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Inquiry into Australia's Maritime Strategy

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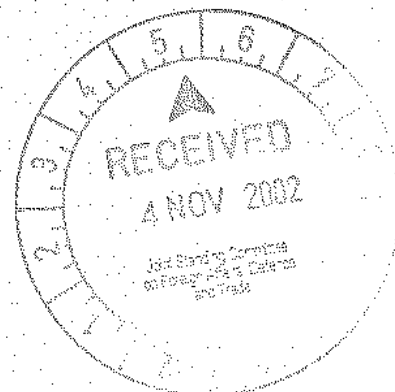
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Australia's Maritime Strategy in a protean security environment: Confronting the Asymmetric challenge.

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ABSTRACT

The challenge of providing security in what Professor Eliot Cohen has called 'the Age of Surprises' represents a significant challenge to the capabilities of conventional military forces. To a large degree this is the consequence of blinkered strategic thinking that has continued to apply Cold War assumptions to what must now be identified as a protean security environment. Demonstrated conditions of global insecurity and the threat posed by destructive, mass-casualty asymmetric attacks requires the national security establishment to formulate a novel approach to national security. Revolutionary change has occurred in the global strategic environment. Our strategic outlook needs to adapt to deal with the challenges posed by the appearance of new actors on the international stage and the emergence of adversaries willing to wage war without any limitations on their conduct.

Clearly, a continental state that occupies an oceanic environment requires a Maritime concept of strategy. However, the emergence of a serious asymmetric threat to Australian interests since September 11 has demonstrated that the formulation of that strategy contained in the White Paper *Defence 2000* is essentially hollow. In the era of globalisation, Australia's security interests are not limited to the threat of invasion by another state. Moreover, the most immediate, and continuing, threat to Australian security comes not from conventional opponents waging war in conventional ways, but from novel adversaries who are prepared to wage new forms of warfare to secure their objectives. Terrorist groups and their state-based supporters do not fight to gain territory

or win resources. They are attempting to impose their interests on others. These altered objectives represent a paradigm shift in the form, if not the nature, of armed conflict and they have dramatic implications for our future strategic outlook. We need to adjust our strategic vision to the reality of a world where no power can challenge the United States in conventional terms. Accordingly, rogue states and non-state actors alike will be tempted to resort to modes of attack previously considered unacceptable.

The threat posed by asymmetric attack—particularly where non-state actors are involved—requires more than a purely defensive response based on protecting the national heartland. The role of the military is to fight and its capabilities are limited when resources are tied up in asset protection. Homeland security is not assured by focusing military resources on a purely defensive posture. Likewise, given the transnational nature of protean insecurity, defence self-reliance is no longer a credible option.

Disclaimer

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Australia's Maritime Strategy in a protean security environment: Confronting the Asymmetric challenge.

[A] technological elite among the citizenry have broken down the door and barged in uninvited, making it impossible for professional soldiers with their concepts of professionalized warfare to ignore challenges that are somewhat embarrassing.

Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 1999.¹

Introduction

Western liberal democracies such as Australia are being forced to adjust their strategic thinking to deal with the novel circumstances of what must now be viewed as a protean security environment. The protean nature of the security dilemma means that contemporary security concerns have adopted a range of different forms and characters—no longer are states solely pre-occupied with the threats posed by other states. Responding to the new insecurity, states have reacted in the same way as a person caught unexpectedly nude—they have sought to shield their most exposed parts. This strategy is essentially reactive and will do little to improve conditions of long-term human or economic security. Meanwhile we see conventional military establishments employed in ways for which they are ill-suited, ineffective and inefficient.

The description of Australia's Maritime Strategy contained in the White Paper *Defence 2000* emphasises a defensive policy of denial. It states that: 'The key to defending Australia is to control the air and sea approaches to our continent, so as to deny them to hostile ships and aircraft'.² In the same place the role of the army is limited to defeating incursions on Australian territory and providing base security for air and naval forces. This formulation is based on a concept of strategic geography that has been made increasingly redundant by the protean insecurities of a globalised world. It also fails to recognise that Australia's littoral environment is defined not by an 'air-sea' gap, but by an 'air-land-sea' gap.

¹ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, Beijing, February 1999, p. 45. http://www.infowar.com/mil_c4i/00/unrestrictedwarfare.pdf, downloaded 22 August 2002.

² Department of Defence, *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000, p. 47.

By itself, simply labelling the denial of the air-land-sea gap to hostile ships and aircraft does not amount to a maritime strategy. It is merely an approach to dealing with one variety of threat—a contingency that is increasingly less likely to arise. A true maritime strategy is driven by an awareness of all aspects of the national interest that are affected by our oceanic environment. As Professor John Hattendorf, Director of the Advanced Research Department at the United States' Naval War College, has written:

A maritime strategy is the comprehensive direction of all aspects of national power to achieve specific policy goals in a specific situation by exercising some degree of control at sea. In understanding the general concepts underlying maritime strategy, there are no absolute dicta, only a constantly evolving theory that is ever in need of modification and correction through our understanding of maritime history, our changing experiences and challenges, and our own reflective analysis in history in the light of those experiences.³

As the attack on Australian citizens in Bali on 12 October 2002 graphically demonstrated, Australia's interests and citizens are represented offshore. Our strategic circumstances are shaped by events on land in the archipelago to our north, as well as in the island states of the Pacific. Australian security is not well served by a strategy of denial. Instead, Australia requires the ability to project its national power to provide security and to help shape the international strategic environment. We need to come to terms with a world in which only one state—the United States—can honestly expect to be self-reliant in its own defence. We need to prepare our forces and our national policy for the challenges of global strategic interdependence. The issue is no longer the one dimensional task of territorial defence, it is the ability to act to provide security for Australian citizens, their property and their freedom to pursue their way of life. To achieve this objective we need to integrate our *military* strategy into a broader concept of *national* strategy. That national strategic outlook requires an integrated, 'all-of-nation' approach that has been lacking in the stove-piped, departmentalised policies of the past.

The challenge for contemporary military forces is to adapt to a world in which they no longer stand alone as the defensive bulwark on the ramparts of the nation, but are fully

³ John B. Hattendorf, 'What is a Maritime Strategy?', in *In Search of a Maritime Strategy*, David Stevens (ed.), Canberra Paper on Strategy and Defence, No. 119, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997, p. 18.

integrated into the security establishment. Most Western governments are increasingly making demands of their military forces and for a wider range of operations than ever before. Consequently, armed forces must provide a much wider range of capabilities than in the past. If the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is to remain relevant in the contemporary global security environment it must be capable of a far greater degree of force projection than previously thought possible.

Confronting our strategic legacy

For thirty years, Australian Defence policy has been made in the shadow of the Vietnam War. The failure to achieve Australian objectives in that conflict led to national security strategy being conflated with a particularly narrow form of military strategy. The current reassessment of our maritime strategy comes at the end of a period during which the prevailing attitude to the military was at best indifference and which more often questioned the need for the continuing existence of an Australian warfighting capacity. However, since the end of the Cold War the Australian Defence Force has been involved in an escalating tempo of military operations ranging from Somalia, Rwanda, Cambodia, the Gulf, and Afghanistan to Bougainville, the Solomons and most notably East Timor. Although the strategic guidance received by the ADF has made territorial defence the primary priority, the strategic reality is that our forces have been employed in a variety of roles intended to promote international security. Most of these operations have required a substantial land force component. Australian troops are once again serving in an expeditionary capacity overseas and have made a significant contribution to regional and global security. The conditions of insecurity arising from the War on Terrorism appear to guarantee that Australian troops will continue to serve in coalition with other military forces in regional and extra-regional theatres.

The era of strategic paralysis that followed Vietnam appears to be ending, but the bureaucratic and academic policy community that emerged in the aftermath of the war needs reminding that the latter stages of Cold War stasis were the exception in Australia's strategic circumstances. Popular perceptions of the implications of the United States' Guam Doctrine have exercised undue influence on Australian policy for over thirty years. Appalled by the escalating American casualty count in Vietnam, President Nixon announced in 1969 that allies such as Australia had primary responsibility for their

own security in regional conflicts.⁴ Both before President Nixon proclaimed that doctrine and since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the international scene has been dominated by conditions of protean insecurity.

The most significant strategic consequence of the Vietnam War was that it facilitated the abandonment of the long-standing policy of 'Forward Defence' that had prevailed during the 1950s and 1960s. The realities imposed by American the adoption of the Guam Doctrine had already led to a significant re-assessment of this policy. In March 1972, D.E. Fairbairn, the Minister for Defence in the McMahon Liberal Government tabled the Department of Defence's *Australian Defence Review* in Parliament. While accepting the need for greater self-reliance the review reiterated the importance of the defence force continuing to make an active contribution to regional stability. It rejected a formulaic approach to defence policy and held that:

The best defence of Australia's interests is seen to go beyond the defence of Australian territory alone. It calls for military capability, evident to other countries, to project Australian strength beyond the continental boundaries. In this view Australian security would be best promoted if, drawing on increasingly self-reliant military strength, we continue to recognise and support the security interests which we share with those who are a part of our special strategic environment. This implies a need to select carefully what we are capable of and what serves to strengthen our friends in that environment.⁵

While stressing that Australia would need to be more self-reliant, the review reflected the fact that President Nixon's Guam Doctrine did not represent total disengagement from the region. In fact it contained guarantees that the United States would provide military and economic assistance to its allies if they were attacked. Accordingly 'greater self-reliance' was interpreted to mean that Australia would not rely on its allies for integral operational support but would build increased self-sufficiency in respect of strategic lift, reconnaissance, artillery, air strike and sea control.⁶ It did not mean, as it has come to mean that Australia felt that it was possible 'to defend Australia without relying on the combat forces of other countries' □ a laudable but perhaps impossibly ambitious aim.⁷ At

⁴ President Richard M. Nixon, Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam, 3 November 1969, http://www.nixonfoundation.org/Research_Center/1969_pdf_files/1969_0425.pdf

⁵ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1972, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 27, para. 59.

⁷ *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2000, p. xi.

some time during the years that followed the objective of assuring that Australian forces could conduct operations with their own dedicated support morphed into the policy that became known as 'Fortress Australia'.

The need for a greater degree of operational self-reliance was not a concept that was contested before or after the 1972 Federal election.⁸ Instead the main focus of strategic policy in the years following Australian disengagement from South-East Asia was the focus on the territorial defence of Australia. The adoption of this policy was confirmed by the 1976 Defence White Paper. This document was commissioned by the Labor Government, but released by its successor Liberal Government.⁹

Two documents have been most influential in shaping the direction of Australian strategic policy in the thirty years since the end of Australia's involvement in Vietnam. These are Dr Paul Dibb's *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* which was submitted to the Minister of Defence in 1986 and the 1987 Defence White Paper that was based on its findings.¹⁰ The Dibb Report was undoubtedly the most comprehensive analysis of Australia's defence situation yet undertaken. Yet it was the last such review undertaken in the context of the international situation that existed before the dawning of the information age and during the Cold War. While stating that Australia was 'one of the most secure countries in the world' it proposed 'a strategy of denial'.¹¹ It concluded that Australia's 'most important defence planning concern is to ensure that an enemy would have substantial difficulty in crossing the sea and air gap' to Australia's north.¹² In the context of the Cold War, with the United States still badly scarred by the Vietnam experience and still focusing on the defence of Western Europe these attitudes were defensible. They did not, however, reflect a national security strategy that took into account non-state based threats to Australia—only a military strategy that was defensive and reactive. It was an appropriate stop-gap policy during a period of superpower

⁸ See for example: 'Defence Policy' Statement issued at press conference held in Brisbane, 18 October 1971 by Mr E.G. Whitlam and Mr L.H. Barnard; L. Barnard M.P., Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Statement on Defence (White Paper) 11 April 1972; *Extracts in Defence and Foreign Affairs from the Australian Labor Party's Platform, Constitution and Rules*, as approved by the 30th Federal Conference, 1973 Surfing Paradise.

⁹ See *Australian Defence*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976, p. 10.

¹⁰ Paul Dibb, *A Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1986; Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1987.

¹¹ Dibb, *A Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, pp. 1, 3, 174-6.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 5.

deadlock. Neither the Dobb Report or the 1987 White Paper developed anything more than the strategy of denial—both focused on immediate defence capabilities and Australia's strategic setting. The White Paper affirmed that the defence of Australia was based on the concept of defence in depth.¹³

The end of the Cold War and the emergence of novel global information, economic, political and social networks radically altered Australia's strategic situation and should have prompted a reassessment of Australia's strategic and defence policies. This did not occur. *Defending Australia*, the 1994 Defence White Paper reiterated the nostrums of territorial defence and self-reliance and emphasised that Australia's 'strategic geography is central in planning our defence posture and capabilities'.¹⁴ During a period of globalisation, when the significance of strategic geography as the dominant factor in national security was clearly diminishing, the Department of Defence was still clinging to the verities of the past. That position was consolidated with the Department's own review, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, released in 1997 and, as already demonstrated, remains evident in the current White Paper.¹⁵

Despite the priority placed on territorial defence, within three years of the 1987 White Paper the ADF was providing naval assets to the war for the liberation of Kuwait. Three years after that an infantry battalion group was deployed on a complex peace enforcement operation in Somalia and saw combat. Australia played a major part in peace operations in Cambodia and has sent its troops in harm's way in Rwanda, Bougainville and the Solomons. In 1999, the ADF mounted and commanded the international operation to restore peace and security in East Timor and has continued to provide the largest contingent in the multinational UN force that took over responsibility for that country. Australian ground troops were once again conducting operations in South East Asia. Peculiarly, no government had required the ADF to prepare for the command of a multinational military operation offshore, though once the contingency arose the military was expected to deal with the problem. The prevailing strategic orthodoxy was still dictated by the assumptions that had been derived from the political

¹³ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987*, p. 31.

¹⁴ *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994, p. 21.

¹⁵ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Defence Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra, 1997, pp. 8-10.

struggles over Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The actual employment of the ADF—and the Army in particular—had nothing in common with that guidance.

Misreading the lessons of our involvement in Vietnam did a great deal of harm to Australia's strategic vision and the capacity of its armed forces to do the national bidding. No threat-based strategic scenario ever eventuated—nor was it ever likely to—at least if Australia was expecting to be self-reliant in its own defence. However, at the time of writing, Australia is counting the cost of the most violent attack on its citizens since the Second World War. It is well past time that Australia develops a concept of strategy that matches its actual security environment.

Revolutionary change in our strategic circumstances

Conventional military forces can provide only a limited range of capabilities to deal with the exceedingly variable security concerns facing modern governments. Asymmetric modes of violence as well as attacks on the civil infrastructure of a state may be adopted by non-state actors such as religious and political groups, criminals, war lords in failed states and even single issue groups such as radical environmentalists and economic luddites. It is not possible any more to draw an artificial distinction between defence—which is what military forces do—and state security, which is the province of police forces. This is not to say that the armed services should seek to develop constabulary functions. The American strategic iconoclast Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters has forcibly made the point that 'the military is not a surgical instrument—it is a sledgehammer. It is for breaking bones and smashing in skulls.'¹⁶ Police forces and intelligence organisations are the shield of the state—its armed forces should be its unsheathed sword. Neither is useful without the other, to win the fight they need to be wielded with precision and in coordination.

Military establishments are accustomed to contending with the security problems faced by the prospect of conventional inter-state war. That threat has not gone away, but in the aftermath of the Cold War it is only one of a suite of threats and security concerns confronting states. Ralph Peters has painted a world in which defence forces will have to counter the threat posed by '“warriors”—erratic primitives of shifting allegiance,

habituated to violence, with no stake in civil order'.¹⁷ We recognise them in the militias of the former Yugoslavia, in Chechnya, East Timor and Sierra Leone. We see them in the narco-marxist groups that infest south and central America. They exist in the armies of the war lords of Afghanistan, Somalia and the Sudan. While in the past we could depend on these groups being quarantined in the Third World, they are beginning to adapt themselves to the era of globalisation and are becoming transnational in nature. As the events of September 11, and most recently in Bali, demonstrated, globalisation has given them the opportunity to travel, to construct alliances between disaffected groups and to find new sources of funding. In our new world these 'warriors' provide the foot soldiers of underground terrorist groups like al-Qu'aeda, Hamas, the Abu Nidal organisation and the Irish Republican Army. Peters forecasts that in our immediate future:

There will be fewer classic wars but more violence. While conventional war will remain the means of last resort to resolve interstate confrontations, *the majority of conflicts will be asymmetrical*, with a state or coalition of states only one of the possible participants. The rise of nonstate threats is a tremendous problem for Western governments and militaries, because we are legally and behaviorally prepared to fight only other legal-basis states—mirror images of ourselves—at a time when state power and substance are declining worldwide.¹⁸

The battlespace inhabited by these warriors is no longer just the mean streets and jungles of marginalised countries. They can, and increasingly will, bring their brand of warfare to the hitherto secure First World. Consequently, armed forces need to consider how and where they will engage these enemies. Ideally, with good intelligence and demonstrable evidence of their plans they can be interdicted before they launch their attacks. For that to happen, countries that are organised against terrorism will have to cooperate to maintain sufficient precision strike forces to be able to conduct operations on a global scale.

However, we do not inhabit an ideal world. It will not always be possible to interdict attacks before they occur, and in those circumstances the military will play a part in crisis response. The main role of the armed forces is not to provide border and key asset protection and emergency services, though it may supplement the civilian agencies charged with those functions. Australia's professional armed forces, in cooperation with

¹⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters (USA-Ret.), *Future War*, BBC Television, Final episode.

¹⁷ Ralph Peters, *Fighting for the Future: Will America Triumph?* Stackpole Books, Mechanisburg, PA, 1999, p. 32. (Emphasis added)

their traditional allies, need to be capable of conducting operations that will deny 'warriors' any place of refuge. On occasion this might involve destroying rogue states, though more commonly it will mean defeating asymmetric foes in the failed states that they inhabit and then establishing the preconditions for civil reconstruction. This is the greatest contribution that military forces can make to national defence and it is not that great a departure from their traditional role.

Whether we care to admit it or not, the deterrent effect afforded by the armed forces of legitimate states underpins the security of our national and international systems. However, in a protean security environment that protection is only available when it is credible. Consequently conventional defence forces need to establish seamless links with the other organs of the national security establishment. What is more, those synergies have to be developed in common with other states that face the same threats.

Countries like Australia are generally ill-prepared to adapt to a strategic situation where the main threats to the physical and economic well-being of their citizens emanate, not from other states, but from fundamentalist sects, non-viable nations, non-state actors and virtual associations. Traditional departments of defence have not paid much attention to those 'non-military security issues' that cannot be dealt with by the application of directed violence. With the end of the bi-polar deadlock that characterised the period of the cold war, the nature of human conflict has reverted to a more atavistic state.

Professor Eliot Cohen, head of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Washington has made a useful analogy with the circumstances that prevailed during the Middle Ages. He points out that in the medieval period: 'a number of entities waged war—states, to be sure, but also crusading movements, religious orders, principalities, and entrepreneurs'.¹⁹ Those entities are with us once more. In the networked era of the global economy, of international information exchange and western cultural ascendancy, sufficient of those groups have the will and the capability to wage war or at least conduct political violence. We have only to think of organisations such as al-Qu'aeda, Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council, the Red Brigades, Aum Shinrikyo, Hamas and Jemaah Islamiah. Militant virtual associations

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 10.

such as S11 and some radical animal liberation groups have demonstrated a propensity to employ violence for political ends.

When violence is used against whole societies for political ends, it cannot be simply dismissed as a criminal act. The intention of the aggressor is to wage war, and in some circumstances a military response will have to play a part in the security operations that follow. The military is most likely to become involved in circumstances where states or aspiring states sponsor terrorist groups or resort to terrorism themselves. The list of states that conduct asymmetric conflict by proxy is a long one and has included: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, North Korea, the Sudan and Syria. Other forms of asymmetric attack on behalf of states have become common. In the wake of both the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the April 2001 spy plane incident, computer hackers located in China launched a number of coordinated attacks on United States Government, financial and public utilities websites.²⁰ Although it is not suggested that these cyber-attacks were undertaken at the behest of the government of the People's Republic of China they do demonstrate a disturbing new realm in which asymmetric attacks might take place—and with devastating consequences. Perhaps most the most alarming aspect of these developments is the possibility that the conventions that have governed the way that states make war will break down under the influence of new forms of war and new adversaries.

This last possibility is one that was taken up by Senior Colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in their 1999 book *Unrestricted Warfare*. The book, which received some tacit endorsement from the PLA leadership, suggests that weak states might defeat stronger states by using other means than force on force conflict. The book considers the use of tools such as terrorism, cyber attack, psychological warfare and weapons of mass destruction. While states will usually resile from such methods for fear of greater retaliation, there is no guarantee that a desperate rogue regime might not see them as weapons of last resort.

¹⁹ Eliot A. Cohen, 'A Tale of Two Secretaries', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June, 2002, www.foreignaffairs.org, downloaded 22 August 2002.

²⁰ CNN, 'Hackers attack US government websites in protest of Chinese Embassy bombing', 10 May 1999, <http://www.cnn.com/TECH/computing/9905/10/hack.attack/>; iDefense Inc, 'Will Chinese Hackers Attack the US Again', 22 April 2002, <http://www.iddefense.com/Intell/CI041002.html>; Kevin Anderson, 'US fears Chinese hack attack, BBC news, 28 April 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1301327.stm>; Robert Vamosi, 'Is China ground zero for hackers?' 28 August 2001, <http://zdnet.com.com/2100-1107-504010.html?legacy=zdn>, downloaded 27 August 2002.

Accordingly, it may not matter where threats emanate from, what does matter is the extraordinary vulnerability of contemporary societies to destructive attack. In this sense, Qiao and Wang and those who conceive of conflict in protean terms are the worthy heirs of Clausewitz. The venerable German argued that war was 'the continuation of policy by other means' and that consequently war was 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will'.²¹ In early nineteenth century Europe, when Clausewitz was writing his classic work, it was difficult to conceive of modes of force other than military power which could compel whole peoples to do one's will. In our highly urbanised, networked, technologically reliant society this is no longer the case. Qiao and Wang point out that war is not obsolete, 'it has only re-invaded human society in a more complex, more extensive, more concealed and more subtle manner'. It has metamorphised in such a way that:

The new principles of war are no longer 'using armed force to compel the enemy to submit to one's will', but rather are 'using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one's interests'.²²

The shift of emphasis from the crude imposition of one's will to the more subtle compulsion that comes with wielding influence is one that empowers the new species of non-state actor. Not since the rise of the nation state as the ultimate repository of political power have other entities been able to wage war with any realistic expectation of achieving their ends. Two aspects of globalisation—the internationalisation of access to information, combined with the ready availability of weapons that can target the cohesion of the state—have changed all that. Even loosely organised interest groups can now make the sort of 'grand' history that has been the almost exclusive province of the state for three and a half centuries.

In the Western world, sovereign states consolidated their almost exclusive monopoly on military and police power from the middle of the seventeenth century. During this period, the legitimacy of individual states and the international system they formed was based on

²¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed and trans. M. Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1989, pp. 77, 75.

²² Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, pp. 6-7.

the construction of an elaborate set of understandings about the way in which force could be used. Warfare became incredibly destructive, but the predominant principle of international affairs was the preservation of a balance of power. The sovereign state might be imperfect, but it was widely held to produce a form of symmetry. Like states could relate to like states.

The consequences of this balance were predictable. States sought to compete with each other in conventional ways. They built up their military forces to guarantee victory—even if that involved attrition. As Cohen pointed out, ‘the dominant form of military power consisted of large forces equipped for an all out contest of limited duration’.²³ Land, sea and later air forces developed similar capabilities and planned to defeat each other either by the use of mass or by physical manoeuvre. The period of nuclear stand-off merely served to confirm the symmetric element that exists in the conflict that occurs between states. In the aftermath of the Cold War the greatest challenge to national defence establishments has been the emergence of an almost infinite variety of other security concerns. This situation is not just the consequence of the inherently pessimistic outlook of strategic planners. Although the threat of a massive nuclear exchange has receded, the apparent willingness of marginalised groups and rogue regimes to use mass casualty terrorism to further their ends is a new and extremely worrying development.

‘Homeland Defence’ and asymmetric threats

Although the main argument of this submission is that the only way to deal with conditions of protean insecurity is develop versatile and integrated security capabilities, the specific threat that asymmetric attacks pose to the domestic population and vital national assets requires some definition. Australia can never be secure in an insecure world—its population and its interests extend far beyond its territorial borders. Nonetheless, there should be a sphere of national policy that is devoted to dealing with those security issues that fall between the stovepipes of the defence, police and intelligence establishments. In a recent speech at the Australian Defence College, the Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill pointed out that:

²³ Cohen, ‘A Tale of Two Secretaries’

As elsewhere our institutions are still struggling to come to grips with these challenges and to mount the sort of holistic, inter-agency responses required to meet them. Energetic and concerted diplomacy, law enforcement and intelligence cooperation and aid are fundamental to these efforts. But governments—including the Australian Government—are increasingly turning to the military to provide solutions to an ever expanding range of problems close to home and far away.²⁴

The American response to the September 11 attacks is instructive. Faced with attacks within its own country, the Bush Administration moved fast to establish an Office of Homeland Security under Governor Tom Ridge. His first task was to produce a *National Strategy for Homeland Security*.²⁵ This document was released in July 2002 and represents a valuable basis for the creation of a 'whole-of-government' approach to the threats facing the United States. Of course, Australia inhabits a different strategic environment and has significantly different administrative and constitutional processes. Nonetheless, the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* describes four 'foundations' for homeland security that might be adopted with profit by Australia. They are: law, science and technology, information sharing and systems, and international cooperation.²⁶ As a conceptual framework for evaluating homeland security measures they represent the strengths of an information age, western democracy.

The national strategy adopts a restrictive definition of homeland security—which is just as well because too many pundits sought to bring all aspects of national security under this one banner. Homeland security must be a sub-set of broader national interests if it is to have any meaning or value. 'Homeland security' is defined as 'a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist acts within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur'.²⁷ Special attention is given to protecting against, and preparing for what are termed 'catastrophic threats'. The focus on terrorism is probably too limiting, because in the transnational conflict sparked by the events of September 11, it is worthwhile identifying the full range of threats to an open society. Nonetheless, the Office of Homeland Security determined that:

²⁴ Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, 'Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence', Address to the Defence and Strategic Studies Course, Australian Defence College, Canberra, 18 June, 2002, www.minister.defence.gov.au/HillSpeechtpl.cfm?CurrentId=1605, downloaded 25 June 2002.

²⁵ Office of Homeland Security, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, The White House, Washington D.C., July 2002.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

The greatest risk of mass casualties, massive property loss, and immense social disruption comes from weapons of mass destruction, strategic information warfare, attacks on critical infrastructure, and attacks on the highest leadership of government.²⁸

Within the territorial borders of the state, such attacks by non-state actors are terrorist, but they also belong to the larger category of asymmetric threats. It is conceivable that these methods could be employed by a variety of entities—including states. We need to come to an understanding of the extent of the threat that asymmetric methods pose to the established order.

Defining asymmetric threats

The fact that all states are different in the extent of their power has made it difficult to arrive at a working definition of asymmetry. It is important to draw a distinction between, on the one hand, the asymmetries that exist between all organisations (including states) in terms of the extent of their military capabilities and on the other, the application of asymmetric strategy in armed conflict. Some have sought to simplify asymmetry—arguing that it is what happens when a non-state actor attacks a state. Others have argued that all conflict is asymmetric because all opponents are mismatched in some way. Neither of these arguments is sustainable because neither takes into account the strategic objectives of the party that feels that it needs to resort to asymmetry. Asymmetric threats are most frightening because an opponent feels free to play by different rules and in a way which one finds difficult to counter. Asymmetric threats belong to a province of conflict that is much less predictable than the more ordered competition that takes place between parties that have more to gain by observing certain limits on conflict.

Steven Metz and Douglas Johnson of the US Army's Strategic Studies Institute have proposed what is probably the most comprehensive definition of asymmetry. They argue that:

[A]symmetry is acting, organizing, and thinking *differently* than opponents in order to maximise one's own advantages, exploit an opponent's weaknesses, attain the initiative, or gain greater freedom of

²⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

²⁸ Ibid.

action. It can be *political-strategic, military strategic, operational*, or a *combination* of these. It can entail different *methods, technologies, values, organizations, time perspectives* or some *combination* of these. It can be *short-term* or *long-term*. It can be *deliberate* or by *default*. It can be *discrete* or pursued in *conjunction* with symmetric approaches. It can have both *psychological* and *physical* dimensions.²⁹

The defining characteristic of asymmetric threats is that they are different from the tactical and operational methods that we feel able to employ. Because they are unpredictable it is difficult to prepare for them or to create organisations that can counter them. Conventional defence establishments find it particularly difficult to develop methods to enable them to contend with unconventional opponents using unconventional means.

Metz and Johnson identify two types of strategic asymmetry: positive and negative. Positive asymmetry is what our side does—the use of differences to create an advantage. Our positive asymmetries are predominantly technological. The ADF and its partners enjoy a proportionate advantage in firepower, battlefield surveillance, and command-and-control systems over most likely adversaries. We also enjoy an advantage in the training and educational standards that we bestow on our troops. These asymmetries are so obvious that we tend to take them for granted. We may not even regard them as asymmetries—though we can be assured that an outmatched adversary will be fully aware of them. Our comparative advantage is bought by investment of significant resources in both men and equipment. By comparison, negative asymmetry is the difference that an opponent will use to target our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. If we are to succeed in asymmetric conflict we need to be aware of those points of weaknesses and use our strengths to compensate.

Recent conflicts provide us with a range of examples of different asymmetric methods. At its crudest level, in Mogadishu in 1993 the use of cheap rocket-propelled grenades by the Somali militias against vulnerable, expensive helicopters was an example of exploiting technological differences to achieve a significant cost-benefit outcome. It was also an example of a method being adopted that was beyond the intended use of the weapon, but that was nonetheless effective. More frightening, though, was the use of asymmetries of will and of normative behaviour. Asymmetries of will occur where one

²⁹ Steven Metz and Douglas V. Johnson II, *Asymmetry and U.S. Military Strategy: Definition, Background and Strategic Concepts*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle PA, January 2001, pp. 5-6 (Emphasis in original).

party is fully committed to the struggle and the other is engaged in promoting less-than-vital interests.³⁰ In Somalia the Habr Gidr clan were fighting for their political survival, whereas the United States was present in Somalia for humanitarian reasons. The Habr Gidr clan was willing to fight to the death and to act in a way that a professional military would not. By comparison, Somalia was a zero-sum game for the United States. US disengagement demonstrated that a committed fighter could beat a more powerful adversary in circumstances where the latter did not see its interests as being involved.

Closely associated with asymmetries of will are normative asymmetries, which apply when the opposing parties do not share common behavioural or cultural norms. September 11 was so shocking to Western sensibilities precisely because we could not understand what could cause the terrorist to immolate themselves. In the succeeding war in Afghanistan, we found it difficult to comprehend why Taliban warriors chose to fight to the death, content in the knowledge that at least they might have a chance of killing a few of their Western opponents. The willingness of pre-modern warriors to use their women and children as shields, or to use swarm tactics against forces employing superior firepower, seem alien to us. Yet this is what happened to the UN forces in Somalia, Russian troops in Chechnya and to the Israelis in the West Bank. It will happen again. Future armies will need to be prepared to fight opponents (state or non-state) that are prepared to bring the battle to them on their terms.

It is worth contrasting the inclusive definition of asymmetry with the more sceptical approach adopted by the prominent British strategist Colin Gray. Professor Gray, argues that the current fascination with concepts of asymmetric warfare risks overstating the obvious and that in a practical sense, the term is meaningless unless its use is confined to terrorism waged by an irregular foe. It is not enough for a threat to be 'different' to qualify as an asymmetric tactic, Gray points out that all tactical, operational and strategic behaviour seeks to establish an asymmetric advantage.³¹

That being said, Gray argues that, to be useful in the formulation of strategic policy, we need to focus on threats that not only target our weaknesses, but which, if executed, could wreak great harm upon our interests. His argument is that an effective asymmetric

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 10.

³¹ Colin S. Gray, 'Thinking Asymmetrically in Times of Terror', *Parameters*, Spring 2002, pp. 5-14, <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/02spring/gray.htm>, downloaded 14 June 2002.

attack causes strategic paralysis in its target and consequently 'if we are to perform competently in deterrence we need to address empathetically the issue of how, by our policies, we can negate the political effects of tactically successful terrorism'.³² There is no great gap between the theoretical application of asymmetric concepts proposed by Metz and Johnson on the one hand and Gray on the other. Gray concentrates on the vulnerability of states to asymmetric attack rather than the use of such methods by the state itself. He accepts that states will have to counter their more elusive non-state adversaries by denying them legitimacy and effectiveness. Writing in the light of the events of September 11, his conclusion is slightly self-contradicting—for although he rejects the idea that asymmetry is new—he suggests that:

We need to identify and think hard about threats to which we lack obvious responses. In effect this point advises asymmetric, even unconventionally irregular, approaches on our part. We have to learn to respond differently, but effectively, to threats which cannot be answered in kind. The United States has to ask imaginatively what it is that its asymmetric foes value highly, and devise ways and prepare means to hurt those values severely.³³

'Homeland Defence' in Australia's strategic environment

Since September 11 the phrase 'Homeland Defence' is on everybody's lips, as if it is something new. Of course it is not, particularly in the Australian context. For the last thirty years the development of Australia's armed forces has been driven by the perceived need to defend Northern Australia from raids or higher level incursions by conventional, state-based forces. After Vietnam, successive Australian Governments concentrated the efforts of the defence force on the territorial defence of Australia, a trend that the veteran Indochina correspondent Denis Warner described as 'a retreat rather than an advance in Australia's relations with Asia'.³⁴ Of course, planning for the territorial defence of Australia was postulated on a threat originating with some other state. That appreciation led strategic planners to develop a concept of defence in depth whereby Australia's conventional defence force would interdict enemy forces in the sea-air gap to the north. *The Defence of Australia*, the 1987 White Paper has dominated the

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Denis Warner, 'General Coates opens the door', *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, April-May 1992, p. 18.; See also Statement by L.H. Barnard, M.P., Minister of Defence, *Australian Defence: Major Decisions Since December 1972*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975.

development of defence planning to the present day.³⁵ Neither it, nor any of its successor documents have considered the possibility that the defence force might have to conduct combat operations against non-state actors who are capable of causing mass casualties or who could cause damage to Australia's civil infrastructure.

The Defence White Paper released in 2000 did identify a category of 'operations other than conventional war' and spelt out a number of operations that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has carried out in recent years. Most of these operations have been conducted in countries riven by internal conflict, and they include 'humanitarian relief, evacuations, peace-keeping and peace enforcement'.³⁶ These missions were labelled 'new military tasks', though, to be honest, they would have been familiar to Caesar's legions. The White Paper also recognised a variety of 'non-military security issues' such as the threat of cyber attack, border security, illegal fishing, piracy and counter-terrorism.³⁷ The authors of the White Paper recognised that the ADF had an increasing role to play in addressing these non-military security concerns, but noted, quite properly, that the use of the ADF:

[T]rained and equipped for armed conflict—is not necessarily the most cost-effective way to address new non-military security concerns. Civilian responses may be more appropriate. Our approach is to draw on the expertise of the Defence Force where it is most appropriate to do so, but not to allow these roles—important as they are—to detract from the ADF's core function of defending Australia from armed attack.³⁸

In his speech at the Australian Defence College, Senator Hill pointed out that Australia's current strategic situation was one in which transnational threats had moved to the centre of the international security agenda. He concluded that:

[The] defence of Australia and its interests does not stop at the edge of the air-sea gap. It probably never made sense to conceptualise our security interests as a series of diminishing concentric circles around our coastline, but it certainly does not do so now. We are seeing a fundamental change to the notion that our security responsibilities are

³⁵ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service, March 1987.

³⁶ Department of Defence, *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000, p.10.

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 12-3.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 13.

confined largely to our own region. The ADF is both more likely to be deployed and increasingly likely to be deployed well beyond Australia.³⁹

Senator Hill argued that strategists had to 'embrace a broader, more comprehensive definition of security'. The artificial distinction between military and non-military security concerns is simply not relevant if military capabilities are employed in an effective manner to ameliorate, deter or defeat an external threat. As he suggests, security concerns span a broad spectrum and military capabilities may be employed in a discriminate manner at virtually any point on that spectrum. Some threats might require a conventional military response, some an unconventional response and others—no military response at all. Examples of this range of options might include, in turn: a conventional strike at a terrorist headquarters; the use of special forces to arrest a terrorist leader in a hostile or failed state; or using police and intelligence assets to round up a terrorist network. In varying circumstances, different approaches will be appropriate. What the contemporary military establishment needs to consider is what capabilities need to be developed to enable them to carry the fight to non-traditional enemies if circumstances should require it. Senator Hill highlighted the need for an enhanced emphasis on protean security planning when he concluded that in the past:

Some military planners paid lip-service to the new, non-traditional 'challenges' to security—or 'soft security' issues as they are sometimes labelled. But there was often a sense that people in the military regarded these issues as something of a side-show, a distraction from their core business of preparing for and conducting 'high-end' war-fighting . . . Recent events have highlighted, however, that terrorism and associated transnational phenomena such as money laundering and smuggling in drugs, guns and people have moved to the centre of the international security agenda.⁴⁰

The need to develop a conception of national security that includes an awareness of transnational threats and will involve the ADF in novel operations does not make 'Homeland Defence' less important. In the globalised security environment that confronts us today, the physical security of the national territory is vital. The key elements of that security include the need to guarantee: the safety of Australian citizens

³⁹ Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, 'Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence', 18 June, 2002.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and their property; the unfettered operation of core national infrastructure; and the functioning of the cyber-network which underpins our way of life in the information age.

While none of these elements are threatened by any regional state, we do face threats from other sources. Starting at the lower level of the scale, there is no major organisation in Australia that does not have to deal with cyber-attack on a regular basis. Indiscriminate violence against Australian targets is also no stranger here, though our relative security in the past causes us to gloss over political and criminal terrorism. Who now remembers that in 1972, terrorists thought to be Croatian separatists bombed a Yugoslav government office in Australia? In 1978 the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting was targeted in the Hilton bombing. In 1986, Armenian extremists killed a Turkish diplomat in Sydney and in the same year the present author was close enough to hear both the Russell Street bomb and the bombing of the Turkish Consulate in South Yarra.

So what has changed? Quite simply it is the scale of potential destruction facing us. In the past the body politic could expect to shrug off even sustained terrorist attacks. Countries like Australia with no discernable threat on the horizon could afford to place a low priority on internal security. Now the spectre of apocalyptic mass-casualty terrorism has changed that. In the age of the suicide pilot, the dirty bomb and biological warfare we only need to get it wrong once, for Australia to suffer a grievous blow from which it might never recover.

Australia is particularly vulnerable to asymmetric attack. Its centres of population, commerce, communications and industry are more concentrated than virtually any other country. Consequently, an aggressor wishing to attack the Australian population has an almost unrestricted range of targets. As the events of September 11 demonstrated, no form of attack is inconceivable and a coordinated assault could bring the country to a halt. 'Soft' targets include: public utilities such as gas, electricity and water supplies; commercial and government information networks; and public transport systems. 'Hard' targets include government and financial buildings and any place where people gather in large numbers. The bombings in Bali demonstrate that the issue of the security of Australian citizens is not confined to its territorial borders. At the time of writing it appears that in one fell blow, Australia has experienced a significant proportion of the casualties that it experienced over ten years during the Vietnam War. In an increasingly

globalised world we may need to adopt a more flexible interpretation of 'homeland defence' than one simply based on territorial integrity. Our citizens were attacked in Bali, but in no time Australian strategic lift assets, military personnel and medical infrastructure were engaged in the relief operation. In Australia's strategic environment 'homeland security' extends into the littoral environment of our neighbourhood and beyond. Without creating a security state it is impossible to protect against all forms of asymmetric attack. It is therefore essential that we develop the most effective counter measures to these threats.

Countering asymmetric threats—the long view

Asymmetric conflicts are most likely to emerge from long-standing historical, cultural, religious and ethnic rifts. These conflicts are based in deep-rooted antipathies arising from causes such as: relative economic deprivation; opposing belief systems and irrational racial prejudices. Given the almost intractable nature of these problems, it is likely that conflicts arising from them will be protracted. For this reason the 'quick fix' promised by decisive military action is only one of the range of responses open to states. If we can interdict an identifiable threat using military forces then it is appropriate to do so. However, it is always appropriate to take the long view when devising effective counters to conflicts that are rooted in the human heart or in social conditions that might take generations to change. Speaking of the conditions that enabled al-Qu'aeda to take advantage of the tribal state constructed by the Taliban, Senator Hill observed that it is :

clear that poverty, lack of education and the opportunities it brings, lawlessness and intolerance create fertile ground for terrorists to exploit. In Afghanistan it means the combat effort must be matched by a broader civilian effort to give the Afghan people a chance to rebuild their lives and to ensure that the country does not again become a haven for extremists and terrorists.⁴¹

Band-aid solutions in a few trouble spots are not the long-term solution. Gross disparities in life expectations and economic well-being are likely to continue to act as causes of conflict well beyond the end of this century. However, while it might not be possible to rectify conditions of global inequality at one swoop, it is important that if the international community does intervene in a fractured state then it must not disengage

⁴¹ Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, 'Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence'.

until it has established a viable national polity. Most likely those conditions will have to be imposed and may involve the extension of a system of international trusteeship. These imperatives clearly require an international commitment to long-term peace enforcement that has not been evident in the past. Nor is it likely that the under-resourced and overstrained machinery of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the United Nations can cope with the task. Some state, or group of states, within the international coalition against terrorism will have broach the issue of post-conflict reconstruction. Given its past record of support for the United States, but also commitment to nuclear disarmament and robust peace enforcement in Cambodia and East Timor, Australia might be the best country to put the issue on the international agenda.

Until these idealistic objectives are achieved we must remain pragmatic. Conflict with opponents using asymmetric means will continue to occupy us in the foreseeable future. Conventional military establishments therefore need to be aware of the limitations that face them in fighting the wars that have to be waged across cultural chasms. Preaching that we should know our enemy, Ralph Peters has argued that:

For the U.S. soldier, vaccinated with moral and behavioral codes, the warrior is a formidable enemy. Euro-American soldiers in general learn a highly stylized, ritualized form of warfare, with both written and customary rules. We are at our best fighting organized soldieries that attempt a symmetrical response. But warriors respond asymmetrically, leaving us in the role of redcoats marching into an Indian-dominated wilderness.⁴²

Similarly, Colin Gray has long argued that as asymmetric threats are the tool of the militarily weak they can be bundled into the category of 'small wars and other savage violence'. In his authoritative work titled *Modern Strategy* he concluded that: 'Armed forces that decline to take small wars seriously as a military art form with their own tactical, operational, and political—though not strategic—rules invite defeat.'⁴³ He suggests that as we are unlikely to predict every form of asymmetric attack and guard against them, we should enhance our means of deterrence, and develop new responses to new threats.⁴⁴ He believes that under the shadow of terrorism we must accept that there will be casualties, but that we should balance those casualties against the far greater

⁴² Peters, *Fighting for the Future*, p.39.

⁴³ Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 279.

⁴⁴ Gray, 'Thinking Asymmetrically in Times of Terror.'

threat of inter-state war. Above all, he cautions against over-reacting by launching military responses when this is not the best option. He argues that over-reacting empowers the terrorist and even the havoc of September 11 should not be allowed to recast national security policy in such a way as to make the US susceptible to other losses. This might happen where 'the regular belligerent takes action that fatally imperils its own political legitimacy'.⁴⁵ It is a warning that Australia would do well to heed in the aftermath of the Kuta Beach outrage.

Grey points out what should have remained obvious, but which was perhaps obscured by some of the rhetoric of the 'War on Terrorism'. Terrorist acts are violence directed to achieve political ends, not to win battlespace victory. Accordingly, the effective counter to terrorism is to deny the terrorist his political objectives. In the first instance this might not involve his destruction, it might be best achieved by denying significance to his actions and by cutting him off from his potential support base. It is impossible to guard against the full range of asymmetric threats—the nature of asymmetry is that an adversary can always choose to change the mode of attack.

One measure that will assist in anticipating threats, thus enabling the security establishment to pre-empt adversaries, is the development of an annual national threat and risk assessment to help guide Commonwealth and State programmes for homeland security. Such an assessment is not a strategy—it is more of an actuarial analysis. In his testimony to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on America, David Walker, the Comptroller General of the United States argued that:

An important first step in developing a strategy for combating terrorism is to conduct a national threat and risk assessment to define and prioritize requirements. Combating terrorism is a major component of homeland security, but it is not the only one. It is essential that a national threat and risk assessment be undertaken that will address the full range of threats to the homeland . . . We recognise that a national-level threat and risk assessment will not be a panacea for all the problems in providing homeland security. However, we believe that such a national threat and risk assessment could provide a framework for action and facilitate multidisciplinary and multi-organizational participation in planning,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

developing and implementing programs to enhance the security of our homeland.⁴⁶

In the Department of Homeland Security that has been proposed by President Bush, the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Division will be charged with carrying out comprehensive vulnerability assessments of all national critical infrastructure and key assets.⁴⁷ This function involves more than being a clearing house for intelligence from other sources, it is intended to:

- bring under one roof the capability to identify and assess current and future threats to the homeland;
- map those threats against current vulnerabilities;
- inform the President;
- issue timely warnings; and
- immediately take or effect appropriate preventive and protective action.⁴⁸

The centralisation of these roles is designed to minimise confusion, gaps in communication and duplication of effort and is a model that might well be considered within Australia.

Australia still relies on cooperative rather than centralised security arrangements, with its principal organ for coordinating national responses to terrorism being the Standing Advisory Committee on Commonwealth/State Co-operation for Protection Against Violence (SAC-PAV). Raised in the aftermath of the bombing of the Hilton hotel during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Regional Meeting in February 1978, the SAC-PAV represented an appropriate response to low levels of threat. However, faced with an environment of heightened asymmetric activity as well as a range of other transnational security threats, it is now time to consider staffing a permanent national security organisation to implement a holistic whole-of-government approach to security. Such an organisation could perform similar tasks to the proposed American Department of Homeland Security. It could also provide the sort of advice that United States'

⁴⁶ David M. Walker, *Homeland Security: A Framework for Addressing the Nation's Efforts*, Testimony before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, United States General Accounting Office, GAO-01-1158T, 21 September 2001, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁷ Office of Homeland Security, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ The Department of Homeland Security, Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/deptofhomeland/sect6.html#6-1>, downloaded 30 August 2002.

administrations receive through the office of the National Security Adviser. Again, while in Australia defence policy is made in the Department of Defence and international relations are the responsibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, there is no permanent body entrusted with the management of national security policy.

In his monograph *Refocussing Concepts of Security*, the former Director of the Australian Army's Land Warfare Studies Centre, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Wing argued for the creation of a national security council:

[T]hat would be responsible for the management of Australian national security in a broad sense . . . The council would be aimed at overcoming the tendencies of the departments to conceptualise security in terms relevant to their perceptions of their 'core business': Defence as military power; Foreign Affairs and Trade as diplomacy; Attorney-General's as the rule of law; Justice and Customs as border control, and so on.⁴⁹

As the Americans have found, as the level of threat increases, the collegial approach between departments of state has to be controlled and managed by a central authority whose only priority is national security.⁵⁰ The SAC-PAV has performed a useful role in fostering interdepartmental cooperation, but as an advisory committee it does not have the Cabinet level mandate that would enable it to take control of government crisis management processes in a national emergency.⁵¹ No single organisation has that responsibility in Australia. In a protean security environment some central authority must be entrusted with the task of overseeing national security processes.

There is nothing particularly novel about this proposal. For more than a decade many of Australia's leading strategic thinkers have been calling for the creation of a high-level policy development and coordination staff to support the processes that take place in the National Security Council of Cabinet and in the Secretaries Committee on National

⁴⁹ Ian Wing, *Refocussing Concepts of Security: The Convergence of Military and Non-military Tasks*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper No. 111, Duntroon, ACT, November 2000, p. 97.

⁵⁰ *History of the National Security Council 1947-97*, www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/history.html, downloaded 30 August 2002.

⁵¹ SAC-PAV is comprised of representatives from both the Commonwealth and the States. Representatives from the Commonwealth include the Departments of the Attorney-General, the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Transport and Regional Services, Australian Federal Police, Australian Defence Force, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Protective Service. The Department of Finance and Administration attends in the capacity of an adviser. State/Territory representatives include officials from Premier's and Chief Minister's Departments and the Police Services. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the New Zealand Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the New Zealand Police have observer status. The work of SAC-PAV is largely carried out by various sub-committees and project groups. The Strategic Planning Sub-Committee provides SAC-PAV with its strategic planning and advice

Security.⁵² The National Security Committee of Cabinet is a decision making body, while the Secretaries committee is a coordinating group. Neither committee is supported by the level of permanent and dedicated expertise that US Administrations can draw from the office of the National Security Adviser or now from the Department of Homeland Security.

A holistic sense of national security cannot be cultivated in departments that are only charged with some aspect of the national interest. In conditions of protean insecurity, our chief decision-makers need to be able to access professional high-level advice from personnel whose only brief is to monitor national security developments and formulate national (not departmental-level) strategy. Making a similar point in the American context US Naval Commander R. V. Gusentine has argued that: 'As an eclectic network of planners, analysts and operatives . . . such an organization's value would be in the transcendent asymmetric advantages available from its people.'⁵³

Countering asymmetric threats—developing relevant capabilities

Taking the long view of security is important, but in the shorter term military forces are confronted with the immediate problem of determining how to defeat those elusive opponents who are prepared to wage asymmetric warfare on a global scale. Professor Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington published a strategy for counter-terrorism and asymmetric warfare in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on America.⁵⁴ He adopted an actuarial approach to the problem and argued that the degree of threat posed by terrorists needed to be kept in perspective. Although both states and non-state actors are increasingly likely to resort to novel forms of aggression, he pointed out that strategies are available to reduce those risks to

on policy and strategic issues. See <http://www.sac-pav.gov.au/about/about.html>, downloaded 30 August 2002.

⁵² D. Ball and J. O. Langtry (eds.), *A Vulnerable Country? Civil Resources in the Defence of Australia*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1986, p. 601; *The Defence Force and the Community: A Partnership in Australia's Defence*, Report to the Minister for Defence by Alan Wrigley, AGPS, Canberra, June 1990, pp. 465-8. Ross Babbage, *A Coast Too Long: Defending Australia Beyond the 1990s*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, pp. 206-7.; Gary Brown, *Australia's Security: Issues for the New Century*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1994, pp. 159-69.; Carl Oatley, *Australia's National Security Framework: A Look to the Future*, Australian Defence Studies Centre Working Paper No. 61, Canberra 2000, p. 21. My thanks are due the Major Peter Connolly for bringing these sources to my attention.

⁵³ Commander R.V. Gusentine, 'Asymmetric Warfare—On Our Terms', *Proceedings*, Vol. 28, No. 8, August 2002, p. 62.

⁵⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lasting Challenge: A Strategy for Counterterrorism and Asymmetric Warfare*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, November 2001.

acceptable levels. To do so, Western states needed to develop sustained major programs in three areas of security. First, military forces needed to be transformed to deal with terrorism and asymmetric warfare; second, new law enforcement and government systems must be developed to provide tighter homeland security; and third, emergency response capabilities have to be developed to ameliorate the effects of successful attacks.⁵⁵ Cordesman's conclusion was trenchant:

You cannot win a game of three-dimensional chess by trying to play checkers, and the struggle against terrorism and asymmetric warfare is at least as complicated as three-dimensional chess.⁵⁶

Technical capabilities will be of assistance in conducting operations against elusive foes. Nonetheless, such capabilities by themselves are not enough to guarantee victory in conditions of 'unrestricted warfare'. What is required is a recognition that the world is divided along technological lines and this disparity will shape the weaponry that different parties will bring to a conflict. Pre-industrial and industrial age opponents will behave very differently from the military forces of information age societies. The weaponry that parties select are however, only the tools of conflict. In asymmetric conflict it is necessary to shape the behaviour of an opponent. Victory will go to the side that understands its opponents best and which then adapts its own force structure to defeat them.

For Australia, the nature of protean insecurity has some profound implications. Our maritime concept of strategy has to be more than the one-dimensional approach that sought to protect Australia's sea lanes of communication. Confronted with an asymmetric battlespace, Australia needs to develop a strategic mind-set that supports a broad range of capabilities—both civil and military—to detect, shape, respond and defeat adversaries as they appear. The national security establishment needs to synthesise its varied capabilities so that the widest possible range of skill-sets can be brought to bear on any problem. This all-of-nation approach is the information age version of the principle of 'concentration of force' in war. Military organisations need to be able to access all aspects of national power more readily than at present. Military forces need to be physically more agile and deployable and be capable of precision strike. Command structures must be made more adaptable to an inherently unpredictable battlespace. The ability to shape both domestic and international opinion has become a core security

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 7-8.

capability. What is more—given the transnational nature of most contemporary threats to human and state security—all of these capabilities must be exercised in cooperation with coalition partners. Clearly, there remains a need for a maritime strategy, but it needs to be a multi-dimensional one. It also needs to more fully realise the potential inherent within the civil and military national infrastructure. A brief consideration of some of the ways in which these capabilities may be developed follows.

Synthesising security assets and developing 'reachback' capabilities

Gusentine has pointed out the principal characteristic that most distinguishes contemporary conflict from industrial era attritional conflict:

[W]e find ourselves evolving from a capital-intensive form of warfare to a labor-intensive form of national security. The numbers of forces on the battlefield are diminishing, but the numbers and types of participants involved directly in our national security are expanding. We are transitioning from a military-centric security posture to one that calls on all elements of national power to address a variety of transnational threats.⁵⁷

Consequently, the conduct of military operations needs to be synthesised with other aspects of national power such as law enforcement, foreign affairs, trade, finance, transportation, industry, customs and border control and humanitarian relief organisations. None of this is possible by adhering to traditional, stove-piped, departmental models of responsibility for security. Gusentine suggests that most traditional military organisations lack 'the diversity of experience and expertise among . . . [their] . . . members to conceptualize collaborative, multifaceted approaches to complex threats'.⁵⁸ The ADF needs to evolve past a warfighting focus that emphasises the employment of combat power in segregation from other aspects of national power. Combat capability underpins the effectiveness of the ADF, but in contemporary conflict, commanders need to work in tandem with policemen, civil affairs experts, lawyers, media representatives, international civil servants and non-state actors of all descriptions. In this environment tactical victory is less decisive than the ability to shape political outcomes.

The United States Marine Corps (USMC) provides a model of an organisation that is developing novel structures and approaches to the employment of non-traditional

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Gusentine, 'Asymmetric Warfare', p. 59.

elements of national power. In its doctrine of 'comprehensive command and control' it emphasises that future commanders must be able to access a full range of capabilities:

going beyond the conventional forms of military force and extending to the more non-traditional elements of national power: diplomatic, commercial, intellectual, experiential and many others. The result will be an integrated organic whole, capable of crisis deterrence and response, and combining a broad range of military capabilities with disparate, non-military forms of pressure and influence while preserving freedom of action at every level.⁵⁹

These objectives can be brought closer to reality than ever before by using networked information technology in real time. Since the information age commenced, less than twenty years ago, all professions that rely on processing quantitative and qualitative information have been utterly transformed and are still continuing to evolve. In the civil sector, some professionals—notably those that work in law, medicine, the media and the financial world—have been able to use computer-based technologies to increase their earning ability at an exponential rate. This change has been made possible by enhancing their access to markets, by developing alternative products and by creating networked alliances of professional experts. Most traditional military forces have not kept pace with the rate of change and are not profiting in the same way as their civil counterparts are. One reason for this is that, unlike other professions, the military is profoundly introspective and somewhat conservative. The development of military capability has generally been along self-referential lines and reflects the historical experience that battlefield victory generally went to the superior and most lethal force. In asymmetric conflict this principle no longer applies. In the greatly expanded arena of national security, unless the military profession dramatically enhances its access to alternative forms of power and persuasion it risks becoming a marginalised group. Military capabilities remain the ultimate guarantor of national security, but in the information age they need to be fully integrated with the other elements of national power.

Increasingly, armed forces are going to have to become more reliant on experts. As Colonels Qiao and Wang argue in *Unrestricted Warfare*: 'From now on soldiers no longer have a monopoly on war'.⁶⁰ At the tactical and operational levels the requirement for a high level of competency in combat skills remains, but even at these levels military

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 60.

⁵⁹ United States Marine Corps, *Warfighting Concepts for the 21st Century*, Concepts Division, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, 1996, Ch. V, p. 5.

professionals need to be able to do more than just fight. This realisation underlines the USMC concept of the 'three block' soldier who must be conciliator, arbitrator and warfighter at the same time. As we climb the ladder of capability, it becomes obvious that it is not possible to hold all of the skill-sets necessary to wage protean conflict within the regular armed forces. Nor is it appropriate to do so if we do not wish to create a state that is obsessed with its own security. However, as the USMC doctrine espouses, the military must have the ability to 'reachback' and access the pool of expertise that exists in the civil community.⁶¹

Professional armed forces need to cultivate deeper levels of expertise within their ranks. They also need to utilise reserve arrangements to secure access to complementary skill sets not represented in industrial age military organisations. Military forces engaged on conventional operations traditionally conducted their activities in a 'closed' environment. In the globalised, information age of instant media coverage it is no longer possible to construct a hermetic battlespace. The ADF must turn a potential liability into an advantage by making 'interconnectivity' with other sources of power the foundation of the Australian way of war.

In their typically pithy prose, Colonels Qiao and Wang have spelt out the particular vulnerability of traditional military establishments to the new range of threats⁶²

Non-professional warriors and non-state organizations are posing a greater and greater threat to sovereign nations, making these warriors and organizations more and more serious adversaries for every professional army. Compared to these adversaries, professional armies are like gigantic dinosaurs which lack strength commensurate to their size in this new age. Their adversaries, then, are rodents with great powers of survival, which can use their sharp teeth to torment the better part of the world.⁶²

Focus on being deployable and agile

The problems faced by conventional armed forces in deploying to a distant theatre of operations and conducting operations against an unconventional enemy were recently demonstrated in Afghanistan. Given the terrain and the nature of the opposition, heavy armoured forces were not deployed and once again the weight of combat fell on light but lethal forces. Notably these included marines—both American and British; special forces, including a squadron of the Australian Special Air Service; light infantry and

⁶⁰ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, p. 48.

⁶¹ United States Marine Corps, *Warfighting Concepts for the 21st century*, Ch. V, pp. 6-10.

local allies. Allied contributions from Britain, Canada and Australia particularly reflected the fact that easily deployable, agile forces capable of bringing massive but accurate firepower to bear on an enemy were best suited for this kind of war. The ongoing need for such assets in international coalitions against marginalised adversaries favours the future employment of the ADF. For historical and geographical reasons Australia has traditionally maintained the capacity to deploy reasonably independent units and formations across large distances. If anything, this capability needs to be improved. First indications from the war in Afghanistan suggest that the greatest deficiencies faced by the Australian contingent lay in the areas of strategic airlift and dedicated tactical air mobility.⁶³

Early in the course of operations in Afghanistan, Cordesman noted that:

Special Forces and ranger units, specialized power projection units, psychological warfare units, and similar forces can play a critical role in crises like Afghanistan. Both Kosovo and Afghanistan have also shown the critical need to rethink the issue of collateral damage and the political dimension of war. They have also shown the growing value of high mobility light forces, the ability to rapidly project power at longer ranges and without access to traditional bases, and the need for more 'low density assets' like UAVs [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles], special forces aircraft, and electronic warfare platforms.⁶⁴

None of these capabilities are beyond the resources available to the ADF. Developing agile and lethal forces that are fully interoperable with the more flexible elements of the United States military is likely to be the best investment in future capability for the ADF. Such a policy would not only serve Australia's need for self-reliant forces (in the operational, not strategic sense) that are capable of operating within the region, but it would facilitate the ADF's ability to produce balanced and credible contributions to international coalitions. 'Packaging' deployable and interoperable contingents for international missions will save the ADF from attempting to replicate the full spectrum of American technological capability—something that it cannot afford to do in any case.

In 2001 in his role as Land Commander, Major General Peter Abigail set out his vision of the priorities facing the Australian Army as it prepared for Twenty-First century conflict. He argued that:

⁶² Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, p. 48.

⁶³ Nick Hordern and Ian Bostock, 'Australia's armed forces adapt to new challenges', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 2002, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Cordesman, *The Lasting Challenge*, pp. 20-1.

We should benchmark our land combat forces to be the Region's best in complex or restricted terrain, 24-hour operations, knowledge warfare, and decisive close combat. We must certainly seek the advantages offered by the Information Age but in the context of our likely operating environment—which limits the application of some advanced technologies. We must secure the optimisation of both people and technologies to prevail; ours is not the environment where technology has reduced significantly the need for people on the ground.⁶⁵

Create innovative modes of precision strike for strategic effect

Coupled with the need in protean contingencies for easily deployable and agile forces is the need for the ADF to enhance its ability to carry out precision strike. In the past, the siren call of surgical operations has often misled policy-makers into thinking that they can call up neat, bloodless operations at will. This prospect has always proved a chimera, but the almost unlimited possibilities of protean insecurity make the flexibility inherent in precision strike even more of an asset when fighting unconventional adversaries. Precision strike has capability in both conventional and non-conventional conflict. In interstate war the ability to strike key targets reduces the logistical burden on a deployed force and provides the commander with greater flexibility in devising a manoeuvrist approach. Precision strike may involve the use of special forces or manned aircraft, but increasingly it will also include the use of remotely controlled technologies such as missiles, uninhabited combat aerial vehicles (UCAV), non-line of sight weapons and 'smart' munitions. The use of these technologies in asymmetric conflicts is a key element of current US Marine Corps doctrine. In its keystone publication *Warfighting Concepts for the 21st Century* the Marine Corps holds that:

In a war against non-state actors, where the proximity of innocents is often the enemy's greatest advantage . . . more precise weapons will allow a significantly greater degree of discrimination. A guided missile sent through a window, an armed robot turning a corner, and a directed energy weapon covering an exit will often be useful in situations where the delivery of tons of high explosive would be counter-productive.⁶⁶

Precision strike should be more than just a tool in the tactical tool-box. Against conventional and unconventional adversaries alike, its use should be calculated to have strategic consequences. By limiting collateral damage and targeting the enemy it best serves the political element of asymmetric conflict. It also bolsters the relative combat

⁶⁵ Major General Peter Abigail, 'Preparing the Australian Army for 21st Century Conflict: Problems and Perspectives', Address to the Chief of Army's Land Warfare Conference, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 10 October 2001.

⁶⁶ United States Marine Corps, *Warfighting Concepts for the 21st century*, Ch. I, p. 7.

power of a numerically small force. In future operations it will increasingly be the tool of choice, but the capability must not be seen as a universal panacea against asymmetric threats.

Adapt command structures to deal with protean missions

Another innovative aspect of conflict involving asymmetric actors is that it is inherently unpredictable. Even in the conditions of counter-insurgency warfare in South-East Asia during the 1950s and 1960s the range of threats confronting Australian forces were relatively predictable. During the period from the 1987 White Paper the capabilities required for the territorial defence of Australia remained comparatively limited. Consequently, the ADF—like other Western military forces—was able to write doctrine, plan and train for a few contingencies. Since it sent a battalion group to Somalia in 1993, the ADF's actual record of deployments has demonstrated that forces need to develop command habits that will enable them to perform well when confronted with entirely unexpected missions. In particular, operations in Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor and Afghanistan arose entirely without warning and in each case involved low-technology 'warriors'.

So far, Australian forces have coped well with the new tasks confronting them. They will have to remain flexible to continue to meet the ever-widening range of operational challenges. D. Robert Worley of the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies in Arlington has proposed a model of 'adaptive command' that is particularly appropriate for dealing with asymmetric enemies. Because 'warriors' do not behave like regular armed forces we need to adapt our command styles and structures away from the more formal processes of force-on-force warfare. Worley does not challenge existing command hierarchies but suggests that the ability to improvise must be distributed to all command levels in a deployed force. He concludes that:

US forces must adapt their doctrine—including tactics, techniques and procedures—as asymmetric opponents develop theirs. This response will be driven more by contact with the enemy than by intelligence gathered in advance. Adaptive command will require different and tighter integration of intelligence and operations functions. Intelligence functions that monitor the enemy's physical dispositions before contact and assess battle damage afterward will be inadequate . . . Rather than train to doctrine, US forces must learn to anticipate, recognize and adapt on the fly.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ D. Robert Worley, 'Asymmetry and Adaptive Command', *Military Review*, July-August 2001, p. 40.

Worley's philosophy sits well with the Australian notion of 'mission command'. In the ADF mission command is a philosophy of command and a system for conducting operations in which a superior gives his subordinates a clear indication of his intentions. The result required, the task, the resources and any constraints are clearly enunciated, however subordinates are allowed the freedom to decide how to achieve the desired result.⁶⁸ However, Worley goes a step further and makes the case that military forces need to incorporate 'coping mechanisms' in their planning. Preparedness, he suggests, is less a result of deliberate planning and fixed doctrine and more 'a product of warfighting organisations that are trained in crisis-action planning and adaptive command'.⁶⁹ Although military forces are understandably protective of the threat-scenario planning that they conduct in the name of preparedness, there is merit in recognising that such thinking cannot produce a solution for every threat in a protean security environment.

Make information operations a core national security capability

Perhaps the most important capability in future asymmetric conflict will be in the realm of information operations. Even in the context of mass-casualty terrorism, the aim of violence is not to win a tactical victory, but to achieve a greater strategic effect. As Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth McKenzie pointed out in *Revenge of the Melians*:

The target of all asymmetric approaches is the will of the opponent, and this is pursued through the pursuit of psychological effort on the strategic level, regardless of the level of war on which the asymmetric approach is employed.⁷⁰

Just as our asymmetric foes seek to target our will, national resources need to be devoted to targeting theirs. Ralph Peters has concluded that: 'Attacking the human body has been a sloppy and inefficient means of making war. Attacking the mind may prove the culmination of military history.'⁷¹ The ADF has recognised the potential of psychological dominance with the development of doctrine that recognises three components of information operations—offensive, defensive and support.

- Offensive information operations include electronic attack; psychological operations; deception; computer network attack; and destruction.

⁶⁸ Land Warfare Doctrine 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, 2002, p. 16.

⁶⁹ Worley, 'Asymmetry and Adaptive Command', p. 44.

⁷⁰ Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., *The Revenge of the Melians: Asymmetric Threats and the Next QDR*, McNair Paper 62, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington D.C. 2000, p. 95.

⁷¹ Ralph Peters, *Fighting for the Future*, p. 209.

- Defensive operations may include information assurance; counterintelligence; counterdeception; physical security; operational security; and counter-psychological operations.
- Support information operations include intelligence; electronic support; public information; civil affairs; information management; command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) infrastructure; and situational awareness,⁷²

The destruction of the World Trade Centre and the attack on the Pentagon were crude attempts to achieve a strategic objective by shocking acts of violence. Obsessed with the symbolism of both buildings as the centres of American capitalist and military power, the al Qu'aeda leadership apparently believed that demonstrating a capacity to strike at them would deal a blow to American morale that might lead the United States to disengage from the Middle East. In that they were clearly mistaken.

In the ensuing struggle, the centre of gravity of the conflict has focused on winning the support of a number of constituencies. These key groupings include what has become known (quite inaccurately) as the 'Arab street'; broader second and third world populations; elite opinion in the Middle East and Central Asia; Islamic constituencies; and public support in the West. The outcome of these struggles for support are by no means certain. Drawing their conclusions from Serbian information operations during Operation *Allied Force* in 1999 and the impact of Al-Jazeera, the Persian Gulf television network in the current conflict Mils Hills and Rachel Holloway of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in Britain have found that:

[I]t is clear that the West requires effective defence not just from the technical means of adversaries, but also from the affects (emotion) based targeting that . . . [an adversary] . . . can deploy to produce very real effects.⁷³

In the information age the battle for the 'hearts and minds' of different groups will be an integral component of conflict. It will be fought with increasingly sophisticated and diverse media. Even within sovereign states, people's opinions are no longer shaped by the philosophy of 'my country right or wrong'. Different ideologies, ethnic and religious identities, commercial interests and humanitarian concerns all compete for the loyalties

⁷² John Blaxland, *Information-era Manoeuvre: The Australia-led Mission to East Timor*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper No. 118, Duntroon, ACT, June 2002, pp. 15-6.

of the individual. People are constantly bombarded with competing messages—to a point where it is impossible to process them all. Pundits with influence over public opinion have previously unheard of freedom to promulgate ideas that can do great damage to the cohesion of a state or an international cause. In these circumstances the enemy does not require a fifth column, the values of a society or a culture can be faced with subversion from within. Consequently, it is important that democratic states retain the capacity to communicate clear, authoritative and credible messages to a range of constituencies, both within their borders and overseas. In an era where to be legitimate military action will require broad-based support, security establishments will not only have to target the will of their opponents, but will also have to engage the support, or at least the acquiescence, of domestic and peripheral constituencies.

Considerable uncertainty accompanies the emergence of the many novel capabilities covered by the mantle of Information Operations. Not the least of these concerns includes the extent to which the various methods are legal, and in what circumstances. Certainly security establishments that develop these capabilities are going to have to develop a whole new 'rule book' while recognising that non-state actors using negative asymmetries may well not accept the same limitations on their conduct. In *An Assessment of International Legal Issues in Information Operations* the Office of General Counsel in the US Department of Defense determined that the types of information operations being contemplated by the department were likely to be legitimate.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, they required prudent planning and a significant investment of resources. Information Operations are not an exclusively military function, but are a part of broad-spectrum security activity. The report concluded that:

Since so many of these potential issues are relatively novel, and since the actions taken and public positions announced by nations will strongly influence the development of international law in this area, the involvement of high-level policy officials in planning and executing information operations is much more important at present than is the case with more traditional military operations.⁷⁵

The capabilities required to counter and defeat asymmetric threats require a military component, but are not necessarily reliant on achieving success in battle. Asymmetric

⁷³ Mills Hills and Rachel Holloway, 'Competing for media control in an age of asymmetric warfare', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Vol. 14, No. 5, May 2002, p. 23.

⁷⁴ Office of General Counsel, *An Assessment of International Legal Issues in Information Operations*, Department of Defense, May 1999. (Manuscript in author's possession)

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 50.

conflict reverses the emphasis on warfighting prowess that is common in conventional conflict. One of the most influential documents that has shaped American thinking since the attacks on 11 September has been *Reforging the Sword: Forces for a 21st Century Strategy*. Written by a team from the Center for Defense Information, an influential think-tank based in Washington DC and published just before the disaster, they concluded that asymmetric conflict represents the purest form of manoeuvrist strategy. Victory is a product of 'outmaneuvering the enemy *mentally*, so as to limit the need for actual combat'.⁷⁶ The report makes three points that are particularly relevant to the ADF. It concludes that in asymmetric conflict, military force needs to be restrained and utilised selectively as 'excessive or inappropriate use of force breeds resentment and plants the seeds of future conflict'.⁷⁷ Second, alliances count—it is important to garner support and deny it to the enemy. One's own side should be cohesive, while the aim of operations should be to 'foster chaos and paralysis on the other side'. Third, complex hardware—and the bureaucracies that service it—are unsuited to the task of defeating elusive warriors. Protean security threats are best defeated by denying opponents legitimacy and depriving them of their support base. Cut off from the resources of their own communities agile, responsive and lethal forces can destroy them.

Conclusion

The formula for Australia's current maritime strategy that is contained in the current Defence White Paper is the product of a period of low threat combined with superpower deadlock. It is not in fact, a maritime strategy but a continental defence posture founded a one-dimensional threat. It is little changed from the 'Defence of Australia' policies that emerged after Vietnam. *Defence 2000* focuses on a 'platform-based' policy of denial of the air-sea gap to any prospective invader. The platform-based dimension of this strategic mind-set characterises ships and aircraft as the key assets in repelling invasion. Yet the prospect of invasion is more remote now than ever before. Australia has never had to stand alone against an invader, and it is unrealistic to believe that it would ever have to. No small or middle-level state has ever had the potential to launch more than nuisance conventional attacks against the Australian mainland. In the case of a significant deterioration in the international security environment, Australia would always have to

⁷⁶ Colonel Daniel Smith, USA (Ret.), Marcus Corbin, Christopher Hellman, *Reforging the Sword: Forces for a 21st Century Strategy*, Center for Defense Information, Washington, DC, September 2001, p. 72.

provide for its security by taking collective action together with its friends and allies. As Dr Robert O'Neill, the recently retired Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford, wrote in 1976:

As far as major attacks are concerned, obviously we would need assistance if attacked by a super-power. There is no way that Australia can create a wholly self-reliant Defence force to fend off a super-power . . . If a major attack is ever directed at Australia, it would probably come as a part of a great, global catastrophe . . .⁷⁸

A Maritime Strategy formulated to meet the needs of our contemporary security situation will need to do more than simply secure our territorial integrity—it will need to secure our vital interests. Amongst other things these interests include the safety of Australian citizens and their property; the uninterrupted operation of the physical infrastructure supporting our way of life; and the security of the digital networks that make our information age economy possible. To achieve these objectives Australian military strategy needs to be firmly embedded in a holistic national security strategy. That aspect of our military strategy that relates to our maritime environment should so much focus on a policy of denial, but should consider what resources are required to shape and protect our security situation. Our vital interests are not found in the air-sea gap, but on land—where our citizens live, our resources and national assets are found and where our culture flourishes. In the era of globalisation all of those interests exceed the physical boundaries of the state. Countries that are surrounded by water require a maritime strategy that enables them to legitimately project power offshore, in combination with like-minded partners, so as to secure vital national interests.

The purpose of the military is to fight and it is the most potent tool in the nation's security armory. It needs to be capable of deterring aggression by a wide range of potential adversaries—both state and non-state in origin. To do so, the armed services need to be demonstrably effective across a broad range of capability. That range includes lethal combat skills and increasingly the ability to use 'soft' power to further the national interests. Traditional military forces cannot do this in isolation, but need to be part of a synthesised security program. Any future concept of maritime strategy has to think

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 72.

⁷⁸ Robert J. O'Neill, 'Adjusting to the Problems of a Continental Defence Posture', in J. Birman (ed.) *Australia's Defence*, Extension Service, University of Western Australia, 1976, p. 36.

beyond the 'defence of the trench' to integrate all aspects of national power in securing all of our national interests.

As Senator Hill has indicated, governments are increasingly turning to military forces to provide capabilities to deal with the novel security issues of 'the Age of Surprises'. In this era Governments have to deal with protean security issues and quite properly expect that the traditional security establishment will be able to provide strategies that will protect national assets and population. However, it has become obvious that the traditional 'stove-piped' model of departmentalising the functions of defence, intelligence, foreign affairs, customs, police and immigration will not suit the demands of protean insecurity. A single source of national security policy and advice to government has to be established to provide cabinet-level advice to government. Only then will we have established a 'whole-of-nation' approach to security.

In a recent thoughtful address to the National Institute for Asia and The Pacific at The Australian National University Professor Paul Dibb identified what he termed the two 'contending Defence theologies'. One school of thought he termed the expeditionary school—those who believe that we should structure the ADF 'as an expeditionary force to support our global interests'. The other school of thought were 'the regionalists'—those who considered 'that the defence of Australia and our regional interests should remain the key to how the ADF is structured'.⁷⁹ Although historically there was a tension between those who adopted a policy of forward defence and those who wished to concentrate on continental defence, it no longer makes sense to identify vital national interests with their degree of proximity to the homeland. It is no longer a matter of choosing between global and regional interests—national interests are not defined by geography, but by physical, economic and cultural security concerns.

In the era of globalisation, geography is only one of the factors that helps us to identify our key interests. A dirty bomb in any global capital, a pub bomb in Earls Court or an attack on the Dawn Service at Gallipoli could cause even greater Australian casualties than were experienced in Bali. An attack on the global economy is an attack on us all. Professor Dibb is correct when he cautions us that the ADF possesses limited

⁷⁹ Professor Paul Dibb, 'Does Asia matter to Australia's Defence Policy', Public lecture to The National Institute for Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, 23 October 2002.

capabilities, however the question is not simply a choice between regional influence and global reach. The ADF requires capabilities that can do both. We do need to recognise that our ability to influence events diminishes the further we extend operations from the national support base. Nonetheless, the Government requires the option to do so, if it suits our national interests. Consequently, Australia needs to shrug off its preoccupation with geographical proximity, recognise the very great limitations on the number and size of the operations that the ADF can conduct and limit its commitments to those operations which will best serve an expanded notion of the national good. Given the natural protection afforded by Australia's maritime environment, a pro-active, rather than defensive strategy best suits the demands of conditions of global insecurity.

In a globalised world it is also impossible to conceive of security in purely domestic terms. Australia's interests and its population are scattered world-wide. The information age networking of data means that more than ever before our interests are inextricably linked with the citizens of other countries. Consequently, it is not possible to deliver security by simply implementing vital asset protection and crisis management procedures within Australia. A centralised national security organisation would need to coordinate relationships with the security establishments of allies, partners and states with shared interests.

Technology is often mooted as the asymmetric advantage that will protect advanced societies from the threat posed by pre-industrial age 'warriors'. However it is only a tool. The real advantages that Australia and its allies possess are: a high level of situational awareness; the ability to arrive at flexible responses; and the precise and lethal nature of their combat capabilities. It is important that we do not confuse the sword with the shield or derogate from our overall effectiveness by using the sword for tasks that it is ill-suited. Above all it is necessary to remember that protean asymmetries are not new—it is strategic stasis born of superpower deadlock that is the anomaly. This realisation is hardly novel. Nearly two and a half thousand years ago, prior to engaging the barbarian Illyrians during the Peloponnesian Wars, General Brasidas lectured his troops:

These opponents of ours now may look to inexperienced eyes as if they were going to be dangerous. Their numbers seem to be terrific; their shouts and yells are insupportable; the way they wave their arms about in the air looks pretty threatening. But it is not quite the same thing when

they come up against troops who stand their ground against all this . . . you will know in the future that mobs of this kind, once their first attack is met firmly, only show off their courage by making threats of what they are going to do, meanwhile keeping well out of the range themselves; whereas if one gives way to them, they are quick to press home their advantage.⁸⁰

Brasidas knew his opponents and his strategic environment and he won his battle. We require the same level of awareness if we are to win the battles that we will have to fight.

⁸⁰ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book 4: 126. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 341-2.