rory Medcalf

La Trobe University Press in conjunction with Black Inc. (March 2020)

Reviewed by Jeffrey Wilson



At no point since the end of the Second World War has Australia's regional environment been in such a state of upheaval. Great power conflict, the gradual failure of international institutions, trade warfare and now the COVID-19 pandemic—all epicentred in Australia's region—are posing formidable challenges for foreign and defence policymakers. Professor Medcalf's *Contest for the Indo-Pacific* therefore comes at a time when an understanding of the history, architecture and fracture-points of the Indo-Pacific is sorely needed. But while *Contest* promises and delivers an excellent account of the Indo-Pacific story, it is insights on the prospects for mid-

13 Power, *Idealist*, 516.

dle power diplomacy in the region for which it should be recognised.

The Indo-Pacific is still sufficiently novel that any book review on the topic needs to begin with terminological ground-clearing. The Indo-Pacific is a new concept to describe the region of the world roughly centred on Asia. It builds on the prior 'Asia–Pacific' concept developed in the 1980s, geographically extending the region westwards to include the Indian Ocean littoral. Proponents of the Indo-Pacific concept argue that the scope of economic and security interdependencies today spans both the Indian and Pacific oceans, warranting this 'Asia to Indo-Pacific' frame shift in foreign policy thinking. The Indo-Pacific terminology for the region has now been formally adopted by four governments (Australia, Japan, India and the US), has entered into de facto use by most others in the region (including ASEAN), and is only explicitly opposed by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

As Professor Medcalf has been one of the most vocal public advocates for the Indo-Pacific concept for around a decade, it should come as no surprise that his first book on the topic has been widely anticipated. Indeed, it does not disappoint. *Contest* provides a detailed telling of the Indo-Pacific's history, a sophisticated analysis of the strategic conflicts that are emerging and concludes with a vision of the future that puts the region at the centre of world affairs. Written accessibly for a popular and international audience, it lacks the detail to offer a 'definitive history' of the Indo-Pacific, but its clarity and engaging narrative make it an excellent general treatment.

Readers wanting a specialist analysis of particular domains of regional politics—such as maritime security or the institutional architecture—should still look to the academic and think tank literatures. But for those wanting to connect the individual threads of the Indo-Pacific concept into a cohesive and comprehensive narrative, *Contest* is perhaps the best book yet written.

One of Professor Medcalf's most important contributions is to resolve a longstanding confusion regarding the definitional status of the Indo-Pacific. Many debates over the Indo-Pacific are afflicted by authors arguing at cross-purposes: some view the concept as a 'theatre', some as a 'strategy', others as a commitment to a certain set of ideological beliefs (such as democracy), others as an assemblage of institutions. This lack of definitional clarity has led analysts down a garden path of arguing over whether the Indo-Pacific 'really exists', employing competing definitions to make their case.

Contest clearly—and this reviewer hopes, will decisively— settles this vexing mess. It makes clear that the Indo-Pacific is a geographic concept

for understanding the spatial scale of interdependencies in the region. For example, as oil shipments traverse a maritime corridor from the Gulf of Oman to the Sea of Japan, the Indo-Pacific is simply a mental device to understand the scale of that spatial interconnection. The PRC's official rejection of the term Indo-Pacific does nothing to undermine the analytical utility of recognising that geographic reality. Nor do perceived deficiencies of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy condemn the concept to some kind of premature death. Nor does India's absence from some regional institutions mean the Indo-Pacific has not yet taken form. Actually, existing regional interdependencies demonstrate that the Indo-Pacific is now the region's 'map'. How governments choose to respond to that map is then a matter for politics.

Much of *Contest* is thus dedicated to making an argument about what the politics of this new map looks like, and how it will evolve. Its principal thesis is clearly telegraphed in the title's second clause: '*Why China won't map the future*'. Responding to a widely held belief that US regional hegemony is in structural decline while the PRC's leadership claims are inexorably rising, Professor Medcalf carefully stakes out the contrarians' claim. Through chapters examining great power conflict, multipolarity, maritime issues and PRC foreign policy ambitions, *Contest* argues that while regional order is becoming less stable, it is by no means shifting from US to PRC hegemony. Examples abound where the strength of the US presence is illustrated, the extent of PRC overreach is explored, and the inherently multipolar nature of the new regional map is demonstrated. This is an important and timely corrective, as it helps move beyond the simplistic 'Thucydides' Trap' debate that should rightly be relegated to first-year international politics tutorials.

To be sure, not all readers will be convinced by *Contest's* core thesis. Professor Medcalf's view of the US regional presence does allow space for the corrosive effects of the Trump Presidency, but many will view it as underdone given the damage inflicted to the US's important regional alliances. Analysts will debate forever the supposed 'inexorability' of the PRC's rise to global power; and those who have not yet been convinced by the sceptical accounts of Susan Shirk and Minxin Pei won't find anything new in *Contest* that fundamentally changes their mind. Observers of Japanese, Indian and ASEAN foreign policy might also accuse Professor Medcalf of over-optimism regarding these countries' capability for international leadership, given their poor track records in recent decades. But the dissenters will at least have to respond. By showing that the Indo-Pacific map is inherently a multipolar map, *Contest* will help move the debate from a narrow 'US versus China'

discussion to one that properly puts the entire region into discussions of regional order.

If *Contest* was simply an account of the Indo-Pacific region, glossed through a PRC-sceptical lens, it would certainly justify its place in the market. However, the book's contribution goes beyond the two elements telegraphed in the title. Bundled within its analysis of Indo-Pacific multipolarity is a second thesis regarding middle power diplomacy and its role in region-building. By arguing that the Indo-Pacific map is a multipolar one, Professor Medcalf also directs attention to how middle powers —those large enough to influence the regional order, albeit not large enough to attempt to dictate it —have played an indispensable role in shaping the contemporary regional order. While many are considered, four middle powers (Australia, India, Japan and Indonesia) receive consistent attention, and are shown to be the real engine behind the Indo-Pacific shift.

The importance of Professor Medcalf's middle power thesis is revealed on the very first page. His narrative begins on Remembrance Day 2016, during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second state visit to Prime Minister Abe Shinzo of Japan. The visit was catalytic for the Indo-Pacific because it marked the first formal connection of Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' strategy with India's 'Act East' counterpart. This was the first time the Indo-Pacific had shifted from a *linguistic device* used individually by governments to describe the region, to a *strategic concept* that would form the basis for international partnership. Abe was the leading norm entrepreneur behind the Indo-Pacific concept (first using it in 2007), while India's adoption was essential in anchoring the westward extension of the regional map. That it was Japan and India that transitioned the Indo-Pacific from a geographic concept to a strategic device demonstrates how middle powers built this new region.

Indeed, such middle power activism was a highly risky strategy. In 2016, Australia was the only other country that had formally adopted the Indo-Pacific terminology (in 2013), and it would be another year before the US would officially do the same. Moreover, the PRC was mounting a strong diplomatic campaign against the terminology—arguing that it was inherently designed as a 'China-containment device'—making most ASEAN members reticent to engage with the idea, at least in public. But by working together, the Australia, Japan and India trilateral was able to see the US, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia and ASEAN eventually adopt the concept as well. The PRC now finds itself as the only major 'Indo-Pacific denier' in the region.

Sceptics of middle power diplomacy take note: Middle powers can achieve significant things, both in the absence

of a push from security guarantors (the US), and in open defiance of economic powerhouses (the PRC).

If this reviewer were to find fault, it would be the relative lack of attention paid to Australia's role. Consistent Australian diplomacy was essential in bringing the US into the Indo-Pacific fold, and it was an important contributor with ASEAN, Singapore and Indonesia as well. Australia's adoption of the term in 2013 also sent a message to the region that countries economically dependent on the PRC could still 'get away with the Indo-Pacific'. As Professor Medcalf is an Australian, this is somewhat surprising: all analysts have a tendency to accord their own country an outsized importance in world affairs. It may reflect a light form of self-censorship, borne of a (commendable) desire to internationalise the book for a broader regional audience. If Australia's relative omission achieves this goal, and *Contest* gets read in capitals across the region, it will be a warranted compromise. But Australian readers should be ready for several 'but what about us?' moments.

In the long run, the lasting influence of Professor Medcalf's book will likely be due to its middle power thesis. There have been (and will continue to be) good books on the Indo-Pacific; and the market for PRC-scepticism is now as saturated as that for PRC-boosterism. By those yardsticks, *Contest* is a fine and read-worthy book which traverses fairly well-trodden territory. But if the reader pays close attention, they will see that Professor Medcalf's lasting contribution has been to demonstrate how the Indo-Pacific is not just a theatre for some US–PRC 'great game' but actually a complex and multipolar domain. And that its future—for better or worse—will be significantly written by the middle powers. *Contest* might well have been subtitled '*Why middle powers will map the future*'.

Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies

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