
White Paper Then and Now: Returning to Self-Reliance as a Labor Leit-Motif

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The 2009 Defence White Paper *Force 2030* reprises ideas that were central to 1987 White Paper *Defence of Australia*. While there are important differences between both papers, important parallels exist in Labor's approach to strategic policy in 1987 and 2009. This article examines Labor's debate on defence policy in the context of the 1987 White Paper, when the author was Minister for Defence, and traces the influence of the ideas and settlements of that time to the present 2009 White Paper. Core elements of these ideas relate to Labor's approach to self-reliance, and to the US alliance.

Force 2030, the Defence White Paper of 2009 assigns to the Australian Defence Force (ADF) as its principal task:

to deter and defeat armed attacks on Australia by conducting independent military operations without relying on the combat or combat support forces of other countries. This means that the ADF has to be able to control our air and sea approaches against credible adversaries in the defence of Australia, to the extent required to safeguard our territory, critical sea lanes, population and infrastructure.¹

This reprises in spirit the opening paragraph of *The Defence of Australia 1987*:

This Government's policy of defence self-reliance gives priority to the ability to defend ourselves with our own resources. Australia must have the military capability to prevent an enemy from attacking us successfully in our sea and air approaches, gaining a foothold on our territory, or extracting political concessions from us through the use of military force. These are uniquely Australian interests and Australia must have the independent military capability to defend them.²

Embedded in *Force 2030* are concepts which resonate in the 1987 paradigm—self-reliance; defence in depth; a maritime focus for our defence forces; focus on an area of primary strategic significance; attention again to the industrial base of self-reliance; and the rigorous calculation of the mutual benefits of our principal alliance relationship, that with the United States, where advantage is seen less in guarantees than in enhancing our forces' capabilities.

¹ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Defence White Paper 2009 (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2009), p. 13.

² Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), p. 1.

The strategic circumstances of the two are so different it is tempting to see the one as irrelevant to the other. The differences in Australia's geopolitical position over twenty years are massive. The 1987 White Paper was written during the last spasm of the Cold War. The 2009 White Paper is written with seventeen years experience of the post Cold War world, against a background of frequent and continuing Australian military deployments outside its area of primary strategic significance. A defence white paper, however, is not simply a product of a dispassionate view by defence officials of the nations' defence needs. It is a document approved by a political cabinet and reflects at least in part the ideological perspectives and internal political settlement of the party in power. *Defence of Australia* represented the settlement of deeply fraught debates within the Australian Labor Party. Its content entered the conscious and sub-conscious approaches of then and future generations of Labor politicians.

Partisan Continuity/Discontinuity in Defence White Papers?

This partisan component is apparently belied by the stress placed on continuity and bipartisanship that surrounded the presentation of the two White Papers. Bipartisanship is a valuable commodity in defence planning in a democracy. The capabilities foreshadowed have a time trajectory intended to span a period entailing governments of both persuasions. In announcing Labor's intention to commission a new white paper on election, Kevin Rudd as opposition leader did not challenge the assumptions of the 2000 White Paper in its day, merely that circumstances had changed and adjustments were needed.³ The 1987 White Paper explicitly attributed the concept of self-reliance to its predecessor's 1976 Defence White Paper.⁴

In fact both governments were more concerned with the elements of discontinuity from a disciplined approach to self-reliance by their predecessors. The image of a Liberal Party constantly hankering after positioning that would structure Australia's forces around a politically appealing expeditionary opportunity is never far from Labor calculations.

More than the simple effluxion of time motivated this government's belief in a need for a new White Paper. They shared a calculation made by Hugh White on the Howard Government:

Over the past seven years the Howard Government was much more willing than any peace-time predecessor to commit funds to major defence acquisitions, but without careful analysis of costs, benefits or trade offs.

³ Australian Labor Party, *Labor's Plan for Defence*, Election 2007 Policy Document, November 2007, p. 2.

⁴ Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, p. 4, para. 1.8.

White wrote, “Sadly the more the Howard Government spent on defence, the less trouble they took to think carefully about how it was spent.”⁵

Likewise in 1987 it was not the need to update the 1976 White Paper which influenced government thinking, it was the way its Fraser Government predecessor segued off the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to announce a number of changes to fundamental elements of Australia’s force structure.⁶ Though not objected to in themselves, it was the motivation—attaching force structure to broader alliance objectives in the first instance rather than a disciplined approach to defending our approaches—that rang alarm bells in the ALP.

The Howard Government’s direction, particularly when Robert Hill as Defence Minister appeared to challenge the primary focus on defending Australia’s approaches in favour of expeditionary commitments, alarmed Labor.⁷ National security policy is nowhere near as salient in Labor internal debates now or in political debate generally as it was in the 1980s. Minister John Faulkner could move a resolution strongly supporting the Government’s Afghanistan commitment at the 2009 National Conference of the ALP and have it go through on the nod.⁸ At any conference in the 1980s, such a commitment, while likely carried, would have produced a day’s debate and divisions. Nevertheless, a commitment to ensuring that nothing of an allied expeditionary character should distort force structure planning remains visceral in modern Labor.

For example, one paragraph in *Force 2030* has jarred with some commentators. Paragraph 6.15 states:

The Government will always weigh up very carefully any request to send the ADF to fight alongside the armed forces of the United States. We have a proud record of fighting alongside one another in many campaigns. As the United States itself would expect, we would always reserve the right to take a decision based on prevailing circumstances at the time. The Government recognises that Australia can and should play its part in assisting the United States in dealing with global and regional security challenges and we have a demonstrated capacity and willingness to do so. However, we must never put ourselves in a position where the price of our own security is a

⁵ Hugh White, *The New Defence White Paper: Why We Need It and What It Needs to Do* (Sydney: Lowy Institute of International Policy, April 2008), p. 9.

⁶ Ministerial Statement, House of Reps, 19 Feb 1980, pp. 17-28.

⁷ Robert Hill, *Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence*, Address to Defence and Strategic Studies Course, Australian Defence College, Canberra, 18 June 2002.

⁸ Australian Labor Party, *National Platform and Constitution 2009*, Chapter 10: Strengthening Australia in a Changing World. The resolution in question was incorporated into the Platform at Paragraph 31, which states: “Labor believes that addressing terrorism requires a long term commitment to international efforts to stabilise Afghanistan. This requires both a military commitment and an effective strategy to build the capacity of the Afghan Government to manage its own affairs.” Discussion between author and Senator Faulkner, 27 August 2009.

requirement to put Australian troops at risk in distant theatres of war where we have no direct interests at stake.⁹

For Labor, defence self-confidence is also about foreign policy choice. This is not about failing to recognise that part of the price for the benefits of an alliance includes support in distant theatres. It is about being self-reliant enough so that judgement about the importance of any Australian interest in the expedition can be exercised. How Labor arrived at this position is the substance of this article. However, even if principles are sustained, changing times have changed circumstances. Geography is immutable but geo-politics change. There are considerable differences between the 2009 White Paper and that in 1987. Before looking at the Labor settlement of 1987 it is worth enumerating some of these. 2009 is not simply a reprise of 1987.

Differences from 1987 to 2009

Apart from technological changes, the key drivers of difference between the two white papers lies in Australia's geopolitical circumstances that are a direct product of the rise to global prominence of the Asia Pacific region and the end of the Cold War. As a result, Australia moves from being located in a strategic backwater in 1987 to being at the focal point of the core dynamic of the modern global political system.

The northern Pacific and Europe were the flashpoints of the Cold War distribution of power. The Asia Pacific region is at the centre of global economic activity and contains the most rapidly rising economic and therefore military powers. It is one thing to dominate approaches in a strategic backwater—it is another ambition altogether to predominate in the southern tier of the focal point of the global political system. The challenge to sustain a capability edge in this environment is much greater than it was in 1987. While this is not seen as overly ambitious, it has force structure consequences. The significance of cyber-space and the electro-magnetic sphere, the capacity to manage systems of systems and the number and sophistication of modern platforms in all maritime dimensions is of an order of magnitude more substantial in *Force 2030*.

The real contrast can be seen in the treatment of China and other rising Asia Pacific regional powers. There were none in 1987. They existed in the backwater or the umbra of the Superpowers, largely internally focussed in security terms. In *Defence of Australia*, there are two brief, minor mentions of China. The most significant is in paragraph 2.19 where “our own developing relations with China are all matters of substantial interest to the government”.¹⁰ Not defence interest, however. In *Force 2030*, the rise of China as an economic and military power, impacting on the long term

⁹ Department of Defence, *Force 2030*, p. 47, para. 6.15.

¹⁰ Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, p. 13.

distribution of power, merits its own section. It is not hostile and the section is emphatically built around the idea of engagement. However, the government is cautious.

The pace, scope and structure of China's military modernisation have the potential to give its neighbours cause for concern if not carefully explained, and if China does not reach out to others to build confidence regarding its military plans.¹¹

The “primary operational environment” for the ADF appears to fall short of China’s approaches, but as *Force 2030* suggests,

the area should not be considered to impose a fixed operating boundary. Depending on developments in the Asia/Pacific region over the next two decades, Australia might need to selectively project military power or demonstrate strategic presence beyond our primary operational environment. For example, this might occur in maritime South East Asia...¹²

On this basis, China’s and Australia’s military interests intersect in the South China Seas.

This zone was of detailed interest in the 1987 White Paper but then it was the Soviet maritime presence that attracted attention, particularly its facilities at Cam Ranh Bay. As the government justified to its allies the value of independent Australian capabilities, this featured heavily in explanations to the United States. Deployments under the Five Power Defence Arrangements with Malaysia and Singapore, and Australia’s surveillance activities in the region were sold as a direct contribution to the strength of the Western Alliance.

In political terms, stressing Australia’s activity in South East Asia was a vital part of the argument to the American administration that *Defence of Australia* was not isolationist. It was portrayed as of value to the Western alliance particularly given American reluctance to heavily engage with the region. At the time it was anticipated that this would be the main Australian forward commitment and it was assumed Australia would act alone. “The development of our independent military capabilities ... in the region are also beneficial to US security concerns.”¹³ When subsequently I sought advice from the Department of Defence, a few months after the White Paper’s release, on options for activity in the Persian Gulf should the Americans request it, part of the advice back to me questioned the advisability of considering it. It was suggested that such action might confuse the hard won endorsement of Secretary of State George Shultz and Defense

¹¹ Department of Defence, *Force 2030*, p. 34, para. 4.26.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 52, para. 6.46.

¹³ Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, p. 5.

Secretary Caspar Weinberger for the strategy and programme outlined in the White Paper.¹⁴

Provision was made for such forward commitments.

The type of Australian force structure required to protect our interests in our area of military interest entails substantial capabilities for operations further afield. For example, our guided missile frigates (FFGs) ... are capable of effective participation in a US carrier battle group well distant from Australian shores.¹⁵

It would be correct to say that when *Defence of Australia* was written, it was not considered that such events would be frequent nor for that matter, would be independent or allied commitments to peace-keeping or interventionist activities closer to home.

Herein lies another important difference between the two White Papers. As will be argued below, the 1987 paper was the final settlement of the best part of two decades of Labor deliberation on Australia's post Vietnam War and Nixon Doctrine strategic and military posture. External involvements were considered with great caution and non-anticipation of extensive calls. *Force 2030* was written after 20 years of considerable Australian activities external to Australia, within and without our area of strategic interest.

While *Force 2030* still carries *Defence of Australia's* caveats around these engagements, it anticipates that regular active judgement will be required on these matters. It has to encompass a long standing and continuing engagement in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. It also has to comprehend continuing involvement in stabilisation activities in East Timor and the South Pacific.

In force structure terms this latter point produces the major, non-technology driven difference between the two White Papers.

Such operations create a requirement for predominantly land force elements to conduct combat operations to restore and maintain order, support forces to restore essential services, and to assist local populations, in concert with civilian agencies; air and sealift; and other capabilities necessary for stabilisation and reconstruction operations. The prolonged nature of some stabilisation tasks means that we must maintain depth in certain military capabilities, to allow the rotation and sustainment of forces over time.¹⁶

In case this new approach is not clear, *Force 2030* continues,

¹⁴ Patrick Walters, 'US Praise for Aust Defence Strategy', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 1987, quoted in Kim Beazley, 'Operation Sandglass: Old History, Contemporary Lessons', *Security Challenges*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Spring 2008), pp. 23-43.

¹⁵ Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Department of Defence, *Force 2030*, p. 59, para. 8.13.

the ADF requires adequate weight and reach to carry out such tasks, and a narrow 'defence of Australia' approach would not necessarily provide sufficient capacity to do so.¹⁷

This assessment flows through the rest of the paper. Though not co-equal in priority as a force structure determinant with the ability to dominate our maritime approaches, the capability to lead stabilisation initiatives has a major impact. Formulas around drawing on resources calibrated exclusively for the main priority is no longer adequate. Capacity for long range lift and amphibious operations while present, particularly in the 1994 revision of the 1987 White Paper, it now has a much stronger focus.

The 1987 White Paper revolved around an effort to get to grips with what was anticipated as likely direct threats to Australia. These primarily entailed "low level conflict" and "escalated low level conflict".¹⁸ This was perceived as placing "great demands on our defence capacity".¹⁹ In terms of public documents this represented the first time a serious effort was made to get to grips with a possible direct threat to the Australian continent. Discussion in *Defence of Australia* revolved around "warning time" and a detailed military strategy of "defence in depth".²⁰ Though not explicitly stated in *Defence of Australia*, the force structure and military strategy was virtually the same as what had been recommended by the Minister's consultant, Paul Dibb, in his review of Australia's defence capabilities under the rubric of a "strategy of denial".²¹

Central though these considerations were in 1987 and fundamental in Labor's internal debates, it is almost impossible to trace elements of them in *Force 2030*. They are replaced by concepts of 'risk management', and levels of 'preparedness'. Detailed military strategy on Australia's approaches is refined down to

As part of its core business, Defence will need to continue to revise and update contingency plans for the defence of Australia and its approaches, notwithstanding the imperative of managing ongoing operations. This planning work should comprehend especially difficult military problems, such as establishing sea control and our superiority in our approaches, the defence of our offshore territories and resources, and operations on and around our territory.²²

This brevity and the focus on 'risk management' instead of categories of low level conflict, reflects a further subtle difference in *Force 2030's* geostrategy. In *Defence of Australia*, the concentration on low level conflict contemplated

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 59, para. 8.14.

¹⁸ Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, pp. 24-5.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 29-31.

²¹ Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister of Defence* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986), pp. 49-52.

²² Department of Defence, *Force 2030*, p. 51, para. 6.41.

and encompassed current or foreseeable regional military capabilities. The redeployment of forces to northern and western Australian basing facilities required some explanation in our immediate region. The only external briefing I participated in as Defence Minister, after *Defence of Australia's* completion but before its release, was with my counterpart in Indonesia. It was too close to the bone not to give our neighbour warning of its content. Despite the appreciation of Australia's courtesy, media reaction in Indonesia was quite hostile and the government, quite cool.

'Risk management' in *Force 2030* contemplates less clearly defined scenarios, over a much longer time trajectory, and underpins calculation around a vastly more potent maritime force and strike capabilities than contemplated in *Defence of Australia*. They include multiple platforms for land strike missiles, more platforms generally, and sophisticated networking capacities to dominate Australia's approaches in the context of control, not denial. *Force 2030's* writers calculate the required force structure for a day when much greater capabilities exist in Australia's immediate region than those which were perceived as likely or immediately applicable in 1987.

This really drives the force structure in *Force 2030*, not some inflated view of a Chinese threat. It does so just as did the low-level regional scenarios in 1987. Diplomacy forces circumspection but the writers are clear: "The key problem in defence planning is how to take account of strategic risk." The key component of strategic risk is "potentially adverse changes in our strategic outlook, especially in the Asia Pacific region".²³ The time trajectory is long term. "Such changes need not come in a rush. Over time there may be developments that, individually, do not fundamentally alter the balance of risks we face, but cumulatively change our strategic outlook for the worse". One example

might be the steady acquisition by our neighbours of commercially available technologies that might materially erode our traditional strategic capability advantages. In such circumstances, we would need to assess very carefully the impacts on the ADF's ability to operate in our immediate region, and possibly adjust our plans as a consequence.²⁴

The writers then really drive home this regional focus in the next paragraph.

Major strategic surprises are always possible and strategic shocks should be expected at some stage over the foreseeable future. In the early 1980s, no one was seriously predicting the end of the Cold War, or the disintegration of the Soviet Union a decade later. It would be unwise to act on the basis that there is no credible risk of the international environment changing in ways that would increase the threat of armed attack on Australia or otherwise threaten our strategic interests in significant ways.²⁵

²³ Ibid., p. 27, para. 3.7.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 27, para. 3.8.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 27, para. 3.9.

The public response, both in Australia and in the region has tended to stress the breadth of the geographic area covered in *Force 2030*'s calculation.²⁶ A careful reading of these paragraphs might suggest that the writers were thinking long term but closer to home. They are hedging in the force structure against surprises that would affect the capacity for Australia to control the military environment in its immediate approaches. Even if not as detailed as its 1987 counterpart, this still prioritises the defence of Australia's approaches. The paper still disciplines force structure, however the government's focus has subtly changed from a defensive operation in a relatively benign environment in 1987 consistent with a concept of denial, to a more long term environment calculated as potentially very difficult but with a force structure capable nevertheless of control.

The defence of Australia's maritime approaches was almost the whole preoccupation of *Defence of Australia*. As we have seen, *Force 2030* assigns it top priority but the document's most detailed preoccupation is with managing the issues involved with stabilisation operations and deployments further afield as well as the new challenge in cyberspace, the electromagnetic sphere and networking to maximise platform capabilities. Likewise long-range strike, present as a strategic weight and deterrence issue but subordinate in *Defence of Australia* has much greater importance in *Force 2030*. There is no element of 'denial' in *Force 2030*. It is about 'control'.

Nevertheless, lest the focus on distant engagements confuse priorities altogether, *Force 2030* does establish 1987-like discipline when the capacity to lead stabilisation efforts blends into action to support allies further afield. It is a significant indication that such commitments might draw the force structure in unacceptable and expensive directions when *Force 2030*'s writers bluntly state:

the Government has decided that it is not a principal task for the ADF to be generally prepared to deploy to the Middle East, or regions such as Central and South Asia or Africa, in circumstances where it has to engage in ground operations against heavily armed adversaries located in crowded urban environments. This entails a requirement to engage in high-intensity close combat which brings with it the risk of an unsustainable level of casualties for an army the size of Australia's.²⁷

A key feature of defence self-reliance in the 1987 White Paper was Defence Industry Policy. Defence industry policy in 1987 was placed at the heart of reforms of Australia's manufacturing industry which had suffered greatly in the 1983/84 recession. Protectionism and lack of modernity in general government industry policy was to be replaced by innovation, export focus and industrial relations reform. In this mix defence projects were to "bring to industry important technology, introduce new equipment and skills and

²⁶ Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Regional Reactions to the Australian Defence White Paper 2009*, <<http://www.aspi.org.au/research/spf.aspx>> [Accessed 23 September 2009].

²⁷ Department of Defence, *Force 2030*, p. 56, para. 7.23.

develop expertise in aspects of project management and quality control.”²⁸ A reformed defence industry, as well as producing savings for defence, would be capable of constructing new high capacity platforms such as submarines and frigates. It was such a driver of general reform that the first enterprise agreement in the new more decentralised industrial relations system was signed at the privatised Williamstown Naval Dockyard.²⁹ Australia’s industrial strength was an essential component of self-reliance. *Force 2030* recognises the

important role that defence industry plays in support of ADF capability ... growing the capacity and competitiveness of local defence industry is a policy objective of the Government and will require ongoing investment in skills development, workforce growth and improved productivity. The Government will remain closely engaged in defence industry policy to ensure that Australian industry provides the maximum support possible to the ADF while maintaining control of cost, schedule and quality.³⁰

This appears thin gruel by comparison. There is a heavy focus on value for money in *Force 2030*, and optimising off the shelf purchases. Policy is also centred on sustainment of a very active ADF. Self-reliance revolves around the sparsely defined Priority Industry Capabilities essential for maintaining operational forces as well as our strategic base. Much less here about Australian industry needs, more about Defence force essentials.

Context is important here. In two decades industry policy has changed the basis of Australian defence industry. Then it was essentially nationalised. Now foreign primes and a plethora of export capable small and medium enterprises have emerged as a result of the previous industry policy. The requirement for new maritime capabilities is likely to see something of the 1980s spirit re-emerge. What won’t re-emerge is the 1980s Labor Party fascination with it. Industry policy had a political imperative. The Union movement and federal Caucus contained strong elements on the left suspicious of alliance commitments. Support for a self-reliant Defence force delivering industrial change was a Caucus fixation. Defence procurement and policy generally barely fills a contemporary Caucus committee meeting. In the 1980s, it was essential to establish Ministerial liaison committees which brought the political and industrial Labor movement together with the bureaucracy.³¹

Context is also important when examining the two White Papers’ approaches to the core alliance issue of the Joint Facilities. They constitute the single most important contribution Australia makes to the US intelligence effort but

²⁸ Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, p. 75.

²⁹ Chris Coulthard-Clark, *Breaking Free: Transforming Australia’s Defence Industry, the ADI Story* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1999), p. 83.

³⁰ Department of Defence, *Force 2030*, p. 127, para. 16.18.

³¹ Peter Yule and Derek Woolner, *The Collins Class Submarine Story: Steel, Spies and Spin* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 53-4.

merited no direct mention in the *Force 2030* assessment of the alliance and the value to Australia of US extended deterrence. In *Defence of Australia*, the rationale for hosting the facilities appears in great detail.³² Two things are noteworthy here. Firstly this was Australia's commitment to the heart of the Cold War strategic balance. Pine Gap remains of immense importance but that central strategic focus passed with the demise of the Cold War. Secondly the 1987 White Paper involved laying out the settlement of the post-Vietnam internal party debate on the Western alliance. In Labor terms it established a framework which committed the government to the western position on the basis that the facilities contribute to stable deterrence and support arms control. Within the Labor Party and more broadly in the country this was a fraught issue and required attention in a core political as well as strategic document. As a defining element of party loyalty, this has passed. There is little interest now, though the parts of *Force 2030* which contemplated reliance on the US's extended deterrence system in a nuclear context might have provoked more detailed analysis on the role played by Pine Gap.

That little is said about the joint facilities in *Force 2030*, by comparison with its 1987 predecessor, perhaps reflects Pine Gap's change in status as a nuclear target. This prospect was fully canvassed in the party and public in 1987, based on what was known of then-Soviet targeting doctrine. What is known now suggests it is a target no longer.

The differences enumerated above are all clearly related to two decades of change in the global strategic environment, the practical experience of manifold forward commitments by the ADF within and without Australia's immediate region, and changing defence technology. The essential elements of the 1987 legacy are restored. These are a disciplined strategy underpinning force structure with warnings against haphazard distracting acquisitions. A primary focus on maritime defence. A cost framework that relies on reform to deliver an important component of the plan's affordability. All predicated on a ministerial and departmental understanding that profligacy and therefore deviation is unsustainable fiscally. Short of an unexpected catastrophe in relation to basic strategic calculations, nothing else can be expected.

Settling the ALP Internal Defence Debate—1987

What is missing is any vigorous Labor party debate around *Force 2030*'s writing and conclusions. It was produced inside Defence and determined by Cabinet. There is no evidence of a prelude in Conference or Caucus debate. No requirement to manage it by a preliminary independent review such as that conducted by Paul Dibb prior to *Defence of Australia*. That none has been needed is a tribute to the robust legacy of the 1987

³² Department of Defence, *Defence of Australia*, pp. 10-2.

document. Its scope is firmly embedded in the outlook of ALP leaders and rank and file alike.

What the 1987 document did was devise a framework in which alliance arrangements would be calibrated in a way that made collaboration acceptable to a party deeply wounded by debates on the Vietnam War and over associations, albeit indirect, with nuclear weapons systems. It also provided a formula for assuring party members concerned about a capacity to defend the nation without the apparent distortions of short-term, politically self-serving, alleged adventures, that partisan opponents were perceived as prone to. Ironically this formula laid the ground work for support for far more frequent forward deployments outside the context of global war than had ever occurred before. In short, it provided the national security framework for a middle power not satisfied with an isolationist approach, determined to play a role in regional and global affairs which might include an element of military engagement.

On the American alliance generally, *Defence of Australia* enshrined the notion that it was futile to calculate the conditions around which an American security guarantee might apply. The point was no would-be enemy could arrive at any greater certainty than Australia could and that to engage without that certainty would be foolhardy. More important, the alliance involved an exchange of military benefits which immensely and irreplaceably enhanced Australia's independent military capability. The price of occasional commitments was calculable and the risks of engagement acceptable.

On the joint installations, that they might make Australia a nuclear target was acknowledged. Nuclear conflagration was seen as unlikely and if it occurred, the direct damage to Australia could be lived with. Further, the presence of the facilities made the unlikely less likely. In furtherance of this point the facilities contributed to stability of the nuclear system by assisting with US second strike capabilities, lengthening early warning and achieving verification of arms control agreements. They did impose on the Australian government an obligation to have full knowledge of and consent for their activities and an understanding of US nuclear strategy.

In regard to the strategy of defence self-reliance, it probably helped acceptance of the direction of *Defence of Australia* that the American administration questioned the Australian government so intensively at the time. The Caucus was probably aware of that fact even more clearly than

the public. I have written extensively about both these matters and don't intend to rehearse them here.³³ However several points are worth noting.

The discussion with the Americans prior to the White Paper went to the heart of the military strategy and the maritime defence of Australia's approaches. It provided an opportunity to tease out in detail the consequences of Nixon's Guam Doctrine, which was in essence that in areas not central to the Cold War military confrontation, the United States, post-Vietnam, expected allies to provide for their own defence in the first instance. The Americans had not been confronted in such detail with the consequences of their own policy as the Dibb Report did on the self-reliance they ostensibly expected of their allies. The Dibb Report held up a mirror to the Nixon Doctrine. It did not help that it came on the heels of the New Zealand nuclear ships visits imbroglio. It did help that Secretary Weinberger had reaffirmed the Nixon formula shortly beforehand.³⁴

Two decades on, the critical character of the American response to Australia's strategic planning seems unusual. The coherence of the Western alliance system is not as salient now, though still important. Then it was fundamental. Eventual American acceptance was a product of several factors. One already alluded to was that the Australian force structure permitted a political decision by the Australian government to commit forces further afield and their notification that that would be made clear in the White Paper. Likewise the Australian willingness to play a role independently in supporting western interests in maritime South East Asia was important.³⁵ Further it was clear Australia would not go down the New Zealand road on joint activities and was prepared to entertain port visits, B52 practice flights and a range of other supportive activities for American deployments. Most important was continuing Australian preparedness to burden-share with the Joint facilities and the government's willingness to defend them against considerable domestic agitation, an agitation which drew strength from the New Zealand example.

It is lost in the mists of time now, but in April 1986 Secretary Weinberger delivered arguably the most significant speech to the Australia National Press Club made by a senior American official. Weinberger mounted a comprehensive and detailed defence of American strategic policy including a study of Soviet counter capabilities. He also stressed the Administration's

³³ See for example The Coral Bell Lecture 2008, by Professor the Hon Kim Beazley, 'Thinking Security: Influencing National Strategy from the Academy: An Australian Experience', (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2008).

³⁴ Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, Address to the National Press Club, Washington, 28 November 1984, cited in Kim Beazley, 'Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities', Report and Ministerial Statement, House of Representatives, *Debates* (3 June 1986), p. 4420.

³⁵ Kim Beazley 'The Hawke Years: Foreign Affairs and Defence', in Ryan and Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective* (Melbourne: Pluto Press Australia, 2003), pp. 361-2.

commitment to avoiding nuclear war. The substance of the speech, however, was directly and indirectly pointed at argument in Australia over hosting the joint facilities and the New Zealand example. He did not engage the Australian objections to joining President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative and brushed aside questions inviting him to do so.

He saw allies making four contributions. The first was to "recognise the dynamic character of the Soviet nuclear threat" and its "acquisition of offensive military strength, especially in the Pacific. More specially, really, in the Pacific than anywhere else right now".³⁶ The second "contribution that non-nuclear states can make is to understand what nuclear deterrence is all about. It is not about fighting nuclear war." The third involved non-nuclear allies making a contribution through "their own participation in the fabric of deterrence". In selected cases this might "entail risk-sharing and burden-sharing, committing resources or key facilities—or making parts and services available—all of these things which enhance the defence of the entire Pacific, and indeed the entire West". Finally it required

a recognition—and a rejection—of the nearsightedness of those who would seek safety under the protection of our deterrent while denying its effectiveness and complicating the task of maintaining it—of those who think that by putting their heads in the sand they can avoid the consequences of war.

He then laid out what he thought Australia did and by implication should continue to do. Australia contributed

by developing and maintaining conventional military capabilities you have provided a strong counterweight that potential aggressors must take into account. Through our joint facilities you have had a direct and significant effect on enhancing nuclear stability, contributing strategic early warning, assisting arms control monitoring and verification, and supporting both our navies' operations. And finally, by recognising how vital is access to your shores and services by those who support freedom, you have enabled us to deploy forces in the Pacific which undergird all of our mutual interests.³⁷

The speech came one month after the publication of the Dibb report; twelve months after a vigorous argument over the testing of the MX missile with Australian help; several months before the establishment of the AUSMIN process to replace ANZUS consultations and a year before the publication of the White Paper. It was followed several months later by a fairly bruising session in San Francisco when a comprehensive discussion occurred of Australian strategy.³⁸ The upshot of that discussion was acceptance of the Australian direction which was made clear after the White Paper was published.

³⁶ Caspar Weinberger, US Secretary of Defense, Address to the Australian National Press Club, 11 April 1986, Canberra, Australia.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The Coral Bell Lecture 2008, p. 22.

By the time these events had occurred the approaches intended by the Australian government had largely been settled with majority support in the broader Labor Party. Such coherence had not appeared likely in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Whitlam government. Whitlam had extended the joint facilities, despite having said as Prime Minister that

The Australian Government takes the attitude that there should not be foreign military bases, stations, installations in Australia. We honour agreements covering existing stations. We do not favour the extension or prolongation of any of those existing ones.³⁹

Whitlam fell with many ALP members convinced of a CIA involvement, exchanges between the Whitlam and Nixon governments over bombing campaigns in North Vietnam, critical views of any post-Vietnam forward engagements, suspicion of conservative manipulation for domestic purposes of foreign policy events and pride in Whitlam's independent initiatives in foreign affairs. At the same time it was recognised that to hope to return to office required resolving these national security issues to the public's satisfaction.

The formulas which underpinned the 1987 paper were in large measure a product of this direct and indirect interaction through front bench briefings and parliamentary and caucus committee interactions with some members of the Australian academic community, Bob O'Neill, Ross Babbage, Geoffrey Jukes, Des Ball among others and ultimately Paul Dibb.⁴⁰ Many were still influential when *Force 2030* was written.

The academics provided the detail behind the structure as well as much of the structure itself. It had to be robust enough to sustain an argument that policy so based would provide significant space for independent Australian initiative on arms control and South East Asian issues. Likewise that their pursuit really would contribute to global stability in a dangerous world where alternative isolationist positions would not. The ability to convince a majority of the foreign policy fascinated ALP members was much assisted by the broader ramifications of self-reliance for the industrially concerned, who included many members of the left of the Party.

Many of these issues have lost all political saliency with the modern generation of Labor politicians. The model, however, is deeply embedded in their thinking. This would be particularly the case with the two Defence Ministers who came into office after *Force 2030's* release. John Faulkner was a junior defence minister to Robert Ray. Greg Combet began his union

³⁹ Cited in Peter King, 'Credibility and Other Gaps: The Labor Government and the Bases', in Robert O'Neill (ed.), *The Strategic Nuclear Balance, an Australian Perspective* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1975), p. 119.

⁴⁰ See Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*.

career in the thick of it. Both are conscious of the tough financial constraints around defence and wary, therefore, of moving outside blueprints.

Force 2030, like its predecessors, is the product primarily of writing in the Department of Defence. Its strategic judgements and its force structure recommendations derive from the civilians and military in that organisation and to a degree reflect a consensus of strictly non-partisan origins. But they are also political documents of a place and time, delivered by governments with their own political histories. They must be acceptable to the ways the politicians who approve them think. The political history of *Force 2030* has its origins in the deliberations and concerns of Australia's last Cold War government. The perspectives developed then which carved out space for independent Australian initiatives in the most difficult of environments for that endeavour, not surprisingly, still resonate.

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