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EDITORS:

Dr Greg Raymond Dr Andrew Carr Ian Henry
Managing Editors
editor@kokodafoundation.org

Robert Wylie
Consulting Editor Defence Industry Policy
r.wylie@adfa.edu.au

Geoff Hunt
Production Editor
wamboohunt@yahoo.com.au

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Project Management and Cover: Qote Canberra (02) 6162 1258

Published and distributed by: The Kokoda Foundation

2/10 Kennedy St

(PO Box 4060), Kingston ACT 2604

T: (02) 6295 1555

E: manager@kokodafoundation.org

W: www.securitychallenges.org.au

F: (02) 6169 3019

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GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

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Editors' Introduction

Debates about the future regional security order often focus on the big moments of tension or 'choice'. But this often imposes an artificial clarity on the messy world of managing the security of the Asia-Pacific. The articles in this edition all try and take the detail and practice of policymaking as their focus, showing how getting the balance right is as often about small corrections, learning and updates, as it is about era-defining trends and grand themes.

Bert Chapman explores the US Marine Corps deployment to Australia, detailing how it emerged and the geopolitical ramifications for Australia, the United States, China and Southeast Asia. John Blaxland takes a stocktake of the China debate in Australia over the last few years to examine how key relationships are evolving. It argues Australia should hold its nerve on the present course, while suggesting a range of bilateral and multilateral improvements to support security in the region.

Andrew Zammit examines the rise of 'virtual planners', who assist others via the internet to plan and undertake terrorist acts. He argues this is a growing area of practice that will need to be better understood and countered to help foil the threat of Islamic State and other global terrorist organisations. Aaron P. Jackson details the Australian Defence Force's internal debate and evolving thinking about its operational art. Jackson argues that recent developments are a useful step forward, but more is necessary to preserve the ADF's edge.

Finally, this issue marks the first in a new series of book reviews for the journal. Featured publications are *Australia's Northern Shield: Papua New Guinea and the Defence of Australia since 1990*, *A Great Place to Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of a Military CIA* by Joshua Kurlantzick and *Independent Ally: Australia in an Age of Power Transition* by Shannon Tow'.

This issue is also the final one for Andrew Carr and Iain Henry. The editors of *Security Challenges* would like to thank them for their contributions over the past few years and wish them well in their future endeavours. If you feel you could make a contribution to *Security Challenges* as an editor, or would like to become a book reviewer, please get in contact – Editor@ifrs.org.au.

Greg Raymond, Andrew Byrne, Iain Henry
Managing Editors,
May 2017.

US Marine Corps Battalion Deployment to Australia: Potential Strategic Implications

Bert Chapman

During 2011, the United States and Australia agreed to the deployment of a US Marine Corps force to Darwin, Australia, to be rotated on a seasonal basis. This expeditionary force aspires to strengthen the interoperability between the US military and Australian Defence Force. It also is a tangible signal of the United States' commitment to a long-term military presence in the Western Pacific in light of its "Pivot to Asia" and a symbolic notice that Washington intends to contest potential attempts by China to gain hegemony over the South China Sea (SCS). This article examines how deployment of this force came about, reaction to it in Australia and the United States, and potential future geopolitical ramifications it could have for Australia, China, Southeast Asian countries, and the United States.

During a November 2011 visit to Australia then Prime Minister Julia Gillard (LAB-Lalor) and President Barack Obama announced that the United States would begin deploying 200-250 Marines in Darwin on a rotational basis starting the following year with the number of Marines eventually reaching 2,500. These forces will use existing Australian bases, be deployed in six-month rotations, conduct exercises and training with the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and be part of a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). This visit also saw Washington and Canberra agree to greater cooperation between the US Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) through increased rotations of US aircraft through Northern Australia to enhance bilateral cooperation and combined training and exercises which can be seen as reflecting the Indo-Pacific region's increasing strategic importance to the United States.¹

Addressing Australia's Parliament on 17 November 2011, Obama stressed historic security ties between Australia and the United States, while also noting that the United States is and remains a Pacific Ocean nation. He also noted that the troop rotation would increase the US commitment to Asia-Pacific security and that Washington would not let its budget problems injure its commitment to freedom of navigation, projecting power, and deterring threats to peace. These historic security ties, covering military and

¹ The White House, 'Prime Minister Gillard and President Obama Announce Force Posture Initiatives', 16 November 2011, <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/16/prime-minister-gillard-and-president-obama-announce-force-posture-init-0> [Accessed 22 July 2016]. Australian Representatives and Senators represent specific constituencies and states. These are mentioned the first time their names are mentioned in this work.

intelligence cooperation, have produced strategic successes for both countries and some controversy in certain sectors of Australian public opinion who have been concerned over possible Australian loss of sovereignty and international freedom of manoeuvre and concern that a future international crisis scenario may force Australia to choose between the United States and China.²

The MAGTF is designed for rapid force protection in combat situations and is capable of taking and holding strategic territory in anticipation of surging additional forces. Darwin's selection as the location for the MAGTF involves its proximity to the Straits of Malacca (which is the world's busiest shipping corridor carrying 80% of China's crude oil imports), it being outside most Chinese missile threat ranges, having low-traffic skies for aerial training, and sitting adjacent to a large and sparsely populated region open to live fire simulations. This arrangement benefits Australia by providing it with additional strategic assurance from the United States given China's increasing international assertiveness, facilitating improved access to US technology, enhancing ADF capabilities and interoperability with its most powerful ally, and enhancing commercial opportunities in defence, maintenance and support sectors. The United States benefits by being able to use the large geographical expanses of the Australian continent and surrounding waters for maintaining essential communications and intelligence gathering assets, enhancing its regional presence with augmented force deployment flexibility, and enhancing its capabilities through better training and exercising facilities while also increasing its engagement with the ADF. In addition, the United States benefits with strategic partners such as Australia assuming greater responsibility for their defences.³

The rotational deployment of this MAGTF is a small part of a larger US attempt to increase its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region stemming from a strategic rebalance to this region, which also has economic implications given the United States's concern with international freedom of

² See Australia Parliament, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 17 November 2011, p. 12846, <parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=CHAMBER;id=chamber%2Fhansard%2F15888e39-7a11-4ca2-9456-f088c9812ef0%2F0005;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansard%2F15888e39-7a11-4ca2-9456-f088c9812ef0%2F0006%22> [Accessed 22 July 2016]; Desmond Ball, *Pine Gap: Australia and the US Geostationary Signals Intelligence Satellite Program* (Crows Nest, NSW: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Eli Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Joseph Wheatley, 'Does Australia Face a "China Choice"?', *Australian Defense Force Journal*, no. 199 (March-April 2016), pp. 49-54, <www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au/UserFiles/issues/199%202016%20Mar_Apr.pdf> [Accessed 28 July 2016].

³ See Stuart Rolle and Tess Lea, 'Marine Deployment The Region's Wake-Up Call', *The Canberra Times*, 25 August 2016, p. B004; and Jack McCaffire and Chris Rahman, 'The U.S. Strategic Relationship With Australia', in Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson (eds.), *Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia Pacific* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014): p. 114.

navigation and Washington's increasing bilateral trade with regional countries. On 10 February 2015, then Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert told an Australian audience that the United States intended to increase the volume of the Navy's fleet in Asian-Pacific waters from 50-60% and include 60% of the US Air Force's overseas-based forces in this region. The increasing overall US maritime regional presence is reflected by the Darwin deployment and US trade with Asia has increased from US\$1.34 trillion in 2011 to US\$1.46 trillion in 2015 with total trade from January-December 2016 being US\$1.309.540 trillion.⁴

Subsequent years have seen these force deployments occur during the Northern Territory's (NT) six-month dry season (April-September) with the MAGTF including the following force structure for 2012-2016 (see Table 1).

Economic and Social Impacts of US Troop Rotation

Studies prepared in 2013 for Australia's Department of Defence by Deloitte Access Economics forecast potential economic and social impacts of the US troop rotation on Darwin and the NT. The economic impact study predicted the NT economy would receive \$5.6 million (US\$5.114 million) in 2014, that Australian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would increase by \$5.4 million (US\$4.931 million) and that these were conservative estimates based on individual Marines spending approximately \$7,000. Telephone polling of 500 NT residents saw 88% believing the Marines presence would produce economic benefits. This analysis also noted that equipment the Marines would bring to the NT includes vehicles and vehicle support equipment such as all-terrain vehicles, light armoured vehicles, heavy trucks, and weapons including small arms, mortars and towed cannons. Additional aircraft and aircraft support equipment which could be brought to Australia include rotary wing and tilt-rotor aircraft including CH-53 and MV-22 Osprey helicopters; and tankers or transport aircraft including the KC-130 Hercules and fighter jets such as the F/A-18. Maintenance and support for this equipment could be provided by the Marine Corps, industry, or a combination of these entities and that biosecurity and quarantine concerns could be lessened by leaving some equipment in Australia between rotations.⁵

⁴ See Tim Law, 'Rebalancing, What, Exactly?: Analysing the United States' Pacific Pivot', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 198 (November/ December 2015), pp. 23-30, <www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au/UserFiles/issues/198%202015%20Nov_Dec.pdf> [Accessed 28 July 2016]; Nguyen Thi Thuy Hang, 'The U.S. Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific: An Assessment', *Asian Journal of Public Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2016), pp. 20-37, <lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ajpa_08_02.pdf> [Accessed 28 July 2016]; and US Census Bureau, 'Foreign Trade: Trade in Goods With Asia', <www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c0016.html> [Accessed 23 January 2017].

⁵ Deloitte Access Economics, *Economic Impact of the Rotation of 1,100 US Marines and Associated Equipment in Northern Australia: Report for the Department of Defence* (Brindabella, ACT: Deloitte Access Economics, 10 April 2013): pp. i-3, <www.defence.gov.au/publications/docs/USMC1100economicassessment.pdf> [Accessed 28 July 2016].

Table 1: Marine Rotation Force Deployments in the Northern Territory

Year	Regiment	Approx. Rotation Size	Equipment	Key Activities
2012	2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, HI	200	No heavy equipment, vehicles, and aircraft	Bilateral training with Australian Defence Force (ADF)
2013	3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, HI	250	No heavy equipment, vehicles, and aircraft	Bilateral Training with ADF Exercise Koolendong Exercise Talisman Sabre Australian-Indonesian humanitarian assistance tabletop
2014	1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Camp Pendleton, CA	1,150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four CH-53E Super Stallion Helicopters • 150 vehicles • Support Equipment 	Bilateral Training with ADF Exercise Hamel Exercise Koolendong Exercise Southern Frontier
2015	1st Marine Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Camp Pendleton, CA. Detachment Combat Logistics Battalion 1, Camp Pendleton.	1,150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four CH-53E Super Stallion Helicopters • Support Equipment 	Bilateral Training with ADF Exercise Talisman Sabre Exercise Predator Walk Exercise Kowari Military Skills Competition
2016	1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, Camp Pendleton, CA. Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367, MCAS Kaneohe Bay, HI. Detachment-Combat Logistics Battalion 1, Camp Pendleton, CA.	1,250 (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Bell UH-1Y Venom helicopters • 100 vehicles • Support Equipment 	Bilateral Training with ADF Exercise Koolendong Exercise Kowari Exercise Hamel Exercise Southern Jackaroo

Source: Australia, Department of Defence, 'United States Marine Corps Initiative: Overview', (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), <defence.gov.au/usfpi/marines.asp> [Accessed 28 July 2016].

Projected social impacts of the US troop rotation included the Marines representing less than 1% of Darwin's population; only being present for six months; living on base; and being in the field for training and exercises for most of the six-month period. There was slight concern for negative impacts like sexual assault occurring, but that is limited to a 5% probability of one such assault occurring which was too small to concern the preponderance of

individuals consulted. Most phone survey respondents thought the MAGTF social impact would be limited except for 9% perceiving improved national security occurring; 8% expecting improvement in understanding and respecting the Indigenous community; and 9% expecting increased aircraft noise. Additional social impact factors are the Marines complying with Australian policy and existing practice concerning cluster munitions, depleted uranium, and nuclear forces; US military personnel in Australia being government by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) making these personnel subject to Australian law and US military law; this SOFA granting Australia exclusive jurisdiction for alleged offences against Australian laws but not US laws; exclusive US jurisdiction to US military authorities for alleged offences against US laws; and the 1963 SOFA and Defence (Visiting Forces) Act giving both countries a mechanism for determining which country has primary jurisdiction if an offence is punishable by Australian and US law.⁶

Australian Parliamentary Debate

The Marine Corps troop rotation agreement has received periodic reaction during Australian parliamentary debates though opposition to it within Australian governmental and parliamentary circles has been relatively limited. The rotation was initially agreed to by Gillard's Labor government and has been adhered to by the Coalition governments of Tony Abbott (LIB-Warringah) and Malcolm Turnbull (LIB-Wentworth). On 21 March 2012, Senator Scott Ludlam (Greens-Western Australia) asked Foreign Minister Bob Carr (LAB-New South Wales) what he could tell about the Marine Corps rotation which Ludlum described as the biggest operational addition to the US-Australian alliance since the 1980s. Carr replied that the response from Australia's regional neighbours had been muted or supportive noting that Indonesia's President thought such training exercises could be expanded to include other nations such as China. Carr also added that decisions about national security and foreign relations have been executive government

⁶ See Deloitte Access Economics, *Social Impact of Rotations of Up to 1,100 US Marines and Associated Equipment in Northern Australia: Report for the Department of Defence* (Brindabella, ACT: Deloitte Access Economics, 2013), pp. 1-3, 6, <www.defence.gov.au/publications/docs/USMC1100socialassessment.pdf> [Accessed 28 July 2016]; Australia, Federal Register of Legislation, Criminal Code Amendment (Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act) 2012, No. 114 (2012), (Canberra: Federal Register of Legislation, 2012): <www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2012A00114> [Accessed 28 July 2016]; Ibid., Nuclear Non-Proliferation (Safeguards) Act 1987, No. 8 (1987), <www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00618> [Accessed 28 July 2016]; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Nuclear Legislation in OECD Countries: Regulatory and Institutional Framework for Nuclear Activities: Australia, (Paris: OECD, 2007): <www.oecd-neo.org/law/legislation/australia.pdf> [Accessed 28 July 2016]; and Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Agreement with the Government of the United States of America Concerning the Status of United States Forces in Australia, and Protocol, [1963] ATS 10, (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2012), <www.info.dfat.gov.au/Info/Treaties/Treaties.nsf/AllDocIDs/005D3E39D4BF9757CA256B59000DD46F> [Accessed 28 July 2016].

prerogatives since Federation, that there was no need to renegotiate the 1963 SOFA agreement, and that it is part of Australia's national interests to ensure its northern territory and northern approaches are secured against potential threats.⁷

During a 26 June 2013 debate in the House of Representatives, Defence Minister Stephen Smith (LAB-Perth) noted historic Australian-US security ties whose provenance dates back to World War Two. These ties involve jointly administered facilities including Pine Gap in the NT, Nurrangar at Woomera in South Australia, and the Northwest Cape in Western Australia. Smith commented that the 2010 Australian-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) in Melbourne saw both countries establish a joint force posture working group to examine opportunities for enhanced defence force cooperation which produced the 2011 Obama-Gillard Agreement leading to the April 2012 arrival of the first rotation of 200 marines to Darwin for a six-month deployment. Rep. Stuart Robert (LIB-Fadden) expressed the Coalition's support for existing and upcoming security cooperation with the United States noting the contributions Coalition Governments had made to enhancing these ties and criticising the Green Party for failing to realise that these security ties enable early warning intelligence facilitating arms control verification and stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.⁸

2013 AUSMIN Agreement and 2014 Force Posture Agreement

Following the November 2013 AUSMIN between Australian and American Secretaries of State and Defence, a statement of principles was signed on 21 November 2013 clarifying the nature of the Marine Corps deployment which is commonly called the 'force posture initiative'. These principles included reiterating the continuing applicability of the 1963 SOFA to the legal status of US military personnel under this agreement; the bilateral relationship between these countries being based on full respect for national independence, self-reliance, and sovereignty; and making sure Australian-US security cooperation partnership benefits both countries and the region. Additional stipulations of these principles include ensuring force posture initiatives are conducted on fair and sustainable financial and non-financial contributions; shaping expansion of practical bilateral defence cooperation initiatives through force cooperation; developing such initiatives to ensure continued domestic and regional support; and affirming Canberra's and Washington's intention to pursue a legally binding agreement covering cost-

⁷ Australia, Parliament, Senate, *Hansard*, 21 March 2012, p. 2444.

⁸ Australia, Parliament, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 26 June 2013, pp. H7071-80.

sharing and being able to use mutually determined facilities to produce expanded bilateral on force posture initiatives.⁹

On 12 August 2014 a proposed treaty was signed in Sydney by these two countries and called the Force Posture Agreement (FPA). Australia emphasised the necessity of this agreement by saying it supported its efforts to enhance its longstanding alliance with Washington and further its national interests in maintaining a strong US presence as a stabilising anchor in the Asia-Pacific. The agreement also affirmed the importance of maintaining interoperability with US forces optimising ADF skill levels through enhanced training opportunities. It also stressed that it gives Australia and the United States the chance to work with regional partners on common contingencies including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. An accompanying National Interest Analysis of this agreement stressed:

Failure to bring the agreement into force could significantly complicate and delay the full implementation of the force posture initiatives in Australia, increasing legal and financial risks for both Australia and the United States. It could also undermine Australia's long-standing alliance with the United States, with potential ramifications for Australia's bilateral defence cooperation and national security policy. The force posture initiatives represent an important new element in our defence cooperation with the United States; failure to take appropriate steps to provide for their full implementation would likely be seen by the United States as a diminution in Australia's commitment to the alliance. It would also curtail opportunities for the ADF to maintain and enhance skills and interoperability with US Forces.¹⁰

Following its 2014 AUSMIN consultations, the FPA came into effect on 31 March 2015. The agreement gives US forces an Australian presence to perform activities including security operation exercises, joint and combined training exercises, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. It does not provide for permanent US military bases in Australia and US forces are hosted at existing ADF sites such as Robertson Barracks in Shoal Bay, NT, and RAAF Base Darwin, which are 18.1 kilometres apart (see Figure 1).¹¹

⁹ US Department of State, 'Statement of Principles Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia', (Washington, DC: Department of State, 21 November 2013), pp. 1-2, <www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/11/217919.htm> [Accessed 29 July 2016].

¹⁰ Australia, Parliament, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, *The Force Posture Agreement Between the Government of Australia, and the United States of America* (Canberra: Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, 2014), pp. 4-5, <www.aph.gov.au/~media/02%20Parliamentary%20Business/24%20Committees/244%20Joint%20Committees/JSCT/2014/26August2014/force_posture_text.pdf?la=en>; and *ibid.*, *National Interest Analysis 2014 ATNIA 19* (Canberra: Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, 2014), p. 3, <www.aph.gov.au/~media/02%20Parliamentary%20Business/24%20Committees/244%20Joint%20Committees/JSCT/2014/26August2014/force_posture_nia.pdf?la=en> [Both accessed 4 August 2016].

¹¹ Australia, Department of Defence, 'United States Force Posture Initiatives in Australia', Department of Defence, 2016, <defence.gov.au/usfpi/> [Accessed 29 July 2016]; and 'US

Figure 1: Robertson Barracks and RAAF Base Darwin



Source: Courtesy of Australian Department of Defence.

Department of State, Joint Communique AUSMIN 2014', US Department of State, 12 August 2014, pp. 1-3, <2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/230524.htm> [Accessed 29 July 2016].

2016 Australian Defence White Paper

On 25 February 2016 the Coalition government of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Defence Minister Marise Payne (LIB-New South Wales) released a Defence White Paper emphasising the importance of the FPA and the area north of Australia in future Australian strategic planning. This document stressed increasing Canberra's alliance with Washington, seeking to maintain cooperative but cautious relationships with China given Beijing's assertiveness in the East and South China Seas, competing territorial claims and contention for potential natural resources in these waters, and the need for Australia to upgrade its military forces in the NT and Indo-Pacific regions to enhance Canberra's strategic and geopolitical interests including combating illegal immigration.¹²

US Government Responses

While US Government policymakers in Congress and elsewhere have expressed concern about uncertain resourcing for the US Pacific pivot, there has been general consensus that the Forces Posture Agreement is desirable for the United States' increasing economic and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.¹³ A provision in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 National Defense Authorization Act noted that there was not a clear specific plan in the defence budget for the capacity to fund resources and equipment necessary to transport and manoeuvre US military forces as part of the FPA and pivot to the Pacific. This legislation required the Department of Defense to prepare a report to ensure that US forces in the Pacific, including the MAGTF deployed to Australia, are properly funded.¹⁴

On 26 April 2013, a House Armed Services Committee subcommittee held a hearing on the force readiness and posture of the US Navy and Marine Corps. Subcommittee Chair Rep. Robert Wittmann (R-VA), in a post-hearing question to Lt. General William Faulkner, the Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Installations and Logistics, and Lt. General Richard Tryon, Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations, expressed concern that the Marine Corps not create a "hollow force" and that the United States had the ability to provide ready forces to combatant

¹² See Australia, Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), pp. 18, 42, 53, 57, 70-72, 77, 101-4; and Bert Chapman, 'Geopolitics of the 2016 Australian Defence White Paper and Its Predecessors', *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2017), pp. 17-67, <docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fsdocs/134/> [Accessed 29 July 2016].

¹³ See Peter Gadd, *Rebalance to the Pacific: Resourcing the Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2013), <www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a589241.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2016]; US Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, *Resourcing the Pivot to Asia: East Asia and Pacific FY 2015 Budget Priorities* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2014), <url.fdlp.gpo.gov/GPO/50835> [Accessed 29 July 2016].

¹⁴ *Congressional Record*, 158 (163) (18 December 2012), p. H7157, <www.govinfo.gov/app/content/pkg/CREC-2012-12-18/pdf/CREC-2012-12-18-pt1-PgH6869-5.pdf> [Accessed 1 August 2016].

commanders given maintenance, operational and training impacts due to budget sequestrations. Generals Faulkner and Tryon responded by stressing that the Marine Corps not create a “hollow force” and that the United States had the ability to provide ready forces to combatant commanders given maintenance, operational, and training impacts due to budget sequestrations. Generals Faulkner and Tryon responded by stressing that the Marine Corps balances force health and readiness across the pillars of high quality people, unit readiness, capability, and capacity to meet requirements, infrastructure sustainment and equipment modernisation. Acknowledging sequestration would adversely impact future readiness, they went on to contend that sufficient operations and maintenance funding is needed to train and engage rotational forces in Australia and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁵

Concern over the financial sustainability of the Marine Corps force posture realignment to Australia and other Asia-Pacific locales was also expressed in an 11 June 2013 report by Congress’s Government Accountability Office (GAO). This assessment noted that overall costs of US troop relocations in the Pacific, not including Australia, would be US\$12.1 billion; the absence of costs estimates for the Marines in Australia; that cost estimates for relocating the Marines to Australia, Hawaii, and the continental United States were developed using previous costing data for a Guam location; cost estimates for a rotational deployment of 2,500 Marines to Australia are not based on finalised plans or requirements due to the absence of Australian support for provided requirements; the Marines do not know what additional Australian infrastructure and support facilities they will require; and that it may be necessary to preposition equipment in Australia to lower transportation costs and cope with agriculture and quarantine inspection costs.¹⁶

The congressionally authorised National Defense Panel (NDP) on the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review report stressed the importance of the United States maintaining close ties with security partners such as Australia while urging these countries to increase their defence spending. This panel also supported exploring the expanded use of regional facilities in Australia and elsewhere while also emphasising the necessity of the United States improving command and control of coalition forces in a technologically

¹⁵ US Congress, House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Readiness, *The Readiness Posture of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2013); pp. 86-87, <www.govinfo.gov/app/content/pkg/CHRG-113hrg80770/pdf/CHRG-113hrg80770.pdf> [Accessed 1 August 2016].

¹⁶ US Government Accountability Office, *Defense Management: More Reliable Cost Estimates and Further Planning Needed to Inform Marine Corps Realignment Initiatives in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2013), pp. 20-21, 27, 36, <www.gao.gov/assets/660/655142.pdf> [Accessed 1 August 2016].

contested environment where partnering forces could be acutely vulnerable to electronic attack.¹⁷

During a 26 February 2016 House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee hearing, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and the Environment Dennis McGinn, responding to a question from Rep. Charles Dent (R-PA) on the status of force realignment negotiations with Australia, the Philippines and Singapore, asserted that ongoing DOD negotiations with Canberra and Manila would modernise these alliances while developing more geographically distributed, operationally resilient and politically sustainable regional defence postures. He also noted the successful completion of four Marine rotations in Australia, with the fifth scheduled to begin that month.¹⁸

On 4 May 2016, the House Armed Services Committee issued its report on the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 defence budget. This document noted its ongoing support for the Marine Rotational Force in Darwin contending it helped increase military readiness and enhanced partnerships with the ADF and other regional militaries. However, this committee complained that the Marine Corps still had not started planning or designing for known infrastructure requirements to support the 2,500 Marines as required by the United States' Future Years Defense Program.

The committee observed that the Marines had identified a requirement for an aircraft parking apron at RAAF Darwin and requested authorisation for building this facility in its FY 2017 budget request. It also urged the Marines to work with the US Air Force on a collaborative design effort to meet aircraft parking requirements while also directing the Secretary of the Navy to brief their committee by 1 February 2017 on the status of development, planning, programming and infrastructure requirements to support 2,500 marines and their equipment in Darwin and Northern Australia including cost, scope and timeline along with relevant cost-sharing arrangements by the Australian Government. However, these Australia-related provisions were not in the House or Senate Appropriations Committee versions of the 2017 defence appropriations legislation and their status was uncertain as of early August 2016.¹⁹

¹⁷ The National Defense Panel of the Quadrennial Defense Review, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense for the Future* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2014), pp. 12, 40, 42, <www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Ensuring-a-Strong-U.S.-Defense-for-the-Future-NDP-Review-of-the-QDR_0.pdf> [Accessed 3 August 2016].

¹⁸ US Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies, *Oversight Hearing: Quality of Life in the Military* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2016), p. 321, <www.govinfo.gov/app/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg20347/pdf/CHRG-114hhrg20347.pdf> [Accessed 1 August 2016].

¹⁹ See US Congress, House Committee on Armed Services, *National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 2017*, House Report 114-537 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2016), pp. 357-8, <www.govinfo.gov/app/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg20347/pdf/CHRG-114hhrg20347.pdf>

Chinese Investment in Darwin Port

A complicating factor in Marine Corps troop rotation was the 13 October 2015 decision by the NT Government's Chief Minister Adam Giles (CLP-Braitling) to lease key facilities at Darwin's port to the Chinese company Landbridge. This lease lasts 99 years at a price of \$506 million (US\$361 million) ostensibly to benefit a financially struggling government. This occurred during the 2015 AUSMIN meeting in Boston with participating cabinet ministers from both countries expressing concern about Chinese land reclamation and construction in the South China Sea. In March 2016, the United States expressed its concern that Chinese port access would enhance intelligence collection on adjacent US and Australian military forces. This problem was further exacerbated by Canberra's failure to consult with Washington and the presence of fuel storage tanks used by the US military being inside the area leased to Landbridge. This would limit potential future Royal Australian Navy construction to parts of the harbour not under Landbridge management.²⁰

Existing concern over foreign investment in Australian agricultural land was reflected in an October 2015 report by the Senate Standing Committee on Economics which did not address national security implications of this topic.²¹ This committee's Economics Reference Committee conducted additional investigation into how Australia's foreign investment framework is affected by the Port of Darwin lease, but no action was taken before the 2 July 2016 Australian election. Any action on Australian government regulation of deals like the Landbridge acquisition will be administered by the Foreign Investment Review board which will have to examine national

[Accessed 1 August 2016]; Ibid., House Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2017*, House Report 114-577 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2016), <www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-114hrpt577/pdf/CRPT-114hrpt577.pdf> [Accessed 1 August 2016]; and Ibid., US Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2017*, Senate Report 114-263 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2016), <www.congress.gov/114/crpt/srpt263/CRPT-114srpt263.pdf> [Accessed 1 August 2016]. For the status of US defence and other appropriations legislation for individual fiscal years see <www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/Appropriations+for+Fiscal+Year+2017> [Accessed 1 August 2016].

²⁰ See Australia, Northern Territory, Chief Minister, 'NT Government Selects Landbridge as its Partner for the Port of Darwin', Media release, 13 October 2015, <newsroom.nt.gov.au/api/attachment/byld/7260> [Accessed 2 August 2016]; Jane Perlez and Yufan Huang, 'Chinese Lease of Australian Port Troubles U.S.', *New York Times*, 21 March 2016, p. A1; and Paul Barnes et. al. 'Chinese Investment in the Port of Darwin: A Strategic Risk for Australia', *Strategic Insights*, 101 (December 2015), pp. 1-2, <www.aspi.org.au/publications/chinese-investment-in-the-port-of-darwin-a-strategic-risk-for-australia/SI101_Chinese_investment_Darwin_v2.pdf> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

²¹ Australia, Parliament, Senate Standing Committee on Economics, *Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and Related Bills [Provisions]* (Canberra: Senate Standing Committee on Economics, 2015), <[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Foreign_Acquisitions_2015/~media/Committees/economics_ctte/Foreign_Acquisitions_2015/report.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Foreign_Acquisitions_2015/~/media/Committees/economics_ctte/Foreign_Acquisitions_2015/report.pdf)> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

security implications of foreign investment (in consultation with national security policymakers) and strengthen existing deficiencies in Australian law. This should be a priority for the Australian Parliament and narrowly re-elected Turnbull Government when it resumes sitting on 30 August 2016.²²

Public Opinion in Australia and United States

There is general support for close security ties between Australia and the United States in public opinion polling from both countries. A 21 June 2016 Lowy Institute poll saw 68% Australians rank terrorism and national security as high priority issues; 30% saying China is Australia's best friend in Asia; and 43% each of all respondents saying that Australia's relationships with China and the United States are equally important. On China, 85% of respondents have positive views of China's people, 79% of China's history and culture, and 75% of China's economic growth. Conversely, Chinese regional military activities are viewed negatively by 79%, Beijing's government is viewed negatively by 73%, and Chinese investment in Australia is viewed negatively by 59% of Australians. In addition, 74% of Australians favour conducting Freedom of Navigation operations in the South China Sea to oppose China's expansive claims in those waters and 71% of Australians see their alliance with the United States as being very or fairly important to Australian security.²³

A Darwin area protest group called Base Watch opposes the Marine Corps rotational force. It is concerned that the presence of US military personnel will drag Australia into military conflicts, that Australia should not be politically aligned with the United States, and will have adverse social and environmental impacts on the Darwin area.²⁴

American public opinion polls reveal positive feelings about Australia, but ambivalence about whether Washington should have long-term military bases in Australia. A May 2014 Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll found 42% of respondents saying the United States should have these bases in Australia with 55% opposing such bases.²⁵ A February 2015 Pew Global Attitudes project poll found 44% of Americans had a great deal of trust in Australia and 36% a fair amount of trust in Australia. These polls indicate generally strong support in both countries for maintaining and strengthening

²² See Barnes et. al., 'Chinese Investment in the Port of Darwin', 1; and Australia, Treasurer, 'Australia's Foreign Investment Policy', (Canberra: Australia Treasurer, 1 July 2016), pp. 8-9, <firb.gov.au/files/2015/09/Australias-Foreign-Investment-Policy-2016-2017.pdf> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

²³ *The Lowy Institute Poll 2016* (Sydney: The Lowy Institute for International Policy, 21 June 2016), <www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/lowy-institute-poll-2016> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

²⁴ Basewatch, <basewatch.org/#/> [Accessed 2 August 2016].

²⁵ Chicago Council on Global Affairs, *Chicago Council on Global Affairs Poll, May, 2014* [survey question], USKN.2014CCGA.Q17H, GfK Knowledge Networks [producer], Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], [Accessed 2 August 2016].

security ties, but should not induce complacency about these ties due to the increasing economic and strategic influence of China in the Western Pacific and how that might affect Australian strategic interests.²⁶

Conclusions

The seasonal rotational Marine Corps deployment to Darwin signifies a tangible US commitment establishing a minimal but symbolic US troop presence in an increasingly important geopolitical neighbourhood encompassing the Indian Ocean, Indonesian archipelago and South China Sea (SCS) for strategic and humanitarian regions. This occurs during a time of increasing Chinese military assertiveness in these waters and goes against recent patterns of reductions in overseas US troop deployments.²⁷

Both Australia and the United States need to develop realistic cost estimates for how much it will cost to sustain this force and eventually expand it. This is problematic for the United States given its federal budget deficit of US\$590 billion in August 2016²⁸ and public debt of US\$19.93 trillion as of 30 December 2016.²⁹ The financial and military sustainability of this debt and of US forces in the event of a regional conflict was also questioned by the NDP in 2014 noting that reduced defence spending stemming from sequestration under the 2011 Budget Control Act had caused allies and adversaries to question the United States' resolve and that the United States has insufficient ships and aircraft to cope with potential western Pacific combat scenarios. This reduced defence spending has fallen from US\$678 billion in 2011 to an estimated US\$576 billion for 2016. In addition, overall US military personnel strength during the Obama Administration has fallen from

²⁶ See Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Pew Global Attitudes Project Poll, Feb, 2015* [survey question]. USPSRA.040715G.R02C. Princeton Survey Research Associates International [producer]. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, iPOLL [distributor], [Accessed 2 August 2016]; Brendan Taylor, 'Unbreakable Alliance?: ANZUS in the Asian Century', *Asian Politics and Policy*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2016), pp. 75-85, doi:10.1111/aspp.12232; and Alan Bloomfield, 'To Balance or to Bandwagon?: Adjusting to China's Rise During Australia's Rudd-Gillard Era', *The Pacific Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2016), pp. 259-82, doi:10.1080/09512748.2015.1013497.

²⁷ See Tim Kane, 'The Decline of American Engagement: Patterns in U.S. Troop Deployments', Hoover Institute Economics Working Paper 16101 (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 2016), <www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/16101_-_kane_-_decline_of_american_engagement.pdf> [Accessed 3 August 2016]; Bert Chapman, 'China's Nine-Dashed Map: Continuing Maritime Source of Geopolitical Tension', *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2016), pp. 146-68, <docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fsdocs/121/> [Accessed 3 August 2016]; and Gurpreet S. Khurana, 'China as an Indian Ocean Power: Trends and Implications', *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2016), pp. 13-24, doi=10.1080/09733159.2016.1175127.

²⁸ US Congressional Budget Office, 'Budget', 2016, <www.cbo.gov/topics/budget> [Accessed 3 August 2016].

²⁹ US Department of the Treasury, Bureau of the Fiscal Service, 'Daily Treasury Statement', 30 December 2016, p. 2, <fms.treas.gov/fmsweb/viewDTSFiles?dir=a&fname=16123000.pdf> [Accessed 23 January 2017].

1.419 million in 2009 to 1.301 million in 2016 with all military branches experiencing personnel reductions.³⁰

Tensions and the future possibility of conflict in this region, already rising due to increased defence spending by area countries, has also increased due to the 12 July 2016 ruling of the International Court of Arbitration against China's grandiose nine-dashed map claims in SCS regional waters affecting multiple adjoining nations including Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam³¹ and China's petulant reaction to this verdict demonstrated by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang describing the court as a "law-abusing tribunal", saying the ruling was "illegal and invalid" and Chinese President Xi Jinping claiming that the South China Sea had been Chinese since ancient times, and that Beijing rejected conclusions affecting what it sees as its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights. China also announced it would hold military exercises with Russia in the SCS in early August 2016 and companion naval exercises in the East China Sea (ECS).³²

Australia and the United States must maintain professional and candid communications with China, but assertively defend international freedom of navigation and air space in the SCS, Indian Ocean and ECS. There must also be strengthened interoperability and cooperation between US and Australian militaries in this geopolitically strategic region which the Marine Corps deployment represents. There also needs to be a strengthening of mutual US-Australian engagement as part of the US pivot to Asia which must be primarily military to enhance Australian security and give Australian ports and airfields conventional deterrence levels beyond existing ADF capabilities.³³ The Marine Corps deployment also gives Australia an opportunity to develop a maritime and expeditionary orientation toward the

³⁰ See National Defense Panel, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense*, pp. 2-3; and US Office of Management and Budget, 'Table 4.1: Outlays by Agency, 1962-2021', Historical Tables: Budget of the United States Government, 2016, <[www.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/node/18060](http://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/node/18060)> [Accessed 20 April 2017]; *ProQuest Statistical Abstract of the United States 2017 Online Edition*, 'Table 529: Department of Defense Personnel By Service Branch and Sex: 1960 to 2015 [Selected Years, as of September 30], Department of Defense', [Accessed 5 August 2016].

³¹ Permanent Court of Arbitration, 'PCA Case N° 2013-19-In The Matter of the South China Sea Arbitration...Between the Republic of the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China' (The Hague: Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016), <www.pcacases.com/pcadocs/PH-CN%20-%2020160712%20-%20Award.pdf> [Accessed 3 August 2016].

³² See Dean Cheng, 'South China Sea After the Tribunal Ruling: Where Do We Go from Here?', The Heritage Foundation, 20 July 2016, p. 2, <www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2016/7/south-china-sea-after-the-tribunal-ruling> [Accessed 3 August 2016]; and Nick Grimm, 'Military Exercises Between Chinese and Russian Navies in South China Sea to Be Closely Watched', Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2 August 2016, <www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-02/military-exercises-between-chinese-and-russian/7682104> [Accessed 3 August 2016].

³³ Ben McLennan, 'Revitalising Team US-Australia: Australia's Greatest Strategic Challenge', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 189 (November/December 2012), pp. 55-65, <www.adfjournal.adc.edu.au/UserFiles/issues/189%202012%20Nov_Dec.pdf> [Accessed 3 August 2016].

Indo-Pacific region as a core component of its national security strategy.³⁴ The increasing presence of US troops in this region comes at a time when the United States also faces acute strategic challenges internationally demonstrated by a resurgent Russia, the threat posed by Daesh, a nascent nuclear Iran, and an increasingly assertive China seeking to Finlandise waters in the SCS, ECS, and even the Indian Ocean. The United States's ability to address these problems is worsened by its fiscal problems which will require painful entitlement program reforms, tax reforms, and implementing more growth-oriented economic policies. Both countries must invest increased and strategically targeted defence spending in areas affecting their regional security interests including countering Chinese Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities, unmanned and autonomous systems, precision munitions and surveillance, and cyberspace and counterspace capabilities Beijing is likely to use to exploit its opponents' vulnerabilities and strategic power projection. Canberra and Washington must meet these threats in an environment in which the Obama Administration has consistently failed to provide political and moral clarity and funding due to a delusional ideology that military conflict is not an intrinsic part of international political order.³⁵

It remains uncertain whether the Donald Trump Administration will make the requisite strategic changes to US grand strategy and commit the financial resources necessary to make the Marine troop rotation to Australia more than a symbolic gesture and eventually represent a decisive, effective, enduring, and forceful rebalancing deterrent against Chinese aspirations to obtain absolute hegemony over the Indo-Pacific Ocean regions. A 17 February 2017 meeting in Brussels between Defence Minister Marise Payne and US Secretary of Defense James Mattis discussed mutual strategic interests between these two countries and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop met with Vice-President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during her 20-22 February 2017 visit to Washington for additional high-level discussions of important bilateral issues. Trump's 28 February 2017 address to a joint session of Congress stressed "We expect our partners, whether in the NATO, the Middle East, or in the Pacific, to take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost."³⁶

³⁴ Michael Evans, *The Third Way: Towards an Australian Maritime Strategy for the Twenty First Century* (Canberra: Australian Army, 2014), pp. 25-26, <www.army.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1846f/thethirdway_evans.pdf> [Accessed 3 August 2016].

³⁵ See Robert G. Kaufman, *Obama Doctrine: How Obama's Grand Strategy Weakened America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), pp. 145-84; Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); *The Military Balance 2016* (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2016): pp. 214-7, doi:10.1080/04597222.2016.1127567; and National Defense Panel, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense*, pp. 24-25, 38-39.

³⁶ See Australia, Department of Defence, 'Counter Daesh Conference, NATO Head Quarters', Media release, 17 February 2017, <www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-

A key indication of the Trump Administration's willingness to properly resource and provide personnel for the Marine Corps troop rotation and the Asia-Pacific Pivot will be reflected in its congressional budget request. The initial blueprint of this was released in March 2017 and called for increasing military spending by US\$54 billion representing one of the largest single year increases in US history. Other provisions of this proposal included increasing the lethality of land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace forces, strengthening the Army by rebuilding readiness and reversing strength reductions, rebuilding the Navy by increasing ship numbers, ensuring a ready and fully equipped Marine Corps, and enhancing Air Force tactical fleet readiness and technical superiority by purchasing more Joint Strike Fighters while also repairing aging infrastructure. A 4 April 2017 Trump-Turnbull meeting in New York City to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea saw both leaders stress the enduring bonds of friendship between these two countries while emphasising their anticipated security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. Determination of the political and financial seriousness of Washington's strategic intentions toward this region will be reflected in forthcoming congressional debate on these proposals, their enactment into subsequent defence spending legislation, and implementation in subsequent US national security policy documents such as the 2018 *Quadrennial Defense Review* and forthcoming editions of the *National Security Strategy of the United States* and *National Military Strategy of the United States*.³⁷

Professor Bert Chapman is Government Information, Political Science and Economics Librarian/Professor of Library Science at Purdue University. He has authored five books and his articles have been published in the Korean Journal of Defense Analysis, Astropolitics, and Geopolitics, History, and International Relations. chapmanb@purdue.edu.

releases/counter-daesh-conference-nato-head-quarters> [Accessed 24 February 2017]; The White House, Office of the Vice-President, 'Readout of the Vice President's Meeting with Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop', 21 February 2017, <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/21/readout-vice-presidents-meeting-australian-foreign-minister-julie-bishop> [Accessed 24 February 2017]; and US Department of State, 'Public Schedule: February 22, 2017', 22 February 2017, <www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/appt/2017/02/267761.htm> [Accessed 24 February 2017]; and *Congressional Record*, 163 (35)(28 February 2017): H1389, <www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-2017-02-28/pdf/CREC-2017-02-28.pdf> [Accessed 10 May 2017].

³⁷ See US Office of Management and Budget. *America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again*. (Washington, DC: GPO, 2017), pp. 15-16, <www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2018-BLUEPRINT/pdf/BUDGET-2018-BLUEPRINT.pdf> [Accessed 10 May 2017]; and White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Readout of the Meeting Between President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of Australia', 5 May 2017, <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/05/05/readout-meeting-between-president-donald-j-trump-and-prime-minister> [Accessed 10 May 2017].

Strategic Balancing Act: Australia's Approach to Managing China, the USA and Regional Security Priorities

Professor John Blaxland

This paper examines and takes stock of the changed dynamics in Australia's relationships with China and the United States. It revisits the importance of the US alliance to Australia's security and considers a range of regional bilateral and multilateral options to pursue as Australian strategists seek to bolster the security and prosperity of the nation and the region. It argues that in the absence of compelling alternatives, Australia must hold its nerve in remaining actively engaged with the United States and China. That involves carefully balancing economic and security interests while maintaining a focus on the goal of regional security and prosperity. Additional measures to pursue include enhanced relations with Indonesia, Japan, India and Canada, as well as the ASEAN related forums, the Five Power Defence Arrangements and a proposed MANIS regional maritime cooperation forum to sweeten ties between Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore.

Not since the 1940s has Australia's strategic environment been in such a state of change and uncertainty. With so much in flux, Australia must hedge its bets by reinvigorating a broad range of regional bilateral and multilateral relationships, including with the United States. This article sets out to review aspects of the strategic environment generating the uncertainty and to provide recommendations for how to respond. The article includes three major sections. First, there is a discussion of the uncertainties entailed in Australia's two most important bilateral relationships, China and the United States and how the Beijing-Washington relationship in turns affects Australian interests. Second, the article considers what Australia should do, looking at key regional security partnerships, including with the United States, and the need for Australia to bolster and diversify those ties to mitigate the risks associated with a rising China. Third, the article offers some conclusions and recommendations.

Changed Balance of Power

For more than seventy-five years, Australia has looked to the United States for its security and, for the last sixty years at least (since the 1957 trade agreement with Japan), it has looked increasingly to Asia for its economic prosperity. In the last decade, however, China has eclipsed Japan as Australia's greatest trade partner, while the United States remains by far Australia's largest economic partner (when bilateral trade and investment is

taken into account).¹ Holding the US and China relationships in balance has been manageable so far, but is becoming increasingly challenging. With much uncertainty, Australia must hedge its bets by reinvigorating a broad range of other regional bilateral and multilateral relationships. But which ones matter? What purpose might they serve? And what pitfalls might be encountered?

China

Following the rapprochement between Nixon and Mao in China in 1972, Australia also reconsidered its approach. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam established diplomatic relations with China that same year and a mutually beneficial relationship has flourished since then. Few could have imagined how important China would become to Australia.²

Today, China is Australia's largest two-way trading partner in goods and services (valued at \$150.0 billion in 2015-16), its largest export market (\$85.9 billion in 2015-16) and largest source of imports (\$64.1 billion in 2015-16). The Australian Government has pursued a number of initiatives to strengthen and diversify this relationship, not the least of which is the 2015 China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. Increasingly, Australia has benefitted and come to depend on the bilateral relationship across a range of domains. China, for instance, is Australia's largest source of overseas students, with more than 136,000 Chinese having studied in Australia in 2015. China has become Australia's highest spending inbound tourism market, with around 1.1 million visits to Australia from Chinese nationals in 2015-16.³ The astounding growth in links point to Australia's increased dependence on China and, not surprisingly, its increased concern about a potential clash between its economic interests with China and its security ties with the United States.

United States

Australian strategists and policymakers, when reflecting on Australia's relationship with the United States and of the neighbourhood's security needs, are influenced in their thinking by the events of 1942.⁴ With another Asian power having emerged or re-emerged and now challenging the

¹ See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'United States', fact sheet, <dfat.gov.au/trade/resources/Documents/usa.pdf> [Accessed 9 April 2017].

² There is an interesting dimension to the bilateral Australia-China relationship explored in John Blaxland, *The Protest Years: The Official History of ASIO, 1963-1975, Vol II* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2015).

³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'China Country Brief', <dfat.gov.au/geo/china/pages/china-country-brief.aspx> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

⁴ That was when, following the defeat at Singapore at the hands of the Japanese, and General Douglas MacArthur's rout from the Philippines, the United States decided to retain Australia as a base from which to launch its offensives against Imperial Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific Area.

established order, the experience in 1942 influences the thinking of diplomats, strategists and policymakers alike.⁵ It drove Australian policy makers to seek the ANZUS Treaty in 1951 as a security guarantee and buffer against the fear of the possible emergence of a re-armed and belligerent Japan. This is what Allan Gyngell describes as Australia's *Fear of Abandonment*.⁶

Central to understanding America's security role in Asia is the so-called 'hub-and-spokes' network of alliances in Asia. Despite Australia's wariness of being drawn into crises in Northeast Asia, the United States has encouraged greater inter-connectedness between the spokes in the US hub-and-spokes network of Cold War-era military alliances. But as Rory Medcalf and his National Security College colleagues have argued, "This self-help will make the system more resilient, deepen Australia's relationships with other regional countries, provide a hedge against possible US disengagement and help counter perceptions in the United States that other countries are 'free riding' on US security commitments".⁷

As Professor Hugh White argued some years ago, and as is now becoming increasingly apparent, uncontested American primacy is no longer necessarily the case. In 2009, he argued that as America becomes less able or willing to offer help, it may become more demanding for help from Australia. And if America chose to contest a Chinese challenge to its leadership head-on, Australia, being one of the 'spokes', would face a complex, costly and unwelcome set of choices.⁸ Back then, it was relatively easy to dismiss White's views. That is harder to do in the face of the changing regional dynamics and the emergence of an iconoclastic and transactional US president apparently intent on confrontation with China including over the South China Sea.

Changes under Trump

In 2017, how much has changed? There no doubt would be a heated discussion about any calls for support under President Trump.⁹ Australia has not faced such a conundrum in generations. So what is to be done? Australia must weigh-up carefully the balance of its economic and security interests as they play out in this context.

⁵ A useful reference on the significance and developments in this period is Peter Dean (ed.), *Australia 1942: In the Shadow of War* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁶ Allan Gyngell, *Fear of Abandonment: Australia in the World since 1942* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2017).

⁷ Rory Medcalf, Ryan Young, Marina Tsirbas and Matt Sussex, 'The Trump Presidency and Australia's Security: Don't Panic, Don't Relax', *Policy Options Paper*, no. 1 (Canberra: National Security College, Australian National University, January 2017), p. 3.

⁸ Hugh White, *A Focused Force* (Sydney Lowy Institute, 2009), pp. 20-21.

⁹ See Nick Bisley and Brendan Taylor, *Conflict in the East China Sea: Would ANZUS Apply?* (University of Technology Sydney: Australia-China Relations Institute, November 2014).

For many in Australia, the uncertainty arising from Trump's iconoclastic approach to governing is perhaps not as unsettling as the events of 1942, but it is certainly as unsettling as any event since President Nixon's declaration of the so-called Guam Doctrine nearly fifty years ago in 1969. Back then, Nixon declared that, while keeping its treaty commitments, each US ally in Asia had primary responsibility for its own security.¹⁰

Weighing up Options

Dr Andrew Carr, has written about Australia as a middle power and recently noted that for middle-sized countries, like Australia, "periods of flux and uncertainty are the times of greatest opportunity". He also observed that, with the end of World War Two and again with the end of the Cold War, middle powers enjoyed their greatest influence. "New ideas, new institutions and new relationships are formed at times like these".¹¹ With this in mind, it is worth re-examining Australia's ties to consider relationships that merit further development.

Today, Australia looks and feels more like an integral part of the Indo-Pacific—a term which in itself helps reframe our understanding of Australia's neighbourhood by bringing India and the Indian Ocean into the equation and placing Southeast Asia front and centre—what Indonesian President Joko Widodo described as a 'maritime fulcrum'.¹²

India

Rory Medcalf and C. Rajah Mohan have called for increased Australian cooperation with India to build regional resilience against the vagaries of US-China relations. They see India and Australia as well placed to form the core of a middle power coalition to build regional resilience and see cooperation possible in a range of areas. Yet as one military writer observed, distance and differing priorities restrict those prospects. India prides itself on its "non-aligned" image and values its autonomy. In addition, its security concerns remain domestic and land border-focused.¹³ Developing this relationship is important, but Australian policymakers should have modest expectations.

¹⁰ See Peter Dean, 'ANZUS: The Alliance and its Future in Asia' in *Australia's Defence: Towards a New Era?* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2014), pp. 213-4.

¹¹ See Andrew Carr, *Winning the Peace: Australia's Campaign to Change the Asia-Pacific*, Melbourne University Press, 2015); and 'Time to Harness the Motivating Force of Fear', *the interpreter*, 7 February 2017, <www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/time-harness-motivating-force-fear> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

¹² Rendi A. Witular, 'Jokowi Launches Maritime Doctrine to the World', *The Jakarta Post*, 13 November 2014, <www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/13/jokowi-launches-maritime-doctrine-world.html> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

¹³ Rory Medcalf and C. Raja Mohan, *Responding to Indo-Pacific Rivalry: Australia, India and Middle Power Coalitions*, Lowy Institute, 8 August 2014, <www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/responding-indo-pacific-rivalry-australia-india-and-middle-power-coalitions> [Accessed 8 February 2017]; and Paul Kenny, *Enhancing the Australia-India*

Japan

Japan has its own conflicted history with its neighbours and it too has sought to enhance security ties with Southeast Asia and Australia—all with an eye on the changing US-China dynamics.¹⁴ But Japan's relationship with Southeast Asia and Australia presents a complicated security and diplomatic challenge in the event of a crisis. Australia and Japan have a strong and broad-ranging security partnership, and, along with the United States, the three countries progress cooperation on strategic issues through the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue mechanism. Australia and Japan consult regularly on regional security issues. The growing Australia-Japan defence relationship includes regular bilateral and trilateral exercises with the United States.¹⁵

The United States, under President Obama, effectively guaranteed the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands coverage under the US-Japan security treaty.¹⁶ Defence Secretary Mattis's early 2017 visit to Japan indicates the Trump administration intends to honour that pledge. In the event of a clash over the islands, there are concerns Australia could be drawn into the fight, even though the trilateral dialogue mechanisms do not specifically address the issue of defending Japan.

Meanwhile, in a move that appears, in part at least, to reflect growing unease about American resolve, Japan has increased its defence budget to US\$43.55 billion in part at least to fund a pivot away from guarding the nation's north to reinforce an island chain stretching 1,400 kilometres along the southern wedge of the East China Sea.¹⁷

Japan's actions in reaching out and spending more reflect their own national interests. But for Australia, do closer security ties with Japan potentially draw Australia into a clash in Northeast Asia? Or would they help stare

Defence Relationship (Canberra: Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, April 2015), <www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Kenny_IPSP.pdf> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

¹⁴ See J. Berkshire Miller, 'With an Eye on China—and Trump—Japan Enhances Security Ties With Southeast Asia', *World Politics Review*, 26 January 2017, <www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/21002/with-an-eye-on-china-and-trump-japan-enhances-security-ties-with-southeast-asia?utm_source=Weekly+Headlines&utm_campaign=11691bab70-wed-free-02012017&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6e36cc98fd-11691bab70-63162449> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

¹⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Japan Country Brief', <dfat.gov.au/geo/japan/pages/japan-country-brief.aspx> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

¹⁶ Ankit Pannda, 'Obama: Senkakus Covered Under US-Japan Security Treaty', *The Diplomat*, 24 April 2014, <thediplomat.com/2014/04/obama-senkakus-covered-under-us-japan-security-treaty/> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

¹⁷ Franz Stephan Gady, 'Japan Approves Modest Defense Budget Hike', *The Diplomat*, 23 December 2016 <thediplomat.com/2016/12/japan-approves-modest-defense-budget-hike/> [Accessed 9 May 2017].

down intimidation? There are some compelling reasons in terms of the benefits of enhanced interoperability, noting that Australian and Japanese forces have a substantial track record of collaboration in East Timor (1999), in Aceh (2004-2005), in Iraq (2005-2006), and in response to other disasters and crises in Japan (2011) and around the Asia-Pacific region. Understandably, however, some pundits have argued for caution to avoid undue commitments in defence of Japanese national priorities that may not necessarily align with those of Australia, while engaging more closely in what is effect a hedging strategy.¹⁸ Others argue for a greater diversification in security relations.

ASEAN

Closer to home, Australia's ties with Southeast Asia have grown exponentially in recent years. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, consolidated as a five-nation entity in 1967 and then expanded to ten nations after the end of the Cold War. In response to changed dynamics, Australia's trade, tourism, cultural and educational ties with ASEAN countries have grown dramatically. This was accompanied by a significant growth in immigration from across Asia.¹⁹

Nowadays, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade acknowledges, Australia's economic and security interests are inextricably linked with the neighbours. With a population of 620 million and a combined GDP approaching US\$2.5 trillion, the region has become an increasingly important partner for Australian trade and investment. In 2014 alone Australia's total trade with ASEAN countries totalled more than \$120 billion—which is more than total Australian trade with Japan, the European Union or the United States.²⁰ In effect, ASEAN trade is second only to Australia's trade with China. This reflects the growth in free trade agreements including the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, which came into force in January 2010, complemented with bilateral agreements with Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.²¹ People links are strong and growing as well, thanks to strong educational ties, two-way tourist traffic and migration. The 2011 census lists over 650,000 people in Australia as claiming

¹⁸ See Hugh White, 'An Australia-Japan Alliance?', *Centre of Gravity* series no. 4 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, December 2012), <sdsc.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2016-03/cog4_white.pdf> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

¹⁹ See Australian Bureau of Statistics, '3412.0—Migration, Australia, 2014-15', <www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3412.0/> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

²⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)', <dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/asean/Pages/association-of-southeast-asian-nations-asean.aspx> and 'ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement', <dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/aanzfta/pages/asean-australia-new-zealand-free-trade-agreement.aspx> [Both accessed 1 February 2017].

²¹ Ibid.

Southeast Asian heritage.²² While still Western, Australia is more Asian than ever.

Today, Australia is more entwined with Southeast Asia than ever, with foreign, trade and defence ministers frequently engaging counterparts in the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus forum. In addition, there are senior officials meetings and other bilateral meetings on the sidelines of these and other forums like APEC and the Asia-Europe Meetings. Australia actively engages in the associated working groups to improve Australia's network of trade, educational, tourism and other ties and to bolster regional security and stability.

These ties are important, but there are limits to their utility. ASEAN operates on a consensus basis and struggles to speak with one voice. It is unquestionably in Australia's interests to pursue this relationship but this has to be done with a clear-eyed understanding of the limits of ASEAN's power and reach. China effectively has prevented it from speaking with one voice on anything remotely controversial concerning the South China Sea, insisting on dealing with such issues bilaterally, thus avoiding the potential strength in ASEAN unity that might undermine its interests there.²³

When considering the components of ASEAN, Indonesia looms large. A country once colonised by the Dutch and now totalling over 250 million people spread over more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy with the world's largest Muslim population. Indonesia also has felt a certain unease about the Western transplant to its south. That unease has never really manifested itself as identifying Australia as a threat. Nevertheless, the relationship has certainly been contentious, with vicissitudes over more than half a century, akin to a game of "snakes and ladders".²⁴

Indonesians, largely, do not fear Australia but many in the establishment are wary. They know Australia clashed with Indonesia during *Konfrontasi* in the mid-1960s. Australia also disagreed with Jakarta over the fate of Dutch New Guinea, now Papua, until the UN supervised so-called act of free choice in 1969 confirmed Indonesian sovereignty over the territory. Australia later

²² Ibid. DFAT records that there were over one million ASEAN visitors to Australia in 2014 and over 100,000 students from ASEAN countries enrolled to study in Australia.

²³ See for instance, Manuel Mogato, Michael Martina and Ben Blanchard, 'ASEAN Deadlocked on South China Sea, Cambodia Blocks Statement', 26 July 2016, *Reuters*, <www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-ruling-asean-idUSKCN1050F6> [Accessed 4 February 2017].

²⁴ This metaphor is used in Gary Hogan, 'The East Timor Crisis and the Australia-Indonesia Relationship', in John Blaxland (ed.), *East Timor Intervention: A Retrospective on INTERFET* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), pp. 194-208.

backed Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in 1975 and then, changed its mind in 1999, in what many in Jakarta see as an act of perfidy.²⁵

Australia mended fences following terrorist attacks in Bali and Jakarta and the Indian Ocean Tsunami. But the relationship has been on-again, off-again since then, thanks to Australia's poor handling of a range of issues including beef, boats, spies, clemency and Papua. That is, Australia's sudden cessation of live cattle exports to Indonesia, Australia stopping boats laden with people seeking unregulated entry into Australia, the Snowden eavesdropping revelations, and Indonesia's unwillingness to offer clemency to Australians on death row.²⁶ Australia's security is linked inextricably to the security and stability of Indonesia and Indonesia has a key role to play in the South China Sea as the largest and most significant nation in ASEAN—with its Exclusive Economic Zone under challenge from China's claims as well.²⁷ With extensive shared history and long memories, the relationship remains brittle and fragile, despite having common concerns about the security and stability of the neighbourhood. Creatively and respectfully engaging with Indonesia is of fundamental importance to Australia. Ways need to be found to minimise the turbulence in the bilateral relationship.

If we look at another Southeast Asian country, Thailand, for instance, we can get a sense of the competing dynamics at work. I have led a research project funded by the Minerva Research Initiative, examining Thailand's views of the great powers in the past and present, with projections into the future as well. Being one of four mainland Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhist states, one without a claim in the South China Sea and the only country in mainland Southeast Asia with a treaty relationship with the United States, examining Thailand's views is important. Through this prism one gets a sense of the great power rivalry dynamics across Southeast Asia. With hundreds of surveys over the last couple of years already gathered and analysed, it is evident that Thailand perceives Chinese influence as having risen to match if not outpace American influence (see Figure 1).

What is becoming increasingly clear is that countries like Thailand understand that they need to foster good relations with China and to seek greater Chinese investment. At the same time, however, despite occasional diplomatic spats and the fallout over the 2014 military coup, Thai authorities very much value their American ties. They do not want the United States to

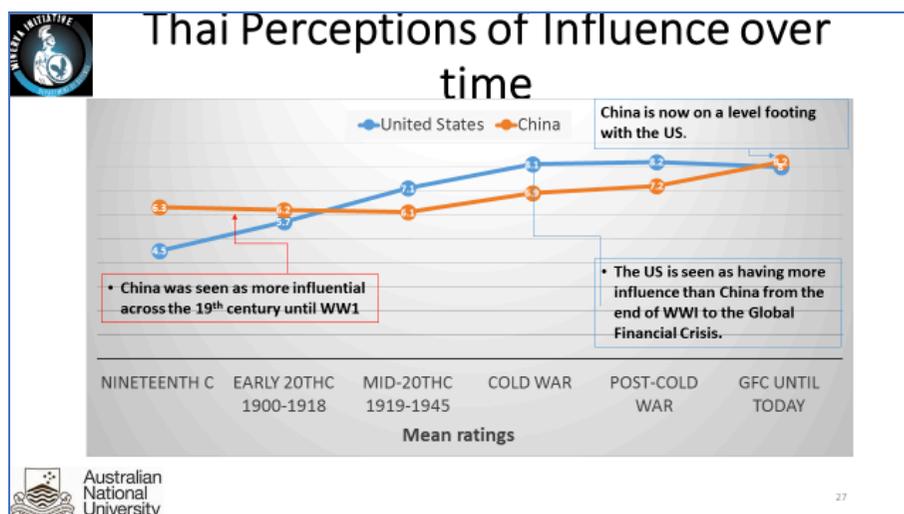
²⁵ For a sense of the Indonesian military's resentment, see Gary Hogan, 'The East Timor Crisis and the Australia-Indonesia Relationship', in John Blaxland (ed.), *East Timor Intervention: A Retrospective on INTERFET* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015).

²⁶ See John Blaxland, 'ASEAN Unity an Institution for Asian Stability', East Asia Forum, 29 April 2015, <www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/04/29/asean-unity-an-institution-for-asian-stability/> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

²⁷ See John Blaxland, 'Australia, Indonesia and Southeast Asia', in Peter Dean, Stephan Frühling and Brendan Taylor (eds), *Australia's Defence: Towards a New Era?* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2014).

leave the neighbourhood. There is a certain institutional inertia, with much invested already in having common US-derived procedures and equipment and usage of the English language—which also happens to be the language of ASEAN, let's not forget. Much like at the time of great power rivalry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Thais appreciate having counterpoints and alternative power bases that can be played off against each other. In all likelihood, that sense of unease at the prospect of a diminished American engagement is equally if not more strongly felt elsewhere in Southeast Asia. In gauging its response, Australian policymakers should take heed of these indicators and examine other regional arrangements as well—including with Singapore.

Figure 1: Thai perceptions of influence over time



Source: Minerva Research Initiative.

Building on existing security and economic ties, Australia and Singapore made a joint announcement in mid-2015 of an ‘Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’.²⁸ These ties are akin to the Closer Economic Relations and intimate security ties between Australia and New Zealand. In an ever-more connected world, what happens in and around the waters of Southeast Asia is of material consequence to Australia’s security and prosperity.

²⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Joint Announcement: Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’, 6 May 2016, <dfat.gov.au/geo/singapore/Pages/joint-announcement-australia-singapore-comprehensive-strategic-partnership.aspx> [Accessed 1 February 2017].

Like Australia, Singapore has a long history of seeking to balance geostrategic interests in the region by maintaining a close relationship with the United States, while also seeking to improve its relationship with China. In late 2016 China seized Singaporean Terrex armoured vehicles in transit from being used on exercises in Taiwan. They were later released, but there is understandable conjecture as to China's motives. The pressure on Singapore is particularly concerning officials in light of Singapore's outspoken stance over China's actions in the South China Sea and support for a beefed-up US presence in the region.²⁹ The implications have yet to be fathomed fully, but what seems self-evident is that, effectively, China has put Singapore on notice.

Five Power Defence Arrangements

Militarily, Australia has been extensively engaged in the region for generations. Despite the withdrawal of Australian combat forces from Vietnam in 1971, Australia remained militarily engaged in Southeast Asia through a number of forums, most notably the Five Power Defence Arrangements or FPDA. This apparent relic of empire has been a remarkably enduring institution. Established in 1971 as Britain was withdrawing from east of Suez, the FPDA provided for the Commonwealth countries of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to remain engaged with Malaysia and Singapore. Established at the height of the Cold War, and when fears over Indonesian intransigence had yet to settle following the end of *Konfrontasi*, the FPDA adapted to its circumstances over time. FPDA has provided Australia a military footprint in Southeast Asia most visibly with the rotational presence of Royal Australian Air Force fighter jets and maritime patrol aircraft.³⁰ That presence has facilitated close engagement with the Royal Malaysian Air Force, including for routine surveillance flights in and around the South China Sea—an activity that predates the end of the Cold War and the recent rise in tensions.

Canada

Another Asia-Pacific Commonwealth power worth considering is Canada. In *Facing West Facing North*, the authors observed that there was a challenge and an opportunity for Canada to revitalise its west coast security links with other Asia-Pacific countries. The paper observed that developments in the AsiaPacific provide opportunities for increased collaboration between countries like Canada and Australia. Non-traditional security threats, including natural disasters, climate change, food security and cyber security,

²⁹ Stephan Ortman, 'China's Seizure of Singaporean Tanks', *APPS Policy Forum*, 2 December 2016, <www.policyforum.net/chinas-seizure-singaporean-tanks-no-reason-panic/> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

³⁰ For an excellent overview of the FPDA a work see Ian Storey, Ralf Emmers and Daljit Singh (eds), *Five Power Defence Arrangements at Forty* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011). See also Blaxland, 'Australia, Indonesia and Southeast Asia', pp. 107-39.

point to a range of areas where the two countries can work more closely together. The report contained several policy recommendations for Canada and Australia to: strengthen regional security, bolster regional governance mechanisms, enhance bilateral defence cooperation and boost defence industry and economic cooperation. This report should be re-examined and its recommendations for closer collaboration between Australia and Canada reinvigorated.³¹

A Contested South China Sea

So far, the focus in this article has been on bilateral security relations. Yet there is one issue that affects a number of neighbours and engenders considerable debate over whether it is best addressed bilaterally or multilaterally. That issue concerns the rights and privileges of claimants and users of the South China Sea.

Security ties are important but trade is a major driver of international relations. The combination of trade ties with ASEAN and the countries of Northeast Asia cumulatively make the South China Sea transit routes more significant than ever for the future prosperity of many countries including Australia. Ensuring that freedom of navigation has long been an important part of the job for Australia's navy and air force.

Historically, however, Australia has studiously avoided taking sides on the numerous territorial disputes affecting the South China Sea. It has done so while seeing its strategic interests as being linked to preventing the intrusion by a major Asian power into maritime Southeast Asia and preventing the domination of Asia by any major power other than the United States.³²

The mid-2016 Arbitral Tribunal's ruling on the South China Sea upheld this view and the rights of ASEAN claimants to their Exclusive Economic Zones, declaring China's Nine-Dash Line claims had no legal basis. The Tribunal stipulated that, for the purposes of Article 121 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, a number of the occupied "rocks" in the South China Sea do in fact generate an entitlement to a 12 nautical mile territorial sea.³³ However, at the same time several low tide elevations do not.³⁴ China may

³¹ See John Blaxland, *Strategic Cousins: Australian and Canadian Expeditionary Forces and the British and American Empires* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006); and Leonard Edwards and Peter Jennings, *Facing West, Facing North: Canada and Australia in East Asia*, (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Centre for International Governance Innovation, 20 February 2014), <www.aspi.org.au/publications/facing-west,-facing-north-canada-and-australia-in-east-asia> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

³² See Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000), Chapter 4.

³³ Scarborough Shoal, Cuarteron Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, Gaven Reef (North), McKennan Reef, Itu Aba, West York, Spratly Island, South-West Cay and North-East Cay.

³⁴ Hughes Reef, Gaven Reef (South), Subi Reef, Mischief Reef and Second Thomas Shoal. See Permanent Court of Arbitration, 'PCA Press Release: The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People's Republic of China)', 12 July 2016, <[pca-](http://pca-cpa.org/en/press-releases/2016/07/12/)

continue to reject this ruling, but other states see it as providing an important clarification. Australian maritime and air transits are undertaken cognisant of this ruling.

Despite the Arbitral Tribunal's ruling, the Southeast Asian countries that have been most outspoken in criticism over China's maritime expansion have softened their stances in the absence of robust regional (ASEAN) or American support for their positions. Even the contested Philippines claims in the South China Sea are not subject to such an American security guarantee.³⁵ With so much uncertainty, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has undertaken a remarkable and vertigo inducing diplomatic about face over its South China Sea dispute with China. Following an extraordinarily favourable legal outcome announced by the arbitral tribunal in mid-2016 Duterte effectively discarded this advantage as a bargaining chip in negotiations with China over access rights to Scarborough Shoal and elsewhere in the country's Exclusive Economic Zone. The change in posture leaves neighbouring countries, including Australia, uncertain—even wary—over whether the future of the Philippines's security prospects are principally as an American ally or Chinese partner.

During President Obama's presidency, however, with draining and distracting military commitments in the Middle East, the United States had little opportunity to muster regional support to inhibit China's industrial-scale island building program there. Thus, by the end of Obama's presidency, China had its installations to the point where effectively they were widely seen as militarised.³⁶ Short of a major conflagration, there is little anyone can do to reverse the effect of China's extraordinary and unprecedented constructions—and that is an option no sensible commentator is entertaining. Effectively, the new islands have enabled China to dominate the South China Sea and, slowly but surely, to exercise greater control over the area inside the Nine-Dash Line.

China's actions have left many unsettled. China has ignored the verdict and is backing its claims with military and paramilitary power, effectively seeing possession as 'nine-tenths of the law'. It has built entire islands where there once were only rocks or shoals. In addition, and to the irritation of regional leaders, China is policing the waters with white-painted coast guard and fisheries so-called "law enforcement" vessels, as well as armed and

cpa.org/en/news/pca-press-release-the-south-china-sea-arbitration-the-republic-of-the-philippines-v-the-peoples-republic-of-china/ [Accessed 1 February 2017].

³⁵ Bonnie S. Glasser, 'Armed Clash in the South China Sea', Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 14, Council on Foreign Relations, April 2012, <www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/armed-clash-south-china-sea/p27883> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

³⁶ This has been convincingly demonstrated in the reports published by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative such as 'China's New Spratly Island Defenses', Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2016, at <amti.csis.org/> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

organised fishing fleets.³⁷ China appears to have militarised its positions in the Spratly Islands, having constructed military grade runways and aprons capable of accommodating large numbers of combat aircraft.³⁸ While others have acted similarly, China has done so on a far greater scale than any others, intimidating many along the way.³⁹

There are indications China plans to build on Scarborough Shoal. Such a move would give China a dominant position well within the Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone and relatively close to the capital, Manila. If construction proceeds, it would also put Chinese fighter jets and missiles within easy striking distance of US forces stationed in the Philippines.⁴⁰

Australia's American Alliance under Pressure

With growing concerns about the prospects of a military clash, a number of Australian former politicians, bureaucrats and diplomats have criticised what they describe as a "military/security takeover of Australia's foreign policy". According to this view, Australia's engagement in the Middle East has distracted Australia's attention from regional priorities and sidelined the Department of Foreign Affairs.⁴¹ Indeed, Australia's focus on the Middle East has come at the expense of its military connections closer to home as Australia's best and brightest have over the last fifteen years vied for operational military appointments in the Middle East.⁴² No doubt, US pressure will continue for Australia to remain and even increase its military presence there. However, there is a diminishing requirement for Australia's presence and increasing uncertainty over what will emerge between the United States, Russia, Turkey and Iran over the spoils of Iraq and Syria.⁴³

³⁷ See 'Are Maritime Law Enforcement Forces Destabilizing Asia?', Center for Strategic & International Studies, <chinapower.csis.org/maritime-forces-destabilizing-asia/> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

³⁸ See Chris Buckley, 'China Suggests It Has Placed Weapons on Disputed Spratly Islands in South China Sea', *The New York Times*, 15 December 2016, <www.nytimes.com/2016/12/15/world/asia/china-spratly-islands.html?_r=0> [Accessed on 2 February 2017].

³⁹ Greg Torode, 'Chinese Coast Guard Involved in Most South China Sea Clashes: Research', *Reuters*, 27 September 2016, <www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinesea-china-coastguard-idUSKCN11C2LA> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

⁴⁰ 'China Likely to Build More Islands in South China Sea: Philippines', *The Straits Times*, 7 February 2017, <www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/china-likely-to-build-more-islands-in-south-china-sea-philippines?utm_content=bufferf39d9&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer> [Accessed 8 February 2017].

⁴¹ See, for instance, John Menadue, 'Military/Security Takeover of Australia's Foreign Policy', *John Menadue—Pearls and Irritations*, <johnmenadue.com/blog/?p=7087> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

⁴² See John Blaxland, 'Middle Eastern Military Campaigns Undermine Our Regional Ties', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 October 2014, <www.smh.com.au/national/middle-eastern-military-campaigns-undermine-our-regional-ties-20141025-119qwc.html> [Accessed 4 February 2017].

⁴³ See for instance, Jamsheed K Choksy and Carol E. B. Choksy, 'Trump's Real Challenge in the Middle East: Don't Follow Russia and Iran', *World Politics Review*, 6 January 2017, <www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/20843/trump-s-real-challenge-in-the-middle-east-don-t-follow-russia-and-iran> [Accessed 4 February 2017].

Without a dramatic increase in defence spending Australia has to choose where its priorities lie. In addition, with greater uncertainty in the neighbourhood, there is a case to be made for Australia to decline further invitations to expand its military presence in the Middle East and plan to wind back, incrementally at least, its role there, to allow greater focus on fostering ties and bolstering stability in Australia's neighbourhood.

Seeing events in the Middle East and elsewhere, former Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, John Menadue, argues, "Our 'foreign policy' has been taken over by the defence, security and military clique".⁴⁴ Former Prime Minister Paul Keating similarly has called for Australia to "cut the tag" from US foreign policy.⁴⁵ Penny Wong similarly has described the US-Australia relationship as being at a "change point".⁴⁶ Greens leader Richard Di Natale, not wanting to be left out, also has pitched in calling for Australia to "junk" the alliance following Trump's call for an immigration ban.⁴⁷ Yet there are a number of well-placed observers that take issue with this harsh denunciation of the impact of the US alliance and it is to these we now turn.

Despite rhetorical criticism of Australia's purported blind allegiance to the United States, it is more accurate to observe that Australia acts, largely as an independent player, albeit with the weight of the alliance hanging on its shoulders. Since leaving office, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Peter Varghese, for instance, has been strident on this point, arguing the idea that Australia does not have an independent foreign policy is phoney and nonsensical; although he admits it is becoming harder to balance the relationships with China and the United States.⁴⁸ He nonetheless has dismissed Malcolm Fraser's thesis of strategic dependence and of the United States being a dangerous ally—admittedly, this came before Trump's inauguration.⁴⁹

Associate Professor Brendan Taylor has made the point that the US alliance does not prevent Australia from pursuing its interests independently.

⁴⁴ Menadue, 'Military/Security Takeover of Australia's Foreign Policy'.

⁴⁵ Leigh Sales and Myles Wearing, 'Paul Keating Says Australia Should "Cut the Tag" with American Foreign Policy', ABC News 7:30 Report, 11 November 2016, <www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-10/keating-on-american-foreign-policy-after-trump-victory/8015028> [Accessed 7 February 2017].

⁴⁶ Peter Hartcher, 'Donald Trump Presidency Should Force Rethink of US Alliance, Says ALP's Penny Wong', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 2016, <www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/donald-trump-presidency-should-force-rethink-of-us-alliance-says-alps-penny-wong-20161115-gspvom.html> [Accessed 7 February 2017].

⁴⁷ Pia Akerman, 'Trump Executive Order: Greens Call for Australia to 'Junk' US Alliance', *The Australian*, 30 January 2017.

⁴⁸ Peter Varghese, Address at the Australian Institute of International Affairs conference, Canberra, 20 November 2016.

⁴⁹ See Malcolm Fraser with Cain Roberts, *Dangerous Allies* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2014); and Varghese, Address at the Australian Institute of International Affairs conference.

Australia, for instance, has plenty of latitude on trade and regional negotiations, having initiated engagement with APEC, the TPP and the East Asia Summit without US endorsement and even, at times, US chagrin. He further argues regional security alliance alternatives potentially would stoke instability and risk entanglement in a major power conflict. He argues, therefore, that the only genuine strategic alternative to the American alliance is for Australia to undertake its own major military build-up. Taylor makes clear: "This option is not pretty".⁵⁰

Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb has argued such a build-up would be prohibitively expensive—approximating an extra \$70 to \$100 billion on defence per year. Australia, therefore, remains, as the strategic intellectual Coral Bell wrote in the late 1980s, a "Dependent Ally".⁵¹ Dibb further argued that it would be prudent to revisit the assumptions that Australia should be more self-reliant. That does not mean aiming for defence self-sufficiency, he argues, especially as most of Australia's advanced military equipment comes from the United States. But we should start planning to expand our forces.⁵²

Even Professor Hugh White has been careful not to endorse Fraser's views on the alliance, claiming Fraser "overstates his case for abandonment". For White, "Fraser's dark view of America leads him to overlook the chance that America might be brought to accept the need for accommodation with China as the basis for a long-term stable relationship". In addition, Fraser's rosy view of China leads him to overlook the value to Australia of keeping the United States engaged in Asia to balance and limit China's power. The best outcome for Australia, therefore, White argues,

would be an Asia in which America concedes to China enough strategic space to satisfy China's legitimate ambitions, and at the same time imposes firm enough limits to deter China from pushing for more. In that Asia, Australia could happily remain a US ally, to our great benefit.⁵³

The devil, of course, is in the detail in how to make that happen—especially as much of that strategic space has already been taken up physically with the recent island building.

On balance, most officials in the national security and foreign policy domain would acknowledge that Australia ultimately must make its own way through supporting and reinforcing a rules based international system. This means

⁵⁰ Brendan Taylor, 'Why Australia's Defence Capability without ANZUS is Greatly Overrated', *Australian Financial Review*, 6 February 2017, <www.afr.com/opinion/why-australias-defence-capability-without-anzus-is-greatly-overrated-20170205-gu5rpq> [Accessed on 6 February 2017].

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Paul Dibb, 'A Strong Defence Force Makes Sound Sense in Uncertain Times', *The Australian*, 7 February 2017.

⁵³ Hugh White, 'Strategic Overreach', book review, US Studies Centre, <www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/strategic-overreach> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

building on the numerous longstanding and emerging regional arrangements mentioned so far, as well as on the significant investment in the bilateral relationship with the United States.

Weighing up the Alliance's Benefits

As Australia sets out to make its own way in a manner building on existing relations, it needs to be particularly mindful of the nature of, and Australia's extensive investment in, its American Alliance. In *Australia's American Alliance*, several strategic and defence studies scholars undertook an in-depth overview, drawing out key insights into the past, present and future of the alliance in an increasingly complex world. We examined its role in Australian and US strategic policy and the mechanics of alliance cooperation: including intimate intelligence ties, closely integrated logistics, and access to global broadband communications and other advanced technology and platforms. We also examined strategic trade-offs and benefits from cooperation over capability development. What we found was a breadth and depth to the bilateral ties that most people do not realise. Reflecting an investment that spans generations, Australia today has a highly capable, sophisticated and versatile but small defence force that is able to respond rapidly to a wide range of contingencies. This is possible to a considerable degree due to Australia's close collaboration with US counterparts.⁵⁴ As Robert Garran observed, "the alliance has significant practical benefits, especially in the support it provides for Australia's military and intelligence capabilities".⁵⁵

Indeed, Australia has structured its defence force essentially as a boutique force, with a pocket-sized army and small but highly capable fleets of aircraft, ships and submarines deemed to be 'self-reliant' but only really capable of independently addressing limited contingencies in its near abroad. Australia's three-brigade regular Army force (that is one divisions' worth of troops) is very different from the fourteen-division army that Australia fielded at the height of the Second World War, let alone the 300,000-strong army of neighbouring Indonesia. This boutique approach is premised on the expectation that the United States could be relied upon for more significant and threatening contingencies that might emerge in future. In return, Australia has made niche and calibrated contributions as an alliance partner further afield, particularly in the Middle East.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Peter J. Dean, Stephan Frühling and Brendan Taylor (eds), *Australia's American Alliance* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Publishing, 2016).

⁵⁵ Robert Garran, 'Asia Will Be the Testing Ground for the Australia-US Alliance', *the interpreter*, The Lowy institute, 1 February 2017, <www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/asia-will-be-testing-ground-australia-us-alliance> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

⁵⁶ See John Blaxland, 'The Army and Government Objectives', in Tom Frame and Albert Palazzo (eds), *On Ops: Lessons and Challenges for the Australian Army Since East Timor* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016).

Defence Secretary Dennis Richardson, when launching *Australia's American Alliance* shortly after Trump's victory in late 2016, declared that those who believe in the value of the alliance "must be prepared to engage in the debate and to make the case. Perhaps more so than at any time over the past 70 years, this is one of those times." Richardson observed that "We will make a big mistake if we allow the alliance to be held hostage to the perceptions of the success or otherwise of one administration or of one person".⁵⁷ His message pointed to the enormous investment in the bilateral relationship made by Australia over generations and of the reasoning for keeping a longer-term perspective in mind rather than let Australia's long-term national interests be thrown off course by Trump's extraordinary short-term actions.

Australian politicians recognise that the Australian American Alliance is about shared national interests, yet their public declarations almost invariably focus on the idea of shared or common values. After all, Australia, like the United States, sees itself as a predominantly 'Anglo-Saxon' country devoted to the same values of liberty, rule of law and democracy.⁵⁸ Both Australia and the United States are English-speaking, New World melting pots populated mostly by migrants. Commonalities in culture, language and security ties are compelling and enduring. That commonality is particularly evident when witnessing Australian and American forces work together. Those who wish to walk away from that should weigh carefully the consequences on Australia's defence capabilities. Yet, the Trump administration's focus "only on America first", with its emphasis on a transactional approach to national interests above all else, has weakened the strength of the argument about shared values.⁵⁹

James Curran, in his paper entitled *Fighting with America*, written just before Trump's ascension to power, observed that the intensity in Australia-US relations led Australians to forget periods of past disagreements. He argued that, as the alliance becomes focused more on Asia, then Australian and US interests may diverge as much as they may coincide and, under certain circumstances, Australia may need to say "no" to the United States. Furthermore, he argues, doing so would not rupture the alliance.⁶⁰ Perhaps

⁵⁷ Karen Middleton, 'How Will Trump's US Act in Asia?', *The Saturday Paper*, 26 November 2016, <www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/2016/11/26/how-will-trumps-us-act-asia/14800788004017> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

⁵⁸ Dean, Frühling and Taylor, *Australia's American Alliance*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ See Colin Kahl and Hal Brands, 'Trump's Grand Strategic Train Wreck', *Foreign Policy*, 31 January 2017, <foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/31/trumps-grand-strategic-train-wreck/?utm_source=Saillthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=FP&utm_term=Flashpoints> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

⁶⁰ James Curran, *Fighting with America*, Lowy institute, December 2016.

his boldness and confidence in his judgements speaks to a pre-Trump era optimism about the strength of the relationship.⁶¹

Conversely, the United States would need to weigh up the consequences of further brash acts in light of the increasing significance of Australia to the US presence in Asia. America's presence in the Joint Defence Facilities at Pine Gap and the US Marine presence in Darwin being symptomatic of their investment in a two-way relationship.

Nonetheless, national security pundits, with occasional exceptions, still reckon that Australia's national interests closely align with those of the United States.⁶² The defence benefits, which are said to accrue from the bilateral ties, amount, in effect, to a saving of about an additional 2 per cent of GDP. That is, tens of billions of dollars per annum that would have to be expended to gain an equivalent independent capability. That figure likely would be even higher if the costs of an independent nuclear weapons capability are included. Australians have taken this for granted since they walked away from the British Atomic tests in the mid-1950s in favour of a virtual American nuclear guarantee.⁶³

One of the more outspoken defenders of this view, Ross Babbage, proposed in 2008 that Australia should develop the capacity, with dozens of submarines and hundreds of fighter aircraft, to "rip the arm off" a major Asian power. His idea was to be capable of imposing costs on a major adversary that outweighed any possible benefit from attacking Australia.⁶⁴ Such an approach undoubtedly would cost an additional 2 per cent of GDP at least. But it is hard to conceive of this cost being bearable politically. In the absence of such a surge in defence expenditure, however, senior officials remain convinced Australia should remain closely aligned with the United States.

In his recent paper entitled *Countering China's Adventurism in the South China Sea* Babbage reveals a more comprehensive and nuanced appreciation of the extent of the challenge. He examines how the United States and its close regional allies (primarily Japan and Australia) can

⁶¹ Greg Miller and Philip Rucker, 'No "G'day, Mate": On Call with Australian Prime Minister, Trump Badgers and Brags', *The Washington Post*, 1 February 2017, <www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/no-gday-mate-on-call-with-australian-pm-trump-badgers-and-brags/2017/02/01/88a3bfb0-e8bf-11e6-80c2-30e57e57e05d_story.html?tid=sm_tw&utm_term=.b2de7f5b7dd2> [Accessed 2 February 2017].

⁶² In essence, this is the view of the heads of the National Security College, and the Australian Strategic Policy Institute as well as a number, but not all, of the academics at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University.

⁶³ See Wayne Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

⁶⁴ Ross Babbage, 'Learning to Walk Amongst Giants: The New Defence White Paper', *Security Challenges*, vol. 4 no. 1 (2008), pp. 13-20, <www.regionalsecurity.org.au/Resources/Files/vol4no1Babbage.pdf> [Accessed 3 February 2017].

“thwart Beijing’s expansionism in the South China Sea and deter further Chinese adventurism”. Babbage sees China as a revisionist state with a strategy “to push Western forces and strategic influence out of the South China Sea and most of the Western Pacific”. The evidence in support of this view is mounting. To advance these goals, he notes, the Chinese leadership has “marshalled a broad range of political, economic, information, and military resources”. By taking incremental steps that fall below the threshold that would trigger a forceful military response, he points out, Beijing has made substantial progress towards achieving its goals.⁶⁵

Babbage’s assessment suggests the ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu appears alive and well in the minds of China’s leadership today. Sun Tzu is best known for his famous dictum: “the acme of skill is to defeat one’s enemy without fighting”. China’s incremental and calibrated approach to asserting and possessing its claims in the South China Sea is proving very effective. It presents a difficult conundrum for the United States and other nations concerned to stem China’s apparently relentless advance without precipitating a major conflagration.

Mindful of this risk, Babbage proposes several sensible but difficult to implement measures to implement his chosen strategy, extending beyond the diplomatic and military domains to include “geo-strategic, information, economic, financial, immigration, legal, and counter-leadership measures”. The most effective allied campaigns, he argues, will likely combine a carefully calibrated mix of measures that can be sustained by the allies and their friends over an extended period. Some of these measures would comprise declaratory policies designed to deter Chinese actions, give confidence to allies and friends, and shape the broader operating environment. Other measures would be classified, designed in part to keep the Chinese off-balance and encourage greater caution in Beijing.⁶⁶

A Way Forward for Australia

On balance, most Australians recognise that Australia’s interest are served best by the orderly negotiation of an arrangement aimed at short-circuiting the growth of strategic competition between major powers. Yet China and the United States appear unprepared to make the necessary concessions. China’s incremental approach so far has proven effective at seizing and holding claims, albeit at the expense of regional goodwill.

In practical terms as Australia considers the situation in the South China Sea today, the government recognises that there is little prospect, short of war, in

⁶⁵ Ross Babbage, *Countering China’s Adventurism in the South China Sea: Strategy Options for the Trump Administration* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2016), <csbaonline.org/research/publications/countering-chinas-adventurism-in-the-south-china-sea-strategy-options-for-t> [Accessed on 2 February 2017].

⁶⁶ Ibid.

undoing China's achievements there. What is possible, drawing on some of Babbage's ideas, is communicating to China, alongside regional security partners and the United States that no further Chinese expansion there will be accepted. Above all, a Chinese move to exclude the naval and air forces of contiguous states and their security partners from their own territorial waters and exclusive economic zones must be respectfully but firmly resisted. Even then, such a move only makes sense if the affected Southeast Asian states themselves take the lead in calling for such a collective response.

China has experienced its century of humiliation and its rise this century points to a future of which China can be immensely proud. But recovering from that does not mean the South China Sea's contiguous states and the world's principal security guarantor need to be subject to a commensurate humiliation either. There is a fine line to be drawn.

Indeed, there is a broad consensus, I would argue, within Australia's national security apparatus that the best way for Australia to influence events and avoid the prospects of escalation is to remain a trusted and close partner of the United States, able to share its views frankly and firmly. At the same time, Australia must work to assist the United States recognise peacefully the limits to its power and influence without triggering a more isolationist impulse.

Meanwhile, Australia must continue to engage with China constructively, respectfully and with an open hand, with a view to more fully understand China's intentions and to encourage a mutually beneficial accommodation. Relationships with Japan, India and Canada should be fostered and expanded, consistent with the level of interest and enthusiasm shown by those respective countries in collaborating more closely with Australia. At the same time, caution should be exercised about making security commitments that may unduly constrict Australia's policy options in future.

Closer to home, Australia concurrently also must bolster regional security ties with traditional partners in ASEAN—particularly including Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia—perhaps also in a sweetened sub-regional arrangement we could call MANIS.

Manis is the Bahasa Indonesia and Malay word for 'sweet'. It also could symbolise a grouping of maritime partners on the southern edge of Southeast Asia: Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore. Australia has invested over decades in a range of regional bilateral and multilateral arrangements. Most of which have failed to live up to expectations. Progress on important regional issues is glacial in large part because of consensus driven constraints. The unwieldiness of larger regional groupings point to the potential benefit that would accrue from a smaller, more focused regional grouping of countries. With so much

uncertainty and so many issues on which to collaborate, there may be utility in generating a sweeter deal for Australia and these neighbours. Existing forums continue to be important, but they often struggle reaching consensus and see only glacial progress on a range of issues.⁶⁷

A MANIS regional maritime cooperation forum could address a range of shared concerns such as illegal fisheries, natural resources, smuggling and transnational crime. This would involve respectful, patient, collegial and yet determined engagement to sweeten regional ties, drawing in government agencies and non-government institutions.

In the absence of compelling alternative courses of action for Australia to take, the country must hold its nerve, engage with the respective parties and proceed, as if walking along a tightrope. That involves carefully balancing economic and security interests with the great powers, notably China and the United States, while maintaining a focus ahead on the goal of regional security and prosperity by engaging constructively and proactively in existing and potential regional, bilateral and multilateral relationships.

Professor John Blaxland is Head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, in the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. john.blaxland@anu.edu.au.

⁶⁷ John Blaxland, 'MANIS: Time for a New Forum to Sweeten Regional Cooperation', *Centre of Gravity* series no. 26 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, June 2016), <sdsc.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2016-08/cog_26.pdf> [Accessed 3 February 2016].

The Role of Virtual Planners in the 2015 Anzac Day Terror Plot

Andrew Zammit

This case study shows how the 2015 Anzac Day terror plot resulted from virtual planning, which is an operational method the Islamic State has used widely since 2014. The article traces how the Melbourne-based perpetrator received online instructions on four components of the intended attack: choosing targets, making tactical preparations, maintaining commitment, and ensuring publicity. The article demonstrates the importance of the concept of virtual planning for understanding Australia's current terror threat and examines aspects of the plot, particularly the involvement of a UK-based juvenile, valuable for understanding the Islamic State's ability to initiate violence in Australia and elsewhere.

Anzac Day is Australia's most prominent military commemoration, marked every 25 April in cities and towns with a dawn ceremony followed by a veterans' and families' parade. In the lead-up to Anzac Day in 2015, a local Islamic State (IS) supporter prepared to murder police officers to "make sure the dogs remember this as well as [their] fallen heroes".¹ Had security agencies failed to disrupt the terror plot, the day could have been forever marred by murder on Melbourne's streets.

This article examines how this terror plot developed. It focuses on the role of IS figures outside Australia, showing how the plot serves as an example of what have been described as *virtually planned* attacks, which is an operational method IS has heavily relied on to expand its reach.

The article first outlines the concept of virtually planned IS attacks, using international examples. It then shows how the 2015 Anzac Day terror plot emerged and traces how it was guided from abroad with regard to four components: choosing targets, making tactical preparations, maintaining commitment, and ensuring publicity. It draws out the implications of this and highlights one of the plot's distinctive features: that a UK-based teenager was able to play a prominent role, which this operational method enabled. Overall this case study shows the importance of the concept of virtual planning for understanding Australia's current terror threat, while also demonstrating dynamics relevant to understanding virtually planned attacks elsewhere.²

¹ The Queen v Besim [2016] VSC 537 (5 September 2016), p. 2, <aucc.sirsidynix.net.au/Judgments/VSC/2016/T0537.pdf> [Accessed 13 November 2016].

² From this point the article will refer to the 2015 Anzac Day terror plot simply as the "Anzac plot", but there is evidence that there was also a terror plot intended for Anzac Day in 2016.

The Islamic State's Virtual Planners

IS has several different ways to promote violence abroad. Sometimes its public exhortations inspire unconnected individuals to attack in its name, as occurred with the murder of a Canadian soldier in Quebec in October 2014 and the hostage-taking at a Sydney cafe the next December.³ In contrast, some of its deadlier attacks were centrally planned by senior IS figures in Syria and Iraq.⁴ Within IS, some commanders direct operations in regions they are familiar with, often dispatching foreign fighters to attack their home countries. Prime examples are the massacres in Paris and Brussels, believed to be directed from Syria by French national Salim Bughalem and run by returnees such as Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Najim Laachraoui.⁵

However, several plots fit somewhere in between, being neither centrally planned by IS nor simply carried out by inspired individuals acting on their own initiative. Nathaniel Barr, Madeleine Blackman, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Bridget Moreng have highlighted a subset which they term *virtually planned attacks*.⁶

This refers to attacks where the perpetrators had not travelled to the conflict zone or joined a formal chain of command, but were nonetheless in regular contact with IS operatives instructing them from IS territory. These operatives, often based in Syria's Raqqa province, have guided attacks in multiple continents by using encrypted online communication platforms to advise aspiring jihadists on how to carry out their violence in a manner that serves IS's strategy. In many cases, the IS operatives are in near-constant communication with the attacker and provide encouragement and detailed advice for each step of the attack.

Judging from various attacks across the world, the advice virtual planners provide can be broken down into at least four components:

See Jared Owens, 'Teen Boy Charged over Anzac Day Terror Plot', *The Australian*, 25 April 2016.

³ Mark Gollom and Tracey Lindeman, 'Who is Martin Couture-Rouleau?', *CBC News*, 21 October 2014; Commonwealth of Australia, State of New South Wales, *Martin Place Siege: Joint Commonwealth—New South Wales Review* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, February 2015).

⁴ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, 'Radicalization in the U.S. and the Rise of Terrorism', testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 14 September 2016.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr, 'Bloody Ramadan: How the Islamic State Coordinated a Global Terrorist Campaign', *War On The Rocks*, 20 July 2016; Bridget Moreng, 'ISIS' Virtual Puppeteers: How They Recruit and Train "Lone Wolves"', *Foreign Affairs*, 21 September 2016; Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Madeleine Blackman, 'ISIL's Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation', *War On The Rocks*, 4 January 2017.

- Targets: An IS virtual planner told Mohammad Daleel, a German-based IS supporter, to detonate his explosives in a restaurant when the music festival he initially targeted became unfeasible.⁷ Another virtual planner provided a US-based IS supporter, Munir Abdulkader, with the address of a US military employee to behead.⁸
- Tactics: IS planners instructed a cell in India to use the explosive Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP) and a cell of French women to use a vehicle filled with gas bottles.⁹ Munir Abdulkader's planner had to give detailed instructions on what type of knives and duct tape to use in his beheading plot.¹⁰ Sometimes tactical advice can be about operational security, such as which forms of encryption to use. Mohammed Ibrahim Yazdani, involved in the plot in India, was advised to use the Tails operating system, which "is contained on a USB stick and allows a user to boot up a computer from the external device and use it without leaving a trace on the hard drive".¹¹
- Commitment: Virtual planners can provide encouragement and emotional support up until the moment of attack. One US-based plotter, Emanuel Lutchman, had doubts about his plot but was patiently reassured by his planner.¹² Riaz Khan, who attacked train passengers in Germany with an axe, was guided through the plot's final moments. He told his Syria-based planner "I am now waiting for the train" and "I am starting now", to which he received the response "now you will enter paradise".¹³
- Publicity: One of the most important aspects of virtual planning is making sure that an attack generates the right sort of publicity. After all, a central communicative purpose of terrorism is to propagate a movement's message. The attackers are expected to send martyrdom videos to the planner, to be released by IS's media wing *al-Amaq* after the attack. Rachid Kassim, suspected of guiding several plots in Europe, advised perpetrators that their videos "must

⁷ Thomas Joscelyn, 'Terror Plots in Germany, France Were "Remote-Controlled" by Islamic State Operatives', *The Long War Journal*, 24 September 2016.

⁸ United States Department of Justice, 'Ohio Man Sentenced to 20 Years in Prison for Plot to Attack U.S. Government Officers', Justice News, 23 November 2016.

⁹ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, 'Bloody Ramadan'; Moreng, 'ISIS' Virtual Puppeteers'.

¹⁰ United States Department of Justice, 'Ohio Man Sentenced to 20 Years in Prison for Plot to Attack U.S. Government Officers'. See also this tweeted summary of court material: <twitter.com/SeamusHughes/status/796793272589025280> [Accessed 3 March 2017].

¹¹ Rukmini Callimachi, 'Not "Lone Wolves" After All: How ISIS Guides World's Terror Plots from Afar', *New York Times*, 4 February 2017.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Joscelyn, 'Terror Plots in Germany, France Were "Remote-Controlled" by Islamic State operatives'.

contain an oath of allegiance and a message of *dawa*" (proselytisation).¹⁴

Not every virtually planned attack features all four components (for example, sometimes the plotter may already be fully committed or have a firm target in mind), and planners may advise on other components (such as the timing), but these four appear to be the most common. In some cases, which appear to be the minority, virtual planning goes beyond providing advice and involves remotely orchestrating logistical support.¹⁵ For example, the pair of IS supporters who murdered an eighty-five-year-old priest in France in July 2016 only met each other a few days beforehand, in a meeting arranged by their Syria-based IS handler.¹⁶ Sid Ahmed Ghlam, who attempted a shooting attack on a French church in April 2015, was told where to find a bag of automatic weapons left in a parked car, which had been arranged by his IS planners in Syria who were tapping into criminal networks in France.¹⁷

However, remote orchestration of logistical support can blur the dividing line between a virtually planned attack and a more direct one. To provide clarity, this article offers the following definition of virtual planning:¹⁸

A virtually planned terrorist plot occurs when one or more people (the planner/s) are in direct communication with one or more people (the perpetrator/s) located in the target country to provide them with advice for carrying out a terrorist attack, usually relating to one or more of the following: targets, tactics, commitment, or publicity. In some cases the planner/s may remotely orchestrate logistical support (such as introducing perpetrators to each other or arranging for others to provide weapons), but this does not involve direct forms of assistance that would go clearly beyond a common understanding of the term "virtual" (such as dispatching an operative into the target country to assist the perpetrator/s, or training a perpetrator).¹⁹

¹⁴ Moreng, 'ISIS' Virtual Puppeteers'.

¹⁵ Clare Ellis, 'With a Little Help from my Friends: An Exploration of the Tactical Use of Single-Actor Terrorism by the Islamic State', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, no. 6 (2016), pp. 41-47.

¹⁶ Callimachi, 'Not "Lone Wolves" After All'.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ This definition is based on current writings on the concept and commonalities across such plots, but not all writers using the term use it the precise same way.

¹⁹ One dilemma is that for a plot to be virtually planned by a particular terrorist organisation, the planners should be officially authorised by the organisation to play that role, but the relationship that the planners have to IS's central leadership is not always clear. According to the work of Gartenstein-Ross and Blackman, among others, IS virtual planners function as part of an IS external operations and espionage branch called the Amniyat al-Kharji. However, Nesser, Sternersen and Oftedal have found cases where it is unclear what part of IS the virtual planners were based in: "these handlers may, or may not operate under IS's international operations section". The internal operations of IS will likely remain opaque for some time, and this article does not engage in the discussion over which particular part of IS virtual planners belong to. It can generally be presumed that an IS operative providing instructions from IS territory is doing so with some sort of official sanction, otherwise they would be running a great risk. Gartenstein-Ross and Blackman, 'ISIL's Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation'; Petter Nesser,

These attacks have also been described with different terms. Thomas Joscelyn and Peter Neumann have referred to them as “remote-controlled” plots, as have French and German authorities.²⁰ In Hegghammer and Nesser’s six-part 2015 typology, virtually planned attacks match Type 4, “remote contact with directives”.²¹ However, the term ‘virtually planned’ will be used for this article.

Virtual planning has been a valuable operational method for IS, and been used extensively. According to Nesser, Stenersen and Oftedal’s 2016 dataset, there were thirty-eight IS-associated terror plots in Europe between January 2014 and October 2016.²² Of these thirty-eight, at least sixteen fit the criteria for virtually planned plots.²³ Seamus Hughes and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens found that up to one-fifth of IS-associated plots in the United States between March 2014 and March 2017 were virtually planned, and suggested that the proportion may be found to be larger when more court material becomes available.²⁴ In Malaysia, virtual planning was reportedly involved in half of all IS terror plots. Of thirteen foiled plots between 2013 and September 2016, seven are believed to have been remotely instructed by a Malaysian IS member in Syria.²⁵ In Indonesia the proportion is less clear, but several plots involved virtual planning. Most importantly, a Syria-based Indonesian IS member remotely initiated the shooting and grenade attack against a Jakarta mall in January 2016, which killed four members of the public.²⁶

Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal, ‘Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect’, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 10, no. 6 (2016), p. 9.

²⁰ Joscelyn, ‘Terror Plots in Germany, France Were “Remote-Controlled” by Islamic State operatives’; Melissa Eddy, ‘Germany Investigates if Boy, 12, Planted Bomb at Christmas Market’, *New York Times*, 16 December 2016.

²¹ Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, ‘Assessing the Islamic State’s Commitment to Attacking the West’, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2015), p. 22.

²² Nesser et al., ‘Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect’, p.4.

²³ *Ibid.*, Appendix 2. Nesser, Stenersen and Oftedal refer to nineteen plots which “involve online instruction from members of IS’s networks”, but not all of these meet the definition of virtual planning used here, as some involved returned fighters. The sixteen plots which do meet the criteria used here, using Nesser, Stenersen and Oftedal’s labels, are: Ghlam church bomb plot, plot against French military base, Touloun Navy Base plot, Coulibaly’s role in the Charlie Hebdo attack, Lyon gas factory attack, swingers club plot, Paris policeman home attack, Normandy priest beheading, car bomb plot near Notre Dame, Würzburg axe attack, Ansbach suicide bombing, Schleswig-Holstein plot, Remembrance Day plot, Junead Khan Serviceman plot, Ceuta plot, and Vienna teenager bombing plot.

²⁴ Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Seamus Hughes, ‘The Threat to the United States from the Islamic State’s Virtual Entrepreneurs’, *CTC Sentinel*, 9 March 2017, pp. 1, 7.

²⁵ Joseph Chinyong Liow, ‘Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Southeast Asia’, in Jacinta Carroll (ed.), *Counterterrorism Yearbook 2017* (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 2017), p. 29.

²⁶ Greg Fealy, ‘Terrorism in Indonesia in 2016’, in Jacinta Carroll (ed.), *Counterterrorism Yearbook 2017* (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 2017), pp. 22-23.

Virtual planning is a recent development that emerged as part of IS's widespread use of social media and other online means to mobilise transnational support, which reached an unprecedented scale from 2014 onwards.²⁷ This operational method has enabled IS to orchestrate violence in places where its capabilities were too limited for centrally planned attacks. This was brutally demonstrated during Ramadan 2016 when IS-associated terror plots, some relying on this virtual approach, occurred in ten different countries.²⁸ This operational method is particularly relevant to countries like Australia, where IS has lacked the advanced capabilities it had in Paris and Brussels.

This method has been used several times against Australia, as demonstrated by some recent counter-terrorism prosecutions. One virtually planned plot was foiled in Sydney in February 2015, and involved a two-man cell receiving instructions from an IS member in Syria.²⁹ Another was foiled in Melbourne in May 2015, where the plotter was attempting to build improvised explosive devices and had received some instructions from Syria-based British IS member Junaid Hussein.³⁰ Virtual planning also appears to have played a role in some of the alleged plots that have not yet been through court, though it will be necessary to wait until trials are completed to gather solid information. For example, in September 2014 Syria-based Australian IS member Mohammad Ali Baryalei allegedly ordered supporters in Sydney to murder a random member of the public.³¹

²⁷ On virtual planning being a recent development, see Nesser et al., 'Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect', pp. 9-10. For IS's use of online communication methods on an unprecedented scale, see Levi J. West, '#jihad: Understanding Social Media as a Weapon', *Security Challenges*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2016), pp. 9-26; Jason Burke, 'The Age of Selfie Jihad: How Evolving Media Technology is Changing Terrorism', *CTC Sentinel*, 30 November 2016. On earlier jihadist use of online communication, see Pete Lentini, 'The Transference of Neojihadism: Towards a Process Theory of Transnational Radicalisation', in Sayed Khateb, Muhammad Bakashmar and Ela Ogru (eds), *Radicalisation Crossing Borders: New Directions in Islamist and Jihadist Political, Intellectual and Theological Thought and Practice: Conference Proceedings* (Melbourne: Global Terrorism Research Centre, Monash University, 2009); Aaron Y. Zelin, *The State of Global Jihad Online: A Qualitative, Quantitative, and Cross-Lingual Analysis* (Washington, DC: New America Foundation, February 2013).

²⁸ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, 'Bloody Ramadan'.

²⁹ Karl Hoerr and Jessica Kidd, 'Informant Warned ASIO of Planned Sydney Terrorist Attack', *ABC News*, 14 September 2016; *R v Al-Kutobi*; *R v Kiad* [2016] NSWSC 1760 (9 December 2016), <www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/nsw/NSWSC/2016/1760.html> [Accessed 3 March 2017].

³⁰ *K v Children's Court of Victoria & Anor* [2015] VSC 645 (18 November 2015), <www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/vic/VSC/2015/645.html> [Accessed 19 November 2016]; *The Queen v M H K* [2016] VSC 742 (7 December 2016), <www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/vic/VSC/2016/742.html> [Accessed 4 January 2017]; Padraic Murphy, 'Melbourne Mother's Day Terrorist Bomb Plotter Instructed by Jihadist Junaid Hussain', *Herald Sun*, 5 September 2016.

³¹ Cameron Stewart, 'The Order to Kill that Triggered Operation Appleby', *The Australian*, 19 September 2016.

However, one of the clearest cases of virtual planning is the 2015 Anzac plot. The following sections examine this plot, using information primarily from court material made available after the aspiring attacker was sentenced. They show how virtual planning was manifested through the key components of targets, tactics, commitment and publicity, and also highlight distinctive aspects of this plot relevant for understanding virtually planned attacks elsewhere.

Background to the Anzac Plot

The perpetrator of the Anzac plot was a Melbourne teenager named Sevdet Besim. He was arrested in a Victorian Joint Counter-Terrorism Team (JCTT) raid on the morning of 18 April 2015 and pleaded guilty two years later.³² Four other suspects were arrested that morning as part of Operation Rising, the JCTT's investigation into the plot, but none were proven to be involved. Two of the suspects were quickly released without charge. Another suspect, Mehren Azami, pleaded guilty to possessing weapons such as tasers, knives, batons and knuckledusters.³³ Police did not allege that Azami intended to be part of the plot; instead they supported a defence application to keep him out of jail out of concern for his mental health and the risk of radicalisation. The remaining suspect, Harun Causevic, was initially charged as a co-conspirator in the terrorist plot but this was dropped due to lack of evidence. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) then sought a Control Order against him, which has a lower standard of proof (on the grounds of the balance of probabilities rather than beyond reasonable doubt). During the hearings, the judge was persuaded that Causevic was dangerous enough to justify a Control Order, but was not persuaded on the balance of probabilities that he had been part of the plot.³⁴ This leaves Sevdet Besim, the focus of this article, as the only proven participant within Australia.

Besim was eighteen years old when the plot was foiled. He was born in Melbourne in 1997, in a family that was not particularly observant of Islam. From 2012, he started attending the al-Furqan Islamic Centre in Springvale, along with some friends.³⁵ Al-Furqan has been described by a judge as “openly supportive of Islamic State”, as having “regularly attracted individuals who believed in an extremist interpretation of Islam”, and was run by an imam who had “been ostracised from the broader Islamic community in light

³² Sarah Farnsworth, 'Anzac Day Terror Plot: Melbourne Teen Sevdet Besim Pleads Guilty to Planning Act of Terrorism', *ABC News*, 30 June 2016. Joint Counter-Terrorism Teams exist in each state and include members from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Federal Police, the relevant state police service, and sometimes other agencies.

³³ *R v Azami* [2015] VCC 1862 (15 December 2015), para. 3, <www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/vic/VCC/2015/1862.html> [Accessed 13 November 2016].

³⁴ See *R v Azami*, para. 15; *Gaughan v Causevic* (No. 2) [2016] FCCA 1693 (8 July 2016), <www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/cth/FCCA/2016/1693.html> [Accessed 13 November 2016].

³⁵ *The Queen v Besim*, p. 7.

of his extreme views”.³⁶ In 2013 and 2014, Besim and his friends regularly attended al-Furqan and met new people. One person Besim met there was Neil Prakash, who travelled to Syria in 2013 and became one of Australia’s most infamous IS members.³⁷ Besim’s close friend Irfaan Hussein also joined IS, leaving Australia on 7 September 2014.³⁸ However, the initial catalyst for the plot was the death of one of Besim’s close friends, Numan Haider, that same month.

Understanding these events requires briefly turning to the Middle East. September 2014 was a tumultuous month in the region, in which the confrontation between IS and the US-led military coalition reached a new level. By this time, IS had been able to successfully exploit the chaos of Syria’s civil war and the fragility of Iraq (as the political settlement forged to contain the outbreak of violence after the 2003 US invasion started to collapse). By June 2014 IS had conquered swathes of land in Iraq, including the million-strong city of Mosul, and declared itself a “Caliphate”. By August they conquered more territory, seized the Kurdish city of Sinjar and perpetrated acts of genocide against its Yazidi population, and were poised to expand further.³⁹

US President Barack Obama responded on 7 August by ordering airstrikes and assisting the Iraqi government and Kurdish Peshmerga to push back against IS. In reprisal, IS publicly murdered American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff. On 10 September, Obama announced a broad coalition including Australia and other traditional allies to “roll back this terrorist threat” and “ultimately destroy” IS.⁴⁰ Following this, IS escalated its overt and covert efforts to attack Western countries. On 22 September, IS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani called for unrestrained violence against Americans and any allies:

So O Muslim, do not let this battle pass you by wherever you may be. You must strike the soldiers, patrons, and troops of the idol worshippers. Strike their police, security, and intelligence members, as well as their treacherous agents. Destroy their beds. Embitter their lives for them and busy them with themselves. If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the

³⁶ Gaughan v Causevic, para. 39. The centre was also associated with counter-terrorism raids in 2012 following the reported bashing of an Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) informant. This led to one person being charged with a terrorism offence, but later acquitted. To get a sense of the views and activities of the person charged in 2012, while keeping in mind that this does not make him guilty of a crime, see *The Queen v Karabegovic* (Ruling No. 3) [2015] VSC 641 (17 November 2015), paras 47-170.

³⁷ *The Queen v Besim*, p. 7.

³⁸ Gaughan v Causevic, para. 43.

³⁹ Stephanie Nebehay, ‘Islamic State Committing Genocide Against Yazidis: U.N.’, *Reuters*, 16 June 2016.

⁴⁰ Barack Obama, ‘Statement by the President on ISIL’, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 10 September 2014, <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1> [Accessed 19 November 2016].

citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then put your trust in Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's Fatwa. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling. Both of them are disbelievers. Both of them are considered to be waging war...Blood becomes legal to spill through disbelief. So whoever is a Muslim, his blood and wealth are sanctified. And whoever is a disbeliever, his wealth is legal for a Muslim to take and his blood is legal to spill...The best thing you can do is to strive to your best and kill any disbeliever, whether he be French, American, or from any of their allies.⁴¹

Counter-terrorism authorities watched these developments with concern. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) monitored local IS supporters and urged the government to raise the National Terrorism Public Alert. On 12 September the alert was raised from Medium to High.⁴² Then on 18 September security agencies launched Australia's largest ever series of counter-terrorism raids after intercepting a message from a Syria-based Australian IS member allegedly ordering supporters at home to murder a random member of the public. More than 800 federal and state police officers raided locations across Sydney and Brisbane to disrupt the suspected plot and its surrounding networks.⁴³

Besim's small group of friends in Melbourne, particularly Numan Haider, had also come to the attention of counter-terrorism authorities. On 16 September, Haider learned that ASIO had refused his passport application, suspecting that he planned to join IS.⁴⁴ Over the next week he publicly expressed outrage at the passport refusal and at the counter-terrorism raids, yelling at police officers in a shopping centre, "you will pay for what happened in Brisbane and Sydney today".⁴⁵ After IS spokesman al-Adnani released his 22 September call for violence against citizens of the US-led coalition, Haider downloaded the call to arms and arranged to meet two Victorian JCTT officers in a carpark. The two officers arrived with the expectation that they would discuss his passport, but Haider brought two knives and a *shahada* (profession of faith) flag and attacked the JCTT officers. He stabbed both of them before being fatally shot.⁴⁶

Catalysed by Haider's death, Besim gradually sought to take action himself. However, he did not go through this journey alone. Similar to many participants in IS attacks in Europe, Asia and elsewhere, he would be closely guided from abroad.

⁴¹ The Queen v Besim, pp. 43-44.

⁴² The Hon. Tony Abbott MP and Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC, 'National Terrorism Public Alert Level Raised to High', Office of the Attorney-General for Australia, 12 September 2014, <www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Mediareleases/Pages/2014/ThirdQuarter/12September2014-NationalTerrorismPublicAlertLevelRaisedToHigh.aspx> [Accessed 19 November 2016].

⁴³ Stewart, 'The Order to Kill that Triggered Operation Appleby'.

⁴⁴ The Queen v Besim, p. 45.

⁴⁵ Gaughan v Causevic, para. 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid., para. 44; The Queen v Besim, pp. 8-9, 44-45.

The Anzac Plot's Virtual Planners

Besim's guidance first came from people he had known in Melbourne who were now fighting for IS in Syria. According to the evidence presented in Besim's sentencing hearings, Prakash contacted Besim through social media shortly after Haider's death and encouraged him to try to come to Syria.⁴⁷ Besim applied for a passport on 13 November, but was told the following month that it was refused.⁴⁸ He gradually concluded that if he was going to take action it would have to be in Australia. As the plans developed, Prakash gave Besim the contact details for a co-conspirator who, due to his age, is only publicly known as "S".⁴⁹

"S" was a teenager in London who had come under the influence of IS in 2014. He had been experiencing a troubled life, with his parents separating, difficulty at school, and a degenerative eye condition that meant he was going blind. He took an interest in jihadism and reached out to extremist preachers such as Anjem Choudary and Mohammed Mizanur Rahman.⁵⁰ He was advised to open a Twitter account, and Prakash contacted him soon after.⁵¹ According to evidence later presented in the UK sentencing hearings for "S", Prakash had mentored him, communicating daily for a period, and brought him into IS's online community where he became a jihadist celebrity.⁵²

In early 2015, Prakash had told "S" of a "brother in Australia who wished to carry out a terrorist attack but needed a guide or mentor".⁵³ Shortly after, Besim contacted "S" through the encrypted messaging service Telegram and said he was the *mujahid* from Australia. "S" pretended to be an experienced jihadist with a wife and son, leaving Besim unaware that he was only fourteen years old.⁵⁴

"S" first asked security questions, which were answered successfully.⁵⁵ In one of their next conversations, "S" advised Besim that he could travel to fight or attack at home. Besim responding by telling "S" that he could not

⁴⁷ The Queen v Besim, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Nick Miller, 'The Boy Who Wanted to Spread Blood and Terror in the Anzac Day Parade', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 2015; Nick Miller, 'Radical Clerics Found Guilty of Supporting IS Had Contact with Teenager Behind Terror Plot', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 2016.

⁵¹ Miller, 'The Boy Who Wanted to Spread Blood and Terror in the Anzac Day Parade'.

⁵² Ibid. There are few details on this process as no court material for "S" is currently available online, presumably because of his age. The process may have resembled that outlined at: J. M. Berger, 'Tailored Online Interventions: The Islamic State's Recruitment Strategy', *CTC Sentinel*, 25 October 2015.

⁵³ Miller, 'The Boy Who Wanted to Spread Blood and Terror in the Anzac Day Parade'.

⁵⁴ The Queen v Besim, pp. 17, 19.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

travel and that he already had orders for an attack in Australia.⁵⁶ Over the next nine days, they communicated regularly through Telegram and together planned the attack.

While “S” became Besim’s main source of guidance for the plot, he was not the first or only one. Besim said that Prakash was going to give him names and addresses of Australian Army personnel who had served in Iraq, to kill in their homes, though this did not end up happening.⁵⁷ Besim also told “S” that Irfaan Hussein, the close friend of his fighting for IS, had been planning an attack for him since January and was meant to return to help.⁵⁸ However, he soon learnt that Hussein had died in Syria; by one account he was killed in battle with Kurdish forces, by another account he was executed by IS for trying to leave.⁵⁹

Therefore, the court material indicates that two Australian IS fighters, Prakash and Hussein, initially guided Besim but eventually “S” became the key virtual planner. That a fourteen-year-old played this role is unusual, but their interaction resembled other virtually planned plots in the four key areas: targets, tactics, commitment, and publicity.

TARGETS

At first, “S” took the initiative on suggesting targets. In an early conversation he promised to research targets in Melbourne and provide Besim with a task, and over the next conversations they discussed targets together.⁶⁰

Though they viewed general members of the public as legitimate targets, they saw security officials as more valuable ones. Through their Telegram messages, Besim said *“I see the best way to do this is to attack australian authority because by attacking there authority it shows weakness it then means that the general population has less confidence in them and therefore is more scared alhamdulillah putting fear into these kufar”*.⁶¹ He told “S” that the agencies he hated the most were the AFP, ASIO and state police.⁶² While he had considered attacks on Army personnel, Prakash had not sent the list of names and addresses.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 12, 16-17. The sentencing document does not actually state that the friend’s name is Irfaan Hussein, but this can be clearly inferred by comparing it to the Causevic Control Order ruling. The Control Order ruling states that Besim messaged Causevic on or about 19 March 2015 to tell him that Irfaan Hussein had died in Syria, while Besim’s sentencing document shows that on the same day Besim was telling “S” that he had just found out his close friend had died in Syria. See: Gaughan v Causevic, para. 43.

⁵⁹ The Queen v Besim, pp. 14, 16-17; Sarah Dean, ‘Australian Jihadi Killed While “Trying to Flee” Syria and Return Home May Have Been Beheaded’, *Daily Mail Australia*, 19 May 2015.

⁶⁰ The Queen v Besim, p. 11.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.53. Italicised quotes are character-for-character recreations of the Telegram messages, as presented in the court material.

⁶² Ibid., p. 11.

Besim was more certain about the timing than the specific target, saying that an Anzac Day attack would “*Make sure the dogs remember this as well as there fallen ‘heros*”.⁶³ He later added that “*this will mean they will remember this on that day every yr after insha’Allah*”, that “*Its close to the kufar heart coz they lost so many ppl*” and that “*The gov gives a speech on how they will always be remembered*”.⁶⁴ “S” agreed on the timing and helped Besim choose the target.

On several occasions, “S” responded to Besim’s target suggestions with questions to explore their suitability. For a police station, he warned that they would have procedures for an armed person approaching and that he could be shot before having a chance to kill anyone.⁶⁵ For a shopping centre, he advised that it should only be targeted if he already had a gun.⁶⁶ For the Anzac Day parade held at Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance, one of their most discussed targets, “S” asked if there was space for a car to run police over and asked for photos of the streets.⁶⁷ He also asked if it was possible for Besim to drive straight into the crowd and how many armed officers would likely be there.⁶⁸

They made no final decision on the target. Though they repeatedly discussed attacking the Anzac Day parade held at the Shrine, which would be attended by tens of thousands of people, they did not firmly settle on it. Besim had searched online for information on the parade, and on other Anzac Day events like the Dandenong Dawn Service. Some of their targets (police stations, shopping centres and court houses) did not specifically involve Anzac commemorations, and they also discussed luring police officers into an ambush.⁶⁹ What mattered most was to kill one or more police officers on Anzac Day; the exact location depended on what the most feasible tactic was.

TACTICS

The first tactical advice from “S” was about the importance of operational security. He advised Besim to act normally around his family and to start dressing like a “*kuffar*” (non-Muslim).⁷⁰ For the day of the attack, “S” advised him to wear black clothes and a scarf, and to smash and burn his phone.⁷¹ “S” also advised him to act alone and not trust anybody, though it became clear that Besim had told other people.⁷² At one point “S” asked how many

⁶³ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 62-63.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 64.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 51-52, 55.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁷² Ibid., p. 12.

others knew of the attack; Besim answered “No one really, theres jst a few brothers that know i want to do something they dnt know dates or specifics about the op”.⁷³

To carry out the operation, “S” initially advised Besim to sell his car and buy a firearm, but Besim struggled to find where to buy one. He said Irfaan Hussein would provide him with a low-calibre weapon when he returned from Syria, for which “S” provided advice, such as that it could be best used for close-range shots to the back of the head.⁷⁴ However, on 19 March Besim learnt of Hussein’s death which ruled out one way to get a gun.⁷⁵ He later spoke of another “brother” who could get him a gun but who was opposed to the “op”.⁷⁶ Besim also claimed that a handgun was buried in his garden and that he would recover it while his family was at a wedding, but this does not appear to have happened.⁷⁷

Failing that, “S” and Besim decided the best approach was to steal a gun from a police officer as *ghanimah* (spoils of war). They settled on a plan for Besim to drive over a police officer, behead them, steal their gun, and start shooting until he was himself killed. “S” gave advice on this, such as instructing Besim to attach a *shahada* flag to his car, so that no one could doubt the attack’s purpose.⁷⁸ “S” also suggested what knives would be “perfect for tearing through throat”⁷⁹ and that Besim should practice beheading a “proper lonely person”.⁸⁰

However, Besim rejected the suggestion of a practice beheading. He also rejected some other suggestions from “S”, such as taking photos of the streets where the Anzac parade was to be held, which he said would be too suspicious.⁸¹ So “S” did not dictate the tactics and often deferred to Besim’s local knowledge, but he did act as if it was his position to give orders. In one of their last conversations, Besim asked “So far the plan is to run a cop over or the anzac parade & then continue to kill a cop then take ghanimah and run to shadah?”. “S” answered “Bidhnillah ill give orders soon but its looking along that line akh”.⁸²

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 12, 19.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁸⁰ Mark Russell, ‘Judge Releases Alleged Communications Between Teenage Terror Suspect Sevdet Besim and 14-Year-Old UK Boy Over Anzac Day Plot’, *The Age*, 3 June 2015; *The Queen v Besim*, pp. 13-14.

⁸¹ *The Queen v Besim*, p. 17.

⁸² Ibid., p. 64.

COMMITMENT

On their first day of contact, “S” reminded Besim to maintain his commitment and suggested he run every day and recite the Koran to remain steadfast.⁸³ “S” provided further encouragement as the plot came closer to fruition, and helped to assuage any doubts. When Besim asked “*If I kill a civilian from any countrys of coalition im i guilty of sin*”, he answered “*No, because these ppl r supporting and assisting the killing of muslims*”.⁸⁴ On other occasions he reminded Besim of the heavenly rewards waiting for him, and that on Judgement Day they could stand before God and show their battle scars.⁸⁵ He also claimed that his “wife” was wishing the plot well and that his “son” was similarly preparing for an attack in London.⁸⁶

However, on 25 March, “S” was arrested by UK police. He was quickly released on bail, and Tweeted “[A]nyone who has me on Telegram immediately self-destruct, police have my phone”.⁸⁷ Besim nonetheless continued his preparations for the attack up until his arrest on 18 April, a week before Anzac Day, showing that encouragement from “S” was not necessarily indispensable for him to maintain commitment.

PUBLICITY

To generate the desired publicity, “S” had instructed Besim that he would need to send a martyrdom video with a *bay’ah* (pledge of allegiance) to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and an explanation for the attack.⁸⁸ Besim said he had already made such a video but that a friend had deleted it.⁸⁹ Besim told “S” he would make a new one when his family was at the wedding, and asked “S” for a list of what to include. Besim also asked if he could send the video through Prakash as he thought it would be more secure, suggesting that Prakash may have still been playing a role, but in the background.⁹⁰

It is unclear whether Besim ended up making the video. However, he did write a martyrdom statement on his phone, which he continued to edit up until his arrest.⁹¹ In the statement, he tied IS’s global message into his personal story:

A while ago world leaders declared war on Islam and Muslims, invading lands, dividing us into separate nations, installing puppets, killing and torturing Muslims. This war had always had a impact on me, however recently my brother Numan (May Allah accept him) carried out his attack, this opened my eyes up to the reality of who the enemy is. Since then a

⁸³ Ibid., p. 51.

⁸⁴ Miller, ‘The Boy Who Wanted to Spread Blood and Terror in the Anzac Day Parade’.

⁸⁵ The Queen v Besim, p. 14.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 17, 19.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

*growing feeling within me had led me to decide to carry out my own. To establish my jihad in Australia, to fight the oppressors, those who have implemented man made law, to fight to make Allahs word known and the highest, to defend Islam and put fear into those who are enemies to Allah and his religion Insha'Allah. At first I wanted nothing else but to leave this country and live in the Islamic State, however after many complications with my passport I realised this could not be done. So I started to prepare my self for my attack against the enemies of Islam...*⁹²

As it happened, Besim never carried out the attack. Two weeks after UK police arrested “S”, they managed to decrypt the Telegram messages between him and Besim.⁹³ With the plot uncovered, the Victorian JCTT swooped on Besim and other suspects on 18 April. Besim was charged with a terrorism offence on 21 April, ultimately leading to his guilty plea and prison sentence. With the plot foiled, there would be no *al-Amaq* video announcing Besim’s attack and martyrdom on behalf of IS.

However, on 22 April IS did release a video making Neil Prakash widely known to the public. In the video, Prakash called for attacks in Australia and announced that he had personally known Numan Haider.⁹⁴ A year later, a US airstrike injured Prakash and he was wrongly reported dead, but was later arrested in Turkey. Following his misreported death, the federal government described him as “actively involved both in recruitment and in encouraging domestic terrorist events... he was the principal Australian reaching back from the Middle East into Australia, and in particular, to terrorist networks in both Melbourne and Sydney”.⁹⁵

Implications

This case study shows that the 2015 Anzac Day terror plot was one of IS’s virtually planned attacks. Besim did not act alone, but was guided by regular contact with IS figures based abroad, who advised on choosing targets, making tactical preparations, maintaining commitment, and ensuring publicity. This is not unique to the Anzac plot, but represents a significant part of the increased terror threat Australia has faced since September 2014. As noted earlier, at least two other recent proven terror plots in Australia have evidence of IS virtual planning, and some of the alleged plots yet to go through court show indications of virtual planning. Therefore, this operational method has been utilised multiple times to try to attack Australia.

A key reason for this would be that centrally planned IS plots are less feasible in Australia than they were in countries like France and Belgium. IS had established a sophisticated underground infrastructure in Europe,

⁹² Ibid., p. 25.

⁹³ Miller, ‘The Boy Who Wanted to Spread Blood and Terror in the Anzac Day Parade’.

⁹⁴ Marissa Calligeros, ‘Islamic State Recruiter Neil Prakash Calls for Attacks in Australia in Propaganda Video’, *The Age*, 22 April 2015.

⁹⁵ Michael Safi and Paul Karp, ‘Neil Prakash, Most Senior Australian Fighting with Isis, Killed in Iraq Airstrike’, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2016.

enabled by various factors: Europe produced many more foreign fighters, had more porous borders, was geographically closer, and had greater strategic importance. Virtually planned plots provide a way for IS to attack Australia without having to attempt the sort of ambitious and closely controlled plans they carried out in Paris and Brussels. It also allows them to not rely solely on inspired individuals acting on their own initiative. Given that IS has successfully used virtual planning to launch attacks in Europe, Asia and elsewhere, it is unsurprising that Australia has also experienced multiple virtually planned plots.

The Anzac plot also demonstrates some of the practical implications of the differences between these types of attacks and centrally planned ones. For example, the interactions between “S” and Besim show that the relationship between virtual planner and perpetrator is not one of strict command and control, as Besim had little trouble rejecting impractical advice. “S” dictated neither the timing nor the tactics and often deferred to Besim’s local knowledge. In addition, Besim’s difficulty getting a gun highlights that this virtual method does not allow IS to provide direct logistical support. There have been cases elsewhere (mainly in France and India) where virtual planners helped to coordinate logistics remotely, such as by instructing another person in-country to leave a bag of weapons in a particular location.⁹⁶ However, these cases currently appear to be rare, so the lack of logistical support provides another way that the Anzac plot resembles most other IS virtual plots.

However, one feature makes the Anzac plot distinct and requires further exploring. Besim’s guidance initially came from Syria-based IS fighters, similar to the plots examined by Barr, Blackman, Gartenstein-Ross, Joscelyn, Moreng and others. However, his main guidance in the plot’s latter stage came from a UK-based juvenile, which is unusual for two reasons. The first is his location, being neither in IS territory nor the country being attacked. Virtual planning enables this, because while “most of ISIL’s prominent virtual planners appear to be based in the group’s ‘caliphate’ in Syria and Iraq, ... since the main equipment that virtual planners require is an Internet connection and good encryption, they could theoretically operate from other geographic locations”.⁹⁷

The second reason that the involvement of “S” is unusual is that he was fourteen years old; it is rare for children to play such a significant planning role. Given his young age, it has to be wondered whether “S” fully grasped the seriousness of what he was advising on. But even if he did not, it unfortunately does not remove the threat from such plans. Virtual planning is an operational method which lowers the barriers to entry, meaning that

⁹⁶ Callimachi, ‘Not “Lone Wolves” After All’.

⁹⁷ Gartenstein-Ross and Blackman, ‘ISIL’s Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation’.

people with varying degrees of genuine commitment, sometimes juveniles and fantasists, can become dangerously real participants in terror plots.

This is less likely to happen with centrally planned plots where leaders can select personnel carefully and might not trust someone this young with operational responsibility, or with “lone wolf” plots where someone like “S” would have to take action himself.⁹⁸ Such participants may or may not entirely grasp what they are doing, but their guidance can still be dangerous. Whether or not it seems truly real to them as they dispense violent advice, the aspiring martyr at the other end may treat their words with deadly seriousness.

This dynamic is likely to have played out in some other virtually planned plots. For example, the Mother’s Day 2015 plot also appears to have had a fantasist element. According to the limited information currently available, while the teenager was communicating with Syria-based British IS member Junaid Hussein, he was also, like Besim, communicating with a Western-based figure who was not what he seemed. This was “Australi Witness”, who turned out to be a Jewish-American who, for entirely unclear motives, adopted a number of online personas, one of which was as an Australian jihadist while others included a neo-Nazi and a radical feminist.⁹⁹ It is plausible that some other virtually planned plots have similarly seen juveniles or fantasists play planning roles, or may in the future. Therefore, the Anzac plot not only serves as an example of how Islamic State virtual planning occurred in Australia, but demonstrates a distinct feature likely relevant to virtually planned plots elsewhere.

Conclusion

The 2015 Anzac Day terror plot developed as a result of IS’s operational method of *virtual planning*. Besim was first guided by two Syria-based IS fighters who he had known in Melbourne beforehand and then by “S”. The plot bore strong resemblances to other virtually planned IS terror plots across the world, in that these virtual planners, primarily “S” in the plot’s later stages, assisted Besim to explore targets, advised on tactics, encouraged him to remain committed, and helped to ensure that the attack could be publicised by IS if carried out. The advice helped Besim progress towards the attack but did not overcome logistical limitations, such as his difficulty finding a firearm. This too resembles other such plots, as IS has only rarely been able to remotely orchestrate logistic support for its virtually planned attacks.

⁹⁸ However, the murder of NSW Police accountant Curtis Cheng by a fifteen-year-old jihadist demonstrates that on some rare occasions children will take such direct action, although the perpetrator was not a “lone wolf”.

⁹⁹ Padraic Murphy, ‘Teenager Pleads Guilty to Planning Mother’s Day Terrorist Attack in Melbourne’, *Herald Sun*, 14 December 2015.

However, one of the plot's distinctive features was that "S" was not an IS fighter operating out of Raqqa but was just a UK-based juvenile. It may seem unusual for a fourteen-year-old to play an important role in a transcontinental terror plot, but virtual planning can enable that by lowering the barriers to involvement. This operational method makes it easier for something that might have begun as a fantasy to turn into a dangerous reality.

Overall, the concept of virtual planning helps make sense of the terror threat Australia faces. At least three other recent plots in the country appear to have followed this operational method. The concept is also relevant to the wider region, with both Indonesia and Malaysia having experienced such plots.¹⁰⁰ Virtual planning is likely to become even more important as IS continues to lose territory in Iraq and Syria.¹⁰¹ The group is anticipated to escalate its external violence in response, and is unlikely to soon abandon an approach that has helped them guide attacks in places where they otherwise lacked the capability.¹⁰²

*Andrew Zammit is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship, and has worked on terrorism research projects at Monash University and Victoria University. He blogs at andrewzammit.org and co-produces the podcast *Sub Rosa* on security and human rights issues in Australia and Southeast Asia. zammita@student.unimelb.edu.au.*

¹⁰⁰ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, 'Bloody Ramadan'.

¹⁰¹ Andrew Watkins, 'Losing Territory and Lashing Out: The Islamic State and International Terror', *CTC Sentinel*, 17 March 2016.

¹⁰² The author would like to thank Natalie Sambhi, Debra Smith, Katrina Zorzi, the reviewer and the *Security Challenges* editors for helpful advice on drafts of this article.

Innovative within the Paradigm: The Evolution of the Australian Defence Force's Joint Operational Art

Aaron P. Jackson¹

Beginning in 2008, several articles argued that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) had paid little attention to revising its operational art in light of recent experiences, and that the ADF had been slow to respond to conceptual evolution within key allied militaries, the United States in particular. Recently the ADF has reviewed its conceptualisation of operational art, updating it to better suit contemporary operational requirements. This article summarises the critical articles and US developments before detailing the ADF's revised approach to operational art. It also briefly highlights possible areas for future conceptual evolution. It is concluded that the ADF's revised approach to operational art will greatly benefit the ADF's operational conduct, yet it is also a step in an intellectual journey rather than a destination.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century Australia's military operations have been characterised by variety, encompassing a mix of unconventional wars, multinational peace operations, humanitarian operations and disaster relief. Concurrently the ADF has needed to maintain an ability to respond to conventional threats. To conduct such a wide variety of operations the ADF routinely conducts detailed operational planning. It does this by employing operational art, which is defined as "the skilful employment of military forces to attain strategic goals through the design, organisation, sequencing and direction of campaigns and operations".² Conducting operational art is the acme of military command at the operational level, although success also requires comprehensive staff work and rigorous planning. The ADF's joint operational planning process, which encapsulates its preferred approach to operational art, is called the Joint Military Appreciation Process (JMAP).³

Beginning in 2008, the ADF's practice of operational art and related doctrine was the subject of five articles that asserted that this practice was suboptimal. Concurrently, the practice of operational art by Australia's key

¹ The views expressed in this paper are the author's own and are not necessarily those of the Australian Department of Defence, or any part thereof.

² The following notes accompany this definition: "1. Operational art translates strategic into operational and ultimately tactical actions. 2. It requires a commander to: a. identify the military conditions or end state that constitute the strategic objective; b. decide the operational objectives that must be achieved to reach the desired end state; c. order a sequence of actions that lead to fulfilment of the operational objectives; d. apply the military resources allocated to sustain the desired sequence of actions". Australian Defence Force, Australian Defence Force Publication (ADFP) 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., Amendment List 2 (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2016), p. 1.4.

³ *Ibid.*

allies, especially the United States, began evolving at an increased pace as a result of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. According to those who have criticised ADF practice of operational art, the ADF had overlooked these evolutions, bringing about a situation characterised by a mix of domestic intellectual stagnation and international disconnection between the ADF and key allied militaries.

Recently, the ADF completed a review of the doctrine publication that contains the JMAP and by doing so comprehensively updated its conceptualisation of operational art, incorporating the lessons of several recent operations to ensure that this update met contemporary operational requirements. This article examines this review, summarising the articles written about the ADF's previous practice of operational art and the major aspects of the recent evolution of operational art in the US military. It subsequently details the nature of the new edition of the JMAP doctrine and the approach to operational art that it encapsulates. This approach is well suited to Australia's contemporary circumstances and requirements, including the need for interoperability with key allies, the US military in particular.

Finally, this article argues that despite the benefits the recent changes yield, the ADF's approach to operational art and the JMAP remain within the same paradigm as previous approaches. This paradigm, which is elaborated in the final section of this article, is characterised by a linear approach to operational art and planning. It assumes the existence of clear and determinable linkages between strategic objectives, a desired operational end state, operational objectives and tactical actions, and to a great extent it relies on the existence of linear cause-and-effect relationships within the operational environment. The limits of this paradigm reveal the limits of the ADF's revised approach to operational art and suggest where additional improvements could potentially be made in the future. As a result it is concluded that while the ADF's revised approach to operational art is an innovative and necessary evolution that will greatly benefit the ADF's operational conduct, it is also a step in an intellectual journey rather than a destination.

Discussion of Operational Art in the ADF

In the last eight years, five articles have included criticism of the ADF's practice of operational art. Although this does not sound like very many, it is noteworthy because Australian military officers and Defence staff—as Albert Palazzo has so poignantly emphasised—tend to shy away from publishing their opinions.⁴ So five articles by ADF officers and Defence staff is

⁴ Albert Palazzo, 'The Future of War Debate in Australia: Why Has There Not Been One? Has the Need for One Now Arrived?', Working Paper No. 140 (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, August 2012).

significant, and merely the presence of such criticism suggests that the ADF's practice of operational art warranted review. Overall, these articles highlighted six areas where ADF doctrine for operational art could be refined:

1. **Functionality.** The functional conceptualisation of operational art needed to be further developed (that is, the conceiving of operational art in terms of functionality rather than scale), which should be specifically designed to Australia's strategic and operational circumstances.

2. **Objectives.** There was a need to better develop linkages between operational objectives and strategic objectives in a way that would allow operational flexibility in response to changes in the strategic situation.

3. **Centre of gravity analysis.** An evaluation of the role and understanding of centre of gravity analysis was clearly required, although the articles' recommendations ranged from updating the concept while maintaining its centrality, through to removing it from ADF doctrine altogether.

4. **Operational design.** There was a need to assess conceptual developments that had occurred overseas, especially within the US military, and to adapt any developments that would be appropriate for Australian use. In particular, 'design' and 'operational design' needed to be thoroughly evaluated.

5. **Campaigns and operations.** A clearer delineation was required of the difference between campaign planning/design and operational planning/design.

6. **Flexibility.** The ADF's operational planning process needed to be more flexible so as to accommodate the high degree of uncertainty and change evident in recent operations.

In the first article, published in 2008, Professor Michael Evans asserted that "essential debates on the role of operational art in the battlespace of the 21st century that have occurred within the US, British and Canadian militaries over the past decade have not ... been formally evident within the contemporary [ADF]".⁵ He went on to highlight that Australia's historical experience of war has led to "a high degree of tactical excellence on one hand and a tradition of inexperience at the operational level of war on the other". He accordingly argued that "the ADF continues to lack a firm conceptual foundation for the development of higher command beyond the traditional Australian strategy-tactics interface".

In Evans' assessment, the ADF's approach to operational art evolved in two stages. In the late 1980s and 1990s, operational art was developed solely in

⁵ Michael Evans, 'The Closing of the Australian Military Mind: The ADF and Operational Art', *Security Challenges*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Winter 2008), p. 105.

preparation for the conventional defence of Australia—the least likely scenario facing Australian military planners. In the second period, following 1999, Evans contended that the ADF’s operational concepts became imbued with a ‘technology bias’ that sidelined cognitive needs and “created a number of weaknesses in the current warfighting posture”. As a result, Evans argued that “conceptual thinking is rooted in technology, rather than the anatomy of war, and fails to reflect the likely reality of armed conflict over the next decade or more”.⁶

Evans advocated the development of an approach to operational art that would be suitable for regional missions, where Australia is the lead nation, and global missions where Australia is part of a multinational alliance. He stressed the importance of achieving balance between interoperability with major allies, flexibility and being “reflective of middle-power geopolitical reality”. He called for the development of better campaign planning tools that more clearly link operational objectives to strategic objectives, and emphasised the need for improved joint professional military education as a key facilitator of the successful practice of operational art. Finally, he called for ADF joint doctrine to be updated to reflect a ‘functional approach’ to operational art, which he defined as conceiving of operations “in terms of *function* rather than in terms of *locus* and *size*”.⁷

Four replies debating Evans’ article, along with a rejoinder, were published in the same journal. The four replies were authored by a retired member of each Service and by a retired senior public servant (notably none were presently-serving members of the ADF).⁸ This is the only example known to this author of the ADF’s operational art being publicly debated during the past decade. The responses reached a variety of conclusions, from substantial agreement with Evans to complete disagreement. It is noteworthy that much of the debate focused on Evans’ proposed reforms to military education rather than the approach to ADF operational art.

Although all the participants in the debate acknowledged that further analysis and development was desirable, it was almost three years before such analysis emerged. This took the form of two papers by serving ADF officers (then Lieutenant Colonels). In the first, Trent Scott acknowledged that ADF practice and understanding of operational art had substantially evolved since Evans’ article, due to the consolidation of Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) as an operational level headquarters and the publication of a provisional edition of Australian Defence Doctrine Publication

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2. It is noteworthy that since the publication of this article, Antoine Bousquet has made a compelling argument that the technology bias has not been limited to the ADF but has been widespread within Western militaries: Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (London: Hurst and Co., 2009).

⁷ Evans, ‘The Closing of the Australian Military Mind’, pp. 125-6. Original emphasis.

⁸ Jim Molan, Ray Funnell, Chris Barrie, Ross Thomas and Michael Evans, ‘Debate: The ADF and Operational Art’, *Security Challenges*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Winter 2008), pp. 133-46.

(ADDP) 5.0—*Joint Planning* in 2006.⁹ However, Scott asserted that these steps were not enough, echoing Evans' contention that ADF operational art was conceptually weak and characterised by an intellectually restrictive framework. Importantly, Scott was critical not only of ADF practice but also its doctrine, asserting that:

Unfortunately ... contemporary ADF operational art and our current approach to campaign planning, as codified in doctrine, is derived from a way of warfare which is growing increasingly irrelevant, does not reflect operational reality, and fails to account for the non-linear and uncertain nature of war.¹⁰

The 'way of warfare' to which Scott referred is large-scale conventional conflict as envisioned during the Cold War. He additionally singled out 'centre of gravity' and 'effects-based approach to operations' for additional criticism, referring to both as flawed concepts. Scott made three broad recommendations. First, he called for an overhaul of Australia's military education system to better focus on teaching excellence in operational art. Second, he emphasised the need to ensure the ADF's operational art is relevant to Australia's circumstances, highlighting areas for doctrinal reform to:

[E]mphasise the essential requirement to get the operational approach right, present a holistic understanding of war, elevate functionality over location, be human-centric and not techno-centric, and acknowledge Australia's geostrategic reality.¹¹

Third, Scott advocated 'operational design'—which he defined as “applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualise and describe complex, ill-structured problems and develop approaches to solve them”—as a methodology to help the ADF create a better understanding of the contemporary operational environment. Importantly, Scott was strongly influenced by US Army 'design methodology', advocating insertion of an essentially unaltered version of the US Army's design methodology into ADF doctrine.

The second paper was published a few months later. In it, Christopher Smith took a narrower focus, seeking “to see whether the Australian Army ought to adopt the US Army [operational design] methodology within its own doctrine”, although he also extended several areas of his study to the ADF jointly.¹² He identified three constraints on the ADF's practice of operational art. First was a tendency to conflate operations with campaigns. Second was the codification of levels of conflict and declaration of the Chief of Joint

⁹ Trent Scott, *The Lost Operational Art: Invigorating Campaigning into the Australian Defence Force* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, February 2011), pp. 1-3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

¹² Christopher Smith, *Design and Planning of Campaigns and Operations in the Twenty-First Century* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, April 2011), p. 1.

Operations (CJOPS) as an operational level commander, which “create[s] an artificial layer of ‘strategy’ between CJOPS (the supreme commander) and the statesmen”.

In Smith’s view, “[t]his layer of bureaucracy and process disconnects the statesman from the execution of the campaign”. Third was “the doctrinal expression of strategy and operational art as a system of prescribed responsibilities, jurisdictions, processes, activities, documents and forums” that stifled institutional thinking about strategy and operational art by shifting the emphasis of (doctrine-based) joint professional military education to the need to understand bureaucratic processes above all else.¹³

Although he refrained from explicit recommendations, Smith nevertheless highlighted several areas where existing doctrine could be enhanced. These included mistaking design for planning, and observing that the JMAP was ill-suited to solving complex problems. Smith’s understanding of ‘design’ was similar to Scott’s, although he relied less on US Army doctrine. He emphasised the need for operational designers and planners to remain flexible; to develop and continually update a thorough understanding of the situation; to maintain an openness to learning; and to think critically about all aspects of operational design and planning.

In August 2012, an Australian Strategic Policy Institute report by Hugh Smith and Anthony Bergin examined the state of joint professional military education in Australia. It called for reform to the ADF’s understanding and practice of operational art.¹⁴ One of its recommendations was that the ADF should introduce a short, high-level course focusing exclusively on operational art, although it did not make any specific recommendations regarding changes to doctrine.

Professor Evans authored the final noteworthy article addressing operational art in the ADF, published in mid-2012.¹⁵ Evans honed in on one specific aspect of operational art: centre of gravity analysis. In light of the intellectual debate in the United States since the mid-2000s, linked to the US military’s shift to ‘operational design’, Evans made four recommendations, emphasising that centre of gravity analysis remains highly relevant and advocating the introduction of a US-style approach to operational design.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁴ Hugh Smith and Anthony Bergin, *Educating for the Profession of Arms in Australia*, Special Report No. 48 (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, August 2012), esp. pp. 28-9.

¹⁵ Michael Evans, ‘Centre of Gravity Analysis in Joint Military Planning and Design: Implications and Recommendations for the Australian Defence Force’, *Security Challenges*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Winter 2012), pp. 81-104.

Innovations Abroad

At the same time as the discussion of the ADF's operational art, the US military was undergoing a period of innovation, with a particular catalyst being the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁶ The best known example of this innovation was the 2006 edition of the US Army/US Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency* field manual, which established an alternative operational approach, subsequently implemented during 'the surge' in Iraq in 2007.¹⁷ While the US military has since sidelined much of the counterinsurgency thinking this manual contained,¹⁸ it has kept some of the key tools and further developed them in subsequent publications, notably 'operational design', which is defined in the latest edition of US *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0—Joint Operation Planning* as:

Operational design supports operational art with a general methodology using elements of operational design for understanding the situation and the problem. The methodology helps the [Joint Force Commander] and staff to understand conceptually the broad solutions for attaining mission accomplishment and to reduce the uncertainty of a complex operational environment. Additionally, it supports a recursive and ongoing dialogue concerning the nature of the problem and an operational approach to achieve the desired end states.¹⁹

On closer scrutiny, it is evident that several of the elements of operational design in this publication—such as determining termination conditions and the military end-state, conducting centre of gravity analysis, determining decisive points and arranging operations—pre-date it and were discussed under the heading of 'operational art' in previous publications.²⁰ Despite this overlap, there were nevertheless some important innovations, with two being particularly noteworthy.

The first was the formation of a linkage between operational design and developing an understanding of the situation and problem. Unlike its predecessors, this edition included a more detailed discussion of the importance of developing a sound understanding of the operational environment and defining the problem facing the joint force, emphasising that this was essential to ensure that operational planning would be able to address the 'right' problem. Although this may sound somewhat intuitive, it was actually a significant departure from previous editions, which had

¹⁶ For example, see: Philipp Rotmann, David Tohn and Jaron Wharton, 'Learning Under Fire: Progress and Dissent in the US Military', *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 4 (August-September 2009), pp. 31-48.

¹⁷ Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the Untold Story of the American Surge in Iraq, 2006-2008* (New York: Allen Lane, 2009).

¹⁸ Fred Kaplan, 'The End of the Age of Petraeus: The Rise and Fall of Counterinsurgency', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 1 (January/February 2013), pp. 75-90.

¹⁹ US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0—Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, August 2011), p. III-2.

²⁰ These elements of design are listed in *JP 5-0—Joint Operation Planning*, p. III-18 and elaborated in ch. 3.

implicitly assumed that the nature of the operational environment and problem would be readily evident.

The second was the more prominent use of language associated with complex adaptive systems theory. For example, the latest edition of *JP 5-0—Joint Operation Planning* asserts that “operational design requires the commander to encourage discourse and leverage dialogue and collaboration to identify and solve complex, ill-defined problems”. Even though such language was not accompanied by an explanation of the underlying fundamentals of complex adaptive systems theory, some aspects were elaborated in an accompanying *Planner’s Handbook for Operational Design*, published in October 2011. This *Handbook* stressed the need for critical thinking, provided guidance about how to achieve this, and detailed the interaction between operational design and operational planning.²¹

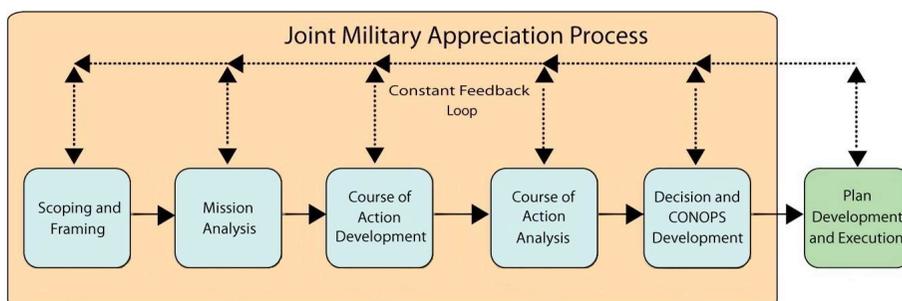
The Evolution of ADF Operational Art

The key doctrine publication that describes the ADF’s approach to operational art is Australian Defence Force Publication (ADFP) 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*. This publication provides guidance for planning ADF campaigns and operations using the JMAP, a planning tool designed to be used from the initial receipt of strategic level direction through to the completion of a comprehensive concept of operations (conops). The conops provides guidance for the conduct of an operation and forms the basis of subsequent orders given to the force elements that will conduct the operation. The JMAP is also suitable for use to revise plans once an operation has commenced, or to plan the cessation of an operation currently underway. The current iteration of the JMAP is shown in Figure 1.

The ADF aims to review and update each of its joint doctrine publications every three-to-five years as part its doctrine development process. Accordingly, the 2009 edition of the JMAP doctrine was revised in 2014. Beyond merely updating the doctrine, however, this review aimed to reinvigorate operational art for the ADF as it approaches the third decade of the twenty-first century. The three ADF organisations that most frequently employ operational art are HQJOC, which is the main ADF organisation responsible for applying operational art in practice, the Joint Warfare Training Centre and the Australian Command and Staff College, which are both responsible for teaching operational art as part of the ADF’s Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) continuum. While the needs of these and other stakeholders remained the primary consideration throughout the revision, the review was also able to address the points raised in the articles summarised above, as well as to respond appropriately to the evolution of operational art that had occurred within the US military.

²¹ Department of Defense, *Planner’s Handbook for Operational Design*, Version 1.0 (Suffolk: Department of Defense, October 2011).

Figure 1: How the ADF Applies Operational Art: The Joint Military Appreciation Process



Source: ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., Figure 1.1.

Meetings with stakeholders, HQJOC in particular, led to the identification of three key areas where doctrinal updates were required. The first of these was confirmation of the need for increased doctrinal interoperability with the US military, due to the frequency of combined military activities involving the ADF and its US ally. Second, the utility of operational art needed to be expanded so that it could be applied to any operation across the spectrum of military activities, and to domestic as well as overseas operations. Several ADF operations in the last fifteen years have involved unconventional warfare and several others have been unopposed.²² The previous iteration of JMAP, which concentrated on defeating a conventional adversary's centre of gravity (COG), had required ad hoc adaptation by practitioners during these operations. Third, the increased occurrence of multiagency operational planning had resulted in the need for a planning process that could easily be communicated to members of other government agencies and that would enable these agencies to be able to easily have input into ADF planning when the situation required.

Evolving the ADF's operational art in a way that successfully met this multitude of requirements was a significant challenge that was ultimately overcome by developing a functional approach to operational art—a recommendation that had been at the forefront of the body of critical literature. The development of this approach is one of the most significant aspects of the new JMAP doctrine.²³ Operational art, traditionally understood, is the sequencing of tactical actions to form a campaign in pursuit of overarching strategic objectives. The term itself has its origins in inter-war Soviet military theory and it was initially developed to cope with

²² Unopposed operations included humanitarian, disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation and Defence Assistance to the Civil Community operations. A partial list of these ADF operations can be found at: <www.defence.gov.au/Operations/default.asp> [Accessed 9 April 2015].

²³ The benefits of a functional approach to operational art are explored in greater detail in: Aaron P. Jackson, 'The Practice of Operational Art by Small Militaries: Why and How', *Military Operations*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 2015), pp. 14-17.

very large scale military activities in a conventional, industrialised state vs. industrialised state setting.²⁴ In the words of Philip Jones, “what the Soviets handed down was an approach that mirrored tactics but on a larger scale”.²⁵ Considered the realm of the front or theatre commander, the Soviets linked operational art to the activities of army groups, armies or perhaps sometimes divisions.

The ADF is, of course, nowhere near large enough to employ operational art the way the Soviets did. Addressing the first of the six major areas for refinement listed above, the new edition of JMAP doctrine has more fully-developed an alternative, functional approach to operational art that suits the contemporary Australian military context. In this approach operational art is the linking of strategic aims with tactical actions, the synchronisation of operations in depth and the linking of multiple tactical engagements to form an operation, *regardless of scale*.²⁶ This approach is suitable to the Australian context because of the flexibility with which it can be employed. To achieve this flexibility the new JMAP doctrine has been designed to be adaptable to a wide variety of operations, including those undertaken overseas or domestically, opposed or unopposed, and in which the actions of other government departments may contribute to achieving overarching national strategic objectives. To enable easier access by members of these departments the new edition of the JMAP doctrine is unclassified and publicly released.

Links to US doctrine have been achieved through the development of an ADF-specific concept of ‘operational design’ that reflects that contained in the US joint operations planning process, adapted to suit Australian conditions. In addition to emphasising a functional approach, in this adaptation operational art consists of a mix of both operational design and ‘arrangement of operations’, a delineation that parallels but is more distinct than in the equivalent US doctrine.²⁷ According to the new JMAP doctrine:

Operational design produces a schematic that articulates the contemporary application of operational art. It constitutes a synthesis between classical notions of operational art, developed during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries ... and selected aspects of complex adaptive systems theory that have emerged during the early twenty-first century.

Arrangement of operations adds additional depth and flexibility to the broad outputs of operational design ... This vital detail allows commanders and planners to ensure that activities are ordered to efficiently progress towards

²⁴ Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, September 2009), pp. 11-71.

²⁵ Philip Jones, “The Operational” in the Information Age’, *Military Operations*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 2014), p. 14.

²⁶ Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADDP) 5.0—*Joint Planning*, 2nd ed., Amendment List 1 (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2015), ch. 2.

²⁷ For the US equivalent, see: *JP 5-0—Joint Operation Planning*, pp. III-35–III-38.

achieving the end state. Appropriate arrangement of operations helps determine the purpose and tempo of desired effects and activities.²⁸

The elements of each of these aspects of the ADF's revised approach to operational art are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Contemporary Operational Art: Elements of Operational Design and Arrangement of Operations

Elements of operational design	Elements of arrangement of operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct environment and problem framing b. Determine the desired campaign or operation end state c. Determine the campaign or operation objectives that together will achieve the desired end state d. Conduct centre of gravity analysis e. Determine decisive points f. Determine desired effects g. Arrange decisive points to form lines of operation that link to each objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess operational risk b. Determine and mitigate against culminating points c. Determine probable operational reach d. Sequencing e. Phasing f. Determine main effort g. Develop branches and sequels h. Conduct operational assessment

Source: ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., para 1.9-1.16.

Incorporating this conceptualisation of operational art into the JMAP involved two major changes to the ADF's planning process. First, to maximise planners' situational understanding, Framing has been added as a vital component of operational design. "[U]sed when confronting an adaptive, interactively complex, and/or ill-structured problem", Framing "enables the commander and [planning] staff to develop an enhanced situational understanding". It is used to "deconstruct complexity and to ensure that the correct problem or series of problems are fully explored".²⁹

This is an important evolution of the planning process. Even though the previous edition of the JMAP doctrine included 'Preliminary Scoping' before the JMAP commenced, this was comparatively limited and several aspects of the nature of the environment and problem were implicitly assumed to be known. By contrast, the inclusion of Framing within the new JMAP doctrine gives planning staff a much better opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the operational environment and the problem they are facing before they apply other aspects of operational art to try and solve it (Framing has been integrated with the previous edition's Preliminary Scoping activities to form a new first JMAP step, titled 'Scoping and Framing'). This is highly useful for ADF planners as it helps them to understand each of the varied and unique scenarios they may face. Framing is also the aspect of the revised ADF conceptualisation of operational art that draws most heavily on complex adaptive systems theory. For example, the section of the

²⁸ ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., paras 1.10, 1.13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, para 2.26.

doctrine about determining the environment frame encourages planning staff to develop a diagram illustrating relevant actor relationships in the operational environment within the 'observed system' and those in the 'desired system' as a first step towards understanding what may be required to prompt transition from one to the other.³⁰

The second major change that this revised conceptualisation has brought is the determination that all aspects of operational design need to be completed by the end of the second step of the JMAP (Mission Analysis). The elements of arrangement of operations then constitute the remaining three steps.³¹ In the contemporary operational environment, factors such as the 24-hour news cycle and the speed of global communications have increased both the amount of data available to operational planners and the need for them to produce options to strategic-level decision-makers more quickly than used to be the case. While the inclusion of elements such as Framing are useful to assist planners to develop situational understanding, the completion of operational design within the first two steps of a five-step planning process addresses the need to develop a broad plan quickly.

As Table 1 describes, by the time operational design is completed planners ought to have derived decisive points (DP) and sequenced them into lines of operation (LOO) that each lead towards achievement of a campaign or operation objective. Each objective should in turn be linked to the achievement of the desired campaign or operation end state and this end state should itself be linked to either a strategic objective or the strategic end state. Figure 2 shows the linkage between these elements and is referred to within JMAP doctrine as a 'LOO diagram'. At the conclusion of operational design, operational planners should be able to develop a schematic akin to this example.

Applying a functional approach results in operations being conceived as a sequence of tactical actions regardless of overall scale. Campaigns in turn sequence multiple operations as they progress towards a common strategic end state. This version of JMAP can be used to plan either campaigns or operations as it is simply the focus of planning that varies.³² This series of linkages is referred to as 'nesting' and this aspect of the updated doctrine has been key to adequately addressing two of the areas for refinement listed

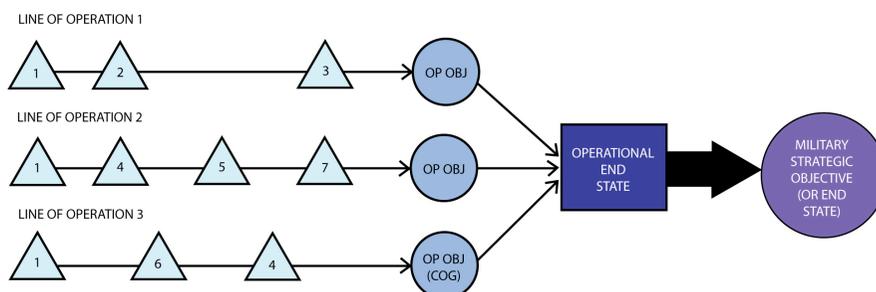
³⁰ Ibid., paras 2.31-2.42.

³¹ In the previous edition of JMAP doctrine several elements now completed in steps one and two were completed in later steps.

³² Campaigns explicitly differ from operations because of their scale (linking a series of discrete operations rather than directly linking tactical actions) but the same conceptual relationships between the desired end state, objectives and DP remain applicable. Ibid., para 1.26-1.27; ADDP 5.0—*Joint Planning*, 2nd ed., ch. 3-4.

above: the linkage between operational and strategic objectives; and the delineation between campaigns and operations.³³

Figure 2: A Lines of Operation Diagram: The Final Output of Operational Design



Source: ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., Figure 3.4.

Looking at Figure 2, one can observe that the third operational objective is defeat of the adversary's COG (symbolised by the inclusion of '(COG)' after the objective title). This positioning of the COG within the LOO diagram symbolises another significant evolution of the ADF practice of operational art: a comprehensive update of the role and place of COG analysis within operational planning. Previously, COG analysis was central to ADF operational art, with joint doctrine linking all LOO to the defeat of an adversary COG and this defeat being implicitly synonymous with reaching the desired operational end state (something that was not explicitly determined during planning). This resulted in an artificially narrow conception of operational art that was linked exclusively to defeat of an adversary's COG.

In addressing the need for greater doctrinal utility across several types of operations, including those where there is not necessarily an adversary, the review of the JMAP doctrine confronted two key issues. The first was

³³ It may be argued that 'nesting' in this context supports the assertion by Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan that operational art has become analogous to an 'alien' that has 'devoured' strategy. In their assessment, campaign planning should fall under the remit of strategic and not operational level planning, in which case JMAP doctrine is not the appropriate place for a discussion of campaign planning at all. This author has disputed this analogy elsewhere, arguing that a more appropriate analogy would be that operational art has become a 'surrogate' that has 'adopted' strategy in light of practical requirements associated with endeavours to implement Samuel Huntington's idealised model of civil-military relations. Yet in the case of JMAP doctrine, the academic debate over where to situate campaign planning and why is moot. The stakeholders in the doctrine stated a requirement for it to address campaign planning and from a doctrine development perspective that was sufficient for it to need to be addressed within the publication. Kelly and Brennan, *Alien*; see also Aaron P. Jackson, 'Surrogate: Why Operational Art Adopted Strategy', *Military Operations*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 2014), pp. 8-11.

whether to keep COG analysis in the doctrine at all. This issue was relatively easy to resolve, as all three major stakeholders wanted the concept retained. Indeed, this aspect of the review showed that culturally the ADF—the Army in particular—is wedded to the COG concept to the extent that removing it from the doctrine altogether would have resulted in insurmountable ‘sales resistance’, to the point where the revised iteration of JMAP likely would not have been applied.³⁴

The second issue confronted during the review was determining what form COG analysis should take and where it should be positioned within the overarching planning process. This issue came about because of a substantial theoretical evolution in COG analysis methodology over the last decade, which had already led to changes to the curriculum of the Joint Operations Module taught at the Australian Command and Staff College. Fortunately, the theoretical work addressing COG analysis was also available to assist in the development of the doctrine. The final decision about how to fit COG analysis within the JMAP resulted from a thorough evaluation of this literature, supported by extensive consultation with the key stakeholders.³⁵

New definitions of COG and related ‘critical factors’ (which encompass critical capabilities, critical requirements and critical vulnerabilities) were developed and are shown in Table 2.³⁶ These definitions are based on the discussion of COG analysis found in some of the more recent works of American theorist Dale C. Eikmeier, albeit modified to be simpler and more

³⁴ Bassford asserted that ‘sales resistance’ to new doctrine is “often stimulated by overt attempts to introduce a new paradigm”. In this case the opposite action, the complete removal of a familiar paradigm from the doctrine, would likely have had the same result. Christopher Bassford, ‘Doctrinal Complexity: Nonlinearity in Marine Corps Doctrine’, in F. G. Hoffman and Gary Horne (eds.), *Maneuver Warfare Science 1998* (Washington DC: Department of the Navy, US Marine Corps, 1998), p. 11.

³⁵ Relevant theoretical works include: Dale C. Eikmeier, ‘Center of Gravity Analysis’, *Military Review*, July/August 2004, pp. 2-5; Celestino Perez, Jr (ed.), *Addressing the Fog of COG: Perspectives on the Center of Gravity in US Military Doctrine* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Combat Studies Institute Press, 2012); Dale C. Eikmeier, ‘Give Carl von Clausewitz and the Center of Gravity a Divorce’, *Small Wars Journal*, vol. 9, no. 7 (2 July 2013), <smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/give-carl-von-clausewitz-and-the-center-of-gravity-a-divorce> [Accessed 17 February 2015]; James P. Butler, ‘Godzilla Methodology: Means for Determining Center of Gravity’, *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 72 (1st Quarter 2014), pp. 26-30; Lawrence Freedman, ‘Stop Looking for the Center of Gravity’, *War on the Rocks* (blog), June 2014, <warontherocks.com/2014/06/stop-looking-for-the-center-of-gravity/> [Accessed 17 February 2015]. To ensure interoperability, another influential source that was thoroughly evaluated was *JP 5-0—Joint Operation Planning*, which contains the latest iteration of US joint doctrinal thinking on the subject.

³⁶ In this new COG construct there is no such thing as a ‘targetable critical vulnerability’, a concept that featured prominently in the previous construct (and which continues to feature in Australian Army doctrine). This is because, according to the new definition, all critical vulnerabilities are inherently targetable.

strongly interlinked.³⁷ In addition to Eikmeier, the writings of Joseph L. Strange and Richard Iron were highly influential and the JMAP doctrine drew on the work of all three theorists to provide an explanation of how to conduct COG analysis.³⁸ Jan L. Rueschhoff and Jonathan P. Dunne's approach to identifying COG "from the 'inside out'" shaped the doctrine's recommended methodology for conducting COG analysis starting with the identification of critical capabilities and then "working left and right" to determine the COG as well as the other critical factors.³⁹

Table 2: New Definitions of Centre of Gravity and Related Critical Factors

Term	Definition
Centre of gravity	The primary entity that possesses the inherent capability to achieve an objective or the desired end-state.
Critical capabilities	An action (verb) done by the centre of gravity which enables it to achieve an objective or the desired end-state.
Critical requirements	A thing (noun), resource or means that is essential for a critical capability to enable a centre of gravity to function.
Critical vulnerabilities	Those critical requirements, or components thereof, that are inherently targetable and vulnerable to neutralisation, defeat or destruction in a way that will contribute to undermining a centre of gravity.

Source: ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., glossary.

These definitions of COG and the critical factors are very different to those contained in the previous edition of the JMAP doctrine. These changes are not just change for its own sake, however. On the contrary, the revised definitions are central to ensuring that the doctrine for ADF operational art is flexible enough to be relevant to a broad range of operations without the need for ad hoc adaptation. This revised COG construct is explicitly linked to either a DP, an objective or the desired end state, meaning that COG analysis can be flexibly applied depending on the requirements of the operational scenario. Additionally, the new edition of JMAP doctrine caters for situations where there is no adversary COG at all. In these cases COG analysis may simply be skipped, allowing planners to instead focus on other aspects of operational art that are more relevant to the scenario, or alternatively a COG analysis may be completed for a non-adversarial threat

³⁷ Dale C. Eikmeier, 'Redefining the Center of Gravity', *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 59 (4th Quarter 2010), pp. 156-8; Dale C. Eikmeier, 'After the Divorce: Clausewitz and the Center of Gravity', *Small Wars Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3 (6 March 2014), <smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/after-the-divorce-clausewitz-and-the-center-of-gravity> [Accessed 14 February 2015].

³⁸ ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., para 3.19-3.22; Joseph L. Strange and Richard Iron, 'Centre of Gravity: What Clausewitz Really Meant', *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 35 (October 2004), pp. 20-27; Joe Strange and Richard Iron, 'Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities', unpublished paper in two parts. Available online, <www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/cog1.pdf> (part 1), <www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/cog2.pdf> (part 2).

³⁹ ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., para 3.29-3.32; Jan L. Rueschhoff and Jonathan P. Dunne, 'Centers of Gravity from the "Inside Out"', *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 60 (1st Quarter 2011), pp. 120-4.

that would prevent mission accomplishment if not adequately addressed.⁴⁰ The revised COG construct is therefore a significant example of how the updated JMAP doctrine allows for a more flexible application of operational art.

The final major evolution of the ADF's operational art that is worthy of mention is the inclusion of a focus on critical thinking. Although critical thinking itself is not new, its formal inclusion within JMAP doctrine is. Indeed, outside of the United States, the ADF is now the only other English-speaking military to address critical thinking in a high-level planning doctrine publication.⁴¹ This inclusion recognises the high degree of uncertainty and need for flexibility that characterises contemporary operations and the new edition of JMAP doctrine includes a section that prompts planners to think critically not only about the situation they are facing but also about the planning process itself.⁴² Specifically, the doctrine notes that:

The JMAP is, as the name states, a process. Although it is robust and adaptable, it is nevertheless subject to some inherent limitations that stem from its linear nature and formulaic structure ... Since JMAP is simply a tool for structured analysis and the drawing of conclusions to create a conops, it can be shaped to fit the immediate situation and experience of the commander and staff. It behoves commanders to allow their staff the freedom to think critically and creatively about solving the right problem within the most appropriate planning construct.⁴³

Developing critical thinking skills is a vital component of JPME and accordingly the doctrine highlights that operational art is ultimately a subjective activity. Processes such as JMAP should support rigorous analysis and understanding and should never be followed merely out of routine or because of precedence.

The Limits of the ADF's New Approach

Even though the new edition of JMAP doctrine has refreshed the ADF's approach to operational art, it is not a panacea. Despite the suitability of the approach to operational art that it contains, there are three areas where the doctrine could further evolve. The first is a technicality, with the doctrine using the term 'lines of operation' to discuss what should more accurately be

⁴⁰ ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., para 3.13-3.37.

⁴¹ The United Kingdom has recently released a few joint doctrine publications that address *understanding* and mention critical thinking in passing, but these do not explain or focus on critical thinking, nor are they doctrine for military planning. It is also noteworthy that North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) planning doctrine does not discuss critical thinking either. Joint Doctrine Publication 04—*Understanding* (Shrivenham, UK: Directorate of Development Concepts and Doctrine, 2010); Joint Doctrine Note 3/11—*Decision-Making and Problem Solving: Human and Organisational Factors* (Shrivenham, UK: Directorate of Development Concepts and Doctrine, 2011); Allied Joint Publication 5—*Allied Joint Doctrine for Operational-Level Planning* (Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency, June 2013).

⁴² ADFP 5.0.1—*Joint Military Appreciation Process*, 2nd ed., para 1.30-1.32.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, para 1.31-1.32.

referred to as 'lines of effort'. The difference is that historically the first term refers to a physical route taken by a military force moving through territory, whereas the second term refers to a conceptual linkage between related operational activities.⁴⁴ This inaccuracy is currently found in Australian Army as well as ADF joint doctrine. Although the current usage is workable, use of this term should nevertheless be reconsidered the next time the ADF approach to operational art is updated.

The second area is the approach to operational risk management that has been included in the JMAP doctrine. Here an issue arises from a fundamental contradiction between the requirements of current legislation, and traditional conceptualisations of military operational risk. The root of this contradiction is that the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*(Cth) maintains that "the health and safety of people must underpin all operational decisions";⁴⁵ however, traditional military operational risk management involves weighing potential gains and costs in situations where risks to the safety of the people involved are likely to be an essential prerequisite for military mission success. The tactical impact of this contradiction has been concisely summarised by one Australian commander, although importantly this commander's assertions also apply at the operational and strategic levels:

It is too risky to not accept risk in war. ... If the most important risk assessment in war is whether the prize is worth the potential cost, then the management and assessment of hazards must take on a different form than the identification and mitigation of hazards under the orthodox workplace risk management model. ... Workplace risk management processes are also suboptimal in warfare because they tend to reduce a commander's and staff's awareness of weak signals of looming threats.⁴⁶

Despite this warning and the lessons learned that underlie it, risk management within the ADF remains geared towards an orthodox workplace risk management approach. Even though the JMAP itself constitutes a well-developed operational risk management tool in the traditional military sense, the unique nature and requirements of operational risk management are not addressed within the current legislation. As a result there has been a need

⁴⁴ The ADF usage of these terms varies from the United States use of the same terms, with US doctrine stating that: "A LOO defines the interior or exterior orientation of the force in relation to the enemy or that connects actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and space to an objective(s). A line of effort links multiple tasks and missions using the logic of purpose—cause and effect—to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions". *JP 5-0—Joint Operation Planning*, p. xxii. On the historical use of the term 'lines of operation', see: Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Bk I, esp. pp. 77-78.

⁴⁵ Comcare, 'Commonwealth Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Effective Now', 1 January 2012, <www.comcare.gov.au/news_and_media/features_/commonwealth_work_health_and_safety_act_2011_effective_now> [Accessed 2 June 2015].

⁴⁶ The Commanding Officer of an Australian Battle Group in Afghanistan in 2011, 'Commanding Officer's Observations: Mentoring Task Force Three', *Military Operations*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 2014), pp. 5-6.

to include an operational risk management model based on a peacetime workplace risk management framework within the JMAP doctrine as a stand-alone annex.⁴⁷ This ‘process within a process’ leads to the duplication of effort and has the potential to undermine the achievement of military missions by causing over-prioritisation of force protection. Addressing this potential problem is beyond the remit of doctrine developers, however, and an amendment to the legislation is required before this problem can be addressed within doctrine.

The third area that warrants mention is perhaps the most significant, because it addresses the ADF’s fundamental understanding of armed conflict and its approach to waging war. Despite the inclusion of Framing as a key component of operational design, the ADF’s revised approach to operational art remains firmly rooted within the same paradigm as its predecessors, which Christopher Paparone refers to as “ends-based rationalism”.⁴⁸ As Figure 2 shows, this paradigm assumes that there are clear and identifiable linear linkages between strategic objectives, a desired operational end state, operational objectives and tactical actions.⁴⁹ The desired end state, which is the start-point for all subsequent planning, can be broken down via reverse-engineering into objectives, which can be further broken down into DP. In this paradigm the desired end state is merely the sum of its parts. Achieving all DP, which can be sequenced linearly in space and time, achieves all objectives. This in turn achieves the desired end state. Despite its success in addressing the criticisms made about the ADF’s previous approach to operational art, the revised approach therefore remains within a reductionist and linear paradigm.

Continued adherence to this paradigm suggests the limits of the ADF’s revised approach; however, acknowledgement of these limits should not be construed as an admittance of failure. On the contrary, the ADF got the updated approach to operational art that is the best it could be at this particular point in time, given the organisation’s prevailing culture and general requirements of its operational art. Working groups held with key stakeholders indicated from early in the review process that any efforts to push beyond an approach that fit within the ends-based rationalist paradigm would have met an insurmountable level of Christopher Bassford’s so-called

⁴⁷ This framework is based on that contained in Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 31000:2009 *Risk Management—Principles and Guidelines*, with which the ADF complies.

⁴⁸ Christopher R. Paparone, ‘Beyond Ends-Based Rationality: A Quad-Conceptual View of Strategic Reasoning for Professional Military Education’, in Gabriel Marcella (ed.), *Teaching Strategy: Challenge and Response* (Carlisle, PA: US Army Strategic Studies Institute, March 2010), p. 310.

⁴⁹ For the purposes of this paper, ‘paradigm’ is defined as the “constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given [scientific] community”. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 174. For a more detailed discussion of how Kuhn’s conceptualisation of paradigms may be applied to military and strategic thinking see: Aaron P. Jackson, ‘Paradigms Reconsidered’, *Infinity Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Summer 2014), pp. 26-31.

'sales resistance'.⁵⁰ Although the inclusion of methodologies such as Framing have introduced ideas and approaches influenced by non-linear paradigms (such as complex adaptive systems approaches) in such a way that they have been generally accepted, this has come at the cost of having subordinated these approaches as steps within an overarching linear process framed within an ends-based rationalist paradigm.

Acknowledging the limits of this paradigm is useful as it allows the ADF to identify ways that it may further improve its approach the next time it reviews its operational art. For example, an expansion of Framing may allow this or a similar concept to include an evaluation not only of the environment and the problem, but also of which paradigm may incorporate the most appropriate approach to solving it. An ends-based rationalist approach to planning such as the JMAP would therefore become only one possible problem-solving tool in a multiparadigmatic toolkit, rather than being the only tool available, as is currently the case.

Alternative tools may come from alternative paradigms, including for example interpretivism, radical humanism and radical structuralism.⁵¹ There is also scope for the inclusion of a greater emphasis on critical thinking to assist in the development of 'out of the box' approaches to operational art that do not necessarily involve the conduct of JMAP. A discussion of 'thinking about thinking' about the JMAP and the rationalist paradigm that underlies it, encouraging a more pluralistic and explicit consideration of this paradigm and its implications, and introducing alternative paradigms and also multiparadigmatic approaches, could be a starting point for such critical thinking. Given the newness of these ideas to the ADF, a 'joint doctrine note' separate to the JMAP publication may be the best starting point for this discussion.⁵²

An enhanced interest in operational art best practice, resulting from a fundamental cultural change as opposed to being driven by an interested few, will be required to ensure the effectiveness any such future evolution. To have the desired impact in this regard, any such emphasis within doctrine

⁵⁰ Bassford, 'Doctrinal Complexity', p. 11. For an elaboration of Bassford's concept of 'sales resistance' see note 34.

⁵¹ Unfortunately space constraints prohibit the further elaboration of these alternative paradigms herein. Readers interested in additional information are encouraged to consult: Dennis A. Gioia and Evelyn Pitre, 'Multiparadigm Perspectives on Theory Building', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1990), pp. 584-602. For discussions of inter-paradigmatic tension in a military context, see: Ben Zweibelson, 'An Awkward Tango: Pairing Traditional Military Planning to Design and Why it Currently Fails to Work', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2015), pp. 11-41; Christopher R. Paparone, 'Red Teaming: Multiparadigmatic Approach', in Gregory Moore (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of US Intelligence*, vol. 2 (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2015).

⁵² Joint doctrine notes are short publications that introduce new ideas and concepts, enabling them to be discussed, debated, assessed and further developed before they are formally incorporated into joint doctrine publications.

would need to be accompanied by a commensurate change in focus within JPME courses, which are the most appropriate place to begin expanding practitioners' knowledge of alternative paradigms. Hence JPME will remain a vital means of ensuring that the ADF's practice of operational art remains robust well into the future.⁵³ Continuing evaluation of doctrinal effectiveness 'post-H-Hour' (i.e. after an operation has commenced) at a joint task force level is another vital aspect, and ongoing linkages between evaluation, doctrine and JPME will also be vital to ensuring all three enable the ADF to maintain its focus on achieving operational success.

Conclusion

The JMAP doctrine publication encapsulates the ADF's institutionally sanctioned approach to operational art. A new edition of this publication has recently been released, representing an innovative evolution of the ADF's approach to operational art. The key change between this edition and its predecessor is the more detailed development within this edition of a functional approach to operational art. This approach emphasises that operational art is the linking of strategic aims to tactical actions, the synchronisation of operations in depth and the sequencing of multiple tactical engagements to form an operation, *regardless of scale*. Accompanying conceptual changes have established 'operational design' as a core component of operational art. This includes the conduct of Framing to better take into account operational complexity and to greatly enhance situational understanding. Centre of gravity analysis has also been reviewed and comprehensively updated in light of recent theoretical developments. Finally, explicit discussion of the need for critical thinking and flexibility during the JMAP has been included within the doctrine.

At the core of his article criticising the ADF's previous approach to operational art, Evans asserted that "the ADF needs to develop a holistic approach to operational art that is at once sufficiently orthodox to ensure interoperability with major alliance partners, flexible enough to cover all likely missions and reflective of middle-power geopolitical reality".⁵⁴ As a result of the aforementioned changes to its operational art, the ADF has successfully achieved just such a holistic approach. ADF operational art can now be

⁵³ Teaching of alternative paradigms is already being tested within some Canadian and American JPME courses. An evaluation of these courses could serve as a starting point for the ADF's development of its own multiparadigmatic JPME program. For further information on allied developments, see: Paul T. Mitchell, 'Stumbling into Design: Radical Action Experiments in Professional Military Education at Canadian Forces College' and Christopher R. Paparone, 'Critical Military Epistemology: Designing Reflexivity into Military Curricula', both in: *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Special Issue: The Rise of Reflexive Military Practitioners, forthcoming in 2017. Grant Martin proposes another possible way to achieve such a change within JPME courses and Australia's JPME institutions may also benefit from considering his proposal, regardless of the state of ADF doctrine. Grant M. Martin, 'Deniers of "The Truth": Why an Agnostic Approach to Warfare is Key', *Military Review*, January-February 2015, pp. 42-51.

⁵⁴ Evans, 'The Closing of the Australian Military Mind', pp. 124-5.

applied to a much wider variety of operations, including unopposed as well as opposed operations. The JMAP itself is more easily interoperable with the equivalent planning processes of key allied militaries, the United States in particular, and the unclassified status of the updated edition of the JMAP doctrine will make it easier to refer to this publication when planning in a multiagency context.

Overall the updated JMAP, combined with rigorous JPME, gives the ADF an up-to-date and intellectually robust approach to operational art. As the varied nature of recent ADF operations attests, the development of innovative approaches to operational art is increasing in importance. The ADF's updated approach to operational art is therefore a significant step in the right direction. But it should not be considered the final step and accordingly the final section of this article proposes where the next step might go. Meanwhile, the new edition of the JMAP and the approach to operational art contained therein has set the ADF up for continued operational success until such time as this next step is taken.

Dr Aaron P. Jackson is Joint Operations Planning Specialist in the Joint and Operations Analysis Division of Defence Science and Technology Group. Previously he worked at the ADF Joint Doctrine Centre, where he specialised in developing executive, operations and planning series doctrine. In addition to his civilian appointments, Aaron has served in the Australian Army Reserve since 2002. He has deployed as a civilian on Operation Accordion (Middle East region) and as a military officer on Operations Astute (Timor Leste) and Resolute (Australian border security). aaron.jackson@dst.defence.gov.au.

***Australia's Northern Shield?
Papua New Guinea and the Defence of
Australia since 1880***

Bruce Hunt

(Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2017)

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Reviewer: James Batley

Hugh White tells a story that, on a 1986 visit to Indonesia as Minister for Defence in the Hawke Government, Kim Beazley called on military commander-in-chief Benny Murdani. The latter's abrupt and deliberately off-putting first question to Beazley was "Would you go to war over PNG?" Beazley's response: "Yes... but we wouldn't tell them that!"

This story doesn't appear in Bruce Hunt's new book *Australia's Northern Shield?*, but it wouldn't have been out of place. Hunt explores the place of Papua New Guinea in Australian defence and strategic thinking since the 1880s, through to the conclusion of the bilateral Joint Declaration of Principles in 1987. Much of this is seen through the broader perspective of Australia's developing relationships with East Asia. While many aspects of this story have been covered by previous authors, Hunt's work is valuable in bringing the Papua New Guinea story into a single narrative. Beyond this, the book's originality lies in Hunt's access to a previously untapped source, the Australian Cabinet Notebooks from the 1950s onwards. The Notebooks record the unedited views of ministers in discussion around the Cabinet table and—contrary to Prime Minister MacMahon's apparent wish—happily were not destroyed. Access to the Notebooks gives Hunt grounds to engage with the views of a range of earlier historians on such basic questions such as Australia's evolving attitude towards Indonesia and engagement with Southeast Asia. Hunt also argues persuasively on the basis of the Cabinet Notebooks that John McEwen (Country Party leader from 1958-1971) was more influential in Australian Government thinking on defence and strategic policy than previously understood.

One of Hunt's key themes is the strong sense of continuity in Australian approaches towards Papua New Guinea over more than a century. He opens his book by quoting Queensland Premier Thomas McIlwraith in 1883: "The establishment of a foreign power in the neighbourhood of Australia would be injurious to ... Australia's interests." He then provides a virtually interchangeable line from the 2016 Defence White Paper: "Australia cannot

be secure if our immediate neighbourhood, including PNG, became the source of threat to Australia.” Hunt writes: “For over a century Australia has viewed the defence relationship with ... Papua New Guinea[,] in the context of the intrusion of foreign powers or an anxiety about the stability and dependability of the country itself.”

The book is structured chronologically, with Hunt tracking the place of Papua New Guinea (in its various guises) in Australian thinking through the pre-Federation era; the First and Second World Wars; protracted uncertainty over the fate of Dutch New Guinea; Konfrontasi; and finally the calmer waters of the post-Sukarno era. He then moves to the post-Vietnam War period which includes Papua New Guinea’s Independence in 1975 and its aftermath.

Along the way he highlights the persistence of certain key themes characterising and influencing Australia’s approach to Papua New Guinea. Perhaps foremost among these is a sense of anxiety (the word is peppered throughout the book) on the part of Australian ministers and senior policymakers regarding rising and/or disruptive powers in the Asia Pacific: first Germany, then Japan and then, for most of the period he covers, Indonesia. Hunt also tracks the persistent temptation—never completed succumbed to but never entirely suppressed either—on the part of Australian governments to declare an antipodean Monroe Doctrine. Hunt reminds us that support for the territorial unity of Papua New Guinea has been a foundation of Australian policy since the 1960s. (He also records that, as far back as the late 1940s, Australian governments identified Manus Island and its facilities as a strategic asset in protecting Australia’s northern approaches. *Plus ça change...*)

Against the background of these secular continuities, Hunt tracks an important shift in emphasis in assessments of the implications of Papua New Guinea’s vulnerability for Australia: less focused on external penetration or attack (although this has never entirely gone away), and more focused on internal stability. Hunt dates this shift to the early 1970s.

One of the questions Hunt sets out to address is why Australia did not offer the newly independent state of Papua New Guinea a formal defence guarantee. There was a bipartisan consensus in Australia on this question: both sides of politics saw unacceptable risks in offering Papua New Guinea an unconditional security guarantee, not least because of how this might be read in Jakarta. (It is of course not irrelevant that the emerging Papua New Guinean leaders themselves were not looking for a formal defence pact between the two countries.) At the same time, Australian governments were anxious—there’s that word again—to avoid assuming ultimate responsibility for Papua New Guinea’s internal security.

What emerges from the book is a sense of ambivalence in Australia's approach towards Papua New Guinea; this perhaps justifies the question mark in Hunt's title. In a curious way, Papua New Guinea has been seen as both an asset and a liability for Australia's defence and national security—at times simultaneously. Over time, Australian governments have sought to maximise Papua New Guinea's value to Australia as an element in our national defence and our national security more broadly, while also working to minimise the possibility of other powers doing the same thing. At the same time, Australian governments have been keen to avoid open-ended commitments, and to avoid taking Papua New Guinea's problems on as our own problems.

Australia has certainly been successful in remaining Papua New Guinea's primary defence and security partner since 1975: this was one of the key objectives agreed by Australian governments of both hues in the lead-up to Independence, and it has been reiterated in successive Defence White Papers including in 2016. Yet when it comes to questions of internal stability, it has on occasion been difficult for Australian governments to strike the right balance between committed support and assuming responsibility. While most of Papua New Guinea's history as an independent nation falls outside the scope of Hunt's book, Australia's approach to the Bougainville crisis (at least until 1997) and the Enhanced Cooperation Program (2004-5) are just two examples which illustrate the difficulty of getting that balance right. And few in 1975 would have anticipated the extent to which police, as distinct from defence, cooperation has become a core and seemingly permanent element in the bilateral relationship.

Overall, readers of Hunt's book will be struck at the way the themes he sketches out resonate with Australia's current preoccupations and anxieties regarding Papua New Guinea. With Papua New Guinea hosting APEC in 2018; with a possible referendum on Bougainville's independence looming in 2019; with growing Chinese investment and interest in Papua New Guinea: Australia's interests remain inescapably engaged.

Hunt has done a great service to all students of Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea, and to all policymakers concerned with this vital relationship. One can only hope that a sequel, tracking events from 1987 to the present day, is in the pipeline.

James Batley is a Distinguished Policy Fellow at the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia program, Australian National University.

A Great Place to Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of a Military CIA

Joshua Kurlantzick
(New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016)

Reviewer: Greg Raymond

In 2015 I was fortunate enough to accompany the late strategic studies scholar Des Ball on his last trip to Thailand. In the latter part of his career Des had researched and published several books on Thailand's paramilitary units. During the trip, he was keen to pass on his knowledge and contacts. Des talked about Bill Lair, the American who had helped found and train Thailand's crack paratrooper outfit the Police Aerial Reconnaissance Unit, usually known by the acronym PARU. His fascination in Lair was apparent. He also talked about Henry Kissinger and here his tone was quite different; a note of distaste and in fact loathing was evident.

Both Lair and Kissinger loom large in Joshua Kurlantzick's compelling account of the United States' secret war in Laos. The conflict from 1961 to 1975 ended with US defeat, and Laos controlled by communist forces. Lair was the progenitor of Operation Momentum, the US name for the secret war. A World War Two veteran who had joined the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in its early days, Lair had become a Thailand and Laos specialist and had proposed the concept of helping Laos's ethnic Hmong clans fight the communists. But Lair became disillusioned with the upscaling of the war to include a massive air campaign, and was shattered at the final outcome. The Hmong, having lost the war, were given little assistance and many ended up either persecuted at home or in refugee camps in Thailand. Many Hmong believed Lair had promised that the United States would provide sanctuary. Lair, a Texan, finished his days driving long haul trucking routes, which provided the solitude and concentration he needed to deal with his past.

It is unknown whether Kissinger was troubled by what had occurred, but Kurlantzick's reporting of his casual discussion with Nixon suggests not:

"how many did we kill in Laos?" Nixon asked Kissinger in one taped recording of a conversation three years into their bombing campaign. "In the Laotian thing, we killed about ten, fifteen [thousand]", Kissinger replied. The national security advisor did not seem to have a very clear figure and seemed blasé about exactly how many people—civilians, mostly—the bombing had killed to that point. (pp. 153-4).

Apart from Kissinger and Nixon, other memorable characters from the book include Lair's fellow CIA agent Tony Poe, a real life Colonel Kurtz renowned for his bloodlust; Vang Pao, the brilliant and charismatic Hmong general; and Bill Sullivan, the bloodless ambassador who oversaw the escalation of the war. But to nominate the colourful individuals from this work is not to belie Kurlantzick's careful and incisive scholarship. This book draws on a wide range of sources, including interviews with the protagonists and recently declassified CIA archival material, in detailing the origins of the conflict and analysing its strategic backdrop and implications.

Kurlantzick, a former journalist now on the prestigious Council for Foreign Relations, makes clear the rationale for the war and its secrecy. American presidents, first Kennedy, then Johnston and finally Nixon, liked using local forces as proxies, as it meant fewer US casualties. Taking North Vietnamese troops out of the South Vietnam theatre, by presenting them with greater challenges in Laos, was also attractive because it reduced the pressure on US troops in South Vietnam. At the same time they wanted to maintain the fiction of adherence to the 1954 Geneva accords, which prohibited foreign forces in Laos. But above all, especially in the early years, both Kennedy and Johnson bought into the domino theory, that if Laos and Vietnam fell, so would Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Kurlantzick makes a strong argument that the CIA's war in Laos was regarded by the agency as a success and became a model for subsequent operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq and today Syria. It seems remarkable that the US military could be excluded from the command of an entire country operation, one that at its peak saw more bombs dropped in Laos in one year than were dropped on Japan during the whole of World War Two. Kurlantzick's startling conclusion is that after Laos, combat operations remain a larger part of the CIA's business than intelligence collection and analysis.

The implications for accountability are significant and damaging. The US Congress and its committees were unable to penetrate the wall of silence and prevarication. Ambassador Bill Sullivan was able to lie and stonewall convincingly to US senators. Lack of accountability assisted the CIA's widespread and indiscriminate bombing campaign, producing horrendous civilian casualties but relatively little impact on the North Vietnamese logistics and resupply chains. Pilots dropped ordnance for the simple reason that they did not wish to return to Thailand still carrying their bombs. By the end of the war some 200,000 Laotians were dead, and one third of the bombs dropped remained undetonated.

Nonetheless, after the fall of Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia to communism in 1975, American interest in Laos dropped abruptly. After spending some \$US3.1 billion per year (2016 dollars) on the operation, Presidents Ford and Carter paid no more attention to Laos. Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia

remained non-communist. And the focus of the US government moved elsewhere.

Joshua Kurlantzick's book performs a valuable service in vividly documenting this largely unknown and forgotten war. His work captures both the strategic and the human dimensions of the conflict.

Dr Greg Raymond is a Research Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University.

Independent Ally: Australia in an Age of Power Transition

Shannon Tow
(Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2017)

Reviewer: Andrew Carr

The most common perception of Australia's alliance with the United States is one of dependence. This is both the folk tale heard in pubs and the title of the most acclaimed academic study of the alliance—Coral Bell's *Dependent Ally*.¹ In *Independent Ally* Shannon Tow takes careful aim at this perception, puncturing it thoroughly. This book is therefore a valuable contribution to understanding the scope, flexibility and constraints of Australian foreign policy over the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

While the folk tale image of dependence has been critiqued widely, this book tackles the harder task: academic assumptions of dependence. Tow notes that academic theories of alliances and power transitions “suggest that the more a junior ally values its alliance, the more likely it is to want to preserve the alliance by presenting itself as a loyal ally and by eschewing ties with a rising power or another external power” (p. 279). Across six case studies, she shows that Australian diplomatic history reveals a starkly different pattern.

In contrast to the wishes of the British Empire during the first half of the century, the new Australian nation under Alfred Deakin sought to build a security relationship with the United States in the Pacific. Thirty years later Joseph Lyons would abruptly apply heavy tariffs to US goods defying both Anglo and American wishes. Meanwhile Robert Menzies, the greatest anglophile to reside in the Lodge, would embrace the pursuit of an alliance with the United States in the face of British opposition.

In a similar vein, Australia often worked independently of Washington's influence in its relationship with China. Gough Whitlam pre-empted Nixon in recognising China, while Bob Hawke developed Australia's disengagement from China after Tiananmen Square with little consultation with the White House. Perhaps most explicitly, John Howard sought—and achieved—a strengthening of relationships with both Beijing and Washington in the 2000s even as China's growing strategic power became undeniable.

¹ Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

Far from being forced to choose one or the other powerful friend, this book presents a picture of a country which carefully shifted its sails, sometimes tacking, sometimes jibing in pursuit of its self-interests. As such, and while recognising the limitations of studying just one country, Tow argues that the alliance literature (much like public debates about ANZUS) overstates how central alliances are to the decisions of smaller states. “Whether Australia engaged or disengaged from a rising power was more often related to Australia’s interests in the rising power than the senior ally’s policies or preferences” (p. 280).

This is a work of meticulous scholarship. Tow has combed both the scholarly and official records and conducted over forty interviews with leading figures to fairly and accurately present the views, choices and deliberations of Australian officials. In detailing this rich history, *Independent Ally* brings to light many significant but largely forgotten events in Australian foreign policy history. Such as Joseph Lyon’s Trade Diversion Act of 1936 which Coral Bell identified as the nadir of the Australia-US relationship in the twentieth century. As well as the intriguing way the Coalition and the Labor Party took different cues and lessons from the Nixon administration’s ‘bifurcated’ approach to China in 1970-71 (pp. 172-3).

Tow also helps to demonstrate that far from simply switching from the declining United Kingdom to the rising United States after World War Two as commonly assumed, Australia “worked to strengthen both relations concurrently” (p. 151). Prime Minister Robert Menzies’ emphasis was always on ‘great and powerful friends’ plural, and this book reveals a leader much more supportive of American engagement than often portrayed. Only as the United Kingdom slipped away from Asia and multilateral bodies such as the United Nations fell short of their promises would the ANZUS alliance remain the only pillar left standing.

To accomplish all this, *Independent Ally*—quite appropriately—assumes readers possess a familiarity with the contours of Australian foreign policy history. And while Tow works hard to present the theoretical concepts and logic as clearly as possible, these do take some chewing through. But they will reward the effort.

Indeed, embracing complexity in our understanding of complex issues—how much freedom do small states have during times of changing power balances such as our own—is fundamental to recognising the actual history of Australia’s relationship with major powers and their underlying dynamics. By operating in the grey zone between what our ally wanted and what it would accept, Australian officials were able to obtain substantial national advantages for its security and prosperity.

By accepting more grey in our own analysis of the present challenges, rather than the black and white view of a ‘China choice’ logic, we may better

understand the opportunities and pathways for Australia to remain both independent and an ally.

Dr Andrew Carr is a Senior Lecturer at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University.

Notes for Contributors

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