

Developing a new Plan B for the ADF: Implications from a Geostrategic SWOT Analysis for Australia¹

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Australia's geostrategic circumstances are in a greater state of flux than seen in generations. Great power contestation has flared and the rules-based order is in question, while environmental catastrophe looms and governance challenges, ranging from cyber attacks, foreign interference, terrorism and transnational crime, flourish. In reflecting on how the Australian Defence Force (ADF) should respond, traditional thinking about conventional military capabilities for the defence of Australia or forward defence is no longer adequate. A more holistic reassessment is called for. This paper considers the nation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; in so doing, it presents an argument for establishing a national institute of net assessment. In turn, that institute needs to place as top priority consideration on a range of proposals to bolster capabilities to defend the nation and its interests. Significant increase in defence expenditure and bold new recruitment and funding initiatives are necessary.

The SWOT Analysis

In order to consider what options Australia has to address an emergent array of challenges, a geostrategic SWOT analysis, weighing up internal strengths and weakness, and external opportunities and threats, points to a number of steps that the ADF and other arms of government can take. Critically reflecting on the circumstances of Australia and its neighbours presents a useful mechanism to commence a dialogue about the net effects of these threats and the most appropriate responses. The SWOT analysis considers the following factors:

Internal strengths include: abundant natural resources; a strong economy (albeit one that is declining relative to neighbouring economies); domestic political stability and the rule of law; an educated workforce; a robust multicultural society; a honed and hi-tech, albeit boutique, defence force; the nation's geography as an island continent, with no land border disputes; and the leverage gained from access to advanced US military and intelligence capabilities.

Internal weaknesses include: a complacency about security and our place in the world; infrastructure pressures and uneven population distribution; fuel dependency on oil refineries abroad; power vulnerabilities and underdeveloped solar, hydro and potential nuclear energy resources; web-dependence and cyber vulnerabilities; and limited and declining sovereign industrial capacity.

¹ This paper derives its foundation from 'A Geostrategic SWOT Analysis for Australia', *Centre of Gravity* series, no. 49 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, June 2019).

External opportunities, by region, include: in the Pacific—climate, resource and social challenges present an opening for respectful Australian leadership alongside New Zealand; in Southeast Asia—there is a regional and sub-regional appetite for closer Australian engagement and investment; in Northeast Asia—trade growth opportunities persist; in the Indian Ocean region—ties to India and beyond, including the east coast of Africa, are growing; with some NATO member countries—a resurgent interest in China’s rise provides openings; with the United States—multifaceted and deep ties with Australia’s principal ally remain of enduring consequence; with Antarctica—Australian responsibilities and obligations loom larger than most realise.

External threats include: levels of foreign interference not seen since the height of the Cold War; cyber attacks from industrial, state and non-state actors; an ideational retreat from leadership by the United States; challenges to the fundamentals of the rules-based order; religiously and politically motivated violence at home and abroad—both near (Southeast Asia and South Pacific) and far (Middle East); increasing prospects of conventional and/or thermonuclear war; increased environmental challenges at home and abroad; other transnational security concerns; large scale unregulated people movement; diminished biodiversity and pandemics, challenges to fishing stocks in the Pacific and beyond; and the possibility of a breakdown in relations with Indonesia—a country with ten times Australia’s population that possibly could eclipse us economically in the near term.

This SWOT shows that a range of factors, from political, economic and human security concerns, environmental challenges including looming environmental catastrophe at home and abroad, cyber security issues and a range of maritime, territorial and homeland security problems are combining to present an unprecedented challenge for the nation and the region. In essence, then, this can be distilled to three fundamental components: great power contestation, environmental strains and local, national and international governance challenges.

Whilst important, some of these SWOT factors may not appear to be urgent. Yet many of these must be addressed sooner than later; for if we wait until they appear urgent, we may have waited too long and left things too late.

Awakening to the New Spectrum of Modern Conflict & Uses of Armed Force

Focusing in on what this SWOT analysis means for defence and security, what emerges is a greater awareness of a new, broader spectrum of security challenges. In the age of so-called ‘grey-zone’ warfare as well as expanding cyber security challenges, artificial intelligence, robotics and the militarisation of space, the very concept of warfare is subject to redefinition. Indeed, as is becoming clear to many, the traditional way of differentiating between peace and war is insufficient. We think of being at peace or war but potential adversaries do not necessarily think that way.²

2 United States Department of Defense, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, Competition Continuum*, 3 June 2019, <www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn_jg/jdn1_19.pdf> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

Rather than being one dimensional, a more comprehensive approach to the use of armed force requires management of several states of being that relate to the conflict-cooperation spectrum: collaboration, cooperation, contestation, confrontation and, where possible, compromise to avert armed conflict.³ Yet even here, the very terms suggest to some that we may be able to muddle our way through without significant additional investment in defence of the nation. The fact remains that Australia currently has limited sovereign capacity to respond to the growing range of traditional and non-traditional security threats. Increased capacity and endurance in a number of areas is required for Australia to be self-sufficient.

In response, the nation needs a domestic political and societal re-awakening to face the array of challenges presenting themselves. A national institute of net assessment, akin to the productivity commission, should be established on a statutory basis, with links to government through a national security authority, to consider the SWOT spectrum, drawing on the breadth of research expertise in the university sector, as well as industry, think tanks, government and beyond. Such an institute would look beyond the tyranny of the urgent to develop viable options to address holistically challenges with intergenerational consequences. That institute should examine the proposals below.

Firstly, there is a growing need for the nation to invest further in the capacity of the ADF and related government instrumentalities and other infrastructure (including in the cyber domain) to be able to endure prolonged security challenges including those presented by nations posing advanced technology threats and possibly war.

Within the military itself, there is a demand for additional trained personnel across the three services and in the joint (overlapping) domains. My SDSC colleague, Hugh White, has argued that Defence expenditure should significantly increase but it should focus on acquisition of additional fighter aircraft and submarines.⁴ The SWOT analysis provides pointers to a range of scenarios which indicate that additional expenditure is indeed becoming urgent, but beyond that, the capability prescription he proposes would unduly limit government options in response to a range of potential scenarios that do not necessarily respond well to the use of such items. Conventional great power contestation is certainly in the mix, but so are many other considerations relating to governance and environmental concerns. The spectrum of challenges raised in the SWOT analysis suggests that it is not inconceivable that Australia may need to deploy forces concurrently in response to:

1. a major humanitarian disaster akin to the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 or the Fijian Cyclone in 2016;
2. catastrophic fires and drought as well as floods and cyclones in multiple locations across Australia like, or worse than, those experienced during the 2019-20 summer;
3. a potentially violent and hotly contested man-made crisis—akin to the crisis in East Timor in 1999 and 2006, Solomon Islands in 2003 or Bougainville in 1998—that could arise at short notice, like the siege of the city of Marawi mounted by violent Islamist extremists in the southern Philippines in 2017;

3 See Brigadier Grant Mason, 'The Competition Prism', *The Forge*, 11 September 2019, <t.co/A0bk49p19s?amp=1> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

4 See Hugh White, *How to Defend Australia* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press with Black Ink, 2019), <www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/how-defend-australia> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

4. calls to support regional security partners facing potentially existential threats—related to crises that could arise over the South China Sea, East China Sea, Korea and Taiwan;⁵
5. a multifaceted terrorist incident, or incidents, possibly in multiple locations;
6. a cyberattack, or multiple cyberattacks, against critical infrastructure that disrupts the electricity grid and shuts down critical industries;
7. a major border security challenge—one such that could be linked to a surge of refugees arriving by sea following a spike in, say, the crisis affecting the displaced Rohingya people in Bangladesh; and
8. a natural or man-made disaster threatening the lives of those forming part of Australia's Antarctic presence and posing a threat to Australia's claims there.

These are plausible scenarios and it is quite possible that several of them could strike at once. The ADF (let alone any other arm of government tasked to respond to emergencies) simply is not structured or resourced to tackle more than a couple of these possible contingencies at once; and yet the prospect of several of them occurring simultaneously is greater than ever before.

Developing a New Plan A for the ADF

The defence force of today is much smaller than it has been at the height of earlier crises. In land power terms alone, Australian full-time armed forces today consist of just over one division of troops. Part time reserve forces maintain a hollow second division. In contrast, in the Second World War, Australian land forces included the equivalent of over fourteen divisions from a population base of seven-to-eight million. A repeat of a Second World War scenario is not what is being argued here, but the comparison is instructive. In addition, the ADF's capabilities are largely tactical and with relatively short range. This means that Australia poses only a modest deterrent to potential aggressors. Therefore, while the ADF is a capable force, should Australia ever face a challenge from a nation with advanced weapons systems, this force may be inadequate for the task. A one-division regular-army force of three combat brigades and some special forces, a navy of a dozen or so warships and a handful of submarines, and an air force of only 100 fighter aircraft, means Australia has little if any ability to sustain significant attrition in case of a substantial conflict. In effect, the ADF is only a one-punch force. This is inadequate in view of emergent issues.

In response to many of these circumstances, Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper of 2017 outlined what I call a 'Plan B' for international engagement.⁶ I would argue that in response to that plan and to the evolving circumstances, Australia's defence capabilities now also need a new 'Plan B'. Defence capabilities are fundamental to international engagement as well as national security. The spectrum of potentially existential matters facing our country and the world is unprecedented. Australia is ill-prepared to

5 Brendan Taylor, *The Four Flash Points: How Asia Goes to War* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, Black Inc., 2019), <www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/four-flashpoints> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

6 John Blaxland, 'Plan B: Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 10 February 2018, <www.aspistrategist.org.au/plan-b-australias-foreign-policy-white-paper/> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

respond appropriately, with limited sovereign capacity and with the ADF designed for a much more benign setting when ten years' warning time of any major threat to the nation was expected.⁷

Australia's unpreparedness is in part because many of these issues are beyond the jurisdiction of one state or federal entity; meanwhile international mechanisms to handle them are weak and disjointed. The defence minister, for instance, can rightly say many of these issues are not her problem. Similarly, the home affairs minister can say they are not his; and the foreign affairs minister, likewise, with significant resource constraints, can say this is way beyond the scope of her remit. Yet it is increasingly evident that such narrow responses to the challenges faced are inadequate. A visionary, inclusive and comprehensive solution is needed if Australia is to be prepared for the potential onslaught of emergent security challenges. The main challenge in overcoming this shortfall relates to recruitment and retention of personnel. With that broad range of concerns in mind, this paper proposes expanding and reorganising a range of force elements as outlined below.

Naval Forces

With the acquisition of new surface warships and submarines, it is tempting to use the equipment update to justify a streamlining of personnel requirements. Arguably, however, the acquisitions should be made in addition, not instead, of extant capabilities. The upgraded Anzac class frigates, for instance, have sophisticated capabilities that should not be retired simply because a replacement platform is scheduled. In addition, the production run of those replacement warships should be extended. Similarly, the eventual construction of the Attack class submarines should not be used to justify retirement of the highly capable Collins class submarines. Necessity is the mother of invention and innovative solutions for additional life extension programs for the Collins submarines should be considered to allow the submarine fleet to grow not just from six to twelve submarines, but to a combined total of eighteen Attack and modified Collins class submarines, equipped with a fleet of underwater drones in support.

Sophisticated, capable of being armed and unattended aerial vehicles should be acquired for operations from the flight deck of the amphibious landing helicopter dock ships (LHDs) HMAS *Canberra* and HMAS *Adelaide*. These ships are already proving to be in high demand to bolster security and stability domestically, in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. They have demonstrable capabilities to help bolster security and stability in places where environmental challenges are grave, security is precarious, governance is weak, and where great power contestation is increasing. With so many scenarios for which a response may be required, their operational tempo can only be expected to increase.

An additional replenishment ship and an additional LHD would add considerably to the ADF's ability to sustain an operational tempo that might be generated by a combination of these scenarios. These should also be able to operate deep in the Southern Ocean.

7 See Paul Dibb, Richard Brabin-Smith and Brendan Sargeant, 'Why Australia Needs a Radically New Defence Policy', *Centre of Gravity* series, no. 40 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, October 2018) <sdsc.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2018-11/cog_44_web.pdf> [Accessed 15 September 2019].

Air and Space Power

The Joint Strike Fighter has proven to be an expensive acquisition. There is scope for an increase in the planned fleet from 70 to 100, but this should not come at the expense of retiring the Super Hornets—a sophisticated almost-new aircraft type: this fleet should be expanded further. Drones, including the Loyal Wingman program, should be acquired as part of the mix. In the meantime, critical enablers for the ADF, including the C17 Globemaster and C130 Hercules transport aircraft, the air-to-air refuellers and surveillance planes, as well as airborne early warning and control aircraft will continue to be of critical importance in order to be able to deploy and sustain force elements across the region in response to contingencies that we can expect to arise with little if any notice. Firefighting and other disaster response is not core military business; specialists manage these functions more economically, but ADF air elements remain well placed to assist when necessary.

With satellite technology becoming increasingly miniaturised and cost effective and anti-satellite technology maturing amongst a range of nations in the Indo-Pacific, the Air Force will need to expand its remit to more fully cover the space domain. This should include the acquisition of Australia's own satellite capability for surveillance, communications, as well as command and control purposes, in order to operate in a more self-reliant and resilient manner.

Land Forces

Land forces today are small by the standards of almost all of Australia's neighbours, except for the Pacific Island states. With so many potential calls for the commitment of land forces, there is scope for an additional rotational regular-force combat brigade to be raised and, perhaps, operated from the nation's west coast. That would allow for potentially a second brigade to be ready to respond to one of the many possible contingencies, while the others undergo the readying and reset phases of the Army's force generation cycle. More importantly, the critical specialist support enabling capabilities (currently found in 6 Brigade (command and intelligence support), 16 Brigade (aviation) and 17 Brigade (logistics), should be filled out to enable more robust dedicated support of the regular-force combined-arms combat brigades (1, 3 and 7 Brigades) that are intended to operate in rotation through the ready, readying and reset force generation cycle. Reserve brigades (with a mix of part-time and full-time members) should be beefed up to assist. Precision medium-range strike capabilities would enable these forces to provide robust defence of airfields and key infrastructure in a contested crisis that might arise in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific maritime approaches to Australia.

Cyber Force

The broadening and deepening of the array of cyber security challenges, points to the need to bolster significantly the ADF's cyber capabilities. Cyber security concerns have seen the establishment of an Information Warfare Division inside the Defence Capability Group; but more concerted action is required.⁸ The ADF already includes electronic

8 Department of Defence, Information Warfare Division, <www.defence.gov.au/jcg/iwd.asp> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

warfare (EW) units in the three services, but the cyber domain is an area of increasing demands that stretch the old definitions and capabilities of the EW realms. Growth in this area is of fundamental importance, but that has to be coordinated with developments in the Australian Cyber Security Centre and other arms of government concerned to develop strong defensive and, in places, offensive cyber capabilities.

Domestic Security

Cyber concerns are alive and well in the community at large, as are enduring concerns about terrorism and growing threats of sabotage and evidence of foreign interference. The combination is corrosive, eating at the core of institutions. The ADF's special operations forces have an important role to play in support of the national and state counter-terrorism plans. They also have important contributions to make in a range of regional scenarios abroad. Preparing for such contingencies requires considerable investment of time and effort developing regional ties and closer relations with counterparts in the neighbourhood, across from the Indian Ocean, through Southeast Asia and into the South Pacific. To do all of that effectively additional growth is required.

Border Force

The Home Affairs Department has responsibility for managing border security in conjunction with the ADF through Border Protection Command. Closer coordination and greater resourcing of the offshore patrol fleet, with additional and more robust ships and aircraft, supplemented by sophisticated unattended aerial vehicles will be required in order for the nation to be adequately prepared to respond to the growing range and scale of environmental and governance challenges around Australia's periphery.

International Ties

Building on the Australia-ASEAN Special Summit of 2018,⁹ Australia should strengthen and deepen ties with ASEAN member states, notably Indonesia, as well as others beyond that are willing to work closely with Australia to bolster regional security and stability. This already includes regional counter terrorism initiatives¹⁰ but it should also involve elements of the ADF being involved in a much greater level of language study and cultural awareness training. Additional opportunities to work collaboratively with neighbours on benign activities such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training scenarios should be vigorously pursued with Indonesia, the FPDA partners (notably Singapore and Malaysia) and other Southeast Asian and Pacific neighbours.¹¹

9 See Frank Frost, 'The ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, Sydney, March 2018: Issues and Implications', Parliament of Australia, 1 March 2018, <www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1718/ASEANSummit> [Accessed 13 September 2019].

10 See Department of Defence, 'Inaugural Sub-Regional Defence Ministers' Meeting on Counter-Terrorism', *Annual Report 2017-18*, <www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/17-18/Features/RegionalMtg.asp> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

11 This is largely what is argued for here John Blaxland, 'LHDs: Game Changing in the Indo-Pacific', *Australian Naval Review*, 25 August 2019, The Australian Naval Institute, <navalinstitute.com.au/lhds-game-changing-in-indo-pacific/#more-12997> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

Tying in Indonesia more closely with Australia's other close Southeast Asian regional partners Singapore and Malaysia, may well be achieved if a regional maritime cooperation forum could be developed for 'sweet' or MANIS, ties. Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore have many reasons to foster closer, sweeter ties.¹²

Ties with partners in the Pacific should be strengthened further as well. Beyond the Pacific 'step-up',¹³ a compact of association with South Pacific countries is needed for shared governance, akin to the treaty arrangements the United States and New Zealand have with several Pacific micro-states. In return for residency rights, Australia, along with New Zealand, should respectfully offer closer partnering arrangements to assist with management, security and governance of territorial and maritime domains. Pacific islanders should be encouraged to join Australia's defence and national security institutions in return for additional benefits including Australian citizenship.¹⁴

Australia should maintain and strengthen its economic and security ties with the United States and other closely aligned states. Utilising its trusted access,¹⁵ Australia should counsel against adventurous US initiatives that undermine international institutions, but support initiatives that reinforce the rules-based order. Australia's US engagement has a demonstration effect in the region, being closely scrutinised by the neighbours.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is not necessarily a significant international body in the Indo-Pacific, but it is one with which Australia shares common values and overlapping interests.¹⁶ Several NATO member states, the United Kingdom and France, for instance, appear interested in engaging with Australia. France has a military presence based in New Caledonia. It makes sense for the ADF to cooperate judiciously on France's Pacific initiatives. Australia also should encourage Britain to engage in Australia's neighbourhood, but must remain alert to the fact that Britain's power is limited and its interests varied. In the meantime, while Germany's trade and economic influence has little of the hard-power edge of France and Britain, its economic and industrial weight is significant. Closer cooperation could work well. Then there is Australia's 'strategic cousin' in Canada, another NATO member country and close US ally, and also a Pacific power with shared interests in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁷ Australia should look to capitalise on ties and shared interests, including security interests and requirements for air, sea and land capabilities. The NATO connections may appear distant, but in an increasingly connected world, distance is of reduced concern and such ties can prove of considerable utility.

12 For an elaboration on the rationale and concept, see John Blaxland 'MANIS: Time for a New Forum to Sweeten Regional Cooperation', *Centre of Gravity* series, no. 26 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, June 2016), <sdsc.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2018-01/cog_26-john-blaxland.pdf> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

13 See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Australia's Pacific Engagement', <dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement.aspx> [Accessed 14 September 2019].

14 See John Blaxland, 'John Blaxland on Developing a Grand Compact for the Pacific' in 'The Fix: Solving Australia's foreign affairs challenges' in *Australian Foreign Affairs*, Edition 8, February 2020, 91-98.

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

16 Stephan Frühling, "Key to the Defense of the Free World": The Past, Present and Future Relevance of NATO for US Allies in the Asia-Pacific', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, doi.org/10.1057/s42738-019-00014-0.

17 See John Blaxland, *Strategic Cousins: Australian and Canadian Expeditionary Forces and the British and American Empires* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006).

An Australian Universal Scheme for National and Community Service (AUSNACS)

Critics of the argument made so far would contend that the proposed expansion of capabilities is fanciful. As it stands, Australia's newly upgraded Anzac class ship, HMAS *Perth*, is up on stilts in Fremantle, having been put there due to crew shortfalls. Similarly, army and air force units struggle to recruit and retain sufficient personnel to maintain critical capabilities. There is a way, however, to address these shortfalls that could make a significant difference to the security and stability of the nation and the region—a scheme enlisting the support of young Australians from all of the nation's multicultural walks of life.

Given chronic personnel shortfalls and a wide array of agencies that could benefit from extra people involved, an expansive and inclusive Australian Universal National and Community Service Scheme (AUSNACS)¹⁸ should be considered through which all young Australians could contribute.¹⁹ There might even be significant societal side benefits as such a scheme would draw in young people from all walks of life across the nation.

Critics may look to discount the utility of such a scheme, arguing Defence does not need that many extra people and that training them would drain resources from operational capabilities. That is valid, to a point, but the need for extra personnel applies not just to the armed services. If introduced as a national and community service initiative, the personnel involved could be shared access state and federal police forces, border force, state emergency services, rural fire services, state health services and DFAT's Australian Aid akin to the US 'Peace Corps'. Others may hark back to the societal tensions of the Vietnam War era. This scheme would look to negate such concerns by ensuring a wide range of choices for Australia's young people to consider. Benefits that could accrue for AUSNACS participants could include concessional loans or reduced higher education contributions.

Proximity and Risk Management

The analysis outlined in this article points towards the need for Australia to focus more attention on its region, to bolster its capabilities considerably, and to be more self-reliant. In my book *The Australian Army: From Whitlam to Howard*,²⁰ I identified a number of determinants of government expectations concerning the efficacy of use of military force. In large part, these revolve around three things: proximity to Australia versus necessity of participation, alliance management, and the government's risk tolerance. Australia has spent almost a generation providing niche military and aid contributions far away while inconsistently engaging on major issues of concern in its own neighbourhood. Yet close to home the nation faces a future where it may have to commit considerable resources

18 John Blaxland, 'Expert Makes Case for Return of National Service', Drive program, ABC, 10 June 2019, <www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/south-queensland-drive/national-service/11196538>

19 John Blaxland, 'Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?', The Signal program, ABC, 17 June 2019, <www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/the-signal/20defence-recruitment-national-service/11187992>

20 John Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

to lead a coalition of participating forces, organisations, agencies and countries with whom Australian authorities are not experienced at leading or even working alongside. This could be in response to an environmental catastrophe, a regional crisis or other issues generating calls for an Australian response, collaborating, for instance, with, say, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea or Malaysia. Should the requirement be for something involving an adversarial state with advanced weapon systems, Australia's defence force lacks the resilience or size to be able to absorb a significant blow—and that prospect appears more likely than in previous or recent generations.

What this means is that the ADF needs to be better positioned to address the spectrum of emergent challenges. Perhaps for the first time in more than half a century, it needs to grow beyond its standard three regular-force combat brigades, 100 combat aircraft and a dozen or so warships, to include a surge in AI-enabled equipment, unmanned vehicles and sensors, and enhanced space and cyber capabilities.

Funding

There is a truism that states strategy without funding is not a strategy. This article has outlined an ambitious plan to expand capabilities across a range of domains; for it to be realised, there is no question that a detailed costing would be required before plans could be confirmed to see the proposals outlined here come to fruition. There is a broad consensus emerging amongst defence, strategy and security pundits, however, that Australia will need to significantly increase its expenditure in defence of the nation and its interests across a range of domains. In broad terms, that likely will see the need to double down on the budget, increasing expenditure from 2 per cent of GDP to between 3 and 4 per cent. Such a high level of expenditure on defence has not been experienced for several decades but it has been done before, notably during the Vietnam War, the Korean War and during the period of defence build-up in the late 1930s. For this to be politically acceptable, the Australian people will need to come to an understanding of the scale and scope of the security challenges that are looming. For that, the government has to lead.

Conclusion

This article started by revisiting a Geostrategic SWOT Analysis for Australia. It pointed to the need for an awakening concerning the spectrum of modern conflict and the possible demands for the use of armed force, including a range of plausible contingencies which could arise at short notice. This indicates the current boutique ADF is inadequately resourced for a range of looming challenges. The article then argued for a national institute for net assessment and, specifically for the defence and security purposes, the need to develop a new Plan B for the ADF, bolstering naval, air, space, cyber and land forces, as well as domestic security and border forces. International ties also need to be refreshed and expanded, including with ASEAN member states, the FPDA countries, the potential MANIS forum, the Pacific partners, the United States and other NATO member countries.

To do all this, the current ADF is not big or strong enough. An Australian Universal Scheme for National and Community Service (AUSNACS) is required. The proximity of these challenges and the heightened risk of them materialising without adequate preparation indicates the Australian Government must find the funds to make it happen. It must also engage in a conversation with the Australian people to explain how it plans to respond and why a new Plan B is necessary.

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