Dr Michael Evans
9 Jaques Place
Evatt
ACT 2617
Tel 6258 2084
Mob 0417 423 995
E mail: drme@ozemail.com.au

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The Secretary (Mr Grant Harrison)
Defence Sub-Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Harrison

INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S MARITIME STRATEGY: SUBMISSION BY DR MICHAEL EVANS

Thank you for your formal invitation to me dated 25 September 2002 to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry into Australia's maritime strategy in my capacity as Head of the Australian Army's Land Warfare Studies Centre.

Because of a decision by the Department of Defence to respond to the Inquiry with only a single, collective submission, I am unable to comply with your request in my official capacity. I am, however, making a submission as a private citizen. My submission, entitled 'The Future of Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy', is enclosed.

I have also appended for the Committee's reference, several publications I have authored on the subject in my capacity as a Senior Research Fellow and, now Head of the Land Warfare Studies Centre.

Please let me know if you require clarification on any points.

Yours sincerely

DR MICHAEL EVANS

Enclosures:

1.   Submission entitled, 'The Future of Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy'.

2.   Appended publications by Michael Evans from the Land Warfare Studies Centre and *Quadrant* Magazine.

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S MARITIME STRATEGY

THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA'S MARITIME CONCEPT OF STRATEGY

by

Michael Evans

ABSTRACT

This submission attempts to provide the Joint Standing Committee with an overview of Australia's experience of maritime strategy past, present and future. The submission seeks to define the differences between naval and maritime strategy and tries to explain some of the historical reasons why Australia has a weak tradition in the formulation of maritime strategy. The paper argues that, within Australia defence policy, there is a strong tendency to view maritime strategy through the lens of naval and land traditions of war and conflict. This approach has had a distorting effect on the essential joint character of maritime strategy and has prevented an integrated form of Australian maritime strategy from evolving.

In order to illustrate the power of the naval-land schism in Australian defence policy, two recent documents, *Australia's Strategic Policy* (1997) and the *Defence 2000* White Paper, are examined. The submission suggests that the effect of both documents is to subordinate maritime strategy to the lingering priorities of a continental geostrategy derived from the 1980s. The paper then proceeds to examine the security environment of the early 21st century and identifies the coming of a new era based on globalised security and merging modes of conflict. It is argued that the most significant strategic development of the first decade of the 21st century is the rise of connectedness over territoriality and the relative decline in the importance of strategic geography.

Major threats to both Western and Australian security have now become indivisible and, to a large extent, are non-territorial in character. They work, however, to imperil Australia's vital national interests at multiple points that frequently blur national, regional and global distinctions of security. The paper concludes by arguing that, under new conditions, Australia must finally abandon its Cold War-style continental geostrategy and move firmly towards developing a highly flexible and adaptable maritime concept of strategy. The latter should be based on joint forces with a force structure designed to maximise interoperability and international coalition operations with a primary focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

Introduction

There is an eternal dispute between those who imagine the world to suit their policy, and those who correct their policy to suit the realities of the world.

Albert Sorel

When we are attacked it will not be with kid gloves, or after convenient notice, but it will be when and where we least desire it, and with remorseless fury.

Alfred Deakin, Speech to the House of Representatives, 31 August, 1905

Over the past five years Australia has sought to come to terms with a rapidly changing regional and global security environment by adopting a maritime concept of strategy. Australia's approach to maritime strategy was initially outlined in December 1997 in the document, *Australia's Strategic Policy* (ASP 97) and further developed in the White Paper, *Defence 2000.*[1] Although both the 1997 and 2000 defence reviews began a long overdue reorientation of Australian strategy away from a 1980s Cold War concept of continental geostrategy, the process of intellectual change has not been smooth or easy. A full embrace of a maritime concept of strategy has been hampered by such factors as intellectual conservatism in the face of change, a lack of resources, by the habits of strategic culture, and by a reluctance to distinguish between naval principles and maritime principles.

With the above factors in mind, this submission examines the prospects for the development of Australia's concept of maritime strategy. Four areas are examined. First, in order to create an intellectual context for analysis, the meaning of maritime strategy is defined and the important differences between maritime and naval strategy in the early 21st century are explained. Second, the significance of Australia's relative lack of a historical maritime tradition is briefly examined. It is suggested that Australia's weak

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[1] Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra, 1997; *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Canberra, Defence Publishing Service, 2000.

maritime tradition has encouraged an approach to strategic thinking that emphasises separate naval and continental dimensions. The submission argues that the weight of Australia's strong naval and land-based continental traditions of strategic thought have largely eclipsed the important legacy of the South West Pacific campaign of 1942-45 – the one occasion where Australia mounted significant joint maritime operations. Third, in order to illustrate how the naval-continental traditions have operated to distort the evolution of a coherent view of maritime strategy, a brief analysis of the maritime component of our last two major strategic guidance documents, *ASP 97* and the 2000 White Paper is undertaken. Fourth, and finally, the prospects for developing Australia's maritime concept of strategy against the shadow of new and uncertain security conditions of the early 21st century are outlined.

Defining Maritime Strategy

Maritime strategy is about the use of the sea in the employment of armed force, but it is most important that it should not be seen as being synonymous with naval strategy. A maritime strategy is fundamentally joint in character and emanates from forces drawn from all three services, both sea and land based, supported by national and commercial resources, exercising influence over sea, land and air environments. As the leading American maritime historian, Clark G. Reynolds, has pointed out, maritime and naval strategy differ significantly in their essentials:

> Maritime strategy is not naval strategy. Naval strategy may be defined as the employment of Navy forces to a specific end. Maritime strategy has a much broader scope: the combined use of all arms - Army, Navy, and Air Forces - in seaborne operations'.[2]

Modern naval strategy is largely concerned with Captain Alfred Mahan's famous notion of command of the sea involving open-ocean warfighting on the sea and the principles governing the strategic activities of powerful blue-water navies. In contrast, maritime strategy is mainly concerned with green-water force projection from the sea in

amphibious operations from ship to shore. For most contemporary maritime strategists, the central purpose of maritime power is its influence on military operations on land. As the doyen of 20th century maritime strategists, Sir Julian Corbett, wrote in 1911:

> By maritime strategy we mean the principles which govern a war in which the sea is a substantial factor. Naval strategy is but that part of it which determines the movements of the fleet when maritime strategy has determined what part the fleet must play in relation to the action of the land forces; for it scarcely needs saying that is almost impossible that a war can be decided by naval action alone.[3]

Like naval operations, continental land operations by armies are also only one component in an overarching maritime strategy. As Corbett observed, 'the crude maxims as to primary objects which seem to have served well enough in continental warfare have never worked so clearly where the sea enters seriously into a war'.[4] For Corbett the essence of maritime strategy was the integration of land and sea power. 'The paramount concern . . . of maritime strategy', he wrote, 'is to determine the mutual relations of your army and navy in a plan of war'.[5] In the formulation of maritime strategy, there were 'delicate interactions' between land and sea forces (one must now, of course, add aerospace forces to Corbett's equation) which required careful handling by military planners.[6] The integration of sea, land and air forces and their joint employment in the service of policy objectives is perhaps the most distinctive feature of modern maritime strategy.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the ideas of Corbett rather than Mahan are in the ascendancy. Over the past decade, following the end of the Cold War, most leading Western powers have moved towards a maritime rather than a purely naval view of seaborne strategy in which the emphasis is on littoral operations involving joint power

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[2] Clark G. Reynolds, *History and the Sea: Essays on Maritime Strategies*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, South Carolina, 1989, p. 167.
[3] Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1911, p. 13.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

projection from the sea to the land.[7] For the first time since the heyday of the *Pax Britannica*, one nation again rules the high, seas the United States. The post-Cold War domination of the *Pax Americana* has cemented a new era of global Western naval domination. In an age of unchallenged Western sea control, the emphasis in contemporary maritime strategy is firmly focused on operations aimed at achieving dominance of the seaward littoral – that is at the land-sea interface. Western navies have increasingly been shaped into instruments to support marines and troops in operations on the landward side of the littoral.[8]

Modern maritime strategy now embraces the core concept of 'operational manoeuvre from the sea' in which landing forces are launched from shipping situated well over the horizon and are directed against objectives of operational and strategic importance deep inland. Over the last decade, operational manoeuvre from the sea has been greatly empowered by the coming of information age technologies and techniques for 'over-the-horizon' missions. Advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and electronic warfare (C41SREW), long range precision strike weapons systems and stealth (low-observable) platforms, have created conditions of battlespace situational awareness in which discriminate targeting can be used over reduced space in increased time.[9] Innovative technologies such as tilt-rotor aircraft, advanced amphibious assault vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, stealth and precision strike weapons have permitted the integration of ship-to-shore mobility with new long range fire support to facilitate air-ground amphibious manoeuvre.[10]

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[7] For discussions see Colin S. Gray, *The Navy in the Post-Cold War World: The Uses and Value of Strategic Sea Power*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 1994, chap 4; Rear Admiral Raja Menon, *Maritime Strategy and Continental Wars*, Frank Cass, London, 1998, chaps 7-8 and Norman Friedman, *Seapower as Strategy: Navies and National Interests*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2001, chapters 6 and 10-12.

[8] Geoffrey Till, 'Maritime Power and the 21st Century', in Geoffrey Till, ed, *Seapower: Theory and Practice*, Frank Cass, Ilford, Essex, 1994, pp. 176-99.

[9] Menon, *Maritime Strategy*, pp. 157-63.

[10] Lieutenant Colonel Jerome F. Bierly and Major Thomas E. Seal, 'Over-the-Horizon Amphibious Operations', *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 1991, LXXV, vii, pp. 41-2.

The nexus between over-the-horizon manoeuvre, precision firepower and air assault, reflects the immense change in the character of contemporary amphibious operations.[11] World War II amphibious style-landings of the kind portrayed in the film *Saving Private Ryan* have largely passed into history. Beaches are no longer merely battlefronts along the lines of Normandy or Iwo Jima. Rather, in information age conditions, beaches increasingly serve only as points of tactical entry for highly mobile air-ground forces using the sea for non-linear operational manoeuvre. Precision ordnance, improved air defence and an enhanced role in fires delivered by marines and special forces have greatly enhanced the conditions for rapid manoeuvre operations from the sea. Technology and technique now permit seaborne task forces to bypass strong beach defences and to achieve military decision by driving rapidly into the enemy's flanks and rear.[12]

Recent Australian warfighting concepts for waging maritime operations reflect the influence of information-age technologies and techniques. The Army's Manoeuvre Operations in a Littoral environment (MOLE) and Entry from the Air and Sea (EAS) both focus on aspects of over-the-horizon attack. Within the ADF, work towards developing a joint warfighting concept (JWC) has attempted to develop the concept of multi-dimensional manoeuvre based on network-enabled and effects-based operations and employing assets from all three services.[13] Nonetheless, despite these important developments, the Australian approach to littoral operations remains hampered by a lack of experience in, and familiarity with, many of the principles of joint maritime warfighting.

Moreover, current Australian maritime doctrine remains subject to strategic guidance that emphasises the primacy of a Cold War-style continental geostrategy. The latter has meant that the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) continues to remain more focused on the concept

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[11] General Charles C. Krulak, 'The United States Marine Corps in the Twenty First Century', *RUSI Journal* August 1996, CXLI, ii, p. 25.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

[13] Much of this material remains restricted but for recent Australian approaches to maritime strategy see Australian Army, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, Defence Publishing Service, 2002; 'The 2020 Objective Force Environment', Land Warfare Development Centre, Puckapunyal, June 2002 and Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Maritime Doctrine: RAN Doctrine 1 2000*, Defence

of sea control than most of its Western counterparts. As the RAN's keystone doctrine manual, *Australian Maritime Doctrine*, explains, national maritime requirements remain closely tied to fundamental naval concepts such as sea control and sea denial. In particular, the continental geostrategy adopted by Australia in the 1980s remains based on denial of the maritime approaches to attack.[14] The RAN's maritime doctrine goes on to make the following judgment about the relevance of the general Western shift towards a maritime strategy based on littoral operations:

> Our region includes a large number of nations with significant maritime and air capability and it would be extremely unwise to make the assumption that the preconditions for sea control will exist whatever the strategic situation. Thus, while we may adopt and benefit from much of the [maritime strategy] work done in the United States and Europe, it will be necessary for Australia to maintain in the immediate future a greater focus on fundamental issues such as sea control – including control of the air – at the same time as we seek to increase our ability to directly influence events on land.[15]

Indeed, the above tendency towards a narrow interpretation of maritime strategy by the RAN, reflects the existence of a systemic problem of conceptual integration within Australian strategic thought. Maritime, continental and aerospace concepts are not sufficiently interrelated or broadly comprehended in either ADF doctrine or Australian military strategy. As a result, as Captain Peter Leschen, a former Director of the RAN Sea Power Centre has observed, '[Australian] doctrine is not currently presented in an integrated way, and . . . this hinders our understanding of the full potential of joint operations'.[16]

Australia's Weak Maritime Strategic Tradition and its Impact on Defence Planning

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Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000. For network enabled and effects based operations see Department of Defence, *Force 2020*, Public Affairs and Corporate Communication, Canberra, June 2002, pp. 17-26.
[14] *Australian Maritime Doctrine: RAN Doctrine 1*, pp. 44-45.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[16] Captain P. D. Leschen, RAN, 'The Integration of Joint and Single-Service Doctrine – Ensuring Maritime, Land and Air Concepts are Understood and Applied', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, January/February 2002, no. 152, pp. 5-14.

Nowhere in Australian strategic policy is a lack of conceptual integration more marked than in the approach to developing a maritime strategy. Over the past five years, Australia's most serious difficulties in embracing maritime concept of strategy have been intellectual and cultural. While there have been weaknesses in new technology, inadequacies in techniques and doctrine and a shortage of resources, these problems are less serious than the intellectual and cultural constraints imposed by an approach to strategy that historically has seldom emphasised the role of the sea as a manoeuvre space.

The greatest weakness in contemporary Australian defence thinking is a relative absence of a strong maritime influence in Australian culture. Unlike other liberal democracies such as Britain and the United States, a maritime tradition has been, and remains, a missing element in Australia's sense of its national history and, by extension, of its strategy and approach to defence policy. This is a striking paradox in that, as an island-continent dependent on sea communications and trade, Australia should be the archetype of a maritime nation. Yet a maritime character is not imprinted on the Australian national psyche, a factor that has been noticed by numerous writers and historians as well as by strategists. The Anzac sacrifice on the beaches of Gallipoli, the greatest joint maritime operation of World War 1, may dominate Australia's conception of modern nationhood, but in a military sense, Gallipoli has never dominated Australian strategic thought.

In 1976 the maritime historian, John Bach, pointed out, 'there has been [in Australia] a lack of what might be called a national maritime tradition'.[17] Similarly, Geoffrey Blainey has observed that Australians are 'a nation of islanders who devalue seapower' while the West Australian historian, Frank Broeze, has lamented that, Australians are a coastal people with a continental outlook; an island-nation with an inward-focus.[18]

The land, not the sea is the dominant feature of Australian culture. Three examples serve to demonstrate this reality. First, in terms of political philosophy, Australian Federation

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[17] John Bach, *A Maritime History of Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Sydney, 1976, p. 5.
[18] Geoffrey Blainey, 'A Nation of Islanders, We Can Hardly See the Sea', *Weekend Australian*, 8-9 October 1988; Frank Broeze, 'Maritime Australia: Integrating the Sea into Our National History', *Maritime Studies*,

in 1901 was the culmination of a philosophy of continental union rather than of island-unity. Second, following Gallipoli, the 1st AIF's experience of continental warfare in Europe from 1916-18 was a powerful force in cementing the idea of Australian nationhood. Third, a sense of continental awareness infuses both Australian literature and art - from the novels of Patrick White to the paintings of Sidney Nolan. White's most internationally acclaimed novel is *Voss*, a novel of inland exploration based on the career of Ludwig Leichardt. Nolan's famous paintings of Ned Kelly capture the interior world of the bushranger not the seafarer.[19] In the words of Ian Mudie, it is the outback not the ocean that grips the mind of Australians 'like heart and blood, from heat to mist'.[20]

Historically, Australian strategic thinking has viewed the sea as a defensive moat that separates the continent from the South-East Asian island archipelago in the north. Such a moat is to be defended – as the 1986 Dibb Report argued and successive White Papers in 1987, 1994 and 2000 have echoed – as a 'sea and air gap' by a strategy of denial.[21] The 2000 White Paper's statement 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, and provide maximum freedom of action for our forces' is consistent with a denial posture.[22] The difficulty with this conception of strategy is that it is largely naval and narrowly continental rather than joint service and broadly maritime in formulation. It is a strategic posture that lacks a clear understanding of the joint service requirements and integrated character of maritime operations. The archipelagos to our north comprise of a large number of islands, and essentially form what is a 'sea-air-land gap'.[23]

May/June 1995, pp. 9-16 and *Island-Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 1-9.

[19] See Michael Evans, 'Strategic Culture and the Australian Way of War', in David Stevens and John Reeve, eds, *Southern Trident: Strategy, History and the Rise of Australian Naval Power*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001, pp. 83-96 and 'Towards an Australian Way of Warfare', *Quadrant*, July-August, 2001, vol. XLVI, no. 388, pp. 8-16 and Thomas-Durell Young, *Australia's Security and Defense Posture: Implications for Affecting Greater Cooperation*, Working Paper, Japan Information Access Project, Washington DC., July 2000.

[20] Quoted by Robin W. Winks, *The Myth of the American Frontier: Its Relevance to America, Canada and Australia*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1971, p. 34.

[21] Commonwealth of Australia, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister of Defence by Mr Paul Dibb*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1986, Parts 1-4; 7.

[22] *Defence 2000*, p. 47.

[23] See Michael Evans, *Developing Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy: Lessons from the Ambon Disaster of 1942*, Study Paper No. 303, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, July 2000, pp. 69-90.

In a very real sense, then, Australia possesses a naval and a military strategic tradition but not a maritime strategic tradition. In 1930, Frederick Eggleston, one of the pioneers of modern Australian strategic analysis wrote, 'we are insular enough, but we do not have that sense of the sea and our surroundings which is generally developed in an island people'.[24] In his important 1965 study of Australian defence, the leading scholar T. B. Millar, was moved to remind his readers that, 'the first point to remember about the Australian island-continent is not that it is a continent but that it is an island'.[25] In 1977, another defence analyst, B. N. Primrose, observed that one of the greatest intellectual weaknesses in Australia's perception of strategy was the absence of a maritime tradition. Primrose wrote:

> As an island trading people, Australians lack a real understanding of the utility of the sea: They lack significant interest in maritime affairs; have little cultural affinity with the sea . . . and it is doubtful if many leaders or the electorate behind them have understood how to exploit or control the maritime resources which the nation possesses.[26]

A decade later, Kim Beazley, then Minister for Defence, came to a similar conclusion. In a speech in November 1987 he lamented, 'despite a host of good reasons for the contrary, Australia is not a maritime nation and its people do not sustain much of an interest in Australian maritime strategy'.[27]

As a result, the greatest difficulty Australian strategists have faced in formulating a maritime concept of strategy since 1997 is that of limited historical experience and, with this, a general cultural unfamiliarity with seaborne warfare. In intellectual terms, Australia possesses a distinct strategic culture that is characterised by a strong tendency to conceptualise about defence matters in discrete naval and land-based continental

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[24] Warren G. Osmond, *Frederick Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p. 139.
[25] T. B. Millar, *Australia's Defence*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965, p. 30.
[26] B. N. Primrose, 'Insurance, Deterrence, Faith: The Search for an Integrated Concept of Defence', *The Australian Journal of Defence Studies*, March 1977, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 36.

dimensions. A strategic culture may be defined a complex accretion of ideas and habits of thought about war which, despite changing circumstances, tend to reappear in new guises and often demonstrate a persistent affinity with the past.[28]

In Australia's strategic culture, the naval and continental approaches to strategy have often been in contention, creating a philosophical divide that has hindered an integrated and unitary approach to strategic policy. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that a philosophical divide between navalists and land-based continentalists, permeates 20th century Australian military history. The legacy of this philosophical divide continues to be the single biggest obstacle to the emergence of an effective 21st century Australian maritime concept of strategy.[29]

Throughout the 20th century, the intellectual collision between opposing concepts of naval versus land-based continental defence led to frequent strategy-force and strategic theory-military practice mismatches. Such theory-practice mismatches were particularly striking between 1901 and 1914, between 1919 and 1939 and, again, between the years 1987 and 1997. In all of these cases, strategic theory failed to match strategic practice in times of armed conflict. The strategic ideas of the years 1901-14 and 1919-39 failed to match the strategic practice followed in the two World Wars. Similarly, the strategic guidance of the period 1987-99 bore little resemblance to the majority of the ADF's actual military deployments from Somalia to the South Pacific. In all the above cases, official strategic theory favoured a primary role for naval forces with land forces confined to continental defence. Yet military reality dictated operations in which land

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[27] Kim C. Beazley, 'The Development of Australian Maritime Strategy', in Commonwealth of Australia. *Selected Speeches 1985-1989 by the Hon Kim C. Beazley, MP Minister for Defence*, Directorate of Departmental Publications, 1989, p. 184.
[28] Yitzhak Klein, 'A Theory of Strategic Culture', *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 10, no.1 1991, pp. 3-23.
[29] Michael Evans, 'From Defence to Security: Continuity and Change in Australian Strategic Planning in the Twentieth Century', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, eds, *Serving Vital Interests: Australia's Strategic Planning in Peace and War*, Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales, Canberra, 1996, pp. 116-39 and *From Deakin to Dibb: The Army and the Making of Australian Strategy in the 20th Century*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper No. 113, Canberra, June 2001.

forces were the main component of the forces deployed– the exact opposite of what strategic theory had envisaged.[30]

The lack of a cultural maritime tradition that might serve as an intellectual mechanism to unify contending ideas about sea and land defence has been one of the main reasons why Australian strategy in peace and war has oscillated between the conceptual opposites of naval defence and land-based continental defence. Historically, a tendency towards divergence rather than convergence, has moulded Australian strategic thought. Rivalry, tensions and compromises resulting from a naval-land intellectual divide have helped to shape a distinct 20th century Australian strategic culture. A few examples serve to make the point.

The Naval-Land Divide in Australian Strategy, 1901-39

Between 1901 and 1914, a naval-land divide was evident in the pre-1914 defence debate between such figures as Captain William Cresswell who favoured concentrating resources on naval defence and Colonel J. W. McCay, the Minister of Defence in the Reid-McLean Government who favoured a strong land defence. A similar fracture emerged again in the inter-war years, when proponents of a strong land-based continental defence such as the Chiefs of the General Staff, Major Generals Julius Bruche and John Lavarack, clashed fiercely with Frederick Shedden and Sir Archdale Parkhill over the adoption of a blue-water naval defence built around the Singapore strategy. In general terms, in the first half of the 20th century, Australia showed a preference in peacetime strategy for relying on a naval strategy based on cooperation with the British fleet. Yet in both World Wars, land forces – seen in peacetime conditions as a second-line force for continental defence – became Australia's main contribution to overseas operations in France (1916-18) and in North Africa and Greece (1939-42).[31]

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[30] *From Deakin to Dibb*, .pp. 40-42. Of twenty-two ADF deployments in the decade following the end of the Cold War, land forces predominated in twenty of them.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 10-17.

The Absence of a Maritime Strategic Dimension in Australia's Cold War Defence Policies

During both the Cold War, neither of the two dominant Australian strategies of forward defence and continental geostrategy reflected a maritime approach to strategy. The aim of forward defence was to fuse diplomacy and strategy in order to provide a framework of security that kept threats as far away as possible from Australia's shores. Australia's strategy of forward defence tended to employ separate service elements – particularly troops – rather than joint maritime forces in overseas regional contingencies from Korea to Vietnam.[32] A former Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral M. W. Hudson once described forward defence as a 'continental concept, applicable to fighting land battles on someone else's territory rather than one's own'.[33]

From the mid-1970s as Australia moved towards codifying a continental geostrategy as the foundation of its defence policy, a divergence in naval and land-based defence thinking again emerged. In the 1980s, the adoption of a layered strategy of defence-in-depth gave the RAN, supported by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), the role of primary guardian of the northern 'sea-air gap'. The most distinctive aspect of continental geostrategy was its attempt 'to narrow the options [for Australian strategy] . . . by focusing on the unchanging nature of our geographic circumstances and the levels of threat we might realistically expect'.[34] The centrepiece of strategic effort, and the important defence planning concern, became the need to deny the northern maritime approaches to an enemy by emphasising the capabilities of strike and interdiction based on naval and air forces.[35]

The notion of the northern maritime approaches constituting a 'sea and air gap' enclosing the defence of Australia was essentially a narrow naval rather than a broad-based

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[32] David Horner, 'The Security Dimension of Australian Foreign Policy', in F. A. Mediansky, ed, *Australia in a Changing World: New Foreign Policy Directions*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992, pp. 88-93.
[33] 'The Importance of Alliances: An Interview with Vice Admiral Mike Hudson, Chief of the Australian Naval Staff', *Naval Forces* (January 1988), p. 17.
[34] *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 5.
[35] *Ibid.*

maritime strategic concept. For example, no forward role for land forces in archipelagic defence was envisaged. Instead, the Army was confined to operations in Northern Australia in a classic continental defence role. The absence of a joint maritime element in the geostrategy of the 1980s was captured well by a former Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, who in 2000 described the notion of a sea-air gap as representing a 'blue-water Maginot Line theory'.[36]

Australia's Experience of Maritime Warfare: Lessons from the South-West Pacific Campaign, 1942-45

The differences between strategy conditioned by often divergent naval and land concepts of defence and a maritime strategy employing joint forces can be further analysed by reference to Australia's one true experience of maritime warfare – the campaign against the Japanese in the South West Pacific during World War II. In 1941, when Australia was forced to confront the Japanese threat to the northern island archipelago stretching from Sumatra to the Solomons, the fallacy of the Singapore strategy and a narrow naval approach to defence was quickly demonstrated. The Japanese threat to the northern island archipelago revealed the clear linkage that existed – and continues to exist – between Australia's security and that of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the Netherlands East Indies (modern Indonesia).[37]

A February 1941 appreciation of the strategic situation in the Far East written by the Australian Chiefs of Staff, Lieutenant General V. A. H. Sturdee, Admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin and Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett, is instructive. In their appreciation, the Chiefs of Staff immediately pointed out that the defence of Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies and Australia represented 'a single strategic problem'.[38] In particular, the

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[36] Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, 'Our Army: Past, Present and Future', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, June 2000, vol. 21, p. 58.
[37] Michael Evans, *Developing Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy: Lessons from the Ambon Disaster of 1942*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Study Paper No. 303, Canberra, July 2000, pp. 83-90.
[38] Australian Archives, CRS 2671, 64/1941, Combined Far Eastern Appreciation of Australian Chiefs of Staff, February, 1941. For a good summary of this appreciation see Commonwealth Government to Lord Cranborne, UK Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 15 February 1941, Document 300, in W. J.

appreciation noted the danger to Australia of the Japanese gaining forward operating bases in the Netherlands East Indies and threatening Australian communications and trade. The Chiefs concluded:

> Security in the Netherlands East Indies vitally affects that of Singapore and Australia . . . Naval and Air Forces should be employed [to] prevent the Japanese establishing naval and air bases within striking distance our vital interests . . . Provision must be made [to] garrison outlying bases to] ensure continued operations [of naval and air forces].[39]

The nature of Australia's national security being intimately linked to that of the Asia-Pacific region as a 'single strategic problem' was further highlighted by Prime Minister Robert Menzies. In March 1941, Menzies advised the British Naval Staff:

> If Japan should establish herself in the Netherlands East Indies, Australian public opinion would undoubtedly insist on military action to eject her, as her presence in this region would strike at the very basis of Australian defence by introducing a very powerful threat to Singapore, and by enabling Japan to make an attack on Northern Australia with land-based aircraft.[40]

John McEwen, the Minister for Air described the nexus between Australian security and that of the region even more graphically when he stated in November 1941 that, 'the position of the Netherlands East Indies in relation to Australia [is] similar to the [European] Channel ports in relation to England'.[41]

Between 1942 and 1945, Australia was catapulted into the unfamiliar world of joint maritime warfare in the South West Pacific. Australia's forces became a component in General MacArthur's 'island hopping' campaign as a junior coalition partner of the United States. Fighting with the Americans, Australian forces enjoyed the advantages of

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Hudson and H. J. W. Stokes, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-49*, Vol. IV, July 1940-June 1941, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1980, pp. 408-11.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Note of Conversations at UK Admiralty, 8 March 1941, Document 343 in Hudson and Stokes, eds, *Documents*, Vol IV: July 1940 –June 1941, p. 483.
[41] Advisory War Council Minute 560, 7 November 1941, Document 104 in W. J. Hudson and H. J. W. Stokes, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937-49*, Volume V: July 1941-June 1942, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1982, p. 180.

overwhelming American materiel support in air superiority, massive fire support from ship-to-shore bombardment and the benefit of excellent intelligence. [42]

Above all, an Army confined to the land defence of Australia by the strategy of the 1920s and 1930s, was forced abruptly into the complexity of archipelagic operations in tropical conditions alongside Admiral Barbey's US 7th Fleet Amphibious Force. Between 1943 and 1945, the 7th and 9th Divisions of the 2nd AIF undertook amphibious landings in New Guinea at Salamaua, Lae and at Buna, Brunei, Tarakan, Labuan and Balikpapan in Borneo. [43] The 1945 OBOE landings in Borneo Labuan and were highly complex joint amphibious assaults that have been described by the official historian as, 'demand[ing] exact and detailed coordination between not only the arms and services . . . of the army but also between the army, navy and air force'. [44]

The main lesson of the South West Pacific campaign for contemporary Australian strategy is a clear and unequivocal one. In a time of crisis, if Australia is threatened with a security threat or with military hostilities from through the northern archipelagos, joint force will have to be projected forward to help control parts of the northern island screen stretching from Java to Fiji. In the wake of the Bali bombing of October 12 2002, we are again painfully reminded of the nexus that exists between regional stability and Australia's security.

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[42] See Russell Parkin, *A Capability of First Resort: Amphibious Operations and Australian Defence Policy, 1901-2001*, Land Warfare Studies Working Paper No. 117, Canberra, 2002, pp. 23-32; David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series One: Army, Vol VI, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1961; Gavin Long, *The Final Offensives*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series One: Army, Vol VII, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1963 and Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Wahlert, ed, *Australian Army Amphibious Operations in the South-West Pacific, 1942-45*, Army Doctrine Centre, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, 1994.
[43] Parkin, *A Capability of First Resort: Amphibious Operations and Australian Defence Policy, 1901-2001*, pp. 23-32; David Horner, 'The Army's Role in the Maritime Defence of Australia', in David Stevens, ed, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning since 1901*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 119, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997, pp. 17-42; Michael Evans, 'Maritime Power and the Australian Army: Lessons from the past, Implications for the Future', in David Stevens, ed, *Maritime Power in the 20th Century: The Australian Experience*, Allen and Unwin, Canberra, 1998, pp. 230-48. See also John Reeve, *Maritime Strategy and the Defence of the Archipelagic Inner Arc*, Sea Power Centre, Canberra, Working Paper No. 5, July 2001.
[44] Long, *The Final Campaigns*, p. 261.

At the end of 1945, fresh from the Pacific War, most Australian politicians and military leaders accepted that logic that the security of the island chains to the north were fundamental to the security of Australia. In June 1946, the veteran politician, Sir Earle Page, summed up a post-war political consensus when he described the arc of northern islands running from Sumatra to the Solomons as being 'the real shield of Australia'.[45]

In the immediate aftermath of the end of the Pacific War, the Chifley Government asked the Australian Chiefs of Staff to draw up a strategic review of Australia's future defence needs. The document that emerged was the February 1946 Chiefs of Staff 'Appreciation of the Strategical Position of Australia'. In many respects, this appreciation is perhaps the most pure distillation of Australia's enduring strategic requirements that is available to contemporary researchers and policy makers.[46] This is because the 1946 Appreciation was written at a time when there was no great power threat in the Pacific, no Cold War and after a successful struggle by Australia to defeat aggression in the region – a rare combination of circumstances.[47]

The Chiefs' appreciation, drawn up by three veteran strategists, Lieutenant General Vernon Sturdee, Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton, and Air Marshal G. Jones, sought to avoid the weaknesses of defence planning in the 1920s and 1930s as exposed in the early weeks of the Pacific War in 1941-2. Several of the Chiefs' recommendations embodied strategic thinking that was fundamentally maritime in conception. For instance, they recommended that a network of advanced bases in the Asia-Pacific area, garrisoned by the Army was required if the RAAF and RAN were to function effectively in the defence of Australia.[48]

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[45] Commonwealth of Australia. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, Vol. 185, 27 June 1946, p. 1954.

[46] AA CRS A5954/69, Papers of F. G. Shedden, Item 1645/9, 'An Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff of the Strategical Position of Australia', February 1946.

[47] For a useful comparative perspective see Commonwealth of Australia. Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Key Elements in the Triennial Reviews of Strategic Guidance since 1945*, Special Hansard Report, Canberra, April 1986.

[48] 'An Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff of the Strategical Position of Australia', February 1946, paras 68-70, p. 18; para 89, p. 19.

The appreciation viewed Port Moresby, Nadzab, the Admiralties, Rabaul and the Solomons as essential air bases that should be maintained by Australia.[49] New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and the Netherlands East Indies were also regarded as being critical to Australia's security.[50] The Chiefs noted that good relations with the Netherlands East Indies were essential since the archipelago afforded key strategic base and communications facilities to a potential enemy and conferred 'a jumping-off place for an attack on the Australian mainland'.[51]

In the wake of Australia's experience of maritime operations in the South West Pacific from 1941-5, the Chiefs pointed out that 'arrangements for Regional Security, to be effective, must be made in relation to a wider plan and not solely on local considerations'.[52] The Chiefs went on to recommend a cooperative and joint service concept of defence in which 'the primary considerations in the organisation of the armed forces should be the provision of a balanced Task Force of the three Services'.[53] Such a balanced task force should, they stated be made up of a naval mobile unit, a fleet train, amphibious craft, land forces for both operations in normal terrain and amphibious operations (but capable of rapid conversion to meet jungle warfare), garrison forces and by a long-range air mobile force.[54]

The 1946 appreciation warned that developing Australia's military forces solely on the basis of the primacy of continental geography was undesirable since it would 'necessitate reorganisation and inevitable dislocation in the case of an emergency requiring overseas operations'.[55] They warned that preparing for local defence might run the risk of neglecting 'the security of strategical focal points (which may be far distant]'.[56] A Joint Planning Committee Report of 1946 drawn up by the three Deputy Chiefs of Staff was

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[49] *Ibid.*, para 86, p. 19.
[50] *Ibid.*, paras 98-99, p. 23.
[51] *Ibid.*, paras 101-3, p. 23.
[52] *Ibid.*, para 110, p. 24.
[53] *Ibid.*, paras 126-28, p. 27.
[54] *Ibid.*, para 125, p. 27.
[55] *Ibid.*, para 108, p. 24.
[56] *Ibid.*, para 5, p. 6.

also based on the lessons of the South West Pacific campaign in World War II, reinforced the Chiefs' analysis by stating:

> The operations of amphibious warfare, requiring a balanced contribution from all three Services are highly important in modern warfare for they lead to victory. The Navy may control the seaways; the Air Force may batter the enemy; but only the ground troops can occupy the enemy's territory and by so doing inflict ultimate defeat ... *The outstanding lesson of modern warfare is the importance of maintaining and co-ordinating all arms in a single plan.*[57]

Unfortunately, the main recommendation of the 1946 Appreciation and of the Joint Planning Committee Report, the creation of a maritime-style balanced task force organisation made up of components from all three services was never fully implemented. The main reason for this failure was the emergence of the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s and the type of strategic guidance that long conflict engendered over some forty years. Australia's Cold War strategic guidance from forward defence in the 1950s and 1960s to the adoption of a continental geostrategy in the 1970s and 1980s did not emphasise a need for joint maritime operations. As a result Australia's hard won expertise from the South West Pacific campaign in the 1940s, particularly in amphibious operations, was allowed to gradually atrophy over the next four decades.[58]

Forward Defence and the Loss of Joint Maritime Warfare Capabilities

In the 1950s and 1960s, capabilities for joint maritime operations rapidly declined. For instance, RAN amphibious ships and landing craft became important mainly in transport operations. At the time of the Korean War in 1950, only two specialist amphibious units were retained in the Citizen Military Force (CMF), an Artillery Amphibious Observation

[57] Australian Archives, A 5954/1, 'Report of the Joint Planning Committee: Nature and Function of Post-War Defence Forces in Australia', no date but clearly early 1946, p. 3. Emphasis added. See also Parkin, *A Capability of First Resort: Amphibious Operations in Australian Defence Policy, 1901-2001*, pp. 30-39.
[58] Michael Evans, 'Unarmed Prophets: Amphibious Warfare in Australian Military Thought', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, January/March 1999, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 10-19; Stewart Woodman, 'Defending the Moat: Maritime Strategy and Self-Reliance', in Stevens, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning since 1901*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1997 pp. 130-33.

Battery and an Armoured Corps Amphibious Assault Regiment.[59] By the end of the 1950s in the event of amphibious operations being required the Asia-Pacific, Australia counted on gaining support from the Royal Navy's Singapore-based Fleet Amphibious and the US Navy Amphibious Ready Groups in the South China Sea. In addition, to the loss of organic amphibious capabilities, the end of the 1960s saw the RAN increasingly turn away from fleet carrier operations towards anti-submarine warfare. This trend saw the beginning of a gradual decline in Australia's fleet air arm and sea-based fixed wing aviation.[60]

Continental Geostrategy and Maritime Strategy Requirements

In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the long decline in Australian maritime warfare knowledge, assets and expertise accelerated under the impact of defence policy based on a geostrategy of defending the Australian continent. Continental geography became, in effect, the most important conceptual determination in disciplining strategy and aligning it tightly with force structure, capability development and defence expenditure.[61] Under the relatively predictable geopolitical conditions of the late Cold War such an approach appeared to be feasible. As a result there was no place for a broader strategic considerations based on an appreciation that the maritime approaches embrace two northern archipelagos and represent, in truth, a sea-air-land gap.[62]

The experience of World War II, in which Australian operations in the northern approaches had required a joint maritime strategy with a proactive role for land forces,

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[59] Parkin, *A Capability of First Resort: Amphibious Operations and Australian Defence Policy, 1901-2001*, pp. 35-39; Evans, 'Maritime Power and the Australian Army: Lessons from the Past, Implications for the Future', pp. 233-4 and 'Unarmed Prophets: Amphibious Warfare in Australian Military Thought', pp. 10-12.

[60] Evans, 'Unarmed Prophets: Amphibious Warfare in Australian Military Thought', pp. 10-13.

[61] Commonwealth of Australia, *The Defence of Australia 1987: Presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence the Honourable Kim C. Beazley, MP, March 1987*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987, chaps. 2-3 and *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994, chap. 4.

[62] See Michael Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, Working Paper No. 101, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 1998, pp. 8-17.

was largely overlooked in defence planning between 1987 and 1997.[63] As the Royal Australian Navy transformed into a defensive strike-based 'sea-air gap' service, the ADF as a whole forfeited some of the key aspects of joint maritime operations notably carrier aviation, seaborne land forces and the capability for significant inland force projection. In 1982, HMAS *Melbourne,* the Navy's last carrier was decommissioned, effectively ending the fixed-wing Fleet Air Arm In 1986, this was followed by the decision to disband the ADF's amphibious landing-craft squadron based on HMAS *Tobruk.*[64] In 1990, Defence Minister Kim Beazley, justified the phasing out of a carrier capability and the scaling down of amphibious troop lift on the basis that, 'we [the Government] have concluded that their essentially offensive nature makes them inappropriate for our force structure'.[65]

Despite amphibious-style contingencies in the South Pacific during the 1980s, the end of the Cold War in 1989, the collapse of Soviet communism in 1991 and the rapid shift towards a more fluid strategic environment in the first half of the 1990s, Australian strategic guidance was slow to recognise how changing geopolitical conditions could influence the need for greater maritime and amphibious flexibility. In both the 1987 and 1994 White Papers, amphibious resources and the requirements of joint maritime operations were largely ignored. ADF seaborne contingencies in the South Pacific, including Operation *Morrisdance* during the 1987 Fiji crisis and later Operation *Lagoon* in Bougainville in 1994, did not significantly change the continental/northern approaches defence thrust of Australian policy.[66]

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[63] See the emphasis in Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development* and 'Australia's Defence Policies in the Post-Cold War Era;, in James Cotton and John Ravenhill, eds, *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs, 1991-95,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, chap. 5; The Hon. Kim C. Beazley, 'The Development of Australian Maritime Strategy, 26 November 1987', in Commonwealth of Australia. *Selected Speeches 1985-1989 by the Hon. Kim C. Beazley, MP, Minister for Defence,* Directorate of Departmental Publications, Canberra, February 1989, pp. 179-85; and Senator the Hon. Robert Ray, Minister for Defence, 'The Strategic Imperative of the Move to the North', in David Horner, ed, *The Army and the Future: Land Forces in Australia and South-East Asia,* Directorate of Departmental Publications, Canberra, 1993, pp. 229-38.

[64] Evans, 'Unarmed Prophets: Amphibious Warfare in Australian Military Thought', p. 19.

[65] 'Response by Kim Beazley, Minister for Defence, on Australia's defensive posture, 1990', Document 60, Documents on Australian Maritime Strategy in Stevens, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy,* pp. 218-19.

[66] Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy,* pp. 13-15.

It is true that a requirement for greater maritime flexibility was addressed in *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s* and the 1991 *Force Structure Review*. Such maritime-style contingencies were classified as Responses to Regional Requests and were seen as possible operational commitments but not as key force structure determinants.[67] It was against this background that acquisition in 1993 of two American *Newport* class Landing Platform Helicopter ships (LPHs) for conversion as Amphibious Transport, Personnel ships (LPAs) was undertaken.

The acquisition and modernisation of the LPAs in the 1990s gave the ADF an improved technical capability for manoeuvre operations from the sea. HMAS *Manoora* and HMAS *Kanimbla*, and HMAS *Tobruk* (in service until 2010) give the ADF an amphibious force of three ships. Is important, however, to restate that this capability was acquired against the background of a half-a century of philosophical disagreement over defence policy imperatives, unfavourable strategic guidance, long years of doctrinal neglect, lack of single service interest in joint maritime operations and frequent cost-cutting. The result was, that by at the time Australia began to embrace the principles of a maritime concept of strategy in late 1997 – some fifty years after the recommendation made in the Chiefs' 1946 Appreciation – the ADF's knowledge and expertise in joint maritime warfare had been reduced to a minimum.

The Evolution of Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy, 1997-2000

In December 1997, Australia began the complex process of transitioning away from a geostrategy towards a new concept of maritime strategy. A key document in this process was ASP 97. Although the latter document has since been superseded by the 2000 Defence White Paper it remains of considerable interest in any discussion of the evolution and future of Australian maritime strategy. The reason for this is that ASP 97 provides a clear and unequivocal example of the impact of the naval-land philosophical divide in Australian strategic thought – trends that are also present in the 2000 White

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[67] Department of Defence. *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s* , Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, November 1989, pp. 34-6; *Force Structure Review 1991*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1991, p. 28.

Paper. ASP 97 demonstrates how such a dichotomy can distort strategic priorities by elevating philosophical tradition over empirical thought.

The Weaknesses of ASP 97

The major weakness of the 1997 strategic review was its tendency to interpret a maritime concept strategy in largely navalist terms while seeking to continue the trend of confining the land force to a continental role. In this sense, the document lacked conceptual integration and was consistent with the historic sea-land schism in 20th century Australian strategic thinking. In essence, ASP 97 sought to treat a post-Cold War joint maritime role for the ADF as merely an 'add-on' to the master template of geostrategy adopted in the 1987 and 1994 White Papers. Although the 1997 strategic review saw the need for an increased regional security focus in Australian defence, defeating direct attacks against Australia remained the *'core force structure priority . . . the focus of all our defence activities'.*[68]

In terms of developing a stronger regional focus in defence, the major flaw in ASP 97 was its Mahanian-style naval interpretation of a maritime concept of strategy for Australia. The policy review viewed a maritime concept of strategy as being mainly based on naval strategic warfare, sea control and counter-air operations. Accordingly, the review placed major emphasis on deploying naval units supported by land-based aircraft to defeat aggressors in the maritime approaches. [69] In outlining a new maritime concept of defence, ASP 97 stated: 'combat aircraft, submarines and surface combatants, supported by well-developed intelligence, surveillance and command and control systems, would be our first line of defence and are our highest priority'.[70]

While few people would deny the vital importance of naval and air assets in Australia's defence policy, there is much more intellectual analysis involved in any exposition of a modern maritime concept of strategy. ASP 97 largely ignored the need for land force

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[68] *Australia's Strategic Policy,* (ASP 97) p. 29. Emphasis in original.
[69] *Ibid.,* p. 44.
[70] *Ibid.,* p. 45

deployment in littoral operations in the archipelago and it neglected the key requirement for Australia to develop a broader notion of joint operations throughout the maritime approaches. The document perpetuated the tendency in Australian strategic thinking to try to confine the role of land forces to that of a mere rearguard on Australian soil. There was little understanding demonstrated of the need for joint service exploitation of the protective manoeuvre space of the sea-air-land gap as occurred in the operations of 1942-45. In addition, only vague mention was given to the need for amphibious forces and, even then, only in the context of developing 'a limited amphibious capability'.[71]

The hierarchy of capability priorities listed in the review also reinforced the naval-aerospace orientation of Australian strategy. An integrated surveillance system, the provision of land-based air cover with air-to-air refuelling, the deployment of naval platforms with anti-shipping missile defence and strategic strike, were considered largely in isolation from the role of land forces.[72] The main problem with the entire approach of ASP 97 was that it failed to use a maritime concept of strategy as an intellectual device to integrate Australia's military capabilities into a joint strategy encompassing both the defence of the northern archipelago and the security of Australia.

East Timor and the 2000 Defence White Paper

Less than two years later, in September 1999, the logic for a broader and more refined maritime strategic concept was clearly underlined when Australia deployed 4,500 troops to East Timor in the Indonesian archipelago – a scenario that had been unthinkable in ASP 97. The East Timor operation – the largest since the Vietnam commitment of the mid-1960s – reinforced the need for Australia to possess a 21st century defence strategy that supported the nation's security interests in its most vital area of concern, the Asia-Pacific region. In the wake of the operation in East Timor, it became clear – as the 1941 and 1946 Chiefs Appreciations had warned – that the security of Australia and the

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[71] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[72] *Ibid*, pp. 57-60; 62-3; 65-66.

security of the region cannot be treated in isolation and in reality represent 'a single strategic problem'.

The December 2000 White Paper sought to resolve the challenges posed by the 'arc of instability' extending to Australia's north and east that encompasses a fragile post-Suharto Indonesia, a weak Papua New Guinea, armed secessionism in Bougainville and the rise of insecurity in the South Pacific islands. The document sought to resolve a growing tension between a desire to limit force structure and expenditure to the bedrock of continental geostrategy while simultaneously preparing meet a broadened international security agenda that extended well beyond Australia's shores.

Unlike the 1976, 1987 and 1994 documents and its immediate predecessor, ASP 97, *Defence 2000* seeks to create a more realistic balance of, and integration between, defending territory and defending interests, between balancing national and regional defence needs and between the theory of continental geostrategy and the practice of a joint maritime strategy.[73] In a key statement the White Paper admits, 'the development of our land forces needs to reflect a new balance between the demands of operations on Australian territory and the demands of deployments offshore, especially in our immediate neighbourhood'.[74] The 2000 White Paper's land force proposals seek to structure the Army to enable it to deploy a brigade group for extended periods while simultaneously maintaining at least a battalion group for operations elsewhere.[75]

Unlike the singular geographical focus of its 1987 and 1994 predecessors, the 2000 White Paper does admit the existence of broad security interests involving 'the need to balance the Australian interest at stake with the human, financial, political and diplomatic, and wider costs of committing military forces'.[76] While continuing to uphold a priority commitment to defend Australia's geography, the document signals a shift in strategic thinking when it states:

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[73] *Defence 2000*, chap. 6.
[74] *Ibid.,* p. 79.
[75] *Ibid.,* pp. 183-84.
[76] *Ibid.,* p. 30.

> Nothing can remove the element of the unexpected from our military affairs . . . *So our defence planning should not leave us with a set of capabilities that is too narrowly focussed on specific scenarios.* Our aim is to provide Australia with a set of capabilities that will be *flexible enough to provide governments with a range of military options across a spectrum of credible situations.*[77]

As the 2000 White Paper puts it, 'our armed forces need to be able to do more than simply defend our coastline. We have strategic interests and objectives at the global and regional levels. Australia is an outward looking country'.[78]

To what extent does the 2000 Defence White Paper present a successful exposition of a modern maritime concept of strategy? In comparison to ASP 97, it is clear that the 2000 White Paper provides a more intellectually substantive analysis of the needs of a post-Cold War maritime concept of strategy. Having said this, it should be noted that Australia's approach to maritime affairs continues to be straitjacketed by the dictates of a narrowly based continental geostrategy. The main weakness of the 2000 White Paper, like that of ASP 97, continues to remain conceptual and philosophical. As the American analyst, Thomas-Durell Young has perceptively written, the White Paper 'marks a shift in Australia's official strategic thinking, if perhaps not just yet its strategic culture'.[79]

Because it lacks conceptual integration, the White Paper seeks to reconcile the irreconcilable by marrying a continental geostrategy with a maritime strategy. The first is essentially inward looking and concerned with defending local territory; the second is essentially outward looking and concerned with broader regional interests. The White Paper also seeks to continue to meld force structure planning and expenditure for continental geostrategy to the requirements of a new, complex and much broader international security environment. Yet paradoxically, the very integrating mechanism for this melding of opposites – a 21st century maritime strategy based on an embrace of joint

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[77] *Ibid.*, p. 54. Emphases added.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[79] Thomas-Durell Young, 'Defence 2000: An Unofficial American View', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, March/April 2001, no. 147, p. 45.

littoral operations – remains conceptually subordinate to a late 20th century continental strategy emphasis on a naval-air defence of the sea-air gap.[80]

As a result the 'single strategic problem' presented by the juxtaposition of national and regional defence commitments remains constrained by a 1980s vision of a geostrategic defence of the Australian continent. As the 2000 review reiterates, in words that might have been extracted from the 1987 White Paper, '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, and provide maximum freedom of action for our forces'.[81] In short, although *Defence 2000* employs a maritime concept of strategy, its philosophical preference is, like that ASP 97, still to equate this rather narrowly with sea and air forces rather than with joint forces. The White Paper continues this trend in spite of the reality that Australia is quickest reached from the littoral and not from the blue water of the sea-air gap. Professor Paul Dibb's comment that the 2000 White Paper, conforms to 'St James version [of defence policy] centred on defence of Australia', reflects the continued theoretical primacy of formulating defence policy based on unchanging strategic geography with a primary reliance on naval and air assets.[82]

The leading Australian political analyst, Paul Kelly, captured this intellectual contradiction when he noted in an analysis of the 2000 White Paper, that the document remains at heart a 'conservative 1980s document'. The 2000 document's main difference from its 1987 and 1994 predecessors is that it seeks to weld a 'neighbourhood role' for the ADF on to the master template of the Defence of Australia geostrategy.[83] The difficulty is that the 'neighbourhood role' is a crucial one. After all, Australia cannot remain secure in an insecure region.

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[80] *Defence 2000*, pp. xi, 29-31; 46-54.
[81] *Ibid*, p. 47.
[82] Paul Dibb, 'Australia's Best Defence White Paper?', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, March/April 2001, no. 147, p. 30.
[83] Address by Paul Kelly at the Australian Defence Studies Centre Seminar on the 2000 White Paper, Rydges Hotel, Canberra, 12 December 2000. Notes taken by author.

In fluid and uncertain 21ˢᵗ century international conditions, it is almost certain that 'a neighbourhood role' – requiring compact but effective joint maritime forces rather than primarily sea-air platforms for narrow geographically-constrained missions – will become of primary importance in defence strategy in the years ahead. On present and foreseeable trend-analysis, the growing interconnection between national, regional and global security in Australian defence thinking is unlikely to be reversed in the foreseeable future – as the recent events of October 12 in Bali underline. Indeed, over the next decade, if the ADF is to be an effective instrument of Australian statecraft, its force structure must become more flexible and less tied to the geographical imperatives of continental defence planning. As was the case in World War II, Australia must to be able to mount effective and sustainable joint operations in the complex conditions of the northern archipelagic islands. The ADF's prime warfighting aim should be to be capable of joint operations within the glacis of the island archipelago. From this perspective, Australian defence policy makers must learn to view the northern archilpelago as a zone of operational manoeuvre and not merely as a type of defensive antipodean Maginot Line.

The benefits of possessing a defence force whose primary role is that of executing modern seaborne manoeuvre warfare within a broad maritime concept of strategy are considerable. Such a force structure has inherent flexibility and, above all, confers policy options for Government across a spectrum of conflict including continental, offshore and regional-international theatres. With respect to the defence of continental Australia, operational manoeuvre from the sea permits the exploitation of the seaward flank in defence of national territory. Operational manoeuvre based on seaborne mobility also allows coverage of 600 kilometres in any direction within twenty four hours.[84] In regional and international operations, possessing flexible amphibious-trained joint maritime oriented forces would be a force multiplier for the ADF for a range of tasks ranging from counter-terrorism, services protected evacuations, forcible entry and coalition operations. All three services, RAN, RAAF and the Australian Army, are capable of doing more for

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[84] Lieutenant Commander John P. Robinson, 'Manoeuvre from the Sea – The Forgotten Force Multiplier', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, August/October 1996, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 24-30.

Australia's defence if their special enviromental capabilities are carefully integrated to maximise all available resources.

The Changing Character of Conflict and the Future of Australia's Maritime Strategy

From an Australian perspective, the most distinctive feature of armed conflict in the first decade of the 21st century is the relative decline of strategic geography and the growing importance of connectedness over territoriality.[85] The implications stemming from the rise of connectedness over territoriality represent the most rigorous intellectual challenge Australian strategic policy makers will face over the next decade.

The international security environment of the early 21st century is marked by its unprecedented tendency towards the phenomenon of inteconnectedness – a process propelled by the dual impact of globalisation and its handmaiden, the information revolution. Together, these two forces have altered the context within which modern states must now operate, bringing about a redistribution of power between states, markets, civil society, non-state and trans-state actors.[86] From a strategic perspective, the globalisation occurring over the last decade is perhaps best described as *a process in which space and time have been so compressed by technology as to permit distant actions to have local effects and vice versa.* In an age of globalisation and unprecedented interconnectedness, even local military developments now have the potential to be of global significance and as a result, the protection nation states once enjoyed from their strategic geography has diminished.[87]

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[85] Much of this section is based on research in Michael Evans, 'From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and Future War', *US Naval War College Review* (forthcoming) and a monograph, *Military Theory and 21st Century War: The Legacy of the Past and the Challenge of the Future* (forthcoming).

[86] Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2002, chapters 10-12 and 24-26.

[87] Jean-Marie Guéhenno, 'The Impact of Globalisation on Strategy', *Survival*, Winter 1998-99, vol. 40, no. 4, pp 5-19; David Held and Anthony McGrew, 'Globalisation and the Prospects for World Order', in Tim Dunne, Michael Cox and Ken Booth, eds, *The Eighty Years Crisis: International Relations 1919-99*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 219-43.

It is very important to understand clearly what is meant by the relative decline of strategic geography. In no sense, does such a statement imply 'the end of geography' in the same sense that Francis Fukuyama famously spoke of 'the end of history'. In terms of logistics, campaign planning and topographical analysis, geography remains fundamental to the art of war, while geopolitics remains an important component of statecraft. Nonetheless, the use of strategic geography as a primary rationale for defining a nation's defence and national security postures has clearly declined. As two leading Chinese strategists have pointed out, ours is an age in which 'there is no territory that cannot be surpassed; there is no means which cannot be used in the war; and there is no territory or method which cannot be used in combination'.[88]

In September 1999, the bipartisan US (Hart-Rudman) Commission on National Security/21st Century stated:

> The future strategic environment will . . . be one of considerable turbulence . . . The international system will be so fluid and complex that to think intelligently about military issues will mean taking an integrated view of political, social, technological, and economic developments. Only a broad definition of national security is appropriate to such a circumstance. In short we have entered an age in which many of the fundamental assumptions that steered us through the chilly waters of the Cold War require rethinking . . . *The very facts of military reality are changing, and that bears serious and concentrated reflection.*[89]

The Hart-Rudman Commission's judgement about the facts of military reality changing reflect the enormous changes that have occurred in the character of armed conflict over the last decade. In common with other Western democracies, Australia has now entered the age of globalised security and our unique geographic position can no longer be counted upon to naturally insulate us from the impact of international events. The globalisation of security and the growing indivisibility of major threats do not allow any state or society to retreat behind physical or moral borders.

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[88] Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, Beijing, 1999, p. 199.
[89] United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century, Supporting Research & Analysis*, The Phase 1 Report on the Emerging Global Security

In the international system of the early 21st century, conflict and disorder anywhere in the world can be quickly transmitted everywhere – and invested with crisis – by a pervasive global communications media, symbolised by the Cable News Network. Moreover, conflict is exacerbated by the fact that globalisation is not a homogenous process, but contains a striking paradox in that it brings about both convergence and divergence. The notion of interconnectedness and a heightened sense of global consciousness are paralleled by polarisation and by particularism.

The result over the past ten years has been the development of an unpredictable and complex pattern of armed conflict involving merging modes that has increasingly transcended traditional ideas about warfare. In effect, by 2001 the contemporary international security system had bifurcated – that is it had split between a traditional 20th century state-centred paradigm and new 21st century sub-state and trans-state strata. The great change in the early 21st century international system from that of the last quarter of the 20th century, is the transition away from a dominant state-centric structure towards one marked by a greater number of sub-state and trans-state actors.[90]

Under conditions of global strategic bifurcation the old distinctions between civil and international conflict; between internal and external security; and between national and societal security began to erode. It has become clear that in an era in which various transnational and sub-state forces are greatly empowered by technology, issues such as failed states, civil conflict, mass-casualty terrorism and the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, can no longer be easily quarantined within states or regions. In a very real sense, strategic bifurcation has been one of the main factors contributing to the decline of strategic geography.[91]

From the early 1990s onward, such issues as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and failed states emerged as global strategic threats precisely because they act

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Environment for the First Quarter of the 21st Century, US Commission on National Security/21st Century, Washington DC, September 15 1999, p. 57. Emphasis added.

[90] For a useful discussion see Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr., and Richard H. Shultz, Jr., 'Future Actors in a Changing Security Environment', in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr. and Richard H. Schlutz, eds, *War in the Information Age: New Challenges for US Security Policy*, Brassey's, Washington DC, 1997, chapter 1.

to blur the distinction between internal and external crises. Under new political conditions, transnational and sub-state forces threaten not just states, but entire societies and thus the fabric of international stability itself. Traditional ideas about strategy have come under challenge as the political, economic and military dimensions of security merge closer and state-on-state war appears to have become supplemented by new forms of sub-state and trans-state conflict. A major new feature of the 21st century international order is the empowerment of new non-state and trans-state forces that have brought a degree of unpredictability to a world used to being ordered according to the principles of the Westphalian state-system. Echoing the Hart-Rudman Commission, the US Secretary for Defence, Donald H. Rumsfeld, has pointed out that in the 21st century, new strategic thinking is now required to arm Western societies 'against the unknown, the uncertain, the unseen, and the unexpected'.[92] Such strategic thinking is the exact opposite of what was required during the Cold War where the communist opponent was known, certain and clearly visible. There was a certain predictability in the bipolar world of international strategic behaviour.

Since the 1990s strategic predictability has evaporated. There has been a diffusion of contemporary war and armed conflict into a variety of different modes. In the 1990s conflict became at once *modern* (reflecting conventional warfare between states); *post-modern* (reflecting the West's cosmopolitan political values of limited war, peace enforcement and humanitarian military intervention); and *pre-modern* (reflecting a mix of sub-state and trans-state warfare based on the age-old politics of identity, extremism and particularism). It is important to note that none of these categories represent neatly divided compartments of activity; rather they overlap and interact with each other.[93]

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[91] *Ibid.*

[92] Donald H. Rumsfeld, 'Transforming the Military', *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2002, vol. 81, no. 3, p. 23.

[93] For views on the future of armed conflict see Makhmut Gareev, *If War Comes Tomorrow? The Contours of Future Armed Conflict*, Frank Cass, London, 1998; Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999; Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, Zed Books, London, 2001; Robert E. Harkavy and Stephanie G. Neuman, *Warfare and the Third World*, Palgrave, New York, 2001; Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat*, Public Affairs, New York, 2001; Andrew J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen, eds, *War Over Kosovo; Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, Columbia University Pess, New York, 2001 and Christopher Coker, *Waging War Without Warriors? The Changing Culture of Military Conflict*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado. 2002, William R. Schilling, ed, *Nontraditional Warfare: Twenty-First Century Threats and Responses*, Brassey's Inc, Washington, 2002 and Colin S.

The merging of modes of armed conflict suggests an era of warfare quite different from that of the recent past, an era in which national, trans-state and sub-state forces may coalesce or confront each other. Moreover, the conventional and the unconventional, the symmetric and the asymmetric may occur almost simultaneously and overlap in time and space. Fighting in the future may involve high-technology conventional forces, guerrilla bands, independent and state-directed terrorist groups, specialised antiterrorist units, and assorted private militias. Terrorist attacks might evolve into classic guerrilla warfare, and then escalate to conventional conflict. Alternatively, fighting could be conducted on several levels and different environments at once. The possibility of continuous, sporadic, armed conflict, blurred in time and space, waged on several levels by a large array of national and subnational forces, means that the reality of war and armed conflict in the first decade of the 21st century transcends a neat division into distinct areas of symmetry and asymmetry.[94]

In a new age of multiple threats, the discrete categories of conventional and unconventional conflict are eroding along with corresponding legal and moral restraints. In an age of interconnectedness, linkage and interdependence seem to pervade all aspects of armed conflict creating what the US Hart-Rudman Commission has described as 'the spectrum of symmetrical and asymmetrical threats we anticipate [developing] over the next quarter century'.[95]

The diffusion of armed conflict and its merging modes in the early 21st century reflects the consequences of a global system that has become bifurcated between a traditional state-centric world on one hand and new trans-state and sub-state strata on the other hand.

Gray, *Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and The Evidence of History*, Frank Cass, London, 2002.

[94] See Huba Wass de Czege and Richard Hart Sinnreich, *Conceptual Foundations of a Transformed US Army*, Association of the United States Army, Institute for Land Warfare Paper No. 40, Washington DC, March 2002; Michael Russell Rip and James M. Hasik, *The Precision Revolution: GPS and the Future of Aerial Warfare*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2002, chapters 11-13 and Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, chapters 26-27.

[95] The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Seeking a National Strategy: A Concert for Preserving Security and Promoting Freedom*, The Phase II Report on a US National Security Strategy for the 21st Century, The Commission, Washington DC, 15 April 2000, p. 14.

The marriage between new trans-state and non-state actors and the power of advanced technology have helped to make a redefinition of security away from territoriality towards connectedness more and more necessary. As President George W. Bush has put it, Western nations face a new threat that emanates from 'the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology'.[96] The great danger to Western nations is no longer the threat of military invasion of the territory of the sovereign state, but an assault on the very connections of our complex, networked societies. Western societies are now most vulnerable not so much from external attack but from an internal disruption of the connectedness of government, financial and economic institutions and critical infrastructures.[97]

It was this critical weakness that was identified by al-Qaeda on September 11 2001 with devastating results for the United States. Increasingly, both national and societal security now depends on the protection of a loop of social institutions and protecting the information infrastructures which link them. However, unlike the borders of a state, it is almost impossible to protect an entire society solely by homeland defence. The way in which a traditional focus on territoriality has been gradually supplemented by the new reality of connectedness is perhaps the central change in strategy in the first decade of the 21st century. In the words of Philip Bobbitt:

> We are at a moment in world affairs when the essential ideas that govern statecraft must change. For five centuries it has taken the resources of a state to destroy another state; only states could muster the huge revenues, conscript the vast armies, and equip the divisions required to threaten the survival of other states . . . In such a world, every state knew that its enemy would be drawn from a small class of potential adversaries. This is no longer true, owing to advances in international telecommunications, rapid computation, and weapons of mass destruction. The change in statecraft that will accompany these developments will be as profound as any that the State has thus far undergone.[98]

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[96] President George W. Bush, 'Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy West Point New York', 1 June 2002.
[97] Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, pp. 776-823.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

The globalisation of security clearly requires a new approach to strategy and statecraft. Australia, in common with its Western allies, has entered a period where small numbers of non-state actors operating with the power of modern computers, biogenetics and possibly weapons of mass destruction can deal lethal blows to any society. For those of us who were educated in the 20th century paradigm of modern war, armed conflict pitted one country against another; war was waged by governments; and the victorious party defeated its adversary. In the early 21st century, marked as it is by a globalisation of security and by a proliferation of non-state and trans-state threats, none of these hallowed certainties may apply. As the French military analyst, Philippe Delmas has observed, 'this world is without precedent. It is as different from the Cold War as it is from the Middle Ages . . . Tomorrow's wars will not result from the ambitions of States; rather from their weaknesses'.[99]

We are confronted with the grave challenge of finding new ways of using force and defending modern societies. Increasingly, the nation-state model of war by threat-analysis will have to be supplemented by globalised vulnerability-analysis based on international collaboration ranging from enhanced intelligence collection, defensive sensors, vaccinations, prepositioned medical supplies and advanced methods of deception.[100] In short, there has been a profound change in the calculus of destructive power. Preparing for armed conflict is no longer a matter of simply assembling battlefield strength and capabilities to destroy defined adversaries as occurred in much of the past. The diffusion of advanced technology has seen standoff missiles, commercial space systems and, possibly in the future even weapons of mass destruction, fall into the hands of smaller armies, paramilitaries, militias and other armed groups. Some of these groups are multinational in character and are organised along the lines of near 'virtual states' in a malignant and mutated form of globalisation.

In an era when all security issues are interconnected and when the national security of Western states has become critically dependent on the health of international security,

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[99] Philippe Delmas, *The Rosy Future of War*, The Free Press, New York, 1995, p. 213.
[100] Bobbit, *The Shield of Achilles*, pp. 811-16.

traditional concepts of deterrence and territorial defence need to be supplemented by new doctrines of strategic preemption and strategic prevention. Moreover, the clear separation of peace and war needs to be supplemented by an acknowledgement that modes of war have merged. In a new age marked by networks and instant communications, the need is for advanced military forces that bring wide, mobile and highly flexible skills across a spectrum of conflict that may involve preventive deployment and operational manoeuvre from strategic distance, preemptive strike, war fighting, peace enforcement, traditional peacekeeping and peace building and counter-terrorism. Increasingly, military power is entwined in politics as an instrument that shapes, polices, punishes, signals, warns and contains a complex strategic environment from sea, air and land.[101] In an age of globalisation and connectedness, a defence force that is structured for joint maritime operations possesses much greater options, utility and deployability than one that is inwardly focused on defending strategic geography.

Implications of a Changed 21st Security Environment for Australia

Australia and the ADF cannot be immune from any of the new strategic realities outlined above. In the peculiar conditions of the post-September 11 world, Australia needs more than ever to view its defence strategy within the overarching context of a 'multi-agency' national security system. Australia requires a sophisticated multi-faceted security outlook – one that is simultaneously *globally attuned, regionally focused and alliance-oriented*. Like other Western states, then, Australia must prepare to meet an accelerating convergence of military and security challenges. We have, as a matter of urgency, to overcome our 20th century propensity to view strategy in terms of separate naval and land dimensions.

There are three imperatives the ADF must embrace over the next decade. First, the ADF must develop the ability to adapt to differing modes of war right along the conflict spectrum by becoming multifunctional. A 21st century ADF must be capable of

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[101] Brigadier General Loup Francart and Jean-Jacques Patry, 'Mastering Violence: An Option for Operational Military Strategy', *Naval War College Review*, Summer 2000, vol 53, no. 3, pp. 144-84.

participating in joint multidimensional missions ranging from shaping the environment to counter-terrorism and air-ground operational manoeuvre through to conventional warfighting. Such a multi-spectral approach to conflict is best facilitated by possessing a joint maritime strategy, but one that is unfettered by the requirements of a now defunct 1980s style continental geostrategy.

A full embrace of a maritime concept of strategy would permit much greater flexibility and confer a greater range of options on Government. The task for Australian strategic planners is no longer to plan according to the matrix of to strategic geography; it is now one of carefully disciplining limited military power into a new and much broader security strategy – that will span often a complex and joint spectrum of conflict – and to do this in a calibrated, judicious and precise manner. This task will not be easy or straightforward, but nor can it be avoided by simple recourse to past strategic practices.

Since there are over 13,000 islands stretching for over 5,000 kilometres through the northern archipelagos from Java to Fiji, the ADF's force structure should be determined mainly on the grounds of coalition interoperability and the primacy of regional operations.[102] There is a natural linkage, 'a single strategic problem' in the words of the 1946 Chiefs of Staff, between defending Australia's regional interests and securing continental Australia. Three areas of activity need to be integrated into a maritime strategic framework: manoeuvre operations in a littoral environment (MOLE); improved amphibious capability; and a new appreciation of the use of key strategic points and forward operating bases in the northern archipelagos by naval and air power in a joint maritime strategy. As the RAN's maritime doctrine notes, 'Australia's naval forces do not possess the organic air capability to protect operations on land'.[103] The ADF should then look beyond air warfare defence at sea. Strategic planners should at least examine the possibilities of a through deck ski jump ship as well as the potential of the land attack missile – a weapons system that has the capacity to offset many of the aviation

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[102] Evans, *Developing Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy*, pp. 83-88.
[103] *Australia's Maritime Doctrine: RAN Doctrine 1 2000*, p. 63.

disadvantages in medium, non-carrier navies such as the RAN.[104] Overall, the concepts of MOLE and amphibious warfare along with the special roles of naval and air power in littoral warfare need to become integrated at the strategic level if Australia is to successfully integrate its operational means with strategic ends.

Accordingly, both the RAN and the RAAF have to move away from a purely national sea control/sea denial defensive approach to the 'sea-air gap'. There should be more of a naval-air doctrinal concentration on the dynamics of regional operational manoeuvre in the 'sea-air-land' gap that is the reality of an archipelagic environment. As the 1946 Chiefs appreciation pointed out, key strategic points for air and naval forces in the archipelagos include islands such as Timor, Cocos, Christmas, Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya.[105]

Second, as questions of both national defence and societal security merge and interpenetrate, it is clear that possessing a reactive operational strategy alone is inadequate as a means of deterrence. We now live in the age of the rise of non-territorial and wider interests, of interdependence and indivisible security when there is an asymmetric, but systemic, threat from mass-casualty terrorism against society's critical infrastructure. In these conditions, we have to recognise that it is not territoriality alone that we must defend, but also our vital non-territorial interests. It is our fate to operate in an era of great strategic ambiguity in which the older tools of strategy – retaliation, deterrence and incursion – have become less useful. Security in the new era of liberal globalism requires a willingness by Western states – including Australia – to undertake offshore intervention missions. In securing Australian interests anywhere, it is critically important that the strategic lift capacity of ADF be sufficient to deliver special forces, commandos or a combined arms force by sea and air into the region or wider afield.

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[104] For a discussion see Eric Grove, 'Medium Navies and Organic Air', and Lee Willett, 'Land Attack Cruise Missiles for Medium Navies', in David Wilson, ed, *Maritime War in the 21st Century,* Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs No. 8, Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, pp. 91-100; 101-26.
[105] See Wing Commander Michael S. Maher, *The Role of Australian Land-Based Air Power in a Maritime Strategy,* Paper No. 75, Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, June 1999.

Third, if global political and technological conditions now permit radical groups and rogue states to use ballistic or biological weapons to inflict mass-casualties on democratic societies then this new challenge must be met by maximum cooperation with allies both regionally and globally. While the front line of this new challenge will be assumed by intelligence agencies and police forces, the ADF has an important supporting role to play in homeland, regional and international security tasks.

Conclusion

The leading maritime scholar. John B. Hattendorf, has warned that, the words 'naval and 'maritime' are not synonymous because 'a maritime strategy involves much more than a navy'.[106] A maritime strategy is about the comprehensive direction of all aspects of national power to achieve policy goals using the sea.[107] Using Hattendorf's perspective, Australia's 20th century strategic culture may be said to have been distinguished by the lack of an integrated and joint national approach to war. In a real sense, Australia, for most of its history since 1945, has possessed a philosophical approach to strategy that has never properly understood the seaborne land force requirements of a balanced and joint maritime strategy.

In terms of its immediate region of interest and, insofar as Australia can ever be said to possess a regional 'natural strategy', that strategy is to operate forward in the maritime environment of the northern archipelagos. Prime Minister Billy Hughes once said that 'in order that Australia shall be safe, it is necessary that the great rampart of islands stretching around the north-east of Australia should be held by us or by some Power in whom we have absolute confidence'.[108] From 1941-45 Australia sought to secure its northern rampart from the Japanese through a maritime campaign in the South-West Pacific. Similarly, in 1999 Australia intervened in East Timor to manage chronic political instability in its area of direct interest.

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[106] John B. Hattendorf, 'What is a Maritime Strategy?', in Stevens, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy*, p. 18.
[107] *Ibid.*

In both the cases of the Second World War and the crisis in East Timor, Australian intervention in the archipelago was seen as essential in the defence of national security interests. In 2002, the events of October 12 in Bali serve once again to underline the absolute importance of Australia possessing the defence capacity to operate effectively within the northern littoral. In first decade of the 21st century, in the face of a radical Islamist terrorist threat from South-East Asia, the requirement for Australia to be able to operate in the region will clearly grow. Indeed, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Australian forces will once again, as in 1942-45, operate with American and Asian allies in diverse paramilitary and military operations throughout the northern archipelagos.

A joint maritime strategy is a complex and demanding undertaking but one that no island-nation, still less an island-continent neglects at its peril. The most pressing requirement for Australian strategic policy in the early years of the 21st century is to develop a broad-based, integrated maritime concept of strategy that is not shackled by the residual legacy of a 1980s continental geostrategy. An effective Australian concept of maritime strategy needs to be properly balanced and joint and should seek a workable and affordable linkage between international coalition and independent military operations, while being structured for activity in Australia's main area of security interest that stretches from Fiji to the Cocos Islands.[109]

Above all, in an age of interconnected conflict, Australia's approach to maritime strategy must confer the necessary flexibility to deal with the multiple contingencies that may arise in a globalised, yet deeply fractured, international environment. The process of globalisation, and the discontents it engenders, have eroded the traditional territorial membrane of strategy. We are confronted by a need to develop force structures that are supple and malleable enough to react at short-notice to an environment of extraordinary international uncertainty. In an era of globalised security, the immutability of our geography cannot insulate us from trans-national threats and non-state actors, still less

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[108] Commonwealth of Australia. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, VoL LXXXIX, 10 September 1919, p. 12173.
[109] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-63; 183-84

terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Nor can we stay aloof from international events that might occur at a distance, but which nonetheless, threaten our vital interests.

Australia cannot be a secure nation in either an insecure region or an insecure world. The prosperity and future of our country depends on the complex networks of regional and global interdependence that link our trade, communications and liberal democratic culture. Accordingly, our vital interests, as ever, transcend our national geography and, under new conditions, it is our interests rather than our territory that we must secure; our societal security rather than our strategic geography that we must defend. Australia has to learn to plan its defence policy to meet a future based on geopolitical uncertainty rather than geographical certainty.

Finally, Australia's policy makers would do well to heed the wise words of the far-sighted US strategist, Admiral J. C. Wylie, who thirty five years warned against adopting a narrow or constricted approach to strategy:

> The requirement is for a spectrum of strategies that are flexible and non-committal, a theory that by intent and design can be applied in unforeseen circumstances. Planning for uncertainty is not as dangerous as it might seem; there is after all some order in military as in other human affairs. But planning for certitude is the greatest of all military mistakes, as military history demonstrates all too vividly. There is always in mind the hazard of the Maginot mentality, ashore, afloat, airborne, or chairborne'.[110]

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[110] J. C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1967, p. 85.