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Peter Layton is a visiting fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University; a Royal United Services Institute associate fellow; and a fellow of the Australian Security Leaders Climate Group. He has extensive defence experience, a doctorate on grand strategy and taught national security strategy at the US National Defense University. Author of the book *Grand Strategy*, he is co-authoring, *Warfare in the Robotic Age*, due for release in 2024. His work is accessible at https://peterlayton.academia.edu/research.

Adam Lockyer is an associate professor in strategic studies at Macquarie University. He held the 2015 Fulbright Scholarship in US–Australian Alliance Studies at Georgetown University. Before joining the Department of Security Studies and Criminology, he was a research fellow in defence studies at the University of New South Wales. He has also held positions at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, the Center for Strategic and

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Sonya Russell is director of International Policy Division's Pacific Strategic Events and Implementation section in the Department of Defence, having held policy officer roles in the Pacific, Afghanistan and Southeast Asia sections. Previously, she has held policy roles with Headquarters Joint Operations Command and on Operation HIGHROAD in Afghanistan. In 2021, she was posted to Port Moresby as the inaugural strategic policy adviser to Papua New Guinea's Department of Defence. She is a graduate of the Australian Command and Staff Course.

Mick Ryan is a globally recognised commentator on the military campaign in Ukraine and a nonresident fellow at the Lowy Institute. He spent 35 years in the Australian Army, completing his Army career as the commander of the Australian Defence College. His operational service includes deployments to East Timor, Iraq and southern Afghanistan. His book, *War Transformed: The Future of Twenty-First-Century Great Power Competition and Conflict*, (US Naval Institute Press, 2022), was published in 2022.

Fred Smith has been an honorary fellow at the Department of Security Studies and Criminology – Macquarie University since 2021, and lectured in the department for eight years. He served as a military intelligence officer in the United States Navy for 30 years, where he gathered extensive experience in Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, retiring as a Captain in 2012.

Matthew Sussex is a senior fellow at the Centre for Defence Research, Australian Defence College and adjunct associate professor at the Griffith Asia Institute. Previously, he was academic director at the National Security College, the Australian National University. His research specialisations centre on strategic studies and political warfare, with a particular focus on Russia, Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific. His recent books include *The Palgrave Handbook of National Security* (Palgrave, 2021), and *BRI and the Future of Regional Order* (Lexington, 2020).

Peter Tesch is one of Australia's most senior and experienced national security and foreign affairs officials. Most recently, he was deputy secretary for strategy, policy and industry at the Department of Defence (2019–22). During his 32-year career in Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, he was ambassador to the Russian Federation (2016–19), ambassador to Germany (2009–13) and the head of the international security division (2014–15). He also served as deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, New York (2002–05).

Alex Waterman is a research fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg and a leading member of the Counterinsurgency Forum, connecting British Land Warfare Centre doctrine writers with early career academics. His research interests include insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN), in particular exploring the continuum of practice between Western and non-Western forms of COIN. From 2019 to 2021, he worked at the University of Leeds as a postdoctoral research fellow with Dr James Worrall on the 'Dancing with Devils: How do Militaries Integrate Understanding of Rebels and Militias into Counterinsurgency Doctrines?' research project, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

Kyle Wilson is a visiting fellow at the ANU's Centre for European Studies. He has over 30-years of experience in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Office of National Assessments as a senior analyst of Russia and the Former Soviet Union, and as head of DFAT's China political and bilateral section. He also held postings in Warsaw (1982–84), Moscow (1988–92) and Beijing (1995–2000). Wilson has also served as official Russian interpreter for Australian heads of state, prime ministers and ministers.

James Worrall is associate professor in international relations and Middle East studies in the school of politics and international studies at the University of Leeds. His broad research fields are in comparative politics, security studies and international relations, with particular interest in strategy, counterinsurgency, rebel governance and localised order(s) in civil war. His work often focuses on the Gulf and Levant. One of his current research projects, working with Dr Alex Waterman, is 'Dancing with Devils: How do Militaries Integrate Understanding of Rebels and Militias into Counterinsurgency Doctrines?', funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. He is co-editor of the journal *Civil Wars.*

Editorial

While this issue was being assembled, the announcement of the next stage of the AUKUS agreement was delivered, followed closely by the release of the independent Defence Strategic Review (DSR) outlining shifts for the organisation that reflect the accelerating strategic challenges in our environment. Both announcements ushered in a strategic and policy transformation for the Department of Defence that will have far-reaching consequences not only for the organisation but also across the whole of government. However, in this issue we scrutinise the changing strategic posture in our region and the war that continues in Ukraine – a war that can inform Australian thinking about an environment that we are striving to avoid.

To that end, our first two articles contextualise a part of the strategic environment that Australia's DSR aims to help navigate. Bennett, Lockyer and Smith posit 'time' and 'space' are two key elements of defence strategy, and how analysing strategic risk in these arenas can provide a new framework for defence planning, particularly in response to force modernisation in the Indo-Pacific. We then turn our attention to India. After what could be characterised as Indian Prime Minister Modi's 'rock star tour' to Australia in May this year, David Bolton examines whether India can leverage its economic growth to shape its strategic environment through military means. This complex task sees the author analyse the concept of military power and military strategic influence, deriving a contextual perspective on the future of military influence in the region.

For the first time in the Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies, we have commissioned a special focus section on Ukraine and Russia. The 'three-day war' that sees little end in sight a year on has generated abundant analysis, challenged assumptions and already taught us significant lessons. Our guest

editor Dr Matthew Sussex, one of Australia's leading academic scholars on Russian foreign policy, with a substantial academic and commentary presence, has assembled some of Australia's best military and strategic thinkers on Russia alongside deep subject matter analysis and insights from international scholars.

This is followed by our commentary section in which Andrew Maher examines resistance strategy, a strategy oft forgotten under the weight of great power competition. But against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the author offers lessons for Australia, Europe and the Indo-Pacific. The theme of conceptualisation continues with Rachel Baker articulating what framing and definitional challenges arise in the face of determining Defence's sovereign industrial capability. She argues that the way in which we frame a concept can significantly impact paths taken and outcomes delivered.

We round out this issue with a fascinating interview between Professor Michael Evans, the General Sir Francis Hassett Chair of Military Studies and Alex Waterman and James Worrall on the subject of developing Australian counterinsurgent doctrine from 2008 to 2009. While this interview was part of a project that is still ongoing, we have been given permission to publish the interview in its entirety for the first time.

As the winter months set in the southern hemisphere, we offer a range of books to add to the bedside table, bookshelf or e-reader to while away the longer nights – of course only after you have digested all that this issue has to offer!

Finally, Professor Evans acknowledges the passing of Senator Jim Molan, AO, DSC MAJGEN (Rtd) in January, a great loss to the Australian defence and security community and the profession of arms. The team at the AJDSS would also like to acknowledge the exceptional loss of our editorial review board member and former commander of the Australian Defence College, Rear Admiral James Goldrick, AO, CSC, RAN (Rtd) who passed away in March 2023. We will be bringing you a tribute to James in our next edition.

So, as we settle into the second half of the year and await the challenges and opportunities over the horizon – we hope you read, relax and enjoy!

Dr Cathy Moloney

Editor

A more dangerous neighbourhood: implications of Indo-Pacific arms modernisation for Australian defence strategy

Nell Bennett, Adam Lockyer and Fred Smith

Abstract

Australian defence policy has traditionally rested upon the belief that geographic isolation and technological superiority protected Australia from conventional attack. These assumptions have been called into question by rapid economic development across the Indo-Pacific. The recent Defence Strategic Review (the DSR) has stated that Australia can no longer rely on geographic isolation or relative technological advantage. Australia has entered a period of unprecedented strategic competition. This paper offers a supplementary framework to assist planners looking to implement the recommendations of the DSR. We argue that Australia needs a broader vocabulary and more precise language for discussing threats to territorial integrity. Terms such as 'defence' and 'attack' are no longer sufficient to capture the spectrum of risks. To explain this, we use the prism of time and space. Time and space are two key elements of defence strategy. By analysing strategic risk within these two arenas, we can provide a new framework for defence planning.

We first examine the implications of force modernisation in the Indo-Pacific for Australian defence planners' understandings of time. We argue that Australia's procurement times have become longer than those of some of its regional neighbours, such as China, which in turn is eroding its technological advantage. The changes within Australia's region have also affected strategists' notions of space. While time and space are shrinking, we argue that this is not occurring in a unified pattern. The warning time for high-tech or grey-zone aggressions may be diminished; however, Australia still maintains a time/space buffer from conventional attack. This is because no other state has developed the capabilities to execute a conventional attack upon the Australian mainland without a

forward operating base. We, therefore, support the DSR recommendations that Australian maintain and expand its influence in South-East Asia and the South Pacific. Specifically, to ensure that no hostile power acquires such a foothold in Australia's vicinity.

Introduction

Between 1945 and roughly 2010, Australian defence policy rested upon the belief that geographic isolation coupled with technological superiority largely insulated Australia's territory from a major conventional attack.[1] Over the past decade, however, these assumptions have been called into question by the rapid economic development and force modernisation across the Indo-Pacific.[2] The result has been that the strategic debate within Australia has hardened into two opposing schools of thought.[3] On one side, analysts argue that Australia's geographic advantages should form the basis of its defence policy. Australia remains a long way from its main sources of threat across long expanses of water. It makes sense, they argue, to plan to resist within Australia's home-waters with all the associated benefits, while forcing opposition to fight at the end of a very long and vulnerable logistical chain.[4] On the other, it is posited that new technology overrides strategic geography. Peter Jennings, for instance, argues that: 'Distance is no longer equivalent to safety from our strategic perspective.'[5]

It was against this backdrop of an increasingly polarised strategic debate that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called for a review of Australian defence strategy and invited the nation to reconceptualise its defence strategy. At the heart of the current strategic debate is the question of how the region's force modernisation is affecting Australia's defence across time and space. The DSR argues that the 'Defence of Australia' model is no longer fit for purpose.

1 Paul Dibb, 'The self-reliant defence of Australia: the history of an idea', in Ron Huisken and Meredith Thatcher (eds), *History as Policy: Framing the Debate on the Future of Australia's Defence Policy*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2007, pp 11–28, p 13. https://doi.org/10.22459/HP.12.2007 We understand 'conventional attack' to mean an armed attack on one state openly perpetrated by the regular army of another state.

2 Hugh White, 'Four decades of the defence of Australia: reflections on Australian defence policy over the past 40 years', in Ron Huisken and Meredith Thatcher (eds), *History as Policy: Framing the Debate On the Future of Australia's Defence Policy*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2007, pp 163–188, pp 174–175.

3 Despite the debate's current re-emergence, it has long antecedents in Australian defence history. See, for example, Michael Evans, 'Overcoming the Creswell–Foster divide in Australian strategy: the challenge for the twenty-first century Policy-Makers', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2007, 61(2): 193–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710701358352

4 Sam Roggenveen, 'Australia, China, AUKUS and the squandered advantage', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 20 March 2023. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-china-aukus-squandered-advantage

5 Peter Jennings quoted in Peter Hartcher and Matthew Knott, 'How an attack on Taiwan could reach Australia', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 2023.

In its place, it presents a new approach called 'National Defence'. This broad framework 'encompasses the defence of Australia against potential threats arising from major power competition, including the prospect of conflict'.[6] National Defence is an ambitious, whole of nation approach that requires a substantial reorientation of defence planning. However, we argue that it is not necessary to radically alter Australian defence strategy. Rather, we propose a pragmatic middle ground between the two established schools of thought. We agree that technological advances mean that time and space are contracting. Long-range ballistic missiles, cyber attacks and grey-zone tactics obviate orthodox geopolitics. It stands to reason, therefore, that defence planners take a broad view of Australia's strategic environment. However, we do not discount the significance of strategic geography. When it comes to defending against a conventional attack, space still matters. As Hugh White observed, military operations involve inflicting damage at a physical location. Space can be traversed but only at a cost.[7]

In this paper, we present a conceptual midpoint between the two main schools of thought. We do this by examining the new challenges facing Australia through the prisms of time and space. Our rationale for this is simple: time and space are the two domains that provide the basis for all strategic calculations. This observation is not new. Carl von Clausewitz wrote that the calculation of time and space is 'universally at the foundation of strategy, and is to a certain extent its daily bread'.[8] In a similar vein, Napoleon argued that strategy is the 'art of making use of time and space'.[9] More recently, Australian strategist, Andrew Carr argued that strategy is, in essence, 'action in time and space'.[10] However, we argue that all too frequently these arenas are viewed in isolation. Our pragmatic middle ground considers time and space in tandem, and thereby permits a nuanced conceptualisation of Australian defence strategy. One that at once acknowledges the impact of technology and appreciates the significance of strategic geography.

Our argument unfolds as follows. We first present an outline of the current divisions within Australian defence analysis. We then explore the two strategic dimensions of time and space. We first examine the implications of force modernisation in

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6   Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, Australian Government, 2023, p 5.

7   Hugh White, *How to Defend Australia*, La Trobe University Press, Carlton, 2019, p 49.

8   Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, N Trübner & Co, London, 1873, p 102.

9   Kevin Cunningham and Robert R Tomes, 'Space-time orientations and contemporary political-military thought', *Armed Forces & Society*, 2004, 31(1): 119–140, p 119.

10 Andrew Carr, 'It's about time: strategy and temporal phenomena', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2021, 44(3): 303–324, p 303.

the Indo-Pacific for Australian defence planners' understandings of time. It is argued that Australia's procurement time is slipping behind that of its regional neighbours, which in turn is eroding its technological advantage. The proliferation of advanced military technologies is reducing warning time by enabling rapid and even instantaneous attacks. These advances have reduced reaction time, which can have serious implications for strategic decision-making. The changes within Australia's region have also affected strategists' notions of space. Traditionally, Australia's strategic geography has been considered one of the nation's greatest defensive assets.[11] However, in the age of hypersonic weapons this may no longer be the case. While Australia may find itself protected from conventional attack by its geographic isolation, this may no longer hold true of other forms of aggression.

While we argue that the strategic value of time and space are undergoing rapid change, we also note that this change is not progressing at a uniform pace. Australia is still protected from conventional attack by its strategic geography. No power, however advanced its military, has developed the capabilities to execute a large-scale conventional attack upon the Australian mainland without a forward operating base.[12] We therefore argue that the priority for Australian defence policy is to maintain and expand its influence in South-East Asia and the South Pacific to ensure that no potentially hostile power acquires such a foothold in Australia's vicinity.

Two schools of thought

There are two broad schools of thought in Australian defence analysis. One contends that strategic geography should be the foundation of defence planning. The other argues that new technologies have overridden traditional geopolitics.[13] The first camp includes defence scholars such as Paul Dibb, Hugh White and Sam Roggeveen, who continue to argue that strategic geography is as relevant

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11   Dibb, 'The self-reliant defence of Australia', p 13.

12   Small-scale conventional attacks would, of course, be possible, which might include air strikes (potentially by aircraft carrier–based planes), submarine operations or limited amphibious raids.

13   Evans, 'Overcoming the Creswell–Foster divide in Australian strategy'.

as it has ever been to Australian defence planning.[14] Paul Dibb, for example, argued that geography has 'lasting strategic relevance'. Hugh White noted that 'even with today's technology – and most likely with tomorrow's too – how much it costs overall to bomb a facility, shoot down an aircraft or sink a ship depends on how far you have to go to do it'[15] On the other side, are those who contend that regional force modernisation has diminished the importance of geography. Consequently, it is better to work with allies and confront threats as far from Australia as possible. It has long been a tenet of Australian defence planning that it is better to fight them 'over there' than to fight them 'over here'; but now, due to increasing range and speed of weaponry, Australia has little choice. From this perspective, Australia is facing a perilous future. For decades, Australia has relied on its technological superiority. However, rapid force modernisation in the Asia–Pacific has eroded that position. The result is that while Australia was once assured of its relative technological advantage, its regional neighbours, in particular China, have closed the gap. The speed of regional force modernisation, in turn, undermines Australia's advantageous strategic geography. Australia may still be an island nation, but the proliferation of ballistic missiles, attack aircraft and the continued development of hypersonic weapons are increasingly placing Australian targets within striking distance. As Thomas Shugart argues, 'Four thousand kilometres — the rough distance between Australia and the nearest point on mainland China — sounds like a long way, and until fairly recently it was.' Shugart warns that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is, 'developing the military capability to put at risk Australia's territorial integrity'.[16] Andrew Davies argues that defence planners should focus on countering long-range ballistic missiles, cyber attacks, information warfare, economic coercion, and other so-called 'grey-zone' tactics, rather than outdated notions of geography.[17]

14 Hugh White, 'The Jakarta switch: why Australia needs to pin its hopes (not fears) on a great and powerful Indonesia', *Australian Foreign Affairs*, 2018, no. 3, pp 7–30; Hugh White, 'In denial: defending Australia as China looks south', *Australian Foreign Affairs*, 2019, no. 6, pp 5–27; Paul Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2006, 60(2): 247–264; Paul Dibb, 'The return of geography', in Russell W. Glenn (ed), *New Directions in Strategic Thinking 2.0 ANU Strategic & Defence Studies Centre's Golden Anniversary Conference Proceedings*, ANU Press, Acton, 2018, pp 91–104, https://doi.org/10.22459/NDST.07.2018; Paul Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2006, 60(2): 247–264, p 253; Rory Medcalf, *Contest for the Indo-Pacific*, La Trobe University Press, 2020; Sam Roggeveen, *The Echidna Strategy: Australia's Search for Power and Peace*, La Trobe University Press, 2023.

15 White, *How to Defend Australia*, 2019, p 49.

16 Thomas Shugart, *Australia and the growing reach of China's military*, Lowy Institute, August 2021, p 3. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/australia-growing-reach-china-s-military

17 Andrew Davies, 'Australia's shrinking advantages: how technology might defeat geography' in Stephan Frühling and Andrew O'Neil, (eds), *Alliances, Nuclear Weapons and Escalation: Managing Deterrence in the 21st Century*, ANU Press, Acton, 2021, pp 151–160.

Faced with these two apparently irreconcilable views of Australian defence, how are planners to determine where to invest Australia's finite resources? This article adopts a pragmatic middle ground. It argues that both schools of thought make important arguments, but that they are more complimentary than contradictory. We argue that force modernisation has made Australia vulnerable to long-range attacks and other forms of coercion; however, this has not entirely negated Australia's geographic advantage. By analysing the two strategic arenas of time and space, we explain how defence planners can combine the insights of Australia's pre-eminent thinkers into an actionable policy for the defence of the nation.

Time

Time is a fundamental aspect of military strategy and defence planning. As Colin Gray states, 'the importance of time and timing is stamped on every page of modern strategy'.[18] This is due to the fact that it is a 'permanent reality', even more so than physical geography.[19] In spite of this, there is often little explicit discussion of time in military strategy and planning documents.[20] This is surprising as 'in strategy, time is as much a part of the operating environment as geography'.[21] Space, or physical geography, on the other hand, has been the subject of much strategic and policy debate and has even formed the basis of one of the predominant areas of strategic thought, geopolitics.

There are three aspects of time that clearly illustrate the challenges faced by Australian defence strategists. These are procurement time, warning time and reaction time. Australia's procurement time has slowed relative to that of China. This has the potential to generate a capability gap that the Chinese can exploit. One reason for this change is that technological advancement has contracted the comfortable warning time that has informed Australia's procurement cycle. Australia can no longer rely on a ten-year lead-up to any significant territorial attack. Technological advances have also compressed reaction time. Hypersonic missiles can reach their targets within minutes. As an example, President Vladimir Putin claimed that Russia possesses hypersonic missiles that, if fired from an aircraft or shift near Bermuda, could traverse the 800-mile distance and strike the Pentagon within five minutes. Similarly, China has conducted flight tests that demonstrated it can deploy hypersonics from its own coast and hit

18   Colin S Gray, *Modern Strategy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p 172.

19   Colin S Grey, *Theory of Strategy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018, p 7.

20   Cunningham and Tomes, 'Space-time orientations and contemporary political-military thought', 2004, p 113. Carr, 'It's about time: strategy and temporal phenomena', 2021, p 303.

21   Royal College of Defence Studies, *Thinking Strategically*, 3rd edn, British Crown Copyright, 2010, p 12.

Guam in a matter of minutes. This provides decision-makers with precious little time to receive and verify intelligence, and even less to formulate a proportionate response.[22]

Procurement time

Procurement time is the time that it takes for a state to identify a need, select capabilities appropriate for addressing that need, and acquire and operationalise the new capabilities. Australia has traditionally maintained a technological advantage over its regional neighbours. Indeed, according to the 2016 White Paper, Australia's defence is premised on its 'ability to deploy, operate and sustain technologically superior capabilities'.[23] However, as the DSR notes, 'Defence's current approach to capability acquisition is not suitable given our strategic circumstances, and there is a clear need for a more efficient acquisition process.'[24] Procurement is often at the heart of Australia's defence debates. Procurement's centrality to defence planning is compounded by the fact that it is one of the few strategic factors that is under Australia's own control. That is, most factors in strategic planning are externalities, which Australia can attempt to influence but rarely controls. In contrast, where Canberra decides to invest is largely its own decision.

China's force modernisation is currently out-pacing Australia's own procurement schedule, which in turn is causing a significant shift in the technological balance.[25] While China does not appear to have the capabilities to directly attack Australian bases from its mainland, it may develop these capabilities. Developing technologies, including hypersonic glide vehicles or precise conventional intercontinental-range missiles may well be able to reach Australia from the Chinese mainland. Another consideration is the strategic advantage afforded to China by its artificial islands in South China Sea. Intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) launched from such a vantage point. could pose a real threat to Australian bases.[26] Michael Shoebridge argues that Australia's ability to operationalise new technology 'is at best mixed, slowed by the understandable conservatism about the promise of new technologies balanced against the power

22 Jeffrey R Smith, 'Hypersonic missiles are unstoppable. And they're starting a new global arms race', *The New York Times*, 19 June 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/magazine/hypersonic-missiles.html

23 Department of Defence, *2016 Defence Industry Policy Statement* [PDF], Australian Government, Canberra, 2016, p 19. https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2016-02/apo-nid93621.pdf

24 Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p 91.

25 Gavin Brennen, Simon Devitt, Tara Roberson and Peter Rohde, *An Australian strategy for the quantum revolution* [PDF], ASPI, Policy Brief Report no. 43/2021, 2021, p 8. http://ad-aspi.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-05/Quantum%20revolution-v2.pdf

26 Thomas Shugart, *Australia and the growing reach of China's military*, Lowy Institute Analysis, August 2021, p 11.

of well-understood solutions and approaches'.[27] The result is that Australia's comparative advantage is being eroded. As Andrew Davies states, the 'next generation of theatre and global-range weapons will only continue the trend'.[28] Increased affluence is enabling states to invest in cutting-edge capabilities, including longer-range precision-guided missiles, hypersonics, directed energy weapons, unmanned systems and quantum computing.[29] Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich have argued that:

> Technological change is progressively reducing the net cost of striking fixed targets such as power plants, cities, transportation hubs, or other civilian value targets with precision-guided ballistic missiles at ever-increasing ranges.[30]

In 2019, Asia's defence spending constituted 27.7% of the world's total defence expenditure.[31] According to the 2016 White Paper, over the next two decades 'half of the world's submarines' and 'at least half of the world's advanced combat aircraft armed with extended range missiles and supported by highly sophisticated information networks will be operating in the region'.[32] China, in particular, has invested heavily in long-range strike capabilities.[33] One example of this is China's DF-26 IRBMs. According to the US military, China possessed 1-30 IRBM missile launchers in 2018, 80 in 2019 and 200 in 2020. Making a conservative assumption that each launcher has only one reload missile each, that would put the Chinese IRBM arsenal at a minimum of 400.[34] Not an invincible force, but one that must be countered. Gavin Brennen, Simon Devitt, Tara Roberson and Peter Rohde argue that Australia's failure to keep pace with quantum technology could result in a geopolitical disadvantage. Specifically, they argue that investment in quantum computing could tip the balance of

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27 Michael Shoebridge, 'How will the ADF get the technology edge it needs to win?', *The Strategist,* ASPI, 23 July 2021. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/how-will-the-adf-get-the-technology-edge-it-needs-to-win/

28 Davies, 'Australia's shrinking advantages: how technology might defeat geography', 2021, p 151.

29 Stefan Markowski, Rob Bourke and Robert Wylie, 'Defence industry in Australia' in Keith Hartley and Jean Belin (eds), *The Economics of the Global Defence Industry*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2019, pp 462–481, p 477; Andrew Davies and Patrick Kennedy, *From little things: quantum technologies and their application to Defence*, Special Report 112, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Barton, 2017. https://www.aspi.org.au/report/little-things-quantum-technologies-and-their-application-defence

30 Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, 'Future warfare in the western Pacific: Chinese antiaccess/area denial', US AirSea battle, and command of the commons in east Asia', *International Security*, 2016, 41(1): 7–48, p 14.

31 Andrew T H Tan, *Security and Conflict in East Asia*, Routledge, London, 2020, p 208.

32 Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 2016, pp 49–50, https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-white-paper; Markowski, Bourke and Wylie, 'Defence industry in Australia' 2019, p 477.

33 Peter Jennings, 'Does Australia need a 'Plan B' for its defence policy?', *United Service,* 2019, 70(4): pp 5–8, p 7.

34 Shugart, *Australia and the growing reach of China's military*, 2021, p 8.

regional power. They note that in 2015, Australia was the sixth largest investor in quantum technology among the nine economies pursuing this technology. As of 2021, Australia was ranked last.[35] Major General Mick Ryan has argued it is not just economic investment that is lacking. Rather, there is insufficient appreciation of the importance of education and training in recent white papers.[36]

One reason Australia is falling behind in overall investment is that it is too focused on a small range of 'exquisite platforms' that take years to develop.[37] As stated in the DSR: 'The increasing volume and complexity of capability projects is overwhelming Defence's capability system, its limited workforce and its resource base.'[38] Ambitious projects not only take longer to build, but they are also more prone to delay. For example, the Australian decision to invest in nuclear-powered submarines through the AUKUS technology-sharing partnership means it is likely to be at least two decades before the new submarines are operational.[39] In contrast, Singapore has pragmatically acquired the Type 218SG submarine, based upon the German export version of the Type 214 Classes and anticipate they should be delivered within five to six years after their purchase date, taking into account covid-19 related delays.[40] A recent audit report found there is an average delay of 23 months across all current Australian defence projects, which is attributed to an underestimation of the complexity of these undertakings.[41]

Threats, on the other hand, are evolving at an increasing pace. In particular, in the realm of irregular warfare. It could be argued that Australia does not need nuclear-powered submarines and their long procurement time to meet the lesser threat of irregular warfare, Indeed, Ulas Yildirim argues that Australia needs to be prepared to fight in the grey zone, with rapid procurement for the dynamic

35 Brennen, Devitt, Roberson and Rohde, *An Australian strategy for the quantum revolution*, 2021, pp 8–14.

36 Major General Mick Ryan, 'An Australian intellectual edge for conflict and competition in the 21st century', *Centre of Gravity*, no. 48, ANU Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 2019, p 6.

37 Ulas Yildirim, 'Defence needs to change its approach to equip the ADF better and faster', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 23 March 2022. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/defence-needs-to-change-its-approach-to-equip-the-adf-better-and-faster/

38 Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p 92.

39 Andrew Nicholls, Jackson Dowie and Marcus Hellyer, 'Implementing Australia's nuclear submarine program', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 14 December 2021. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/implementing-australias-nuclear-submarine-program/

40 Charbel Kadib, 'Defence grilled over 2054 delivery of future submarines', *Defence Connect,* 28 October 2020, https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/maritime-antisub/7084-defence-grilled-over-2054-delivery-of-future-submarines; Ridzwan Rahmat, 'Singapore›s first Type 218SG submarine delayed by covid-19', *Janes,* 30 June 2020. https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/singapores-first-type-218sg-submarine-delayed-by-covid-19

41 Australian National Audit Office, *2020–21 Major Projects Report, Auditor General Report no. 13*, Department of Defence, 13 December 2021. https://www.anao.gov.au/work/major-projects-report/2020-21-major-projects-report

threat environment.[42] However, the threat of conventional attack to Australia or its neighbours cannot be discounted. As Alan Dupont observes:

> It is essential that we have a balanced force capable of addressing all reasonable defence contingencies that may arise over the next 20 years, even if there is only minimal capability in some areas. Capabilities that have been discarded cannot be grown back in an emergency.[43]

The ADF is already demonstrating agility regarding cyber threats, and these capacities can be enhanced through the AUKUS pact. Jocelinn Kang has argued that AUKUS can act as a 'technology accelerator' by 'enhancing joint technical capabilities and interoperability among Australia, the UK and the US', and thereby strengthening Indo-Pacific security.[44]

Australia's slow and steady procurement cycle can be exploited by a rival power.[45] Andrew Carr argues:

> [w]hen two states hold different conceptions of time, are working on different time horizons or have differing views about the likely ordering of events, a strategic opportunity can present in the form of surprise attacks.[46]

The differences between two states' concept of time can provide an opportunity for a potential aggressor. A fast-moving enemy can strike before its opponent has developed sufficient capabilities to counter its attack.[47] If tactical surprises are inevitable, a robust defence must use 'effective strategic warning to prepare to succeed despite surprise'.[48]

The Australian Government should address this situation by rethinking its approach to procurement. As Malcolm Davis observes, '[s]ailing on an assumption of calm waters and accepting a two-decade acquisition cycle are no longer appropriate'. Complex platforms take time to develop. However, Australia can identify capabilities that can be acquired concurrently, either off-the-shelf

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42   Yildirim, 'Defence needs to change its approach to equip the ADF better and faster', 2022.

43   Alan Dupont, 'The next Defence White Paper: challenges facing Defence', *United Service*, 2015, 66(1): 14–16, p 16.

44   Jocelinn Kang, 'Enhancing cyber capabilities through AUKUS', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 16 September 2022. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/enhancing-cyber-capabilities-through-aukus/

45   Malcolm Davis, 'Forward defence in depth for Australia', *Strategic Insights 139,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2019, pp 1–16. https://www.aspi.org.au/report/forward-defence-depth-australia

46   Carr, 'It's about time: strategy and temporal phenomena', 2021, p 311.

47   Carr, 'It's about time: strategy and temporal phenomena', 2021, p 311.

48   Jack Davis, *Strategic warning: if surprise is inevitable, what role for analysis?*, Occasional Paper, Sherman Kent Centre for Intelligence Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency, Langley, 2003, pp 1–16, p 4.

or through AUKUS collaboration.[49] As recommended in the DSR, the priority should be to 'streamline and accelerate the capability acquisition process for projects designated as strategically urgent or of low complexity'.[50] In addition, more focus can also be placed on the domestic production of the consumables of war. In decades past, Australia could rely on the US to supply it with any necessary munitions in times of crisis.[51] However, in the event of a high-end contingency with China, the US may not be able to provide its allies with the necessary supply. As Michael Shoebridge argued back in 2018:

> Defence needs to stop focusing just on the low-number, high-capability approach it has used for decades and embrace instead a force design that includes mass capabilities able to be deployed, lost and replaced in numbers.[52]

Warning time

Strategic warning time can be understood as 'the time a country estimates an adversary would need to launch a major attack against it, once the adversary's intent to do so has been established'.[53] Or, as the Honourable Kim Beazley submitted while the Minister of Defence, 'the process by which government adjusts defence planning to political and military developments'.[54] Since the 1970s, two fundamental assumptions have underpinned Australian defence policy. First that Australia's military capabilities should be sufficient to counter low and medium-level contingencies, and that the capabilities to launch a massive assault on Australia did not exist in the region and would take many years to develop.[55]

In the 1987 Defence White Paper, it was argued that Australia's concept of warning was different to that of nations in the northern hemisphere. While they faced 'direct and identifiable military threats from nearby forces to which they may have to respond in timescales measured in days and weeks, Australia faces

49 Malcolm Davis, 'Getting Australia's defence capability right in time to deter a future enemy', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 7 February 2022.
    https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/getting-australias-defence-capability-right-in-time-to-deter-a-future-enemy/

50 Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p 93.

51 Stephan Fruehling, 'Does the AUKUS submarine deal compromise Australia's sovereignty?', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 1 October 2021.
    https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/does-the-aukus-submarine-deal-compromise-australias-sovereignty/

52 Michael Shoebridge, 'The return of combat loses?' *The Strategist,* ASPI, 18 September 2018.
    https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-return-of-combat-losses/

53 Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Australian Government, Canberra, 2000, p 15.

54 Kim Beazley 'Thinking defence: key concepts in Australian defence planning', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 1988, 42(2): 71–76.

55 Beazley, 'Thinking defence: key concepts in Australian defence planning', 1988, p 73; Richard Brabin-Smith, 'Force expansion and warning time', *Security Challenges,* 2012, 8(2): 33–48.

no presently identifiable major military threat, except for the remote possibility of global war'.[56] This line of reasoning was continued in the 1994 White Paper, which argued that no country in Australia's region had the capability or intention to launch a conventional attack on Australia, and that 'the capabilities required could not be developed from the existing low base in much under a decade'.[57] The 2000 and 2009 White Papers took a similar approach to warning time, with the prediction that Australia would most likely remain safe from external threat until 2030.[58]

The world of today, however, is not the same as that of 2009, or even 2016. Australia can no longer assume that it is sheltered from global power struggles by its remote geography. The DSR states that Australia's region 'faces increasing competition that operates on multiple levels'.[59] Australia is increasingly vulnerable to 'coercive strategic bombardment' or other kinds of military coercion.[60] The DSR recommends that defence planners consider three time periods, the three-year period from 2023 to 2025; the five years from 2026 to 2030; and 2031 and beyond. However, we argue that a more fundamental reconceptualisation of time is needed. Time does not operate in the same way across different threats. Therefore, time should be understood in relation to the threat itself. Medium to low-end contingencies, including ballistic-mission attacks, naval strikes and raids, are now either already possible or seem likely to be so within the next five to ten years. Yet, these developments must be tempered against the fact that these technological developments do not put Australia in peril of a major conventional assault. High-end contingencies, such as invasion, continue to be beyond the reach of any regional power within the next ten years. As John Bruni argues:

> modernising and building a fleet of warships and fighter planes to alter the regional balance of power and threaten Australia is not something that any state in Southeast Asia or the South Pacific can do easily, stealthily or affordably.[61]

56   Department of Defence*, The Defence of Australia (1987 Defence White Paper),* Australian Government, Canberra, 1987, p 30. https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-white-paper

57   Department of Defence, *Defending Australia (1994 Defence White Paper)*, Australian Government, Canberra, 1994, p 23. https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-white-paper

58   Department of Defence*, Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030,* Australian Government, Canberra, 2009.

59   Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p 5.

60   Biddle and Oelrich, 'Future warfare in the western Pacific: Chinese antiaccess/area denial, US AirSea battle, and command of the commons in east Asia', 2016, p 14.

61   John Bruni, 'What is the real question at the heart of Dibb's recent musings on Australia's defence?', *SAGE International Australia*, 2020, pp 1–7, p 4.

As such, although on the one hand force modernisation across the region is increasingly Australia's vulnerability, it remains at the lower end of the escalation ladder. Major conventional attack or invasion remains a remote possibility with the time horizon of current strategic guidance.

Another factor that challenges Australia's traditional understanding of warning time is the increase in grey-zone activities, acts that are 'designed to coerce countries in ways that seek to avoid military conflict'.[62] While grey-zone activities are not new, their prominence within Australia's strategic environment has increased markedly over the past two decades, facilitated by new developments in cyberwarfare.[63] Indeed, China has effectively been employing these tactics against Australia and other nations in the Indo-Pacific,[64] particularly in the South China Sea. In response, Australia can improve its warning systems by augmenting intelligence capabilities. Nicholas Barber, for example, argues that Australia needs improved surveillance and reconnaissance to counteract the uncertainty and volatility of Australia's strategic environment.[65] However, while effective intelligence may result in timely warnings, this provides no guarantee that warnings will be heeded. History is littered with examples of surprise attacks that were effective despite warnings.[66] As Richard Betts states, 'fixation on intelligence channels… diverts attention from other aspects of the problem'.[67] Indeed, avoiding surprise is an unrealistic goal.[68] Instead, Australia should limit the damage that could be caused by a surprise attack.

Reaction time

Traditionally, military strategists have approached the issue of time with the objective of increasing the speed of action.[69] States have strived for rapid domination of their adversaries, while attempting to draw out their opponent's campaign. The rational is simple: short wars are more desirable as they are less costly and

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62   Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update,* Australian Government, Canberra, 2020, p 12. https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update

63   Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, p 12.

64   Davis, 'Forward defence in depth for Australia', p 2.

65   Nicholas Barber, 'Making sense of accelerated warfare: Army's adaptive ISR capability', *Australian Army Journal*, 2020, 16(1):61–77, p 72.

66   Davis, *Strategic warning: if surprise is inevitable, what role for analysis?*, p 5.

67   Richard K Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 1982, p 17.

68   Davis, *Strategic warning: if surprise is inevitable, what role for analysis?*, p 56.

69   Cunningham and Tomes, 'Space-time orientations and contemporary political-military thought', 2004, p 119; Pascal Vennesson, 'Fighting, fast and slow?', in Sten Rynning, Olivier Schmitt and Amelie Theussen (eds), *War Time: Temporality and the Decline of Western Military Power*, The Brookings Institutions, Washington DC, 2021, pp 211–230, p 211.

risky.[70] Accordingly, planners have tended to seek 'the fastest pace or tempo of operations that will enable them to exploit mobility and surprise'.[71] However, fast-paced operations carry their own risks. Compressed timeframes leave little room for strategic calculation and reassessment after errors have been committed. Additionally, recent technological advances have compressed the action-reaction cycle to the point where near instantaneous attacks and automatic retaliation are possible. This can lead to what General John R Allen and Amir Husain refer to as 'hyperwar… a type of conflict where human decision-making is almost entirely absent from the observe-orient-decide-act (OODA) loop'. The result of this is that planners and decision-makers are placed in a position in which their only viable option is to engage in almost instantaneous responses.[72]

The new pace of conflict has provided strategist with certain advantages. As Kevin Cunningham and Robert R Tomes write, 'Compressing one's decision cycle yields a competitive advantage in some decision areas (as measured quantitatively, not qualitatively) during conflicts and military engagements'.[73] However, these technologies have created new challenges for defence strategists and decision-makers. The DSR opines that 'rising tensions and reduced warning time for conflict' are resulting in an increased risk of military escalation or miscalculation.[74] An increase in the use of artificial intelligence, hypersonic weapons, as well as semi and fully automatous vehicles has the potential to challenge human cognition. The speed of hypersonic weapons provides their target with a limited window of time with which to formulate a response. This new tempo of conflict raises the risk of strategic miscalculation. Back in 1994, David Jablonsky argued that new technological development could increase the probability of error and miscalculation by forcing decision-makers to act within compressed timeframes. In addition, the increase in electronically generated information would make it more difficult for decision-makers to process data in real time.[75] Almost three decades later, strategists find that technology has taken yet another quantum leap. There is now a real risk that the 'intolerable time pressure' of modern military technology may undermine the ability of parties to make calculated decisions.[76]

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70   John J Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1983, p 24.

71   Vennesson, 'Fighting, fast and slow?', 2021, p 211.

72   General John R Allen, US Marine Corps (Retired) and Amir Husain, 'On hyperwar', *Proceedings,* US Naval Institute, July 2017, vol. 143/7/1,373. https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2017/july/hyperwar.

73   Cunningham and Tomes, 'Space-time orientations and contemporary political-military thought', 2004, p 129.

74   Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p 5.

75   David Jablonsky, 'US military doctrine and the revolution in military affairs', *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*, 1994, 24(1): 18–36.

76   Cunningham and Tomes, 'Space-time orientations and contemporary political-military thought', 2004, p 130.

It is not just war that is getting faster, so too is conflict onset.[77] The combination of factors, including grey-zone tactics, long-range weapons and the complexity of new military technologies, creates a situation in which hostilities can quickly escalate.[78] They can also compress the window during which decision-makers could make sense of the nature of an attack and formulate a proportionate response.[79] Rory Medcalf and James Brown argue that:

> Precision strike weapons, remotely piloted (or potentially autonomous) weapons platforms, offensive cyber, and other new disruptive technologies are increasing the pace of conflict, including the speed at which it can begin and end.[80]

The increased pace puts pressure on decision-makers, and essentially requires the streamlining or automation of decision processes.

Stephen J Cimbala and Adam Lowther note that the time between the possible detection of the launch of a Russian hypersonic glide vehicle and its arrival on US territory could be as little as five minutes. This is insufficient time to detect a false positive, and response time may be further contracted by a preceding cyber attack against command-and-control networks.[81] Some analysts have argued that certain regions, such as South Asia, may be too volatile for the development of resilient nuclear command-and-control systems, and that systems may need to be supplemented with panic control mechanisms.[82] New technology may speed up the initiation of conflict. However, recent events have demonstrated that this will not necessarily result in quick victories. The Russo-Ukraine war is taking the form of a protracted conflict. This may well be due to Russia's overestimation of the strength of its military and its ability to achieve a decisive result.[83]

The key to managing the increased speed of conflict onset is preparation. As Carr argues, the most important time for strategists is the period between peace

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77 Malcolm Davis, 'Technological change, future wars and the arms trade', in Andrew T H Tan (ed), *Research Handbook on the Arms Trade*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham, 2020, pp 80–96, p 88.

78 Davis, 'Forward defence in depth for Australia', 2019, p 3.

79 Jeffrey R Smith, 'Hypersonic missiles are unstoppable. And they're starting a new global arms race'.

80 Rory Medcalf and James Brown, *Defence challenges 2035: securing Australia's lifelines*, Lowy Institute, November 2014, p 12. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep10128

81 Stephen J Cimbala and Adam Lowther, 'Hypersonic weapons and nuclear deterrence', *Comparative Strategy*, 2022, 41(3):282–295, p 285.

82 Peter Hayes, Benoy Kampmark, Philip Reiner, and Deborah St Gordon, *Synthesis Report NC3 – Systems and strategic stability: a global overview*, Nautilus Institute, 2019, p 19. https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/synthesis-report-nc3-systems-and-strategic-stability-a-global-overview/

83 Dumitru Minzarari, 'Failing to deter Russia's war against Ukraine: The role of misperceptions', *SWP Comment*, no. 33/2022, 2022, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Berlin, pp 1–8, p 3.

and war.[84] This transition period must be recognised if it is to be effectively utilised. Richard K Betts identified three stages of warning: political, strategic and tactical. Political involves a period of heightened tensions that may signal deterrence is unlikely to be successful. Strategic is the phase in which the enemy forces are mobilising and tactical is the initial detection of the actual attack. Betts argues that failure to react to any of these three stages of warning degrades the ability to defend against an aggressor.[85]

Dibb argues that Australia has already entered a period of defence warning time in which a potential adversary is deploying military capabilities in Australia's strategic zone. In effect, Australia is on notice that China is in the process of contesting Australia's 'inner arc' or the zone between the Indonesian archipelago and Papua New Guinea to the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This signifies that Australia has entered the warning phase because 'a change of intention is all that a potential adversary would need to do to transform a presence into a direct military threat'.[86] As discussed above with regard to China's rapid expansion of its IRBM arsenal and the construction of new bases in the South China Sea, China could soon have the capabilities to pose a direct threat to Australian bases and the Australian mainland.[87]

Space

Space has long been considered a fundamental determinant of military strategy.[88] This is because, in the words of Geoffrey Sloan, 'Strategy is done in geography.'[89] A state's location and physical terrain comprise its strategic geography, which, with regard to conventional attack, is 'one of the most important factors driving military posture and force structure'.[90] Indeed, Cold War strategist Nicholas Spykman went as far as to call geography 'the most fundamentally conditioning factor in the formulation of national policy'.[91] Traditionally, the Australia–US alliance has been the cornerstone of Australian defence policy. This alliance affects Australia's strategic geography by providing extended nuclear deterrence

84   Carr, 'It's about time: strategy and temporal phenomena', 2021, p 317.

85   Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*, 1982, pp 4–5.

86   Paul Dibb, 'How Australia can defend itself against China's military', *The National Interest*, 15 March 2020. https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-australia-can-defend-itself-against-chinas-military-132677

87   Shugart, *Australia and the growing reach of China's military*, 2021, p 11.

88   Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bern, *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp 1–23.

89   Geoffrey Sloan, *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategic History*, Routledge, Oxon, 2017, p xiv.

90   Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', 2006, p 247.

91   Nicholas J Spykman 'Geography and foreign policy I,' *American Political Science Review*, 1938 32(1): 28–50, p 29. https://doi.org/10.2307/1949029

and support in international and regional crises. However, this alliance has expanded Australia's operational sphere to the Middle East, a shift which may have undermined Australia's ability to defend its vital regional interests.[92] This trend was redressed in the 2016 White Paper and re-emphasised in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update. The result was a shift of focus back to Australia's own region.[93] This section will support the recommendation in the DSR that Australia's immediate region, 'encompassing the north-eastern Indian Ocean through maritime South-East Asia into the Pacific' be its primary strategic focus.[94] It will further argue that if Australia wants to prevent a foreign military power obtaining influence in South-East Asia or the South Pacific and challenging the security of Australia's maritime approaches, it must prioritise its own region.[95]

Proximity matters

Australia's relative geographic isolation has long been a double-edged sword.[96] On the one hand, Australia has benefited from being far removed from the main centres of military power in Europe, East Asia and the Americas.[97] It provided a sense of security that no attack could be made without significant warning. On the other hand, the 'tyranny of distance' created a popular fear that Australia was alone and vulnerable in a populous and resource-hungry Asia.[98] Australia has managed to maintain its time/space advantage with regard to conventional attack. This is largely because Australia's position as an island nation means that it is most likely any significant threat to Australia would come from the sea.[99] The same holds for Australia's neighbours, all of which are islands or archipelagos.

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92   Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', 2006, p 259–261.

93   Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, 2020, pp 3–4.

94   Department of Defence*, National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p 28.

95   Paul Dibb, 'The return of geography', in Russell W Glenn (ed), *New Directions in Strategic Thinking 2.0*, ANU Strategic & Defence Studies Centre's Golden Anniversary Conference Proceedings, ANU Press, Acton ACT, 2018, pp 91–104, p 101.

96   Adam Lockyer, *Australia's Defence Strategy: Evaluating Alternatives for a Contested Asia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2017; Adam Lockyer, 'An Australian defence policy for a multipolar Asia', *Defence Studies*, 2015, 15(3):273–289.

97   A J Rose, 'Strategic geography and the northern approaches', *Australian Journal of International Affairs,* 1959, 13(4): 304–314, p 307; Hugh White*, How to Defend Australia,* p 6; Paul Dibb and Richard Brabin-Smith, 'Deterrence through denial: A strategy for an era of reduced warning time', *The Strategist,* ASPI, 22 May 2021. https://www.aspi.org.au/report/deterrence-through-denial-strategy-era-reduced-warning-time

98   Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', 2006, p 248.

99   Dibb and Brabin-Smith, 'Deterrence through denial: a strategy for an era of reduced warning time', 2021, p 11.

Effective defence against aggression would require the ability to control air and sea approaches.[100] A J Rose argued back in 1959:

> Australia can only be brought to heel, at the last resort, by the country that controls the sea. The matter of sea power should, therefore, always be in the background of our consciousness.[101]

There is a stretch of approximately 4,000 kilometres of ocean between Australia and the Chinese mainland. Traditionally, Australia has viewed this expanse as an effective buffer zone, which would preclude any Chinese threat to Australia's territorial integrity.[102] Force modernisation, however, may soon alter this strategic assumption. Some have argued that China's investment in its armed forces may soon enable it to traverse the divide. For example, Thomas Shugart argues China's force modernisation is 'the greatest expansion of maritime and aerospace power in generations', and China is fast 'developing the military capability to put at risk Australia's territorial integrity'.[103] Although the threat of invasion remains remote, China's ability to seize and hold sea control for sufficient time and distance from the Australian coastline to conduct 'from sea' operations (for example cruise missile attacks, bombardment, air strikes or temporary blockade) are increasingly feasible options for Beijing to contemplate. Since the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has been expanding its geopolitical interests in the Indo-Pacific region, a foreign policy priority for the Chinese Communist Party. [104] Twenty-five countries in the Pacific and East Asia have signed up to the Chinese initiative, including Cambodia and Laos.[105] In addition, six Pacific nations are currently in debt to China. They are the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. After borrowing from the Chinese, all six countries signed up to the BRI.[106] Accordingly, Australia must anticipate continued expansion of Chinese influence in the region.

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100 Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', 2006, p 255.

101 Rose, 'Strategic geography and the northern approaches', 1959, p 304.

102 Rose, 'Strategic geography and the northern approaches', p 307; Davies, *'Australia's shrinking advantages: how technology might defeat geography'*, 2021, p 151.

103 Shugart, *Australia and the growing reach of China's military,* 2021, p 1, p 3, Jaebeom Kwon, 'When the kangaroo encounters the flying dragon: the growth of balancing elements in Australia's China policy', *Pacific Focus*, 35(3), 2020, pp 491–529, p 501.

104 Mingjiang Li, 'The Belt and Road Initiative: geo-economics and Indo-Pacific security competition', *International Affairs*, 2020, 96(1): 169–187, p 186. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz240

105 David Sacks, 'Countries in China's belt and road initiative: who's in and who's out', *Asian Unbound*, Council on Foreign Relations, 24 March 2021. https://www.cfr.org/blog/countries-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-whos-and-whos-out

106 Roland Rajah, Alexandre Dayant and Jonathan Pryke, *Ocean of debt? Belt and Road and debt diplomacy in the Pacific,* Lowy Institute, 21 October 2019, available at: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/ocean-debt-belt-road-debt-diplomacy-pacific

Australia's strategic geography still provides protection from conventional attack. As Sam Roggeveen recently observed, 'despite the dramatic pace and scale of China's rise as a military power, it remains incredibly costly and technologically difficult to bomb another country from thousands of kilometres away.'[107] While Chinese sea power has dramatically increased over the past decade, there has been no significant improvement in the speed at which ships travel. Shugart estimates it will still take China at least eight years to develop the ability to imperil Australia's vital interests or territorial integrity because, at present, Chinese military power is constrained within the First Island Chain.[108] If China were to contemplate a direct land attack on the Australian mainland, it would first have to obtain a forward operating base.[109] A priority for Australia must therefore be to deny China a foothold in its neighbourhood. To do this, it will need to expand its influence in South-East Asia and the South Pacific.

Australia must therefore recognise that while time and space no longer shield it from all forms of attack, space is still its primary defence against invasion. Indeed, it is arguable that space has never been more relevant to Australian defence planning. Australia's most important security interests lie in its own region. A fundamental principle of geopolitics is that distance matters. A proximate power is more threatening than a far power.[110] Australia's neighbours are its chief security guarantors simply because they are so close. These are the states that have the power to permit or deny China a military base that would enable it to launch a conventional attack on the Australian mainland.[111]

The significance of China establishing a base close to Australia should not be understated. Davis argues:

> a forward Chinese military presence, expanding out from military bases in the South China Sea through the archipelago to our north and potentially into the South Pacific between Australia and the US, would fundamentally change our strategic calculus for the worse.[112]

107 Sam Roggeveen, 'Australia, China, AUKUS and the squandered advantage', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 20 March 2023.

108 Shugart, *Australia and the growing reach of China's military*, 2021, pp 18–19.

109 White, *How to Defend Australia*, 2019, p 49.

110 Stephen M Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power', *International Security,* 1985, 9(4):3–43, p 11.

111 White, *How to Defend Australia*, 2019, p 18.

112 Davis, 'Technological change, future wars and the arms trade', pp 80–96.

Neither should it be presumed this is a remote contingency. It is also important to recognise there are factors besides relative power that influence the behaviour of states, and China's future intentions will be influenced by a multiplicity of variables, including internal politics and doctrines as well as external events and interactions.[113] Regardless, Australia must continue to consolidate its defence relationships with its neighbours to ensure it maintains the ability to prevent China establishing a base in its vicinity, should China form the intention to do so.

Filling the void

The strategic importance of South-East Asia has been recognised in successive white papers. The 2017 White Paper acknowledged the strategic importance of this region but called for a 'secure, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific'.[114] This begs the question of whether an open region can be truly secure. Australia currently relies upon the US to maintain supremacy in the Indo-Pacific. However, it may need to contend with the fact there could come a time when the US is forced to relinquish that position.[115] According to Medcalf, Chinese strategists have long felt that US presence in the western Pacific constrained China's ability to navigate.[116] To continue to grow, China needs to increase its import and export trade. However, it does not have unfettered access to maritime trading routes. The US still maintains the ability to restrict Chinese trade. It is therefore in China's geopolitical interest to develop new routes into South-East Asia and the South Pacific.[117] These trade routes may well lay the groundwork for future bases.

If Australia is to protect the air-and-sea gap and prevent a hostile power from securing forward bases in South-East Asia it cannot leave the region 'open'. Rather, it will need to continue to expand its influence in the region. Australia can do this by working with regional neighbours who share its strategic vulnerabilities. To that end, it is helpful to identify Australia's key strategic partners. Strategic geography dictates that Melanesia will be more important to Australian security than Polynesia and Micronesia. But just as important is Australia's neighbour to

113 Jeffrey W Lego, 'What China will want: the future intentions of a rising power', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2007, 5(3): 515–534.

114 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, Australian Government, Canberra, p iii, https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf; Lockyer, *Australia's Defence Strategy: Evaluating Alternatives for a Contested Asia*, 2017, p 119; Adam Leong Kok Wey, 'Mates all the way! From Konfrontasi to confronting China: Australia–Malaysia geostrategic cooperation', *Comparative Strategy*, 2016, 35(2): 131–138, p 132.

115 Patrick Lawrence, 'Goodbye, America: the remaking of Asia', *Australian Foreign Affairs*, 2020, no. 10, pp 69–89, p 69.

116 Medcalf, *Contest for the Indo-Pacific*, La Trobe University Press, 2020.

117 David Morris, 'The belt and road initiative and the geopolitics of the South Pacific', *Research on Pacific Island Countries*, Social Science Academic Press, China, 2019, pp 1–10, p 3. Available from https://davidmorrisprojects.com/post/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-geopolitics-of-the-south-pacific

the north, Indonesia. The Australian Government is already taking steps towards consolidating regional security agreements. The recent joint commitment to enter into a security treaty with Papua New Guinea is an important development.[118] However, Australia cannot expect sovereign nations of the South Pacific and South-East Asia to align their foreign policy with its own unless it is in their interest to do so. In order to establish common interests, Australia needs to take the security concerns of these nations seriously. This includes those concerns related to climate change, which some South Pacific nations view as an existential threat.[119] Anne-Marie Schleich warns that Australia risks losing influence in the South Pacific due in part to China's increased investment in the region and Australia's poor track record on climate change.[120] White states that Australia's influence in the South Pacific only subsists because, as yet, no other power has attempted to challenge it.[121]

Serious and sustained diplomatic, economic and military investment is needed to ensure that China does not subvert Australian influence in South-East Asia and the South Pacific. White has recommended Australia form a formal alliance with Indonesia. He observes that if it continues to grow at its present rate, Indonesia will be the world's fifth-largest economy by 2040, enabling it to exercise considerable power in the region.[122] Indeed, Indonesia may one day become a more important economic partner than China. Indonesia may not match China's economy, but it is closer, and Australia should '[n]ever underestimate the importance of proximity'.[123] Australia should also build on its long history of military cooperation with Malaysia and increase its presence at the Butterworth base in Penang [124]. In addition, it can use its involvement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to help balance China's influence.[125] Medcalf argues that cooperation between Australia, India, Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam would

118 Stephen Dziedzic, 'Australia, Papua New Guinea agree to finalise talks on bilateral security treaty', *ABC News*, 12 January 2023.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-12/australia-papua-new-guinea-security-treaty-talks/101850840

119 Anne-Marie Schleich, 'Geopolitical trends in the South Pacific: is the US or China winning?', *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, 2018, 554, pp 1–10, p 9; White, 'In denial: defending Australia as China looks south', p 20.

120 Schleich, 'Geopolitical trends in the South Pacific: is the US or China winning?', 2018, p 9.

121 White, 'In denial: defending Australia as China looks south', 2019, p 20.

122 White, 'The Jakarta switch: why Australia needs to pin its hopes (not fears) on a great and powerful Indonesia', p 7.

123 White, 'The Jakarta switch: why Australia needs to pin its hopes (not fears) on a great and powerful Indonesia', p 8.

124 Wey, 'Mates all the way! From Konfrontasi to confronting China: Australia–Malaysia geostrategic cooperation', 2016.

125 Deekhit Bhattacharya and Ashley Eadon, 'Oceans of churn: Australia's 2020 defence strategic update and the Indo-Pacific', *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2021, 17(1): 116–125, p 121.

enable these Indo-Pacific powers to collectively shape their future. Middle states facing a rising hegemon must seek safety in numbers.[126]

Conclusion

Force modernisation in the Indo-Pacific has created new challenges for Australian national security. Technological developments and increased military expenditure are causing strategists to question some of the comfortable assumptions that have underpinned Australian defence policy. These include the idea that Australia's isolated location gives it protection from aggression, and that any significant attack would not occur without a substantial warning period. This changing perspective is reflected in the 2023 DSR, which argues that the traditional ten-year warning period is no longer applicable to Australian defence planning. This article has taken a further step and proposed a unique way of understanding the challenges faced by Australian defence planners. We have presented an analysis of the range of threats to Australia's territorial integrity through the prism of time and space. Time and space are the two arenas in which strategy can be devised and executed. By breaking down strategic thought into these two domains we can more accurately assess the efficacy of Australian strategic planning.

The first section found that Australia's procurement time is falling behind that of its regional neighbours. This means it has lost its technological advantage – an advantage that will be costly to regain. It also discussed warning time. It is no longer the case that Australia will have up to a decade of notice before a hostile power can choose to launch an attack. New technologies, including hypersonic weapons and cyber capabilities, can be deployed with little to no notice. The speed at which these technologies operate also compresses reaction time, which can lead to suboptimal decision-making and disproportionate responses. Due to the multifarious nature of contemporary threats, we argue that time windows are no longer a useful planning tool. Time must be understood in relation to the threat itself.

However, we also maintain that geography still matters. Australia could suffer a damaging long-range attack, but no state in the Indo-Pacific possesses the capabilities to launch a conventional attack on the Australian mainland without a forward operating base. Therefore, it is essential Australia prevent any potential rival from establishing such a presence in South-East Asia or the South Pacific. If Australia wants to ensure that no foreign power acquires the ability to threaten its

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126 Medcalf, *Contest for the Indo-Pacific*, 2020, pp 47 & 30; Rory Medcalf, 'Balancing act: making sense of the Quad'*, Australian Foreign Affairs*, 2020, no. 10, pp 30–48.

territorial integrity, it needs to expand its influence in its own region and work with regional partners to keep the Indo-Pacific from becoming a more dangerous neighbourhood. Australia's strategic priorities, therefore, should be to safeguard Australia's territorial integrity, while ensuring regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.

India in 2050: will being the world's third largest economy translate into military power to reshape India's strategic environment?

David Bolton

Introduction

India's recent and anticipated growth has prompted a range of scholars to equate this growth with potential military power.[1] It has the potential to become the world's third largest economy by 2050; and by one measure is already there.[2] India's ability to translate its economic position into military power matters greatly to the strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific. It also matters to nations like the United States, Japan and Australia who hope India will add weight to their efforts to counter China's influence in the region.

This article argues it would be wrong to assume that India's economic growth will translate directly to an ability to shape the strategic environment through military means. This is based on a holistic assessment of India's future, which assesses the military balance in the context of national leadership, strategy, culture and the perception of competitors. In addressing this complexity, the article argues we should move beyond the unhelpful concept of *military power* to instead analyse how capability and strategy impact *military strategic influence* to achieve political objectives in specific contexts.

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1   Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2010; Bharat Karnad, *Why India Is Not a Great Power (Yet)*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015; Ashley Tellis, *India as a leading power*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4 April 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/04/india-as-leading-power-pub-63185; Christine Fair, 'India', in T Balzacq, P Dombrowski and S Reich (eds), *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework and Cases*, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2019.

2   Purchasing power parity.

The argument in this paper is made in four parts. The first section argues it is important to assess military power in context and with a focus on strategic preferences. The second section argues that new wealth will not change the continental status quo between India, China and Pakistan, but will give India more military strategic influence in the northern Indian Ocean. The third section argues that a wealthier India is likely to muster more military influence over its wide array of domestic enemies. The final section tests the assumption in parts two and three that Indian strategic culture will endure by examining the influence of Hindu nationalism and the populist political style on strategic preferences. Overall, this paper offers a contextual perspective on the future of Indian military influence with relevance for other nations in the Indo-Pacific, including Australia.

Military strategic influence

It seems a simple prospect that greater wealth will provide opportunities for developing influence through military power, but there is more to the story. Ultimately, we cannot merely infer greater resources will give a state the ability to significantly shape their environment in the future. Instead, we should seek to understand how a state will develop resources, convert them into capability and, through strategy, seek to influence an opponent or environment in the hope of exercising power. This contextual approach avoids Mearsheimer's resource-based view of power, which goes too far in encouraging analysts to think of states as possessing *military power* in general.[3] Instead, it favours contemporary approaches based on Dahl's conception of power as existing in specific relationships between actors.[4] This makes way for an understanding of how military strategic influence might be achieved in different contexts through strategic choices, the role of cultural preferences, and how competitors are perceived in making those choices (see Figure 1). Lim and Fergusons' analysis further highlights how Dahl's approach avoids the flaws of a resource-based view of power.[5]

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3   John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2014, p 57; See Samuel Bergenwall, 'Assessing India's rise and the road ahead', *Strategic Analysis*, 2016, 40(5):386–404, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09700161.2016.1209905 for an example of this approach applied to India.

4   'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' see Robert Dahl, 'The concept of power', *Behavioral Science,* 1957, 2(3): 201–215, pp 202-203. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/bs.3830020303

5   Darren J Lim and Victor A Ferguson, 'Power in Australian foreign policy', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2018, 72(4): 306–313, p 307. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2018.1484072

Figure 1: Understanding power – perceptions and influence

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│             Resources                │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│             Capability               │
│   Military – Civil – Economic – Cultural │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    Perceptions
        ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐
        │ Context: │      │ Strategy │ ←──
        │ Political│      └──────────┘
        │ Social   │                ┌──────────────┐
        │ Geographic│               │ Strategies of│
        │ Technological│ ←──────────│  Competitors │
        └──────────┘                └──────────────┘

  Military
  Strategic
  Influence ───
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│             Power?                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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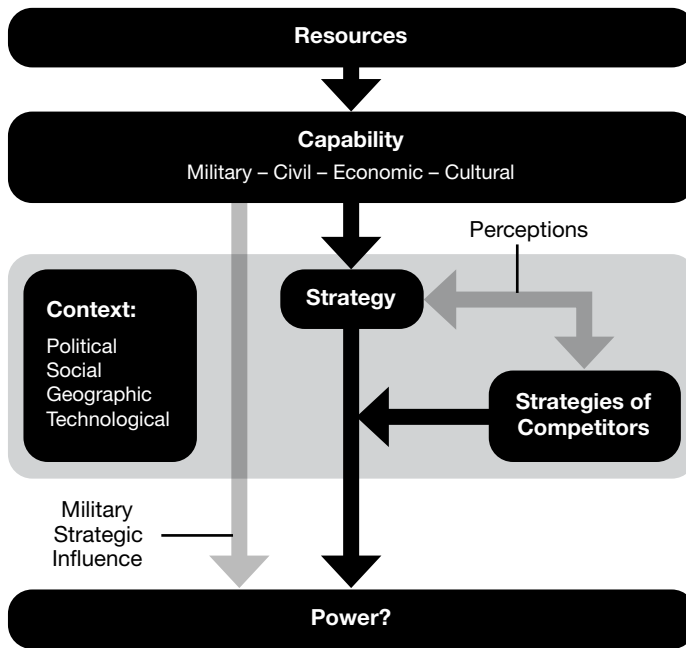
If we begin to see power as contextual and fundamentally connected to the strategic decisions open to us, then we can draw on scholarly work that helps to show how context works to shape the development and use of power. Glaser's strategic choice theory provides an excellent foundation for this work,[6] as it combines structural realism's focus on material factors alongside important cultural and social factors.[7] These include *motive* and the perception of *information* favoured by studies of strategic culture, the impact of perception

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6   Charles Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010.

7   Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* Waveland Press, Long Grove USA, 1979; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics.*

and classical realism.[8] Glaser's approach brings to the fore the impact of security dilemmas and focuses on the optimal strategy for a *security-seeking* state.

A security dilemma exists when 'a state's efforts to increase its security would have the unintended effect of reducing its adversary's security'.[9] Glaser argues how a state views its security dilemmas depends on its motives, material factors (such as the balance of capabilities for offensive and defensive missions) and information about the adversary's motives. The scale of the security dilemma will determine whether a security-seeking state chooses a military policy of *competition* (arms races and the formation of alliances) or *cooperation* (policies to avoid costly balancing and improve foreign relations). This approach underlines that:

> international anarchy does not generate a general tendency toward competitive international strategies; under a wide range of material and information conditions, cooperation is a state's best option for achieving security.[10]

Thus Glaser provides a lens through which we can analyse India's culture of strategic restraint as a rational response to the structure of the international system and as a cultural preference.

This approach limits the analysis of military strategic influence to how a future India might seek to use military, paramilitary and closely related means to protect core security values from existential security threats. It does not address the full range of political issues and sources of insecurity where the Indian state chooses to bargain with international and domestic actors to achieve its aspirations or where it principally seeks to influence its environment through the application of civil, economic or cultural capabilities.

The continental balance

To determine India's ability to shape its strategic environment it is important to begin by addressing the continental balance of power involving China and Pakistan. Prime Minister Nehru and India's founders worked to develop a strategic policy that rejected great power politics and allowed India to retain

8   Alastair Johnston, 'Thinking about strategic culture', *International Security*, 1995, 19: 32–64; Amitav Acharya, 'Global international relations (IR) and regional worlds: a new agenda for international studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 2014, 58: 647–659; Muthiah Alagappa, 'Rethinking security: a critical review and appraisal of the debate', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed), *Asian Security Practice: Material Ideational Influences*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998; Michael Mastanduno, 'Realism and Asia', in S Pekkanen, J Ravenhill and R Foot (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

9   Robert Jervis, 'Dilemmas about security dilemmas', *Security Studies*, 2011, 20: 416–423, p 416.

10   Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, p ix.

its autonomy to focus on development. This included maintaining good international relations, building an adequate defence and seeking strength through development. This led to a military policy of strategic restraint and a strategy of deterrence by denial. These have been portrayed as arising from an absence of vision, nerve and proper appreciation of hard power and the result of excessive political-bureaucratic control that has denied India its potential.[11] But they can also be seen as a rational response to India's security dilemma.[12] The future of this approach is analysed here by examining India's future motives and unpacking the scale of its security dilemmas with China and Pakistan through material and information variables: comparative resources, the offence–defence balance and perceptions of the motives of competitors.

India's future motives

India's leaders are likely to continue to be motivated by security seeking, not greed. Security-seeking states try to minimise the security dilemma by adopting military policies that reassure other states. They want security for their territory but may also seek security through the control of sea lanes, resources or a geographic buffer. Greedy states are primarily motivated by wealth, territory, prestige or ideology.[13]

India's sheer scale and development challenges require a focus on territorial, internal and human security, while the opportunities afforded by international cooperation are likely to discourage predatory behaviour abroad. This rational perspective has been reinforced culturally through the legacy of Nehru's policies of non-alignment and restraint.[14] India's core security values of territorial integrity, foreign policy autonomy, military strength, economic development and internal security are pursued through Bajpai's three major and minor schools of grand strategic thought.[15] In 2014, Bajpai argued these schools pulled towards a mean of 'prudential, defensive realism' that was closest to Nehruvianism.[16] Cohen and Dasgupta translate this into an operational preference for strategic restraint.[17]

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11   Karnad, *Why India Is Not a Great Power (Yet)*, p 241, p 512; Fair, 'India', pp 183–186.

12   Kanti Bajpai, 'India: modified structuralism', in Muthiath Alagappa (ed), *Asian Security Practice*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1989, p 195.

13   Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, p 221–226.

14   Fair, 'India', p 175.

15   The three major schools are Nehruvianism, Neoliberalism and Hyperrealism and the three minor schools are Marxism, Hindutva and Ghandianism.

16   Avoiding war through restraint and rejecting a pure balance-of-power approach. See Kanti Bajpai, 'Indian grand strategy: six schools of thought', in Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit and V Kirshnappa (eds), *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory and Cases*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2014, p 118.

17   Relying on a benign international environment to manage disputes politically, rejecting armed force as an instrument of policy and directing resources to national development. See Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, p xi.

Since 2014, Prime Minister Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have won two national elections suggesting a potential shift to strategic behaviour more akin to the Hindutva and Hyperrealist schools.[18] However, BJP governments have continued security practices of the past and mostly expressed in policy those aspects of Hindutva concerned with Hinduism's internal cultural resilience and external attractiveness.[19]

Military policy towards China

China's 1962 victory over India did not lead to a downward spiral of military competition because both sides adopted reassuring *cooperative* military policies. China withdrew from occupied territory and India developed new defensive capabilities in support of a strategy of deterrence by denial: new US-equipped mountain infantry divisions and Soviet MiG21 fighters for local air defence.[20]

The pair could afford *cooperative* military policies that signalled benign motives because their respective security dilemmas were relatively mild. This remains the case today, and there appears to be little in the future that is likely to bring about a change. India's mild security dilemma with China is determined by its strong defensive advantage and a judgement that China's military posture, actions and declared policies send mixed signals that make it equally likely to be greedy or security seeking.[21] Let us now examine this judgement in terms of how India's defensive advantage and perception of Chinese *motives* are likely to change over the next 27 years.

A state's defensive advantage depends on the comparative resources available to convert into military capability and the offence–defence balance (the ratio of the investment costs of military forces required for successful offence or defence).[22] Looking at the first variable, China's higher rates of growth since the 1990s have increased its comparative advantage in resources available to convert into military capability over India. China's economy has gone from roughly 20% smaller than India's in the 1980s to roughly 140% larger in 2019 (in purchasing power parity terms).[23] By market exchange rates, China's advantage is closer to 400%.[24] Long-term forecasts estimate India will reduce this gap by 2050 due to structural factors, such as a growing and more youthful workforce (see Figure 2).

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18 Hindutva: Hindu civilisation is moral, internally focused and must use whatever force is necessary to protect itself Hyperrealist: Finding security through power, readiness to use force and taking the offensive.

19 Bajpai, 'Indian grand strategy: six schools of thought', p 143; Ian Hall, *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy*, Bristol University Press, 2019, pp 128–129.

20 Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization,* p 8.

21 This is charted later in Figure 3.

22 Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, p 34.

23 The purchasing power parity measure is useful for determining domestic buying power.

24 The market exchange rate measure is more useful when considering purchases of foreign materiel.

Figure 2: Comparison of India and China 2019 and projected GDP

Gross Domestic Product
(Purchasing Power Parity)
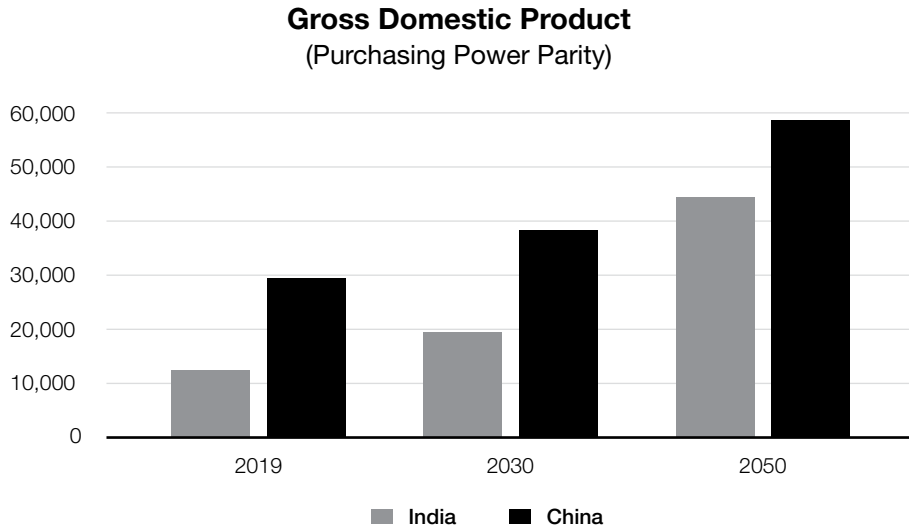
Source: John Hawksworth, Hannah Audino and John McClarry, *The Long View: How Will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050*, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2017, pp 10–12, https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/world-2050/assets/pwc-world-in-2050-summary-report-feb-2017.pdf   For 2030 and 2050 estimates (PwC analysis using UN population projections); International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook: Growth Slowdown, Precarious Recovery,* IMF, Washington DC, 2019, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2019/03/28/world-economic-outlook-april-2019 For the 2019 data.

India's growing resource disadvantage has not been sufficient to erode its defensive advantage because the strength of defensive factors in the offence–defence balance requires China to generate a very high ratio of capability against India for success in offensive missions. The most significant factors favouring India's defence are geography, technology and scale.

The India–China border is mountainous with extreme climates, limited infrastructure and requires sources of supply to travel long distances (especially for China). India's maritime approaches are long and navigate several chokepoints. Blasko argues that China's Army retains a strategically defensive posture despite increased mechanisation, with large formations far from borders and limited capability to lift, project and sustain forces.[25] Brewster makes a similar point that decades of sustained expansion of forces, local partnerships and logistics would be required for China to challenge the US or a growing India in the Indian

25   Dennis Blasko, 'The PLA Army', in L Dittmer and M Yu (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Security,* Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

Ocean.[26] New Chinese infrastructure in Tibet and the Indian Ocean has probably given China some tactical and operational advantages and increased Indian insecurity,[27] but is far from the levels required to support the large concentration of forces needed to sustain an offensive strategy. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative are firstly economic and occasionally stabilisation projects. Their focus and scale do not indicate an intent to support a significant or sustainable offensive strategy.[28]

Since 1945, new technology has strengthened defensive missions, and there is little prospect of this changing by 2050. Offence–defence balance theory argues improvements in firepower favour defenders, as firepower reduces the attacker's mobility and targets the concentration of forces needed to attack. Conversely, improvements in mobility favour attackers, as mobility enables the transport and supply of forces over distances and environments that otherwise benefit the defence.[29] Scales argues that technology has:

> increased killing power by a factor of four or five in the past three decades alone while the speed of ground maneuver is exactly where it was during the Battle of France in 1940.[30]

This judgement is reinforced by the apparent effectiveness of both established and emerging missile and drone technology in the first months of Ukraine's defence against Russian invasion. Emergent technology, such as hypersonic missiles and drones, look to further benefit firepower, while little is on offer to make the movement and protection of forces more effective. The nuclear revolution is the other, and even more profound, shift favouring defence. Nuclear weapons cannot seize and control territory or people; they can only deter, destroy capability and punish. They are a powerful disincentive to military competition.[31]

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26 David Brewster, *Scenarios for China's future military presence in the Indian Ocean region* [video file], Seminar, Air and Space Power Centre, Canberra, 24 June 2020 https://airpower.airforce.gov.au/videos/scenarios-chinas-future-military-presence-india-ocean-region

27 Yogesh Joshi and Anit Mukherjee, 'From denial to punishment: the security dilemma and changes in India's military strategy towards China', *Asian Security*, 2018, 15: 25–43, p 1 and p 6; Robert Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*, Random House, 2012, pp 250–251.

28 James Schwemlein, *Strategic Implications of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor*, US Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 16 December 2019, https://www.usip.org; Frédéric Grare, 'Along the road–Gwadar and China's power projection', *EUISS Brief Issue*, 31 July 2018, https://www.iss.europa.eu; Darshana Baruah, 'India's answer to the Belt and Road: A road map for south Asia', *Carnegie India*, 21 August 2018. https://carnegieindia.org

29 Keir Lieber, 'Grasping the technological peace: the offense–defense balance and international security', *International Security*, 2000, 25: 71.

30 Robert Scales, 'The great duality and the future of the army: does technology favour the offensive or the defensive?' *War on the Rocks*, 3 September 2019, https://warontherocks.com

31 Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, p 5.

Although India can be slow to integrate new technologies, it consistently invests in science and industry to harness potential innovations, positioning it to harness improvements in firepower favouring its defence.

Increased defence spending by China and India is likely to favour defence for both because of the effect of increasing scale. Garfinkel and Dafoe argue that:

> beyond a certain investment level, the defender begins to saturate the attack surface, reducing any opportunities the attacker derives from differences in the two actors' patterns of coverage (defensive saturation).[32]

On the ground and at sea, there are less gaps for an attacker to exploit and it is relatively easy to achieve defensive saturation of the limited attack surface (valleys, straits and ports). In domains where geographic advantages are less important (such as air, space and cyber), it is still feasible for India to achieve defensive saturation with less spending due to the requirement for an attacker to transport, concentrate and sustain superior force.

Distinguishing some capabilities as favouring offensive or defensive missions can change how India perceives the offence–defence balance. China's development of amphibious capabilities for Taiwan are clearly offensive in one context but are unlikely to see India reassess the state of the balance unless they were increased, re-based to the Indian Ocean, and supported by sea control and facilities for resupply, repair and prompt reinforcement. Similarly, the mechanisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) can only make a significant difference to India if these forces are based in Tibet or Pakistan, with substantial infrastructure and logistics support.

Indian leaders cannot know the current and future *motives* of China's leaders, but they will analyse *information* about China through a rational and culturally informed lens to assess the scale of their security dilemma. Barring radical changes in China, India's leaders are likely to continue to assess that China holds a mix of security-seeking and greedy motives. Most Indian strategic thinking recognises in China the same security-seeking priorities as India's around territory and human security.[33] However, China's continued claims on Indian territory, development of atolls in the South China Sea, efforts to influence

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32 Ben Garfinkel and Allan Dafoe, 'How does the offense–defense balance scale?', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2019, 42: 736–763, p 737.

33 Tanvi Madan, 'China in three avatars', in Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit and V Kirshnappa (eds), *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory and Cases*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2014, p 314; Srikanth Kondapalli, 'Indian perspectives on China', in Herbert S Yee (ed), *China Rise – Threat or Opportunity?*, Taylor and Francis, 2010, p 169; Bajpai, 'Indian grand strategy: six schools of thought'.

India's neighbours and a wider sense that China seeks – through a variety of means – to be the preeminent power in Asia at India's expense will also fuel perceptions that China has some greedy motives.[34]

The magnitude of India's future security dilemma and its optimal military policy will be guided by material and information variables. Figure 3 depicts how these variables combine to determine the severity of the security dilemma. Although China is expected to maintain the lead in comparative resources through to 2050, the strength of the defence in India's offence–defence balance with China is likely to diminish but not overturn India's overall defensive advantage. Similarly, the information available to India about China's motives is likely to prompt more Indian leaders to think of China as a greedy state, but not enough to overturn the assessment that China has many of the same security-seeking goals as India.

Figure 3: Severity of India's security dilemma with China – trend from today to 2050

	Very severe	Severe	Moderate
Chinese offence advantage			
Indian defence advantage	Moderate	Mild ● **2050** ● **Today**	Essentially eliminated
	Likely greedy	Equally likely greedy or security seeker	Likely security seeker

Indian perception of Chinese motive
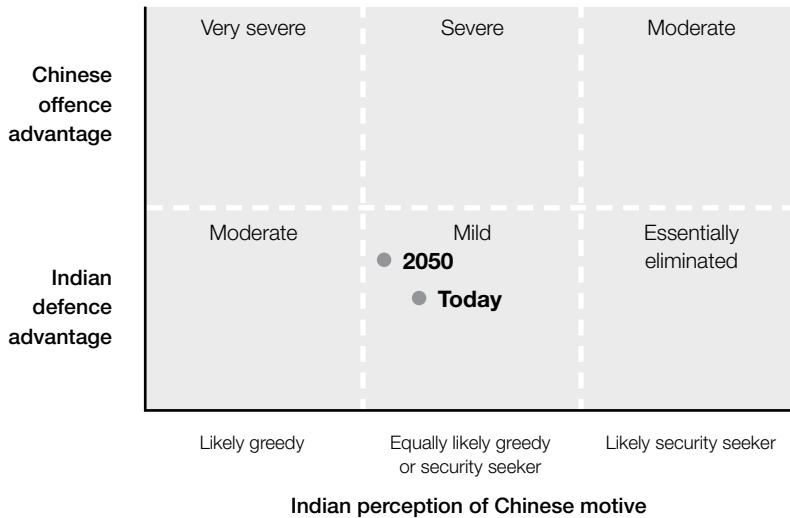
Glaser argues the severity of the security dilemma will determine whether a security-seeking state chooses a military policy of competition or cooperation. His views are summarised in Figure 4.

34   Rory Medcalf, *Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China Won't Map the Future*, Black Inc., 2020, pp 143–144.

Figure 4: Severity of the security dilemma and influence on military policy

	Likely greedy	Equally likely greedy or security seeker	Likely security seeker
Chinese offence advantage	**Very severe** Cooperation risks the greedy state cheating, compete if feasible	**Severe**	**Moderate** Competition risks losing an arms race, better to cooperate
Indian defence advantage	**Moderate** Greedy states are more willing to fight costly wars, some competition required to deter	**Mild**	**Essentially eliminated** Strong incentives to cooperate

Source: Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, pp 86-87.

Although Glaser does not talk about the right military policy response to a mild dilemma, the Indian policy has been one of cooperation or strategic restraint and a strategy of deterrence by denial. Given we expect the dilemma to remain mild, there are good grounds to argue Indian leaders will not significantly shift from this broad policy for reasons both rational and rooted in strategic culture.

Military policy towards Pakistan

To build influence, India must also manage a security dilemma with Pakistan – a state that has failed in its founding vision to protect British India's Muslim minority through control of Muslim majority regions due to Indian forces rebuffing its attempt to forcibly absorb Jammu and Kashmir (1947–49) and supporting Bengali rebels to create Bangladesh (1971).[35] These bitter experiences have diminished Pakistan's strategic weight and sustained its determination to fight for Jammu and Kashmir and to compete militarily with India. India has responded with a military policy of cooperation and a strategy of deterrence by denial, supplemented by some competitive behaviour and deterrence by punishment.

India can accept the risks associated with this approach because its security dilemma with Pakistan is moderate and is likely to remain so. Indian leaders see a clear greedy motive rooted in national ideology in Pakistan's desire to

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35   Bhashyam Katsuri, 'The state of war with Pakistan', in D Marston and S Chandar (eds), *A Military History of India and South Asia*, Praeger Security International, Westport, 2007, p 139.

bring Jammu and Kashmir under its rule, but India retains a strong defensive advantage when it comes to thwarting Pakistan's ambitions against it.[36] To look forward to 2050, we must now repeat the exercise undertaken with China and look at whether India's defensive advantage or view of *Pakistani* motives are likely to change in the next 27 years.

India has a defensive advantage over Pakistan as it has more resources available for investment in military capability and because of the strength of the defensive in the offence–defence balance. In the 1980s, India's economy was roughly 400% larger than Pakistan's (by purchasing power parity). This gap grew to roughly 900% between 1995 and 2019. Long-term forecasts predict that Pakistan will arrest its relative decline and maintain the growth needed to stay around 10 times smaller than the Indian economy through to 2050 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Comparison of India and Pakistan 2019 and projected GDP

Gross Domestic Product
(Purchasing Power Parity)
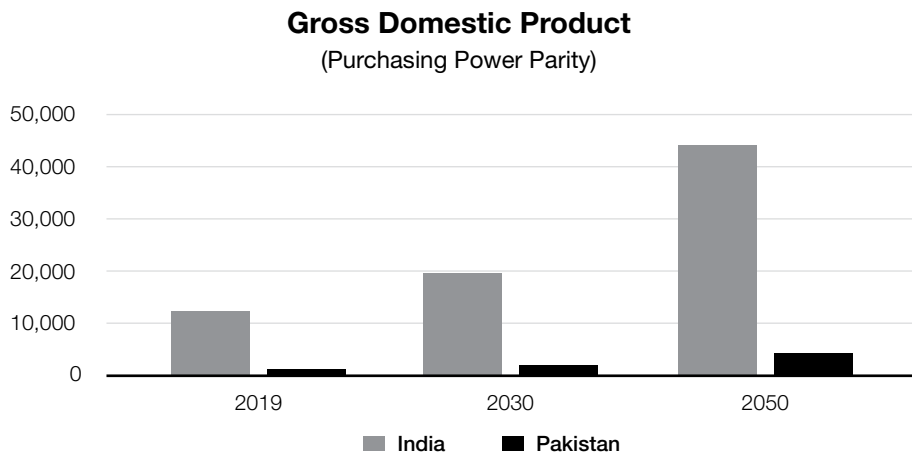
Source: Hawksworth et al., *The Long View.* For 2030 and 2050 estimates. IMF, *World Economic Outlook.* For 2019 data.

We can compare the strength of India's defence against Pakistan by repeating the exercise used earlier to compare India with China, that is, looking at geography, technology and scale. The India–Pakistan border provides defensive advantages through mountains in the north and salt marshes by the sea. But the sand dune desert and irrigated farms of the central border do less to impede mobility, and both India and Pakistan have short distances to sources of supply and infrastructure close to the border. Both countries also have long coastlines and

36   This is charted later in Figure 6.

significant contiguous airspace to defend. Aside from development of agricultural and urban areas impeding mobility, there is little about this geography that will change before 2050.

Both countries access military technology and will continue to enjoy the benefits that improvements in firepower will deliver to defensive strategies; and both possess the nuclear weapons that disincentivise military competition. Pakistan's development of tactical nuclear weapons to balance India's conventional superiority further demonstrates how much technology can do to enhance defence.[37]

Finally, the forces on both sides of the border reached defensive saturation long ago. The 1965 war demonstrated the effectiveness of artillery and air strikes in blunting the few significant advances of mechanised forces.[38] Both India and Pakistan continue to maintain and renew the capabilities of large holding and counterattack formations.

How offensive or defensive intent is perceived can partly depend on whether military capabilities can be distinguished as primarily defensive or equally useful for offence or defence. By investing in infantry, artillery and tactical air support, and relatively less in mobility, strategic strike and power projection capabilities, both India and Pakistan have engaged in a form of qualitative arms control in which they have signalled a broadly defensive intent. Both have mechanised formations which can support offensive missions, but these only make up roughly 20% to 25% of the manoeuvre formations (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Indian and Pakistani army manoeuvre formations

Formation type	India	Pakistan
Armoured and mechanised infantry	9 divisions 10 independent brigades	4 divisions 8 independent brigades
Light and mountain infantry	27 divisions 9 independent brigades	18 divisions 5 independent brigades

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance, 2019*, IISS, London, p 267 and p 297.

Over the next 27 years, Indian leaders will also analyse information to make rational and culturally informed judgements about the motives of Pakistan's leaders. Pakistan's rejection of India's administration of Jammu and Kashmir and

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37   PK Singh, 'The India–-Pakistan nuclear dyad and regional nuclear dynamics', *Asia Policy*, 2015, 19(1):37–44, p 40.

38   Katsuri, 'The state of war with Pakistan', pp 144–145.

appeals to India's Muslim minority gives Pakistan a clear greedy motive in Indian eyes. A change in this perception would require an unlikely reversal of the strong commitment of Pakistan's politicians and generals to the state's Islamic credentials.

How these factors combine to affect the severity of India's security dilemma with Pakistan is illustrated in Figure 6 (below). India's defensive advantage is expected the grow through to 2050, as its sustained resource advantage over Pakistan delivers some advantages in military capability. Indian leaders are unlikely to revise their view that Pakistan has a greedy motive in that time.

Figure 6: Severity of India's security dilemma with Pakistan – trend from today to 2050

Indian perception of Pakistani motive
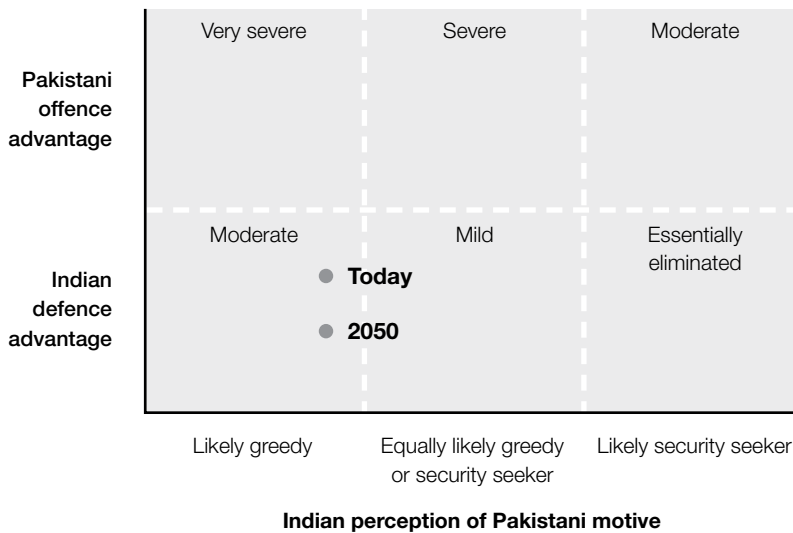
Glaser argues that when faced with a greedy state prepared to fight costly wars some competition is required to deter (see Figure 4). This roughly describes India's military policy towards Pakistan. India's overall superiority in scale has allowed it to accept the risk associated with strategic restraint and make only limited use of competitive behaviour. Glaser's view of a rational policy suggests that India should be able to make even less use of offensive strategies and do more to reassure Pakistan of its benign motive as its defensive advantage grows.

Glaser's strategic choice theory leads to the conclusion that the Nehruvian policy of strategic restraint will remain a good choice in managing the security dilemma with Pakistan. This contrasts with those that seek to replace strategic restraint as the operational level assumption in Indian strategic culture with a

more offensive strategy. Such thinking ignores Pakistan's defensive advantages and its demonstrated ability to consistently balance Indian strategy with foreign support and conventional and nuclear forces.[39]

This debate can be viewed through the development of the Indian Army's Cold Start doctrine. Conceived in 2004, this proposed doctrine sought to move from the Sundarji Doctrine, designed to support deterrence by denial, to more rapidly mobilising and faster units able to support deterrence by punishment through the seizure of territory ahead of any settlement. After 19 years, this effort to find room to fight limited war under nuclear deterrence has only attracted limited funding and has not won over Indian governments. In the 1999 Kargil War, and more recent confrontations, both states engaged in increasingly sophisticated tacit nuclear bargaining around broadly acknowledged focal points they have not crossed.[40]

Nuclear deterrence has left the Indian public and governments frustrated over what they see as Pakistan's support for separatism and terrorist attacks in India. But this has not eroded the preference for strategic restraint due to the significant risks of escalation. Military attacks on Pakistan in response to terrorist acts in 2016 and 2019 have been limited and indecisive. Instead, India's responses to these forms of irregular warfare have remained protective and preventative measures at home, domestic political initiatives and some international diplomacy.

Military strategic influence

Whether new wealth delivers India more military strategic influence in 2050 is dependent on how its future leaders manage their security dilemmas with China and Pakistan. There are strong and mutually reinforcing rational and cultural grounds to estimate the Indian Prime Minister in 2050 will continue to opt for a cooperative policy with China and a broadly cooperative policy with Pakistan, with some elements of competition for both. Such policies will avoid costly balancing through arms racing and alliance formation and leave the door open to improving relations. In short, new wealth is not likely to be used to give India more military strategic influence over its two strongest neighbours. Such a

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39   Ali Ahmed, 'Indian strategic culture: the Pakistan dimension', in Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit and V Kirshnappa
    (eds), *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory and Cases*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2014, p 304; Harsh Pant
    and Kartik Bommakanti, 'India's national security: challenges and dilemmas', *International Affairs*, 2019,
    95(4):835–857, p 843; Rajesh Rajagopalan, 'India: the logic of assured retaliation', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed),
    The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia, Stanford University Press, Stanford,
    2008; Paul Staniland, 'America has high expectations for India. Can New Delhi deliver?', *War on the Rocks*,
    22 February 2018,
    https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/america-has-high-expectations-for-india-can-new-delhi-deliver/

40   Abhijnan Rej, 'S(c)helling in Kashmir: bargaining under the nuclear shadow', *Washington Quarterly,* 2019,
    42(2):163. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1627157

path entails unnecessary risks for a security-seeking state that enjoys a strong defensive advantage.

This conclusion is as far as the straightforward application of strategic choice theory can take us, but Glaser also argues a security-seeking state could have rational grounds to acquire an offensive capability to defend interests offshore or when facing the prospect of a two-front war.[41]

India has interests in the northern Indian Ocean and advantages that will allow growing military strategic influence without the same risk of triggering balancing as on its land borders. India's dependence on seaborne energy,[42] island possessions and preference for excluding major powers from its approaches all help to characterise Indian maritime strategy as reassuringly security-seeking. Proximity and chokepoints also provide India maritime advantages that would require extensive investment to challenge.[43] Karnad argues these factors should allow India to sustain a form of Monroe System through which, with a light hand and likely US acquiescence, it could dissuade China from developing a significant military presence.[44] India's culture of strategic restraint suggests prospects are good. Indian leaders are generally sensitive to the risk that aligning too closely with the US against China or seeking to overawe neighbours can trigger what Joshi and Mukherjee termed 'cascading security dilemmas'.[45] However, Indian leaders may need to provide reassurance that India's growing advantage does not require balancing by limiting high-intensity warfare capabilities and growing multilateral security mechanisms.[46]

The fear of a future China–Pakistan combined attack could drive Indian leaders to develop a more offensive strategy; risking an arms race it could lose. Such a fear would also risk forcing India into the sort of alliance with the US that it has long regarded as undesirable. Smith and Aamir both argue that, although China is prepared to underwrite Pakistan, there are limits to how far China is prepared

41   Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*, p 78.

42   Arnab Dasgupta, 'India's strategy in the Indian Ocean region: a critical aspect of India's energy security', *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 2018, 22, pp 39–57.

43   Kho Swee Lean Collin, 'China–India rivalry at sea', in R Basrur, A Mukherjee and TV Paul (eds), *India–China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma at Sea*, Routledge, New York, 2019.

44   Karnad, *Why India Is Not a Great Power (Yet)*, p 90 and p 137.

45   Joshi and Mukherjee, 'From denial to punishment: the security dilemma and changes in India's military strategy towards China', p 71.

46   Geoffrey Till, 'Naval development and international stability in the Indian Ocean region', in R Basrur, A Mukherjee and TV Paul (eds), *India–China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma at Sea*, Routledge, New York, 2019.

to go to support Pakistan in a conflict with India.[47] Combined military action by China and Pakistan would do little to change the role of geography, technology and scale in favouring India's defence. Offensive operations from both states would have to contend with the same distances, terrain, firepower and technology favouring the defensive and saturation of land and maritime approaches. A future closer relationship is likely to drive more Indian leaders to assign China greedy motives. Figure 7 charts this analysis. It suggests that a closer China–Pakistan military partnership would increase India's security dilemma with China and drive it to move from a largely cooperative military policy and deterrence by denial to one that makes limited efforts to deter China through competitive policies. The impact of such a competition on India's military strategic influence would be hard to predict. India would struggle to compete with China's mobilisation of resources, but any disadvantage would still be moderated by India's defensive advantage.

Figure 7: Severity of India's security dilemma with China and Pakistan in 2050 and impact of a closer China–Pakistan military partnership
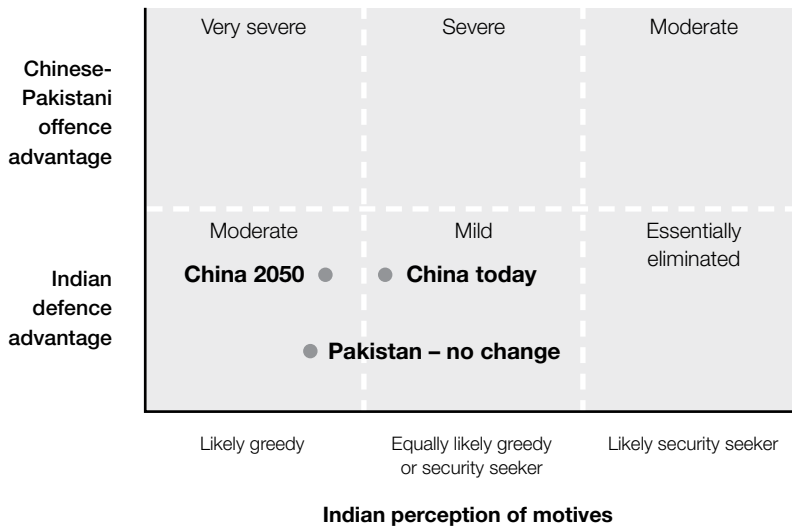
47   Jeff Smith, *Cold Peace: China–India Rivalry in the Twenty-First Century*, Lexington Books, 2013, pp 136–137; Adnan Aamir, 'Can Indo-Pakistan conflict affect Chinese interests?', *China Focus*, 2019. https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy

Security at home

If our analysis of power is focused on context and strategic choices, then it is important not to ignore domestic factors. Domestic security is crucial when assessing the future of India's military strategic influence; not only because internal threats limit India's influence in the world, but also because the Indian state must apply military strategic influence at home to control resources and people.

India has faced dozens of rebellions since independence. The most significant have been in Punjab, Kashmir, the north-eastern states and the Maoist Naxalite movement in the east. Of these, the latter three remain active. Their causes include communal cleavages, separatism and inequality; aided to different degrees by poverty, weak institutions and external interference. This pattern of rebellion raises fundamental problems for the future of the Indian political project. The republic struggles to use legitimate force and the threat of force to control and direct resources and people.[48]

Internal strategic culture

Indian strategic culture is partly rooted in a historical view that internal disorder has consistently made India vulnerable and that liberal democracy, federalism and development are the best ways to mediate internal conflicts. Bajpai places internal order alongside economic development and military strength as core Indian security values.[49] How Indian leaders approach this value can be divided into realpolitik and idealpolitik. On the one hand, all states resort to violence and threats to some degree to achieve control and must adapt to material and internal structural factors (realpolitik). On the other, democracies appeal to their constituents to comply with norms on compliance with lawful government direction and the mediation of disputes (idealpolitik). Most examinations of India's internal security preferences navigate these confusing layers of negotiation backed by direct force.[50] This is partly because India's embrace of liberal democracy charted new waters. It defied the widely held view that prosperity, common culture and secularism were necessary for a successful democracy.[51]

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48 It has also lacked the capacity (and among many leaders, the desire) to attempt to maximise its resources and capability through marketisation and the enforcement of modernity. See Tellis, *India as a leading power*, p 13.

49 Bajpai, 'Indian grand strategy: six schools of thought', pp 157–159.

50 Paul Staniland, 'Internal security strategy in India', *India Review*, 2018, 17(1):142–158, p 142, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14736489.2018.1415287; Matthew Webb, *Separatist Violence in South Asia: A Comparative Study*, Taylor & Francis, 2016, p 108; Namrata Panwar, 'From nationalism to factionalism: faultlines in the Naga insurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 2017, 28(1): 233–258, p 233; Bajpai, 'India: modified structuralism', p 191.

51 John Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy*, Simon & Schuster, Sydney, 2009, p 586.

Poverty and heterogeneity have required Indian politicians to experiment and adapt both democratic and coercive means to achieve their ends.

Indian leaders make separate operational assumptions regarding the best approaches to rebellion and terrorism. Staniland argues India employs a mixed security strategy against rebels that shifts between sharing authority, ceasefires, containment and counterinsurgency depending on the threat.[52] Hoyt notes India is almost unique in its use of strong military action alongside political accommodation.[53] Evans sees the influence of Western doctrine and Indian political practice combining to produce a population-centric strategy that has facilitated Indian unity, in contrast with the more destructive enemy-centric strategies applied in Pakistan and in Sri Lanka after 2005.[54] The mixed strategy makes the best use of limited resources, substantial internal security forces and the capacity to implement political agreements. Campaigns involve police and armed forces but are generally police led.[55]

There are different views on the effectiveness of a mixed strategy. Some see a broad decline in the state's legitimate monopoly on the use of force as room is made for rebels, bandits, armed wings of political parties and government-sponsored militias.[56] Others argue multilayered federalism has allowed India to decentralise without undermining central authority.[57] The militarisation of Indian police and society sustaining and spreading violent conflict is an additional concern.

India's preferred approach to counterterrorism is through law enforcement, protective measures and diplomatic initiatives. There is little room for conciliation and consistent disinterest in using armed force abroad to pre-empt attacks or help stabilise sources of threat.[58] Addressing counterterrorism policy separately can distinguish India's use of military strategic influence in the international and domestic security domains.

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52 Staniland, 'Internal security strategy in India', p 147.

53 Timothy Hoyt, 'The Indian way of war', in TG Mahnken and D Blumenthal (eds), *Strategy in Asia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2014, p 156.

54 Michael Evans, 'Irregular warfare in Asia', in TG Mahnken and D Blumenthal (eds), *Strategy in Asia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2014, pp 246–249.

55 Kashmir is the exception due to its proximity to Pakistan.

56 Staniland, 'Internal security strategy in India'; Webb, *Separatist Violence in South Asia: A Comparative Study*, p 122.

57 Bajpai, 'India: modified structuralism', p 192.

58 Harsh Pant and Ivan Lidarev, 'Indian counterterrorism policy and the influence of the Global War on Terror', *India Review*, 2018, 17:181-208, pp 188–200; Shashank Joshi, *Indian Power Projection: Ambition, Arms and Influence*, Abingdon UK, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies and Routledge Journals, 2015, pp 124–125.

New opportunities

A wealthier India will be well positioned to improve its military strategic, and wider national, influence over internal security. A survey of four futures studies suggest India's internal opponents will continue to be motivated by poverty and dislocation, driven by changes in technology, business and climate.[59] They will also benefit from the diffusion of technology and methods.[60] But given internal security is a core Indian security value new resources will likely be harnessed to the mixed internal security strategy and police led counterterrorism to India's considerable advantage – particularly by increasing the size and capability of neglected police and judiciary and addressing socioeconomic disadvantage. Unlike competitors in the international system, India's rebels have little capacity to balance the Indian state. Their variety makes developing a common cause unlikely and the postcolonial norm in Asia against interference in the domestic affairs of other states is likely to remain strong as states prioritise the consolidation of domestic authority.[61] We can test this argument against three of India's enduring internal challenges: the Naxalites, the Naga insurgency in India's northeast and in Kashmir.

The Naxalites are India's most perplexing rebels. They are a response to socioeconomic problems that India's democratic institutions and recent growth should be able to address. Further, they do not benefit significantly from proximity to a porous international border through which they might access sanctuary or receive resources from foreign supporters. In the early 1990s, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI-M) succeeded in reviving their 1960–70s rural revolutionary movement among India's poorest farmers, scheduled castes and tribes along a corridor of five eastern states. The party has used real grievances over land reform, poverty and social services to build a level of class consciousness and revolutionary tradition among marginalised groups.[62] Although the line between revolutionary motivation and social and criminal

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59 World Economic Forum (WEF), *The global risks report 2019*, Geneva, 2019, https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2019; Ministry of Defence (UK), *Global strategic trends – the future starts today*, 2 October 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-strategic-trends; Roman Muzalevsky, *Strategic Landscape, 2050: Preparing the US military for new era dynamics*, Carlisle Barracks, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2017, https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=804718; Peter Varghese, *An India economic strategy to 2035: navigating from potential to delivery*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2018, https://www.dfat.gov.au

60 Martin Van Creveld, 'Through a glass, darkly: some reflections on the future of war', *The RUSI Journal*, 2000: 25–44, pp 35–41; Staniland, 'America has high expectations for India. Can New Delhi deliver?'.

61 Alagappa, 'Rethinking security: a critical review and appraisal of the debate', p 87; Arun Swamy and John Gershman, 'Managing internal conflicts: dominance of the state', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed), *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003, p 529.

62 Dipak Gupta, 'The Naxalites and the Maoist movement in India: birth, demise, and reincarnation', *Democracy and Security*, 2007, 3(2): 157–188, pp 178–179. https://doi.org/10.1080/17419160701374911

banditry is unclear, the CPI-M has built a sustained armed challenge against the state,[63] and can draw encouragement from the success of fellow Maoists in Nepal. By 2006, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh claimed the Naxalites were India's biggest security threat. Since then, India has applied a mixed security strategy with some success, but development and political initiatives continue to be stymied in areas where police lack the capacity to provide protection.[64] A future that includes high growth accompanied by dislocation and continued poverty appears tailor-made for the Naxalites. But their make-up and motivations are also well understood and state institutions with more resources will be well placed to expand current socioeconomic and security programs in the same manner as many states before India have done to bring development and order to their marginalised rural poor.

The Nagas are one of many peoples in India's north-east to sustain rebel groups since India's independence. They seek some level of autonomy and benefit, like the Naxals, from the region's difficult terrain and low development. Unlike the Naxals, Naga insurgents have partially benefited from working with others across an international border. However, their ethnic character drives conflict with other northeastern groups such as the Manipuris.[65] The north-east has seen the full panoply of Indian internal security strategy: special powers, counterinsurgency, crossborder cooperation, ceasefires, peace deals, new states and public spending.[66] This has gradually splintered the Naga rebel effort but not offered a comprehensive solution to poverty and a desire for some level of independence or cultural protection. As with the Naxals, new wealth will give Indian leaders more resources to pursue a mixed security strategy.

Kashmiri separatism has a different character to India's other internal security challenges, due to the foundational dispute between India and Pakistan over the fate of Jammu and Kashmir, the desire of some Kashmiris for independence or merger with Pakistan and ethno-religious divisions among the people. Its international character has made this rebellion more threatening to the primary Indian security value of territorial integrity. India must address the external threat of direct attack by Pakistan and the threat posed by terrorist groups aided by

63 Pritam Singh, 'The origins, influence, suppression, and resilience of the Maoist/Naxalite movement in India: 1967–present', *Socialist History*, 2016, 50: 85–104, p 97.

64 Aryan Yashpal, 'Naxalism and the challenge to the internal security of India', *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, 2020, 3(3):1273–1291, p 1275; Sumantra Bhattacharya, Jayanta Kumar Ray, Shakti Sinha and Bhavneet Kaur Sachdev, 'The growing Naxalism in the country and the role of the government to eradicate Naxalite', *Galaxy International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 2021, 9(12):203–209, pp 204–207. https://internationaljournals.co.in/index.php/giirj/article/view/659

65 M Amarjeet Singh, 'Revisiting the Naga conflict: what can India do to resolve this conflict?', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 2013, 24:795–812, p 803. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2013.866420

66 Panwar, 'From nationalism to factionalism: fault lines in the Naga insurgency', p 253.

Pakistan, such as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Jaish-e-Mohamed. Consequently, the Indian Army has led the deployment of extensive military and police forces in a prolonged counterinsurgency campaign. New wealth will help India sustain and expand this effort and further enhance India's defensive advantage against Pakistan. But a defensive advantage is insufficient to deter or prevent terrorist attacks, like the 2019 suicide bombing at Pulwama, and Pakistan's defensive advantage ensures India remains unprepared to risk wider conflict with Pakistan through a military response. The token air strike following the Pulwama attack demonstrates this.

Given the value Indian strategic culture assigns to internal order, new wealth is likely to be applied by future leaders to make India's already well-practised mixed internal security strategy more effective. But developing the influence to ensure internal order will require improved civil, economic and cultural capabilities, and effective national strategy (see Figure 1).

Changing strategic preferences?

This argument is based on the broad judgement that future strategic culture and rational actors will continue to support a policy of strategic restraint abroad and a mixed security strategy at home – maximising the limited opportunities provided by new wealth to increase military strategic influence. However, the BJP's 2019 second consecutive election win raised the prospect that the Hindutva and Hyperrealist schools and populism might come to exert greater influence over the strategic preferences of Indian leaders and promote suboptimal policy choices.

Future perceptions of the strategic environment

A shift of Indian strategic culture away from what Bajpai characterised as a 'prudential, defensive realism' closest to Nehruvianism towards the Hindutva and Hyperrealist schools could diminish India's military strategic influence.[67] It would direct military policy towards competition: exacerbating security dilemmas with China and Pakistan and removing the 'light hand' required to build acceptance of Indian military strength in the Indian Ocean. BJP governments have catalysed some widely supported adjustments of Nehruvian principles to more realist approaches favouring the use of force, strategic partnerships that balance China and a tougher response on border disputes.[68] However, there is broad consensus that Hindutva, as practised by the BJP today, primarily sees the use

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67 Bajpai, 'Indian grand strategy: six schools of thought', p 118.

68 Shrikant Paranjpe, *India's Strategic Culture: The Making of National Security Policy*, Taylor & Francis ebook, 2020, p 158, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003030164; Kanti Bajpai, 'Modi's China policy and the road to confrontation', *Pacific Affairs*, 2018, 91(2):245–260. https://doi.org/10.5509/2018912245

of force as for the internal defence of Hindu civilisation and that the security policies of BJP governments display more continuity with past Indian security practice than change.[69] Hyperrealism and earlier more aggressive conceptions of Hindutva have not manifested in the BJP's foreign and international security policies to the degree once feared. Basrur goes as far as to argue that:

> From a foreign policy standpoint, there is no evidence that Hindutva today conceives of the world any differently from the centrist liberal worldview espoused by the Indian elite as a whole … It follows that Modi's politics, whatever its domestic distortions, remains a defensive realist one in the external realm.[70]

With its focus on internal cultural resilience, Hindutva could have a much greater influence on the domestic strategic environment. The BJP's parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS – National Volunteer Organisation), has long prioritised internal order but their focus on Hindu culture and social service results in an ambivalence about the role of liberal democracy, the state and federal politics.[71] Consequently, successive BJP governments have challenged protections for minorities and some democratic conventions. Intriguingly, the BJP has also had some success styling itself as the party that both delivers economic opportunity to the modernising middle class and protects poorer Indians from the excesses of globalisation.[72] This mixed picture prevents us from determining whether the longer-term impact of the BJP on domestic strategic culture will degrade India's liberal and federal institutions' capacity to mediate conflict and/ or renovate efforts to strengthen the economy and protect the marginalised rural poor. Part of the answer lies in whether Modi can deliver successes needed to cement the BJP as a conciliatory party of the centre-right rather than the militant party seen in the 1980s and 1990s.

69 Chris Ogden, *Hindu Nationalism and the Evolution of Contemporary Indian Security: Portents of Power*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p 186; Rajesh Basrur, 'Modi, Hindutva, and foreign policy', in Surupa Gupta, Rani D Mullen, Rajesh Basrur, Ian Hall, Nicolas Blarel, Manjeet S Pardesi, Sumit Ganguly, 'Indian foreign policy under Modi: a new brand or just repackaging', *International Studies Perspectives*, 2019, 20(1):745, p 10. https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky008; Hall, *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy*, p 125; Johannes Plagemann and Sandra Destradi, 'What Modi teaches us about populist foreign policy', *East Asia Forum*, 22 February 2019,
https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/02/22/what-modi-teaches-us-about-populist-foreign-policy/

70 Basrur, 'Modi, Hindutva and foreign policy', p 10.

71 Hall, *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy*, pp 129–130.

72 Ogden, *Hindu Nationalism and the Evolution of Contemporary Indian Security: Portents of Power*, p 196.

Future perceptions of the best strategic options

Like many parties across the world, Modi and the BJP have harnessed the populist political style, which Moffit convincingly argues will be reinforced into the future by social media and public disenchantment.[73] But the potential for populism to drive suboptimal policy choices is limited. Populism is a style, not an ideology. It does not have the capacity to change the core values discussed above that form the basis of strategic restraint abroad and a mixed security strategy at home. The recent rounds of border crises with Pakistan (2016 and 2019) and China (2017, 2020 and 2022) have demonstrated how even a textbook populist like Modi balances domestic political gain with the need for strategic restraint. There is more to be said for populism's potential impact on the future perceptions of the best domestic strategic options. The very nature of the mixed security strategy makes it hard to assess if Modi's tough approach to domestic opponents is an ill-conceived escalation or a rejuvenation of the state's efforts to tackle domestic rebellion, but the potential for deepening domestic divisions and suboptimal aggressive policies at times when conciliation might be best is clear. Even when the international and the domestic converged with the 2019 Pulwama suicide car bombing and subsequent border clashes, Modi's hard work to benefit in the subsequent national elections did not result in any genuine changes in policy (leaving aside Modi's efforts to reset conditions in Kashmir prior to the attacks).[74] India and Pakistan exhibited considerable restraint, while in Kashmir Army-led counterinsurgency and India's evolving mix of police, preventative and diplomatic counterterrorism initiatives remained largely on course.

Conclusions

New wealth will give India some military strategic influence to reshape its environment in the Indian Ocean and at home; but will do little to change its military relationship with its strongest neighbours or see it act as more than a strong regional power. New capability will not alter the continental status quo but will give India more military strategic influence in the northern Indian Ocean due to geography and a recognition of legitimate interests. Future governments can be expected to channel new resources into underfunded domestic security programs with some expectation of success. These judgements are based on the assessment that the rise of Hindu nationalism and the populist political style are unlikely to change the

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73   Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2016, p 46 and pp 159–160.

74   Mohammed Ayoob, 'Modi's re-election and the future of Indian democracy', *The Strategist,* ASPI, 24 May 2019. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/modis-re-election-and-the-future-of-indian-democracy/

preference for strategic restraint abroad and a mixed security strategy at home. Of these two, the future of the mixed security strategy is more uncertain given the BJP's focus on internal cohesion and the potential for change in Indian society compared to the relatively more stable international system.

These conclusions have some wider implications for the Indo-Pacific region and security analysis. The US, Japan and Australia should be careful in looking to India to actively balance Chinese military influence. The revived US–Australia–India–Japan Consultations allow all participants to signal to China their potential to work together, but India's continental, developing, and postcolonial character means it lacks the interests and perceptions in common with the other three to make potentially costly military commitments. However, the region has an opportunity to partner with a more capable India seeking security for its growing interests offshore and improvements in India's domestic security might also make it a more active and effective counterterrorism and law enforcement partner. Finally, security analysts need to do more to understand the relationship between force, strategy and power in the modern era in general, and in India's specific context. Force alone does not deliver power – at home or abroad. Capabilities are applied in specific contexts and in support of opposing strategies derived from both rational judgement and cultural knowledge.

Focus…

on the Russian
war on Ukraine

A war that defies expectations

Matthew Sussex

It gives me great pleasure to present this special focus section of the *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies* dealing specifically with Russia's ongoing, unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine. While it is an unfinished war, the conflict already has much to teach us. Chief amongst these is a sobering reminder that wars confound even the most confident assumptions about their root causes, the ingredients for success on the battlefield, and their strategic consequences. Wars, put simply, are world-shaping. They redraw the map of international politics and frequently have implications far beyond their geographical centres of gravity. And this war – Europe's first major interstate land conflict since the Second World War – is no exception.

To draw out some lessons from Russia's war against Ukraine we have assembled a collection of essays from seven distinguished experts. In doing so this special focus showcases some of Australia's best thinking on Russia and strategic studies, as well as analysis from leading international specialists. Our contributors come from a number of different backgrounds. Some are practitioners engaging in operational arts, diplomacy and defence policy. Others are expert analysts at research institutes. Still others are prominent academics. Each of them brings important insights about the war based on many years of expertise.

The scope of this special focus is broad, and deliberately so. It has been developed specifically with the intention of spurring discussions that bridge practice-policy-academic divides. We begin by assessing the causes of the war before moving to assess its implications for the way the Kremlin pursues its foreign and security policies, as well as the internal drivers under President Vladimir Putin that have animated his regime's view of Russia's place in the world. We then examine what might be learned about strategy and capabilities through specific reference to

Ukraine's spirited defence of its homeland and lessons from how Russia has deployed its cyber capabilities in its war efforts. Finally, we examine the impact of the war in Australia's Indo-Pacific strategic environment, as well as the increasing significance and impact of Russian influence in Australia.

Before doing this and in order to contextualise the contributions that follow, it is instructive to frame how the war in Ukraine has already bucked conventional wisdom. Accordingly, I now turn to briefly assess the many misjudgements and flawed assumptions made already by key players in the conflict. Following this, I map out the themes of the focus section, summarising the main arguments made by each contributor.

Causes, conduct and prospects: conventional wisdom and the Russia–Ukraine war

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia's armed forces on 24 February 2022 caught many observers off guard. A common assumption amongst Western defence and security pundits was that Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, was merely flexing his military muscles. It was thought his demands for a new order in Europe – which would essentially have set the security clock back to 1999, if not earlier – amounted to little more than posturing.[1] However, once Russian troops had rolled across the border, launching an audacious assault on Kyiv to decapitate the Ukrainian leadership, the general consensus was that resistance would swiftly crumble.[2] It was expected that the Kremlin would in short order pull off another act of territorial aggrandisement, adding to its takeover of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

But this was not to be. More than a year after what was supposed to be a rapid invasion, with a main combat phase lasting a few weeks at most, Russian forces have struggled to generate offensive momentum. This has been despite committing some 80 per cent of their ground forces to the war, in addition to several rounds of conscription. The Kremlin has proven itself to be inept at

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1   See for instance Samuel Charap, 'The US approach to Ukraine's border war isn't working', *Politico*, 19 November 2021.
    https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/11/19/ukraine-russia-putin-border-522989

2   Tatiana Vorozhko, 'Three reasons most analysts were wrong on war in Ukraine', *VOA News*, 24 February 2023.
    https://www.voanews.com/a/three-reasons-most-analysts-were-wrong-on-war-in-ukraine/6974782.html

operational arts, has adapted only partially and slowly,[3] and its vaunted offensive cyber capabilities have had little effect on the conflict's trajectory. The Russian military's ongoing failure to perform combined operations has been compounded by widespread corruption, poor equipment, low morale, and a ponderous and sclerotic command structure that eschews innovation and mobility in favour of the use of indiscriminate massed fires; essentially, the tactics of the previous century rather than the current one.

At the same time, the performance of the Ukrainian armed forces, seen as decidedly inferior to Russia's modernised military before the invasion, has thus far been little short of exceptional. An emphasis on rapid movement, cutting off supply lines and striking deep into Russian follow-on support forces has enabled it to inflict maximum damage on the aggressor. Its counteroffensives in September 2022 were highly successful. The decision to defend the town of Bakhmut, in the face of a renewed Russian offensive in January 2023, though criticised as being a pointless waste of personnel and equipment for no strategic benefit, in fact led to some substantial strategic payoffs. Doing so tied up a large proportion of Russia's replenished forces, bought time for Ukraine to build-up its capabilities in preparation for its own counteroffensives,[4] and inflicted an estimated 100,000 casualties on the Russian military between December 2022 and April 2023 alone.[5]

The behaviour of leaders has also been unexpected. The Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, was ridiculed before the war as a second-rate politician, whose background as a comedian and actor would be no match for the seasoned and savvy Vladimir Putin.[6] This assumption too proved almost immediately incorrect. Zelenskyy became the international personification of the Ukrainian resistance, backed by adroit and well-pitched information operations that together drove the push to build international support for Ukraine's cause. Zelenskyy also became something of a folk hero in the West, whose citizens arguably saw in his frank manner and casual honesty the qualities that were

3   On Russian adaptation see Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *Meatgrinder: Russian tactics in the second year of its invasion of Ukraine,* RUSI Special Resources, 19 May 2023; Steve Holland and Katharine Jackson, 'US believes Russians in Ukraine have suffered 100,000 casualties in 5 months', *Reuters*, 2 May 2023. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/us-believes-russians-ukraine-have-suffered-100000-casualties-5-months-2023-05-01/#:~:text=WASHINGTON%2C%20May%201%20(Reuters),and%20other%20areas%20of%20Ukraine

4   Matthew Sussex, 'Why Ukraine's fate rests on its imminent counteroffensive', *The Conversation*, 2 May 2023. https://theconversation.com/why-ukraines-fate-rests-on-its-imminent-counteroffensive-204900

5   Holland and Jackson, 'US believes Russians in Ukraine have suffered 100,000 casualties in 5 months'.

6   Mykhailo Minakov, *Zelenskyy vs Putin: the personality factor in Russia's war on Ukraine* [blog], Wilson Centre, Kennan Institute, 13 April 2022. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/zelensky-versus-putin-personality-factor-russias-war-ukraine

absent in their own carefully curated political elites. This made giving Zelenskyy what he wanted – not to mention visiting Kyiv and meeting him – a way for Western leaders to generate political capital, in addition to the obvious desire to thwart Russian imperialism.[7]

In contrast, the typically confident and assertive Putin began looking increasingly unhinged and shrill. Abandoning his earlier rationale of NATO expansion as the reason for his invasion of Ukraine, Putin now favours one of Russian imperial expansion. His public pronouncements have sought to paint Russia as the victim of a widespread Western conspiracy comprised of satanists, warmongers and fascists, whose woke transgender ideologies would poison conservative Orthodox Russians.[8] Juxtaposed against Putin's own neofascist 'Z' movement,[9] the purging of critics, the imposition of jail terms for any dissent,[10] and a compliant state media – contorting itself to describe Russia's invasion as somehow justified, let alone successful – Russian narratives about Ukrainian Nazism have veered from the implausible and demonstrably false to the fantastical.

Pitching his 'special military operation' as an existential conflict for Russia against dark forces that have always sought to subjugate and dominate it, Putin's invocation of the militaristic and nationalist totems of the past have made him look weak rather than strong, leading to real questions about his political future. So too has the infighting within his security services: from Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov's criticisms of Russian strategy, to Wagner chief Yevgenyi Prigozhin's public and bile-filled rants against the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and his generals.[11]

The defining feature of the war in Ukraine is, therefore, that it continues to confound conventional wisdom, especially about causes, conduct and prospects. Putin has made three critical misjudgements in respect to the quality of his armed forces, the likelihood of Ukrainian resistance, and the willingness of the West to capitulate to a Russian fait accompli. But, in fairness, numerous Western experts have been guilty of this too, particularly when it comes to NATO unity.

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7   Lynn Berry, 'In unlikely wartime role, Zelenskyy gives Ukrainians hope', *Associated Press*, 22 February 2023. https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-one-year-anniversary-f1e17c5658f1aea7463cc7a392b b76c2

8   For instance: Vladimir Putin, *Presidential address to Federal Assembly*, The Kremlin website, 21 February 2023. http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/70565

9   Ian Garner, 'Russia's frighteningly fascist youth', *Foreign Policy*, 21 May 2023. https://foreignpolicy. com/2023/05/21/russia-fascist-putin-war-youth-ian-garner-book-z-generation/?tpcc=onboarding_trending

10   Francesca Ebel, 'Meet the people caught up in Russia's crackdown on dissent', *Washington Post*, 13 May 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/05/13/russia-political-prisoners/

11   Jamie Dettmer, 'Wagner chief should avoid the tea', *Politico*, 14 May 2023. https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-russia-wagner-avoid-the-tea/

Granted, the US and the transatlantic West have long signalled a preference for de-escalation, a posture that was most clearly visible in President Joe Biden's statement before Russia's invasion that NATO would not get involved militarily in the event of hostilities.[12] However, when this failed – and perhaps recognising that telegraphing NATO's unwillingness to offer security guarantees to Ukraine probably emboldened Putin – the commitment by NATO members and their partners to aiding and arming Ukraine has been admirable. It is certainly true that there have been signs of disunity along the way, including disagreements over the supply of main battle tanks to F-16 fighters.[13] Given the past tendency of NATO and EU members not to directly challenge Putin, the degree to which this has become a hallmark of the conflict is in itself unexpected.

What lessons can be learned from the war in Ukraine?

Among the many central themes in the study of war, debates over why they occur in the first place are easily one of the most prominent. Examining Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Rajan Menon tackles this question in the first of our essays. Menon surveys the main explanations for the war. This includes the Kremlin's argument (a view shared by many realist scholars) that NATO expansion created an existential threat to Russia, leaving it no option but to invade Ukraine to secure its sphere of influence. Finding this unconvincing on the grounds that there was little evidence Ukraine was set to be admitted into the alliance in the foreseeable future, Menon turns to the rival explanation: that fear of democracy, and in particular fear of 'colour revolutions' that might topple him, were ultimately responsible. But Menon takes issue with this too, observing that if Putin was so paralysed with fear at the prospect of popular revolt it was odd for him to invade Ukraine at a time when his domination of Russia was rock-solid. For Menon, the same applies to arguments that Putin was a rabid imperialist: if that's the case, why did he wait 20 years to invade? Ultimately, Menon concludes that there is no good answer for why the war in Ukraine happened, nor why it happened when it did. He therefore sees it as a 'war of surprises', noting that the longer it goes on, the more likely it will continue to surprise us.

Reflecting the insights of a practitioner monitoring events as they happened, Peter Tesch's essay offers a different interpretation of Putin's decision to invade Ukraine. He makes two important observations here. First, the West was too

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12   Jeff Mason and Vladimir Soldatkin, 'Biden says US will not put troops in Ukraine, as tensions with Russia ease', *Reuters*, 9 December 2021. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/kremlin-says-both-sides-follow-up-quickly-putin-biden-talks-2021-12-08/

13   Matthew Sussex, 'Why can't the West agree on how much military support to provide Ukraine?', *ABC News,* 23 January 2023.
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-24/military-support-ukraine-german-tanks/101884620

quick to ignore or downplay the Russian President's past penchant for using military force to achieve foreign policy objectives. Second, Putin clearly believed victory would be swift and relatively painless. Placing Putin's leadership into historical context, Tesch identifies four persistent themes that help to explain his worldview: absolutism, spiritualism, exceptionalism and convulsion. The first two of these emerged early in Russia's history, with the institutions of the state designed to serve the will of leaders who came to personify the nation and its interests, with Orthodox Christianity serving as the spiritual authority that legitimated the tsar's power. These are in turn supported by the popular narrative that, similar to a sense of manifest destiny, Russia must be accorded special status to act as a hegemon over the lands and people who surround it. Finally, Russia's experience with war underscores a sense of being beset by hostile adversaries. Taken together, Tesch argues, the result is a tragedy for both Ukraine and Russia. As Putin attempts to make Russia great and secure his own pre-eminence amongst his forebears, Putin is sending both nations back to the past.

Moving from causes to consequences, the impact of the war in Ukraine on Russia and its future trajectory is an important theme that specialists will continue to grapple with. In her essay dealing with what the effects of war in Ukraine will have on Russia's foreign policy strategy, Ruth Deyermond observes that in trying to reassert Russia's role as a great power, Putin's invasion of Ukraine has manifestly failed to deliver. Indeed, she notes, it is actually resulting in the diminution of Russian authority and influence. Examining Russia's responses to this strategic disaster, Deyermond identifies an attempt to meld economic and ideological engagement to construct an anti-Western bloc, especially with China and in the Global South. With the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as multilateral vehicles, Deyermond demonstrates that Putin's strategy has been to try and accelerate the global shift towards multipolarity: whether by promoting Russia as a hub for conservative values; or as a bulwark against alleged Western neocolonialism. However, as Deyermond correctly notes, there is little to suggest these will deliver outcomes on a scale Putin seeks. On the contrary, a more subservient relationship with China and Putin's self-inflicted abrogation of energy influence in Europe are already the hallmarks of what she sees as a weakened and humiliated Russia.

The exceptionally poor performance of Russia's military has been regularly identified as a key reason for the Kremlin's failure to achieve its maximalist war aims in Ukraine. But as noted above, the ability of Ukraine's armed forces to inflict significant damage on invading Russian forces is at least equally important. In his

evaluation of the drivers of Ukraine's success, Mick Ryan identifies a Ukrainian strategy of *corrosion*, which sits between the more conventional strategies of annihilation and exhaustion. The ultimate aim has been to degrade Russia's physical, moral and intellectual capacity to fight.

Ryan sees Ukraine's strategy of corrosion as having a number of constitutive parts. Central to eventual strategic success, it has an overarching theory of victory based on building resilience and simultaneously denying Russia sources of strategic support. It has integrated civil and military approaches to the conflict, on the one hand stressing the durability of the armed forces and society, while simultaneously corroding Russian morale through battlefield defeats, attacks on logistics and clever use of messaging. Meanwhile, Ukraine's global influence campaign has attracted significant foreign support, providing crucial aid, intelligence, equipment and economic assistance. It has supplemented this by mobilising national resources, including an armed force of around 700,000 personnel, as well as nationalising the war economy. And yet, unlike Russia, Ukraine has sought not to fight a 'total war', unbound by rules. On the contrary, it has been keen to promote the view that it is fighting fairly with a cause that it just. Finally, Ryan observes that Ukraine has demonstrated a superior capacity to learn and adapt as the war has evolved. It is this combination of factors, Ryan concludes, that show a strategy of corrosion is not just a recipe for Ukrainian success, but also a model for strategists to keenly study for both contemporary and future wars.

Assessing success through the lenses of conventional battlefield domains can offer much to our understanding of how wars evolve. But what of the impact of technology, and in particular Russia's much vaunted cyber capabilities? In this next essay, Keir Giles notes that implementation failures around doctrine and planning have not been primarily responsible for Russian failures. Instead, an overconfidence in Russian military capabilities meant that opportunities for much more robust cyberattacks were squandered and limited to a 'fast and dirty' tempo unsuited for longer wars. These failures were exacerbated by Ukrainian resilience, brought about by years of experience with Russian information warfare, enlisting an eager civilian sector, and foreign support from governments as well as leading technology companies.

Turning his focus to specific aspects of Russian information warfare in Ukraine, Giles finds that interdiction has only really been effective in the territories already controlled by Kremlin proxies. Attempts to leverage cognitive effects have had some successes, especially in finding and exploiting local collaborators. But, whereas they have been fairly instrumental in promoting Russian narratives outside the West (and to an extent within it), they have not been effective in

cowing the Ukrainian population. Moreover, while operational coordination has been hard to judge, given Ukraine's strong operational security (OPSEC) measures, Russia has clearly struggled to achieve cyber-kinetic integration. Finally, Giles notes there is evidence of Russian sensitivity to NATO's Article 5 agreements, which make escalation in cyberspace against Western targets preferable to kinetic spillover. Giles therefore concludes there is much the West can learn from Russia's experience with cyber operations in Ukraine: careful planning is vulnerable to determined opposition; having the private sector on side is invaluable; and while Russia has experienced cyber failures in Ukraine, it has certainly not lost the information war on the broader strategic level.

Much of the analysis of Russia's war in Ukraine has obviously focused on the implications for the two protagonists and wider questions about European security. However, the effect of the war on Russian strategy and influence in Asia will become increasingly important, especially with Moscow looking at alternatives to Europe as centres to build trade relations, influence and national power. In her essay on Russia–China relations and the Indo-Pacific, Natasha Kuhrt analyses how this might play out. In a piece likely to be of particular interest to Australian readers, Kuhrt notes that one immediate effect of the war in Ukraine has been that Russian arms sales have plummeted, with the gap increasingly being filled by South Korea and France. This is also an area of potential tension between Moscow and Beijing, as both nations increasingly compete for arms markets in the same region. The relationship with Japan has also been damaged, with Tokyo now seeing security in Europe and security in the Indo-Pacific as indivisible. Of course, much of this depends on how closely the Russia–China relationship develops, especially on the question of potential Russian support for any Chinese moves against Taiwan. And, at present, Russia is failing to diversify its relationships in the region by courting Indonesia, Vietnam or other South-East Asian actors.

The final contribution in our special focus section concerns a topic even closer to home for an Australian audience: Russia's growing influence activities in this country. In this essay, Kyle Wilson makes the important point that Western intelligence agencies have failed to learn from history, disinvesting in capabilities when threats seem to have passed, only to be faced with capacity shortfalls when they reappear. In the case of Russia's undeclared war against the West, Wilson charts the evolution of Russia's fully blown information operations, which have dovetailed with the high premium Russian intelligence services have placed on espionage. In Australia this has – in addition to attempts to recruit officials – taken the form of efforts to promote the Russian world (*Russkij mir*), weaponising the local diaspora and mobilising numerous wellwishers. The chief targets here

have been those who would champion anti-Americanism and scepticism about the ANZUS alliance. They also include individuals on the left and right with either lingering nostalgia about the USSR, or a preference for strong powerful leaders that is coupled to a mistrust of the mainstream media. In his examination of the main promoters of Russian propaganda in Australia – taking in a variety of sympathisers, from motorcycle gangs to martial arts clubs, Orthodox Church groups and links to Australia's far right, Wilson paints a sobering picture of an information and recruitment campaign that may not be publicly prominent but has gathered in strength and intensity.

Conclusions

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has already produced a number of potential lessons. Amongst many others, these include geostrategic analysis about its causes, granular assessments of operational success or failure, and assessments of regional and global security implications. Of course, it is worth reiterating that there is only so much we can learn about a conflict that is still ongoing. But in each of these theme areas what has been most striking has been the extent to which prior expectations were not met by reality. That in itself is a good lesson: much of our thinking about war rests on prior experience, generating numerous assumptions that are not always borne out by events. As an exercise in prompting us to challenge our preconceptions, it is clear that the war in Ukraine will remain an excellent case study that will generate debate for some time to come. And as a starting point, I hope our readers find that the essays presented here – by leading scholars and analysts with a tendency to be right far more often than they are wrong – makes an important contribution to that discussion.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine: the war of surprise

Rajan Menon

Some wars acquire names that stick. The Lancaster and York clans fought the War of the Roses from 1455 to 1485 to claim the British throne. The Hundred Years' War pitted England against France from 1337 to 1453. In the Thirty Years' War, 1618 to 1648, many European countries clashed, while Britain and France waged the Seven Years' War, from 1756 to 1763, across significant parts of the globe. The First World War (1914–18) gained the lofty moniker, 'The Great War', even though the Second World War (1939–45) would prove far greater in death, destruction and its grim global reach.

Of the catchier conflict names, my own favourite—though the Pig War of 1859 between the United States and Great Britain in Canada runs a close second [1]— is the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–48).[2] It was named for Captain Robert Jenkins of the East India Company who, in 1738, told the British House of Commons that his ear, which he displayed for the onlooking parliamentarians, had been severed several years earlier by a Spanish coast guard sloop's commander. He had boarded the ship off the Cuban coast and committed the outrage using Jenkins's own cutlass. If ever there were cause for war that was it! An ear for an ear, so to speak.

If I could give Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine a name for posterity, I think I'd call it the War of Surprises, because from the get-go it so thoroughly confounded the military mavens and experts on Russia and Ukraine.

1   Taylor C Noakes, *The Pig War*, The Canadian Encyclopedia, 6 August 2021.
    https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/pig-war

2   John Brown, *The War of Jenkins' Ear*, Warfare History Network website, April 2021,
    https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/the-war-of-jenkins-ear/

For now, though, let me confine myself to exploring just two surprising aspects of the ongoing conflict, both of which can be posed as questions. Why did it occur when it did? And, why has it evolved in such unexpected ways?

It's NATO's fault

Though a slim majority of experts opined that Putin might use force against Ukraine many months after his military build-up on Ukraine's border began in early 2021,[3] few foresaw an all-out invasion. When he started massing troops, the reigning assumption was that Putin was muscle-flexing, probably to extract a promise that NATO would cease expanding towards Russia.

Some context helps here. NATO had just 16 members at its Cold War peak. More than three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has 30—and will have 32 when Finland and Sweden,[4] which sought membership after Putin's invasion, are allowed to join (and Finland has already done so). Long before Putin became president in 2000, Russian officials were already condemning the eastward march of the American-led former Cold War alliance. His predecessor, Boris Yeltsin made his opposition clear to President Bill Clinton.[5]

In October 1993, as Secretary of State Warren Christopher prepared to travel to Russia, James Collins, chargé d'affaires at the American embassy in Moscow, sent him a cable warning that 'NATO expansion is neuralgic to Russians'. If continued 'without holding the door open to Russia', he added, it would be 'universally interpreted in Moscow as directed against Russia and Russia alone—or "Neo-Containment", as Foreign Minister [Andrei] Kozyrev recently suggested'.

In February 2008, eight years into Putin's presidency and about a month before a NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, William Burns, then the American ambassador to Moscow and now the director of the CIA, sent a cable to Washington focusing on Ukraine.[6] 'NATO enlargement, particularly to Ukraine,' he warned, 'remains an "emotional and neuralgic" issue for Russia.' That same month, in a memo to President George W Bush's national security adviser

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3   Irene Entringer Garcia Blanes, Ryan Powers, Susan Peterson and Michael J Tierney, 'Poll: will Russia invade Ukraine?', *Foreign Policy*, 31 January 2022,
     https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/31/poll-russia-ukraine-invasion-crisis-biden-response/

4   Rob Schmitz and Fatma Tanis, 'Turkey says it will ratify Finland's bid to joint NATO', *NPR website*, 17 March 2023. https://www.npr.org/2023/03/17/1164236651/turkey-finland-nato-erdogan-sweden

5   Svetlana Savranskya and Tom Blanton (eds), *NATO expansion: what Yeltsin heard*, National Security Archive website, 16 March 2018.
     https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2018-03-16/nato-expansion-what-yeltsin-heard

6   Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08MOSCOW265_a.html

Condoleezza Rice,[7] Burns wrote that Ukraine's entry into NATO would cross 'the brightest of all red lines' for Russia's leaders. 'I have,' he continued, 'yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests.'

Such diplomatic missives had little effect, as NATO expansion became the centrepiece of Washington's new security order in Europe. In April 2008, at Bush's urging, NATO finally took a fateful step at that Bucharest summit, declaring that Ukraine and Georgia would, one day, join its ranks.

Now, it was one thing to include former Soviet allies from central Europe in NATO, but Ukraine was another matter entirely. In the eyes of Russian nationalists, the two countries shared a centuries-long set of cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious ties, not to mention a 1,426 mile border, a point Putin made in a 7,000-word essay he wrote in July 2021,[8] tellingly titled 'On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians'.

Putin, who never regarded Ukraine as an authentic state, saw the Ukrainians' overwhelming December 1991 vote in favour of independence as a deep injustice. The Russian newspaper *Kommersant* reported that he told George W Bush at a NATO–Russia Council meeting held during that 2008 Bucharest summit:

Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? A part of its territory is Eastern Europe, another part [Ukraine east of the Dnipro River], and a significant one, is a donation from us.

He later added ominously that, if Ukraine entered NATO, it would lose Crimea, its sole Russian-majority province, and the Donbas, its Russophone east. In his 2016 book, *All the Kremlin's Men*, Russian journalist Mikhail Zygar confirmed that Putin had indeed threatened to destroy Ukraine, were it to join NATO.

Those who blame NATO for the present war point to just such evidence.[9] And it cannot be denied that NATO expansion created tension between Russia and the West, as well as Russia and Ukraine. But the alliance's Bucharest promise that Ukraine would become a member someday didn't make Putin's war any less surprising.

7 William J Burns, *The Back Channel: American Diplomacy in a Disordered World*, Google Books edition, Random House Publishing Group, 2019, p 233.

8 President of Russia, *Article by Vladimir Putin, 'On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians'*, President of Russia website, 12 July 2021. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181

9 John Mearsheimer, 'John Mearsheimer on why the West is principally responsible for the Ukrainian crisis', *The Economist*, 19 March 2022. https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2022/03/11/john-mearsheimer-on-why-the-west-is-principally-responsible-for-the-ukrainian-crisis

Here's why: between then and the invasion moment, NATO never followed through on its pledge to take the next step and provide Kyiv with a 'membership action plan'.[10] By February 2022, it had, in fact, kept Ukraine waiting for 14 years without the slightest sign its candidacy might be advancing (though Ukraine's security ties and military training with some NATO states – the United States, Britain and Canada, in particular – had increased).

So, the NATO-was-responsible theory, suggesting that Putin invaded in 2022 in the face of an 'existential threat', isn't convincing (even if one believes, as I do, that NATO's enlargement was a bad idea and Russian apprehensions reasonable).

It's democracy, stupid

A rival explanation for Putin's war is that it stemmed from his fear of liberal democracy.[11] Under his rule, Russia has become steadily more authoritarian, until the state has become embodied in a single person: him. Putin's greatest fear, so this explanation goes, is the spectre of Russians thronging the streets demanding more freedom – and so, his departure. For that reason, he has curbed the media,[12] exiled opposition figures,[13] allegedly had others, like Anna Politkovskaya and Boris Nemtsov, killed and jailed Alexei Navalny,[14] Russia's most prominent dissident and the person most likely to lead a grassroots rebellion against him.

According to this account, Putin cannot imagine Russians turning against him spontaneously, since he played such a crucial role in putting the 1990s—a decade of economic collapse, fire sales of state property to sleazy oligarchs, rising poverty and potential civil war—behind them. Instead, he built a strong state, imposed order, crushed the Chechens' attempted secession, paid off Russia's massive debt early, rebuilt the army, revved up the economy and left the country standing tall as a great power once again.

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10   North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Membership Action Plan (MAP),* NATO website, last updated 19 April 2023. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37356.htm

11   Robert Person and Michael McFaul, *What Putin fears most*, Journal of Democracy website, 22 February 2022. https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/what-putin-fears-most/

12   Damelya Aitkhozhina, *Russia closing down media freedoms*, Human Rights Watch website, first published in *The Moscow Times*, 29 April 2021. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/29/russia-closing-down-media-freedoms

13   Human Rights Watch, *Russia: repression escalates, dissenting voices and activists forced into exile*, Human Rights Watch website, 13 January 2022. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/13/russia-repression-escalates

14   Amnesty International, *Russia: two years after Aleksei Navalny's arrest, Russian opposition figures suppressed, jailed or exiled*, Amnesty International website, 23 January 2023. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/russia-two-years-after-aleksei-navalnys-arrest-russian-opposition-figures-suppressed-jailed-or-exiled/

So if Russians do protest en masse (as they did from 2011 to 2013 against rigged elections), it must be thanks to instigation from abroad, as was supposedly true in adjoining countries like Georgia during its 2003 Rose Revolution, Kyrgyzstan during its 2005 Tulip Revolution, and Ukraine during its Orange Revolution that same year. Putin, this narrative continues, hated the 'colour revolutions' because they created turmoil in regions he deemed to be inside Russia's sphere of influence, or in which, as former president Dmitry Medvedev put it, the country has 'privileged interests'.[15]

But his real beef against citizen rebellions in Russia's neighbourhood, according to this explanation of what sparked the invasion, is that they might inspire insurrection in Russia. And when it came to that, he especially feared such events in Ukraine. After all, its 2014 'revolution of dignity' culminated in the ousting of a Russian-friendly president, Viktor Yanukovych. For Putin, in other words, that revolt hit too close to home. He reacted by annexing Crimea (after a referendum that violated Ukraine's constitution), while working to foster two separatist 'republics' across the border in Ukraine's Donbas region. A little more than a month before his invasion at a meeting of the Russia-led Collective Treaty Organization, he warned,[16] 'We will not allow the realization of so-called color-revolution scenarios,' and promptly dispatched 2,500 troops to Kazakhstan following a revolt there.

As for Ukraine, while it may be an imperfect democracy, it was certainly making progress. Its elections were cleaner than Russia's and its media far freer, as political parties competed; governments were voted in and out of power, and civic groups multiplied. All of this, so goes the argument, Putin found intolerable, fearing that such democratic ideas and aspirations would eventually make their way to Russia.

As it happens, though, none of this explains the timing of his invasion.

After all, Ukraine had been moving towards political plurality for years, however slowly and unevenly, and however far it still had to go.[17] So, what was happening in 2021 that could have taken his fear to new heights? The answer: nothing, really. Those who claim NATO was irrelevant to the invasion often insist the deed sprang from Putin's ingrained authoritarianism, dating back to his days in

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15   Brian Whitmore, 'Words mean things', *The Power Vertical* blog, RadioFreeEurope website, 2 March 2010. https://www.rferl.org/a/Words_Mean_Things/1972696.html

16   The Moscow Times, AFP, 'Russia-led military bloc will not allow "Color Revolutions" in Post-Soviet countries – Putin', *The Moscow Times*, 10 January 2022. https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/01/10/russia-led-military-bloc-will-not-allow-color-revolutions-in-post-soviet-countries-putin-a76000

17   Freedom House, *Nations in transit: Ukraine – 2022*, Freedom House website, accessed 26 May 2023. https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/nations-transit/2022

Russia's secret police, the KGB, his love of unchecked power and his dread of uppity citizens inclined to rebellion.

The problem: none of this explains why the war broke out when it did. Russia wasn't then being roiled by protests; Putin's position was rock-solid; and his party, United Russia, had no true rivals. Indeed, the only others with significant followings, relatively speaking, the Communist Party and the Liberal Democracy Party (neither liberal nor democratic), were aligned with the state.

According to yet another explanation, he attacked Ukraine simply because he's an imperialist through and through, yearns to go down in history as Putin the Great (like Russian tsars Peter the Great and Catherine the Great), and has been transfixed by far-right thinkers, above all the exile Ivan Ilyin,[18] whose remains he arranged to have returned to Russia for reburial.

But why then did a Russian ruler seized by imperial dreams and a neo-fascist ideology wait more than two decades to attack Ukraine? And remember, though now commonly portrayed as a wild-eyed expansionist, Putin, though hardly a peacemaker, had never previously committed Russian forces to anything like that invasion. His 1999–2009 war in Chechnya,[19] though brutal, was waged within Russia and there was no prospect of outside intervention to help the Chechens. His brief military foray into Georgia in 2008, his land grab in Ukraine in 2014, his intervention in Syria in 2015 – none were comparable in their size or audacity.

Do I have a better explanation? No, but that's my point. To this day, perhaps the most important question of all about this war, the biggest surprise – why did it happen when it did? – remains deeply mysterious, as do Putin's motives (or perhaps impulses).

God doesn't favour the bigger battalions

Once Russian troops did cross Ukraine's border, just about everyone expected Kyiv to fall within days. After that, it was assumed, Putin would appoint a quisling government and annex big chunks of the country. The CIA's assessment was that Ukrainian forces would be trounced in no time at all,[20] while Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley reportedly told members of Congress

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18 Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn, 'Putin's philosopher: Ivan Ilyin and the ideology of Moscow's rule', *Foreign Affairs*, 20 September 2015.
    https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2015-09-20/putins-philosopher

19 Rajan Menon, 'Russia's quagmire', *Boston Review*, 1 June 2004.
    https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/rajan-menon-chechnya-russia/

20 James Risen and Ken Klippenstein, 'The CIA thought Putin would quickly conquer Ukraine. Why did they get it so wrong?', *The Intercept*, 6 October 2022. https://theintercept.com/2022/10/05/russia-ukraine-putin-cia/

resistance would fizzle within a mere three days.[21] Those predictions briefly seemed on the mark. After all, the Russian army made its way to the northern suburbs of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv – think of a military bent on capturing Washington DC reaching Bethesda, Maryland – before being stopped in its tracks. Had it taken that city, we would be in a different world today.

But—perhaps the biggest surprise of all—the far weaker Ukrainian army not only prevented what was then considered the world's second-greatest military superpower from taking Kyiv but also, in September 2022, ejected Russian forces from the north-eastern province of Kharkiv. That October, it also pushed them out of the portion of the southern province of Kherson they had captured on the right bank of the Dnipro River. In all, Ukrainian forces have now retaken about half the territory Russia occupied after the invasion.

As winter approached in 2022, the crescent-shaped frontlines extending from northern Luhansk Province (one of two that make up the Donbas region) all the way south became the scene of First World War–style trench warfare, with both sides throwing their troops into a virtual meat grinder. Still, since then, despite having overwhelming superiority in soldiers and firepower – the estimated artillery exchange ratio between the two forces has been put as high as 7:1 [22] – Russia's advance has been at best glacial and at worst non-existent.

The Russian army's abysmal performance has perplexed experts. According to American, British,[23] and Norwegian estimates, it has suffered something on the order of 180,000 to 200,000 casualties.[24] Some observers do believe those numbers are significantly too high, but even if they were off by 50 per cent, the Russian army's casualties in one year of fighting would be perhaps double the losses of the Soviet Union's Red Army during its 10-year war in Afghanistan.[25]

21 Jacqui Heinrich and Adam Sabes, 'Gen. Milley says Kyiv could fall within 72 hours if Russia decides to invade Ukraine: sources', *Fox News Live* website, 5 February 2022. https://www.foxnews.com/us/gen-milley-says-kyiv-could-fall-within-72-hours-if-russia-decides-to-invade-ukraine-sources

22 Sanya Mansoor, 'Why the West is getting nervous about ammunition shortages for Ukraine', *Time Magazine* website, 16 March 2023. https://time.com/6263802/ukraine-west-ammunition-shortages/

23 Kate Nicholson, 'Putin's invasion has led to 200,000 Russian casualties and a high death toll, UK says', *Huffpost*, 17 February 2023. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/russia-casualty-death-rate-ukraine-war_uk_63ef593ee4b0808b91c6430e

24 'Soaring death toll gives grim insight into Russian tactics', *The New York Times*, 2 February 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/02/us/politics/ukraine-russia-casualties.html

25 Phillip Taubman, 'Soviet lists Afghan war toll: 13,310 dead, 35,478 wounded', *The New York Times*, 26 May 1988. https://www.nytimes.com/1988/05/26/world/soviet-lists-afghan-war-toll-13310-dead-35478-wounded.html

Russia has also lost thousands of tanks,[26] armoured personnel carriers, and helicopters, while vast amounts of equipment, abandoned intact, have fallen into Ukrainian hands. All of this, mind you, after Putin initiated a mega-bucks military modernisation drive in 2008,[27] leading *The Economist* to declare in 2020 that 'the Russian military dazzles after a decade of reform' and NATO had better watch out.[28]

For the surprising evolution of the war, unlike so much else, I do have an explanation. Military experts typically dwell on what can be counted: the level of military spending, the number of soldiers, tanks, warplanes and artillery pieces a military has, and so on. They assume, reasonably enough, that the side with more countable stuff is likely to be the winner – and quickly if it has a lot more, as Russia indeed did.

There is, however, no way to assign numerical values to morale or leadership. As a result, they tend to be discounted, if not simply omitted from comparisons of military power. Yet, as in the American wars in Vietnam in the last century and Afghanistan in this one, in Ukraine the squishy stuff has, at least so far, proven decisive. French Emperor Napoleon's dictum that, in war, 'the moral is to the physical as three to one' may seem hyperbolic, and he certainly ignored it when he led his *Grande Armée* disastrously into Russia and allowed the brutal Russian winter to shred its spirit. But in Ukraine – surprise of surprises – his maxim has held all too true, at least so far.

When it comes to surprises, count on one thing: the longer this war continues, the greater the likelihood of yet more of them. One in particular should worry us all: the possibility, if a Russian defeat looms, of a sudden escalation to nuclear war. There's no way to judge or measure the probability of such a dreaded denouement now. All we know is that the consequences could be horrific.

Though neither Russia nor the United States seeks a nuclear war, it's at least possible that they could slide into one. After all, never, not even in the Cold War era, has their relationship been quite so poisonous, only increasing the risk of both misperception and overreaction born of worst-case thinking. Let us hope, in this war of surprises, that it remains nothing more than another of the scenarios strategists like to imagine. Then again, if as 2021 began, I had suggested that Russia might soon invade Ukraine and begin a war in Europe, you would undoubtedly have thought me mad.

26 Oryx, *Attack on Europe: documenting Russian equipment losses during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine*, ORYX website, 24 February 2022. https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html

27 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Russia's military modernisation: an assessment*, IISS Strategic Dossier, 30 September 2020. https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/09/rmm-introduction

28 The Economist, 'Russian military forces dazzle after a decade of reform', *The Economist*, 2 November 2020. https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/11/02/russian-military-forces-dazzle-after-a-decade-of-reform

Absolutism, spiritualism, exceptionalism and convulsion: the core of Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and against the West

Peter Tesch

Vladimir Putin's decision to invade Ukraine on 24 February 2022 – for a second time, after his illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea in March 2014 – really should not have surprised anyone, given what Western military intelligence had been seeing and saying in the preceding months.

Nonetheless, until the week before, I had been telling foreign counterparts that I did not think physical invasion was inevitable, as Putin was achieving meaningful strategic outcomes through his menacing manoeuvring and marshalling of forces on Ukraine's borders. Fissures in Western cohesion were evident as capitals debated and disputed assessments and possible responses. On full display, again, was the Kremlin's intent and capacity to disrupt regional and global order and stability, to manipulate and misinform foreign public opinion, destabilise and demobilise Western societies, and increase pressure upon their governments to look for 'off-ramps' that would deliver concessions to the Kremlin. My view was shared in capitals as diverse as The Hague, Warsaw and Berlin.

But when I attended a classified briefing in London in mid-February 2022 and saw the full picture laid out on a single slide, I dejectedly concluded war was unavoidable. Presented with the same overview, I felt, Putin would see no downsides, especially as he had no doubt been confidently assured by his intelligence services and military planners that Ukraine's military would fold swiftly. And, consistent with the rhetoric of the Kremlin since 2014 and Putin's own essay on the indivisibility of Russia and Ukraine published in July 2021, he would likely believe Ukraine's Slavic population would welcome Russian forces

as liberators from 'Ukro-Nazism' and the alleged persecution of Russian and pro-Russian communities in Donbas.[1]

Thus, Putin once again cast aside the security commitments his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, had made in the *1994 Budapest Memorandum* 'to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine', as part of the deal securing the repatriation to Russia of the Soviet-era legacy nuclear weapons stationed in Ukraine.[2]

How did it come to this?

For years, our collective, 'we' had not sufficiently heeded Putin's words or drawn the confronting but realistic conclusions from the pattern of his actions. Too often we wrestled with the question: 'what does he want?'. We should have listened more closely, because he told us often enough, notably:

- in his speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, when he declared full and final opposition to US preponderance and avowed 'multipolarity' in its place[3]

- in his address to Russia's Federal Assembly in 2018, when he unveiled a range of nuclear-powered and nuclear-capable 'Wunderwaffen', and menacingly said: 'No, nobody really wanted to talk to us about the core of the problem, and nobody wanted to listen to us. So listen now'[4]

- in his 2021 essay on Ukraine, where he asserted 'modern Ukraine is entirely the product of the Soviet era. We know and remember well that it was shaped – for a significant part – on the lands of historical Russia'; adding 'And we will never allow our historical territories and people close to us living there to be used against Russia.'[5]

We should have understood that Putin's readiness to resort to military force to prosecute the Kremlin's policy objectives would not be confined to his violent response to Chechen nationalism in the Second Chechen War between 1999 and 2009; his invasion of Georgia in 2008 in support of the breakaway statelets

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1   For Putin's essay, see Vladimir Putin, *On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, The Kremlin website, 12 July 2021. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181

2   United Nations Security Council, *Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, 49th Session, 7 December 1994. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_1994_1399.pdf

3   Vladimir Putin, *Speech and discussion at the Munich Conference on security policy*, The Kremlin website, 10 October 2027. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/copy/24034

4   Vladimir Putin, *Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly*, The Kremlin website, 1 March 2018. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957

5   Putin, *On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, The Kremlin website, 2021. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

of South Ossetia and Abkhazia; his military's assault on civilian populations in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad in 2015; or the role of the Russian military (the 'little green men') in support of separatists in Donbas and the occupation of Crimea in February and March 2014 – the latter initially denied but later admitted.[6] All these actions elicited a relatively modest and manageable – from Putin's perspective – response from the West.

Putin's world view and policies reflect four themes that infuse roughly 1,000 years of Russian history: absolutism, spiritualism, exceptionalism and convulsion.

Absolutism and spiritualism

Since the emergence in the late sixteenth century of what might be considered 'Russia', it has been state-centric, militaristic and an absolute monarchy, punctuated with periodic surges of despotism. The legacy of almost 200 years of Mongol domination from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries was extreme centralisation of power in the ruler's hands, prioritisation of the state's over the individual's interests, and subservience of the institutions of the state to the will of the ruler.

The adoption of Orthodox Christianity in 988 by Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev was a calculated move to generate a unifying spiritual authority for the political control Vladimir sought to exert and consolidate over rival centres of authority, including Moscow. The increasing symbiosis between church and state over the ensuing centuries was expressed in 1833 by Sergei Uvarov, Minister for National Education of the reactionary Tsar Nicholas I, whose policy of 'orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality' posited 'loyalty to dynastic rule, traditional religious faith, and romantic glorification of the Russian homeland'.[7]

In 2016, a 17-metre monument of Vladimir I holding a sword and raised cross was unveiled by Putin in central Moscow, metres from the Kremlin. The choice of figure and location struck me even then as a significant politico-cultural statement, although I could not foresee subsequent events. In hindsight, Putin's remarks were clear enough:

> He laid the moral foundation on which our lives are still based today. It was a strong moral bearing, solidarity and unity which helped our ancestors overcome difficulties and win victories for

6   Carl Schreck, 'From 'not us' to 'why hide it?': How Russia denied its Crimea invasion, then admitted it', *RRE/RL*, 26 February 2019. https://www.rferl.org/a/from-not-us-to-why-hide-it-how-russia-denied-its-crimea-invasion-then-admitted-it/29791806.html

7   See for instance Cynthia Whittaker, 'The ideology of Sergei Uvarov: an interpretive essay'. *The Russian Review*, 1978, 37(2):158–76.

the glory of the fatherland, making it stronger and greater with each generation … Today it is our duty to stand together against contemporary challenges and threats, using our spiritual legacy and our invaluable traditions of unity to go forward and continue our thousand-year history.[8]

Exceptionalism and convulsion

Characterising Russia's view of itself and its place in the world to this day is a sense of exceptionalism, sprung from its history and a profound belief that manifest destiny has singled out Russia to be the bulwark of civilisation and defender of 'traditional' values, abandoned by the decadent and morally desiccated West.

Moscow's self-proclaimed status as the 'Third Rome'[9] – that is, the keeper of the true Christian Orthodox faith following the fall of Rome and the occupation by the Ottomans of Constantinople in 1453 – underpins this conviction. The theme of Russia's moral superiority over the West has gained sharper contours in official rhetoric. In public remarks, especially in social media, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council and former President and Prime Minister, Dmitrii Medvedev, has spewed bile and poured scorn upon Western degeneracy. Even as early as 2000, while still acting president, in an interview with a small group of journalists who had been given unprecedented access to the leader over several meetings, Putin opined the country needed clearly defined goals, comprehensible to everyone, akin to the 'Code of the Builder of Communism' of the Soviet era. When asked what the first line would be of such a code, he replied: 'moral values'.[10]

Perhaps truly unique to Russia is the profound impact of war and conflict, which has overshadowed every century of that country's existence. As Professor Gregory Carleton writes: 'War is where Russia's contested legacy has been forged' and 'serves as the core of a neo-nationalist civic religion seeking to unite all citizens around a shared belief about their unique role in history and place in the world'.[11]

8   Shaun Walker, 'From one Vladimir to another: Putin unveils huge statue in Moscow', *The Guardian*, 4 November 2016.
     https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/04/vladimir-great-statue-unveiled-putin-moscow

9   Marshall Poe, 'Moscow, the Third Rome: the origins and transformations of a "pivotal moment"', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas, 2001, 49(3):412–29.* http://www.jstor.org/stable/41050783

10   Vladimir Putin, *First Person*, Public Affairs, New York, 2000, p 169.

11   Gregory Carleton, *Russia: The Story of War*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 2017, pp 2–3.

The object, over a millennium, of repeated internal conflicts and predations by Mongols and Tartars, Swedes, Poles, Lithuanians, French and Germans, Russia has endured hardships and borne physical costs almost incomprehensible to Western audiences. But it has emerged triumphant – and often physically enlarged – engendering in Russians a deep sense of pride in their nation's endurance and resilience and a belief, as Putin declared in his 2023 Federal Assembly address, 'that it is impossible to defeat Russia on the battlefield'.[12]

This sense of being beleaguered by enemies predisposes Russia to being untrusting and inward-looking. Its leaders have eschewed alliances as we understand them, considering them temporary arrangements to be tolerated rather than relied upon where Russia's existential interests are involved. Most students of Russian history are familiar with the words of Tsar Alexander III, who reputedly counselled his son, the future Nicholas II that 'Russia has only two allies: her army and navy; all others fear our vastness and, at the first opportunity, will unite against us.'

Whether he said this at all, and in what precise form, is contested. But Putin chose to reference this in his televised 'Direct Line' address in April 2015.[13] The key message resonated with him: military capability is the only guarantor of Russia's security and sovereignty in an irredeemably antipathetic world.

Intertwined with this is the concept of Russia as a great power – in Russian, *derzhava* – and the entitlements that naturally attend that status. In the words of Kyle Wilson, a retired Australian diplomat and specialist in Soviet and Russian affairs:

> The etymology of *derzhava* is noteworthy. It's a cognate of the verb *derzhat*, the main meanings of which are: 'to grab hold of', 'to hold onto', 'to seize and hold'. A *derzhava* is a state which is powerful enough to seize and keep lands occupied by other peoples. So the word bespeaks, indeed encapsulates, the historical pathway taken by Russia. Even a brief excursion into Russian history is enough to see that, for almost five centuries, it has been a story of expansion and capture of other peoples and their lands.[14]

12   Putin, *Presidential address to the Federal Assembly*, The Kremlin website, 1 March 2018. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957

13   Yuri Smityuk, 'Putin agrees with an emperor that Russia's only allies are Army and Navy', *Tass*, 16 April 2016. https://tass.com/russia/789866

14   Email from Kyle Wilson, 9 March 2023. Quoted with permission.

Throughout the twentieth century, Soviet and Russian leaders had only one yardstick: parity with the United States of America, measured inter alia in the size of their respective nuclear arsenals and the strength of their militaries, their dominance within their respective 'spheres of influence', and in membership of the privileged caste of veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The end of the bipolar Cold War world in 1991 ruptured Russia's claim to greatness. The subsequent slights and disrespect Russia endured, which were both perceived and real, laid the foundations for the seething resentment and desire for revenge and restoration of Russia to its rightful place that characterise Putin's outlook today. His resentment of the West – and in particular the US – was particularly evident with respect to what he saw as an American hyperpower trampling on long-agreed spheres of influence. Addressing the Federal Assembly in February 2023, Putin asserted:

> After the Soviet Union broke up, they began to revise the outcomes of World War II and to build an American-style world ruled by one master. To do this, they began to rudely destroy the foundations of the international order laid down after WWII in order to cross out the legacy of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences.[15]

As early as 2005, Putin had declared 'the demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century'.[16] This is a noteworthy claim when viewed against the backdrop of a century that, for Russia, was especially marked by upheaval, violence and bloodshed, much of it visited upon the people by their own authorities.

The historian Mark Edele estimates total excess deaths arising from the First World War, revolution in 1917 and the ensuing civil war (until 1921), at some 16 million people. Stalin's enforced collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation of the country (1929 to 1933) and mass purges of the military, government, and society known as 'The Great Terror' of 1937–1938 claimed approximately another 10 million. The Second World War ('Great Patriotic War' in Russian) accounted for some 27 million, with roughly 1.5 million more succumbing to postwar famine in 1946–47. Thus, Edele – who references authoritative research by several scholars who had access to Soviet archives in the early 1990s – calculates total excess deaths attributable to the 'catastrophic years of Soviet

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15 Vladimir Putin, *Presidential address to Federal Assembly*, The Kremlin website, 21 February 2023. http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/70565

16 Vladimir Putin, *Annual address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*, The Kremlin website, 25 April 2005. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931

history, 1914–1953' at 55 million, with some 39 million of these occurring during Stalin's rule from 1926 to 1953.[17]

All Russian rulers have been acutely conscious that disunity and disorder are potentially fatal to the vast, multi-ethnic imperial Russian state. For Putin, the convulsions that had rattled the Warsaw Pact in 1953 (the workers uprising in East Berlin), 1956 (Hungary), and 1968 (Czechoslovakia) became more proximate and personal in 1989, as protest waves and mass demonstrations unfolded across the Germany Democratic Republic. In 2000, he recalled how, as a KGB officer stationed in Dresden, he had seen protesters gather before his office building:

> These people were in an aggressive mood. I called our group of forces and explained the situation. And I was told: 'We cannot do anything without orders from Moscow. And Moscow is silent.' After a few hours our military people did finally get there. And the crowd dispersed. But that business of 'Moscow is silent' – I got the feeling then that the country no longer existed. That it had disappeared. It was clear that the Union was ailing. And it had a terminal disease without a cure – a paralysis of power.[18]

Putin often recalls the achievements of Russian tsars, who expanded Russia's borders and strengthened the state. The 'gathering of the lands' in the reign of Ivan III, the territorial expansion under Ivan IV, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great, inform the recurrent theme of the restitution of Russia's 'historical lands'. Indeed, at the Moscow rally on 22 February 2023, the eve of 'Defender of the Fatherland Day', Putin said 'a battle for our people is unfolding on our historical borders right at this moment.'[19] It is the tragedy of both Ukraine and Russia that – as he seeks to secure Russia's future and his own pre-eminence in the pantheon of his predecessors – Putin is propelling his nation, and the world, into the past.

17 See J Arch Getty, Gabor T Rittersporn and V Zemskov, 'Victims of the Soviet penal system in the pre-war years: a first approach on the basis of archival evidence', *The American Historical Review*, 1993, 98(4):1017–49; Steven G Wheatcroft and R W Davies, 'Population', in R W Davies, Mark Harrison and S G Wheatcroft (eds), *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913–1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1994, pp 57–80; Mark Edele, *Stalinist Society 1928–1953,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, ch 2.

18 Putin, *First Person*, 2000, p 79.

19 Vladimir Putin, *Concert glory to defenders of the fatherland*, The Kremlin website, 22 February 2023. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70574

What is Putin's foreign policy strategy now?

Ruth Deyermond

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is perhaps the most strategically disastrous decision by a powerful state in recent history. Apparently designed to reinforce Russia's position in the space of the former Soviet Union, and to strengthen its great power status internationally, it has achieved the opposite, undermining Russian military and political credibility in multiple ways. Without acknowledging this failure, the Russian government is responding by adjusting its foreign policy and diplomatic strategy, focusing even more than before on enhanced alliances and shared ideology to reinforce its place in international affairs. Given Russia's military and diplomatic weakness, however, this appears unlikely to succeed.

Before and in the early stages of the invasion, the Russian government and friendly commentators identified several goals that the war was intended to achieve. In addition to spurious claims of preventing genocide and overthrowing a Nazi government, which appeared to be directed largely at a domestic audience, there were three main public objectives.

One was to prevent further NATO expansion, specifically the possible accession of Ukraine; another objective was to force a reset of the strategic map of Europe back to the mid-1990s, before the first wave of NATO expansion occurred. The third objective was to reclaim Ukraine for the *Russkiy mir* (Russian world). An essay briefly published by the state news agency *RIA Novosti* in late

February 2022, in anticipation of a rapid Russian victory (and then quickly withdrawn), claimed:

> there will be no more Ukraine as anti-Russia. Russia is restoring its historical completeness, gathering together the Russian world, the Russian people – in its totality of Great Russians [Russians], Belarusians and Little Russians [Ukrainians].[1]

These goals were elements of a more fundamental objective: the maintenance and expansion of Russia as a great power. Putin's foreign policy – particularly since his return to the presidency in 2012, after a short spell as prime minister – has been dominated by concerns about Russia's international status and the threats to it from the US and its European allies (who are largely viewed as subordinates, doing Washington's bidding). This great power status is not merely a matter of military or diplomatic capabilities; it is understood to be central to – arguably the most important component of – Russian national identity, both contemporary and historic.

The idea of Russia as a great power has rested on three roles, largely inherited from the USSR: permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC); its position as one of two nuclear superpowers; and regional hegemony over the territory of the former Soviet Union. Its credibility in these roles has been bolstered by secondary factors, notably the pre-2022 perceptions of Russia's armed forces and Russia's role as a key energy provider to Europe and Asia.

Since the mid-noughties, the Russian government has been concerned that all three roles are being undermined by Western, particularly US, actions. The bypassing of the UNSC on Iraq in 2003 and the deployment of ballistic missile defence in Eastern Europe were seen as threating the importance of permanent Security Council membership and Russia's nuclear deterrent capabilities. The 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine, in which stolen elections were overturned by grassroots protests, and the 2014 Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine were seen (entirely wrongly) by the Kremlin as parts of a plot by the US to undermine Russian influence in its 'near abroad'. The decision to invade Ukraine should be understood in this context: as an attempt to secure the key state in what the Russian political and security elite regard as Russia's sphere of interest.

The war has not only failed to achieve Russia's immediate objectives – the conquest of Ukraine and the installation of a puppet government – it has entirely failed in relation to its stated goals. Rather than resetting the strategic map

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1   Petr Akopov, *Nastuplenie Rossii I novogo mira*, RIA Novosti, 26 April 2022.
     https://web.archive.org/web/20220226051154/https:/ria.ru/20220226/rossiya-1775162336.html

of Europe back to the period before the first wave of NATO expansion, it has triggered the further growth of NATO and pushed previously neutral Sweden and Finland towards accession (though, to date, only Finland has been admitted). Although Ukrainian membership seems as remote a prospect now as it did before the invasion, cooperation with NATO has never been greater. Finally, the imperialist fantasy of bringing Ukraine politically and culturally into a united 'Russian world' has been comprehensively destroyed by the invasion.

Beyond this, the war has undermined Russia's claims to great power status on all fronts. While both UNSC permanent membership and its nuclear arsenal remain, Russia's diplomatic credibility has been weakened by its failure to secure meaningful support in the UN or elsewhere; and the credibility of its nuclear deterrent appears more questionable after months of vague threats directed against the West and Ukraine. Russia's influence in its so-called near abroad, already under pressure from factors including both Chinese and Western influence, has been further undermined by the war. This has been evident even in states like Armenia, which is heavily dependent on Russia, and in Kazakhstan, a state whose president has refused to back Russia's invasion or recognise the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, despite the Russia-led intervention in support of him during unrest in January 2022.[2]

Confronted with this comprehensive strategic disaster, the Russian government has amplified some elements of its diplomatic messaging and attempted to present the invasion as part of a wider struggle against Western (notably US) oppression and hypocrisy. Having failed to achieve the twin underlying priorities of shoring up Russia's status and minimising the influence of the US on global affairs through military force in Ukraine, Putin appears to be placing more emphasis on a diplomatic strategy that combines economic (particularly energy) engagement with building global political and ideological opposition to the West. Four ideas in particular appear to dominate current Russian foreign policy. All of them have been discussed by Putin, Lavrov and other government figures, as well as by Russian analysts; they are all prominent features of the new Russian Foreign Policy Concept, released at the end of March.

The first is an attempt to move international relations towards multipolarity, with Russia as one of the poles. The desirability of a multipolar order has been a principle of Russian foreign policy since the late 1990s; increasing emphasis

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2   See for example, Daniel Boffey, 'Putin's grip on regional allies loosens again after Armenia snub', *The Guardian*, 25 November 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/25/putinsgrip-regional-allies-loosen-again-after-armenia-snub-csto-summit; Kamila Auyezova, *Russia's Ukraine invasion is eroding Kremlin influence in Kazakhstan*, Ukraine Alert, Atlantic Council website, 28 March 2023, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-ukraine-invasion-is-eroding-kremlin-influence-in-kazakhstan/

has been placed on it since the relationship with the US deteriorated during the mid-noughties. The idea that the world is on the cusp of multipolarity is a longstanding staple of Kremlin rhetoric – the 'emerging multipolar order' is discussed in the Russian Foreign Policy Concept as far back as 2008,[3] and the most recent version claims that 'the formation of a more equitable multipolar world order is underway'.[4] A multipolar system of the kind envisaged by Putin would simultaneously reduce the relative importance of the US and enhance that of Russia; it would also allow Russia to secure and expand what the Kremlin sees as its sphere of influence in the so-called near abroad, including Ukraine.

For Moscow, evidence of, and the means of accelerating, this shift to multipolarity is the development of blocs of regional and global powers to balance against, or resist, the West. The most significant of these (for Russia) are the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Group (SCO); members of the SCO include Russia, China, India and Pakistan, with Iran becoming a full member in April 2023. Since the start of the war, these structures have been more explicitly presented by Putin as mechanisms for powerful states from the Global South to push back against Western domination,[5] and as a means to 'help adapt the world order to the realities of a multipolar world'.[6]

In practice, of course, these organisations have not functioned as coherent vehicles for an anti-US movement towards multipolarity in the way that Russia would like. They are, however, highly significant for Putin because they are the only remaining international forums in which Russia is able to engage diplomatically, as an uncontested and theoretically equal partner of powerful states.

The capacity to build this anti-Western bloc is understood to rest in large part on the second factor: the development of ever-closer bilateral relations with China. The Russia–China relationship has been vital for Russia since 2014, when the annexation of Crimea transformed relations with the US and Europe. The unprecedented scale and severity of Western sanctions in response to the invasion and the further worsening of diplomatic relations have enormously

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3   Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union, *The foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation* [PDF], Government of the Russian Federation, 12 July 2008.
      https://russiaeu.ru/userfiles/file/foreign_policy_concept_english.pdf

4   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *The concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation*, Unofficial translation, 31 March 2023.
      https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/

5   For example, AFP, Reuters, 'Putin urges BRICS nations to work with Russia', DW.com, 23 June 2022.
      https://www.dw.com/en/putin-urges-brics-nations-to-cooperate-with-russia/a-62236984

6   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *The concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.*

increased Russia's dependence on China, and not just in the economic sphere. Chinese engagement with Russia, and recognition of it as a globally significant state, is now one of the key external props supporting Russian great power status. It is seen by the Kremlin as the basis for constructing the new post-Western multipolar order. Yet the increasingly close relationship with China is not based on the equality of great power that Putin appears to seek; the China–Russia relationship is ever more publicly characterised by Russian dependence – a situation that is not likely to change as long as Russia is isolated from key markets in the West.[7]

The increased focus on multilateral engagement with powerful states in the Global South and on bilateral relations with China is partly a consequence of the enforced shift away from economic and political relations with Europe. Before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, engagement with Europe was one of the most important elements of Russian foreign policy. Energy and other economic relations and broadly positive diplomatic relations – at least compared with the US and UK – characterised Russian relationships with key European states, most importantly France and Germany. Putin seems to have miscalculated their desire to maintain these positive relations in making his decision to invade.

The attack on Ukraine has pushed Russia–Europe relations to their lowest level since the collapse of the USSR and, despite the evident desire of sections of Europe's foreign policy elites for a quick end to the war and a return to some form of business as usual, they are unlikely to improve significantly in the medium term, or beyond it. Putin's response to the loss of these key relationships has been to signal a sharp disengagement from Europe in favour of a focus on Asia and Africa. European actions are claimed to be a threat to Russian security, and any future engagement is represented as conditional on Europe's decoupling from the malign policies of the US and recognising (in a phrase with inescapable allusions to the Cold War) the need for 'peaceful coexistence' with Russia.[8]

Finally, one of the most striking elements of Russia's revised foreign policy strategy has been the attempt to present Russia as a global leader on political and ideological issues. These appear designed to build stronger links with non-Western states and to weaken US and European relations with them, as well as making common cause with the extremes of both the right and the left in Western societies.

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7   Alexander Gabuev, 'Russia's reliance on China will outlast Vladimir Putin, says Alexander Gabuev', *The Economist*, 18 March 2023. https://www.economist.com/russias-reliance-on-china-will-persist-even-after-vladimir-putin-is-gone-says-alexander-gabuev

8   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *The concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation*.

One element of this is the increased focus on presenting Russia as the protector of so-called traditional values against a degenerate and bullying West. The war itself is framed as a defence against the 'threat' of LGBT rights; but more generally, the Kremlin has sought to use the issue as a unifying issue with the Global South and conservatives in the West. Liberal values are presented as something imposed by Western elites; the Russian government claims to speak up for the right of other states to resist 'dozens of genders or gay pride parades'.[9] In particular, the new Foreign Policy Concept identifies 'protecting traditional moral and spiritual values' as important grounds for developing relations with the Islamic world and Africa.[10]

At the same time – and extraordinarily, given the imperial character of the war in Ukraine – Russia is being touted as a global leader of resistance to neo-colonialism. This is presented as one of the ways Russia can unite with African states and others in building a multipolar world, based on respect for state sovereignty and resistance to Western meddling. It features repeatedly in the new Foreign Policy Concept and has been utilised in high-profile diplomatic engagements such as Foreign Minister Lavrov's February 2023 visit to Africa. How effective it is remains unclear.

Conclusion

The invasion of Ukraine has been an extraordinary self-created disaster for Russia, one that has placed out of reach the goals it was intended to achieve and undermined the perception of Russia's great power status. While not acknowledging this failure, Putin appears to be responding with a shift in foreign policy strategy. Although the objectives seem unchanged, some of the means by which the Kremlin attempts to achieve them appear to be altering. Notably, the use or threat of military force (in the region of the former Soviet Union and elsewhere) has been damaged for the foreseeable future by the catastrophic political and military failures of the war. While it is unrealistic to expect that Russia will never use military instruments in future, there appears to be an increasing emphasis on diplomatic and ideological tools. It is difficult to see how these will repair its damaged great power status, but they appear to be the only options open to a weakened and humiliated Russia.

9   Vladimir Putin, *Valdai International Discussion Club meeting* [transcript], President of Russia website, 27 October 2022. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69695

10   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *The concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation*.

Pathway to victory: the Ukrainian strategy of corrosion

Mick Ryan

The current war in Ukraine has changed the face of the security environment in Europe. It also provides an assortment of observations for those who study international and military affairs. One interesting area is the strategy adopted by Ukraine.

Clausewitz wrote that 'the political object – the original motive for the war – will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires'.[1] The Ukrainian political object, however, has evolved throughout the war. This should not be surprising. As Clausewitz describes it, the political aim 'must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it'.[2]

Political objectives for Ukraine have been provided through the speeches of President Zelensky. These have unified his nation, guided the actions of his government and gained him global attention and influence, resulting in a broad range of assistance.[3] Just after Russian forces had attacked his nation, Zelensky's speech to his people described the outlines of a defensive strategy. He explained how 'no one will be able to convince or force us, Ukrainians, to give up our freedom, our independence, our sovereignty'.[4] These implied a limited, defensive strategy.

1   Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Michael Howard and Peter Paret eds and trans), Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976, p 81.

2   Clausewitz, *On War*, p 87.

3   Mick Ryan, 'Ukraine can win this war – on these five conditions', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 August 2022, https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/ukraine-can-win-this-war-on-these-five-conditions-20220817-p5bajr.html

4   Volodymyr Zelensky, *Address by the President of Ukraine*, President of Ukraine official website, 24 February 2022. https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-73137

Russian atrocities in Bucha shortly afterward not only reinforced Ukrainian resolve but also have driven changes to Ukrainian strategy with *justice* and *accountability* being themes thereafter in Ukraine's approach.

The Ukrainian government revised its political objectives for the war in late 2022. After the victory over Russia in the Battle of Kharkiv and the Russian withdrawal from western Kherson, Ukraine's President described a more expansive view of his nation's political outcomes and conditions for war termination.

Speaking remotely to the G20 Summit being held in Indonesia, Zelensky outlined ten Ukrainian political objectives.[5] These ranged from nuclear safety and food security through to restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, war crimes trials and a definitive end to the war. In subsequent addresses, Zelensky has reinforced these national goals.[6] Battlefield success, Russian atrocities and the assistance of foreign nations have permitted Ukraine to revise its political objectives in the war.

These have guided the Ukrainian strategy for the war.

A strategy of corrosion

Hans Delbruck described how all military strategy could be divided into two forms. First, annihilation, where the objective was to annihilate the enemy forces to achieve victory. The second, exhaustion, was the use of multiple means, including battle, to achieve the political objectives of war.[7] Throughout history, weaker states in wars have often chosen the later because, as Lawrence Freedman describes, exhaustion favours an underdog with inferior resources.[8]

But neither model neatly fits the Ukrainian strategy that has evolved during this war. Not only has it gradually embraced a model that involves the destruction of enemy forces on the battlefield, Ukraine has also employed clever diplomacy and strategic influence campaigns to undertake a drawn-out corrosion of Russian will, which attempts to exhaust their ability to wage war on Ukraine.

5   Volodymyr Zelensky, *Ukraine has always been a leader in peacemaking efforts; if Russia wants to end this war, let it prove it with actions,* Speech by the President of Ukraine at the G20 Summit, President of Ukraine official website, 15 November 2022.
https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-zavzhdi-bula-liderom-mirotvorchih-zusil-yaksho-rosi-79141

6   Volodymyr Zelensky, *New Year greetings of President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy*, Kyiv, President of Ukraine official website, 31 December 2022.
https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/novorichne-privitannya-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelens-80197.
These included his 22 December 2022 speech to the US Congress and his 2023 New Year's address where he called for victory in 2023.

7   Gordon Craig, 'Delbruck the military historian', in Peter Paret (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986, 340–2.

8   Lawrence Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019, p 46.

Consequently, I propose that the Ukrainians have adopted a strategy I describe as *corrosion*. It is an approach that uses a combination of old and new ideas to make the war more costly for the Russians than the Ukrainians.

The Ukrainians were able to destroy many of the supporting elements of the initial Russian invasion force, in addition to the combat forces they engaged from the first day of the invasion. They corroded the northern Russian expedition from within, and eventually after several weeks of desperate fighting and Western preparations for a Ukrainian insurgency, forced Russia's ejection from northern Ukraine.[9] It was in this initial phase of the war that Ukraine honed its strategy for the war. It has used and adapted a variation of this strategy of corrosion ever since.

The components of a nation's ability to fight in its defence are often collectively described as 'fighting power'.[10] It is a power made up of physical, moral and intellectual components.[11] The Ukrainian approach has embraced the corrosion of the Russian physical, moral, and intellectual capacity to fight and win in Ukraine.

I propose that there are seven elements of this strategy: a theory of victory; integrated civil–military actions; the global influence campaign; foreign support; national mobilisation of people and resources; fighting a just war; and constant learning and adaptation.

A theory of victory (the big idea)

To win in war, a nation should be guided by a theory of victory or a 'big idea'. This should comprise a plausible set of principles for overcoming an adversary.[12] The 2017 UK publication *Getting strategy right (enough)* notes that:

> a strategy which has no unifying idea is not a strategy…The innovative and compelling 'big idea' is often the basis of a new strategy. It must not only bind the ends, ways and means but also inspire others to support it.[13]

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9   Mick Ryan, 'The ingenious strategy that could win the war for Ukraine', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 2022. https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/the-ingenious-strategy-that-could-win-the-war-for-ukraine-20220517-p5alz4.html

10 Martin van Crevald, *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939–1945*, Praeger, London, 1982; Australian Army, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: The Fundamentals of Land Power 2017*, Australian Army, Canberra, 2017, pp 37–39. The term fighting power was used by Martin van Crevald in his book *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939–1945*. The term was also used to describe the combination of the physical, intellectual and moral aspects of preparing an army for war in Australian Army, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: The Fundamentals of Land Power (LWD1)*.

11 This is described in Australian Army, *LWD1: The Fundamentals of Land Power*, 2017, p 37.

12 Brad Roberts, *On Theories of Victory, Red and Blue*, Livermore Papers on Global Security No. 7, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Center for Global Security Research, Livermore, CA, June 2020, p 91. https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/CGSR-LivermorePaper7.pdf

13 Royal College of Defence Studies, *Getting strategy right (enough),* Ministry of Defence, London, 2017, p 20.

The theory of victory does not include all aspects of strategy making, but as Frank Hoffman notes, 'it is central to strategic success'.[14] In the case of Ukraine, one (short) variant of their theory of victory might be as follows: Ukrainian freedom requires a military victory over Russian forces through battlefield victories and denying them sources of strategic support, while we maintain our national resilience, generate global influence and absorb foreign assistance.

Zelensky also speaks of victory in his speeches. He frequently links his notion of victory to the elements in the above theory of victory. It is the unifying idea behind Ukrainian strategy.

Integrated civil and military actions

The integration of civil and military aspects of Ukrainian national power has been an important component of their strategy of corrosion.

The Ukrainians have evolved their approach to civil defence since the Russian invasion of 2014. The Ukrainian approach has varied from the 'total defence' model of nations such as Sweden and Singapore. Instead, Ukraine has adopted a model in civil defence that is focused on the 'resilience of society as a whole'. It has incorporated state agencies as well as volunteer organisations that have become better coordinated as the war has progressed. In the lead-up to the war, Ukraine adopted its 2021 National Resilience Concept. This endorsed the 2016 NATO commitment to enhance resilience',[15] while adding two additional categories: resilience to information influence operations and financial and economic resilience.[16]

Ultimately, however, the Ukrainians must win this war on the battlefield.

After successfully beating Russia in the north, the Ukrainians continued to evolve their strategy of corrosion in the east and the south. They attacked Russian logistics, even though the Russians have since then moved more cautiously than at the beginning of the conflict. The Ukrainians also attacked critical enabling capabilities such as engineers, surveillance drones, fuel depots and senior

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14 Frank Hoffman, 'The missing element in crafting national strategy: a theory of success', *Joint Forces Quarterly,* 97, 2nd Quarter, April 2020, p 56.

15 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Commitment to enhance resilience: issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, 8–9 July 2016* [press release (2016) 118], NATO website, 8 July 2016. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133180.htm

16 Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 479/2021, *On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated August 20, 2021 'On the introduction of the national stability system'*, Government of Ukraine website, 27 September 2021. https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4792021-40181

Russian commanders, corroding the physical capacity of the Russians to fight from within.[17]

These acts in the physical world also impacted on the moral and intellectual aspects of Russian fighting power. Russian morale was corroded because of its battlefield defeats, supply challenges and withdrawals in the face of Ukrainian pressure at Kyiv, Kherson and Kharkiv. Ukrainian use of social media, showing off Russian deficiencies, has magnified this moral corrosion throughout the war. The corrosion in morale has resulted in declining battlefield discipline, with Russian desertions, battlefield refusals and war crimes. The Ukrainians have slowly corroded Russia's will to fight.[18]

The Ukrainians have also forced on the Russians a form of intellectual corrosion. Under pressure to achieve some form of victory due to previous setbacks, the Russians are taking greater tactical and operational risks with their military operations. Disastrous Russian battles, such as the river crossing over the Severskyi Donets and the more recent Battle of Vuhledar, are indicative of a Russian army that is becoming less capable of assessing the risks of significant operational or tactical decisions.[19] Corrosion of the intellectual component of the Russian military has seen them revert to increasing desperate and unsound tactics, such as human waves, in order to eke out even minor advances.[20]

The global influence campaign

The Ukrainian President has mastered communicating with a global audience during the war. Sustaining Western support means that Ukraine, its president, its citizen information warriors and its diplomatic corps must constantly engage and influence the politicians and populations of the United States, Europe and beyond.[21] This influence campaign has been founded upon what some have called a democratisation of intelligence, with government, military and open

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17 Ryan, 'The ingenious strategy that could win the war for Ukraine'.

18 Ryan, 'The ingenious strategy that could win the war for Ukraine'.

19 Ryan, 'The ingenious strategy that could win the war for Ukraine'.

20 David Axe, 'Russian mercenaries' human wave tactics push back Ukrainian troops In Soledar', *Forbes*, 12 January 2023, https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2023/01/12/russian-mercenaries-human-wave-tactics-push-back-ukrainian-troops-in-soledar/?sh=785e0d867701; Veronika Melkozerova, 'Zelenskyy slams Kremlin for sacrificing troops in the "meat waves" of Bakhmut', *Politico Europe*, 20 December 2022, https://www.politico.eu/article/volodymyr-zelenskyy-ukraine-war-bakhmut-russia-sacrificing-troops-meat-waves/. The Russian use of human wave attacks, mostly with Wagner convict recruits or newly mobilised Russian army soldiers, is described in multiple sources.

21 Mick Ryan, 'Ukraine must maintain Western attention to win this war', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June 2022, https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/ukraine-must-maintain-western-attention-to-win-this-war-20220614-p5atgf.html

sources of information being meshed and used for targeting in the physical and information environments.[22]

Strategically, the Ukrainians have sought to corrode Russia's international standing with their global influence activities. This has secured economic sanctions against Russia (although many countries have not joined this regime) and strategic commitments from the EU and NATO. Using government sources as well as volunteers,[23] Ukraine has also discredited Russian narratives and crowded the information space to degrade the impact of Russian influence campaigns.

Social media has been an important part of this influence battle.[24] Other wars have been covered by social media, but there has been a broader use of social media in this war than previous conflicts.[25] This has included grassroots movements to support Ukraine's strategic influence operations, such as the #NAFO movement.[26]

Foreign support

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion, Western political, intelligence, military and economic support has been a crucial element of Ukraine's defence. While this may have remained short of 'boots on the ground', and often been slower than many would like,[27] Western support underpins the flow of weapons into Ukraine and the international coalition implementing economic sanctions against Russia.

22 David Gioe and Ken Stolworthy, 'Democratised and declassified: the era of social media war is here', *Engelsberg Ideas*, 24 October 2022. https://engelsbergideas.com/notebook/democratised-and-declassified-the-era-of-social-media-war-is-here/; Amy Zegart, 'Ukraine and the next intelligence revolution', *Foreign Affairs*, 20 December 2022. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/open-secrets-ukraine-intelligence-revolution-amy-zegart

23 Matt Burgess, 'Ukraine's volunteer "IT Army" is hacking in uncharted territory', *Wired*, 27 February 2022. https://www.wired.co.uk/article/ukraine-it-army-russia-war-cyberattacks-ddos

24 Paul Adams, 'How Ukraine is winning the social media war', *BBC News*, 16 October 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63272202

25 The Economist, 'The invasion of Ukraine is not the first social media war, but it is the most viral', *The Economist,* 2 April 2022. https://www.economist.com/international/the-invasion-of-ukraine-is-not-the-first-social-media-war-but-it-is-the-most-viral/21808456 Examples include the Israeli operations in Gaza as well as the application of social media by ISIS during their invasion of northern Iraq.

26 Mark Scott, 'The shit-posting, Twitter-trolling, dog-deploying social media army taking on Putin one meme at a time', *Politico*, 31 August 2022. https://www.politico.eu/article/nafo-doge-shiba-russia-putin-ukraine-twitter-trolling-social-media-meme/

27 Eliot Cohen, 'Western aid to Ukraine is still not enough', *The Atlantic*, 17 January 2023. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/01/western-military-aid-ukraine-russia/672737/

Since February 2022, Ukraine has been provided with massive amounts of assistance.[28] This aid has included humanitarian aid as well as financial assistance to the Ukrainian budget, through loans and other means. Ukraine has needed ongoing economic assistance from individual nations and institutions such as the World Bank[29]

Ukraine also receives intelligence from foreign intelligence agencies. Consisting of some of the most sensitive collection assets owned by the US and other countries, this assistance supports the targeting of Russian high-value assets, as well as identifying Russian units and intentions.[30]

The Ukrainian government has been masterful in assembling an international community to provide aid as well as economic, military and moral support. These, and sanctions against Russia, have been vital to Ukraine's survival.

National mobilisation of resources

Since the Russian invasion, Ukraine has undertaken a national mobilisation to fight a total war against Russia. President Zelensky signed a mobilisation decree just hours after the Russian army crossed international frontiers into his country. This proclamation prohibited Ukrainian males between the ages of 18 and 60 from leaving the country.[31] The country subsequently raised a military of nearly 700,000 personnel.

Industry in Ukraine has been another element of national endeavour mobilised for the war effort. In 2022, the Government of Ukraine invoked wartime law to take controlling stakes in companies it saw as vital to the production of war materiel.[32]

28 In the lead-up to the war, the provision of weapons and NATO military training allowed the Ukrainian Armed Forces to better prepare itself in the event of a Russian invasion. This also underpinned Ukrainian institutional capacity to receive ever more sophisticated armaments over the course of the war.

29 Just one example of this economic aid is the World Bank Assistance announced in August 2022. World Bank, *World Bank mobilizes $4.5 billion in additional financing for vital support to Ukraine* [press release 2023/ECA/06], World Bank website, 8 August 2022. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/08/08/world-bank-mobilizes-4-5-billion-in-additional-financing-for-vital-support-to-ukraine

30 Shane Harris and Dan Lamothe, 'Intelligence-sharing with Ukraine designed to prevent wider war', *Washington Post*, 11 May 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/05/11/ukraine-us-intelligence-sharing-war/; Anna Mulrine Grobe, 'How US military aids Ukraine with information, not just weaponry', *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 June 2022. https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2022/0613/How-US-military-aids-Ukraine-with-information-not-just-weaponry

31 DW.com, *Ukraine president orders general mobilisation*, DW.com website, 25 February 2022. https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-president-orders-general-mobilization/a-60908996

32 Tom Balmforth and Max Hunder, 'War spurs Ukraine to ramp up defence industry, including "army of drones"', *Reuters*, 12 November 2022. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/war-spurs-ukraine-ramp-up-defence-industry-including-army-drones-2022-11-11/

Despite this, the neglect of Ukrainian defence industrial capacity before the 2014 invasion, and its limited growth since then, has meant Ukraine still has some way to go before it is able to regain a level of self-sufficiency in defence production. Mobilisation of national resources is an important element of Ukraine's strategy of corrosion, but it remains an incomplete journey.

Fighting a just war

In his book *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer writes, 'for as long as men and women have talked about war, they have talked about it in terms of right and wrong'.[33] There is a fundamental asymmetry in the Russian and Ukrainian strategies for this war. Russian uses nearly every means at its disposal; legal and illegal, moral and immoral. Ukraine does not. The Ukrainian government has explicitly rejected operating like the Russian military and has generally adhered to international law and the conventions of warfare adhered to by Western nations.

This is a key element of Ukraine's strategy of corrosion. Ukraine has been able to project itself as 'fighting fair' to the Western nations it relies upon for support. In each phase of the war, Ukraine has refrained from targeting Russian civilians in Russia, and has (as far as we know) not undertaken widespread cyber operations to deny Russians their banking, health or electricity services. While it could be observed that Ukraine is fighting with one hand behind its back, the reality is that it ensures a level of legitimacy to Ukraine's conduct in the war that is politically and strategically essential. It ensures the unity of the nation, and its support from foreign nations, in the pursuit of a just war of self-defence.

Learning and adaptation

A key virtue for military organisations in war must be adaptability to unexpected events. Both sides in this war have adapted. For the Ukrainians, the old truism 'adapt or die' is literal in its application; the existential threat they face allows for more risk taking and greater creativity at different levels of their military organisation.[34]

33   Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Basic Books, New York, 1977, p 3.

34   Mick Ryan, *How Ukraine is winning the adaptation battle against Russia*, Engelsberg Ideas website, 24 August 2022.
     https://engelsbergideas.com/essays/how-ukraine-is-winning-in-the-adaptation-battle-against-russia/

The Russians also brought with them a legacy learning culture, which appears to be inferior to the Ukrainian model. This was explored in the recent report from the Royal United Services Institution, which notes that:

> those who fail are usually replaced or threatened with punishment. Far from incentivising success, this often leads to dishonest reporting in which the blame for failure is transferred onto others.[35]

The Ukrainians have demonstrated a superior learning culture in this war. This adaptive stance, including the ability to rapidly absorb new technologies and integrate them into their operations, has had an impact on the battlefield. And in winning victories on the battlefield, the Ukrainian President has been given the breathing space to ponder and adapt Ukraine's political objectives for the war (as explored earlier).

This ability to win the adaptation battle against the Russians has been an important element of Ukraine's strategy of corrosion.

Conclusion

The war in Ukraine offers the chance to learn from the mistakes in strategy, as well as the opportunities exploited, by both sides in this war. For some, especially purists, describing a war strategy that is something other than attrition or annihilation may be close to an epistemological heresy. Perhaps. But while this war has seen many continuities from previous conflicts, some aspects such as autonomy, digital connectivity and the meshing of civil, military and private intelligence and influence mean we may need to reconsider how strategy is described. This exploration of the Ukrainian strategy of corrosion is designed to foster such a conversation.

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35 Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, *Preliminary lessons in conventional warfighting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine: February–July 2022*, Royal United Services Institute, London, 2022, p 51. https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/special-resources/preliminary-lessons-conventional-warfighting-russias-invasion-ukraine-february-july-2022

Russian cyber and information warfare capabilities in the war on Ukraine: expectations, reality and lessons learned for the future

Keir Giles

While Russia's conventional military performance in Ukraine has been studied intensively, there are also lessons on capability and future conflict with Russia to be drawn from Russia's cyber and information warfare campaigns.

Just as in conventional warfare, events in Ukraine have triggered a substantial rethink of Russia's real, as opposed to claimed, capabilities.[1] Expectations ahead of 24 February 2022 were for a swift and devastating campaign by crushingly superior Russian forces. This did not take place, either in the conventional or the cyber and information domains. This came as a considerable surprise to many commentators around the world who had not been observing the way in which Ukraine's military and information capacity had developed during the preceding eight years of war. Fortunately for Ukraine, it also came as a considerable surprise to Russia's own armed forces and planners, and it was this which influenced the evolution of Russia's cyber and information campaign over the subsequent months of war.

But unlike in other domains, in information space Russia's lack of early success in Ukraine did not appeared to have resulted from failures to implement doctrine and planning. Russia attempted precisely the types of cyber and information attacks that it had been practising and developing over preceding years, as described in multiple specialist publications both within Russia and beyond.[2] However, many of these activities were unsuccessful, and other anticipated

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1   Robert Dalsjö, Michael Jonsson and Johan Norberg, 'A brutal examination: Russian military capability in light of the Ukraine War', *Survival*, 30 May 2022. https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2022.2078044

2   Keir Giles, *The next phase of Russian information warfare*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 20 May 2016.
https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/the-next-phase-of-russian-information-warfare/176

campaigns did not materialise. For instance, extensive and successful destructive attacks on critical infrastructure were widely, and reasonably, anticipated.[3] And yet comprehensive reviews of operations in the first few months after February 2022 concluded that 'the modest scale of Russia's cyber attacks has fallen far short of … predictions';[4] and consequently, 'cyber has not been a consequential front in Russia's invasion of Ukraine'.[5]

February 2022

Just as with conventional warfare, conceptual failings are likely to have severely limited early cyber operations in support of the war effort. In the early stages of the new invasion, destructive attacks on communications and other infrastructure were constrained by an assumption that Ukraine would fall without a fight, and that infrastructure would be taken over by Russian authorities. Once that assumption was discovered to be distant from reality, Russia's forces across the board found themselves fighting an unanticipated war.[6] This may have contributed to a transition in the ensuing months, when there was a change in tempo to 'fast and dirty' cyber methods.[7] Russian cyber forces shifted to methods that required less forward planning and preparation and were less sophisticated and more straightforward to plan and launch, including wiper and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks.[8]

In the process, according to a February 2023 analysis by Google, lack of forward planning led to a squandering of resources, equities and cyber access gained months in advance.[9] But this was accompanied by cyber effects receding in prominence as the war developed. Attack campaigns were noted against a wide range of targets, both before and after February 2022.[10] But

3   Maggie Miller, 'Russian invasion of Ukraine could redefine cyber warfare', *Politico*, 28 January 2022. https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/28/russia-cyber-army-ukraine-00003051

4   Nadiya Kostyuk and Erik Gartzke, 'Why cyber dogs have yet to bark loudly in Russia's invasion of Ukraine', *Texas National Security Review*, Summer 2022, 5(3):113–126. https://tnsr.org/2022/06/why-cyber-dogs-have-yet-to-bark-loudly-in-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/

5   Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *Russian cyberwarfare: unpacking the Kremlin's Capabilities*, Center for European Policy Analysis website, 8 September 2022. https://cepa.org/russian-cyberwarfare-unpacking-the-kremlins-capabilities/

6   Kostyuk and Gartzke, 'Why cyber dogs have yet to bark loudly in Russia's invasion of Ukraine'.

7   Andy Greenberg, 'Russia's new cyberwarfare in Ukraine is fast, dirty, and relentless', *Wired* website, 18 November 2022. https://www.wired.com/story/russia-ukraine-cyberattacks-mandiant/

8   John Sakellariadis and Maggie Miller, 'Ukraine gears up for new phase of cyber war with Russia', *Politico*, 25 February 2023. https://www.politico.com/news/2023/02/25/ukraine-russian-cyberattacks-00084429

9   Google Threat Analysis Group (TAG), *Fog of war: how the Ukraine conflict transformed the cyber threat landscape*, Google, 16 February 2023. https://blog.google/threat-analysis-group/fog-of-war-how-the-ukraine-conflict-transformed-the-cyber-threat-landscape/

10 Emma Raffray, *Ukraine: 100 days of war in cyberspace*, Cyber Peace Institute, 2 June 2022. https://cyberpeaceinstitute.org/news/ukraine-100-days-of-war-in-cyberspace/

from mid-2022 onwards, during Russia's campaign against Ukrainian critical national infrastructure, any impact achieved through cyber means was entirely overshadowed by the effect of missile and drone strikes.[11] Analysis from December 2022 concluded that:

> Russia's experience suggests that cyber fires can be usefully concentrated in a surprise attack or other major salvo, but they risk fading in relevance during larger, longer wars.[12]

Preconditions for Ukrainian resilience

Ukraine's unexpected ability to withstand Russian attacks in the cyber and information domains was also bolstered by a number of key enablers. First among these was the simple fact that Russia's war on Ukraine did not start on 24 February 2022, and so any expectations of cyber and cyber-enabled effects that would leverage an adversary's surprise and unpreparedness were entirely misplaced. The preceding eight years of war gave Ukraine ample opportunity to examine Russia's capabilities and develop countermeasures; and like Ukraine's conventional military, its cyber defences had developed beyond recognition from their condition in 2014[13] – another development that was widely underestimated outside Ukraine itself.

Ukraine was also highly successful at harnessing the contributions of volunteers in cyber and information operations, tapping into the motivations of a population galvanised by a war of national survival.[14] Russia too has looked outside governmental structures for sources of cyber and information power, leveraging not only traditional links with criminal organisations,[15] but also an extensive range of private contractors delivering outsourced capabilities across the whole

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11 Henri Astier and Yaroslav Lukov, 'Ukraine war: massive Russian strikes target energy grid – Zelensky', *BBC News*, 23 October 2022. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-63357393

12 Jon Bateman, *Russia's wartime cyber operations in Ukraine: military impacts, influences, and implications*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 December 2022. https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/12/16/russia-s-wartime-cyber-operations-in-ukraine-military-impacts-influences-and-implications-pub-88657

13 Kenneth Geers (ed), *Cyber war in perspective: Russian aggression against Ukraine*, NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence website, NATO CCD COE Publications, Tallinn, 2015. https://ccdcoe.org/library/publications/cyber-war-in-perspective-russian-aggression-against-ukraine/

14 Anna Husarska, 'Ukrainian engineers, historians and housewives are keeping Putin on his toes', *The New York Times*, 12 January 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/12/opinion/ukraine-war.html

15 Gareth Corfield, 'Russian military using criminal hackers to attack Ukraine, warns Kyiv', *The Telegraph*, 10 September 2022. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/09/10/russian-military-using-criminal-hackers-attack-ukraine-warns/

spectrum of information activities.[16] But mass mobilisation of the information security community in support of Russia's war aims appears far less effective than anticipated.[17]

Perhaps most significantly, Ukrainian resistance has also been greatly enhanced by support from abroad, both by states and by private sector organisations. Countries like the US and UK have referred in more or less opaque terms to direct support in cyber operations provided to Ukraine.[18] But the support provided by information and telecommunications technology companies has been an essential enabler. Corporations – like Amazon,[19] Google,[20] Microsoft[21] and Mandiant[22] – have offered their services pro bono, or been funded by Western governments or philanthropic grants. This has created an essentially new environment for Russian cyber operations, one which is inherently hostile because it is largely owned and maintained by organisations that have made a values choice to oppose Russia's aims. While the involvement of private enterprise in warfare is hardly new, this does represent a shift in the extent to which corporations are directly involved in operations in their own right as opposed to being contracted by states that are parties to the conflict.[23] But these same corporate entities may not make the same choice in the future – meaning that another country other than Ukraine might have to contract their services on a commercial basis, at potentially crippling cost. In addition, the experience of operating with (and dependence on) the Starlink satellite communications system shows how critical

16   Craig Timberg, Ellen Nakashima, Hannes Munzinger and Hakan Tanriverdi, 'Secret trove offers rare look into Russian cyberwar ambitions', *The Washington Post*, 30 March 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/03/30/russian-cyberwarfare-documents-vulkan-files/

17   Anh V Vu, Daniel R Thomas, Ben Collier, Alice Hutchings, Richard Clayton and Ross Anderson, 'Getting bored of cyberwar: exploring the role of civilian participation in the Russia–Ukraine cyber conflict', arXiv:2208.10629 [cs.CR], v3, 3 December 2022. https://arxiv.org/abs/2208.10629

18   Alexander Martin, 'Ukraine war: US cyber chief on Kyiv's advantage over Russia', *Sky News*, 8 June 2022. https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-war-us-cyber-chief-on-kyivs-advantage-over-russia-1262886900; Alexander Martin, 'US military hackers conducting offensive operations in support of Ukraine, says head of Cyber Command', *Sky News*, 1 June 2022. https://news.sky.com/story/us-military-hackers-conducting-offensive-operations-in-support-of-ukraine-says-head-of-cyber-command-12625139

19   Russ Mitchell, 'How Amazon put Ukraine's "government in a box" — and saved its economy from Russia', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 2022. https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2022-12-15/amazon-ukraine-war-cloud-data

20   Google TAG, *Fog of war: how the Ukraine conflict transformed the cyber threat landscape*.

21   Katie Prescott, 'Microsoft boosts digital aid for Ukraine', *The Times*, 4 November 2022. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/90818582-5ba0-11ed-9b1f-f7c251e9dfdc

22   Mandiant, *Ukraine Crisis Resource Center* [blog], Mandiant website, n.d. https://www.mandiant.com/resources/insights/ukraine-crisis-resource-center

23   Emma Schroeder and Sean Dack, *A parallel terrain: public–private defense of the Ukrainian information environment*, Atlantic Council/Cyber Statecraft Initiative/DFRLab, 27 February 2023. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/a-parallel-terrain-public-private-defense-of-the-ukrainian-information-environment/

warfighting capabilities can be hostage to corporate or individual whim[24] – or be curtailed at no notice due to a terms of service violation.[25]

Information warfare in Ukraine: expectations and reality

A number of distinctive features of Russian information warfare that had been anticipated in specialist literature have been observed in practice in the current conflict.

Interdiction

In the years between 2014 and 2022, Russia devoted considerable resources to probing the vulnerabilities of civilian telecommunications infrastructure worldwide, with the aim of being able to disconnect them when required and isolate target populations from outside information.[26] As implemented in Ukraine, with the exception of an attack on the Viasat KA-SAT network immediately before the 24 February onslaught, Russia's efforts at information interdiction were localised and disjointed – not least because of the absence of the single points of failure of Ukrainian communications networks that Russia was able to exploit eight years earlier in Crimea.[27] Russia's attempts to target connectivity and information flows, whether by kinetic attack on infrastructure,[28] or cyber activities against media and communications services,[29] also conflicted with Russia's own priorities to preserve and exploit those same networks for information effects.

It is in the occupied territories, where Russia has physical control of infrastructure, that the practical effects of Russia's aspiration for information interdiction are most clearly visible. Routing internet access through Russia has meant Moscow

24   Alex Marquardt, 'Exclusive: Musk's SpaceX says it can no longer pay for critical satellite services in Ukraine, asks Pentagon to pick up the tab', *CNN*, 14 October 2022. https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/13/politics/elon-musk-spacex-starlink-ukraine/index.html

25   James FitzGerald, 'Ukraine war: Elon Musk's SpaceX firm bars Kyiv from using Starlink tech for drone control', *BBC News*, 9 February 2023. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-64579267

26   Keir Giles and Kim Hartmann, 'Adversary targeting of civilian telecommunications infrastructure', in T Jančárková, L Lindström, G Visky and P Zotz (eds), *13th International Conference on Cyber Conflict: Going Viral Proceedings 2021*, NATO CCDCOE, Tallinn Estonia, ch 8, pp 133–150. https://ccdcoe.org/library/publications/13th-international-conference-on-cyber-conflict-going-viral-proceedings-2021/

27   Keir Giles, 'Russia and its neighbours: old attitudes, new capabilities', in Kenneth Geers (ed), *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression against Ukraine*, NATO CCDCOE Publications, Tallinn Estonia, 2015, ch 2. https://ccdcoe.org/library/publications/cyber-war-in-perspective-russian-aggression-against-ukraine/

28   UK Defence Headquarters, '(2 of 4) Russia is probably targeting Ukraine's communications infrastructure in order to reduce Ukrainian citizens' access to reliable news and information.' [tweet], @DefenceHQ, Ministry of Defence, 7 March 2022, accessed https://twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1500727889192497152

29   Andrea Peterson, 'Traffic at major Ukrainian internet service provider Ukrtelecom disrupted,' *The Record*, 28 March 2022. https://therecord.media/traffic-at-major-ukrainian-internet-service-provider-ukrtelecom-disrupted/ ; Christopher Bing and Raphael Satter, 'Ukrainian telecom company's internet service disrupted by 'powerful' cyberattack', *Reuters*, 28 March 2022. https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/ukrainian-telecom-companys-internet-service-disrupted-by-powerful-cyberattack-2022-03-28/

can suppress access to outside information, leaving the populations with no sources of knowledge other than Russian propaganda and thus fully immersing them in Russia's alternative reality.[30] Disinformation efforts directed at the civilian population of occupied areas have had a cumulative effect, leading to cognitive dissonance when those areas are liberated by Ukrainian forces – a problem which will pose a significant challenge if or when Crimea too is recovered from Russian occupation. And even where Ukraine retains control of territory, Russia has achieved local success when isolated towns or communities close to the frontline receive their information primarily from Russian television and radio broadcasts.[31]

Cognitive effects

Russia's attempts to influence both military personnel and civilians in unoccupied Ukraine have been intensive and widespread but have shown little evidence of innovation since February 2022. And extensive prior experience of the techniques has meant Ukrainian targets of disinformation operations are accustomed to the methods in use. Tactical information operations directed at Ukrainian servicepersons in a local area include means of disseminating information that remain unchanged from conflicts in previous centuries, including radio broadcasts,[32] long-range loudspeakers,[33] and leaflet distribution by artillery shell.[34] Meanwhile direct messages to Ukrainian servicepersons containing personalised threats – for instance including information on their families and residences as well as their names – are delivered through a range of online platforms.[35] However, it is a technique that has been noted since the very earliest stages of the conflict in 2014–15. This has given ample time for such techniques

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30   Emma Schroeder and Sean Dack, *A parallel terrain: public–private defense of the Ukrainian information environment*, Atlantic Council, 27 February 2023. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/a-parallel-terrain-public-private-defense-of-the-ukrainian-information-environment/; Adam Satariano and Scott Reinhard, 'How Russia took over Ukraine's internet in occupied territories', *The New York Times*, 9 August 2022.
https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/09/technology/ukraine-internet-russia-censorship.html;
Vera Bergengruen, 'The battle for control over Ukraine's internet', *Time Magazine* website, 18 October 2022. https://time.com/6222111/ukraine-internet-russia-reclaimed-territory/

31   Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Natalia Yermak and Tyler Hicks, 'Russians breached this city, not with troops, but propaganda'*, The New York Times*, 17 June 2022,
https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/17/world/europe/ukraine-russia-propaganda.html

32   Gibbons-Neff, Yermak and Hicks, 'Russians breached this city, not with troops, but propaganda'.

33   Ivo Juurvee, *Russian tactical PSYOPS in Ukraine – do they play by Soviet handbook?*, presentation at 'Russia's war on Ukraine: strategic and operational designs and implementation', Finnish National Defense University 5th Russia Seminar, Helsinki [video], Day 1, YouTube, 6 February 2023.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iI-1U5kKwd8

34   Anton Lavrov and Ruslan Pukhov (eds), *Voyna sredi sten* (War Within Walls), CAST, Moscow, 2022.

35   Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 'Увага! Ворог розсилає погрози. Не піддавайтесь на провокації!' (WARNING! The enemy sends threats. Do not give in to provocations!), Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 8 June 2022.
https://gur.gov.ua/content/uvaha-voroh-rozsylaie-pohrozy-ne-piddavaites-na-provokatsii.html

to become an accepted feature of the information environment, which in turn is likely to limit their effectiveness.[36]

This does not mean that Russia has not achieved local successes. Russia's ability to find and exploit collaborators was a key enabler for its success in occupying some southern regions of Ukraine with very little opposition. Embedded Russian agents also engaged in technical means of information warfare deep within Ukrainian territory, such as SMS broadcasting and communications interception.[37] But if Russia had succeeded in dividing or demoralising the Ukrainian population more broadly, or eroding its faith in and support for government and institutions in the manner that other Russian campaigns against the West have sought to do, this could have had a critical impact on the essential unity and resilience that has enabled Ukraine to prevail to date.

Russian efforts against the West have not been entirely unsuccessful. Narratives, ideas and individual phrases that have been inculcated by Russian tools of influence over many years now permeate the entirety of Western political debate on the conflict. Crucially for Ukraine, this includes the key idea that impeding Russia in any way will inevitably lead to escalating conflict, quite possibly culminating in nuclear exchanges; this idea has presented a crippling constraint on Western efforts to support Ukraine and back it to victory.[38] But even further afield, audiences and decision-makers in the West continue to underestimate the extent to which their view of the conflict is not shared by others around the world. Russia has been highly successful in presenting a far more ambivalent picture to the rest of the world, both of who is to blame for the war and what is at stake in it. Overcoming this challenge would require far greater effort by the collective West than is visible at present.[39]

Operational coordination

Analysis published in open sources has been inconclusive on whether Russian forces have successfully coordinated cyber effects with kinetic outcomes. The UK's National Cyber Security Centre has stated that Russian cyber forces have

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36   Keir Giles, *The next phase of Russian information warfare*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, November 2015.
       https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/the-next-phase-of-russian-information-warfare/176

37   Corin Faife. 'A phone relay capture may be the latest of Russia's communications woes in Ukraine', *The Verge*, 15 March 2022. https://www.theverge.com/2022/3/15/22979381/phone-relay-capture-russia-military-unencrypted-communications-ukraine

38   Keir Giles, *Russian nuclear intimidation: how Russia uses nuclear threats to shape Western responses to aggression*, Chatham House, March 2023.
       https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/03/russian-nuclear-intimidation

39   Jakub Kalenský, 'The information war is far from over', *Kyiv Independent*, 26 March 2023.
       https://kyivindependent.com/jakub-kalensky-the-information-war-against-the-kremlin-is-far-from-over/

launched 'a huge number of attacks in support of immediate military objectives',[40] but without providing supporting detail. In June 2022 Microsoft concluded that:

On several occasions the Russian military has coupled its cyberattacks with conventional weapons aimed at the same targets ... the war in Ukraine has witnessed Russian use of cyberattacks to disable computer networks at a target before seeking to overrun it with ground troops or aerial or missile attacks.[41]

But Microsoft's references to coordination between cyber and kinetic warfare were called into question by members of the expert community,[42] and later surveys struggled to find clear examples of successful cyber-kinetic coordination.[43]

Even in those limited instances where information on apparent coordination is available, it is impossible to be certain that coordinated action was the intent rather than accidental, and sceptical analysts point to a tendency to attribute better capacity for joined-up operations to the adversary than may be warranted.[44] One factor limiting visibility into any possible successful coordination is the high effectiveness of Ukraine's OPSEC measures, resulting in a dearth of reporting on successful information operations by Russia – or on other forms of setback or failure by Ukraine. But given that the continuing need to integrate cyber effects with conventional warfare at an operational and tactical level, as well as seeing them as strategic tools, was one of the intents behind the establishment of Russia's 'Information operations troops' from 2009 onwards,[45] it is noteworthy that the practical impact of this purported development is hard to discern in actual Russian operations a decade and a half later.

40 Lindy Cameron, *Lindy Cameron at Chatham House security and defence conference 2022*, National Cyber Security Centre website, 28 September 2022.
    https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/speech/lindy-cameron-chatham-house-security-and-defence-conference-2022

41 Microsoft Corporation, *Defending Ukraine: early lessons from the cyber war*, Microsoft, 22 June 2022.
    https://query.prod.cms.rt.microsoft.com/cms/api/am/binary/RE50KOK

42 Suzanne Smalley, 'Cybersecurity experts question Microsoft's Ukraine report', *Cyberscoop*, 1 July 2022.
    https://cyberscoop.com/cybersecurity-experts-question-microsofts-ukraine-report/

43 Jon Bateman, *Russia's wartime cyber operations in Ukraine: military impacts, influences, and implications,* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 December 2022.
    https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/12/16/russia-s-wartime-cyber-operations-in-ukraine-military-impacts-influences-and-implications-pub-88657

44 Gavin Wilde, 'Assess Russia's cyber performance without repeating its past mistakes', *War on the Rocks*, 21 July 2022. https://warontherocks.com/2022/07/assess-russias-cyber-performance-without-repeating-its-past-mistakes/

45 Keir Giles, '"Information troops" – a Russian cyber command?', in C Czosseck, E Tyugu and T Wingfield (eds), *2011 3rd International Conference on Cyber Conflict*, ch 5.
    https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/5954699

Spillover and escalation

Another anticipated effect of escalation in February 2022 that was not borne out was far wider destructive cyber effects than just within Ukraine, with uncontained cyber weapons causing damage either deliberately against the West and/or accidentally against the world.[46] The period of intensified fighting in Ukraine has coincided with a rise in frequency and impact of cyber incidents globally, but analysis by SecDev attributes this more to rapid processes of digital transformation than to the war itself.[47]

British officials contended in November 2022 that Russia had been keen to confine the impact of its attacks to Ukraine in order to avoid a confrontation with NATO nations.[48] That assumption was called into question by Russia later showing itself willing to carry out cyber, but not kinetic, attacks on the logistics chains and organisations delivering aid to Ukraine through Poland.[49] But this in turn suggests that Russia's understanding of NATO's Article 5 agreement on collective defence is shaping the boundaries of Russian actions[50] – and cyber activity is still considered less escalatory than direct kinetic attack. This implies that if Russia wishes to escalate the conflict further as part of its deterrent strategy, direct and more damaging cyber attacks against Western interests would provide a more attractive option than the nuclear strike option that is far more prominent in Western public discussion.

46   Colin Demarest, *US seeking to understand Russia's failure to project cyber power in Ukraine*, C4ISRNET, 21 July 2022. https://www.c4isrnet.com/cyber/2022/07/21/us-seeking-to-understand-russian-failures-to-project-cyber-power-in-ukraine/

47   SecDev, 'Europe's digital troubles', SecDev [email newsletter], October 2022. https://mailchi.mp/secdev/europes-digital-troubles

48   The Economist, 'Lessons from Russia's cyber war in Ukraine', *The Economist*, 30 November 2022. https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2022/11/30/lessons-from-russias-cyber-war-in-ukraine

49   Sean Lyngaas, 'Russian hackers targeted European military and transport organizations in newly discovered spying campaign', *CNN*, 15 March 2023. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/15/politics/russian-hackers-europe-military-organizations-microsoft/index.html

50   Monica Kaminska, James Shires, and Max Smeets, 'Cyber operations during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine: Lessons Learned (so far)', *European Cyber Conflict Research Initiative*, July 2022. https://eccri.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ECCRI_WorkshopReport_Version-Online.pdf

Conclusion and lessons observed

In theory, study of information operations in Ukraine should provide valuable operational lessons for Ukraine's Western backers in the same way that conventional operations do (whether or not those lessons are then acted on).[51] The experience of open conflict with Russia should validate or disprove a great deal of prior theorising, as well as the value of cyber and information power overall. In practice, however, the lessons observed from Ukraine are not universal, and there are specific features of the conflict that mean that not all of them will transfer seamlessly to consideration of future clashes between Russia and other nations.

One key lesson is that just as in conventional operations, Russia's plans collapsed in the face of active and determined opposition – a striking difference from previous information operations worldwide, where Russia achieved success often through shooting at open goals because the target had little interest in defending itself.[52] But in addition, having private sector capabilities on side presents a key advantage to Ukraine that may simply not be available to other states defending themselves against aggression in the future.

Finally, a vital lesson from the fighting to date is that Russia has suffered tactical and operational reverses in technical terms, and local defeats in information confrontation, but at a broader, global level it has not lost the information war. The success of Russian nuclear intimidation shows how Russia can and does use information warfare means over decades-long timespans to achieve its objectives. For future conflict, Western nations need to think like Russia about effects and outcomes that are strategic, not tactical, and long-term, not immediate.

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51   Katie Bo Lillis and Oren Liebermann, 'How Ukraine became a testbed for Western weapons and battlefield innovation', *CNN*, 16 January 2023.
https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/15/politics/ukraine-russia-war-weapons-lab/index.html

52   See Keir Giles, 'What deters Russia', *Chatham House*, September 2021.
https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-deters-russia

Russia–China relations and the Indo-Pacific

Natasha Kuhrt

While much attention in the Russia–Ukraine war is naturally directed to Europe, it is also having important implications for regional stability in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and Beijing's ambiguous stance on Russia's war, which is widely viewed as implicit support for Russia,[1] has raised the question of whether Moscow's stance in the Indo-Pacific might change to more active support for China in the Indo-Pacific via a *quid pro quo.* Russia has continued to rail against the US-sponsored 'hub and spokes' system of alliances in the region, particularly as the US–Japanese alliance has broadened into regional and global roles, and the Quad has moved to protect the maritime commons. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov has described the Indo-Pacific concept as 'destructive'.[2] Thus, Russia has joined China in rejecting the US-driven concepts of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad. In strategic terms, the Indo-Pacific connotes the reassertion of US leadership in Asia. Hence both Russia and China have signalled their preference for 'Asia–Pacific' instead, while Russia also uses 'Greater Eurasia', or even an 'Arcto-Pacific' formulation.[3]

Beyond the immediate implications of closer Sino-Russian ties as a product of the war in Ukraine, the gradual strengthening of the Beijing–Moscow 'no limits' strategic partnership has had a clear impact on the Indo-Pacific region. While

1   Dong Xing and Iris Zhao, 'China's "implicit" support for Russia is at odds with what expats in Ukraine are posting on social media', *ABC News,* 5 March 2022. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-05/china-response-to-russia-over-invasion-of-ukraine/100879016

2   Sergei Lavrov, 'US Indo-Pacific strategy "destructive" for that region', *Tass,* 20 January 2020. https://tass.com/world/1108051

3   A V Kupriyanov, 'Constructing the Arcto-Pacific: new challenges and opportunities', *Russia in Global Affairs,* no. 4, 2020, pp 171–191. https://www.imemo.ru/publications/info/constructing-the-arcto-pacific-new-challenges-and-opportunities

previously, Russia stayed on the sidelines to remain largely neutral regarding Chinese territorial claims in the region,[4] Moscow now frequently echoes Beijing's criticisms of US Indo-Pacific strategy. Not only that but, Russia's armed forces have been regularly participating in joint military exercises with the PLA in the region, as well as joint bomber patrols. And while these began as early as 2005, they became more frequent after Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014.

Russia has also criticised the Indo-Pacific concept as 'unnatural', in contrast to Russia's own integration projects in Central Asia *viz.* the 'Greater Eurasian Partnership', which brings together Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and China's Belt and Road Initiative. For Russia, the Indo-Pacific initiative represents a move away from the Asia–Pacific idea based upon ASEAN to a more divisive concept. Moreover, the reorientation of India and ASEAN nations to the US confines Russia to a more marginal, regional role.

The growth of minilaterals such as the Quad and AUKUS are also an integral part of the new flexible partnerships appearing across many regions. Russia is highly critical of the Quad. Further, the Ukraine war has meant that NATO is now emerging as a global player, a disturbing development for both Russia and China. In light of NATO's announcement in 2022 of a broadening of cooperation with both Japan and South Korea, the idea that NATO will no longer just 'do NATO' has been received by both Moscow and Beijing as even more dangerous.

Russian military capabilities in the Indo-Pacific

In response to renewed US attention being directed towards the Indo-Pacific, Moscow has sought to place greater emphasis on its military presence in the region. Russia's 2015 Maritime Doctrine signalled a desire to be a stronger power in Asia, especially in the Indian Ocean. In the 2022 iteration of the Maritime Doctrine, it put the Arctic Ocean first, but the Pacific Ocean came in second, and the Atlantic Ocean (which previously held the top spot), is ranked third in Russian maritime priorities.[5]

To pursue its military ambitions, Russia relies heavily on its Pacific Fleet; together with its Northern Fleet, the two groups make up the bulk of Russia's naval capabilities. It is designed to fulfil a number of important functions, which include not just the protection of the Russian far east but also nuclear deterrence, since it controls one of Russia's two main ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) bases.

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4   Nivedita Kapoor, 'Russia's conduct in the South China Sea', *Observer Research Foundation Commentaries,* 18 June 2021. https://www.orfonline.org/research/russias-conduct-in-the-south-china-sea/

5   Yuval Weber, 'Russia's new maritime doctrine' [PDF], *MES Insights*, vol. 13, no. 4, August 2022. https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/MES%20Insights_Weber_13_4.pdf

However, the modernisation of the Pacific SSBN fleet has been both slow and partial. Thus far, it has only obtained two new Borei-class SSBNs, which were delayed until the rearmament of the Black Sea brigade of conventional submarines (4th Submarine Brigade) was completed. Russia's SSBN deterrent in the Pacific has therefore experienced a relative decline. Its project 955/955A Borei SSBNs are now distributed evenly between the Northern Fleet and the Pacific Fleet, after Russia drew down its Pacific SSBNs in the 1990s and 2000s.

The Russian rearmament project, which formed a crucial aspect of Vladimir Putin's desire to project power both against NATO and in Asia has also largely bypassed the Pacific Fleet. New frigates are expected to enter service only around 2025, and so far, the Fleet is supported by limited modernisation of legacy Soviet-era ships. All of the project 21631 missile corvettes carrying Kalibr LACMs are deployed in the Caspian, Baltic or the Black Seas, and have been used extensively in combat operations against targets in Ukraine. Just four out of eighteen planned next-generation project 22800 missile corvettes are expected to be built for the Pacific Fleet after 2023.[6]

Sino-Russian military ties

Another key implication of Russia's war in Ukraine is that it promises to reverse the trajectory of Russian arms sales to China. These had dropped off some years before the invasion. Russia had tended to sell India the more advanced generation of weaponry and aircraft, wary of Chinese military modernisation and reverse engineering practices. Concurrently, Chinese indigenous production had also increased.[7] While the partnership has strengthened, there remain areas of potential tension; both Russia and China are significant suppliers of weapons to several countries in the region. Russia has principally sold weapons to Vietnam and Indonesia, and more recently to Myanmar. This is in addition to its longstanding sales to India, which amount to the bulk of New Delhi's arms imports.

Yet not only are the reputational risks associated with purchasing Russian weapons affecting sales, given Russia's poor military performance in Ukraine, but also buyers risk becoming subject to secondary sanctions from the US.[8] This leaves a number of countries in a quandary, due to the heightened sense

6   David Scott, 'Russian naval strategy for the Indo-Pacific', *CIMSEC Briefs*, 14 April 2022. https://cimsec.org/russian-naval-strategy-for-the-indo-pacific/

7   Brian Hart, Bonny Lin, Matthew P Funaiole, Samantha Lu, Hannah Price, Nicholas Kaufman and Gavril Torrijos, 'How deep are China–Russia military ties?' *CSIS China Power Project*, 6 September 2022. https://chinapower.csis.org/china-russia-military-cooperation-arms-sales-exercises/

8   Myriam Boulianne, 'In Southeast Asia, buying Russian weapons has become a "risky bet"', *Le Monde*, 30 June 2022. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/06/30/in-southeast-asia-buying-russian-weapons-has-become-a-risky-bet_5988568_4.html

of insecurity following Russia's invasion and concomitant fears regarding a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Overall then, while China appears set to become a major market for high-end Russian military kit, Moscow's arms sales to the region have plummeted since the invasion, and other countries such as South Korea and France are stepping in to replace it.[9]

That said, the sale of advanced Russian weaponry to China is cause for concern. This is especially the case when it is taken into the broader context in which military cooperation and the increasing frequency of Sino-Russian joint military and naval exercises have been accelerating in the region since 2012. Major exercises involving the two states have included the 'Maritime Cooperation' and *Vostok* exercises near Vladivostok, as well as in the South China Sea. China has acquired S-400 missiles from Russia that could reach targets on Taiwan.[10] Finally, there have been suggestions that the S-400s could also cover parts of India, and China has also acquired from Russia 24 SU-35 aircraft, which could extend the range of Chinese air power deep into the South China Sea.

Moreover, it is important to note that the Indo-Pacific challenge places both China and Russia in the position of reactive actors in Asia. Throughout the past decade, the 'Indo-Pacific' idea has consecutively entered the geopolitical and geoeconomic narratives of Indonesia, India, Japan, Australia, the US, ASEAN, France, Germany and the UK. Despite its vague meaning, the geostrategic shift from Asia to the Indo-Pacific is a reality. Since many of these concepts – and more specifically the ones of the US, Australia and Japan – had a clear anti-CCP core, they put both China and Russia on alert and brought back memories of the confrontation of the Cold War period. This is why Russia has increasingly echoed Chinese rhetoric regarding the Quad, which has become much more strident. Indeed, while initially China dismissed the grouping as mere 'sea foam' Beijing now refers to the Quad as an 'exclusive clique'.[11] At other times, China has even described the Quad as a 'mini'- or 'Asian' NATO.[12] This has extended

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9   RFE/RL, 'Russia's global arms exports suffer as war takes toll; Ukraine's imports surge', *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty,* 13 March 2023. https://www.rferl.org/a/global-arms-sales-sipri-russia-ukraine/32314407.html

10   Liam Gibson, 'India deploys Russian-made S-400 missile defence system to guard against China, *Taiwan News,* 12 December 2021. https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4383519. Russia temporarily halted sales of the S-400s to China in 2020, citing the pandemic, only for Moscow to then attempt to supply the missile system to India. See Christopher Woody, 'Russian weapons are creating a headache for the US as it looks for partners to counter China', *Business Insider*, 12 May 2021. https://www.businessinsider.com/india-s400-purchase-risks-us-sanctions-amid-competition-with-china-2021-5?r=US&IR=T

11   Matthew Lee, 'Quad FMs, wary of China's might, push Indo-Pacific options', *Associated Press*, 4 March 2023. https://apnews.com/article/indo-pacific-diplomacy-india-us-australia-japan-china-17ebf36a7 8b413a1946f6bfec5546074

12   James Holmes, 'To counter China, the Quad should own the military side of containment', *National Interest,* 22 October 2021. https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/counter-china-quad-should-own-military-side-containment-195269

to Russia emulating Chinese criticisms of Japan's role in the Second World War: for example, Sergei Naryshkin, head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, recently accused Japan of having not repented for war crimes in the Second World War.[13]

Japan: Russia's other neighbour

Tokyo has been a firm critic of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Its robust new national security strategy, released in December 2022, labels Russian military activities around Japan a 'strong security concern', and identifies Russia as 'the most significant and direct threat' to European security.[14] This continues a pattern of a slowly degrading Russo-Japanese relationship. Russia's military build-up on the Kuril Islands and frequent violations of Japanese airspace have been particularly damaging to the relationship, and in December 2020 Russia deployed an S-300 missile defence system on the disputed islands.[15] The Sea of Okhotsk remains a Russian sea bastion. SSBNs and nuclear submarines carrying submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) have been deployed in and around the Sea of Okhotsk, as a key part of sea access denial in the defence of the Russian Far East.[16] As both the Northern and Pacific Fleets are so-called 'swing fleets', Arctic missions may spill over into the North Pacific.[17] Further, the Northern Sea Route offers Russia diversification of energy supplies to other Asian clients and increases the strategic importance of the Kuril Islands to Russia via the Sea of Okhotsk.

Amidst Russia's expanding footprint in Japan's strategic operating environment, its joint exercises with China in the Sea of Japan as well as missile drills in the region are increasingly interpreted by Tokyo as provocative.[18] Despite the Russia's

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13 Russia Business Today (RBT), 'Russian official: calls urging Tokyo for reactionary policy can't boost region's stability', *RBT*, 20 April 2021. https://russiabusinesstoday.com/foreign-policy/russian-official-calls-urging-tokyo-for-reactionary-policy-cant-boost-regions-stability

14 Mirna Galic, 'What you need to know about Japan's new National Security Strategy", *US Institute of Peace,* 19 December 2022. https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/12/what-you-need-know-about-japans-new-national-security-strategy

15 Reuters staff, 'Russia deploys advanced S-300 missiles to disputed islands near Japan', *Reuters*, 2 December 2020. https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-japan-missiles-idUSKBN28B5D3

16 Alexey Muraviev, 'BEARing back: Russia's military power in the Indo-Pacific under Vladimir Putin' [PDF], *ASPI Special Reports*, January 2018. https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/ASPI%20Bearing%20Back.pdf

17 Stephen Blank, 'Testimony to the US China Economic and Security Review Commission: The Russo-Chinese alliance: what are its limits?', *American Foreign Policy Council*, 28 March 2019. https://www.afpc.org/publications/articles/congressional-testimony-the-russo-chinese-alliance-what-are-its-limits

18 Mark Episkopos, 'Naval exercises in the Sea of Japan show Russia's naval strength', *National Interest,* 2 January 2021. https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/naval-exercises-sea-japan-show-russia's-naval-strength-17564.

Pacific Fleet's focus on sea access denial,[19] until only a few years ago Japan had remained relatively unconcerned regarding a threat from Russia in comparison to its concerns about China. But, the depth of Sino-Russian cooperation and muscular Russian policies have clearly changed the security calculus for Japan. Since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japan has become more proactive in its own Indo-Pacific version of Germany's *Zeitenwende,* reflecting the reality that Japan is now expected to be a leading new rule-maker as a member of the Quad.[20] The Ukraine war in effect brings to an end Japan's balancing act between the US and China, as the Western world unites within both NATO and the Indo-Pacific to counter Russian aggression and increasingly, to counter the Russia–China partnership. Here a particularly telling moment occurred in June 2022 at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting, when Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida said it was no longer possible to view the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific separately.[21]

Failing diversification

Aware of the risks of becoming China's 'junior partner', Russia has sought to diversify relations in Asia for some time, and the war in Ukraine has given that task greater urgency. Over the years Russian–Vietnamese military cooperation has developed extensively in a process that began in the early 2000s. Vietnam has purchased from Russia Su-30 jets, S300 SAM batteries, coastguard ships and diesel-electric submarines (the last of these were transferred to Hanoi in February 2017). At times this has caused friction between Russia and China, which is not enthusiastic about Vietnam acquiring capabilities for power projection in the South China Sea. Indonesia has also been another longstanding market for Sukhoi jets (the Indonesian military currently operates Su-27 and Su-30 aircraft). Considerable attention was attracted to the contract between Russia and Indonesia to purchase 11 Su-35 fighters for $1.1 billion. However, that deal seems to have been postponed, perhaps due to Jakarta's fear of repercussions from US sanctions as a knock-on effect of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Yet even after Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, there were some potential bright spots in Russian relations with the countries of the region. Japan had continued to seek better relations in a bid to resolve the territorial impasse over

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19   Geoffrey Gresh, 'The new great game at sea', *War on the Rocks,* 8 December 2020. https://warontherocks.com/2020/12/the-new-great-game-at-sea/

20   Michito Tsuruoka, 'Tokyo's awakening: Japan in the Indo-Pacific after Russia's invasion of Ukraine', *Danish Institute of International Studies,* 4 January 2023. https://www.diis.dk/en/research/tokyos-awakening-japan-in-the-indo-pacific-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine

21   Kishida Fumio and Jens Stoltenberg, 'Joint statement following the NATO summit', *NATO,* 31 January 2023. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_211294.htm?selectedLocale=en

the Kuril Islands/Northern Territories, and Vietnam and Indonesia continued to regard Russia as a potential hedge against Chinese assertiveness. India showed its discomfort with US policy in the Indo-Pacific that appeared to position it as part of the US strategy to contain Chinese aggression, viewing Russia as helping to balance China.

However, the Ukraine war and the new partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, as well as Russia's more decisive support for Chinese positions here, including joint bomber patrols and encouragement of intimidating Chinese military behaviour, arguably puts these relationships in jeopardy. An equally important consideration exacerbating this is that the emergence of the Quad has made it much harder for Russia to balance China through its ties to India and Japan. Growing Sino-Russian alignment – including, for instance, the view that Russia tried to sabotage India's presidency of the G20[22] – has also elicited concern in New Delhi, which fears it may lead to less support from Russia for Indian positions. This is especially the case in regard to the Sino-Indian border dispute, where Russia has been disinclined to moderate a drawdown in tensions. If previously India saw in Russia a way to balance China, Russia's solidifying relationship with China seems to leave little room for other partners. This, in turn, has been a significant consideration in New Delhi's keenness to ramp up economic cooperation with Russia after the invasion of Ukraine, especially in the arena of oil supplies.

Does the war in Ukraine hold lessons for a future conflict over Taiwan?

Since 2022, there have been repeated concerns, especially from more hawkish security elites in the US and Australia, that while Europe and America are preoccupied with Russia's invasion, China might take the opportunity to invade Taiwan. Some have suggested the Russian invasion serves as a template for a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan.[23] Yet the two situations are vastly different in strategic terms: the largely land-based conflict in Ukraine is not at all analogous to the maritime assault that would be required in a potential China–Taiwan war. Moreover, China may be drawing a number of lessons that might militate against an invasion, notably Russia's poor military performance and unexpected Western unity regarding sanctions and supply of weapons to Ukraine.

More importantly, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while potentially raising fears of Chinese opportunism in terms of invading Taiwan, has also shown that both the

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22   Madhav Nalapat, 'China using Russia to try and disrupt India's G20 presidency', *Sunday Guardian*, 4 March 2023.
     https://sundayguardianlive.com/news/china-using-russia-to-try-and-disrupt-indias-g20-presidency

23   Ben Blanchard, 'Taiwan sees China taking lessons from Russia's Ukraine invasion', *Reuters*, 24 February 2023. https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-sees-china-taking-lessons-russias-ukraine-invasion-2023-02-24/

US *and* Europe are ready to support Taiwan.[24] Even notionally pacifist countries like Japan are becoming more vocal on the issue. Tokyo has called for a major overhaul of its defence posture, including an increase in military expenditure to 2 per cent of GDP, citing Russia's invasion and China's more assertive position in the Asia–Pacific as two of the prime motivations.[25]

Conclusions

The knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine are clearly having significant implications in the Indo-Pacific. Chief among these is the increasing closeness of Sino-Russian ties. It is true that Moscow and Beijing have not (yet) announced a formal alliance. But they have spoken of 'a flexible strategic partnership', which keeps the door open to one in the future. This creates not just ambiguity but also uncertainty and anxiety in the minds of Western security policy planners, as well as those who represent key regional allies, such as Japan.

A good example of this growing harmonisation between Russia and China occurred just over a year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In March 2023, President Putin and President Xi met in Moscow, and strongly criticised US actions in the Indo-Pacific. They declared their opposition to what they characterised as external military forces disrupting regional peace, and urged the United States to 'stop undermining international and regional security and global strategic stability in order to maintain its own unilateral military superiority'.[26]

Overall, Russia's war on Ukraine and the context of Russia's burgeoning strategic partnership with China exacerbates security concerns amongst the states of the Indo-Pacific. The prospect of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, as well as fears about the scale of support that Russia might lend China, add further fuel to what is already a tense strategic environment. And while it remains to be seen how Moscow will seek to navigate its relationship with Beijing, it is clear that Russia's war in Ukraine is driving the two nations closer together. The West and its Asian partners would therefore do well to anticipate further coordination between Russia and China in the Indo-Pacific, and plan accordingly to meet that challenge.

24 White House, 'Joint Statement following the meeting between President Biden and President Macron', *White House Briefing Room*, 1 December 2022. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/01/joint-statement-following-the-meeting–between-president-biden-and-president-macron/

25 John Grevatt, 'Japan's ruling party proposes defence strategy revisions', *Janes*, 28 April 2022. https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/japans-ruling-party-proposes-defence-strategy-revisions

26 The Kremlin, *Meeting with President of People's Republic of China President Xi Jinping*, President of Russia website, 20 March 2023. http://www.en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70746

Russian influence in Australia at a time of undeclared war

Kyle Wilson

As a member of the Five Eyes Agreement, Australia has long been of more interest to Russian intelligence agencies than the modest form and limited content of the bilateral relationship might suggest. Now, Australia has emerged as a robust and significant supporter of Ukraine's struggle to thwart Putin's neo-imperialist invasion. As a consequence, in December 2022 the Prime Minister of Finland travelled 30,000 kilometres to reinforce Australian resolve.[1] Australia is pursuing much closer cooperation with NATO and has recently entered into AUKUS, a tripartite defence pact with two countries identified by the present Russian leadership as their main adversaries.[2]

Taken together, these policies have enhanced Australia's relative importance to Russia, advancing Australia into the front rank of those Putin perceives as enemies.[3] It follows that Russian agencies charged with protecting and promoting Russia's interests would devote more resources to erode Australian support for Ukraine and to undermine its alliances and partnerships. It is also logical to assume Moscow will have placed a premium on efforts to prosecute espionage and obtain intelligence useful to the Russian war effort.[4] Moscow

1   Prime Minister of Australia, *Visit to Australia by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland* [media release], Office of the Prime Minister of Australia, 23 November 2022.
     https://www.pm.gov.au/media/visit-australia-prime-minister-republic-finland

2   Janis Berzins, 'The West is Russia's main adversary, and the answer is new-generation warfare', *Security and Peace*, 2016, 34(3):171–176. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26428998

3   Jamir Seidel, 'Destruction: Russia's terrifying threat to Australia', news.com.au, 13 December 2022.
     https://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/destruction-russias-terrifying-threat-to-australia/news-story/8a69431187a30ed8877ecc2ac55d2482

4   Al Jazeera and News Agencies, 'Australia uncovers Russian espionage ring, expels spies', *Al Jazeera*, 24 February 2023.
     https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/24/australia-uncovers-russian-espionage-ring-expels-spies-report

will also likely mobilise assets in Australia to support the war against Ukraine, presented now as a war against the global West.[5]

Background: the Soviet Union and Australia

For the eight decades from 1942 to 2023, Russo-Australian diplomatic relations have mostly been strained and adversarial. Over half of this period was by the Cold War, with the two countries on opposing sides. Other than a brief interlude following Prime Minister Whitlam's 1974 decision to recognise the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet empire, the main exception to bilateral tension was the thaw, and later genuine warmth, of the six years from Gorbachev's accession to power as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in 1985. This carried over into the early years of Yeltsin's leadership.

But by about 1993–94 a strong bilateral trading relationship, based mainly on bulk exports of Australian commodities, particularly wool and wheat, had been reduced to insignificance. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union was the second biggest market for Australian microfine wool. From a peak of just over $A1 billion in 1989, the total value of exports fell to $A59 million in 1992; the wool trade dropped from 14% of total wool exports in 1988/89 to 0.5% in 1994.[6] The trading relationship fell victim to the disarray, as post-Soviet Russia struggled to replace a centrally planned economy with one based on free-market principles. Unlike his predecessor Bob Hawke, Prime Minister Keating, preoccupied with South-East and North Asia, showed no interest in post-Soviet Russia and the other new states that emerged amidst the USSR's unravelling.

With the accession of a Coalition government in 1996, this attitude solidified into policy, or rather a non-policy. Relations came to be characterised by mutual indifference. The immediate effect was that Russia slipped to a low position in Australia's priorities for foreign relations. In 1997, DFAT instructed the Australian embassy in Moscow to reduce its reporting on Russia, and the new post-Soviet states to which it was accredited, to a bare minimum. Thus, Russia also slipped to a low category in the national foreign intelligence priorities.

The shift was part of a broader failure of states in the non-Russian world to learn from history. Over centuries, leaders and governments had boosted the resources of their intelligence services when they perceived a threat – of foreign interference, subversion, war in its various forms, and terrorism – only to

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5   Pjotr Sauer and Andrew Roth, 'Putin prepares Russia for 'forever war' with West as Ukraine invasion stalls', *The Guardian*, 28 March 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/28/putin-prepares-russia-for-forever-war-with-west-as-ukraine-invasion-stalls

6   Stephen Wyatt, 'Wool under siege as Russia dumps', *Australian Financial Review*, 19 December 1994. https://www.afr.com/companies/wool-under-siege-as-russia-dumps-19941219-k66p2

emasculate them when the threat was perceived to have passed. The exception was Russia. Following the revolutions of 1917 and 1991–2, its intelligence agencies soon regained their traditional pre-eminence as instruments of state power. Today, in a Russia ruled for the first time by a career intelligence officer, they are very probably as well or better resourced and more influential than at any time in Russian history.

The last of the rare thaws between Russia and Australia was when the two states cooperated over Russia's hosting of the annual APEC summit in 2012.[7] Soon thereafter came the Russian invasion and seizure of Crimea, and then chunks of the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, followed by the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17.[8] The deaths of 38 passengers who were Australians or residents of Australia at the hands of Russian proxies; the Russian refusal to accept responsibility and Moscow's mendacity in dealing with the issue marked the end of the naivety with which many in the Australian public service (APS) had hitherto perceived Russia under Putin. In July 2018, Gareth Evans, Chancellor of the ANU, told the (then) Russian Ambassador:

> While it seems very likely that the militia member who pressed the button to fire the missile that caused so many Australian and other lives to be tragically lost did not intend to destroy a civilian airliner, unless and until that mistake is frankly acknowledged and redressed it is hard to see how any Australian government can invest our bilateral relationship with more substance.[9]

By 2014, anyone monitoring the treatment of Australia in Russian state-controlled media knew it was the target of a full-blown information war. Australia was relentlessly depicting as a cynical undemocratic hireling of the US. The trend was exemplified by a Russian TV documentary hosted by 'Anna Chapman', an officer of the Russian external intelligence service (SVR), who had been deported from the US in 2010, along with a group of long-term 'sleeper agents'.[10] The documentary accused Australia of supplying terrorists to ISIS, and purported

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7   Nina Markovic, '2012 APEC Meeting in Russia: a success for Australia', *Flagpost,* Parliament of Australia, 18 September 2012. https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2012/September/2012_APEC_meeting_in_Russia_a_success_for_Australia

8   Matthew Dal Santo, 'MH17 tragedy galvanized world opinion against Russia', *The Interpreter,* Lowy Institute, 17 July 2015.
    https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/mh17-tragedy-galvanised-world-opinion-against-russia

9   ANU Communication and Engagement, *ANU unveils Pushkin bust* [media release], ANU Newsroom website, 31 July 2018. https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/anu-unveils-pushkin-bust

10 On Chapman's celebrity status in Russia, see Brett Forrest, 'The Big Russian Life of Anna Chapman, ex-spy', *Politico*, 4 April 2012. https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2012/01/the-big-russian-life-of-anna-chapman-ex-spy-069297

to explain Australia's role in an Anglo-Saxon conspiracy to foment war in Syria, inundate Europe with migrants and terrorists, and force wealthy Europeans to shift their wealth to Anglo-Saxon countries. It also informed Russian viewers that nuclear tests at Maralinga in the 1950s and 60s had caused the extinction of the thylacine; and claimed that in the Australian education system five-year-olds were taught homosexuality was a good thing.[11]

Espionage

In its relations with Australia, the Soviet side placed the highest premium on espionage. As soon as a Soviet diplomatic mission arrived in March 1943, its intelligence officers, under diplomatic cover, set up an espionage ring that proved productive till about 1948. Indeed, so effective that it led to the establishing of ASIO; it is no exaggeration to assert that ASIO is a Soviet achievement. Beginning with the Petrov defection in 1954, which led to a five-year break in formal diplomatic relations, periodic crises were prompted by the uncovering of Soviet espionage. Within three years of the renewal of formal ties, Ivan Skripov was expelled in 1962; and in 1983 came the revelations of the cultivation of David Coombe by Valery Ivanov.[12] After the Soviet collapse, KGB defectors or former officers claimed that their colleagues posted to Australia had recruited informants within ASIO.[13]

As noted above, under Putin, the relative weight and influence of the Russian intelligence services in the wider apparatus of administration and control, domestic and foreign has been much enhanced,[14] and the importance of the espionage function of Russian embassies has increased. In the context of the war in Ukraine, it has probably become the primary function. Indeed, a recent statement by Mike Burgess, Director-General of ASIO, suggests that in Australia SVR and/or GRU officers working under diplomatic cover have not been idle. On 21 February, Burgess said that more Australians were being targeted for espionage and foreign interference 'than at any time in Australia's history'. He went on to observe that this was intended 'to shape political and business decision-making', as well as 'to monitor, threaten and even harm members of diaspora communities'.[15]

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11 This video was published on YouTube but is no longer available.
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLogH78DY2w

12 John Blaxland and Rhys Crawley, *The Secret Cold War: The Official History of ASIO*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2016, pp 247–272.

13 Oleg Kalugin, *Spymaster: My Thirty-Two Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West*, Basic Books, New York, 2009, p 154.

14 Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The Compatriots: The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Emigres and Agents Abroad*, Public Affairs, New York, 2022.

15 Andrew Greene, 'Judges, journalists and military veterans targeted in "unprecedented" spy threat in Australia', *ABC News*, 21 February 2023.
    https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-21/mike-burgess-asio-annual-threat-assessment/102003692

Weaponising the diaspora

Until Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, all Soviet leaders saw the large Russian/Soviet diaspora as a threat – a source of opposition and subversion – and as an asset to be mobilised, to undermine any state perceived to be an adversary. During that Soviet period, primary responsibility for identifying and exploiting such assets, and neutralising threats (in some cases by assassination), lay either with the KGB or its earlier names – the Cheka, NKVD, OGPU. In Australia, the best-known cases were the marshalling, and in some cases recruitment, of members of the Communist Party of Australia and Russian emigres, some working in sensitive positions in Australia's public service.[16] The effects of that policy still colour perceptions of Russia.

As the Soviet Union began to falter in the late 1980s and Soviet-backed communist parties in the West shrank, the policy of recruiting 'emigres' and 'fellow travellers' – non-Russian sympathisers, fell into abeyance. In a memoir, the last Counsellor for Culture at the Soviet embassy in Canberra described the demise of one of the networks built up over 60 years:

> Right up until the collapse of the USSR and the abolition of the Soviet Communist Party I had the stressful and delicate task of maintaining ties with those Australia's leftist parties that espoused Marxist positions and were supported by Moscow.[17]

Throughout the 1990s, following on the rout of the KGB planned and led coup to overthrow Gorbachev in August 1991, and during the disarray of the nine years of Yeltsin's floundering rule, the Russian intelligence services manoeuvred to adapt and survive. The KGB was restructured, and was divided into the FSB (domestic secret police) and the SVR, the Russian foreign intelligence service. But, in a fateful failure of foresight, neither were reformed.[18]

After two decades with one of their own as Russia's ruler, Russia's intelligence services are better resourced and, in the FSB's case at least, more independently powerful than ever. Under Putin, efforts to tap the Russian diaspora as an asset have been refined and strengthened. In October 2001, Putin set out a concept of the diaspora as an attribute of a powerful Russian state. He proclaimed the notion of *Russkij mir* – the 'Russian world', asserting that all Russians, no

16   See for instance Mark Aarons, *The Family File*, Black Inc. Books, Melbourne, 2010; David Lowell and Kevin Windle (eds), *Our Unswerving Loyalty: A Documentary Survey of Relations Between the Communist Party of Australia and Moscow, 1920–1940*, ANU Press, Canberra, ACT, 2008, https://doi.org/10.22459/OUL.08.2008

17   VV Kuzmin, *Vzlety i padenia*, Zapiski diplomata, Moskva, 2011, pp 233–35.

18   Evgeniia Albats, *KBG: State Within a State*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 1994.

matter where they may be, together with those claiming Russian heritage, would henceforth be seen not as 'emigres' but as 'compatriots', a global tribe dispersed but united by a commitment to the Russian Fatherland.[19] This is also the title of one of a phalanx of state agencies and 'foundations' later set up under Putin, charged with achieving this cohesion and maximising Russia's global reach and influence.[20]

The policy of marshalling the diaspora is also now underpinned by legislation – 'the Law on State Policy Towards Compatriots Abroad', key provisions of which have recently been reflected in amendments to the Russian Constitution. The law defines anyone anywhere 'who speaks Russian and identifies with/observes the (values of the) associated culture' as a 'compatriot', whose rights the Russian state undertakes to protect.[21]

Diaspora assets and wellwishers in Australia

With their scope for building networks of influence in government and the APS much reduced by widespread revulsion over Putin's policies and methods, the Russian Embassy and Consulate in Sydney would naturally concentrate their efforts elsewhere. Apart from their 'compatriots', they focus on the media and academia. In a 2018–19 New Year message, former Russian ambassador Logvinov, appealed to Australians of Russian origin, claiming that Russia had never before been 'subjected to such a coordinated and aggressive campaign of vilification, abuse and slander'. He concluded that '*we in the Embassy would be most grateful for any support, moral and political, that our compatriots can give, within, of course, the bounds permitted under Australian legislation'.*[22]

We cannot know how many of the 98,000 Australians who, according to the most recent census, claim Russian ancestry support Putin and his policies. Attendances at pro-Russian demonstrations suggest active support is limited to a few hundred at most. Some would have posted helpful commentaries on social media; supported embassy-sponsored functions; and would carry Russian and Soviet flags, nationalist symbols and portraits of fallen forbears in Anzac Day marches. The implication is to remind Australians that the two countries were allies once (and should be again). Since the full-scale invasion

19 Vladimir Putin, *Speech at the opening of the Congress of Compatriots*, The Kremlin website, 10 October 2001. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21359

20 See the official website of *Russkiy mir*: https://russkiymir.ru

21 President of the Russian Federation D Medvedev, 'Amendments to the Federal Law "On State Policy Towards Compatriots Abroad"', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* website, 26 July 2010. https://rg.ru/documents/2010/07/27/sootech-dok.html

22 Author's italics. Video of Loginov's appeal [video], Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAJQs8

of Ukraine, a variation on this theme has appeared on social media and at pro-Russian demonstrations, featuring symbolic images and slogans designed to tap into an undercurrent of anti-American sentiment, long a feature of Australian public discourse and politics. The published results of a 2021 series of surveys to gauge global anti-American sentiment ranked Australia sixth of 15 countries in terms of negative views of the US, with 35% of respondents expressing such views and 49% registering a positive view.[23]

Support for withdrawal from ANZUS, together with a conviction that the United States is the most irresponsible and reprehensible of the great powers, appear to underpin the editorial policies of those publications and digital journals consistently offering a platform to Russian and Australian commentators supporting Putin's policies.[24] And some non-Russian Australians who are well-disposed to Russia may be positioned to influence public attitudes, and even politicians' views. Some Australian Russophiles demonstrate a passionate identification with Russia's history and culture, and the particular qualities of the Russians as they perceive them.[25] They endorse the Russian official narrative of victimhood, and proclaim themselves Russia's allies. For this group, all Russian policies in dealings with 'the West' are defensive: the destruction of MH17, for instance, was an anti-Russian conspiracy. And the invasion of Ukraine is presented as a wholly justifiable response to the provocation represented by NATO's 'expansion'.

As in some other countries, such support for Putin and his policies tends to be far more conspicuous at either end of the political spectrum. On the left it tends to be associated with nostalgia for or lingering identification with the Soviet Union. In 2006, the head of a commission appointed by Putin to review the curriculum and textbooks for Russian history used in Russian schools, A Filippov, wrote: 'The Soviet Union was not a democracy but it was a beacon of hope for millions as the world's most just and best society'.[26]

23   Eli Yokley, 'How the world sees America amid its chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan', *Morning Consult*, 26 August 2021.
https://morningconsult.com/2021/08/26/united-states-favorability-global-countries-afghanistan/

24   One of the most prominent of these is John Menadue's website Pearls and Irritations. See for instance Dennis Argall, *If we spit the American dummy, what becomes of us?,* Pearls and Irritations, 29 March 2023.
https://johnmenadue.com/if-we-spit-the-american-dummy-what-becomes-of-us/

25   Stephen Johnson, 'Ex-Aussie ambassador defends Putin over Russia's invasion', *Daily Mail*, 18 March 2022.
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10625511/Former-Aussie-ambassador-Tony-Kevin-defends-Russian-President-Vladimir-Putins-Ukraine-war.html

26   A A Filippov, *Noveishaya istoria Rossii*, 1945–2006, Moskva, 2007.

That view still appears to have adherents in Australia. On the far right sits the Australian Citizens Party, formerly the Citizens Electoral Council.[27] The group supports Putin and Xi Jinping. Its annual conference in 2016 was addressed by then director for the Indo-Pacific of the Russkij Mir Foundation, the agency established by Putin in 2006 to mobilise support for his policies in the Russian diaspora and among 'wellwishers'. ACP officials have travelled to Russia and claim to have ties to Sergei Glaz'ev, 'Advisor to the President for Eurasian Cooperation', who has been among the most energetic proponents of Ukraine's re-absorption into Russia by force.

Until recently, the self-styled 'Aussie Cossack', Simeon Boikov has been the most prominent promoter of Russian information campaigns in the Australian diaspora. In an interview with a Russian digital journal in 2018, Boikov proclaimed:

> I consider myself a proponent of a strong Russian state. We'll always support the policies of the [Russian] state, we respect very much our Commander-in-Chief, Putin. And we have a unique capacity to support Russia from within a hostile state… we organise demonstrations in support of the return of Crimea [to Russia], in support of our army in Syria, in support of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics.

Boikov added that while they cannot go into battle with sabres as their grandfathers did, 'Australia's Cossacks can prosecute another form of war — an information war'.[28]

But since about 2019, Mikhail Ovchinnikov has apparently emerged the victor in a power struggle for influence in the Russian diaspora with Boikov. A Sydney-based businessman who appears to own a construction company, 77-year-old Ovchinnikov has become the national leader – 'ataman' - of the so-called Zabaikal'sk Cossacks in Australia. He is also the President of the Russian World

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27   See *Australian Citizens Party* (ACP), n.d., https://citizensparty.org.au

28   Boikov's comments can be found at https://vz.ru/news/2018/8/13/936919.html.

Foundation in Australia. In that position he would answer to the Russian embassy and to the foundation's head in Moscow, Vyacheslav Nikonov: a prominent member of the Russian Duma and among Putin's most strident supporters. The foundation, like every other Russian entity dealing with Russian 'compatriots' abroad, is subordinate to the Russian intelligence services.[29]

Ovchinnikov cooperates with the Russian Embassy and Consulate in Sydney in organising social functions, marking Russian state and Orthodox Church anniversaries and encouraging people to vote in Russia's orchestrated elections.[30] He is prominent as a philanthropist, sponsoring Russian martial arts clubs in various state capitals. According to the Russian journalists Soldatov and Borogan, in other western countries such clubs are often associated with biker groups and have ties to the GRU, Russian military intelligence.[31]

Ovchinnikov is the proprietor of 'Horizon', one of the two main weekly Russian-language newspapers directed at the Australian diaspora. Together with titillating material about health, UFOs and sex, it publishes a weekly supplement reprinted from *Moskvosky Komsomolets*, one of the racier state-controlled Russian dailies. On the invasion of Ukraine, 'Horizon' reproduced to the letter the Kremlin-authorised version of causes and events. Ovchinnikov is also the publisher and distributor, though not the owner, of the 'Australian international edition' of another Moscow-based weekly, *Argumenty i Fakty*. It is weightier and even more fervently loyal than 'Horizon'. For instance, the 1–7 March edition explained to readers the deeper meanings of Putin's most recent 'state-of-the-empire' address.[32]

29   On Ovchinnikov see for example 'Ataman of the combined Cossack village of Australia Mikhail Ovchinnokov was awarded an honorary badge of the Russkiy mir Foundation', *Russkiy mir*, 10 October 2019.
     https://russkiymir.ru/news/293022/

30   The issue of 'Gorizont', No.39 (1426) for 30 September 2021 carries letters of thanks to Ovchinnikov from the Russian Ambassador Pavlovsky and Consul General Arzhaev.

31   Soldatov and Borogan, *The Compatriots*, 2022.

32   For the Australian edition see: *Argumenty i Fakty Avstralia*, no.9 (2206), 2023, p 3. Putin's speech has also been comprehensively unpacked in Chris Devonshire-Ellis, 'Putin's speech to the Russian Federal Assembly: the 2023 Trade and Commerce content', *Russia Briefing*, 21 February 2023.
     https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/breaking-putin-s-speech-to-the-russian-general-assembly-the-2023-trade-commerce-content.html/

Conclusion

Despite all this activity, the cumulative effect of Putin's policies – the destruction of and refusal to accept responsibility for MH17, the ruthless treatment meted out to all domestic opposition in Russia and the brutality of Russia's treatment of the Ukrainians, all contribute to strongly negative perceptions of Putin's Russia in Australia. Compared to a country like India, where a majority of the population is well-disposed and inclined to take Russia's part, in Australia Russia has few assets that it can exploit in pursuit of its goals.

But it does have some. In the Russian diaspora are active supporters and sympathisers who can be recruited to the cause. And in what Russian authors call the political class – those who are engaged in politics and media activity – are wellwishers eager to support the information war by re-broadcasting the Kremlin's positions and propaganda. They include a few former leading politicians, whose particular value lies in their standing with the 'political class'. Likewise, recruiting sources with access to sensitive information would remain the highest priority of Russia's intelligence officers posted in Australia.

Commentary

Resistance strategy: lessons from the Russo-Ukraine conflict for Europe, Australia and the Indo-Pacific

Andrew Maher

Introduction

War in Ukraine did not begin in February 2022. Russia seized Crimea and parts of the Donbas from Ukraine in 2014 using grey-zone techniques, or activities below the threshold of triggering a conventional military response. The conflict did not, however, end there. Over the past eight years, a simmering irregular proxy conflict, or hybrid warfare,[1] has continued, using Russian-supported militias, steeled with Russian 'volunteers', mercenaries and select Russian Army capabilities. This eight-year proxy conflict in the Donbass inflicted over 7,100 combat deaths on the Ukrainian military and 14,000 Ukrainians overall.[2] Then, on 24 February 2022, Putin escalated.

The operational art applied by Russia when it seized Crimea shocked NATO, particularly its Baltic state members. It also prompted the Ukrainians to accelerate a comprehensive review of their national defence strategy. Indeed, the contrast between the weak performance of the Ukrainian military in 2014 and the strong military capability it has shown in 2022 points to the impact a focused

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1   Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, p 14. 'Hybrid Wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder'.

2   Upsala Conflict Data Program, 'Ukraine' webpage, UCDP, accessed 4 June 2023, https://ucdp.uu.se/country/369; Brendan Nicholson, 'Ukraine's ambassador: "Give us the heavy weapons we need to defend us all"', *The Strategist* ASPI, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), 27 April 2022, accessed 4 June 2022, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/ukraines-ambassador-give-us-the-heavy-weapons-we-need-to-defend-us-all/; Volodymyr Zelensky, *A Message from Ukraine: Speeches, 2019–2022*, Crown, New York, 2022, p 42. As Ukrainian President Zelensky noted, this proxy conflict lasted longer than the Second World War.

strategic review, driven by an acute understanding of risk, can have in a relatively short period.

During October and November 2021, Russian brinksmanship and subversive activities echoed the lead-up to the 2014 conflict. After approximately 70 days of posturing, Russia began its escalation, in what seems to have been a belief that Kyiv could be seized quickly and a pro-Russian faction could readily assume control over the Ukrainian political system.[3] These efforts to seize Kyiv failed. The Russian advance in the north culminated after around seven days. Russian forces withdrew and re-orientated to the east after a further month of intense fighting.[4]

The Ukrainian experience has required a lengthy strategy of resistance. This is often neglected in attempts to draw lessons from the war, both in Europe as well as Australia. And while it may be tempting for analysts to focus on the first seven days of fighting in February 2022, this period cannot be viewed in isolation from the preceding period of brinkmanship,[5] nor from the eight years of proxy competition that played out in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.[6] Likewise, the analysis must not dissociate Ukraine's conventional defence from her effective counterintelligence efforts pre-conflict, nor from the mobilisation of the Ukrainian population through legislative, organisational and conceptual preparations for national resistance between 2015 and 2021. The analysis must avoid the 'allure of battle' if it is to understand the characteristics of the war.[7]

With this context in mind, I focus this essay on the lessons European nations, including Ukraine, are learning regarding whole-of-society mobilisation. These efforts are characterised as a strategy of resistance or total defence.[8] This is a response to grey-zone competition to which Australia should take note. I argue that the analysis of resistance strategy is poorly understood in an Australian context – a gap that I seek to address with this essay. I therefore progress from a background understanding of the strategy of resistance, its historical application and the lessons its application in Ukraine posits for an Australian context.

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3   Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *The plot to destroy Ukraine: special report*, RUSI, London, 15 February 2022.

4   Institute for the Study of War, 'Ukraine conflict updates', *ISW* webpage, accessed 4 June 2022. https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-updates

5   Watling and Reynolds, *The plot to destroy Ukraine.*

6   Michael Kofman, Katya Migacheva, Brian Nichiporuk, Andrew Radin, Olesya Tkacheva ansd Jenny Oberholtzer, *Lessons from Russia's operations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine*, RAND, Santa Monica CA, 2017.

7   Cathal J Nolan, *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost*, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK, 2017.

8   The Ukraine national resistance, 'About the national resistance' webpage, *National Resistance Center of Ukraine*, accessed 4 June 2022. https://sprotyv.mod.gov.ua/en/about-the-national-resistance/

The strategy of resistance

A pre-prepared security strategy of *resistance* is defined as:

> a nation's organised, whole-of-society effort, encompassing the full range of activities from nonviolent to violent, led by a legally established government (potentially exiled, displaced or shadow) to re-establish independence and autonomy within its sovereign territory that has been wholly or partially occupied by a foreign power.[9]

Key within this definition is the 'whole-of-society' effort. This designation highlights that resistance is not a 'military task' per se. Rather, it is a government task, founded upon the idea of resilience, prepared in peacetime, preferably with partners.[10] In parallel to resistance strategy is the growing scholarship into 'resilience' as a security concept, defined as the 'ability of a nation-state to preserve its societal cohesion when it is confronted by external and internal stresses caused by sociopolitical change and/or violent disturbances'.[11]

A key challenge for governments engaged in resistance strategy is to mobilise sufficient 'buy-in' from the population. Specifically, those in government organising for resistance must remain cognisant of the fact that in many countries only around two per cent of society participates in defence and social order. The other 98 per cent does not.[12] As counterinsurgency theorist David Galula has observed, the other 98 per cent of the population is an 'ambivalent

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9   Otto Fiala (ed), *Resistance Operating Concept*, Swedish Defence University & Joint Special Operations University, Stockholm & Tampa, FL, 2019. An alternate, but similar definition is: 'a form of contention or asymmetric conflict involving participants' limited or collective mobilisation of subversive and/or disruptive efforts against an authority or structure'. Jonathan B Cosgrove and Erin N Hahn, *Conceptual typology of resistance, assessing revolutionary and insurgent strategies* [PDF], United States Army Special Operations Command and The John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, February 2021. https://www.soc.mil/ARIS/books/pdf/typology-resistance.pdf

10   Irregular Warfare Initiative, *On resistance* [video file], YouTube, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdsS1|1x9HI. Also https://www.youtube.com/@IrregularWarfareInitiative/videos Irregular Warfare Initiative, National Defence University and Special Warfare Centre, 'On resistance' virtual panel discussion streamed on 20 May 2022, featuring Major General Patrick Roberson – Commander, Special Warfare Center and School, Dr James D Kiras – Professor, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Dr Ulrica Pettersson – Director, Centre of Special Operations Research at the Swedish Defence University, Dr Byron Harper – Deputy Director, NATO Special Operations Headquarters, J9 – Partnership Directorate, Moderator: Dr Martijn Kitzen – Professor, Netherlands Defence Academy and IWI Fellow.

11   Tomas Jermalavičius and Merle Parmak, 'Societal resilience: a basis for whole-of-society approach to national security', in Kevin Stringer and Glennis Napier (eds), *Resistance Views: Essays on Unconventional Warfare and Small State Resistance – 2014*, Joint Special Operations University, 2018. Importantly, as Jermalavičius and Parmak note, resilience is a much better narrative for orchestrating broader government and non-government organisations that otherwise would be unlikely to be involved with national security.

12   Irregular Warfare Initiative, *On resistance* [video file]; Mark I Lichbach, 'What makes rational peasants revolutionary? Dilemma, paradox, and irony in peasant collective action', *World Politics*, April 1994, *46(3):383–418,* https://doi.org/10.2307/2950687.This dilemma is also noted in a broader irregular warfare context as 'the Rebel's dilemma'.

majority'.[13] This reality is generally acceptable in times of peace; the polity does not feel threatened and uniformed military forces might be perceived as sufficient to provide national defence.

What differentiates resistance is a broader context of escalated risk, due to a sense of confrontation against a more powerful adversary. In such circumstances, a government can engage the interests of the ambivalent majority towards national security objectives in ways not otherwise achievable. True resistance strategy is not characterised by the model of the self-mobilising French *marquis* of the Second World War, but rather by the pre-conflict organisation of civilian militias, such as that conducted today by the Estonian Defence League. Control over militias, through the continued legitimacy and authority of the state, is key to this strategy being orchestrated in a disciplined and focused manner – especially if occupied by a foreign power.

In circumstances of heightened risk or a sense of confrontation, a nation might adopt a strategy of 'total defence', where it seeks to expand upon the two per cent already invested in national defence to motivate, support, and mobilise segments of the 98 per cent to engage in nonviolent and violent actions in defence of the nation.[14] This term, total defence, has been used by several countries to describe their whole-of-society resistance strategy. Otto Fiala usefully describes resistance as another layer, building upon conventional military capability and societal resilience.[15]

The common perception of national resistance strategy emerged in Western Europe during the Second World War.[16] These self-mobilising groups are better described as subversive, guerrilla or insurgent organisations, depending upon the level of capability they were able to achieve.[17] The value of this history is it demonstrates grassroots movements will organically emerge because of

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13   David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Praeger Security International, Westport CT, 2006.

14   Stephen J Flanagan, Jan Osburg, Anika Binnendijk, Marta Kepe and Andrew Radin, *Deterring Russian aggression in the Baltic states through resilience and resistances*, Research Report, RAND, April 2019.

15   Otto C Fiala, 'Resistance resurgent: resurrecting a method of irregular warfare in great power competition',' *Special Operations Journal*, 2021, 7(2):109–135. https://doi.org/10.1080/23296151.2021.1994746

16   M R D Foot, *Resistance: European Resistance to the Nazis*, 1940-1945, Biteback Publishing Ltd, London, 1976.

17   Andrew Maher, *Guerrillas, revolutionaries, insurgents, and militias and mafiosi: the GRIM threats of irregular strategy,* Modern War Institute website, 24 February 2022. https://mwi.usma.edu/guerrillas-revolutionaries-insurgents-and-militias-and-mafiosi-the-grim-threats-of-irregular-strategy/

occupation, a force which might be harnessed to counter an occupier.[18] Such groups exert a certain magnetism, as the experience of the French resistance demonstrates:

> Will the people who produced the '33 Conseils à l'occupé' (33 Hints to the Occupied) ever know what they have done for us, and probably for thousands of others? A glimmer of light in the darkness … Now we know for certain that we are not alone. There are other people who think like us, who are suffering, and organising the struggle.[19]

Occupied France, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Norway, were characterised by governments-in-exile, some of which struggled to exert control over such grassroots resistance efforts in occupied territories. Although, they were supported by broad political, organisational and logistical efforts from Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE).[20]

These efforts had mixed success and raise important moral and ethical considerations, where good intentions can lead to unintended loss of life. Due to poor coordination with the Allies, the French *maquis* in the Vercor were decimated in a premature attempt to liberate the Grenoble region.[21] Incompetent support to the Dutch Resistance derived from an abject intelligence failure and resulted in the deaths of scores of agents. The efforts of the Polish Home Army were let down by logistical challenges at extreme ranges from England and Soviet connivance.[22] These factors resulted in the human tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising.[23] In Czechoslovakia, Operation ANTHROPOID (the assassination by

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18 Brian S Petit, 'Can Ukrainian resistance foil a Russian victory?' *War on the Rocks*, 18 February 2022, accessed 1 February 2023, https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/can-ukrainian-resistance-foil-a-russian-victory/. A further example of this organic emergence is the way in which Ukrainian militias (across the spectrum of political orientations) emerged in 2014. Of note, is that between 2015–2022, Ukraine systematically worked to incorporate such grassroots militias into a formalised and centrally controlled structure.

19 Quote from Agnes Humbert diary, 18 August 1940, in Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis*, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, London, 2009, p 38.

20 MRD Foot, *SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940–46*, British Broadcasting Corporation Books, London, 1984.

21 Paddy Ashdown, *The Cruel Victory: The French Resistance, D-Day and the Battle for the Vercors 1944*, William Collins, London, 2014.

22 Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *The Polish Home Army 1939–1945*, Polish Underground Movement (1939–1945) Study Trust, London 2001. The Warsaw Uprising began on 1 August 1944, triggered by the approaching Soviet armies. The Soviets inexplicably halted outside Warsaw for approximately two months, during which time the Wehrmacht were able to focus upon repression of the uprising. While it is possible the Soviet advance culminated and required resupply, given the coming winter weather, many interpret these events as Stalin's desire to see the Polish Home Army destroyed by the Germans to then ensure minimal resistance to the subsequent Soviet occupation.

23 Ney-Krwawicz, *The Polish Home Army 1939–1945*.

Czech agents of Reinhard Heydrich) prompted severe civilian reprisals. And in Crete, the British aimed to minimise the likelihood of German reprisals against the civilian populace by taking specific measures to demonstrate British involvement in military actions.[24]

The second historical period in the development of resistance strategy is that of the Cold War era. In this context, Sweden and Switzerland are key models. Yet, importantly, they do not represent 'tested' models that were validated by conflict.[25] The Cold War era saw the autocratic repression of nationalist uprisings in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Indeed, the Czechoslovakian invasion of 1968 prompted Tito's Yugoslavia to return to its partisan warfare roots in a 'total national defence' strategy.[26] The context of Cold War Soviet repression led to the phenomenon of contention through nonviolence undertaken by the Polish Solidarity movement.[27] Ultimately, Solidarity opened the first crack in the Iron Curtain and precipitated a cascade of communist government failures across Eastern Europe.[28]

In the post–Cold War era, several models of resistance emerged in response to the occupation of sovereign territory by foreign powers. For example, Saddam Hussein's *al-Muqawamah* (The Resistance) had the goal of creating 'Mogadishu on the Tigris' in 2003'.[29] While Saddam's *Fedayeen* proved unsuccessful against the US military, Abu-Musab Al-Zarqawi conducted a similar preparatory phase of developing underground networks in 2002,[30] which proved to be markedly more successful in sparking an insurgency and embroiling civil war. In 2008, Iran implemented a defence concept termed, *mosaic defence*, which is founded

24 W Stanley Moss, *Ill Met by Moonlight*, First Paul Dry Books, Philadelphia PA, 2010.

25 Kevin D Stringer, 'Building a stay-behind resistance organisation: the case of Cold War Switzerland against the Soviet Union', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, National Defense University, JFQ 85, 2nd Quarter, 2017; Irregular Warfare Initiative *On resistance* [video file]; Government Offices of Sweden 'Main elements of the government bill Totalförsvaret 2021–2025', *Swedish Department of Defence/Ministry of Justice*, 21 June 2021, accessed 30 January 2023. https://www.government.se/articles/2018/06/development-of-modern-total-defence/. Indeed, the Swedish model continues today, reinvigorated by an act of parliament (the Riksdag) on 15 December 2020, and described by the Swedish Government.

26 A Ross Johnson, with Jeanette A Koch, *The Yugoslav Military Elite* (U), Office of Regional and Political Analysis, Central Intelligence Agency, 1977, Wilson Center Digital Archive, declassified 6 February 2019. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208967.

27 Seth Jones, A Covert Action: Reagan, *The CIA and the Cold War Struggle in Poland*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York NY, 2018.

28 Adam Roberts, *Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions*, Monograph Series Number 4, The Albert Einstein Institution, Cambridge MA, 1991.

29 Malcom W Nance, *The Terrorists of Iraq: Inside the Strategy and Tactics of the Iraq Insurgency, 2003–2014*, 2nd edn, CRC Press, Boca Raton FL, 2015, p 25; Carter Malkasian, *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*, Oxford University Press, New York NY, 2017, pp 30–31.

30 David Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West*, Oxford University Press, New York NY, 2020, p 93.

upon a structure of local, independent resistance cells, layered with conventional warfighting and asymmetric capabilities.[31] Iran's potential for domestic defensive resistance, coupled with an offensive proxy capability in the region – an 'axis of resistance' – seemingly demonstrated deterrence by denial during the Bush (Jnr) and Obama administrations.[32] Finally, coalition efforts were undertaken to foment popular resistance in Islamic state-controlled areas in Iraq and Syria.[33]

The historical record demonstrates that irregulars (non-state actors) will self-mobilise in times of crisis and conflict, with implications that can be difficult to predict. For example, during the First World War, Tsarist Russian battlefield losses, economic deprivations and elite corruption contributed to the societal unrest that would lead to the revolution of 1917. This history echoes the domestic unrest of protests and civil disobedience seen in 2022 within Russia. Unplanned grassroots movements do not have comparable levels of organisation, legitimacy and resilience in the face of repression. Such grassroots movements are better termed, *insurgency* or *insurrection,* depending upon their level of organisation. These may still pose a marked threat to occupying forces, but lack unity of effort and command within a framework of civilian government control. It is therefore important to recognise this pre-planned and deliberate variable in our understanding of resistance concepts.

All three of these characterising variables – organisation, legitimacy and resilience – are key elements to the successful implementation of resistance strategy. It takes time to organise an underground network that can support resistance.[34] Legitimacy enhances the ability of a resistance movement to gain external support. Resilience ensures the movement can survive the inevitable repression from the occupying force. Resistance, particularly in the case of the failure of conventional defence, is a weapon of the weak,[35] and relies upon *cost imposition*, or what Carter Malkasian argues was intended by the term *attrition*.[36]

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31 Ali Alfoneh, *The Basij resistance force: a weak link in the Iranian regime?*, Policy Watch 1627, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 5 February 2010.

32 Seth G Jones, *Three Dangerous Men: Russia, China, Iran, and The Rise of Irregular Warfare*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York NY, 2021; *IISS Strategic Dossier, Iran's networks of influence in the Middle East* [PDF], International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, November 2019; Ariane M Tabatabai, Jeffrey Martini and Becca Wasser*, The Iran threat network (ITN): four models of Iran's nonstate client partnerships*, Research Report, RAND, 2021.

33 Mike Stevens, 'Resistance and information warfare in Mosul and Raqqa: in darkness, light', *The RUSI Journal*, 2020, 165(56):10–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2020.1855083

34 Robert Leonhard (ed), *Undergrounds in Insurgent, Revolutionary, and Resistance Warfare, Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies* [PDF], 2nd edn, United States Army Special Operations Command, 25 January 2013. https://www.soc.mil/ARIS/books/pdf/UndergroundsS.pdf

35 James C Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1985.

36 Carter Malkasian, *A History of Modern Wars of Attrition*, Praeger, Westport, CT, 2002.

These factors are key lessons, as can be seen in a brief history of resistance movements in Europe.[37]

Resistance is not new in Europe

Ukraine has a long history of irregular warfare as a component of its national defence experience. Following the 1917 February Revolution, Russia began to fragment as nationalist movements arose from the collapse of Tsarist control. Finnish, Baltic and Ukrainian nationalism very quickly emerged, with support from Germany to punish Russian intransigence in delaying the signing of an armistice. The Ukrainian People's Republic emerged in February 1918.[38] With the collapse of Germany in November 1918, these nationalist movements experienced mixed success and failure, as an increasingly assertive Red Army consolidated control over large swathes of former Russian territory during the Russian Civil War of 1917–1923.

Before the Second World War invasion of the Soviet Union (Operation BARBAROSSA), Germany cultivated the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). This entity had its roots in the Ukrainian Military Organisation that had originally been established in 1920.[39] However, the OUN would not be a compliant proxy; and, following Germany's campaign of conquest, factions worked towards Ukrainian independence against their former German patrons.[40] German armed forces thus suppressed the OUN, which evolved into the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The UPA would ultimately fight Germany, the Soviet Union and Poland, before being finally suppressed in 1949. During the early period of the Cold War, Operation AERODYNAMIC saw the nascent US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) attempt to revive the UPA (now the Ukrainian Supreme Council of Liberation), to resist Soviet occupation, in a covert operation that ultimately failed.[41] Ukraine's history parallels that of broader Eastern European resistance

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37 A comprehensive history has recently been published by Halik Kochanski, *Resistance: The Underground War in Europe, 1939–45*, Allen Lane, Great Britain, 2022.

38 Robert Forczyk, *Where the Iron Crosses Grow: The Crimea, 1941–44*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2014.

39 Larysa Zariczniak, 'Major Stepan Stebelski of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army: examples of insurgency leadership and tactics', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 2011, 22(3):435–447. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.581497

40 Center for Research on the Liberation Movement Joint Project of Center for Research on the Liberation Movement and Lviv National Ivan Franko University, *Digital Archive of the Ukrainian Liberation Movement* website, n.d., accessed 5 June 2022. https://avr.org.ua/?locale=en The existence of this archive supports Ukrainian nationalist sentiments that ideologically underpin its Resistance strategy, particularly where they document Soviet atrocities.

41 Lindsay A O'Rouke, *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2018.

movements during the First and Second World Wars, as national resistance struggled against communism, fascism and then Soviet totalitarianism.[42]

The Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 sparked a renaissance of resistance as a component of national strategy. The strategy of the 'indigestible hedgehog' has been adopted in Estonia,[43] Sweden,[44] and Finland.[45] Ukrainian legislation (Bill #5557) of 25 May 2021 authorised the establishment of national resistance in Ukraine, which sought to promote 'the widest possible involvement of the population in actions aimed at ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state'.[46] This legislation clarified national defence tasks within state and local government responsibilities, identified financing and material-support requirements and provided legal protections for those citizens who engaged in resistance activities in times of crisis. This legislation, alongside practical support for the development of resistance networks, was aided by advice from the US Special Operations Command – Europe (SOCEUR) and NATO.[47]

The concept of resistance is based upon the logic that the costs of occupation will prove to be so high an aggressor would have little to gain through aggression.

42 Juozas Luksa, *Forest Brothers: The Account of an Anti-Soviet Lithuanian Freedom Fighter, 1944–1948* (Laima Vince trans), Central European University Press, Budapest, 2009. The Baltic's 'Forest Brothers' are an exemplar in this regard. The Forest Brothers emerged during the unrest of Revolutionary Russia. The turbulence of the Second World War would again unleash Baltic nationalism, which post–Second World War saw British intelligence support until the Forest Brothers were ultimately suppressed by the Soviet Union between 1953 and 1956; O'Rouke, *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War*; Otto Fiala and Ulrica Petterson, 'ROC(K) solid preparedness: resistance operations concept in the shadow of Russia', *PRISM*, 2020, 8(4); Anika Binnendijk and Marta Kepe, *Civilian-based resistance in the Baltic states: historical precedents and current capabilities*, RAND, Santa Monica CA, 2021.

43 Estonian Defence League, *Kaitseliit website*, accessed 4 June 2022. https://www.kaitseliit.ee/

44 Richard Orange, 'Total Defence, "What's your role defending Sweden in the event of a military attack?"' *The Local se* website, 4 March 2022, accessed 5 June 2022, https://www.thelocal.se/20220303/total-defence-whats-your-role-defending-sweden-in-the-event-of-a-military-attack/; Government Offices on Sweden, 'Objectives for Swedish total defence 2021–2025: Government bill 'Totalförsvaret 2021–2025' webpage, 18 December 2020, accessed 5 June 2022. https://www.government.se/government-policy/defence/objectives-for-swedish-total-defence-2021-2025---government-bill-totalforsvaret-20212025/

45 Finnish Ministry of Defence, *Taistelukenttä 2020* [video], YouTube, uploaded 8 June 2020, accessed 4 June 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTmWCbcYwb8 The short film, *Taistelukenttä 2020* (Battlefield 2020), produced by the Finnish Ministry of Defence, is notable in its visual demonstration of the Finnish understanding of Russian hybrid warfare tactics and the way military and civilian resistance preparations stand ready to counter 'grey-zone' actions.

46 Press Office of UCBS, *Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) register a bill #5557 'About foundations of national resistance'*, Ukrainian Security and Cooperation Centre, 25 May 2021, accessed 30 June 2022. https://uscc.org.ua/en/ukrainian-parliament-verkhovna-rada-registered-a-bill-5557-about-foundations-of-national-resistance/

47 Fiala, 'Resistance resurgent: resurrecting a method of irregular warfare in great power competition'.

The utility of the strategy is that it might theoretically deter through denial.[48] In other words, a deterrent to aggression is provided by an adversary knowing their invasion and occupation intentions may prove untenable. There are several such examples.

The 'Spanish Ulcer' of 1807–1814 saw British support to Portuguese and Spanish irregulars, which frustrated Napoleon's designs on the Iberian Peninsula.[49] Hitler, cognisant of this French experience in Spain, was deterred from outright invasion when dealing with Franco's recalcitrance in 1941.[50] Hitler was also deterred from invading neutral Switzerland following the fall of France in June–October 1940. General Leeb's staff estimated 22 divisions would be required to occupy Switzerland (a revised plan stipulated 11 divisions), a price Hitler did not want to pay prior to the planned Operation BARBAROSSA campaign against the Soviet Union in 1941.[51] By contrast, Hitler was not deterred from invading neutral Norway, Denmark, Belgium or the Netherlands – none of which had a resistance strategy. The Russian resistance of 1812, to which Carl von Clausewitz was a 'foreign fighter' participant, destroyed Napoleon's *Grand Armée* and was a defensive model for the Bolshevik leadership in 1917–18.[52] Finally, the Yugoslav partisan war against the Wehrmacht persuaded Stalin not to intervene following the Yugoslav break from Soviet leadership in 1948 – at a time when Stalin was consolidating control behind the Iron Curtain.[53]

National resistance concepts include the employment of nonviolent coercion, as was amply shown by the Norwegian and Danish resistance movements during their Second World War occupations.[54] Nonviolence lowers the barrier to entry for civilians to contribute to national resistance. For example, the simple act of spray painting over street signs helped to disrupt the Russian advance

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48 Robert M Klein, Stefan Lundqvist, Ed Sumangil and Ulrica Pettersson, *Baltics left of bang: the role of NATO with partners in denial-based deterrence*, Strategic Forum 301, National Defence University, 7 November 2019; Scowcroft Centre Task Force on Deterrence and Force Posture *Defending every inch of NATO territory: force posture options for strengthening deterrence in Europe*, Atlantic Council website, 9 March 2022, accessed 4 June 2022, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/us-and-nato-force-posture-options/; Flanagan et al., *Deterring Russian aggression in the Baltic states through resilience and resistances*.

49 Michael Glover, *The Peninsular War, 1807–1814: A Concise Military History*, David and Charles, Exeter UK 1974; John Lawrence Tone, *The Fatal Knot: The Guerrilla War in Navarre and the Defeat of Napoleon in Spain*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1994.

50 Lauran Paine, *The Abwehr: German Military Intelligence in World War Two*, Robert Hale, London, 1984.

51 Stephen P Halbrook, *The Swiss and the Nazis: How the Alpine Republic Survived in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, e-book edn, Casemate, Philadelphia PA, 2006.

52 R H Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent*, Putnam, London and New York, 1932, p 228. British consul to the Bolsheviks reports in *Lockhart's Memoirs of a British Agent* suggest that Trotsky informed him in February 1918 that if the Germans were to invade, the Bolshevik regime would revert to partisan war 'to the best of her ability'.

53 Johnson with Koch, *The Yugoslav Military Elite* (U), fn 26.

54 Kochanski, *Resistance: The Underground War in Europe*.

upon Kyiv. The work of Gene Sharp is exemplary for its clinical examination of nonviolence, yet is relatively unknown to the military practitioner.[55] Sharpe's work was subsequently built upon by Erica Chenoweth, who noted the growth in the frequency of nonviolent resistance,[56] and pointed out that under certain conditions nonviolence can, in fact, be more successful than violent resistance.[57]

Analysis of the efficacy of European resistance efforts has been consistently shown to be dependent on the nature of the occupying regime, its capacity to operate as a police state, and the capacity of the local population to retain coherence against that regime.[58] Nonviolence increases the likelihood of mobilising from the ambivalent 98 per cent of the population and proved characteristic of Ukraine's social media campaign in the early days of the Russo-Ukraine war.

Against this backdrop, the next section identifies a model of resistance in the contemporary strategic context. Today's resistance or total defence strategies have been informed by the 'Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies Project',[59] collaborative work with partners undertaken by Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR), and the scholarly works of Will Irwin's *Support to resistance*, *Decision-making considerations in support to resistance*, and *How civil resistance works*.[60]

How have NATO states sought to incorporate resistance into their strategic practices?

NATO experienced a reinvigorated sense of purpose following Russia's 2014 aggression and is fostering a community of interest to enhance preparations for resistance. 'Total defence' (or 'national defence' or 'comprehensive defence')

55 Gene Sharp, *How Nonviolent Struggle Works*, The Albert Einstein Institution, East Boston MA, 2013; Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*, Hardy Merriman, Boston MA, 2005.

56 Erica Chenoweth, 'The future of nonviolent resistance', *Journal of Democracy*, July 2020, 31(3):69–84. https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/the-future-of-nonviolent-resistance-2/

57 Erica Chenoweth, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, New York NY, 2021.

58 Martijn Kitzen and Marnix Provoost, 'Don't underestimate the bear – Russia is one of the world's most effective modern counterinsurgents', *Modern War Institute*, 24 March 2022, accessed 4 June 2022, https://mwi.usma.edu/dont-underestimate-the-bear-russia-is-one-of-the-worlds-most-effective-modern-counterinsurgents/; David H Ucko, '"The people are revolting": an anatomy of authoritarian counterinsurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2016, 39(1):29–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1094390

59 Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies (ARIS), *Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies* (AIRS) Studies, ARIS website, n.d., United States Army Special Operations Command. https://www.soc.mil/ARIS/books/arisbooks.html

60 Will Irwin, *Support to resistance: strategic purpose and effectiveness*, Joint Special Operations University Report 192, JSOU Press, 2019; Will Irwin, *Decision-making considerations in support to resistance*, Joint Special Operations University Report, 20-1, JSOU Press, 2020; Will Irwin, *How civil resistance works (and why it matters to SOF)*, Joint Special Operations University Report 19-4, JSOU Press, 2019.

has been articulated in the 2012 Czech Defence Strategy,[61] 'the 2010 and 2017 Estonian National Defense Concepts, the 2016 Latvian National Defence Concept, the 2017 Lithuanian National Security Strategy, the 2015 Swedish National Defence Bills, and the 2017 Finnish Security Strategy for Society'.[62]

NATO is fostering 'intellectual interoperability' to aid in the sharing of lessons based upon what is occurring today.[63] Shared understanding helps to combat the inherent asymmetry of commitment in providing support to resistance movements; local inhabitants carry significant risk and external supporters have a much lower level of commitment. Maintaining resolve, internal and external, is, therefore, an important factor that must be considered. This issue especially holds when resistance faces an authoritarian opponent willing to employ indiscriminate violence.[64] Collectively, the capacity of member states for resistance extends NATO's capacity for deterrence by denial as it continues to confront Russian aggression.[65]

To be effective, resistance must be anchored in civil society long before battlelines are drawn between opponents. It takes time to mobilise an effective social response following the failure of national defence. For example, in the case of the French Resistance, following the collapse of the French military to the Wehrmacht invasion, it took approximately three months for subversive newspapers to emerge, approximately six months for the coordinated organisation of resistance groups and the rise of coordinated civil disobedience.[66] And, it took approximately 12 months for the emergence of assassinations, large-scale strikes and low-level guerrilla sabotage.[67] Hence, the Latvian National Defence Academy (LNDA), for example, has included an unconventional warfare course in its curriculum since 2014; it has educated every officer graduating from the LNDA on resistance concepts.[68]

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61   Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, *The Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic* [PDF], Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic – MHI Prague, Prague, 2012.
     https://www.army.cz/assets/en/ministry-of-defence/strategy-and-doctrine/defencestrategy2017.pdf

62   Flanagan et al., *Deterring Russian aggression in the Baltic states through resilience and resistances*, p 2.

63   Irregular Warfare Initiative, *On resistance* [video file].

64   Kitzen and Provoost, 'Don't underestimate the bear'.

65   Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, *Defending every inch of NATO territory: Force posture options for strengthening deterrence in Europe*, Issue Brief, Atlantic Council website, March 2022.

66   Justus Rosenberg, *The Art of Resistance: My Four Years in the French Underground*, William Collins, London, 2020, p 140. Rosenberg makes the important point that the National Council of the Resistance had emerged in August 1940, building upon pre-existing political party movements. As a result, the Resistance at that time was a loose affiliation of eight movements, aligned to communists, socialists, social democrats, etc., geographically orientated based upon the pre-war heartlands of such political parties.

67   Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis*, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, London UK, 2009.

68   Mareks Runts, 'The backbone: the role of the armed forces in the resistance movement', *Journal on Baltic Security*, June 2022, 8(1):120–130. https://journalonbalticsecurity.com/journal/JOBS/article/21/info

This lesson of pre-planning has also been learnt in the case of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Special Operations Commander deployed his teams in an autonomous fashion to provinces and counties pre-invasion. Here, they established relationships with local governors and 'learnt the local terrain… established communications with local people'.[69] Socially embedded, these teams then supported the local Territorial Defence Force units in their respective regions. These teams were aided by centralised national guidance, in the form of website information and a PDF booklet on how to be a good partisan.[70]

If deterrence fails, as it did in Ukraine, resistance can contribute to national defence through efforts to slow and attrite, that is to impose a cost, morally and materially.[71] Grassroots resistants might prove valuable to conventional forces for reconnaissance and intelligence collection, and as guides and interpreter support.[72] An example of such synergistic effects between conventional forces and irregular actors can be seen in the Ukrainian ambush against a Russian convoy at the Griffe Bridge in Irpin. When the lead vehicle approached the bridge, Ukrainian regulars destroyed it with an anti-tank missile at the same time volunteers destroyed the trail vehicle. 'The closely packed convoy on the narrow street became pinned and an easy target for Ukrainian artillery, which destroyed the entire convoy'.[73]

In the Russia–Ukraine context, both sides are using hybrid warfare – a blending of regular and irregular warfare – to impose costs upon their competitors. These combinations may assume a momentum of their own. Indeed, state support to irregular actors often hopes to create asymmetric effects through irregulars growing in strength and capability. For instance, Ukrainian intelligence reported FSB (the Russian intelligence agency, *Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*)

69   Ryan Evans and Brigadier General Viktor Khorenko, *A conversation with Ukraine's Special Operations Commander,* [audio podcast], War on the Rocks, 14 November 2022.

70   Sarah Rainsford, 'Ukraine's shadow army resisting Russian occupation', *BBC News*, 29 July 2022, accessed 15 August 2022. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62333795.

71   Doowan Lee, 'Cost imposition: the key to making great power competition an actionable strategy', *Modern War Institute* website, 8 April 2021, accessed 4 June 2022, https://mwi.usma.edu/cost-imposition-the-key-to-making-great-power-competition-an-actionable-strategy/ This language also evokes James D Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism*, Routledge, New York NY, 2006.

72   Rosenberg, *The Art of Resistance: My Four Years in the French Underground*. For example, all of these functions were provided by French resistant, Justus Rosenberg over the course of his four years of service with the French Resistance in south-eastern France; Nancy Wake, *The White Mouse*, Sun Books, South Melbourne, 1986. Similar requirements were performed by Nancy Wake.

73   Liam Collins and John Spencer, 'How volunteers can help defeat great powers', *Military Times*, 6 July 2022, accessed 6 July 2022. https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2022/07/05/how-volunteers-can-defeat-great-powers/

manoeuvres to incite pro-Russian protest movements in Moldova in April 2022.[74] Moscow may have been seeking to expand the conflict and divert Ukrainian and NATO resources by stirring tensions in Moldova. Conversely, the Russo-Ukraine conflict has led to the emergence of a Belarusian resistance network, which seeks to weaken Russia as a precondition to a revolution to depose Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.[75] This Belarusian resistance network has generated 'cyber partisans', sabotage attacks against railway infrastructure, and volunteers to join the international 'Legion for the Territorial Defence of Ukraine'.[76] These events demonstrate that irregular warfare has a certain 'contagion' effect to which analysts should remain attuned.

Events seem to have confirmed that a resistance strategy was a prudent Ukrainian approach to Russian aggression, even though Kyiv remained sceptical up until early February 2022 that the Kremlin would give the invasion order. Before the commencement of hostilities, the Russian military was approximately four and a half times larger than that of Ukraine, with a similar or greater, ratio of over-match across most metrics of measuring military strength.[77] In 2013, the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC),[78] which is a measure of national power, generated a balance-of-power ratio markedly in Russia's favour: 4.96:1. Soon afterwards, in 2014, Russia demonstrated its ability to successfully execute *fait accompli* strategies through competent tactical action that would 'escalate to deescalate' and militarily secure limited objectives.[79]

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74 David Brewster, 'Transnistria: The next front of the Ukraine war', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 2 May 2022, accessed 2 June 2022, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/transnistria-next-front-ukraine-war; Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, *Operation Z: The death throes of an imperial delusion*, Special Report, RUSI, London, 22 April 2022, pp 17–18. Watling and Reynolds make this point of proxy expansion compellingly by noting that: 'Ukrainian intelligence [post-7 April 2022] began to receive reports that Major General Dmitry Milyutin of the FSB Fifth Service was discussing the organisation of a protest movement in Moldova that would intentionally use the banned symbols [of the Ribbon of St George] en masse, encouraging the authorities to fine large numbers of poor protesters, and creating a basis for allegations that the government was clamping down on political expression and free speech. These protests have since started to materialise. The intention is to build them towards a climax on 9 May, premised on the argument that President Sandu is preventing the country from celebrating its own role in the Great Patriotic War'.

75 Emily Clark and Agnieszka Suszko, 'The underground network of Belarusians sabotaging Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and plotting a revolution at home', *ABC News*, 5 June 2022, accessed 10 June 2022. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-05/belarus-opposition-sabotages-russia-in-ukraine-plans-revolution/101072484.

76 International Legion of Defence of Ukraine, *Enlist*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine website. https://fightforua.org/

77 Pierre de Dreuzy and Andrea Gilli, 'Russia's military performance in Ukraine', in Thierry Tardy (ed), *War in Europe: preliminary lessons*, NDC Research Paper No. 23, NATO Defence College – Rome, May 2022, p 26.

78 National Material Capabilities dataset at the Correlates of War Project, *National material capabilities v6.0*, Correlates of War website, n.d., accessed 4 June 2022. https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities

79 Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes*.

It is worth making note of Ukraine's 'correlation of forces' and 'correlation of power' context vis-a-vis Russia, as Australia and like-minded Asian neighbours will undoubtedly face similarly more powerful competitors into the future. As such, preparation for regional conflict requires Australian Defence practitioners to think seriously about the utility of elements of resistance strategy within regional national defence strategies.

Lessons for Australia and the Indo-Pacific

The Russo-Ukraine conflict has sparked significant policy discussion on the lessons to be drawn regarding the risk of war between China and Taiwan. Should the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) attempt to seize Taiwan, the implications for Australia will be legion. Australia would undoubtedly feel directly threatened and indirectly, would be impacted by regional considerations as Asian nations similarly respond to a new security environment. US security analysts have suggested that the development of a Taiwanese resistance concept, leveraging the European experience, could serve to deter Beijing from military aggression in a cost-effective manner.[80]

In 2017, the Taiwanese Chief of the General Staff, Admiral Lee Hsi-ming advocated a strategy termed the 'Overall Defence Concept'.[81] This concept emphasises 'Taiwan's existing natural advantages, civilian infrastructure and asymmetrical warfare capabilities' to combat 'the PLA's qualitative and quantitative advantage over the Republic of China (ROC) armed forces'.[82] Conceived as a 'porcupine doctrine', the concept involves 'guerrilla warfare at sea' to 'deter a Chinese invasion by threatening to impose major political costs'.[83] The US government seemingly supports this concept as the 'best chance for survival against Chinese invasion'.[84]

A Taiwanese resistance concept was, however, challenged during the Trump administration by ambiguity as to whether American support could be depended upon. This ambiguity forced the Taiwanese to seek military capabilities that

80 Jim Thomas, John Stillion and Iskander Rehman, *Hard ROC 2.0: Taiwan and deterrence through protraction*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 21 December 2014. https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/hard-roc-2-0-taiwan-and-deterrence-through-protraction

81 Drew Thompson, 'Hope on the horizon: Taiwan's radical new defense concept', *War on the Rocks*, 2 October 2018, accessed 24 October 2022. https://warontherocks.com/2018/10/hope-on-the-horizon-taiwans-radical-new-defense-concept/

82 Lee Hsi-ming and Eric Lee, 'Taiwan's overall defense concept, explained', *The Diplomat*, 3 November 2020, 24 October 2022. https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/taiwans-overall-defense-concept-explained/

83 Zeno Leoni, 'Taiwan: how the "porcupine doctrine" might help deter armed conflict with China', *The Conversation*, 8 October 2021, accessed 24 October 2022. https://theconversation.com/taiwan-how-the-porcupine-doctrine-might-help-deter-armed-conflict-with-china-169488

84 Raymond Kuo, 'The counter-intuitive sensibility of Taiwan's new defense strategy', *War on the Rocks,* 6 December 2021, accessed 24 October 2022. https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/the-counter-intuitive-sensibility-of-taiwans-new-defense-strategy/

could offer greater self-reliance. A weakness of a porcupine strategy is that it is reliant upon imposing costs – in time, materiel and political will – sufficient to provide time for partner mobilisation and external support. Taiwan cannot rely upon anything akin to a NATO Article V trigger, as benefits many European nations. The example of citizen resistance demonstrated by Ukraine in February-March 2022 recently led Taiwanese billionaire, Robert Tsao, to publicly bankroll the development of a three-million-strong 'people's militia'.[85] These are planning considerations to which Australia needs to be attuned.

There are three gaps that emerge regarding Australia's understanding of European resistance strategy: an irregular warfare gap, a deterrence gap and a grey-zone gap.

Irregular warfare gap

The current Russo-Ukraine conflict's roots in proxy, irregular warfare have been largely overlooked in Australian analysis.[86] The word 'resistance', used frequently by NATO and European commentators,[87] is seldom used in Australian analysis of the Russo-Ukraine conflict, or defence strategy discourse generally. Recent commentary regarding a potential Australian 'echidna strategy' seldom recognises the 'indigestible' element of deterrence that 'hedgehog' or 'porcupine' models, as utilised by the Europeans or the Taiwanese respectively, are intended to evoke.[88] To sum, due to a gap regarding irregular warfare theory,

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85 Helen Davidson, 'Taiwan's citizen warriors prepare to confront looming threat from China', *The Guardian*, 9 October 2022, accessed 26 October 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/09/taiwans-citizen-warriors-prepare-to-confront-looming-threat-from-china

86 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *The Strategist*, ASPI, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/. In the first six months of 2022, 103 articles have engaged with the topic of the Russia–Ukraine conflict at ASPI's *The Strategist*. Only three of these articles used the word 'resistance' and none examined the implications of this facet of the war; The Lowy Institute, 'The Ukraine debate: Upping the ante', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, accessed 10 June 2022, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/debate/ukraine-upping-ante. The Lowy Institute's *The Interpreter* has likewise exhibited a shallow analysis of this conflict, again, with no mention of Ukraine's resistance strategy over a similar timeframe; Australian Army, *The Cove* website, Department of Defence, accessed 10 June 2022, https://cove.army.gov.au/. On Army's own lessons-learned space, *The Cove* website, none of the articles examining lessons from the Russia–Ukraine conflict in the first six months of the conflict mentioned Ukraine's resistance strategy.

87 For example, see North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, *Statement by NATO heads of state and government*, NATO, 24 March 2022, Brussels, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_193719.htm, and Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, 'Ukraine nonviolent resistance is a brave and often effective response to aggression', *The Conversation*, 5 March 2022, accessed 6 June 2022. https://theconversation.com/ukraine-nonviolent-resistance-is-a-brave-and-often-effective-response-to-aggression-178361

88 For example, Sam Roggeveen, 'Developing a strike capability to hit China would generate dangerous uncertainty', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 20 March 2020, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/developing-a-strike-capability-to-hit-china-would-generate-dangerous-uncertainty/; Marcus Hellyer, '"Impactful projection": a porcupine with very long quills', *The Strategist,* ASPI, 18 November 2022, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/impactful-projection-a-porcupine-with-very-long-quills/; and Matthew Knott, '"We need to be a porcupine": Marles says Australia must project lethal force', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 2022. https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/we-need-to-be-a-porcupine-marles-says-australia-must-project-lethal-force-20220826-p5bd3x.html

Australia is presently mixing its metaphors between offensive and defensive strategies, and between exquisite, long-range weaponry and low-tech, 'crowdsourced' resistance.[89]

Deterrence gap

A resistance strategy is intended to contribute to deterrence by denial. Analysis of the Russo-Ukraine conflict has seldom been described in the context of the 'stability–instability paradox' – that is where irregular proxies are deliberately employed to compete while minimising the risk of nuclear escalation.[90] Further, analysis of Ukraine's resistance strategy – effectively a deterrence-by-denial posture – needs to be appreciated in the context of the ongoing proxy war in the east of Ukraine, Ukraine's efforts to deter through the communication of a resistance strategy, and more recently, the potential for proxy expansion into Moldova. Ukraine and Western nations failed to deter Putin's escalation in February 2022 and have thus far failed to compel Russia to even revert to 2021 boundaries, much less the pre-conflict (that is 2013) borders. If, as stipulated in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update,[91] Australia seeks the ability to 'deter' then an understanding of why deterrence and compellence are failing in the Russo-Ukraine conflict is of critical importance.

A grey-zone gap

Australia's limited analysis of the use of proxies as a grey-zone policy tool, one of several activities below the threshold that might trigger a conventional military response, stands in marked contrast to the breadth of the US and European discourse. This contrast is exemplified by the debate hosted by *War on the*

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89   Maj Gen. Richard Angle, Lt Col Samuel Hayes and Capt. Tommy Daniel, 'Crowdsourcing: changing how nations resist', *Military Review*, November 2022.
     https://www.armyupress.army.mil/journals/military-review/online-exclusive/2022-ole/hayes/

90   For example, David Brewster, 'Fighting a war in the nuclear shadow',' *The Strategist*, ASPI, 10 March 2022, accessed 6 June 2022. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/fighting-a-war-in-the-nuclear-shadow/; Shlomo Ben-Ami, 'Russia's nuclear threat has worked',' *The Strategist*, ASPI, 8 June 2022, accessed 10 June 2022, https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/russias-nuclear-threat-has-worked/. This further post mentioned the manner with which the West 'has been carefully calibrating its arms supply to Ukraine' in the context of Russian nuclear threats, which describes the essence of the 'stability–instability paradox', even though it does not recognise this context as such. The stability–instability paradox is a Cold War era concept argues that the costly risk of vertical escalation into major combat operations or even nuclear war will encourage competitors to engage in sub-threshold actions, such as support to insurgency.

91   Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, Australian Government,, 2020.
     https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update

Rocks[92] and analysis by the *Modern War Institute.*[93] Australia's limited public discourse exists in the context of NATO's multi-year operational support effort in helping to characterise hybrid and grey-zone threats while implementing civilian resistance strategy in the Baltic states and Ukraine.[94] The growing dialogue in the US regarding resistance strategy in a Taiwanese context is further evidence of this gap.

So what?

As lessons are derived from the Russia–Ukraine conflict and applied to new contexts – such as the tensions between China and Taiwan – an understanding of Ukraine's strategy in its political context is essential. Unlike the US and some of its European counterparts, Australia has no specific military doctrine that deals with resistance as an operating concept, and little pertaining to irregular warfare writ large. Indeed, the last time an Australian defence strategy document referred to the way major powers have pursued their ends through support to irregular (or non-state) actors was in 1976.[95] The terms 'resistance' and 'irregular warfare' simply do not appear, and seemingly nor does any publicly available strategic examination of such phenomenon.

The implications for Australia are straightforward. Professional military education (PME) pertaining to irregular warfare, which incorporates an understanding of international views of resistance strategy, is now essential to combat grey-zone concepts and to develop an understanding of the risks of military escalation in hybrid conflicts. This would also develop an appropriate understanding of the

92 War on the Rocks, 'Understanding the Russo-Ukrainian War: A Guide from War on the Rocks', *War on the Rocks*, accessed 10 June 2022,
https://warontherocks.com/understanding-the-russo-ukrainian-war-a-guide-from-war-on-the-rocks/.
Of note, is that seven articles in this guide specifically addressed Ukraine's resistance strategy, perhaps the most notable being by Brian Petit written *before* the Russian escalation. Brian Petit, 'Can Ukrainian resistance foil a Russian victory, *War on the Rocks*, 18 February 2022, accessed 10 June 2022. https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/can-ukrainian-resistance-foil-a-russian-victory/

93 Danny Moriarty, 'Pockets of sunflower seeds: civil resistance in Ukraine', *Modern War Institute* website, 13 June 2022, accessed 15 June 2022,
https://mwi.usma.edu/pockets-of-sunflower-seeds-civil-resistance-in-ukraine/; Irregular Warfare Initiative, *On resistance* [video file].

94 Anika Binnendijk and Marta Kepe, *Civilian-based resistance in the Baltic states: historical precedents and current capabilities*, RAND, Santa Monica CA, 2021; Flanagan et al., *Deterring Russian aggression in the Baltic states through resilience and resistances*; Henrik Praks, *Hybrid or not: deterring and defeating Russia's ways of warfare in the Baltics – the case of Estonia*, Research Paper, NATO Defence College, Rome, December 2015.

95 Stephan Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*, Department of Defence, Canberra ACT, 2009. This conclusion has been reached through examination of Australian military strategy documents in *A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945*.

strategies that are being adopted by allies, partners and peers.[96] Addressing this PME gap will drive public discourse, which in turn can influence Australian policy deliberations – without mixing metaphors.

Despite Ukraine's evident successes in resisting the Russian advance upon Kyiv, its strategy of resistance is not a panacea for all nations facing the threat of occupation by a militarily superior nation. Taiwan is not Ukraine, nor Lithuania or Singapore. We must understand the nuance inherent in circumstances, created by formal alliances (NATO), strategic depth (or the absence thereof) and economic interdependencies. Many issues require further study. For example, how is success in resistance to be measured, particularly in peacetime? When does a nation know it's prepared to resist? How is the efficacy of deterrence action to be measured? How can a nation gauge whether its national interests overlap with those of the external supporting actor?

Conclusion

> [W]e are invincible because we have our dignity. Ukrainians understand a simple truth: that a life without freedom is no life at all. We know that to lose our freedom would be to lose our honour… freedom is not about having unshackled hands. Freedom is about having unshackled minds.
>
> Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky
>
> Kyiv, 21 November 2021.[97]

An incomplete understanding of the characteristics of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine still plagues Australian strategic discourse. This is despite the strategic signalling employed by Ukraine pre- and post-24 February 2022; Ukraine communicated that it would resist.[98] This is not surprising. Australia has a

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96   Ministry of Defence Singapore, *Total Defence*, Government of Singapore, accessed 24 October 2022, accessed 24 October 2022. https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/defence-matters/defence-topic/defence-topic-detail/total-defence Notably, Singapore has held a 'poisoned shrimp' strategy of total defence since 1984, which envisages 'every Singaporean playing a part, individually and collectively, to build a strong, secure and cohesive nation'. This concept is now quite mature, empowered with a website that communicates total defence concepts to its people. The terminology of 'poisoned shrimp' comes from then Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew forecasting in 1966 Singapore's future in crowded 'Asian waters' with much more powerful neighbours. Lee Kuan Yew, *Big and small fishes in Asian waters*, Speech at the Democratic Socialist Club, University of Singapore, National Archives of Singapore, 15 June 1966. https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/lky19660615.pdf

97   Volodymyr Zelensky, *A Message from Ukraine: Speeches, 2019–2022*, Crown, New York, 2022, pp 32–33.

98   Interpreting such communication, approximately one-week pre-escalation, former-US Special Forces officer Brian Petit stated: 'If Russia launches a fresh invasion, Ukraine will surely seek to fall back on such a strategy [of partisan warfare through a civil resistance] … Kyiv's resistance plans – which have been carefully and loudly choreographed – are a key part of its hopes to deter Russia'. Brian S Petit, 'Can Ukrainian resistance foil a Russian victory?' *War on the Rocks*, 18 February 2022, accessed 1 February 2023. https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/can-ukrainian-resistance-foil-a-russian-victory/,

limited dialogue pertaining to irregular warfare.[99] Australian strategists are presently ill-supported with doctrine that addresses the character of Ukraine's (and others') model of resistance. In what has been termed, the 'first TikTok war',[100] strategies of resistance or total defence evidence a broader long-term trend, the democratisation of warfare in response to grey-zone actions by autocratic regimes.

Nations seeking to emulate the recent actions of Ukraine must remember it took time, legislation and political will to build the underground networks that would enable Ukrainian guerrilla warfare.[101] Yet, such nuance is seemingly missed in Australia's analysis of Ukraine's conflict. In February 2022, there was no question as to 'whether Russia would invade' – it already had – in 2014. Ukraine has been at war for over eight years and over that time has evolved a resistance strategy concurrent to fighting a prolonged proxy, irregular conflict with Russia.

The internationalisation of the Russo-Ukraine conflict carries important implications for Australian foreign and defence policy. While Russia's annexation of Crimea and its seizure of the Donbass in 2014 elicited Western condemnation and international sanctions, the West's attention soon shifted as a 'frozen conflict' developed in the Donbas.[102] Putin's escalation in 2022 has created grave economic, social and political costs to Russia.[103] It would not be surprising if Xi Jinping has learnt from the Russo-Ukraine conflict that the risks of escalation into major conventional operations outweigh the tediousness of incremental gains and long timeframes associated with grey-zone activities. The likelihood that the Chinese Communist Party will continue to use 'sub-threshold' or 'liminal' methods,[104] *is increased* by the Russo-Ukraine experience, due to the risk of a ruinous international backlash to blatant military aggression.

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99 This statement builds upon my earlier work in generating a 'first step' in addressing this limited analysis. *A framework for irregular warfare*, Australian Army Research Centre, 2021, accessed 4 June 2022. https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/library/occasional-papers/framework-irregular-warfare

100 Kyle Chayka, 'Watching the world's "first Tiktok war"', *The New Yorker*, 3 March 2022, accessed 4 June 2022. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/watching-the-worlds-first-tiktok-war

101 Sandor Fabian, 'Building and enabling urban resistance networks in small countries – a crucial role for US Special Forces in great power competition', *Small Wars Journal*, 11 April 2021, accessed 4 June 2022. https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/building-and-enabling-urban-resistance-networks-small-countries-crucial-role-us-special

102 Jacub Lachert, *Post-Soviet frozen conflicts: a challenge for European security* [PDF], Warsaw Institute, 14 March 2019. https://warsawinstitute.org/post-soviet-frozen-conflicts-challenge-european-security/

103 David H Ucko and Thomas A Marks, *Crafting Strategy for Irregular Warfare: A Framework for Analysis and Action*, 2nd edn, National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 2022, p 3. This point is similarly made by David Ucko and Thomas Marks: it was precisely when Russia abandoned this [irregular warfare] playbook, through its conventional invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, that it succeeded in mobilising significant local and global resistance, greatly complicating its military and political effort.

104 David Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes.*

Australian discourse will benefit from a broader appreciation of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict by noting national resistance has proven to be an effective strategy.[105] Australian support to resistance concepts, should a resistance strategy be adopted by vulnerable partners in the Indo-Pacific, may therefore present as an asymmetric strategic option to enhance Australia's national security and foreign policies.

Consideration of such an option must note, however, that resistance strategy operates within the broader field of irregular warfare; we must first understand what motivates an individual to fight, and how these citizen-soldiers are sustained while avoiding autocratic repression. With such insight, a greater range of options might be opened to the strategist and policymaker. Support to resistance might then prove to be a viable policy option for how Australia might choose to compete against more powerful nations.

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105 Spencer Meredith, 'The key to blunting Russia's strategic victory in Ukraine and beyond? Irregular Warfare', *Modern War Institute website*, 19 February 2022, accessed 4 June 2022.
https://mwi.usma.edu/the-key-to-blunting-russias-strategic-victory-in-ukraine-and-beyond-irregular-warfare/

Sovereign capability: made in Australia or product of Australia?

Rachael Baker

Introduction

> We have examined where we are strong and where we are not, where we may succeed and where we may not. Now it is time to take longer strides … I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out… No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.
>
> <div align="right">John F Kennedy[1]</div>

When pursuing any concept into reality framing matters, words matter, definitions matter.

The Australian Government has stated it is committed to achieving maximum participation of local industry in Defence acquisition and sustainment. Unfortunately, legislative or principles frameworks have not reflected this commitment.

Currently, the definition of 'sovereign capability' is arguably disparate and imprecisely applied between government agencies and within the industrial sectors. This has led to confusing and inefficient approaches to the development and implementation of the concept. There is no extant detailed framing of what constitutes local industrial participation nor the establishment of a process

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1   John F Kennedy, Excerpt from President John F Kennedy's Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs, presented 25 May 1961, John F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, DOI: JFKPOF-034-030-p0001 https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/034/JFKPOF-034-030

for evaluation or enforcement of participation. [2] Indeed, there is an enduring lack of consensus between government and industry about what constitutes 'involvement', 'content', and 'participation'.[3] Moreover, the lack of definition as to what constitutes an 'Australian company' raises questions concerning whether a locally based subsidiary of an internationally founded company meets any agreed standard for an 'Australian company'. When questions such as these arise, employing inferences that suit certain needs become an easy default.

This paper articulates the framing and definitional challenges that undermine Defence's sovereign industrial capability intent, guiding the framing to produce the outcomes directed by government. Not unlike JFK's Moonshot speech, this paper offers an opportunity to reframe the meaning and intent of sovereign capability so that Defence can acquire and meet preparedness requirements necessary to defend Australia and our national interests. If Australia is to develop an effective and successful sovereign capability for Defence, it is critical to understand what Australia is seeking to achieve, to articulate the industrial challenges involved, and to make the implicit assumptions explicit. Framing theory demonstrates that the way any issue is defined significantly impacts the response taken and the outcome achieved. As such, we need to discuss the matter of what 'sovereign capability' means in practice and why implementing this concept requires greater rigour and, importantly, a sense of urgency. This must begin by refocusing the current frame; underpinning that framing with an agreed definition of what sovereign capability means in practice, and implementing it through a robust principles framework.

Framing matters

A great power conflict in Australia's region is conceivable.[4] The threat of conflict is real. Australian Government strategic documents and white papers, supported by intelligence, academic analysis and think tanks,[5] acknowledge the geopolitical environment is evolving and increasingly uncertain.[6] Regrettably, Australia's

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2   Senate Economics References Committee of the 44th Parliament of Australia (SERC 44), *Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry, executive summary*, Australian Government, 28 June 2018, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Navalshipbuilding45th/Report

3   SERC 44, *Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry, executive summary*.

4   Oriana Skylar Mastro, *Military confrontation in the South China Sea: contingency planning memorandum no.36*, Centre for Preventative Action, Council on Foreign Relations, 21 May 2020. https://www.cfr.org/report/military-confrontation-south-china-sea

5   Peter Jennings and Brendan Nicholson, 'Strategic update shows shift in Australia's defence outlook in uncertain times', *The Strategist,* ASPI, 1 July 2020.

6   Department of Defence, 2016 Defence White Paper, Australian Government, 2016; Department of Defence, 2020 Defence Strategic Update, Australian Government, 2020; Department of Defence, 2020 Force Structure Plan, Australian Government, 2020.
    Available from https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-white-paper

current force structure is not at a standard resilient to challenges stemming from a regional great power conflict.[7] As such, Defence risks exacerbating the insecurity of priority supply chains. This understanding may have played a part in initiating the sovereign-capability concept, but the implementation has not been forthcoming. Australia has long had a culture of complacency. Potentially, the delays seen in implementation have been due to a misaligned framing of the sovereign-capability concept. However, the fragility of our supply chains is now becoming increasingly obvious and potentially detrimental to Australia's national security. Since 2020, the robustness and resilience of industry supply chains have been inadvertently, but perhaps fortuitously, put to the test during the pandemic; demonstrating gaps in Australia's capacity to have uninterrupted access to supplies. It has provided valuable lessons and insights, highlighting insecurities in the supply chain, and provided us with the opportunity to address this challenge during peacetime. Over the past year, the world has also witnessed Ukraine's struggle against a great power. The world acknowledges that Ukraine can defend itself only as long as defensive partners continue to provide assistance through open and uninterrupted supply chains. Australia cannot afford to find itself in a similar predicament. A self-reliant Australian Defence Force (ADF) ultimately enhances Australia's national security. Yet, the pursuit of a true sovereign capability has lacked a framing that engenders urgency.

Australia is not alone in framing and definitional challenges when addressing capability priorities. In 1994, the United States undertook an assessment of national security risks to identify where they were dependent or over-reliant on foreign military industrial bases.[8] By identifying disparate understandings, analysing the implications of foreign-sourced military goods required an initial determination of the definition of 'foreign sourced'. The assessments considered both the criticality of the item or technology and the potential for disruption of supply when needed. Assessing the risk required weighing the impact of various factors, both individually and together.[9] The report noted the risk assessment outcomes varied significantly depending upon whether a short-term or long-term perspective was taken. That is, short to medium-term considerations of observable threats may realise minimal disruptions. However, the report acknowledged in the event of a larger threat or conflict in the future, the extent to which domestic infrastructure, technology and expertise had been lost could influence significantly the readiness of a defence

7   Hugh White, 'Australia's seaborne trade: essential but undefendable – recognising the limits to Australia's military potential', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 27 August 2021.

8   United States Department of Defense (USDOD), *Industrial base: assessing the risk of DoD's foreign dependence*, Commanders in Chief Critical Items List, 1994. op.cit. Available from US Government Accountability Office, https://www.gao.gov/products/nsiad-94-104

9   USDOD, *Industrial Base.*

capability.[10] Long-term analysis also noted significant uncertainty increased over time regarding political alliances and how they may compromise capabilities that have a 20-to-40-year life of type.

Although now quite dated, the US report recommended a range of policy options that remain relevant for Australia's current strategic needs. The latter policy options, geared towards development of a sovereign industrial base, included dual-use production options, stressing the importance of a flexible industrial base that could scale up from commercial to military production when required.[11] This is where Australia could redirect the framing of the sovereign-capability challenge.

Enhancing Australia's self-reliance through a strong, local defence industrial base is vital to securing the ability to maintain, sustain and upgrade Australia's defence capabilities. Australia already demonstrates excellent sovereign-capability standards in agricultural, mining and health industries. It is vital Australia achieves similar standards in the defence industry sector as well.

Current framing of sovereign capability acknowledges international supply-chain sources do not provide the guaranteed availability, security or warfighting advantages required by the ADF.[12] Two great powers vie for sea lines of communication (SLOC) control and maritime hegemony within Australia's regional interests.[13] Even if Australia's defence partners retain maritime hegemony, there is no guarantee of protected access to SLOCs and maritime chokepoints during a conflict.[14] Therefore, retaining any form of offshore support requirement means significantly compromising Australia's defence capability should interruption or denial of access to SLOC occur. For example, currently the Australian Collins Class submarines employ the American Mark 48 heavyweight torpedo. In the event of conflict within Australia's region access to resupply risks interruption, dependent upon the safety of SLOC and the willingness and free ability of our allies to navigate any contested sea-lane passages.[15] As such, it is a possibility that the capability afforded by the Collins Class could be significantly compromised when it is potentially of greatest need. Therefore, Australia's dependence on

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10   USDOD, *Industrial Base.*

11   USDOD, *Industrial Base.*

12   SERC 44, 'An Australian naval shipbuilding capability', in Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry, ch 5, Parliament of Australia, 28 June 2018.
     https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Navalshipbuilding45th

13   Jeffrey Becker, *China maritime report no 11: securing China's lifelines across the Indian Ocean*, CMSI China Maritime Reports, no. 11, December 2020. https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cmsi-maritime-reports/11/

14   Becker, *China maritime report no. 11.*

15   Becker, *China maritime report no. 11'.*

internationally sourced capability to support Defence's sovereign strategic need places Australia at the whim of international partners, their interests and access to contested maritime chokepoints.

Importantly, any tangible move to self-reliance need not be to the detriment of Australia's regional defence partnerships. This framing is unhelpful, encourages risk-adverse tendencies and stifles progress. Indeed, framing could focus on the opportunity to explore and expand defence ties with traditional and non-traditional partners. Key influential initiatives that draw on Australia's capacity to share and export sovereign defence capability would increase Australia's regional influence and help to achieve the shape, deter, respond strategic objectives. The establishment and development of a resilient sovereign defence industrial base must, however, begin with a solid and agreed definition supported by a principles framework.

As noted above, in both US and Australian contexts, imprecise use of the term sovereign capability has robbed it of true meaning. This has stimulated misunderstanding and misinterpretation in practice. If it is unclear what sovereign capability means through framing and definition, there is a real chance of missing opportunities to grasp the importance and benefits of this initiative.

Words matter

Words matter and, by default, so do definitions. The *Defence Industrial Capability Plan* defines 'sovereignty' as the ability to employ Defence capability or force when and where required to produce the desired military effect.[16] Interestingly, this definition explicitly notes that this does not necessarily mean the capability must be designed, developed or maintained within Australia, rather only that Defence have 'access to' or 'control over' the skills, technology, intellectual property, resources and infrastructure as and when required.[17] While accepting in principle there remains a requirement for increasing national agency, Defence's definition disconcertingly contradicts industry's broader understanding of similar concepts. In this context, the definition has lost any true meaning in practice.

Outside of Defence, industry and government agreed definitions validating sovereignty are quite familiar. The definition of 'Australian Made', a campaign conceptualised in 1999, has evolved and broadened the definitional base to

16   Department of Defence, *2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan*, Australian Government, 2018, p 17.
17   Department of Defence, *2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan*, p 17.

consider but differentiate it from the term 'Product of Australia'.[18] 'Australian Made' confirms the product in question has undergone its last substantial transformation process within Australia.[19] 'Product of Australia', however, goes further, validating all of the product's significant ingredients or parts not only come from Australia but also that all or nearly all manufacturing or processing has occurred in Australia. [20] Where capability projects within Defence have arguably interpreted and implemented the former in order to meet mandatory minimum Australian industry content requirements, the concept of sovereign capability, and ensuring the security of supply chains when most in need, should arguably employ the latter. The challenge is getting from a status of 'Australian Made' to 'Product of Australia' in order to realise true 'sovereign capability'. This is why agreed definitions matter. That is, not just what words are used but how they are used and in what context. The language and framing of any true meaning of sovereign capability will determine the approach to industry participation and Australian industry resilience in delivering secure supply chains, as and when required. This is especially important when access to or control over supply chains may face unprecedented interruption, such as during times of heightened regional tensions or even conflict.

In Defence, sovereign access to or control over critical supply chains would ensure the ADF is fit for purpose and well positioned to achieve the strategic objectives outlined in the *2020 Defence Strategic Update.*[21] Complimentary to this, the *2020 Force Structure Plan* identified a range of priority capabilities that would be required to achieve the shape, deter and respond strategic objectives.[22] However, 'access to' and 'control over' have different meanings with potential for inferred application. Again, words matter. What enables this inference is the lack of a reporting and accountability principles framework.

Parliamentary reports have highlighted the extent of inconsistent and disparate definitions of sovereign capability.[23] Where industry refers to notions of 'Australian Made' or 'Product of Australia' in initially conceptualising sovereign capability, government often defaults to a form of securitisation. To illustrate, advocacy

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18 L Worral, H Gamble, J Spoehr and A-L Hordacre, *Australian sovereign capability and supply chain resilience – perspective and options* [PDF], Australian Industrial Transformation Institute, Flinders University, August 2021, p 75. https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/research/aiti/Australian_sovereign_capability_and_supply_chain_resilience.pdf

19 Australian Made Campaign, *The Australian Made, Australian Grown logo*, accessed 19 May 2023. https://australianmade.com.au/why-buy-australian-made/about-the-logo/

20 Australian Made Campaign, *The Australian Made Australian Grown logo*.

21 Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update.*

22 Department of Defence, *2020 Force Structure Plan*.

23 Worral et.al., *Australian sovereign capability and supply chain resilience*, p 29.

for development of surface ships and submarine programs through a national security lens has advanced the concept of sovereign capability in the continuous shipbuilding program.[24] This national security perspective has effectively securitised the definition – and therefore the use of the sovereign-capability concept – framing it as essential. Yet neither approach seems to provide tangible and actionable detail to a sufficient level enabling the mandating, development, and assessment of a resilient and self-reliant defence industrial base.

The Australian Government stated it was committed to achieving maximum participation of local industry. Unfortunately, legislative or principles frameworks have not reflected this commitment. Without an extant detailed framing of what constitutes local industrial participation, nor the establishment for evaluation or enforcement of participation, an enduring lack of consensus between government and industry about what constitutes 'involvement', 'content', and 'participation' remains. Employing inferences about what constitutes an 'Australian company' (domestically founded or locally based subsidiary of an internationally founded company) becomes an easy default suited to individual needs. To illustrate, recent Defence projects have assessed Australian Industry Capability against a local assembly criterion, despite acknowledging the components are internationally manufactured.[25] This has conflated sovereign capability with Australian labour when assessing Australian industry content.[26] Current literature supports this argument.[27]

Indeed, relevant studies suggest approaches to industry participation exhibit a misguided focus on the level of contractual percentage rather than a purposeful future-led focus on what Australia needs to manufacture to ensure a high degree of self-reliance.[28] Moreover, the *2019 Defence Policy for Industry Participation* falls short in providing a comprehensive framework that stipulates an agreed definitional understanding of Australian involvement and content. The overarching concern in developing the industry is where creation of the technology occurs, where the skills and the intellectual property reside, where the creation and sustainment of jobs occur, and who ultimately receives the investment.[29] Greater

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24 SERC 44, *Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry, executive summary*, 2018.

25 SERC 44, *Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry,* ch 5

26 K Ziesing, 'Putting the 'C' in AIC', *Australian Defence Magazine, 2017.*

27 USDOD, *Industrial base*; Worral et.al., *Australian sovereign capability and supply chain resilience*; Hamish Gamble, Giselle Rampersad, John Spoehr and Ann-Louise Hordacre, *Exploring Australian sovereign capability to scale up in critical times*, Australian Army Research Report no.1, Australian Army Research Centre, 2020. https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/library/research-reports/exploring-australian-sovereign-capability-scale-critical-times

28 Worral et.al., *Australian sovereign capability and supply chain resilience*, p v.

29 Worral et.al., *Australian sovereign capability and supply chain resilience*, p 29.

work is required to define not only the concept of sovereign capability but also to clarify the meaning of such concepts as an 'Australian company'. The provision of a tangible framing will enable an actionable and pragmatic approach towards realising a true sovereign industrial capability.

As such, Defence needs a roadmap demonstrating a clear intent that significantly invests in developing a sovereign defence industrial base, founded upon an agreed definition of the concept and implemented through a principles framework. The principles framework should mandate when and how to achieve industry involvement, how to measure and enforce any potential mandates, and what penalties might exist for non-compliance.[30] For Australia, and Defence, realising sovereign capability means realising a resilient industrial base that is Australian owned and tangibly controlled by Australian interests. As a smaller country, this would entail the need to have an integrated sovereign industrial base, delivering at scale across domains. That is, a sovereign capability where skills, technology and intellectual property can apply to multiple end uses at both the local and national level. Opportunity extends further through exploring export prospects for said capability towards achieving regional influence agency. Successfully realising sovereign capability therefore involves not just a net-zero reliance on foreign-owned priority supply chains, but also entails having a strong and sustainable small and medium enterprise base at the local as well as national level, with the added potential for global expansion.

Defining defence industry

The British Defence Industry Policy defines UK defence industry 'in terms of where the technology is created, where the skills and the intellectual property reside, where jobs are created and sustained, and where the investment is made'.[31] Originally, Australia simply required an Australian Business Number. The *2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan* is a little less reassuring, [32] defining Australia's Defence Industry as consisting of 'large global Defence companies (primes), their major subcontractors (sub-primes), and a large and wide base of small to medium enterprises (SMEs)'. The Plan does not specifically mandate any domestic production or intellectual property requirements, although it encourages Australian leadership influence.[33] Such an approach is not conducive

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30 SERC 44, *Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry*, ch 5.

31 United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Defence industrial strategy – Defence white paper* [PDF], December 2005, p 16. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272203/6697.pdf

32 Department of Defence, *2018 Defence Industrial Capability Plan*, p 123.

33 Graeme Dunk, 'Sovereignty is the key to defence industry policy', *The Strategist*, ASPI, 21 June 2018. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/sovereignty-is-the-key-to-defence-industry-policy/

to building the confidence in industry to grow a domestic industrial sovereign-capability base.

Undeniably, many Australian SMEs are simply not large enough to single-handedly provide Defence with the capability it requires. Being a small country, there is a need to have an integrated industry base within Australia. Australia could benefit from more strategically driving integrated partnerships between Australian primes, SMEs and universities, capitalising on the advantages of such collaboration. To achieve this, Australia needs to signal to domestic SMEs, a level of commitment that will enable them to develop a globally competitive capability edge through an integrated Australian-led partnership. Prioritising strategic investment in Australian industry ensures that Australian SMEs have the means to scale up from commercial to military should the need arise and to make more informed, independent decisions on capability earlier. To this end, Australian defence industry needs the defining guidance to meet the demands of Defence capability requirements.

A clearly understood, agreed and tangible definition and principles framework for Australian sovereign capability creates a positive flow-on effect, encouraging involvement of more Australian SMEs. This requires definitions also include a focus on identifying and defining the political intent of sovereign capability by translating political will into legislation. In this context, Australian industry could benefit from a futures analysis, top-down review of supply-chain resilience, not unlike the US report mentioned earlier and more recently President Biden's 2021 *Executive Order 14017*.[34] Understanding supply-chain resilience, supported by robust mechanisms to implement and grow domestic alternatives, is critical if there is a true political intent to implement true sovereign capability in Australia. Such willingness to invest in increased sovereign capability will be evident in retaining a significant share of billion-dollar contracts onshore in strategic areas. The *Qantas Sales Act of 1992* demonstrated such political will,[35] and the defence industry sector needs a demonstration of the same appreciation today.

When profits remain onshore, subsequently enabling domestic reinvestment, investing in Australian industry has positive economic benefits, driving critical future capability requirements. A demonstrated and proven political intent to invest in Australian industry incentivises startup companies and collaborative partnerships. Confidence through a clearly defined term, supported by a robust

34 Executive Office of the President, *Executive Order 14017 of February 24, 2021 – America's Supply Chains*, Federal Register, National Archives.
https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/03/01/2021-04280/americas-supply-chains

35 Australian Government, *The Qantas Sale ACT 1992*, Federal Register of Legislation.
https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00080

framework, also encourages companies' willingness and ability to invest part of their revenue into universities and research sectors, building on innovative, local talent and translating research into integrated commercial outcomes. However, this confidence relies heavily on the *intent* of true sovereign capability being reflected in the *practice* of true sovereign capability.

Conclusion

'If a problem is cast too narrowly ergo narrow options and narrow outcomes will ensure'.[36]

Successfully realising a resilient Defence sovereign industrial capability requires greater understanding of the impediments, mindsets, constructs and assumptions that enable systemic complacency in Australian industry participation. It is imperative to address the current disconnect between government commitment, industry participation and the tangible, accountable, actionable plans supported by legislated principle frameworks. Successfully implementing effective and long-lasting improvements to Australia's industrial base can occur, and it is essential to ensure an enduring Defence capability that it does. Improving the framing, definition and understanding of this challenge will enable vigorous options with critical implementation strategies.

The first challenge will be arriving at an agreed definition across government and industry on the concept of sovereign capability. The pervasive lack of an agreed definition and supporting principle frameworks undermines attempts at achieving a resilient and self-reliant industrial base with any sense of urgency. Sovereign capability is arguably a 'wicked problem' in and of itself with no single or natural endpoint.

Notwithstanding, there is value in developing a shared understanding through a sovereign capability definitional foundation followed by a principle's framework. This framework can expand on existing definitional concepts for an Australian owned and tangibly controlled manufacturing supply chain that is ready and scalable for perceived contingencies at critical times. A principles framework should also provide detail on when and how to achieve industry involvement and relevant mandates, how to measure and enforce any potential mandates, and what penalties might exist for non-compliance.[37]

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36   Jason Thomas, 'What is in a name: discarding the grand strategy debate and seeking a new approach', *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies*, 2020, 2(2):247–257.

37   SERC 44, *Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry*, ch 5.

With this sound foundation, realising the concept of sovereign capability need not be an elusive one. It need only be a capable and scalable system of high operational capability, independently sustaining essential Australian military operations for a sustained period in peace or war. Framed in this way, Australia is equipped with a pragmatic strategic approach to the development of an independent, yet enduring defence industrial base. Australia's mission is not about landing on the Moon. Yet the sovereign-capability challenge is indeed hard and expensive. Notwithstanding, it is one Australia must be willing to accept, be unwilling to postpone and urgently accomplish. Australia must go boldly where it has not gone before. This is Australia's 'Moonshot' opportunity.

Interview

The Australian Command and Staff College writes doctrine: the case of LWD 3-0-1 *Counterinsurgency*, 2008–09

Michael Evans with Alex Waterman and James Worrall

Introduction

In August 2020, Dr Alex Waterman (then of the University of Leeds)[1] interviewed Professor Michael Evans, the General Sir Francis Hassett Chair of Military Studies at the Australian Defence College, on the writing of Australian counterinsurgency doctrine in 2008–09. The aim was to inject Australian perspectives into a comparative project being led by Associate Professor James Worrall and Dr Alex Waterman, entitled *Dancing with devils: how do militaries integrate understandings of rebels and militias into counterinsurgency doctrines*, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation in Germany.[2] The project is ongoing in 2023, but the *AJDSS* is publishing the interview with Professor Evans in its entirety for the first time.

Framing the Australian context: Alex Waterman and James Worrall

In 2019, we secured funding from the Gerda Henkel Foundation to explore a problem we felt was absent from our understanding of counterinsurgency, and specifically of counterinsurgency doctrine. Clearly, doctrine is shaped by influences ranging from national politics, the influence of different personalities, the organisational culture of the military (and the ministry), as well external stimuli, such as the character of the international system and type of possible future battlefield. However, when thinking about counterinsurgency doctrine,

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1   As of July 2021, Dr Alex Waterman has been based at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg.

2   Gerda Henkel, Grant No. AZ 12/KF/19 under the Special Programme on Security, Society and the State.

much of the debate on doctrine writing has centred around the uniqueness of the 'insurgent style of warfare' and the distinction between counterinsurgency (COIN) and irregular warfare,[3] and indeed, counterterrorism, especially during the 'Global War on Terror'.

Where was the enemy in all of this? There are clear indications that those grappling with insurgencies do actively think about the form(s) of the insurgencies they face and have sought to codify this knowledge – think for example of David Kilcullen's remarks on the differences between classical revolutionary movements and contemporary, globalised insurgencies in *Counter-insurgency redux.*[4] These attempts are often surprisingly limited both in scope and scale. We found that there have been no efforts to systematically study how militaries go about generating, codifying and integrating knowledge of insurgent organisations or of how they embed this knowledge into doctrine-writing processes.

Thus, through document analysis and especially interviews, such as that below, our project interrogates both the processes and influences shaping how both rebels and militias are written into doctrinal manuals. The project's scope is both holistic and comparative. It deliberately seeks to test the supposed binaries between the West and 'the rest', comparing Nigerian, Indian, Iraqi and Omani, as well as Australian, American, British, Dutch, French and NATO-level experiences in doctrinal development.

The recent, often frantic, experiences of doctrine writing during the height of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan offer an important insight into the challenges of integrating knowledge of insurgents into doctrine. During these conflicts, Australian and other allied practitioners were actively grappling with the changing character of insurgency; clearly, the insurgents of Uruzgan no longer resembled those so extensively described in pamphlets such as *The Enemy* (1970).[5] A common thread across the doctrine-writing processes we have examined to date, of course, has been that the nature of insurgencies endures, while its character evolves over time. Yet at the same time, extensive debates often played out during the drafting of these manuals. Was Mao really dead?[6] Should we still think about insurgent organisations through the lens of three-step warfare, political cadres, a mass base and other Maoist-style organisational

3   Keith Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps' Development Of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915–1940*, Routledge, London, 2001, p 236.

4   David Kilcullen, 'Counter-insurgency redux', *Survival*, 48(4): 111–130.
     https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330601062790

5   Australian Army, *The Enemy*, prepared and issued under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Australian Army, Canberra, 1970.

6   Project Interview with Dr Conrad Crane, US Army War College, 2020.

components?[7] Did Bin Laden read Mao's theory of protracted popular warfare, after all? Or did the increasingly networked structures, new fundamentalist ideologies or composite coalitions of disparate interests within armed groups in Iraq and Afghanistan change the way we needed to understand *and deal* with these groups? Importantly, what did these insights mean for military organisations' accumulated knowledge from historical counterinsurgencies?

We are interested in how these debates and influences intersect with the politics and process of writing doctrine. We want to know how lessons from the field were being fed up to intersect with conceptual understandings of insurgency; how different stakeholders thought about insurgent opponents and how they tried to bring these perspectives to the doctrine-writing table; and how lead writers adjudicated debates, coalesced information and condensed it into doctrine. Through this comparative project, we aim to distil lessons learned both for 'writing the enemy' into COIN doctrine specifically, as well as to generate lessons learned for doctrine writing more broadly.

In terms of scale, the Australian experience of drafting LWD 3-0-1 throughout 2007–2009 sits somewhere between the 'industrial'-scale, committee-based approach to writing of the US Army and Marine Corps joint doctrine FM 3-24 (2006) and the 'handcrafted' approach 'staffed by two officers and a couple of bulldogs' in the British case.[8] By analysing the debates, adjudications and drafting decisions across the entirety of the process, from the deadlock of 2007 to final publication in 2009, we think the Australian case – placed in wider comparative context – has a great deal to offer to those studying the art of doctrine writing. Our interview with Professor Evans, published in full below, allows us to peer into some of the thought processes taking place in the engine room of doctrine writing, and we thank him for allowing us to publish it.[9]

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7   John MacKinley, *The Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to Bin Laden*, Hurst, London, 2009.

8   Conrad Crane, *Cassandra in Oz: Counterinsurgency and Future War*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2016, p 53.

9   We have very lightly edited the text of the interview for clarity and to remove excess repetitions, as well as adding explanations where required and numerous references.

Interview transcript

Introductory – phases of development

> ### Question 1:
> What were the key phases of the doctrine's development?

The Australian Army had not seriously considered counterinsurgency doctrinally since its involvement in South Vietnam between 1963 and 1973. For over a quarter of a century after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, the Army focused on the defence of the northern continent in its Defence of Australia doctrine. There was little interest in counterinsurgency, which many in the Army saw as a Cold War phenomenon.

As a result, the land force was unprepared for twenty-first-century counter-insurgency (COIN) operations against the Taliban and other Afghan armed groups in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.[10]

Following the 2006 publication of the US Army and US Marine Corps FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, the Chief of the Army (CA), Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, was determined to create a new Australian COIN manual that upheld Australia's own heritage and experience of irregular warfare, while capturing the new characteristics of insurgency in a globalised world. As he put it, 'We must have something relevant to teach'. He was fond of reminding his staff officers of General William C. Westmoreland's flattering statement:

> Aside from American soldiers, the Australians were the most thoroughly professional foreign force serving in Vietnam. Small in numbers and well-trained, particularly in anti-guerrilla warfare, the

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10 For specific work on the Australian presence in Uruzgan see: William Maley, 'PRT Activity in Afghanistan: The Australian Experience', in Nik Hynek and Péter Marton (eds), *Statebuilding in Afghanistan*, Routledge, London, 2011; Raspal Khosa, *Australia's commitment in Afghanistan: moving to a more comprehensive approach*, Policy Analysis no. 67, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 31 August 2010, https://www.aspi.org.au/report/australias-commitment-afghanistan-moving-more-comprehensive-approach; Matthew Jackson and Stuart Gordon, 'The provincial reconstruction teams and their part in 'stabilisation': what's in a name?', *Australian Army Journal*, 2008, 5(3):173–185; Peter Olsthoorn, Myriame Bollen, Ernst Lobbezoo and Sebastiaan Rietjens, 'The comprehensive approach and the problem of exiting civil–military cooperation: lessons from Uruzgan', in Jorg Noll, Daan Wollenberg, Frans Osinga, Georg Frerks and Irene Kemenade (eds), *Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies – The Dilemma of Leaving: Political and Military Exit Strategies* 2015, TMC Asser Press, The Hague, 2016, pp pp 247–270; Raspal Khosa, 'Playing three dimensional chess: Australia's civil–military commitment in Afghanistan', in William Maley and Susanne Schmeidl (eds), *Reconstructing Afghanistan: Civil–Military Experiences in Comparative Perspective*, Routledge, London, 2014, pp 80–97; Gareth Rice, 'What did we learn from the war in Afghanistan?', *Australian Army Journal*, 2014, 11(1):6–20; Rhys Crawley, 'Australia's lessons', *Parameters*, 2019, 49(4); Mick Ryan, 'The other side of the COIN: reconstruction operations in Southern Afghanistan', *Australian Army Journal*, 2012, 9(2):125–143.

> Australian Army was much like the post-Versailles German Army in which even men in the ranks might have been leaders in some less capable force.[11]

In 2007, General Leahy commissioned the Land Warfare Development Centre (LWDC) at Puckapunyal in Victoria to begin work on a new counterinsurgency manual entitled LWD 3-0-1. During that year, two drafts were produced by the LWDC both of which were rejected by CA Leahy as substandard. Both versions were conceptually weak and poorly written.

Is there scope for expanding on this?

Not really. LWDC simply lacked the staff capacity or intellectual firepower to write LWD 3-0-1 in 2008. Hence, the two drafts were derivative and heavily influenced by the US Army and USMC's FM-3-24. The documents had little affinity with Australia's own military history and heritage in counterinsurgency. Moreover, they lacked the pedagogic function that doctrine must possess.

In February 2008, in an atmosphere of some urgency, an Army COIN seminar to discuss the production problems surrounding LWD 3-0-1 was held in Canberra. At the seminar, Colonel (now Major General) Roger Noble, then Director of Studies (Land), at the Australian Command and Staff College (ACSC), and myself (then the Commander's Fellow at the Australian Defence College running the COIN and Irregular Conflict programs) suggested to the CA that the 04-level students on the COIN elective at the college be used as the writing team.

This is pretty unusual, of course, does it speak to the desperate need? It's certainly not how we envisage doctrine normally being written.

There is always a team of sorts. Ours was just bigger due to urgent need.

We proposed the ACSC team operate under the joint supervision of Colonel Noble and myself. The LWDC would continue to act as the publishing authority for the manual but a specialist COIN staff college team would complete the doctrinal writing. Seeing a way out of what had become an intractable writing task, the LWDC supported the appointment of an ACSC writing team. The LWDC requested I become the lead author and I accepted. Colonel Noble and I proposed to use the ACSC COIN elective as a 'community of practice' to write

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11   William C Westmoreland*, A Soldier Reports*, Doubleday, New York, 1976, p 258.

a new draft doctrine manual. CA Leahy, impatient for progress, quickly agreed and the elective team of 18 was put to work with a 14-day timeline.

Work commenced in June 2008 at a frenetic pace involving 18-hour days over the 14 days. Colonel Noble, former commander of our *Al Muthanna* Task Force in Iraq,[12] imposed a 'march-or-die' mentality on the elective team. This allowed me, in turn, to work the writing cells to the limits of their endurance. Despite such an exhausting schedule – or perhaps because of it – the draft that emerged was an enormous advance on past versions.

How and why?

Well, it was historically informed but situated in a contemporary context – the key to all useful doctrine.

Indeed, CA Leahy declared the draft to be an '80 per cent solution' and ordered that it be published for teaching purposes as LWD 3-0-1 *Counterinsurgency* (Developing Doctrine) by November 2008.[13] In August 2008, the Commander of the LWDC remarked, 'Army could not have produced this manual without the excellent work of the Staff College'.

In May 2009, the next ACSC COIN elective team was asked to produce the final '20 per cent' of LWD 3-0-1. By this time, the Developing Doctrine had been well analysed and discussed throughout the stakeholder community and by a formal Army review team of six, coordinated by the LWDC.

What forms did the feedback take and how was it classified and ranked in terms of importance for inclusion or consideration?

The review team engaged with a wide range of Army opinion with emphasis on intelligence and campaign design.

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12   For more on the Task Group see: Roger Noble, 'Guns, money, buildings and tea: the enduring civil–military lessons of contemporary operations', *Australian Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Engineering*, 2008, 6(2):191–198, https://doi.org/10.1080/14488388.2008.11464784; Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Committee activities (inquiries and reports) *Visit to Australian Defence Forces Deployed to Support the Rehabilitation of Iraq – 22 to 28 October 2005*, Parliament of Australia, Canberra, May 2006, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/jfadt/iraqdelegation/chapter5; Catherine Harris (ed), *To Points Unknown... The First Al Muthanna Task Group*, Mesh Publishing, Melbourne, 2008; Albert Palazzo, 'The making of strategy and the junior coalition partner: Australia and the 2003 Iraq War', *Infinity Journal*, 2012, 2(4): 27–30.

13   For an interesting discussion on structural problems with teaching COIN to Australian soldiers see: Michael Craig,' War of the people: counterinsurgency education for non-commissioned officers', *Australian Army Journal*, 2008, 5(3):41–51.

Accordingly, again using a 14-day timeline, we began revision, making agreed changes to the manual's introduction and redrafting parts of the chapters on intelligence and campaign design.

Why were these two parts subject to heavier revisions than the others?

These were the two areas most affected by the rise of the new, networked insurgencies of the new millennium.

In mid-2009, we briefed both the new CA, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie and the Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Lieutenant General (later General) David Hurley and received their support for the final draft. By the end of that year, LWD 3-0-1 *Counterinsurgency* was complete and released by the Army through the LWDC as Endorsed Doctrine.

What kind of impact did it have?

The manual met the need to provide doctrine for force elements deploying to Afghanistan.

Question 2:
You also highlighted the importance of setting up an elite writing group. How was this group identified, brought together and finalised?

In 2008, I devised a five-week COIN elective at the ACSC for 04-level officers who wanted to become 'mini-specialists' in irregular warfare. We attracted an eclectic and talented group of 18 personnel – all selected – a mixture of special forces, logistics and intelligence officers, plus a naval officer and a couple of pilots from the RAAF. We also had several foreign officers from the United States, New Zealand and the Philippines in the team. When I became aware of the problems surrounding the LWD 3-0-1, I suggested to the ACSC Commandant, Brigadier Chris Appleton and Colonel Noble that we use our last two to three weeks of the elective as a practicum, during which we would produce a COIN draft. As the subject matter expert (SME), I thought it would be an excellent way to apply the knowledge gained on the elective to a real world 'wicked problem' then afflicting the Army. Brigadier Appleton and Colonel Noble agreed. We met with General Leahy and he agreed to give responsibility for writing a COIN draft to the ACSC.

> How did this process compare to the one for previous attempts at COIN doctrine and also to other forms of doctrine writing?

In many ways, for the CA, necessity was the mother of invention as far as using the Staff College to write doctrine.

> **Question 3:**
> What were the key influences shaping the doctrine-writing process?

Due to the circumstances described above, speed and intellectual integrity dominated the writing process in 2008 and 2009. In effect, we embarked upon a crash course in doctrine writing. While I had been involved in doctrine writing before and had experience of procedure, I had never presided over a crash programme like LWD 3-0-1; so, it was a novel and, in some respects, risky venture.

We used JFC Fuller's[14] maxim: *'Doctrine is the central idea of an army'* and adapted this to COIN. We asked what is the central idea of Australian COIN? To answer this, we employed a theory-evidence-application approach, highlighting the three components in doctrine writing: the *enduring* component (what does not change in military practice); the *practical* component (doctrine as a guide to action mediated by command judgement) and the *changing* component (what is new about what we are facing in the writing). This approach created clarity. We emphasised to the team that doctrine is a blueprint not dogma based on broad commonality of thought, not narrow uniformity of belief. We also examined the current American, British and Canadian COIN doctrine for comparative perspective.

We paraphrased a statement from (British) Major General Mungo Melvin in the *RUSI Journal* of August 2002, to the effect that any doctrine needs to be:

> short and attractive enough to be read, consistent within itself and the key principles it espouses should be coherent.[15]

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14 Brian Holden Reid, *JFC Fuller: Military Thinker*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1990.

15 R A M S Melvin, 'Continuity and change: how British Army doctrine is evolving to match the balanced force', *RUSI Journal*, 2002, 147(4):38–44, p 39. The fuller version of the quote in the original article is worth placing here given its wider context: 'Our overall goal in this doctrine review process is to write a body of Army doctrine that is authoritative, understood and applied in practice on operations and training. Our doctrine should be short and attractive enough to be read, and not just idly referred to. It should be well enough written to make that reading a pleasure, to the professional soldier or to anyone else interested in the subject. Above all, the doctrine should be consistent within itself, and with the national Joint and Allied doctrine that it fits into, and key principles it espouses should be coherent'.

We spent time on defining the *audience*, the *purpose* and the *message* of the draft manual, and we employed a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. In 2008, we spent precious moments in defining what we were embarking upon intellectually and how the writing process needed shaping, given our limited time. We performed similarly in 2009, when the writing task moved from producing Developing Doctrine to that of producing and reviewing Endorsed Doctrine.

Insurgents, their character, form and type

> **Question 4:**
> The doctrine suggests 'recent operational experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with a shift in strategic guidance has demanded more comprehensive and contemporary COIN doctrine'.

That is true. Although Australia had not expected COIN operations in either Iraq or Afghanistan, it was the operational reality. It was especially true regarding Afghanistan where what the Howard Government defined as a mentoring and reconstruction mission (MTF) in Afghanistan developed into a parallel COIN mission, conducted mainly by special operations forces, in the form of the 2nd Commando Regiment and the SAS Regiment. In contrast, our post-invasion mission in Iraq was mainly a protective security role using a cavalry regiment in *Al Muthanna* province. Afghanistan was different in that it possessed a clear and present insurgent threat to our forces. By 2014, we had lost 40 soldiers killed in Uruzgan and some 300 wounded.

Yet there was a reluctance inside the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to embrace any 'COINdinista' agenda,[16] in the sense that 'war amongst the people' represented the future of armed conflict. Such a view was sensible, given that war, as Clausewitz cautions, is a chameleon that constantly changes in character.

> This element of the *shift* in strategic guidance is not clearly present in the answer...

As stated, Uruzgan was not a COIN mission per se, even though it involved COIN. Strategically, our political masters always keep an eye on our immediate

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16   See: Colleen Bell, 'Celebrity power and powers of war: the rise of the COINdinistas in American popular media', *Critical Military Studies*, 2018, 4(3): 244–263.

Asian region as well as supporting the need to uphold our Western values globally as a good international citizen.

You need to remember where Australia is – we are in Asia and that operational environment looms large in our strategic thinking. Our history may draw us into defence of Western global interests but our geography also draws us into the security dynamics of an Indo-Pacific regional world. There is always a strategic tension between managing our historical, geographical requirements. Nonetheless, although the ADF rejected a COINdinista outlook, CA Leahy clearly recognised the primary responsibility of the Army to prepare our forces for the COIN challenge in Afghanistan, hence the urgency in 2008–09 to provide updated and comprehensive COIN doctrine.

Very interesting – a theme we've identified throughout is the need to make a distinction between dynamics in Iraq and Afghanistan. Would you say the manual was predominantly written for Afghanistan? What kind of shelf life was envisaged for the doctrine at this stage, was it anticipated to outlast the ADF involvement in Afghanistan and have more enduring value?

We were focused on Afghanistan as the main mission facing the ADF because of its COIN dimension. This was not the case in Iraq where our post-2003 commitment was mainly to provide protection for a non-combat Japanese engineering contingent.

Interesting, since it was not entirely guaranteed that COIN would be pursued by Obama at this stage, that is in 2009.

To soldiers on the ground, the reality was they were facing armed insurgents in the population and the response involved both non-kinetic COIN of dealing with local actors, the so-called 'hearts and minds' dimension, and the parallel kinetic COIN task of eliminating insurgents who might threaten the lives of Australian troops.

Question 5:

To what extent, and how, was knowledge of the character, strategy and tactics of insurgents – both in general and those being faced at the time – fed into the various stages of the writing process?

We knew the Taliban was not the Viet Cong, and Afghanistan was not the tropical environment Australia had cut its COIN teeth on between the 1950s and 1960s. We also recognised the Islamist religious dimension, as opposed to a Cold War communist ideology. We were aware of new practices, such as networking, the widespread use of improvised explosive devices and the intersection of insurgency with tribal warlordism, narcotics and criminality. Therefore, from our lessons-learned cell and post-mission reports, plus anecdotal evidence, we had a reasonable picture of Uruzgan as a diverse operational theatre. However, what we possessed was technical-tactical knowledge as opposed to sociocultural knowledge.[17]

How would this affect writing general COIN doctrine compared to something specific to the reality in Australia for Australian forces?

One must understand the operating environment, yet such a task demanded linguistic skills and a grasp of Afghan history and ethnography that was generally missing inside the ADF.

The basics of insurgency and COIN still applied in terms of technique, tactics and procedures. Yet, at no point did we ever conceive of a clear-cut idea of military victory. Australia was part of a coalition force; there was a host government in Kabul, and any resolution in Afghanistan would be political. Our responsibility was to provide a manual that would improve operational effectiveness within the boundaries of strategic guidance. What we really lacked, in retrospect, was a better understanding of Afghan sociological-cultural dynamics and undulating tribal affiliations. I think it is fair to say that the tribal dynamics proved perplexing; but this was a coalition-wide challenge, so we were not alone in being perplexed.

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17 Despite all the efforts with human-terrain systems programming in Afghanistan there were still struggles to understand local dynamics, especially local understandings of territory and its political meaning: see: James Worrall, 'Bringing the soil back in: control and territoriality in Western and non-Western COIN', in Celeste Ward Gventer, David Martin Jones and MLR Smith (eds), *The New Counter-insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014, pp 127–143.

To what extent is it doctrine's job to do this?

There is always a focus on forms of governance in counterinsurgency and this is normally reflected in a doctrine manual. For instance, the notion of dealing with a host government on the ground implies that at the coalition politico-strategic level there was a grasp of cultural issues that could inform operational doctrine. Unfortunately, beyond sloganeering, that strategic grasp was largely missing in Afghanistan.

Question 6:
To what extent did (formal and/or informal) lessons-learned processes from Australian contingents in Iraq and Afghanistan (as well as other historical campaigns, if relevant) influence the way the doctrine conceptualised insurgents?

Because we had not practised counterinsurgency since 1973, we knew we needed an updated analysis of Australia's approach to COIN to synthesise with what we were seeing in Afghanistan. We were fortunate to have a military historian, Dr Russell Parkin, on the directing staff of the Command and Staff College. In early 2008, I asked him to produce a summary of the Australian tradition in irregular warfare between 1945 and 1975. He completed it in record time, and we used his work to situate our study in 2008–09. The Parkin article was extraordinarily useful as it provided us with an intellectual anvil upon which to hammer out LWD 3-0-1.

How did you situate his work exactly?

We investigated an Australian way in irregular conflict based on excellence in small-unit tactics from New Guinea to Vietnam. While there is an Australian 'Digger' style, the substance of operational practice was largely British inspired at command level. Parkin's work helped us clarify the character of Australian theory and practice in irregular conflict.

The high quality of Parkin's work was reflected by its subsequent publication in the March 2009 edition of the journal *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, as 'The sources of the Australian tradition in irregular warfare, 1942–1974'.[18] Using the Australian tradition in jungle warfare and COIN, we were able to situate our study

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18   Russell Parkin, 'The sources of the Australian tradition in irregular warfare, 1942–1974', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 2009, 20(1): pp 118–140.

for Afghanistan. Here, lessons from New Guinea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam all came into play, as did Australia's contribution to international COIN studies via theorist-practitioners, such as Ted Serong[19] and Geoffrey Fairbairn.[20] We were also aware that the 1965 DIB 11 *Counter Revolutionary Warfare*, largely written by Brigadier Frank Hassett (later General Sir Francis Hassett), was arguably the best-written COIN manual of the 1960s; at least that was the consensus in professional circles.

Manual versus doctrine?

The Manual of Land Warfare (MLW), Division in Battle (DIB), *Counter Revolutionary Warfare* (1965) was Vietnam-era doctrine. The MLW is a series of Australian Army doctrine manuals.

DIB 11 was important to us. The clarity of expression and precision of prose in DIB 11 became a template for the COIN elective team of 2008–09. Having our own history in place, we were able to incorporate the 'Australian approach' with the various features of insurgency in Afghanistan. Then, in 2009 with the Developing Doctrine in place, we were in better shape to form the intellectual basis for the Endorsed Doctrine.

How would this 'Australian approach' best be characterised?

Excellence in small-unit tactics, patrolling and field-craft combined with a 'Digger' can-do spirit of doing more with less.

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19 Ian McNeill, *The Team: Australian Army Advisers in Vietnam 1962–1972*, Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1984; Anne Blair, Ted Serong: *The Life of an Australian Counter-Insurgency Expert*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2002.

20 Geoffrey Fairbairn, *Revolutionary Guerrilla Warfare: The Countryside Version*, Penguin, Sydney, 1974; See also Geoffrey Fairbairn, *Revolutionary Warfare and Communist Strategy: Threat to South-East Asia*, Faber and Faber, London, 1968.

> **Question 7:**
> A number of intellectual influences are apparent in the way the doctrine presents insurgents, in particular, for example, Bard O'Neill and authors of doctrine from other national contexts (the typology of five common insurgent strategies bears resemblance to US FM 3-24 – Conrad Crane's 'identity-focused approach', for instance).

In mid-2005, I had been the Australian representative in the expert COIN international group that gathered in Basin Harbor, Vermont in the USA. The Basin Harbor conference was held under the auspices of Dr Eliot Cohen and the School of Advanced International Studies Faculty at The Johns Hopkins University. As a result, I was well aware of the intellectual influences playing out in international circles in COIN, particularly in the United States, Britain and Australia. At Basin Harbor, there was a burning fever in the air at the lack of COIN knowledge in the Coalition. After all, the Americans were in serious military trouble against the insurgency in Iraq, and Afghanistan was beginning to boil up as the Taliban–al-Qaeda regrouped. There was a real sense of urgency concerning Iraq at Basin Harbor.

One of the most influential figures present was Dr David Kilcullen, who had recently been the Australian Army's representative on the American *Quadrennial Defense Review* team. In 2005, Kilcullen was in the process of transitioning into his American role as the guru of Western COIN in the age of Islamic insurgency. Like Ted Serong, Kilcullen had kept the flame of COIN burning throughout his individual Army career, writing a PhD on Indonesian insurgency and serving in East Timor in 1999, and then, in the early 2000s, in our Future Land Warfare Directorate. At Basin Harbor, Kilcullen linked up with figures such as John Nagl, Hank Crumpton, Kalev Sepp and others who would go on to form the writing team around General Petraeus for FM 3-24 (with Conrad Crane as lead author). Lieutenant General (later General) Ray Odierno, who went on to become Chief of Staff US Army, was a guest speaker at the seminar in Vermont.[21] I think Basin Harbor was the most important Western COIN seminar since the 1962 RAND COIN seminar, which brought together the likes of Frank Kitson, Edward Lansdale and David Galula, just as American involvement in the Vietnam War was beginning. The difference between the two gatherings was one of influence. Basin Harbor, in 2005, was more influential than the RAND gathering, in 1962. This was because Basin Harbor was the seedbed for FM 3-24 and by extension for the successful 2007 Surge in Iraq.

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21   For a summary of Basin Harbor. Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War,* Simon & Schuster, London, 2013.

The point of recounting all the above is that I brought the atmospherics and concerns of Basin Harbor back to Australia. It was why I created a specialist ACSC COIN elective and then moved our activity into the doctrine space in 2008–09. In short, while we strived for the Australian approach to COIN, our intellectual influences were internationally diverse and thoroughly grounded in military theory and historical practice. We used not only Bard O'Neill's work but also that of Serong's 'seven phase progression', [22] and the works of Galula,[23] Thompson,[24] Kitson,[25] and McCuen.[26]

> **Question 8:**
> What shaped the decision to draw on particular conceptual approaches to classifying insurgency, and what shaped how these were modified and incorporated into the doctrine? Were any particular models or theoretical influences rejected, and if so why?

Australians are pragmatists. In our distrust of theory, we are true to the Anglo-Saxon empirical tradition. We were naturally drawn to what had worked in past COIN campaigns, particularly in Malaya and Borneo. A metaphysical theory, such as the French *guerre revolutionnaire*, is alien to Australians, as is the modernisation/social science school of American COIN (nation building).[27] Our models were Thompson from Malaya and Kitson from Kenya. Galula was a discovery of the Americans, which is not to diminish him but he was discovered

22   Bard E O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd edn, Potomac Books, Washington DC, 2005.

23   David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Praeger, Santa Barbara CA, 2006; David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 1956–1958, RAND, Santa Monica CA, 2006, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG478-1.html. See also: A A Cohen, *Galula: The Life and Writings of the French Officer Who Defined the Art of Counterinsurgency*, Praeger, Santa Barbara CA, 2012; Grégor Mathias, *Galula in Algeria: Counterinsurgency Practice Versus Theory*, Praeger, Santa Barbara CA, 2011.

24   Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences in Malaya and Vietnam (Studies in international security)*, Chatto & Windus, 1966; Robert Thompson, *Revolutionary War in World Strategy, 1945–1969*, Martin Secker & Warburg, London, 1970; Robert Thompson, *Make for the Hills: An Autobiography*, Pen & Sword Books/Leo Cooper, London, 1989.

25   Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping,* Faber & Faber, London, 1971; Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five,* Faber & Faber, London 1977.

26   John McCuen, *The Art of Counter Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counter-Insurgency*, Stackpole Books, Harrisburg PA, 1966.

27   Beatrice Heuser, 'The cultural revolution in counter-insurgency', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2007, 30(1):153–171.

late.[28] In the Anglo-Saxon tradition of COIN, politics are paramount. Our own DIB 11 reflects this outlook. Although it was dated, one DB 11 quote stood out:

> Countering insurgency calls for far more than military means. While military operations are an essential ingredient of a successful military plan, it is particularly important that all military leaders should keep the whole plan and the military participation therein, particularly their relationship with the political aspects, in proper perspective.[29]

Of course, in retrospect, our main weakness in LWD 3-0-1 was obvious: we were in the business of expeditionary COIN not colonial COIN. Unlike Templer in Malaya, Coalition commanders in Iraq–Afghanistan were not civil–military supremos controlling local politics and colonial governments. Coalition commanders did not control the policies of the host government (to use the contemporary usage). We were so focused on re-capturing the basics of COIN, we did not give sufficient attention to the expeditionary–colonial dichotomy, in terms of the political dimension. I think the latter is a weakness of FM 3-24 as well – and perhaps of most COIN manuals in the mid-2000s. We were still finding our way with twenty-first century modes of insurgency. Intellectually, we leaned on our own tradition, especially Serong. His views on how an insurgency progresses through phases from police action to military action was important. We were also well aware that on our own, we could no more 'solve' Afghanistan than we could Vietnam in an earlier era. We had some discussion over 'clear, hold, build'. In Vietnam, in Phuoc Tuy province, we cleared and held but did not really build. In Afghanistan, we appeared to be building (reconstruction and training), but we seemed to be more in the business of clearing out insurgents than holding vital ground.

Why is that and how did you try to address it in the doctrine?

'Clear, hold, build' was the mantra in Afghanistan, yet we lacked the kind of area and population control to perform the entire suite as an intervention force. We were conscious that the Afghan government, Uruzgan provincial leaders and elements of the Afghan National Army had their own responsibilities for security,

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28 Douglas Porch, 'David Galula and the revival of COIN in the US military', in Celeste Ward Gventer, David Martin Jones and MLR Smith (eds), *The New Counter-insurgency Era in Critical Perspective,* Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014, pp 173–197; Alexander Alderson, 'Learning, adapting, applying', *RUSI Journal*, 2007, 152(6):12–19.

29 Army Headquarters, 'The Division in Battle: Pamphlet no. 11, *Counter Revolutionary Warfare* (AMF DIB 11)', Military Board, Canberra, 1965, p 36.

governance and development. We were in support of their sovereign efforts not a replacement for them.

We had a valuable 'off-the-record' back-brief session in 2009 with Lieutenant Colonel Matt Brennan, the CO of the Special Forces Task Group in Uruzgan. Lieutenant Colonel Brennan had used LWD 3-0-1 *Counterinsurgency* (Developing Doctrine) from its release in 2008. He highlighted the nexus between criminality and insurgency involving narcotics in Afghanistan. In September 2009, he addressed the United Services Institute in Canberra, where he told the audience how valuable he had found the Developing Doctrine. He admitted to having given the notion of doctrine 'lip service' in the past, but exhorted those present to:

> read the [COIN] doctrine, read the histories; separate the insurgents from the population – it works. COIN methodology is not just good theory. I firmly believe in it now after the last six or seven months.

He went on to speak of 7 Ps. These were: be *pervasive*, be *persistent*, have a *presence*, exert constant *pressure*, *pursue* the enemy, *punish* the enemy and be *patient*. He concluded his address by stating:

> we've seen a number of US officers coming into the fight from the Iraq context, who had very much an Iraqi [urban] approach, rather than a rural-based insurgency … When it comes to the [Afghan] insurgent who is drug and money motivated out there in Helmand, Kandahar and Oruzgan provinces it's quite unique and needs to be understood.

These verbatim quotations come from my notes of the United Services Institute meeting on 15 September 2009. I thought Brennan's positive comments validated what we had tried to achieve in LWD 3-0-1.

Space for auxiliaries, home guards and militias

Question 10:
How would you say LWD 3-0-1 accounted for interactions with militias/auxiliaries/home guards, and how were these actors incorporated into the manual?

We knew Uruzgan was complex with a mosaic of insurgents, warlord groups, narco-criminals and ethnic alliances that constantly shifted over time. We did not attempt to track all of this sociologically because, as I have pointed out, our task was to get a COIN manual to our troops for training and preparation. The kind of human-terrain mapping required to deal with the mosaic of actors can be recognised in doctrine, but not resolved by doctrine. Resolution requires ongoing and constant intelligence and information operations. Moreover, because the Afghanistan mission was defined as a reconstruction and training mission with COIN as a by-product of the mission, we focused on host government issues as best we could. We perhaps did not give enough attention to the Afghan National Army and its weaknesses. We later lost three soldiers in an infamous blue-on-blue killing. For more details on Uruzgan, I would draw your attention to Colonel Peter Connolly's 2011 study, *Counterinsurgency* in Uruzgan, which are the reflections of a senior practitioner in-theatre.[30]

Understanding the process, stakeholders and wider inputs

Question 11:
During the doctrine-writing process, how were inputs sought, collated and managed across the varying stages? How were decisions made to include certain inputs and exclude others?

Doctrine writing is collaborative writing; no individual gets his or her name on the cover because ultimately it is an institutional product. Our biggest challenge was the reality that our writing team, no matter how talented as military professionals, were fighters not writers. As the lead author, I resigned myself to the reality of much editing and rewriting to achieve an acceptable draft. We set key guidelines. These included the notions that:

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30 Peter Connolly, *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, August 2011. https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/library/land-warfare-studies-centre/counterinsurgency-uruzgan-2009

- writing is a craft in which words are nails with which to hammer ideas into place

- good prose is architecture not interior decoration, so stay simple in expression and avoid jargon

- the secret of writing is rewriting

- 'there is no such thing as a flawless document'.

Whatever eventuated from the writing team we knew would be criticised, mulled over and pulled apart by stakeholders.

Our task was to ensure that the COIN draft survived the rigour of critique and avoided the oblivion of the previous two LWDC drafts. Accordingly, we split the elective team into chapter sub-teams, then each sub-team was coached in the small group dynamics of 'forming, norming, storming and performing'. As mid-career military professionals used to syndicate work, this process was not difficult to implement. Each sub-team appointed a coordinator of doctrinal activity and a recorder of data, on the basis that 'a champion team will always outperform a team of champions'. We emphasised that while some sub-team members would find writing difficult, each group required encouragers, *harmonisers, compromisers, gatekeepers* and *summarisers*. For the selected writers in each sub-team, we explained that doctrine is 'explanatory writing' in which clarity is paramount, especially in definitions. As a rule of thumb, if a term could not be defined, it was abandoned. This was the main input/output guide. Moreover, we emphasised the role of the 'unknown reader' – that is the military officer who would read a paragraph and say, 'I don't understand this', or 'Yes, I get this'. In this manner, all members of the LWD 3-0-1 writing team had a role to keep the project moving forward. There were no passengers. I ask you to imagine a team working 12 to 18 hours a day for 14 to 21 days, suffering lack of sleep, irritation and frustration, stress and perplexity and with the weight of the CA's expectation hanging over them. It was not easy work. Colonel Noble flogged the team mercilessly, while I became a tyrant when it came to meeting writing deadlines.

How did this approach differ to the earlier attempts at writing this doctrine?

Internal deadlines concerning chapter content had to be met. This was vital to our success in producing both Developing and Endorsed doctrine in 2008 and 2009 respectively.

Question 12:

In your pre-interview note, you mentioned the importance of involving outsiders and foreign officers, killing egos amongst other things.

Doctrine writing is no place for roosters and ballerinas; it requires solid team players who appreciate the views of peers. The suppression of ego is fundamental because if the writing team fails, everyone fails. We had some brilliant officers on the team, but they had to adjust to a collective writing atmosphere and harness their talents to a common output. Since we had several foreign officers in the team, we encouraged them to be critics or 'unknown readers'. We lacked the time to bring in outside academics (aside from Russell Parkin's scholarly essay mentioned above) to serve the cause of doctrine development.

Question 13:

To what extent were different stakeholders within the Army (and any other organisations/institutions) involved in the process?

Doctrine development is a process of negotiation and compromise involving knowledge of war at a given time. Dogmatists are quickly eliminated. There is a saying from Jorge Luis Borges, 'censorship is the mother of metaphor'. This saying applies in doctrine writing when one hits objections based on rank rather than intellect or narrow personal experience rather than the weight of comparative history. The military thought of individuals is not the raw material of doctrine except when that thought enters historical discourse (think of Liddell Hart's indirect approach that influenced manoeuvre warfare doctrine).[31] Military doctrine arises from the organisational experience of multiple operations. In the initial production of the Developing Doctrine, because we had the backing of CA Leahy, we had little interference from stakeholders. Potential critics and stakeholders were hesitant because of the failure of two previous LWDC drafts. There was a stakeholder belief of 'let's see what eventuates' and perhaps a view that the ACSC may have taken hold of a poisoned chalice. Overall, then, the stakeholder community remained aloof from the draft that became Developing Doctrine. In the end, the ACSC defied the odds and succeeded because of a talented team and its commitment to success.

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31   Alex Danchev, 'Liddell Hart and manoeuvre', *RUSI Journal*, 1998, 143(6): 33–35.
     https://doi.org/10.1080/03071849808446325

Question 14:
To what extent did different stakeholders come into the process (both within and beyond the writing team) with different ideas about the character of insurgency?

Various stakeholders came out of the woodwork once it became clear that the 2008 Developing Doctrine would form the basis for Endorsed Doctrine in 2009. It is, of course, easier to critique than to create. A review team emerged, of which I was a member. As the lead author, I had to handle many of the criticisms that emerged inside the Army. These tended to centre on the content of the introduction, the intelligence and campaign design chapters.

Why these in particular?

Intelligence and operational design were the two areas most affected by the revolution in information technology as manifested by computer networks and cell phones, which together accelerate the tempo and imagery of a battlefield and transform it into a battlespace.

Incredibly, several prominent Iraq veterans – who were true-believer 'COINdinistas', including some who had served on the Coalition COIN Academy at Taji – wanted to eliminate the intelligence chapter altogether. This attempt only served to galvanise the Army intelligence corps who soon saw off the challenge. The issue here was simple: Australia had not conducted COIN in Iraq, but it was conducting COIN in Afghanistan. The Iraq urban COIN experience had limited resonance for the Australian Army in rural Afghanistan, and we were wary of 'Americanitis' and 'COINdinista fever'. While there were clear differences between the character of the Iraq and Afghanistan insurgencies, some Australian COINdinistas seemed to believe that a silver bullet from the Surge in Iraq could magically be fired to suppress insurgency in the mountains of Afghanistan.

I was surprised when one Australian COINdinista told me, 'COIN is a strategy in itself'. He rejected the notion of COIN as an operational methodology governed by politics and strategic imperatives but insisted it was a *strategy*. It seemed as if ideological enthusiasm had overtaken common sense. The COINdinistas were a noisy element, but ultimately, they proved to be a fringe group outside of the Australian Army's mainstream on doctrine. In what became Developing Doctrine, we made a few textual compromises to the introduction. Similarly, since campaign design was a relatively new area we proceeded with caution. We were not against a systems view of some areas of doctrine, but I viewed postmodern systemic operational design with caution. There was a simple rule

in play: if you cannot define something clearly for teaching purposes then do not include it in doctrine. SOD clearly came into that category at that time. You cannot teach what cannot be understood, and this view was accepted by most stakeholders in 2009. Military history and knowledge of contemporary warfare are handmaidens in writing doctrine, especially in the definitional realm.

Question 15:
To what extent did this create challenges and how were accommodations or decisions made on these issues to forge consensus?

Doctrine, like strategic guidance, must be negotiated between stakeholders. You bring your intellectual capital to the table and present your case in a collective writing context. To resolve issues, knowledge, flexibility and textual compromises are necessary. No doctrine document is ever flawless or a masterpiece of exciting prose. Doctrine is specialist writing and always flirts with dullness if it is not clear in expression. The key is to reach agreement on what is comprehensible and teachable for the benefit of practitioners. The end state is a usable and readable document grounded in the history of war that reflects the best contemporary military practice. Using this philosophy, most issues can be, and were in the case of LWD 3-0-1, resolved by sensible argument and textual conciliation. The exception was the fate of the intelligence chapter, as that dispute was related to COIN experience in Iraq, as opposed to Afghanistan. Those sceptical of a dedicated intelligence chapter tended to be officers previously embedded in Coalition forces conducting COIN or who were associated with the Taji COIN Academy. They had little experience of Afghanistan and, in the end, many in the writing team found their views one-dimensional. From a professional perspective, I could not conceive of a COIN manual without a dedicated intelligence section, so on principle I dug in to defend the chapter. Fortunately, I was not alone in my views and several generals agreed that an intelligence chapter was indispensable to LWD 3-0-1.

It's not really clear what their objections were – especially when it is present in so many other COIN doctrines and manuals.

The objection was that intelligence was now diffuse and networked and did not require a dedicated intelligence chapter. Of course, this view was unacceptable to the majority of intelligence specialists in the Army and, in my view, rightly so.

Question 16:

For example, in your note, you highlighted the importance of striking at groupthink while keeping things collective. It would be interesting to know more about how this played out.

In doctrine writing there is fine balance to be struck between the power of collective intellectual effort and the peril of groupthink. This is why I commissioned the Parkin paper, to give a sophisticated historical perspective to our activity. We also introduced the concept of the 'unknown reader' to question assumptions and assigned various roles to sub-team members, including gatekeepers, who would monitor disagreements and try to accelerate progress. We encouraged a certain heresy to flourish in the discussion and debate of terms and ideas.

Ultimately, however, we were not in a university seminar with time to ruminate in the abstract. We were in a professional military environment and decisions on content had to be finalised. The lead author is important in driving the collective effort but so too is the senior officer in charge of the process (if he or she is not the lead author). One of the good things about doctrine is that it cannot be personal, so egos inevitably die on the vine for the greater good. The doctrinal product is always institutional with the lead author invisible outside of the writing team itself. The institutional character of military doctrine helps to filter out eccentric or historically distorted views on warfare. If doctrine become personalised in any way, it is usually associated with sponsoring generals not authors. Hence DePuy and Starry with AirLand Battle;[32] or Petraeus with FM 3-24; and Hassett with DIB 11. In this respect, LWD 3-0-1 clearly belongs to Peter Leahy, not to Michael Evans.

Conclusion and reflections:
Alex Waterman and James Worrall

The interview above, and our wider interviews across the Australian doctrinal context, offers an important window into the influences shaping Australian doctrine. LWD 3-0-1 forms part of a wider milieu of Western COIN doctrine, written during an intense and critical period when shared, overlapping networks and key individuals played important roles, attended the same conferences, co-created big ideas and commented on one another's drafts across multiple national contexts. Indeed, in many ways these years represented an important critical juncture in which things which were not normally possible suddenly became necessary. Shortened timescales, political and practical expediency,

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32   Richard Lock-Pullan, 'How to rethink war: conceptual innovation and AirLand Battle doctrine', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2005, 28(4):679–702.

along with the high profile nature of COIN during this period meant that doctrine was rapidly developed. Yet while the 'seedbed' of ideas underpinning the manual was laid at the famous meeting of the 'Basin Harbor Gang' in 2005, the seeds of LWD 3-0-1's doctrinal thinking differed in key ways to those of FM 3-24.

Australia's distinct strategic setting, for one, and the strategic and organisational cultures flowing from it, clearly played an important role in shaping Australian COIN doctrine.[33] Another common theme across the discussion above, and our wider interviews, was the importance of a healthy scepticism of over-intellectual or overly theoretical approaches to doctrine. This Anglo-Saxon empirical tradition predisposes the writing team towards certain influences based on practical experience (Thompson, Kitson, Serong and Fairbairn) and juxtaposes it with more abstract, theoretical approaches such as Shimon Naveh's systemic operational design.[34] Although he is clearly too modest to say it, the case of LWD 3-0-1's tangled and then smooth evolution, also highlights the importance of the lead doctrine writer's role. This, combined with political 'top-cover', can enable rapid progress, which in this case is a clear balance of both Australian perspectives and those of Australia's enduring allies. Taking the lead on doctrine writing can be a difficult job. This particular case demonstrates some unorthodox elements but also shows the importance of retaining an open mind, a steady determination and being able to draw on networks.

With our project's focus on how insurgents were represented in doctrine, the Australian case shows a flexible but sometimes unfocused conceptualisation of insurgents, which has its pros and cons. While elements of FM 3-24 (including Bard O'Neill's typology of insurgent forms) do make their mark, what follows in LWD 3-0-1 is a discussion largely stripped back of typologies, taxonomies and boxes in which to put rebel groups, while at the same time emphasising the complexity of the irregular opponent in the contemporary operating environment. This is encapsulated by Professor Evans' remark: 'the kind of human-terrain mapping required to deal with the mosaic of actors can be recognised in doctrine, but not resolved by doctrine'. This line of thinking certainly resembles how some (if not all) stakeholders in the FM 3-24 drafting process thought about how insurgencies ought to be codified into doctrine, as we highlight in our forthcoming article on the specific case of FM 3-24.

The reluctance in Australia to 'go full COINdinista' is reflected in the resistance to overgeneralise from the Iraq experience, which has a bearing on how insurgent forms are represented. LWD 3-0-1 places a real emphasis, for instance, on the

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33   For an interesting recent discussion of Australia's past and future engagement in the Asia–Pacific working with partners and frequently engaging in COIN see: Craig Stockings and Peter Dennis (eds), *An Army of Influence: Eighty Years of Regional Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, Sydney, 2021.

34   Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, Frank Cass, Abingdon, 1997.

distinction between the urban insurgencies, which characterised experiences in Iraq, and the rural insurgencies of Uruzgan. This distinction played a major role in the debates shaping the manual. While this reflects the ADF's pivot towards Afghanistan during the time of writing the doctrine, the distinction drawn is sharper than that evident in the British Army's equivalent manual published during the same year, reflecting differing approaches to integrating knowledge into their respective doctrine-writing processes.

The rather limited answers to our questions of the presence of militias in the doctrine and the doctrine-writing process described above, also highlights an ongoing weakness, which is present not only in Australian COIN doctrine but also that of all Western powers. As Andrew Maher of the Australian Army neatly puts it:

> Despite tactical adaptation to the insurgent and irregular threats in Iraq and Afghanistan, we arguably have failed to modify our doctrinal foundations accordingly. Indeed, there is no Australian doctrine for the development of indigenous partners, despite the employment of this operational method in both Iraq and Afghanistan. We have failed to institutionalise 'Adaptive Campaigning' and its underlying conception of competing complex adaptive systems.[35]

This demonstrates the fact that even as the 'post COIN era' is declared, COIN and its lessons retain enduring relevance for militaries and there is a continuing need to build and evolve doctrine in these areas, even though the doctrine might go under a pseudonym.[36]

As our project proceeds, we are examining doctrine writing across three levels. The first is a comparison across manuals within a national context, analysing changes made across different iterations of the same doctrine. The second is to compare across Western doctrinal manuals, as we have done very briefly above. Finally, we want to bring the experiences of Western doctrine writers such as Professor Evans, General Leahy and the wider writing team into comparison with non-Western perspectives from countries such as India and Nigeria, who have spent decades fighting insurgencies on 'home turf'. Ultimately, our aim is to spark discussions that generate lessons and best practices for effectively integrating knowledge of the opponent into doctrine writing. We hope that publishing this interview – and our follow-up work on Australia and elsewhere – kick-starts that process.

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35 Andrew Maher, 'Counter-network operations: insights into the application of complexity theory', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, Issue 198, November/December 2015, p 58.

36 It also links with the enduring need in COIN for unity of effort, or civil–military cooperation concept (CIMIC) in its more modern guise. For an Australian perspective contemporary to the writing of LWD 3-0-1 see: Peter Jeffrey, 'An Australian CIMIC capability: doctrine, training and future development', *Australian Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Engineering*, 2008, 6(2):209–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/14488388.2008.11464787
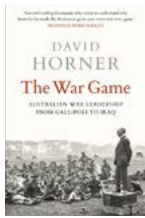
Reviews

The war game: Australian war leadership from Gallipoli to Iraq

David Horner

Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2022

Reviewed by Peter Layton

Reviewing a book by David Horner is a tough task. In many respects, he has defined the field of historical analysis of Australian wartime leadership, particularly with his seminal 1982 work *High Command: Australian and Allied Strategy 1939–45*. His new book, *The War Game*, continues his long interest in this area although with a lighter, less academic touch than some previous works, making it as accessible for the general reader as the military professional. In deference to his scholarship, this review does not debate the historical facts and instead discusses some key judgements the author makes.

The War Game discusses nine wars from August 1914 to March 2003, probing the leadership of top Australian political leaders and their military advisers during that time. The term 'advisers' highlights that the book is not about generalship in the field but leadership at the civil–military divide, with the emphasis on the civil.

The book consists of 13 chapters that analyse specific historical cases. The First World War has three chapters, the Second World War has four, and the Vietnam War has three. The early 1950s war scare, the Korean War and the Malayan emergency are all rolled into a single, perhaps too brief, chapter. Chapter 12 discusses the first Gulf War in Kuwait and the final chapter considers Afghanistan and Iraq until 2003. This final wide-ranging chapter also briefly mentions the Timor intervention. Noticeable in terms of reading ease, the author's increasing use of acronyms from the 1914 to the 2003 case may frustrate the general reader; the three-page list of abbreviations will be useful for many.

The 13 chapters are used to good effect in formulating a most thought-provoking conclusion, where Horner sets out 'ten rules for effectively playing the [Australian] war leadership game'.[1] The first two rules concern getting into a war, that is whether to commit the nation to war

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1   David Horner, *The War Game: Australian War Leadership from Gallipoli to Iraq*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 2023, p 390.

and then, the level and nature of the commitment. The next five rules are about the mechanisms for conducting a war: the prime minister needs continuing advice from a formal or informal group; the government must have confidence in its military commanders; operations undertaken should accord with policy; Australia should try to gain access to allied strategic decision-making; and Australia should have an independent intelligence capability. Rules eight and nine are domestically focused, being about managing Australian politics and media. The final rule might not be a rule, rather it notes the context within which the other rules operate is an 'environment of uncertainty'.[2]

In passing, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's Graeme Dobell recently had a 15-minute interview with Horner. The resulting podcast nicely complements the book and brings a voice to the rules.[3]

Whose wars for what purpose?

Horner considers the most important rule is committing to war, quoting Bob Woodward that such a decision 'defines a nation … to the world and … to itself'.[4] In this, across his 90 years of analysis, Horner discerns a key division in the nine wars. In those fought up until 1942, Australia fought to make a difference in the war's outcome; whereas from 1943 onwards, it was to buttress an alliance. Horner sees the War Cabinet meeting of 1 October 1943 as 'a major turning point in the history of Australian strategic and defence policy', after which Australia sent troops to war for 'political purposes' not to 'help…win the war'.[5]

This is an important judgement, which has a long tail in clearly explaining why Australian war leadership since 1943 has both developed and acted as it has.

The rules Horner has developed from the Australian experience do not elaborate on running a war. The focus is on committing to war not on achieving victory in the war. The differences with the Weinberger and Powell doctrines of the late Cold War era are stark. These laid out war-making principles, like defining an attainable objective, using significant force, understanding the consequences, having an assurance of domestic societal support, and devising an exit strategy.[6]

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2   Horner, *The War Game*, p 394.

3   Graeme Dobell, 'Ten rules of the Australian way of war', *The Strategist,* ASPI, 8 August 2022.
     https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/ten-rules-of-the-australian-way-of-war/

4   Horner, *The War Game*, p 390.

5   Horner, *The War Game*, p 184–5.

6   Jeffrey Record, 'Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine?', *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Fall 2007, 1(1):79–95.
     https://www.jstor.org/stable/26268385#metadata_info_tab_contents

Horner's history-derived rules mean that Australian war leadership paradoxically relates little to warfighting.

The result is that the Australian war leaders across this period seem to have developed a deepening insouciance about the outcome of the wars their nation was fighting. Whether the war was won or lost was the business of other nations. Indeed, being included in these allies' wars achieved the victory successive Australian governments sought. The follow-on was that, over time, Australian war leadership was not conducted in an 'environment of uncertainty', as the rules argue, because for Australia the enemy did not get a vote.

This history does mean some issues are overlooked within the rules. There is little consideration of what a major Australian ally losing a war might mean. As an example, America came out of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan damaged, not better off. From an Australia perspective, American attention was diverted from the Indo-Pacific, while significant American resources were wasted on peripheral conflicts. Arguably, Australia's geostrategic circumstances today would be better if the US had quickly and cheaply won. In this respect, the earlier Vietnam War was similar to Afghanistan and Iraq. Losing a war is not strategically helpful for Australia,

even if the rules are silent on needing to consider success or failure.

Moreover, Australians are put at real risk even in 'small' wars. In this, Horner sees the Howard Government's management of Australian involvement in the initial stages of the Iraq and Afghan wars as 'highly effective … with the loss of only one ADF person to enemy action'.[7] However, in the later conflict this situation did not last. Both wars had numerous causalities and PTSD remains a long-lasting blight affecting Australian society. The counterargument is that the intangible political gains were worth this real pain, but in matters of life and death such abstract mathematical calculations are inherently problematic. The rules skate around needing to consider the potential costs in blood.

Such obfuscation highlights that these post-1943 wars were wars of the state, of the high political and military leadership, not wars of the people. Might the rules need to be reconsidered if a future war is a war where victory is essential and the Australian people are deeply involved?

Building power

The year 1942 was such a time, and the book's sixth chapter concisely discusses the high-level decisions taken in this most dangerous year in Australia's history. However, the chapter also reveals a shortcoming

7   Horner, *The War Game*, p 389.

in the book's scope. It has a narrow focus on decisions relating to the application of military power. The building of this power is in the main overlooked, the exception being some short mentions of conscription. This is unfortunate, as it means much of the role of a wartime political leader is not included.

Prime ministers in times of war are ultimately responsible for mobilising the nation's weapons, wealth, workforce and will, without which a war cannot be waged. Moreover, how these are obtained generally has a major impact on a nation's application of military power. British historian, Alan Milward determined that the military strategies nations adopted in the Second World War were influenced and shaped by their respective domestic foundations. The development of national power and its application were not simply opposite sides of the same coin but mutually determining elements.[8] In war, building national power is important to politicians and generals.

To be fair, Horner does not set out to include this aspect of war leadership in this book, or indeed in most of his other works in this field of study. Logisticians might not be unduly surprised by this omission! However, in not considering how leaders build national power and thus joining the dots between building and applying power, the ten rules he has derived may be critiqued for ignoring much that is of great import to high political and military war leaders alike.

Dark clouds

Before concluding, two particular rules mainly related to military leadership might be worth consideration. Rules four and five respectively declare that the government must both have confidence in its military commanders and ensure 'that the government's wishes are followed on the battlefield'. Both rules appear obvious and essential; however, Horner's judgement on the nature of recent conflicts as being wars for 'political purposes' raises doubt.

If wars are to be won by others, then Australia's high military leaders are principally managers allocating units to the frontlines to be used as others think best. How then can we be sure government intent is being followed on the battlefield, and can it be policed?

The ADF remained committed in Afghanistan well beyond the book's 2003 ending. The Afghanistan Inquiry Report (also called the Brereton Report) raised troubling issues of some personnel being deployed on operations far too frequently and of personnel committing acts not in

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8   Alan S Milward, *War, Economy and Society 1939–1945,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1979, pp 19–23.

accord with government intent, particularly between 2009 and 2013. Judged against rules four and five, Australia's strategic-level civil–military relationship appears wanting in this period, although perhaps more on the high military leader's side rather than the civilian's side.

The Afghanistan experience may hint that the real-world application of Horner's rules is trending in an unfortunate direction. To reuse the word, at the strategic level a certain insouciance may have set in. Future Australian political leaders and their military advisers should perhaps take Horner's rules on board and follow them more strictly.

The War Game makes a most valuable contribution to modern thinking about Australian war leadership. The author's somewhat courageous setting out of clear assessment criteria will both help future war leaders achieve success and give staff college seminars much to debate. Importantly, in carefully synthesising much of Horner's other works, it allows a new generation of readers to readily enjoy his deep scholarship and considered judgements. Interested laypeople, politicians, academics, defence bureaucrats and military professionals will find much of interest to consider and ponder in David Horner's admirable book.

Chasing shadows: the untold and deadly story of terrorism in Australia

Kirsty Campion

Allen and Unwin, 2022

Reviewed by Jade Hutchinson

Extremism and terrorism were once considered distant and underwhelming threats to Australia's robust border security and steadfast liberal democracy. However, Dr Kirsty Campion compels us to reconsider these assumptions in her book, *Chasing Shadows: The Untold and Deadly Story of Terrorism in Australia*. Walking alongside us and speaking to more than 100 years of Australian and world history, Campion unveils the reality that extremism and terrorism are neither exotic nor easily contained, but are insidious problems propagated by exceedingly pervasive ideologies. *Chasing Shadows* represents the first comprehensive historical telling of Australian

extremism and terrorism experienced and committed by Australian actors and networks, as well as their relationship to international events and causes. This 'untold and deadly story' contains a stunning array of historical personalities, predicaments and peculiar moments of irony in Australia's dealings with terrorism – from Prince Alfred to Brenton Tarrant.

Campion provides a comprehensive historic overview of the Australian experience with extremism and terrorism and uncovers the stories behind Australian victims and perpetrators of extremist violence, as well as those who worked to thwart terrorism.

We arrive at the concluding chapters with a greater understanding and appreciation for Australian experiences with:

- the shadows of the British Empire and reactionary anti-colonial violence (1868–1918)

- the socialist utopias, New-Left revolutionaries Australia's adoption of European fascism and pro-Palestinian extremist violence (1965–1975)

- spiritual elitism, pro-Armenian violence, right-wing extremism, Aum Shinrikyo, and their lethal understanding of biochemical weapons (1975–1990)

- Jihadism and international terrorist organisations, including al-Qaeda, the so-called Islamic state and Jemaah Islamiyah (1990s onwards)

- the issues surrounding the Australian radical right and extreme right in recent decades.

Written in a personable and curious tone, these stories are structured in a logical and chronological format, encompassing an eccentric range of locations and moments in time. *Chasing Shadows* explores the Australian experience with terrorism in far-away locations familiar to those with the most cursory interest, such as New York and the Middle East. However, Campion brings to our collective attention once unknown places with familiar-sounding names, such as Megalong Valley and Macquarie University, with renewed significance among terrorism studies circles.

It is important to note these events and their makers were reanimated due to Campion's phenomenal digging in the Australian archives, retrieving both local as well as international histories – left behind in once confidential documents, cable messages, telegrams and communiques – that detail unexpected and the now unforgettable sides of extremism and terrorism.

As a senior lecturer in terrorism studies within the Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security at Charles Sturt University, Campion is well equipped to guide us. These sources combined and complimented by Campion's impressive aptitude in terrorism studies, have resulted in explanations of how and why obscure

beliefs – whether they were in support of a foreign apocalyptic death cult, or Australian anti-war movements – can give rise to anomalous acts of extremist violence.

Discussion

Chasing Shadows contributes fundamental knowledge of terrorism in Australia and the Australian experience with extremist ideologies and terrorist violence. In recent years, and in anticipation of the book's release, Campion has published several research articles peering in-depth into Australian right-wing extremism and terrorism.1 This scholarly work and by extension *Chasing Shadows* are situated among other notable renditions and researchers, such as Andrew Moore (1995),[2] Gwenda Tavan (2005),[3] Gregory Noble (2009),[4] Peter Charles Henderson (2002),[5] Amelia Johns (2015),[6] as well as Andrew Lynch, Nicola McGarrity, and George Williams (2015).[7]

However, *Chasing Shadows* does somewhat stand adjacent to these works. For example, Campion contributes important answers to the following research questions.

- Who was Australia's first political terrorist and in what ways were they related to Queen Elizabeth's second son?

- From where and under what circumstances was the Australian Surveillance and Intelligence Organisation established?

- In what ways can 'visions of Utopia' and 'fantasies of a radiant destiny' dissolve into resolute extremist violence?

- Who was 'Ananda Marga' and how did this Indian Guru motivate the first terrorist bombing in Australian history?

- What do the Lower House of Parliament in Japan and the Australian ranch called 'Banjawarn Station' have in common?

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1   Kirsty Campion, '"Lunatic fringe"? The persistence of right wing extremism in Australia', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2019, 13(2): 2–19; Kirsty Campion, 'Australian right wing extremist ideology: exploring narratives of nostalgia and nemesis'. *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 2019, 14(3): 208–226, https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2019.1667013; K Campion and S Poynting, 'International nets and national links: the global rise of the extreme right—Introduction to Special Issue', *Social Sciences*, 2021, 10(2), 61. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020061

2   Andrew Moore, *The Right Road? A History of Right Wing Politics in Australia*, Oxford University Press, 1995.

3   Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (new title edition), Scribe Publications Pty Ltd, 2005.

4   Gregory Noble (ed), *Lines in the Sand: The Cronulla Riots, Multiculturalism and National Belonging*, Institute of Criminology, 2009.

5   Peter Charles Henderson, *A history of the Australian extreme right since 1950* [PhD], University of Western Sydney, 2002, https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws%3A504/

6   Amelia Johns, *Battle for the Flag*, Melbourne University Publishing, 2015.

7   Andrew Lynch, Nicola McGarrity and George Williams, *Inside Australia's Anti-Terrorism Laws and Trials*, NewSouth, 2015.

- Who said Osama bin Laden was a 'great man' on the ABC's 730 program?

- What operation required 16,400 hours of recordings and intercepting 98,000 text messages prior to thwarting Australian terrorists?

- What is eco-fascism?

- Who has referred to Australia as 'the tail of the snake' and why?

These questions and Campion's answers provide important context for the social and psychological foundations of multiple extremist ideologies.

What is extremely valuable in *Chasing Shadows* are the ways (among other things) Campion delves into how and why motivations – including oppression, entitlement, hatred, despair and perhaps, most importantly, hope and their search for certainty – are created in direct relationship to their historical context.

Once we understand this foundation, Campion concedes several inconvenient and one promising truth to prepare us. Before we are let go (in the epilogue), Campion elucidates several understated observations. Extremism and terrorism cannot always be stopped at the Australian border. There is no easy solution for extremist communities or their beliefs. Extremist ideologies are inextricable and evolve in tandem with changes in the world. Domestic and international extremism and terrorism cannot be entirely divorced from one another. And, although terrorism is considered a moving target for authorities, the values and principles upheld by Australia's liberal democratic and multicultural society offer an enduring counterbalance.

If there is somewhere readers may disembark, it may be because of their want for more. *Chasing Shadows* is written from the perspective of terrorism studies and relies explicitly on the concept of 'ideology' as the key to understanding and addressing extremism and terrorism. As Campion comments, '[i]deology therefore lies at the heart of why people commit acts of terrorism against unsuspecting victims around the world'.[8] This is undoubtedly an important aspect of the problem, however, readers may be left wanting Campion to connect extreme ideas to other contributing factors, such as social media companies and to what degree their technologies are involved, in what ways do extremist ideologies intersect with gender discourses, criminal organisations or adjacent conspiracies. Other readers may want to know why *Chasing Shadows* was confined to terrorism attempted or conducted by 'nonstate' actors only, excluding stories involving state actors and

8   Campion, *Chasing Shadows*, p 4.

institutions geographically or politically in proximity to Australia.

Despite this, Campion successfully and succinctly covers a substantial period of local and international history while ensuring various audiences are retained and entertained. For instance, and as aforementioned, almost all Australian readers will be drawn together in appreciation for the suggestions found in the epilogue. *Chasing Shadows* is certainly worth reading and will offer great company to university students, lecturers, as well as researchers interested in extremism and terrorism, who will all be absorbed by the detailed historical analysis. In addition, *Chasing Shadows* offers casual readers and teachers an easily accessible and entertaining journey in Australian and world history.

A matter of conscience

Jerry Singirok

Partridge Publishing, Singapore, 2022

Reviewed by Sonya Russell

Twenty-five years since launching the greatest political and military crisis in Papua New Guinea's short independence, retired Major General Singirok's conscience is, purportedly, clear.[9] Why then has he chosen now to pen *A Matter of Conscience: Operation RAUSIM KWIK* – a comprehensive, worthy, original and flawed work – is never truly answered. Nevertheless, Singirok's contribution is a valuable addition to the small body of Pacific-based security texts, enabling students of history and adjudicators of ethics alike the opportunity to fully understand the background, experience, and reckoning of the man calling the shots in one of the most pivotal moments of Papua New Guinea's history.

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9   Jerry Singirok, *A Matter of Conscience: Operation RAUSIM KWIK*, Partridge Publishing, Singapore, 2022, p 185.

Major General Jerry Singirok (Rtd) was the seventh Chief of Defence Force (CDF) of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force. Born on Karkar Island, near Madang in 1956, he was also the youngest CDF to date, rapidly rising through the ranks with strong operational, training and leadership experience. He graduated from the Australian Army Command and Staff College and instructed at the Australia Army Land Warfare Centre. He has now become the first PNGDF CDF to pen memoirs.

Appointed by Prime Minister Julius Chan in 1995, explicitly to end the drawn-out Bougainville conflict, Singirok was handed a difficult task from the start. Poorly resourced and funded, the PNGDF was facing a decade-long quagmire. The PNGDF's lack of quick operational successes in Bougainville under Singirok's command strained his relationship with the government, and its leaders began seeking assistance elsewhere. The final solution decided by Chan's Government was a US$36 million contract with private military company Sandline International who were to provide equipment, munitions, and security contractors and, hopefully, an end to the Bougainville Crisis.

On 17 March 1997, Singirok shocked much of his military force, the government, the wider PNG population, Australia and the world. He declared the contract was cancelled; the Sandline personnel would be immediately removed from Papua New Guinea; and Chan and key ministers needed to either step down or aside, in preparation for an inquiry into Singirok's claims the contract was corrupt and the use of mercenaries unethical and unconstitutional. The nation came to a standstill; as there was rioting on the streets of Port Moresby, protests and parliament was blockaded. With democracy on the brink, Prime Minister Chan stepped aside and ultimately lost his re-election bid. The two inquiries into the Sandline Crisis that followed were inconclusive, so a sense of unresolved business hangs over *A Matter of Conscience.*

At 609 pages, *A Matter of Conscience* is a hefty tome. It consists of two parts. Part A is an in-depth retelling of the Sandline Crisis from Singirok's perspective, commencing with a chronology of key dates and events associated with Operation RAUSIM KWIK. Chapter One provides an initial background, leading to the engagement of Sandline. Over the following nine chapters, Singirok lays down his growing disquiet with the Chan Government's proposed contract and his ethical justification for his subsequent actions. Those familiar with the PNGDF will recognise Singirok's constant, and often unsuccessful, attempts to adequately resource his force as an unfortunate but familiar refrain. Part A concludes with a description of two inquiries conducted into the crisis.

Singirok reverts to his military training and presents Operation RAUSIM KWIK through the military appreciation process in Part A. This approach provides clarity around Singirok's thinking and the reader can follow his thoughts clearly. Of interest is Singirok's strong focus on controlling the public narrative, media relations and influencing international partners. He argues that convincing PNG's general population made his intent easier to achieve. In turn, Singirok also remarks on his concerns that Australia would have launched an intervention if the security situation in Port Moresby had deteriorated further. To address this, he details how he drew upon existing professional networks and in-country contacts to engage with Australia.

Part B is a relatively straightforward autobiographical retelling of his life: a boy of Karkar Island, a fateful decision to join the new PNGDF, friendships, marriages, operational deployments, training, casualties, politics and travel. Singirok takes his retelling to the present day, having found peace in his faith, marriage, children and gardening. His operational experience in Bougainville is a particular highlight, despite its difficult content.

The value in Part B is twofold. First, few PNG memoirs are written due to a cultural preference for history to be passed down through oral traditions. Second, Singirok's journey towards leadership represents in a microcosm a generation of PNGDF leaders – their intimate and ubiquitous engagement with the ADF at tactical, operational, strategic and training levels, and their heavy deployment burden, from Indonesia's borders on the west to Bougainville in the east, and even Vanuatu.

It is in the structure of *A Matter of Conscience* that the book is wanting. The decision to retell Operation RAUSIM KWIK first is an odd approach: it jumps straight into the action and stays there. Without the context of Part B, Part A is a harder read. The emotional ties Singirok developed with Bougainville, the tragic loss of personnel, and his operational successes and failures, all of which drove him towards the immense choice of a modern mutiny, only make sense once the story is told in full. It is an unfortunate choice, which muddles both narratives.

Importantly, Singirok describes the events of March 1997 from his own perspective. This means the days of rioting and insecurity that transfixed the world via television aren't really addressed, as Singirok focuses instead on the success of the operation from a military perspective.

Singirok includes, at length, the discussions he held in the lead-up to the mutiny. These provide fascinating insights into his thinking and the personnel involved. Singirok does not confirm if the extensive details are drawn from memory or notes.

Unfortunately, the dialogue can read as stilted at times, possibly an indication of either the length of time since the discussions took place, translating from tok pisin to English, or the author attempting to present the substance of the conversation, if not the exact verbiage. For historical purposes, the recollection of these conversations is significant.

Singirok has been sadly let down by poor editing – there are grammatical errors throughout. A further edit would have similarly reduced the duplication of information that appears; for example, Singirok explains who Sir Barry Holloway is three times. Unfortunately, the contents pages are split between Parts A and B, further reducing the accessibility of information. However, the book does include a helpful and robust index. One hopes that if a second edition of *A Matter of Conscience* is published, these issues will be addressed.

Despite these flaws, *A Matter of Conscience* is a deeply important work.

Journalists, academics, politicians and Sandline's leader, Tim Spicer, have already published perspectives on the Sandline Crisis. It is only reasonable that Singirok complete the anthology from his own viewpoint. Where the truth lies amongst all these views is likely an unresolvable debate. This work grants us a degree of historical analysis from a primary source not regularly seen in the Pacific. Singirok does not trouble himself with the nature of truth. *A Matter of Conscience* deals instead, as the title implies, with an ethical conundrum. Singirok argues that he took the only honourable path available to him, in a field of deeply flawed human beings.[1] It is the reader who needs to decide if Singirok's actions were right or wrong and whether the means justified the end.

In reading *A Matter of Conscience* one may consider its value as a topic of study at Australia's military education institutions. Singirok clearly puts the book within an ethical construct. The Australian Command and Staff Course's week-long examination of military ethics would be a sound arena for continued debate on Singirok's actions. How does a modern military officer express concerns with political decisions that impact their force? How does one display moral courage in the halls of Waigani (or Russell)? At the risk of their own career, does one follow orders when the legality is unknown? And, what are the appropriate mechanisms an officer can take to express concern to a public audience? It is easy to think the political sensitivities of the Australia–PNG defence relationship or the association with Bougainville's independence movement may preclude such discussions. However, Singirok himself recommends Operation RAUSIM

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1   Singirok, *A Matter of Conscience*, p 68.

KWIK as a topic of military education.[2] Perhaps the publication of *A Matter of Conscience*, by filling the gap in the existing anthology, will enable such study to commence.

Also of value are Singirok's insights into key PNG political and military leaders. He heaps praise on those loyal to him and is cutting in his disdain for opposing officers. He is, perhaps surprisingly, generally professional towards Spicer, an honour Spicer did not convey in return in his own autobiography.[3] While the generational changes since Operation RAUSIM KWIK mean few of the main actors remain in PNGDF service, the described personalities should be familiar to any interested PNG observer. Those still in service, who were junior officers at the time of the crisis, are now in critical engagement roles with Australia.

At the time of writing this review, Singirok was in Hollywood, pitching the book as the basis for a blockbuster thriller script.[4] He's right. Stripped of the poor editing and odd structure apparent in Singirok's work, the Sandline Crisis and those fateful days in March 1997 are a fascinating tale, filled with twists, complex characters, danger, politics and drama. This reviewer hopes he succeeds. Positioning Singirok at the centre of the story gives it a strong moral focus, and the richness of PNG life and depth of PNGDF service provides an absorbing background.

At the very least, *A Matter of Conscience* may enhance the ADF's awareness of our northern neighbour. Perhaps Singirok's success will encourage other Papua New Guinea and Pacific leaders to draft their memoirs – giving voice to a region so often spoken about in current security discourse, but rarely heard from.

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2   Singirok, *A Matter of Conscience*, p 234.

3   Tim Spicer, *An Unorthodox Soldier: Peace and War and the Sandline Affair: An Autobiography*, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh, 1999.

4   PNG News, 'PNG's retired Major General Jerry Singirok: Sandline hero to Hollywood movie pitch, country anxiously waits for pitch result', *Papua New Guinea Today*, 7 March 2023. https://news.pngfacts.com/2023/03/pngs-retired-major-general-jerry.html

Myths of war

Dr Mark Dapin

RN Presents, Radio National, ABC, 2019[5]

Reviewed by Dana Pham

Where have our myths of war come from, and what function do they serve? These are questions explored in the eight-part Radio National podcast series *Myths of War*, which looks for the truth in Australian war history and explores why we sometimes believe the opposite.

This series first went to air in December 2019, which may make this review seem a little old. But it appears to be no less relevant now as debunking myths of war has not been frequent or pervasive. The series is presented by historian Dr Mark Dapin[6] – a journalist, screenwriter and author, whose books are often found on literature shortlists – and consists of interviews with a range of war history subject-matter experts. The listener experience is enriched by relevant archival sounds, played at the just the right time in each episode, particularly for those short on time and in need of reliable, well-paced soundbites.

Did young women really hand out white feathers to young men who did not enlist during the First World War? The answer is yes. Their actions lead to injuries and even deaths, and they are the subject of the first episode in the series.[7] The white feather women were a phenomenon that started as the Order of the White Feather.

The Order started in Kent, England, as a conscriptionist response to lower than expected military recruitment rates. The Order used women to mindlessly shame men into volunteering by means of giving white feathers of cowardice to men wearing civilian clothes in public. But some men even if they wanted to enlist could not, for example, because they were held back by their employment in essential services.

White feather giving took a life of its own, eventually reaching Australia, and had an apparent impact on the conscription debate. So much so that in some cases, the white feather either became a tool of gaining sexual

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5 RN *Presents: Myths of War* is available via the ABC listen app: Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), 'ABC listen app', ABC, accessed 10 May 2023. https://www.abc.net.au/listen/listenapp

6 Radio National, 'Dr Mark Dapin', ABC, n.d., https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/mark-dapin/3162422

7 Mark Dapin, *Myths of War – The white feather women and their unwelcome gifts* [audio podcast], ABC Radio National, ep 1, 1 December 2019. https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rn-presents/the-white-feather-women-and-their-unwelcome-gifts/11692186

favour, or flirtation – something unrecognisable by the Tinder generation today. Unsurprisingly, feminist scholars tend to shy away from openly demythologising the white feather movement because of the inconvenience this poses for women's history.

Dr Dapin summed up the inconvenient truth, largely unknown today, as follows:

> It seems to me that people like to place themselves in a grand historical tradition, and hunt for illustrious ancestors … whether literally or ideologically. Everyone in Australia wants an Anzac in their family. It used to be they were looking for a convict. But the white feather tradition seems to have no heirs.

What a spicy first episode, setting a high bar for the next seven episodes to meet! Episode two is titled *Gallipoli: Anzac misremembered.*[1] One of the most famous and best-loved Australian accounts of the Gallipoli landing is … don't hate me for saying this … a fabrication. And I hate to stab you in the front for the second time but the most quoted quote was never actually said. If you are not sure

of the quote I'm referring to then listening to *Myths of War* is now your homework.

Episode three is *General Sir John Monash: a flattering self-portrait.*[2] General Monash is the only Jew to command an army in the First World War, and has been described in Australia as an outsider who won the war. But, how much of an outsider was he, and how much of the war did Australia win?

In a follow-up ABC article that provides some spoilers, Dr Dapin shared his thought that it is easier for people, Australian or not, to believe in simplistic and comforting stories of heroics over complicated and inconvenient truths about (anti-)heroes. 'I think [such] memory is coloured by intellectual and cultural fashions,' he said. 'We tend to forget that people in the past didn't always think the way we think today.'[3]

But in listening to episodes two and three especially, I could not help but conclude, that whilst history is and should be about the in-depth examination of what actually happened in the past, belief owes no historicity in order to drive the believer to find

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1   Mark Dapin, *Myths of War – Gallipoli: Anzac misremembered* [audio podcast], ABC Radio National, ep 2, 29 November 2019,
    https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rn-presents/gallipoli-anzac-misremembered/11692320

2   Mark Dapin, *Myths of War – General Sir John Monash: a flattering self portrait* [audio podcast], ABC Radio National, ep 3, 29 November 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rn-presents/general-sir-john-monash-flattering-portrait/11692332

3   Joey Watson and Ian Coombe for Myths of War, 'Myths of War – Four Australian military legends that are more myth than fact', *ABC News*. 13 December 2019 7:00 am.
    https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-14/four-australian-war-myths-put-to-the-test/11709628

meaning in life. Historical accuracy is not everything, but belief is.

Although the 2021 Census showed that more Australians continue to identify as 'no religion', the decision by *RN* to allow Dr Dapin to critically examine the *Myths of War* two years earlier would suggest that people still cling to strong beliefs systems, which may or may not include traditional religion. Indeed, yearly Anzac Day attendance levels appear to continue to sustain. Why does this church-like event continue yearly, and is not dying? Why do myths survive?

Belief systems survive because they answer three questions that every reflective person must ask. Who am I? Why am I here? How then shall I live? We will always ask those three questions because the human person is meaning seeking, and belief systems, including the Anzac Legend, have always been our greatest heritage of meaning. As you will hear in episode five, *Was there a battle for Australia?*[4], history is about evidence but it will not give an answer to those three questions that human beings ask.

Still, having listened to all eight episodes of the series, I can attest that the high bar was met consistently, and that *Myths of War* is well worth your time to re-examine Australian war history that you thought you knew.

Morality and ethics at war: bridging the gaps between the soldier and the state

Deane-Peter Baker

Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2021

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw
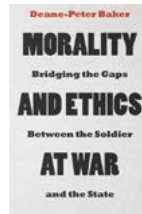
Deane-Peter Baker is an associate professor at UNSW Canberra, teaching military ethics at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He has also taught 'Moral Leadership in Complex Operations' to Army's 6th Brigade and a related course for Special Operations Command, out of which this book has emerged. That is the first strength of the book – that it is grounded in conversations with Australian soldiers and commanders and their exposure to moral dilemmas.

The second strength is that it pays attention to the heightened risk of 'moral injury' or lacerations to a

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4   Mark Dapin, *Myths of War – Was there a battle for Australia?* [audio podcast], ABC Radio National, ep 5, 30 December 2019.
     https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rn-presents/was-there-a-battle-for-australia/11692364

soldier's moral framework. Baker claims there is a critical gap between a soldier's moral identity and the ethics of war of the liberal democratic state, which sets soldiers up for moral injury. This is especially risky in the kind of complex and ambiguous conflicts faced today.

Baker's first solution is that soldiers, sailors and aviators need to adopt a particular identity – not as 'warrior', 'peacekeeper' or 'professional', which each has their advantages but do not adequately bridge the gap The identity he advocates is soldier as 'Guardian' who protects the weak and vulnerable, including civilians and non-combatants and who uses lethal voice only when necessary.

Baker's second solution is that we need to give attention not just to 'weak willed' individuals who need more stringent rules and better character training but recognise the environmental factors that heighten the risk of ethical failure. Thus it is not just about identifying or avoiding 'rotten apples' but helping soldiers avoid becoming rotten apples by keeping the barrels of military culture from becoming bad. The risk factors for ethical failure (and moral injury) that Baker helpfully unpacks and suggests need mitigating are: stress, surprise, visceral emotions (anger, fear and aggression), fatigue, anonymity, in-group loyalty, obedience, adolescence, cues and primes, animalistic dehumanisation and brain

injury. These insights are especially relevant for commanders seeking to foster a safe and inclusive culture for teams.

The most helpful chapter explores how to prepare and lead the Guardian: focusing ethics education on all ranks not just officers, integrating it throughout the training cycle, emphasising ethical 'embedded excellence' throughout the force not just in experts, and fostering mentoring in morals and ethical practice. I appreciated his development of the idea of needing more 'strategic moral corporals'. Baker also offers an 'ethical triangulation' methodology integrating virtue ethics, deontological moral theory and utilitarianism that is becoming an espoused decision-making framework for the Australian Army.

The book offers a thorough introduction to the history of ideas around military ethics to help soldiers attune their moral compass. For example, Baker espouses the value of the Just War Tradition but also suggests ways it needs re-contextualising as a 'Just War Continuum' – spread across whether to go to war (*jus ad bellum*), how to conduct a war (*jus in bello*), whether to continue or cease a war (*jus ex bello*) and ensuring justice after a war (*jus pos bellum*).

Another interesting connection is Baker's engagement with the work of Philip McCormack, ethicist and chaplain, who was appointed as the

British Army's 'Chief of Army Ethics'.[1] His task was to articulate the ground of the British Army's Values and Standards. McCormack said *respect* for an individual's human dignity and rights is what is central. This contention draws wisely on the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor.[2] Baker applauds this but also suggests what McCormack missed in not underlining Army's responsibility to the state, and where this can sometimes create tension for balancing loyalty to the state and to one's colleagues in arms with ethical responsibility.

Major General Susan Coyle, CSC DSM, initiated the 6th Brigade training that was part of the book's inspiration and wrote the foreword where she reflected on the importance of a philosophy of international relations that does not promote war but prioritises preserving peace, albeit by preparing to strongly and intelligently repel aggression:

> History, sadly, is littered with examples of leaders or individuals who have been judged to have failed or act appropriately. Hindsight is a wonderful tool; however, we need to ensure that we provide the environment or framework to ensure that our leaders are physically, psychologically and emotionally equipped to succeed.[3]

Morality and Ethics at War is a valuable resource for anyone preparing themselves or others for conducting war while avoiding ethical failure and undue moral injury. Its writing style is accessible and yet stretching in its challenge for thoughtful officers and soldiers. With seven concise chapters in less than 200 words it is not a concise PAM but neither is it too long to be off-putting. Some of the chapters would be ideal reading in themselves as course readings. For example, chapter 3 'Moral pain and mortal injury' offers 18 pages that relate the themes of the book to the recently labelled moral injury that is being acknowledged as a characteristic injury of complex and ambiguous modern military engagement. Chapter 6 'Risk factors' would be a helpful discussion starter for soldiers of any level to reflect on the situational factors and group ethos that can undermine ethical combat behaviours. Chapter 7 'Rising to the challenge: Preparing and leading the Guardian' would be an excellent professional military education discussion starter for instructors at *ab initio*, Initial Employment Training and unit levels.

1   Philip McCormack, *Grounding British Army values upon an ethical good* [PDF], Command and General Staff Foundation 2015, accessed 18 February 2023.
     http://www.cgscfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/McCormack-GroundingBritishArmyValues.pdf

2   Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1989.

3   Deane-Peter Baker, *Morality and Ethics at War: Bridging the Gaps Between the Solider and the State*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2020, pp xvii–ix.

One aspect of Baker's experience I would have liked to have seen more of in the book is review of how this training has been delivered to Australian Army units – where any resistance was and what was most effective. In other words, what is best practice for training and education in ethical decision-making that underpins other combat behaviours in Army? Moreover, what can we learn from similar or related initiatives in Navy and Air Force, and how specifically relevant are the frameworks of the book relevant in these broader and joint force contexts?

Nevertheless, given its origins in training and discussion with Australian Army units, and its relevance for contemporary operations, I consider *Morality and Ethics at War* as the most ideal contemporary text for military ethics for Australian soldiers and those responsible for leading and training them.

Obituary

In memoriam

Major General Jim Molan, AO, DSC (Rtd)
11 April 1950 – 16 January 2023

On 16 January 2023, Major General Jim Molan passed away after a brave battle with an aggressive form of cancer, at the age of seventy-two. He was a man of many parts – soldier, helicopter pilot, military diplomat, politician, media commentator and writer – an individual who contained within himself what the American poet Walt Whitman once called 'multitudes'. Much has been written about Jim Molan's military career in other tributes, particularly concerning his distinguished military service in Indonesia, East Timor and Iraq. Similarly, several obituaries have highlighted Molan's subsequent political career as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on border protection and main architect of the Abbot Government's Operation Sovereign Borders, the national counter–people smuggling initiative launched in 2013. Further assessments of Molan's career have emphasised his relentless advocacy of a stronger defence policy for Australia as a Liberal Senator for New South Wales between 2019 and 2023.

In contrast, this tribute seeks to honour Major General Molan's less well-known, but equally vital activities in improving and promoting the status of the Australian profession of arms. Molan was influential in three military areas. First, he played an important intellectual role in maintaining the Australian Army as a world-class land force. Second, he was a long-time supporter of improved professional military education stemming from his role as commander of the Australian Defence College (ADC) between 2002 and 2004. Finally, he was a strong advocate of upholding the art of warfighting as the essence of the profession of arms.

Molan's role in maintaining the status of the Australian Army began in the mid-1990s, as Australia grappled to come to terms with the post–Cold War evolution of a new globalised security environment. At this time, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in general and the Army, in particular, was in thrall to the Defence of Australia (DOA) doctrine based on continental geography. Central to DOA doctrine was the conversion of the Australian Army from an expeditionary force capable of combined arms warfare to one composed of light mobile task forces. The new force structure was designed to make the Army compatible with DOA's philosophy of a land force for low-level operations and 'minimum mass tactics' in short-warning conflict – code words for an Army structured to counter raids on Australian soil. The DOA land force vision was outlined officially in July 1994,

in the form of the *Army in the Twenty-First Century Review* (A21 Review) and the November 1994 White Paper, *Defending Australia.* The A21 Review subsequently evolved into the 1997 military policy, *Restructuring the Australian Army* (RTA).

The difficulty with the A21-RTA scheme was threefold in that that it ran contrary to combined arms logic; ignored the history of Australia's military experience of expeditionary warfare; and discounted the role of the Army as an important tool of national statecraft. Moreover, the RTA scheme threatened the Australian Army's carefully crafted international standing as a force capable of interoperability with its ABCA (American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies) cousins. In 1996, Brigadier Jim Molan then in command of the 1st Brigade – the very formation tasked with testing A21-RTA concept – took part in the ABCA Exercise *Cascade Peak 96*. Molan's subsequent February 1997 ABCA post-exercise report was a seminal work in ending the A21-RTA experiment and ensuring the Army adhered to both a combined arms philosophy and its historical role as a versatile instrument of Australian statecraft.

What became known as the Molan Report demonstrated that a DOA vision of dispersed task forces without significant protected mobility was unworkable. If the RTA scheme proceeded, the Australian Army would become little more than a larger version of a Long-Range Desert Group, equipped with an unrealistic doctrine of minimum mass tactics across the vast distances of northern Australia in a will-o-the wisp policy. Based on his ABCA experience, Molan stated unequivocally that a DOA force structure would 'strike at the very heart of [Army] interoperability and credibility'. He went on to point out that the 1st Brigade had only succeeded in playing a significant role in the ABCA exercise because of its its armoured components. In a dagger thrust to the heart of Army force modelling for DOA, Molan observed that had his brigade concentrated on the low-level short-warning conflict doctrine promoted since 1994, his formation would have 'been incapable of performing at anything like the standard required in this important [ABCA] activity, and the credibility of the Army as a whole would have been in question'.

The Molan Report became the intellectual basis for the Army's think tank, the Land Warfare Studies Centre, to conduct further in-depth research into the strategy-force mismatch reflected by the proposed Army reorgansation. The Molan Report also assisted in making the case for an alternate force structure based on an offshore role for the land force through espousal of a maritime concept of strategy. The latter strategy involved the retention of combined arms for manoeuvre operations in the littoral environment. The Army's maritime strategy approach also promoted the development of a credible ADF amphibious capability for operations in the 'air-sea-land' bridge in the island archipelago to

the north. Following a change of government in 1996, a maritime concept of strategy was championed by Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, the Chief of Army between 1998 and 2000. Hickling's approach was validated when the Australian Army was catapulted into its largest offshore commitment since Vietnam, in the form of the East Timor intervention. The East Timor mission saw the deployment of 5,000 troops and involved the direct opposite of the A21-RTA vision of a continental military future. Without the seminal 1997 Molan Report as primary evidence of the unsuitability of RTA force structure, the Army would have been far less prepared for East Timor and the outcome of the intervention itself far more problematical.

Jim Molan was also a long-time supporter of improved professional military education. In 2003, when the Land Warfare Studies Centre ran a Rowell Profession of Arms Seminar investigating the adoption of an advanced warfighting course, Major General Molan, then Commander of the ADC, was a prominent attendee and supporter of the initiative. He warned, however, that any Australian advanced warfare course needed to be joint, not single service, and be post-Command and Staff College in its curriculum. He was right and it took almost 20 years for such a joint initiative to come to fruition in May 2022, in the form of the ADC's Advanced Military Studies (AMS) course. Unfortunately, Molan was too ill in 2022 to attend the AMS course, but he was one of its intellectual fathers.

During his service as Chief of Operations, Multinational Force in Iraq, between 2004 and 2005, Molan observed and participated in combat missions, including the ferocity of the 2004 second battle of Fallujah. For his service, he received the Australian Distinguished Service Cross and the American Legion of Merit decoration. His experience in Iraq convinced him that the ADF was unprepared for the kind of intensive all-arms fighting that he witnessed in Iraq. Molan's views of ADF unpreparedness did not endear him to several figures in Australia's Defence hierarchy. Nonetheless, given his experience and knowledge – later reflected in his well-regarded memoir, *Running the War in Iraq*[1]– he was a hard professional soldier to ignore. In 2006, he became Adviser on Joint Warfighting Concepts and Lessons Learned to the Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF). In this position, he formed a small cadre of military experts (including the present writer and Major General Roger Powell) to examine an Australian approach to future warfare and operational art, which – over time and against considerable internal opposition – resulted in curriculum improvements at the ADC, but never to the exacting standards Molan wanted.

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1   Jim Molan, *Running the War in Iraq*, HarperCollins Publishers Australia, 2008.

When he retired from the Army in April 2008, Molan found the path of the pen and politics to be fruitful methods in influencing defence and national security matters. As a Liberal Senator, he served as a member of both the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (2018–19) and the Parliamentary Joint Committee of Intelligence and Security (2019–23). Despite being a politician, Molan never lost touch with his military roots and, in 2019, readily agreed to speak at the ADC's inaugural *Strategos* short course for 05 officers and EL1 civilian officials on a subject close to his heart: the formulation of a national security strategy. As he used to say, 'whatever the security question, the answer is a National Security Strategy.' As a senator, Molan was an advocate of stronger parliamentary control over defence and security and a constant voice warning the nation of its unpreparedness as Sino-American strategic competition intensified in the Indo-Pacific and Australia's strategic circumstances rapidly deteriorated.

Molan's last book, *Danger on Our Doorstep*[2] was a *cri de coeur* for Australia to urgently defend itself by developing a comprehensive national security strategy with appropriate funding. Many of his ideas including acquiring long-range strike missiles, developing ballistic missile defence, hardening of northern bases, improving domestic resilience, and creating a larger ADF are reflected in the 2023 *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*.[3] Molan would surely have welcomed this policy document, but he would have raised the question of why such an analysis was not situated in an Integrated Review on National Security (IRoNS).
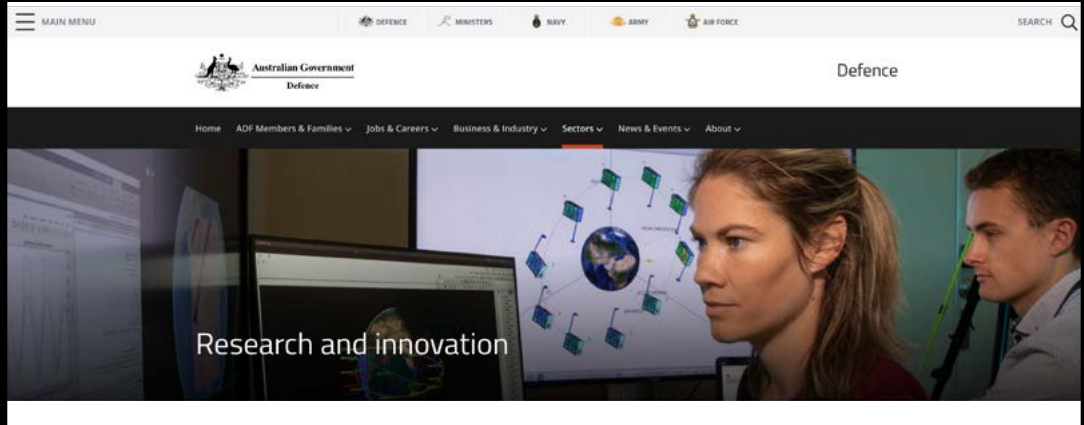
In conclusion, Jim Molan was one of the finest Australian Army generals of the post–Cold War era. He was every inch a professional soldier with firm moral convictions and a personal integrity encased in a disarming, if gruff, charm that he transferred successfully to the world of politics. He could be frank and candid and did not suffer fools easily; he was especially impatient with what he called 'experts in admiring rather than solving problems'. We are much the poorer for his passing at a time when problem-solving wise heads like his have become rare in our strategy and statecraft. Jim Molan's military and political career are a proud testament to a life dedicated to the pursuit of virtuous service. The words of the Roman philosopher, Seneca, commend themselves to his memory: *Vivit post funera virtus.*[4]

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2   Jim Molan, *Danger on our Doorstep*, HarperCollins Publishers Australia, 2022.

3   Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, Australian Government, Canberra, 2023. https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review

4   Virtue lives after the funeral.

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