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Inquiry into Australia's maritime strategy

Introduction

2.1   The Defence White Paper 2000, in referring to a maritime strategy, states that 'the key to defending Australia is to control the air and sea approaches to our continent, so as to deny them to hostile ships and aircraft, and provide maximum freedom of action for our forces.'

2.2   An effective maritime strategy underpinned by appropriate capability provides a nation with defence forces that can project power and contribute to regional and global security. Maritime strategies involve the integration of sea, air and land forces operating jointly.

2.3   Australia, as an island continent, requires an effective maritime strategy. The majority of evidence to the inquiry, however, suggests that Australian military strategy is based on an outdated continental approach. These critics suggest that Australia's maritime strategy is merely based around sea denial. The other aspects of a maritime strategy which include sea control and power projection are not realised in practice.

2.4   This debate goes to the core of Australia's defence objectives. The primary objective of the ADF, as outlined in the White Paper, is 'to defend Australian territory from any credible attack, without relying on help from the combat forces of any other country.'[1] Evidence to the inquiry suggests, that in an environment where threats to security are global and there are increasing threats from non-state adversaries, Australia's defence objectives should be reviewed. Some of the evidence to the inquiry

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1   *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force,* 2000, p. 46.

suggests that the ADF should not just be able to defend Australian territory but Australian interests where ever they may be. These submissions argue that to achieve this, Australia needs a true maritime strategy capable of achieving varying levels of sea control and power projection.

2.5   This chapter reviews the key maritime strategy concepts and the key debates that have arisen during the inquiry.

Maritime strategy concepts

2.6   Maritime strategies are significant in military planning because they provide the means to apply power to areas of interest along coastlines and inland. This area is called the littoral. The littoral is defined 'as the areas to seaward of the coast which is susceptible to influence or support from the land and the areas inland from the coast which are susceptible to influence from the sea.'

2.7   The Information Research Service (IRS) notes that at the turn of the 21st century, 'the littoral accommodates over three quarters of the world's population, hosts over 80% of the world's capital cities and nearly all of the marketplaces for international trade.'[2] In October 2002 the Committee observed operation Tasman Link, which included ADF Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment (MOLE).

2.8   A key aspect of the debate about maritime strategy is whether the topic is confined to military strategy ('small s' maritime strategy) or extends to broader national security strategy ('big S' maritime strategy). The IRS commented that in 'the latter case, the term encompasses a national approach to its security that is either continentalist or maritime-focussed and considers responsibilities, not only for military forces, across a wide spectrum of security sectors.'[3]

2.9   The 'small s' concept of maritime strategy encompasses diplomatic, constabulary and warfighting elements. As suggested above this concept of maritime strategy is a subset of broader military strategy.

2.10   The Defence White Paper 2000 sets out Australia's key strategic interests and objectives in order of importance. These strategic objectives, shown below, aim to:

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2   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 15

3   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, October 2002, p. 15.

- ensure the Defence of Australia and its direct approaches;

- foster the security of our immediate neighbourhood;

- work with others to promote stability and cooperation in Southeast Asia;

- contribute in appropriate ways to maintaining strategic stability in the wider Asia Pacific region, and

- support Global Security.[4]

2.11   These strategic objectives are in turn supported by Australian military strategy. The Defence White Paper identifies four priority tasks for the ADF:

- the defence of Australia which is shaped by three principles:
  - ⇒ we must be able to defend Australia without relying on the combat forces of other countries – self-reliance;
  - ⇒ Australia needs to be able to control the air and sea approaches to our continent – a maritime strategy; and
  - ⇒ although Australia's strategic posture is defensive, we would seek to attack hostile forces as far from our shores as possible – proactive operations;

- the second priority for the ADF is contributing to the security of our immediate neighbourhood;

- the third priority for Australian forces is supporting Australia's wider interests and objectives by being able to contribute effectively to international coalitions of forces to meet crises beyond our immediate neighbourhood; and

- in addition to these core tasks in support of Australia's strategic objectives, the ADF will also be called upon to undertake a number of regular or occasional tasks in support of peacetime national tasks.[5]

2.12   It should be noted that the order of the military tasks listed above are the base for acquiring new equipment. Therefore, the defeat of attacks on Australia (DAA) is the key determinant for acquiring new equipment. The IRS comments that since 9-11 this has been relaxed 'but it is still the case that most acquisitions are justified on their contribution to the DAA task.'[6]

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4   *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, 2000, p. X.

5   *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, 2000, pp. XI-XII.

6   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 19.

This highlights the impact of military strategy on capability and force development.

2.13   In March 2003 the Government released an update on the Defence 2000 White Paper. The 2003 Update concluded that 'while the principles set out in the Defence White Paper remain sound, some rebalancing of capability and expenditure will be necessary to take account of changes in Australia's strategic environment.'[7] The key focus of the 2003 Update was the rise of global terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) which 'have emerged to new prominence and create renewed strategic uncertainty.'[8]

2.14   In relation to the maritime strategy component of Australia's military strategy as outlined in the 2000 Defence White Paper, the IRS observes that the maritime component is one of the denial of the sea-air-gap to our north which is 'a very limited aim.'[9] Before examining this and other issues, it is necessary to review the maritime strategy concepts of sea denial, sea control and power projection:

- ■ *Sea Denial* has the 'aim of prevention of the use of the sea' by another force against us. This is 'defined as the condition that exists when an adversary is denied the ability to use an area of sea for its own purposes for a period of time.'[4] Sea *Denial* implies a more passive posture where the emphasis is on defence (although this does not preclude the employment of offensive capabilities), and where the initiative is likely to remain with the attacking power;

- ■ *Sea Control* which is 'defined as that condition which exits when one has freedom of action to use an area for one's own purposes for a period of time and, if required, to deny its use to an opponent'; and

- ■ *Power Projection*, while not exclusively a maritime strategic concept, recognises that maritime forces, through Sea Control, can shape, influence and control the strategic environment, and can deliver combat force ashore if necessary'.[10]

2.15   The IRS and numerous submissions to the inquiry have concluded that the Defence White Paper has articulated a strategy of sea denial for the sea air gap to the north of Australia as the focus of our defence effort. Sea Control is another step up from sea denial in that it provides for the elements of presence, reach and power to control an area of ocean in order to pursue

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7   *Australia's National Security, A Defence Update*, March 2003, pp. 5-6.

8   *Australia's National Security, A Defence Update*, March 2003, p. 7.

9   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 19.

10   Centre for International Strategic Analysis, *Submission* 6, p. 4.

strategic interests. Sea control is not continuous and is based on the achievement of objectives and the resources available to enforce sea control.

2.16   Power projection is about using maritime power to influence affairs on land. The IRS commented that 'the reach, poise, and flexibility of maritime forces enable them to strike at the land from unexpected and/or advantageous directions, making them, in the words of Liddell-Hart "the greatest strategic asset that a maritime nation can possess"'.[11]

2.17   The 'Big S' meaning of maritime strategy takes the understanding and significance of maritime strategy a few steps further. While the military concepts of maritime strategy described above are also a feature of a 'Big S' maritime strategy, the wider elements of national security are also considered. These include our nation's economic, environmental, societal and political security.

Capability

2.18   Military strategies influence capability development. In turn, the development of military capabilities should give effect to the strategy. For example, the broad military strategy outlined in the 1987 White Paper has influenced force development to the present day. This includes the development of JORN, movement of the Army north, the establishment of bare bases in the north, the location of a squadron of F/A-18s in northern Australia, and the establishment of a second fleet base in Western Australia.

Sea power

2.19   The current debate on Australia's maritime strategy has generally emphasised a joint approach to capability and operations. This approach seeks to combine the forces of Navy, Air Force and Army. In relation to the role of sea power, there has been less focus on the role of blue water navies and more emphasis on operations in the littoral. The IRS commented that 'the RAN has increased its focus on joint operations in the littoral and the RAN's future warfare concepts envisage 'maritime forces providing protection and sustainment of embarked land forces while enroute and while the land forces remain in the littoral.'[12]

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11   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 25.

12   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 32.

2.20   While operations in the littoral are receiving greater attention, the classic concepts of sea denial, sea control and power projection are still important. The type of capabilities needed here include submarine, surface, air and mine warfare. The Royal Australian Navy current and projected fleet needs is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1   Royal Australian Navy's Three Fleet Navy

FORCE ELEMENT GROUPS	FLEET IN BEING 2005	ENHANCED FLEET 2015	FUTURE FLEET 2025
Surface Combatants	• 3 Upgraded FFG • 3 FFG • 1 Anzac FFH (ASMD Upgrade) • 5 Anzac FFH	• 2 Air Warfare Destroyers (+1 or 2 Building) • 4 Upgraded FFG • 8 Upgraded Anzac FFH	• 3 or 4 Air Warfare Destroyers • A mix of New Surface Combatants and upgraded Anzac FFH
Submarines	• 6 Collins Class	• 6 Upgraded Collins Class	• A mix of Next Generation Submarines and upgraded Collins Class
Amphibious Lift	• 1 Landing Ship Heavy (LSH) • 2 Landing Platform Amphibious (LPA) • 6 Landing Craft Heavy (LCH)	• 3 Large Amphibious Platforms • ADF Watercraft Replacements	• 3 Large Amphibious Platforms • ADF Watercraft Replacements
Afloat Support	• 1 Auxilliary Oiler • 1 Fleet Replenishment Ship	• 2 Fleet Replenishment Ships	• 2 Fleet Replenishment Ships
Mine Warfare	• 6 Huon Class Coastal Minehunters • 2 Auxilliary Minesweepers • 2 Clearance Diving Teams	• 6 Huon Class Coastal Minehunters • 2 Clearance Diving Teams	• Next Generation Minehunting Platforms • 2 Clearance Diving teams
Aviation	• 16 Seahawks • 11 Seasprites • 7 Seakings	• 16 Seahawks • 11 Seasprites • Utility Helicopters • Possibly UAVs	• Common type Warfare/Utility Helicopter • UAVs

FORCE ELEMENT GROUPS	FLEET IN BEING 2005	ENHANCED FLEET 2015	FUTURE FLEET 2025
Hydrographic	• 2 Leeuwin Class • 4 Paluma Class • LADS (Laser Airborne Depth Sounder)	• 2 Hydrographic Ships • Next Generation LADs type capability	• 2 Replacement Hydrographic Platforms • Future Airborne System
Patrol Boats	• 13 Fremantle Class • 2 Replacement Patrol Boats	• Replacement Patrol Boats	• Next Generation Patrol Platforms

Source   *Australia's Navy for the 21st Century: 2001-2030 Royal Australian Navy, July 2001.*

Land forces

2.21   The role and capability of Army has been influenced by the Dibb strategy of Defence of Australia but also through the need to operate offshore in support of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. The East Timor operation, for example, demonstrated the need for short notice operations supported by air and sea lift capabilities. The 2000 Defence White Paper has acknowledged the need for greater capability in managing operations offshore. The IRS stated:

> In an attempt to balance the demands between defence of Australia and operations in the region, the White Paper reinforces the importance of an amphibious lift capability by committing to retaining and eventually replacing the Amphibious Support Ships, HMAS Manoora and HMAS Kanimbla, and also HMAS Tobruk. This combined with the additional squadron of troop lift helicopters to operate from the Amphibious Support Ships provides Defence a limited amphibious capability.[13]

2.22   The growing emphasis on amphibious operations and the increasing role of Army in maritime strategy is demonstrated through the Army's doctrine and concept document *Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment* (MOLE).[14] This document demonstrates 'that the maritime approaches to our territory are littoral in nature and therefore the capability to conduct joint operations in the littoral is essential to an effective maritime strategy.'[15]

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13   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 34.

14   Note that the Army's document *Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment* is a classified document but some comments about the document have been made in the public domain.

15   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 34.

2.23   The 2000 Defence White Paper emphasises a 'limited amphibious capability' involving a non-opposed landing. A forced entry from the sea involving conflict could seriously test the ADF under its current capability. The IRS commented that 'the ADF's limited force projection, sea control and surface air warfare capability, combined with the lack of endurance associated with air power, raises questions about how the ADF might be able to effect this operation with the current and planned capital investments.'[16]

Aerospace power

2.24   Aerospace power incorporates air arms from both the Army and Navy in addition to the Air Force. In certain scenarios, commercial air lift would also be relevant. The IRS suggests that since Dibb, aerospace power has remained largely unchanged.

2.25   The 2000 Defence White Paper comments that 'Air combat is the most important single capability for the defence of Australia, because control of the air over our territory and maritime approaches is critical to all other types of operation in the defence of Australia.'[17] The air combat role is provided through a fleet of 71 F/A-18s. In addition, a significant strike capability is provided through the fleet of F-111s.

2.26   In support of these capabilities are air borne early warning aircraft and air-to-air refuelling capabilities. Technological developments are seeing advances in stealth and guided munitions. The Government's decision to sign up as a level three partner for the F-35 is influenced by these developments. At the same time, aerospace power is being influenced by the development of Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) and Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV).

Information and Intelligence capability

2.27   A discussion of military capability is incomplete without mentioning the importance of information and intelligence. The key features of this include intelligence collection, surveillance and command and control. Australia's intelligence community provides a vital role in collecting a range of intelligence which can assist defence decision-makers. Australia's intelligence capability is provided through the:

■ Australian Secret Intelligence Service

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16   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 35.

17   *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, 2000, p. 84.

- Australian Security Intelligence Organisation

- Defence Intelligence Organisation

- Defence Signals Directorate

- Defence Imagery and Geo-spatial Organisation

- Office of National Assessments

2.28   Australia's surveillance capability is provided through a range of sources including Australian Customs, Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft, when they enter service, JORN which became fully operational in April 2003, and Orion maritime patrol aircraft.

2.29   Command and control of the ADF is undertaken through Headquarters Australian Theatre. In addition, there is a single deployable joint task force headquarters and a second is being developed on the HMAS Kanimbla.

Military strategy historical developments

Dibb and the 1987 Defence White Paper

2.30   This discussion begins with the Dibb Report of 1986 and moves through to the present. The Dibb report, written towards the end of the Cold War, focused on the defence of Australia through layered defence and a strategy of denial and protection of the sea-air gap to Australia's north. The three elements of the strategy included intelligence and surveillance to detect incursion. The Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN), for example, is meant to support this part of the strategy. The second layer comprises air and sea naval forces, including strike capabilities to counter forces in the sea-air gap. The third layer comprises defensive capabilities closer to our shores including mine-counter measures, air defences and surface ships. The final layer of defences comprises ground forces to combat an aggressor if they penetrate the sea-air gap. The IRS stated:

> Dibb's strategy was largely continental with force structure determined solely on the capability to defend the Sea-Air Gap. A strategy of denial gave little emphasis to promoting regional security, alliances and force projection in order to assist in shaping the regional and global security environment, specifically Dibb placed less emphasis on ANZUS and the Radford-Collins agreement than previous policies. Critics of the Dibb Report argued that it was too defensive and was isolationist, specifically

the report raised some concerns internationally about Australia's commitment to the region and its alliances.[18]

2.31   The criticisms above may be valid but, equally, if the Dibb report had proposed more sea control and power projection capabilities then criticisms could have been raised that the strategy was expansionist and military aggressive.

2.32   The 1987 Defence White Paper was heavily influenced by the Dibb report. The White Paper focused on the defence of Australia, through defending our northern approaches with a strategy of defence in depth. The criticisms of the 1987 White Paper focused on the divergence between the military strategy and the reality of military operations. This was partly addressed by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade who commented that while the ADF was designed for a defensive role, its capabilities 'provide a foundation for our capacity to contribute to a positive security environment through the exercise of what might be described as military diplomacy.'[19]

1994 Defence White Paper

2.33   The 1994 Defence White Paper was drafted in the context of the end of the Cold War. The then Defence Minister commented that 'end of the Cold War had 'fundamentally changed the global security environment', that no part of the globe was unaffected and that strategic circumstances have changed in the region and worldwide.'[20] The key issue is that while the threat of global war ended, regional instability increased. The critics of the 1994 Defence White Paper suggested that this chain of events should have led to a defence strategy which addressed regional instability. However, the White Paper continued to focus on the defence of Australia.

Australia's strategic policy 1997 (ASP97)

2.34   This statement focused more on the Asia Pacific region and put renewed emphasis on the US alliance. The term 'defence of Australia' was replaced with 'defeating attacks on Australia.' In particular, ASP97 stated that 'we need to recognise that regional conflicts–which may well relate directly to our security, or at least have a knock-on effect–are more likely than direct attacks on Australia.'[21] ASP97, however, was still criticised for not having

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18   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 10.

19   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 11.

20   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 12.

21   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 12.

a valid maritime strategy but only one element, namely sea denial. Dr Michael Evans, Head of the Land Warfare Studies Centre, commented that 'ASP97 upholds the narrow primacy of defending the Sea-Air Gap between Australia and the northern archipelagos rather than the sea-land-air gap that reflects the reality of littoral battlespace.'[22]

Defence 2000

2.35   In the context of the inquiry, the key issue surrounding the current defence White Paper is whether it has enunciated a valid maritime strategy. The IRS's appraisal is that it has not. In the words of Dr Paul Dibb, the 2000 White paper is 'evolutionary' not revolutionary. The IRS commented that 'it was evolutionary in that it further matured the concept of defence of Australia and marked a shift towards the development of a maritime strategy, however it was not a significant change from previous defence policies.'[23]

2.36   A key acknowledgement in Defence 2000 is that control of the sea-air gap is a joint operation. Defence 2000 commented that 'the nature of our air and sea approaches is such that a maritime strategy includes a vital and central role for land forces.'[24]

2.37   Defence 2000 highlights the need to achieve sea control by stating that 'the ability to operate freely in our surrounding oceans, and deny them to others is critical to the defence of Australia, and to our capacity to contribute effectively to the security of our immediate neighbourhood.' However, the actual ability of the ADF to achieve sea control is disputed. The IRS states:

> …the ADF's ability to achieve sea control in the Sea-Air Gap–which implies denying freedom of action to the enemy while maintaining your own freedom of action–except in confined areas for short periods of time, is questionable given the current and planned force structure. In particular the limited air defence capabilities of our surface ships until the air warfare capable ships come into service would mean that the ADF is reliant on land based aircraft for air defence which characteristically lack permanence and to some extent reach even with air-to-air refuelling.[25]

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22   cited in Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 12.

23   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 13.

24   *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, 2000, p. 47.

25   Information Research Service, *A Foundation Paper on Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 13

2.38   The view that the ADF lacks sea control power which is a key feature of a maritime strategy is also argued in a range of evidence to the inquiry. The following section discusses the key issues arising in the inquiry evidence.

Maritime strategy inquiry issues

2.39   The key issues raised in the inquiry question some of the core strategies and tenets raised in the 2000 Defence White Paper. In particular, some evidence has questioned whether it is feasible for a country of Australia's size to be self-reliant.

2.40   A further concern focuses on the weighting that is given to Australia's core defence objective, the Defence of Australia. Some analysts argue that the direct threat to Australian territory from conventional attack is low and there are significant lead times of five to 10 years that would be required to mount such an attack. The consequences of developing strategy and capability around this threat means that the ADF may not be best configured for activities that it is called upon to engage in all the time such as peacekeeping and low level operations overseas.

2.41   Evidence to the maritime strategy inquiry criticised the maritime strategy outlined in the 2000 Defence White Paper for only being sea denial which is only one aspect of a true maritime strategy. The following sections will examine these issues in more detail.

Maritime Strategy – sea denial or sea control?

2.42   As described in the maritime strategy concepts sections above, a true maritime strategy consists of, to varying degrees, sea denial, sea control and power projection. These component of a maritime strategy are not necessarily continuous but vary over space and time depending on strategic needs. Sea control and power projection, in particular, seek to influence events over the littoral. The Defence 2000 White Paper states:

> 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. That means we need a fundamentally maritime strategy.[26]

2.43   Defence reiterated this position in its submission by commenting that 'a key feature of Australia's Military Strategy in defending Australia is to

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26   *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force,* 2000, p. 47.

achieve strategic control of Australia's maritime approaches.' Defence explained the concept of strategic control as involving:

- A pro-active strategy to maximise our freedom of manoeuvre in the air and sea approaches while denying freedom of action to a potential adversary.

- The ability to assert our will over an adversary in time and space, and deny an adversary's ability to position for, or conduct offensive operations against Australia and its interests.

- The projection of power into the region to support our national interests.[27]

2.44   The dot points above suggest that the maritime strategy includes features of sea denial, sea control and power projection. However, this view is disputed in evidence to the inquiry. Commodore Alan Robertson commented that Australia's maritime strategy is in fact a continental strategy which utilises aspects of sea denial.[28] Similarly, the Australian Defence Association stated:

> What the White Paper is describing is one limited element of a strategy of sea denial, not a maritime strategy. A true maritime strategy is one which uses all forces - land, sea and air - to further national objectives in a maritime context as distinct from a territorial context. The White Paper's concept of strategy is in fact a territorial or continental strategy rather than a maritime strategy with operations on or over the sea limited to protecting the approaches to the continent.[29]

2.45   Dr Alan Ryan also suggested that the current maritime strategy was limiting in nature and instead should seek to 'enhance our ability to contribute to international stability, not focus on a parochial and increasingly irrelevant concept of territorial defence.'[30] Dr Ryan advocates the view that Australia needs to be able to adequately project power so that it can 'provide security and to help shape the international strategic environment.'[31]

27   Department of Defence, *Submission* 29, p. 6.
28   Commodore Alan Robertson, *Submission* 1, p, 1.
29   Australian Defence Association, *Submission 5*, p. 2.
30   Dr Alan Ryan, *Submission 13*, p. 2.
31   Dr Alan Ryan, *Submission 14*, p. 4.

The defence of Australia?

2.46   Defending Australia has and continues to be the number one strategic objective for the ADF. The Defence Update concludes, however, that 'the threat of direct conventional military attack on Australia has continued to decline since 2000.'[32] Defence states:

> Full-scale invasion is assessed to be highly unlikely in the short to medium term. It is expected that there would be sufficient warning to enable the ADF to expand to deal with the circumstance.[33]

2.47   Mr Alastair Cooper suggested that a focus on defence of Australian territory was limiting and in contrast more value could be achieved by considering the defence of Australia's interests. Through raising this point Mr Cooper has raised consideration of a 'Big S' maritime strategy which would have regard for Australia's broader interests including, economic, environmental, societal and political. Mr Cooper stated:

> The capacity of the ADO to defend Australia's interests outside the narrow range of the air/sea gap is tenuous at present and does not show prospects of improving relative to the forces which are in our region. The breadth and value of Australian interests, from fish stocks in the Antarctic to LNG shipping in the South China Sea, is not matched by the capability of the ADO. Australia's interests in the maritime environment and their economic value are only likely to increase. This will generate a commensurate interest in them, and it is likely that not all will be benign.[34]

2.48   This view was also supported by the Centre for International Strategic Analysis (CISA) which commented that 'our business, leisure, diplomatic, economic, social, environment and therefore security interests are truly global as Australian citizens engage in many ways in the international community.'[35]

2.49   The Australian Defence Association (ADA) raised similar views commenting that the White Paper fails to recognise that Australia's interests extend beyond national territory. In particular, the ADA pointed out that 'Australia's economic and therefore its political health depends heavily upon foreign, mainly seaborne trade.'[36] The ADA brought

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32   Department of Defence, *Submission 29*, p. 5.
33   Department of Defence, *Submission 29*, p. 5.
34   Mr Alastair Cooper, *Submission 4*, p. 2.
35   Centre for International Strategic Analysis, *Submission 6*, p. 2.
36   Australian Defence Association, *Submission 5*, p. 4.

attention to the need for protection of vital sea lines of communications (SLOCs):

> As far as we can determine, there is no mention in the White Paper of the need to protect merchant shipping as an Australian strategic interest and one that would require maritime strategic capabilities. Indeed, academic and departmental responses have tended to be dismissive, suggesting that the need does not exist or, alternatively, that Australia has no need for a capability of its own.[37]

2.50   The Centre for Maritime Policy, University of Wollongong emphasised the importance of SLOCs by commenting that 'unlike in Europe and North America, very little international trade is carried in Asia-Pacific by road or rail, and seaborne trade has been the "engine" of regional economic growth.'[38] Defence stated:

> The employment of ADF maritime assets in the protection of shipping would be quite selective. Our effort would likely be devoted to the protection of strategically important cargoes.[39]

2.51   The issues that these groups are raising is significant because if Australia's long held strategic objectives are altered or the priority is changed in any way then this has flow on effects for capability. If significant changes are made to capital aspects of capability this may take 10 to 15 years to achieve. Dr Dibb warns that if the Defence of Australia as the key strategic objective is changed then this could undermine Australia's security in the longer term. He believes that there can be no complacency when it comes to the defence of Australia.

Capability development

2.52   Some of those groups that have suggested changes to Australia's maritime strategy have also addressed the issue of how this would influence capability. Mr Cooper commented that maritime forces will need expansion over the next five to 10 years. In particular, he drew attention to the following two areas:

- platforms capable of deploying throughout the region to represent and defend Australian interests against hostile attack.

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37   Australian Defence Association, *Submission 5*, p. 5.
38   Centre for Maritime Policy, University of Wollongong, *Submission 8*, p. 2.
39   Department of Defence, *Submission 29*, p. 11.

■ platforms capable of surveilling the AEEZ and enforcing Australian sovereignty.

2.53   The ADI submission also discussed the growing relevance of operations in the littoral and the need for significant lift capacity. ADI's submission discusses the need for a high speed sealift vessel.[40]

2.54   Dr Alan Dupont brought attention to the decline in Army resourcing. He stated:

> In committing so much of the defence budget to the Navy and Air Force at the expense of the Army, the architects of our strategic doctrine pursued a policy that severely weakened the Army's capacity for force projection in the mistaken belief that air and naval power would suffice. This flawed policy was maintained despite a dramatic increase in the Army's operational tempo during the 1990s and in the face of professional, military advice.[41]

2.55   Mr Hugh White indicated that he would support the need for more light land forces and that by doing so you would not have to reduce your emphasis on air and maritime capabilities.[42]

Australian defence industry and the merchant marine

2.56   A viable Australian defence industry is a feature of defence strategy based around self-reliance. One of the key issues shaping the industrial base is the concern that there is over capacity which has led to the Department of Defence encouraging industry to rationalise in order to sustain an effective industrial base. The key industry sectors include naval shipbuilding and repair, electronic systems, aerospace and land, and weapons systems. In relation to ship building, Defence has suggested that there is only enough work to sustain a single ship building prime in Australia. However, this proposal is yet to be approved and is criticised on the grounds of competitiveness and innovation.

2.57   A further issue that has been raised is the decline of the Australian merchant shipping fleet and implications this has for implementing an effective maritime strategy. For example, during the East Timor deployment, the ADF chartered 19 merchant ships all of which were foreign flagged. The Maritime Union of Australia discussed a range of concerns and concluded:

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40   ADI Limited, *Submission 27*.

41   Dr Alan Dupont, *Submission 19*, p. 1.

42   Mr Hugh White, *Transcript*, p. 29.

The end result is that Australia simply does not have the merchant fleet available to support its own national security decisions. The economic rationalist erosion of policy has led to the exclusion of the merchant marine from our strategic defence programming.[43]

43   Maritime Union of Australia, *Submission 12*, p. 4.