

# The Need for an Australian National Security Strategy

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Whatever the outcome of the 2007 federal election, the incoming Australian Government will need to address the national security policy deficit that has been allowed to accumulate since the release of the 2000 White Paper. The global strategic environment has changed substantially since 9/11, yet the Australian Government has been reluctant to spell out what those changes are, what the consequences of those changes might be, or how Australia should set about managing its longer-term security interests. The procession of *Defence Updates* over the past five years have failed to provide an integrated security strategy, offering instead a collection of complacent and temporizing nostrums that ignore both the complexity of the security problems facing Australia and the need for comprehensive “whole of government” actions. In order to address this policy deficit, an incoming government will need to establish new policy development processes that go beyond Defence to include the other departments and agencies on which Australia relies for its security.

It was the great New York Yankees catcher “Yogi” Berra who said, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it”. Amusing, but the implication is clear enough: sometimes confusing situations demand the exercise of choice. The next Australian Government will be confronted by one of the most ambiguous and complex strategic environments in the nation’s short history, and some sharp choices will have to be made.

This article argues that there is a pressing need for an up-to-date and forward-looking Australian national security strategy. First, it outlines deficiencies in the current approach. Second, it examines global and regional developments and issues that need to be taken into account. Third, it offers some initial thoughts as to what an incoming government should take into account as it repositions Australia’s national security strategy.

## The Problem with Pragmatism

For most of the past decade, the Australian Government has prided itself on its pragmatic handling of security-related issues. Its approach has consistently been to avoid creating “hostages to fortune” by pursuing incrementalist decision-making, taking only the decisions necessary in the short term. At one level, this seems sensible enough, since it detours around the intractability that is assumed to flow from the pursuit of longer-term goals and solutions.

But, for all its commonsense appeal, pragmatism is a policy dead-end, because it is limited to the here and now. It is instinctive rather than creative, reactive rather than strategic, and even where it is constructive it is

always constrained by the “realities” (as they are perceived) of the present. Pragmatism is always the triumph of the expedient over the imaginative, of the short-term over the long-term, of present advantage over more enduring principle. For these reasons, pragmatism is dangerous because it actively militates against efforts positively to shape the future. For as long as national security policy is characterised principally by pragmatism, Australia will be unable to create the opportunities by which it can shape its own destiny, practise strategic leadership and encourage stronger adherence to and practice of the values that ultimately underpin Australian society.

Irrespective of a fifth poll victory by Prime Minister Howard or a first win by Mr Rudd, an incoming government will need to address, as a matter of urgency, the consequences of too long a period without clear and realisable strategic guidance. This glaring omission from the national policy platform is the result of a combination of factors.

First, government has failed to address the consequences of profound changes in the global strategic landscape.

Second, the intensity of the operational pressures on the Australian Defence Force (ADF), together with the ADF’s unflinching willingness to meet the operational demands of government and the government’s preparedness to impose demand upon demand, have combined to place a premium on the immediate planning that delivers swift reaction to external pressures rather than on the proactive shaping of Australia’s strategic options and the deliberate planning needed to that end.

Third, Ministers for Defence have been complacent in their continued re-assertion that the *2000 White Paper* remains relevant to radically changed circumstances.

Fourth, the accelerating complexity of government operations has resulted in an across-the-board reduction in the capacity of the public service, particularly the central policy departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Trade and Prime Minister and Cabinet, to develop and articulate the coordinated, coherent and comprehensive advice that government needs if it is to decide on strategic direction.

Fifth, recent defence capability acquisition has been uncharacteristically opportunistic. Successive Australian Governments have placed great emphasis on force structure and capability analysis before major defence procurement decisions are taken. Yet procurement discipline has been conspicuously absent with respect to a number of recent acquisition decisions, notably the JSF, the Abrams MBT, the C-17 heavy lift aircraft and, most recently, the F/A-18 Super Hornets to replace the F-111s.

Finally, neither the government nor the public service have been able to combine to devise new ways of developing policy when the parameters of national strategy have changed so significantly. Along with the traditional issues of conventional defence and how much is enough, new issues such as global and regional terrorism, illegal immigration, domestic terrorism and violence, international criminal and drug cartels, the possibility of pandemics and the accelerating political, social and economic collapse of regional states have combined to take the policy development task well beyond the responsibilities of the ADF and the Department of Defence. While “whole of government” has been something of a mantra in policy development and decision-making in recent years, its focus seems to have been much more the retention of control by the centre—essentially the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister’s Office—than the integration of the differentiated and often disaggregated elements that attend upon the complexity of the situations that governments need to address and the choices they need to make.

Whoever wins office faces a substantial policy deficit and a significant amount of remedial work.

### **Changed Strategic Settings**

There are two propositions that cannot be sustained simultaneously: that the strategic directions established by the *2000 White Paper* remain substantially in place; and that the events of 9/11 marked a fundamental shift in the global strategic balance. And the tension between those two propositions is exacerbated if—as is the case—neither happens to be true.<sup>1</sup>

### **TERRORISM AND 9/11**

There can be no doubt that the events of 11 September 2001 were a direct attack on the values system of the western liberal democracies and, as such, highlighted the paradox that sits at the centre of democratic liberalism: the freer and more inclusive a society is, the more vulnerable it is to random attacks that exploit that very freedom and inclusivity. But symbolically powerful as 9/11 was, it did not mark the beginning of a new strategic world order.

In many respects, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington were the consequence of much more profound changes that are symbolised by what occurred on 9 November 1989, which marked the end of the Cold War. Not only did the Berlin wall come tumbling down but so, too, did the edifice of world communism, particularly the Soviet Union. This was a development of the utmost significance, one to which the global community is yet to adjust and with which Australian strategic policy is yet to come to terms.

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<sup>1</sup> See Allan Behm, 'Policy Must Reflect Tectonic Global Shift', *The Australian*, 21 May 2005.

As Professor Philip Bobbitt has noted, most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was given to the battle of the “isms”—fascism, communism and democratic liberalism—in order to determine which of these three forms of constitutional order best promoted the well-being of the state and its citizens.<sup>2</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> century was, in his terms, an epochal war in which fundamental political, social and strategic issues struggled for resolution. And, as the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised so powerfully, western democratic liberalism prevailed. But does that, as Francis Fukuyama suggested in his remarkable essay *The End of History and the Last Man*, signal the arrival of an unchallengeable democratic utopia? Will the 21<sup>st</sup> century witness nation states falling into line, like wagons rolling into town,<sup>3</sup> or will division and ideological contest simply mutate?

The early answers are not encouraging. As the events of 9/11, the Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005, the Madrid train bombing of 2004, the London underground bombings of 2005, communal riots in France and the Netherlands, the scores of terrorist incidents in Israel, Palestine, and India, and the apparently endless appetite for anti-US and intra-communal terrorism in Iraq all demonstrate, the forces of absolutist ideology (currently in the livery of Islamic radicalism) are clearly focused on constraining and destroying liberal democratic freedoms. This is the “clash of values” that seems likely to dominate the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

What is significant about the use of asymmetric warfare (terror) by absolutist ideologues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that random force is not employed by groups organised along traditional hierarchical or bureaucratic lines, but rather by cells that are organic in their relationships with other cells, working more as independent franchises than as parts of a centralised and coordinated organisation. This places enormous pressures on those leading the defence against terrorism, since the traditional concepts of operations that would target C<sup>2</sup> systems are almost totally ineffective.

In important respects, terrorism operates at the interface between the clash of values and the antagonism that traditionally defines relations between states pursuing opposing political and strategic objectives. States, particularly those that subscribe to political principles opposed to democracy and individual rights, will continue to exploit opportunistically the potential that always exists for destabilizing the security of their opponents by supporting instability on their opponents’ borders. This may extend to support for groups that espouse terrorism. For Australia, the political, economic and institutional fragility that distinguishes most of the states in its immediate neighbourhood raises the double-headed spectre of large-scale domestic violence fomented by external interference.

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<sup>2</sup> P. Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, London: Penguin Books, 2003, pp 19, 24-64.

<sup>3</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Avon Books, 1993, p. 338.

## **THE RISE OF CHINA AND INDIA**

Both China and India are strategically ambitious. Both wish to exercise the power that comes with size and wealth, and to enjoy the recognition that, in the view of both, has long been denied to them by a dominant West and an “arrogant” USA. Not far beneath the political surface of both China and India is the resentment that drives the sullen, often hectoring, name-calling and abuse that passes for public policy, and the stonewalling inertia that is designed to frustrate the protagonist rather than resolve the problem.

The combination of rapid economic expansion and population growth will impact on strategic attitude and ambition: the “passive aggression” that has characterized Chinese strategic policy for the past four centuries, and the “imperial resentment” that has marked Indian strategic policy for the past two centuries will give way to a significantly more confident and assertive approach to their respective roles as global players.

However the respective policy settings and force dispositions of China and India might eventually turn out, the global strategic environment of 2050 will be extraordinarily complex, due mainly to the competitive forces operating between them, driven in part by the similarities between their relative strategic priorities. Both will have developed the ability to project force at considerable distances from their borders, and both will have developed naval capabilities that will afford them the ability to exercise both sea denial and, in some measure, sea control.

While they will continue to think of themselves as continental powers, China and India will seek to exploit their strategic differentiation from the USA, and from each other. But the similarity of their strategic objectives and generic capabilities will create significant opportunities for misapprehension and misadventure. The size, reach and structure of their respective forces will reinforce the attrition model of warfare, as distinct from the more current manoeuvre model pursued by the USA and, relative strengths taken into account, Australia. This will in fact afford India and China much less flexibility in dealing with each other at the strategic level, and will probably favour head-to-head “stare downs” rather than strategic finesse and adroitness.

But perhaps the most significant change to China’s strategic position is the consequence of the Chinese leadership’s evident transition from a policy of “passive aggression”, a form of strategic inertia that forces the adversary’s hand<sup>4</sup> to one of greater assertiveness. The net effect of this transition is to

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the clearest example of this approach at work in recent years was China’s inept handling of the collision between a PLA(AF) J-811M and a USN EP-3E near Hainan on 1 April 2001. Notwithstanding an apology from US Ambassador Prueher (former CINCPAC) for the death of the Chinese fighter pilot and the intrusion of the EP3 into Chinese airspace, the US continued to prosecute tactical SIGINT missions against mainland China, and continues to prosecute such missions.

impose significantly greater constraints on the freedom to manoeuvre strategically by Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan while simultaneously reducing the constraints on China to confront the USA directly. And, over the next four decades, China's ability (and confidence) to "take the US on" will grow, imposing increasingly complex strategic consequences for the USA and its allies in north Asia.

From the global balance of power perspective, the strategic calculus is relatively straightforward: as China's ability to confront the USA directly reaches its tipping point around the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the probability of strategic confrontation between them increases. This is the critical issue that Australian defence planners must address. And the decision boundaries are clear: Australia either opts for some form of armed neutrality (armed, because it would still need to be able to defend against aggression; neutral, because it would not wish to be caught up in a China-USA confrontation) or it works with its traditional ally to ensure that global strategic leadership remains with democratic liberalism.

It will remain very much in the strategic interests of both the USA and Australia to maintain a vigorous alliance. Community of fundamental values will continue to support a unity of strategic interest in the maintenance of regional peace and stability, the maintenance of a capacity to deter aggression, and the maintenance of a capacity to respond decisively to aggression should it occur.

### **REGIONAL ISSUES**

Australia's immediate neighbourhood is at once economically underdeveloped and politically unstable. These two forces act in combination to create outbursts of domestic violence that require external armed intervention for their suppression. What has been termed "the arc of instability" constitutes an ongoing strategic concern for Australia, not because of any direct threat to Australia's sovereignty or its domestic interests, but because of the threat to Australia's diplomatic, consular, commercial and broader security interests in the region. Not only are Australian businesses and nationals deeply involved in the economies of the region, but Australia's standing as the region's leading power imposes significant security demands involving both its military and law enforcement capacities.

*East Timor's* internal security prospects are poor. While Australia and Indonesia are able to guarantee East Timor's security against external attack—indeed, a trilateral security agreement makes good strategic sense from a number of perspectives—the real problem is East Timor's internal security. Poor economic prospects, especially in terms of youth employment opportunities, together with a rapidly growing population and serious ethnic divisions suggest long-term political instability and real risk of armed violence. For Australia, East Timor's precarious future imposes ongoing

costs. These are not simply economic—the long-term provision of development aid and humanitarian assistance—but also political and strategic. Australia has no option but to intervene when violence becomes more widespread, and this establishes an ongoing task for the ADF.

Of much greater concern, however, is the possibility that some future government of East Timor might turn for political and financial support to external powers whose interests were inimical to those of Australia, or Indonesia for that matter.

The strategic issue then becomes one of significantly greater moment for the ADF, transcending peacekeeping and law enforcement to more direct war fighting roles, including the potential for strategic strike. While the kind of strategic lodgment conducted by Japan in 1942 is most unlikely, circumstances in which Australia's force projection capabilities might be called upon are entirely possible.

*Papua New Guinea* (PNG) remains on a long, slow slide towards unmanageability. Unmanageable politics, together with inept and generally corrupt governments, have combined to destroy the optimism with which the nation was created. By almost any measure, PNG has regressed to a point where serious internal instability, armed challenges to local and central government and popular groundswells towards local autonomy and/or independence are likely to be commonplace.

While Australian financial and development aid may serve to arrest the rate of decline, no amount of external aid can remediate PNG's problems without concerted efforts, over a long period, by the government of PNG to rebuild and strengthen the core national institutions—the courts, the judiciary, education, health, public administration, law enforcement services, governance and proper financial management.

But, if PNG's problems are not susceptible to treatment through foreign aid, they are certainly not susceptible to a military solution. While the ADF, in concert with regional forces, may be able to broker and maintain the peace in special circumstances such as Bougainville, the ADF cannot fix the law and order problem of PNG. At best, it can provide only local and temporary relief. And the demands are likely to be frequent, and continuous.

For their part, the PNG governments of the future will certainly want to maintain a clear independence from Australia, and will continue to demand Australian financial support and budget assistance without undertaking the difficult work of reform and the prosecution of corruption. As with East Timor, so too PNG may look elsewhere for financial and political support. Were, for example, PNG to discover significant energy resources or accept even greater foreign investment from offshore, it could easily become a pawn in the extension of military power from the northern to the southern

hemisphere. And here again Australia's strategic interests would be directly engaged, along with the need for force projection and strategic strike options within the ADF's war fighting capabilities.

*Indonesia* is neither a failed nor a failing state. But it is at once Australia's greatest strategic asset (if things go right) and greatest strategic problem (if things go wrong). For obvious reasons, Australia has put considerable policy, personnel and financial resources into the management of its strategic and defence relationship with Indonesia. The record is, however, a mixed one, due in part to a periodic lack of symmetry and convergence between the conduct of Australia's foreign policy and the conduct of its defence policy.

Australia's strategic interests are well served by an Indonesia that has a stable political system and a credible military capacity—especially given the unique role the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) play, and will continue to play, in the country's political life. For this reason, Australia's support for the emergence and strengthening of Indonesia's embryonic democracy has included not only institutional support for the parliament, the judiciary, the civil administration, the economy, law enforcement, education and capacity building in response to natural disasters (though it might reasonably be claimed that such support has been sporadic and not well targeted) but has also maintained high-level and frequent links with the TNI. It would be in Australia's strategic interests that such programs both continue and expand.

It has long been a basic Australian strategic assumption that any direct attack on Australia must come from or through the Indonesian archipelago. An economically prosperous and politically stable Indonesia does not invalidate that assumption. But it does suggest that, in such circumstances, Australia's force structure would still demand force projection and strike capabilities that can be deployed north of the Indonesian archipelago, either in concert with Indonesia or, in circumstances where Indonesia chose to remain neutral (and that is the more likely situation), independently.

While a prosperous, stable and benign Indonesia is an enormous strategic asset for Australia, that outcome does not relieve Australia of the need to ensure that it is able to meet the challenges of strategic instability further afield. It simply means that Indonesia itself would not be the problem. Of course, were there to be emergent strategic instability elsewhere in Asia and, at the same time, Indonesia were less well disposed, Australia's strategic choices would indeed be complicated.

Unfortunately, Indonesia's political and economic future is by no means certain—and both are highly interdependent. The combined pressures of high population growth, fragile political direction, opportunistic and unstable political alliances, poor investment decisions and evident shifts towards a more formal and fundamentalist form of Islam impose great stress on the

core democratic institutions, particularly the political parties and the two houses of parliament. While the balance of probabilities would tend to favour an Indonesia that continues to muddle through on the basis of some form of democratic centralism, there are two critical pathways that Indonesia might follow if democratic practice were unable to take root properly and grow in strength.

The first is a highly centralized and autocratic Islamic government that effectively marginalizes the principles of *pancasila*<sup>5</sup> and imposes strict Islamic values based on Sharia law.<sup>6</sup> Such an Islamic government would, in all probability, provide substantial benefits to the TNI in return for loyalty and enforcement, similar to the practice under President Suharto. A government of this kind would not be democratic. While it would almost certainly maintain some form of electoral process in the appointment of a representative parliament, the role of that parliament would not be to govern but rather to endorse presidential decrees.

Islamic centralism in Indonesia would evidently impose significant force structuring consequences on Australia. In such circumstances, force projection and strategic strike would be essential capabilities, with the clear corollary that such capabilities would need to be covert as well as overt.

The second generic political outcome for Indonesia were the democratic experiment to fail would be the effective disintegration of Indonesia as a unitary state, and its transition into a loose confederation (the optimistic view) or a group of independent mini-states (the pessimistic view). The former would certainly consume enormous amounts of political energy to secure the kind of lowest common denominator outcomes that allow a loose confederation to stay in business, and would consequently experience such intense internal distraction that it would be less likely to focus on the creation of any serious strategic threat to Australia. The latter would be much more complex strategically, in that the “failed and failing” states syndrome would spread from the Pacific into South East Asia. The prospects for the rise of maverick states (such as Libya and Cuba were in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) or client states (such as Eastern Europe was under Soviet domination) would be substantial.

While the strategic consequences of either disintegration scenario would differ, the force structure and capability planning consequences for Australia would be identical. Australia would need to retain a clear and decisive capacity for force projection and strategic strike both to deter aggression and to sanction the use of armed force against Australian interests.

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<sup>5</sup> Pancasila is the Indonesian ideology that supports national resilience, mutual self-help, religious tolerance and ethnic participation. It has been a central feature of Indonesian constitutional arrangements since 1945.

<sup>6</sup> Sharia law has already been imposed in Aceh province, and there are pressures in other provinces for Sharia law to be applied.

*Malaysia* and Australia are likely to avoid the quiriness that marked the relationship during Dr Mahathir's period as Prime Minister of Malaysia, though the growing formalism of Islam in Malaysia, and the appearance of fundamentalist Islamic groups, may see the injection of cultural sensitivities from time to time. But the respective governments of Malaysia and Australia will work to keep such instances under control.

For the foreseeable future, Malaysia will remain largely introspective as a strategic entity, concerned much more with the maintenance of racial and communal harmony domestically, the management of a competitive and often friction-laden relationship with Singapore, and the creation of a regional economic identity. Australia is unlikely to feature significantly in the realization of these aspirations. Malaysia would not, in most circumstances, oppose Australia directly on any substantive regional strategic issue. But it is highly likely to adopt a neutral stance, and would not be expected to offer much in the nature of operational or logistic support to Australia were Australia to deploy its military forces north of the equator.

*Singapore's* location remains strategically significant. Australia and Singapore have traditionally managed a healthy and robust bilateral defence relationship in which both sides are well aware of the mutual benefits. Singapore will continue to pursue a policy of clear strategic self-interest with a marked preference for strategic alignment with the industrialized democracies. It is less interested in carving out a regional strategic role than it is in maintaining a global voice on maritime and aviation matters. It has well developed plans to expand its already substantial military capabilities in the air and sea domains, and is steadily acquiring an ability to project military force. While it will remain a tough negotiator driving hard bargains, its evident focus on a "realist" approach to strategy will make it a more likely ally of Australia and the USA than a fence sitter. Of course, its support cannot be taken for granted: but in circumstances where strategic necessity dictates force projection by Australia, Singapore would normally find itself sympathetic to Australian strategic thinking.

*Thailand*, too, has maintained a useful defence partnership with Australia since signing the Manila Pact in 1954. Throughout the Vietnam War, and more recently in the management of the INTERFET deployment in East Timor from 1999-2000, Australia and Thailand have been able to collaborate on matters of mutual regional interest. While it retains a small air force and a modest navy, Thailand's capability focus has long been on its land force, given its historical preoccupation with the integrity of its land borders, the preservation of internal security and the maintenance of public order. These are likely to remain the principal objectives of Thailand's strategic policy for decades to come. The Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF) know that they risk a measure of international condemnation for their willingness to intervene in domestic political affairs. Nonetheless, defence of the monarchy and the

ability to restore political order will remain central to the role and functions of the RTAF.

Thailand's strategy is based on self-interest and national introspection. Although it is prepared to form associations and to align itself from time to time, such alliances are more political than strategic in their effect. Consequently, on any issue of strategic importance where the Australian Government may wish to project military force, Thailand is as likely to be neutral as to be aligned. But, so long as its own interests are not directly threatened, it is likely to adopt a permissive stance towards such force projection than it is to oppose it.

The political, social and economic decline of the small *Pacific* states seems to be inexorable. The combination of high population growth rates and declining economic performance exacerbates the ethnic and cultural volatility of the region. While countries such as Fiji, the Solomons and Vanuatu in no way constitute any kind of strategic threat to Australia, they will continue to impose strategic demands on Australia. First, their inherent instability will continue to create demands for direct security intervention by Australia, either unilaterally or as leader of a "coalition of the willing". Second, these small states will continue to curry favour with any extra-regional state that is prepared to provide funds, thus allowing such states to gain a foothold in the Pacific. This is of considerably more strategic consequence: while Australia needs to work hard diplomatically to prevent such strategic lodgements, it also needs to maintain the force capabilities to deter and, *in extremis*, to defeat. This is no small task.

### **BUILDING INSTITUTIONS**

It is evident that Australia has the experience and ability to shape and lead in the Pacific. But it needs to demonstrate that it has the "ticker" to do so. For Australia to strengthen its defence posture, it needs not only to maintain a capacity for effective response to such crises that might occur, but also an ability to build and maintain the regional and global institutions that at once constrain unacceptable international behaviours and provide nations with the capacity to act collectively in the common strategic interest.

Between the late 70s and the mid-90s, successive Australian Governments demonstrated considerable confidence, indeed exuberance, in their approach to regional and international affairs. Australia pressed hard to become a member of the expanded Committee on Disarmament in 1979, and initiatives such as Cairns Group, APEC, the Canberra Conference on Chemical Weapons and the Canberra Commission to eliminate nuclear weapons—all displayed an appetite for policy "progressiveness" and initiative.

The past decade has given way to a more cautious approach, where the drivers of current policy are more clearly differentiated from those of previous

governments. The “progressiveness” of the 80s has been replaced by the “pragmatism” of the 90s, “commonsense” substituting for “vision”.

The principles that inspire the Australian version of a robust democracy are the principles that need to inspire our foreign and strategic policy. Those principles are pretty clear: each human being has intrinsic worth and dignity, from which follow the rule of law and the fundamental freedoms of belief, speech and association. These are the principles that unite Australia as a community and connect us to our allies. They are also the principles that enable Australia to tackle the emerging strategic environment constructively and enthusiastically, shaping, where we can, the rules by which our region will operate and, on the basis of our long democratic experience and success, provide leadership in the design and management of the institutions that will secure this emerging strategic environment.

### **THE FOREIGN POLICY/DEFENCE POLICY DIVIDE**

The increasingly complex strategic dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region demand new approaches to security policy development. If Australia is to determine its security requirements adequately over the next couple of decades, it must both understand the forces driving strategic change and craft integrated policies that translate into a sensible and sustainable force posture. This calls for an innovative approach to policy making. It also calls for an end to the “silos” within which much of Australia’s foreign and defence policy is developed.

Since the end of the Second World War, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence have been preoccupied with rather different things. Foreign Affairs has been more concerned with the maintenance of stability and the reinforcement of measures that favour peace and the maintenance of constructive relations between states. Foreign policy is concerned with diplomacy and the avoidance of armed conflict. The Department of Defence is concerned with what happens when relationships fail, and how armed force is best employed to sanction aggression and to defeat armed attacks. Foreign Affairs deals with the world as it should be. Defence deals with the world as it could be.

The Foreign Affairs and Defence portfolios represent quite different mindsets that can, at times of crisis, manifest themselves not only in fundamentally different approaches to problem solving but also (and more significantly) in basic disagreements on policy outcomes and how they should be delivered.

This fundamental difference in perspective informs both the development and implementation of foreign policy, on the one hand, and of defence policy on the other. This difference is exacerbated by the infrequency of personnel interchanges between the two portfolios, and the relatively low levels of knowledge within the public service of what the ADF actually does, how it organises itself for operations, the demands of military operational planning,

the command responsibilities of ADF leaders, the operational pressures on ADF personnel, the extent or depth of logistic support needed for ADF deployments—among many other factors. And this ignorance is reciprocated from the Defence side: except at the very senior levels, most ADF leaders have little knowledge of the way in which high policy is developed and formulated, how government deals with intelligence, and the need for the full range of factors (including financial aspects) to be taken into account as government reaches strategic decisions.

While it is evident that Australia has global security interests, the *2005 and 2007 Defence Updates* offers no insight into how these interests (shared with many other nations) impact on our national strategic interests or how such security interests should influence capability acquisition decisions.

What this represents is a basic confusion in the articulation of national strategic policy as distinct from national security policy—a confusion that would have been avoided had those framing defence and foreign policy aligned their respective policy development processes. While it is certainly the case that Defence has a significant stake in the development and articulation of national security policy, the issue is much broader than defence, and impacts on virtually every portfolio.

Given the complexity of the global and regional strategic environments, the integration of security policy is no easy task. It is one that demands the fully coordinated capacities of the central policy agencies, particularly the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence, together with Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The question is: how are the silos to be broken down, and how are the wider perspectives to be brought to account? Australia would do well to examine and adapt the process employed by the USA in producing its Quadrennial Defense Review, where, in essence, the views and “mindsets” of the various contributing Departments and agencies are coordinated by an externally contracted coordinator whose job it is to ensure that all angles are covered, and that all agencies that can contribute to the development of public policy do so. Whether or not Australia has yet developed the policy-making maturity to employ such a process is moot. But, at the very least, a national security strategy needs to be mandated by Cabinet and, in consequence, “whole-of-government” coordination would be essential if government is to have a sound basis for future decision-making.

### **The Key Components of a National Security Strategy**

Given the complexities that are likely to distinguish the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an era of epochal strategic change, Australia needs to put in place security planning principles that maximise national security while remaining affordable. They include:

1. An unambiguous statement of national strategic objectives. These would focus on the need to deter any direct attack on Australia, and to respond decisively should such deterrence fail.
2. An unambiguous recognition of the fact that the “clash of values” that will distinguish this century demands decisive responses if the human benefits of democratic liberalism are to be defended and retained. This will almost certainly invoke armed conflict, and, given the nature of the adversary, demands the adversary’s total defeat.
3. A comprehensive analysis of the future demands on the alliance with the USA. The “clash of values” that will increasingly dominate this century demands high levels of strategic cooperation and force interoperability with nations that share similar value sets.
4. The establishment and management of constructive defence relationships with neighbouring nations, particularly New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and, as it evolves its political system from the centralist command model to a more participative style of government, Vietnam. The construction of a regional security architecture that reflects a convergence of strategic interests will serve to impose significant constraints on any regional power that might seek strategic dominance.
5. The establishment and management of constructive defence relationships with the emergent powers, China and India. Given their strategic aspirations, it would be a serious error to underestimate just how difficult this task might be. This means that Australia’s threat calculus needs to comprehend the possibility of significant strategic confrontation where the options may be difficult, but the strategic choices inevitable. Australia’s strategic mind needs to remain focused on the significance of shared values as a determinant of strategic choice.
6. A disciplined approach to force structuring and capabilities acquisition. Opportunistic acquisition must be avoided because it may well distort the ADF’s capacity to fight and win. The Defence organisation needs the heavy rollers that sustained analysis and critiquing provides, and that ability needs to be reinstated.
7. Build strategic policy making capacity within government. The quality of strategic decision making—the fundamental prerogative of government—depends on the quality of policy advice provided by departments and agencies.
8. Finally, a more evident determination to plan for the long term while thinking of the short term. Strategic uncertainty and ambiguity tempt

governments into a national security paradigm built around short-term reaction and “pragmatism” rather than the application of principle to all strategic decision-making.

The challenges for any incoming government in 2007 are formidable. Government not only has to look ahead and re-apply discipline to strategy, coordination, capability acquisition and military deployment, but also needs to undertake the more difficult task of re-building the experience and intellectual capacity to do so. It will need to refine its policy-making systems so that they align better with the significantly improved decision-making structures that the government has put in place over the past decade. But it takes courage to substitute principle for pragmatism, policy for opportunism, and a government prepared to take on that task deserves both the chance to govern and the support of the electorate.

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