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Transforming the US Military Implications for the Asia-Pacific

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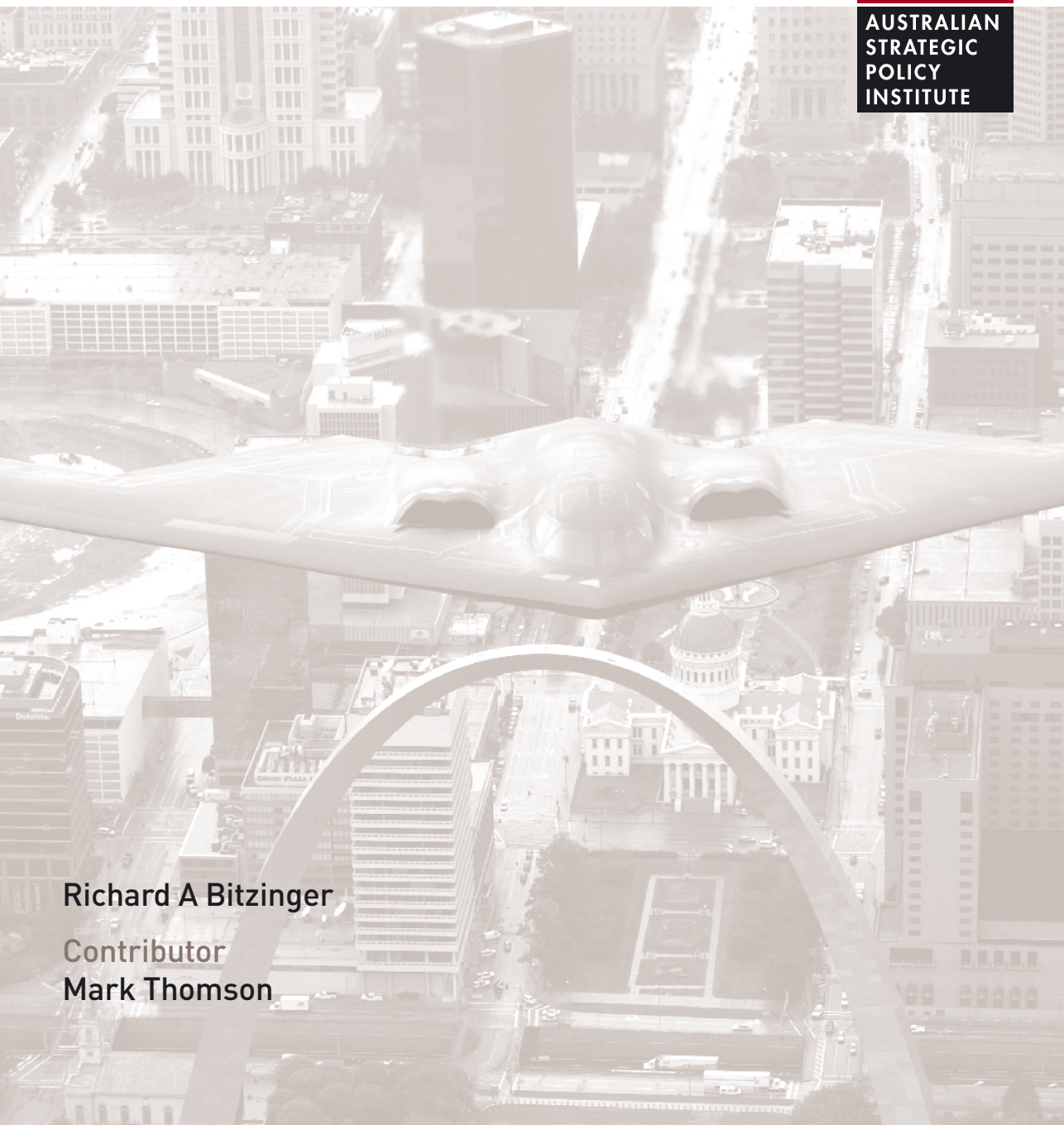
Cover image: A B-2 Stealth bomber flies over the St. Louis Arch on Aug. 10 2006. The B-2 flyover was one of several events celebrating Air Force Week in St. Louis. US Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Justin D. Pyle

Transforming the US Military

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Mark Thomson



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Director's introduction

In January 2001, the newly-elected US President George W Bush made transformation the central plank of US national defence strategy and outlined a vision for the United States armed forces. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld established the Office of Force Transformation in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

The idea behind these moves is that the US military must shift from the operational concepts, processes, weapons systems and military structures designed to fight Cold War enemies to a much more high-tech, smaller and more nimble force.

Is US transformation going in the right direction, and what does it mean for allied and potential coalition partners?

The 'next generation' transformed military concept has now attracted a number of critics who argue that moving towards a smaller more lethal force has not lived up to its promise, especially in the post-war phase in Iraq. The US military, it is suggested, is very effective at defeating conventional forces in the open field, but not nearly as good at dealing with unconventional threats.

Whether the transformation agenda is losing momentum is debatable, but what seems clear is that the capabilities gap between the US military and many allied and potential coalition partners is widening, while at the same time transformation presumes increased cooperation with multinational partners.

This report, written by American scholar Richard Bitzinger, examines what changes in US force posture and force structure might mean for allies and partnering states in the Asia-Pacific.

For Australia there might be hard choices to make in how far we should adapt our military capabilities given US transformation strategies and their implications. Mark Thomson, of ASPI, takes up this theme in a short counter-point to Bitzinger's analysis.

I thank both authors for their contributions to this debate. As always, responsibility for the views expressed in this report rests with the authors and me.

Peter Abigail

Director

Photo opposite: The Global Hawk unmanned aircraft awaits fuelling. US Defense Dept photo

Executive summary

Under the stewardship of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, transformation became the guiding principle of the US military.

Ongoing developments and breakthroughs in such areas as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, precision-strike, stealth technologies and command and control have made the US military the most formidable armed force in the world.

One result of this transformation process is a significant change in the US military force posture, particularly overseas. As flexibility, agility and mobility become more important requirements, maintaining large numbers of US soldiers around the globe has become less imperative.

Overseas bases, while perhaps becoming fewer and smaller, more austere and more impermanent, will be increasingly valued as forward staging areas for expeditionary operations.

The US military will likely come to rely even more than ever on its allies and partnering states. Countries will be asked to provide forward operating sites or cooperative security locations for US troops, and this will probably mean closer coordination in logistics, training and host-nation security.

US forces will increasingly depend on allied troops to fight alongside them, and they'll also expect those troops to accompany them on a variety of expeditionary operations. Interoperability, particularly when it comes to regional or even out-of-area contingencies, will therefore become a much higher priority for the US military in the future, and the importance and criticality of allies and partners around the world will, if anything, increase with the ongoing transformation of the US military.

Defence transformation, therefore, has major implications for the future course of US military and security policy, particularly when it comes to the Asia–Pacific region. As the US continues to transform its forces, this process will have a profound impact on the ways in which US forces operate in the region, including their future basing and deployment, where and how they'll operate, and what kind of equipment they'll require.

Changes in the way the US military fights will pressure allies and partners to re-examine and reassess how and where they may be able to support US forces in the future.

Defence transformation may have unintended consequences by unearthing partnering states' long-submerged security demands or military aspirations, complicating defence cooperation and interoperability. US defence transformation efforts could be a guide for states in peer competition with the US: they might attempt to use such concepts as network centric warfare and reconnaissance-strike complex to gain military advantages over US forces in future regional conflicts.

The report examines how US defence transformation affects the leading nations and militaries in the Asia–Pacific region, and how those countries and their armed forces are responding to a transforming US military. This two-way dynamic will have repercussions for regional security that will be felt for many years to come.

US defence transformation will affect a number of critical regional security concerns, such as alliance relationships and interoperability, regional competition and cooperation, and local force modernisation activities. US forces in the Asia–Pacific region are undergoing significant changes in terms of force structure, roles and missions and operating concepts, and the like. These are developments that countries like Australia should continue to monitor closely and to which they should react cautiously.



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The belief that modern militaries are on the cusp of a ‘revolution in military affairs’ (RMA), driven in particular by recent advances in information technologies (IT), is an increasingly powerful and persuasive school of military thought. For more than a decade, it has been fashionable—almost obligatory, in fact—to acknowledge the so-called IT–RMA when talking about the future of warfare and war fighting. Consequently, the idea that armed forces must be ‘transformed’ along the lines of the IT–RMA and other technological breakthroughs has taken particular hold in the minds of many leading proponents of military reform.

Nowhere has this commitment to defence transformation been more pervasive than in the US Department of Defense during the current Bush Administration.

Nowhere has this commitment to defence transformation been more pervasive than in the US Department of Defense during the current Bush Administration. Under the stewardship of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, transformation became the guiding principle of the US military. Terms such as *information superiority*, *situational awareness*, *network-centric warfare*, *precision-strike*, *deployability*, *flexibility* and *jointness* were given increasing credence in Rumsfeld’s Defense Department, and belief in the power of defence transformation to

Photo opposite: A US Air Force F-22A Raptor refuels inflight from a KC-135R Stratotanker during exercise Northern Edge 2006 on June 9, 2006. The joint exercise is one of a series of US Pacific Command exercises that prepare joint forces to respond to crises in the Asian Pacific region. US Defense Dept photo

bring about a dramatic expansion in the capabilities and effectiveness of the US military almost became an article of faith.

The transformation of the US armed forces was initially promoted as nothing less than a fundamental shift in the way wars would be fought in the future. Nothing was sacred: every piece of defence dogma was on the table for debate and discussion—force structure, organisation, equipment, budgets, doctrine and strategy. Like the RMA, defence transformation was to be a process of discontinuous and disruptive change, but the end result was supposed to be a US military capable of wringing the maximum effectiveness from the tools it was given, and which would cement the ascendancy of US military power for the next several decades.

Of course, it hasn't worked out that way. In fact, defence transformation has been less a process of discontinuous change and more a course of evolutionary and sustaining change. Nevertheless, the absence of a true RMA doesn't mean that the changes being enacted inside the US military are any less significant. Ongoing developments and breakthroughs in such areas as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, precision-strike, stealth technologies and, above all, command and control have clearly made the US military the most formidable armed force in the world. And militaries don't need to embrace the IT–RMA paradigm in order to derive considerable new capabilities and effectiveness from their modernisation efforts—the acquisition of new reconnaissance–strike systems or the embrace of network-centric warfare (NCW) could, in the long run, truly alter the character and conduct of warfare.

One result of this transformation process that is already evident is a significant change in the US military force posture, particularly overseas. As flexibility, agility and mobility become more important requirements, maintaining large numbers of US soldiers around the globe has become less imperative. At the same time, troops are less likely to be used for static defence in a particular country or region, and more apt to be deployed to any number of contingencies around the world. Hence, overseas bases, while perhaps becoming fewer and smaller, more austere and more impermanent, will be increasingly valued as forward staging areas for expeditionary operations.

Defence transformation, therefore, has major implications for the future course of US military and security policy, particularly when it comes to the Asia–Pacific region.

Paradoxically, such force posture and force structure developments mean that the US military will likely come to rely even more than ever on its allies and partnering states. Countries will be asked to provide forward operating sites or cooperative security locations for US troops, and this will probably mean closer coordination in logistics, training and host-nation security. More importantly, US forces will increasingly depend on allied troops to fight alongside them, and they'll also expect those troops to accompany them on a variety of expeditionary operations. Interoperability, particularly when it comes to regional or even out-of-area contingencies, will therefore become a much higher priority for the US military

in the future, and the importance and criticality of allies and partners around the world will, if anything, increase with the ongoing transformation of the US military.

Defence transformation, therefore, has major implications for the future course of US military and security policy, particularly when it comes to the Asia–Pacific region. As the US continues to transform its forces, this process will have a profound impact on the ways in which US forces operate in the region, including their future basing and deployment, where and how they'll operate, and what kind of equipment they'll require. In this regard, US defence transformation—even if only a sustaining, evolutionary sort—will have a considerable impact on countries and militaries in this region. Changes in the way the US military fights will pressure allies and partners to re-examine and reassess how and where they may be able to support US forces in the future. Defence transformation and its possible impact on alliance requirements may, in turn, have unintended consequences by unearthing partnering states' long-submerged security demands or military aspirations, complicating defence cooperation and interoperability. And finally, US defence transformation efforts could be a guide for states in peer competition with the US: they might attempt to use such concepts as NCW and reconnaissance-strike complex to gain military advantages over US forces in future regional conflicts.

For all these reasons, it's important to examine how US defence transformation affects the leading nations and militaries in the Asia–Pacific region, and how those countries and their armed forces are responding to a transforming US military. This two-way dynamic will have repercussions for regional security that will be felt for many years to come.



Chapter 2

US DEFENCE TRANSFORMATION— THEORY, GOALS, IMPLEMENTATION

Defence (or military) transformation has preoccupied the US Defense Department ever since the Bush Administration took office in early 2001. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made overhauling the US military and reorienting US armed forces—in operations, capabilities, strategy, organisation and global posture—a paramount objective in the light of new 21st century security threats arising from terrorist non-state actors (such as Al Qaeda), adversarial states armed with weapons of mass destruction (such as North Korea and Iran) and the potential rise of peer competitors (such as China) (USDOD 2006a: 19–39). For these same reasons, therefore, transformation presents considerable challenges, both for the US military and for its allies, ad hoc partners and potential adversaries in the Asia–Pacific region.

What do we mean by defence transformation?

‘Defence transformation’ remains an ambiguous and elusive concept. No strong consensus exists on what the term exactly means or entails. According to the US Department of Defense’s Office of Force Transformation (the Pentagon’s primary internal body for thinking about and implementing transformation), defence transformation is:

a process that shapes the changing nature of military competition and cooperation through new combinations of concepts, capabilities, people, and organizations that exploit our nation’s advantages and protect against our asymmetric vulnerabilities to sustain our strategic position, which helps underpin peace and stability in the world. (USDOD 2004a: 2)

Photo opposite: US Navy Sailors assigned to Ships Self Defense Force stand watch aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) as the ship gets under way from Norfolk, Va., September 19, 2006. US Navy photo

However, this definition still leaves much to be desired as a guide for understanding what such transformation entails in a practical sense and why it's a critical process. Consequently, many analysts and proponents of transformation view it as simply another name for the so-called 'revolution in military affairs'. Certainly, the two terms are used increasingly interchangeably. But what, then, do we mean by the RMA, and what in particular does the *current* RMA stand for? Furthermore, is defence transformation merely the process of implementing an RMA, or does it entail other objectives and processes?

Above all, in the minds of its proponents and advocates, the defence transformation/RMA model is necessarily a process of *discontinuous, disruptive* and *revolutionary* change, as opposed to incremental, sustaining and evolutionary change. Andrew Krepinevich, for example, argues that a revolution in military affairs occurs when:

... the application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combines with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptation in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of a conflict. It does so by producing a dramatic increase ... in the combat potential and military effectiveness of armed forces. (Krepinevich 1994)

In short, defence transformation is nothing less than a 'paradigm shift' in the way US armed forces will conduct future warfare operations. As the Office of Force Transformation puts it:

In the process of transforming the way that we fight, we should emerge with a force that is more *expeditionary, agile, and lethal* than the present force and more capable of employing *operational maneuver and precision effects* capabilities to achieve victory. The battlespace is expected to be a more dispersed one, within which our forces will conduct noncontiguous, mutually supporting operations. These operations will seamlessly tie in other government agencies, as well as multinational partners ... (USDOD 2004a: 8. Emphasis in original.)

Transformation, then, is a *capabilities- or effects-based* approach; that is, a defence strategy based less on fixed threats than on the anticipated capabilities of a likely adversary and, in turn, on the capabilities that US forces need to deter or defeat such an enemy. In other words, the focus of current transformational efforts is on achieving capabilities and effects and no longer on sheer numbers, so the US military is seeking to build the following capabilities (Ross 2004: 2):

- a highly networked organism of command, control, communications, computing, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems, weapons and platforms
- improved, shared, situational awareness of the immediate battlespace and beyond
- more accurate stand-off engagement capacity
- greater speed, agility, rapid deployability and flexibility
- jointness (the ability of the various services to support each other in warfighting) and interoperability.

In this regard, the current US transformational/RMA model is inevitably linked to the emerging notions of NCW, sometimes also referred to as 'network-enabled capabilities' or 'network-based defence'—the operative word, of course, being 'networked'. According to NCW concepts, the ongoing revolution in IT has made possible significant innovation and improvement in sensors, seekers, data management, computing, communications, automation, range and precision.

NCW exploits these breakthroughs in IT in order to achieve exponential improvements in battlefield knowledge, connectivity and response. NCW, according to the Office of Force Transformation:

... generates increased combat power by networking sensors, decision makers, and shooters to achieve shared awareness, increased speed of command, high tempo of operations, greater lethality, increased survivability, and a degree of self-synchronization. (USDoD 2003a: 2)

Moreover, NCW entails the ‘linking of people, platforms, weapons, sensors and decision aids into a single network’ that ‘creates a whole that is clearly greater than the sum of its parts’, resulting in ‘networked forces that operate with increased speed and synchronisation and are capable of achieving massed effects’ (USDoD 2003a: 8). In other words, defence transformation is also intended to be *synergistic*, as it entails the integration and employment of C4ISR systems, platforms and weapons (particularly smart munitions) in ways that increase their effectiveness and capabilities beyond their individual sets. This bundling together is reminiscent of Admiral William Owens’ ‘system of systems’ concept, in that it entails the linking together of several types of discrete and even disparate systems across a broad geographical, interservice and electronic spectrum in order to create new core competencies in war fighting.

... the US defence transformational model implies more than a simple overlay of new technologies and new hardware over existing force structures; it requires fundamental changes in military doctrine, operations and organisation.

Finally, the US defence transformational model implies more than a simple overlay of new technologies and new hardware over existing force structures; it requires fundamental changes in military doctrine, operations and organisation. Hardware and technology are obviously crucial and primary components when it comes to transformation—they are, in fact, the fundamental building blocks in a modern, IT-based RMA centred on NCW and reconnaissance–strike complexes. Transformation is not supposed to be a mere techno-fix, however. Rather, it entails a fundamental change in the way a military does its business—doctrinally, organisationally and institutionally. Defence transformation, therefore, also requires advanced systems integration skills to knit together disparate military systems into complex operational networks. It demands elemental changes in the ways militaries procure critical military equipment, and reform of the national and defence technological and industrial bases that contribute to the development and production of transformational systems.

All this requires vision and leadership at the top in order to develop the basic concepts of defence transformation, to establish the crucial institutional and political momentum for implementing transformation, and to allocate the financial resources and human capital necessary for the task. Obviously, defence transformation entails much more than the ‘mere’ modernisation of a nation’s armed forces.

Beyond models and concepts: implementing transformation

Defence transformation certainly lays out an extremely ambitious and broad agenda for change. The challenge for the US military has been translating this transformational vision into a credible and effective set of capabilities, strategies and organisations. In other words, the US military can't simply 'talk the talk'; it must 'walk the walk', and do so in a way that has a real effect on the way it wages future warfare.

In this regard, the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) is truly a 'transformational' document. The QDR's executive summary lays out several new goals that are very much in keeping with those of a transformed, networked force. It calls on the US military to make several fundamental shifts in the way it operates (USDoD 2006a: vi–vii):

- From 'one size fits all' deterrence—to tailored deterrence for rogue power, terrorist networks and near-peer competitors ...
- From threat-based planning—to capabilities-based planning ...
- From a focus on kinetics—to a focus on effects ...
- From static defense, garrison forces—to mobile, expeditionary operations ...
- From major conventional combat operations—to multiple irregular, asymmetric operations ...
- From separate military Service concepts of operation—to joint and combined operations ...
- From forces that need to deconflict—to integrated, interdependent forces ...
- From an emphasis on ships, guns, tanks and planes—to focus on information, knowledge and timely, actionable intelligence ...
- From massing forces—to massing effects ...
- From determined force packages—to tailored, flexible forces ...

Overall, the QDR, together with *Joint Vision 2020*, the 2005 *National Defense Strategy*, the 2004 *Global Posture Review* and other Defense Department documents, presents a picture of a new US military that is more operationally flexible and agile; more mobile, more expeditionary and more rapidly deployable; and more capable of dealing with global as well as regional contingencies. In other words, the US military seeks to fight 'mobile high-tech wars', mostly by substituting speed for mass and information for armour.

This new strategy is already apparent in some of the US military's current and projected restructuring and procurement plans. For example, the US Army is reorganising its force structure, de-emphasising larger, more static division-sized forces in favour of new modular brigades—in particular, the Brigade Combat Team (BCT), a lighter, more deployable, more flexible and more independently operational brigade force. Some BCTs will be supported by a dedicated, integrated reconnaissance battalion, equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles and other sensors and able to provide the BCT with an integral intelligence-gathering capability. The first BCTs are being outfitted with the Stryker light armoured vehicle, which will later be replaced by the Future Combat System, a US\$150 billion program to develop a fleet of eighteen different versions of a single type of modularised light combat vehicle, which will be linked by a communications system capable of providing real-time intelligence, command

and control to troops on the move. The US Army plans to restructure into 70 BCTs (including 28 Army National Guard BCTs) and 211 support brigades (75 Regular Army, 78 National Guard and 58 Army Reserve).

At the same time, the other services are planning their own transformations. The US Navy is expanding its close-to-the-shore combat capability with the planned procurement of fifty-five Littoral Combat Ships and the creation of a new riverine force, as well as building a new class of Maritime Prepositioning Ships to aid in the rapid deployment of ground forces. The Air Force considers its two next-generation fighters—the F/A-22 and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, both of which will be armed with advanced precision-guided munitions, such as the Joint Direct Attack Munition—to be transformational systems, along with the long-term development of an unmanned combat aerial vehicle.

More important to the process of transforming the US armed forces, however, is the implementation of ‘net-centricity’, at the heart of which is the creation of the Global Information Grid (GIG).

More important to the process of transforming the US armed forces, however, is the implementation of ‘net-centricity’, at the heart of which is the creation of the Global Information Grid (GIG). The GIG is a globally connected constellation of systems and capabilities for collecting, processing, storing, disseminating, managing and sharing information within the US military and with other partners. The GIG is actually a collection of several different NCW programs, including the Transformational Satellite communication system, the Joint Tactical Radio System (which will be the backbone of the Future Combat System communication system, providing real-time, ‘on-the-move’ voice, data and video) and the Bandwidth Expansion Project (and, of course, the software to tie it all together). Net-centricity, therefore, is fundamental to shifting from a service-based information-sharing culture to one that is joint and interoperable not only across the entire spectrum of the US military, but also with other federal and local security-related and law enforcement authorities, and even foreign partners.

Implications for the Asia–Pacific region

Transformation has obvious, far-reaching implications for America’s allies and partners around the world. Increasingly, the US military must be prepared to manage both global and regional contingency operations, and this will greatly affect not only how US forces are used and deployed overseas, but also how allies and prospective partners cooperate and interoperate with them.

On the one hand, as the US military becomes more mobile and more expeditionary, the need to base large numbers of standing US forces overseas becomes less crucial. As Mikyoung Kim so succinctly puts it:

The maintenance of a large number of American soldiers around the globe has become less important, as the deployability of agile and nimble units will play a more crucial role in the case of contingency. In addition, improved command and control (C2) capabilities based on quality intelligence will support the agility of smaller operational units in near-real time. The logistical element of ‘sense and attack’ radically diminishes the relevance of ground combat troops stationed at overseas bases. (Kim 2005)

One aspect of the US military transformation, therefore, will be a sizable reduction in the number of US forces permanently deployed overseas, particularly in East Asia, as the US military consolidates and rationalises its forces in the Asia–Pacific region. For example, the US Army plans to pull 12,500 troops out of South Korea, while the US Marines will relocate 8,000 marines of the III Marine Expeditionary Force from Okinawa to Guam by 2014. In South Korea, US Forces Korea (USFK) plans to move the bulk of its forces from Seoul and merge them in two main operating areas south of the Han River. USFK has already deployed its troops out of the Demilitarized Zone and turned over control and security of the Panmunjon Joint Security Area to the Republic of Korea military. It also intends to move the USFK Command headquarters, United Nations Command and Combined Forces Command out of the Yongsan Garrison in downtown Seoul, and the headquarters of the 8th Army is being transferred from Seoul to Hawaii.

One aspect of the US military transformation, therefore, will be a sizable reduction in the number of US forces permanently deployed overseas, particularly in East Asia ...

In Okinawa, after many years of debate and negotiation, the US has agreed to vacate Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, and to move its air operations to two new runways to be constructed on ocean bays adjacent to Camp Schwab. The US Navy will relocate its Carrier Air Wing from the Atsugi Air Facility to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

At the same time, the US territory of Guam will become more important in US strategic thinking about the Asia–Pacific region; there’s already a nearly continuous presence of B-1 and B-52 bombers on the island, and it will soon become home to the 8,000 marines (and their families) to be removed from Okinawa. Guam will also become a forward basing area for additional attack and cruise-missile submarines to be deployed to the Pacific area of operations.

As a result of the ongoing transformation of the US military, the importance and criticality of allies and partners in the Asia–Pacific region have increased. Some US troops and marines may be brought home or relocated, but overseas bases and other types of facilities are still essential for rapid reaction and deployability, flexibility and sustainability. In particular, in building the capacity to respond to both global and regional contingencies, overseas facilities will be increasingly important as forward staging areas for US forces. In other words,

US forces will still be deployed to defend in critical areas, such as the Korean peninsula, but they will also use local host-nation facilities as jumping-off points to engage in operations elsewhere in the region and even beyond.

As a result of the ongoing transformation of the US military, the importance and criticality of allies and partners in the Asia–Pacific region have increased.

The 2004 *Global Posture Review* (USDoD 2004b) envisions US forces relying on three types of overseas facilities in the future:

- *Main Operating Base*: comprises permanently stationed combat forces and a ‘robust’ infrastructure, characterised by command and control structures, family support facilities and strengthened force protection measures. Examples include Kadena Air Base in Okinawa and Camp Humphreys in South Korea.
- *Forward Operating Site*: an austere but ‘expandable’ and ‘warm’ facility, with a limited US military support presence and possibly pre-positioned equipment. The site would support rotational rather than permanently stationed forces, and perhaps also be a focus for bilateral and regional training. One example is the Sembawang port facility in Singapore.
- *Cooperative Security Location*: a contingency access point for staging operations; it would maintain few, if any, US personnel, and be maintained mostly by contractor or host-nation support.

As a consequence of the *Global Posture Review*, for example, USFK plans to invest US\$11 billion to upgrade its forces on the Korean peninsula, in order to make them lighter and more mobile and to increase their firepower. A rotational Stryker Brigade will be deployed to South Korea, and a pre-positioned supply ship will also be located there. In addition, USFK will augment its capabilities with additional M-1A1 tanks, improved Bradley infantry fighting vehicles and AH-64D Longbow attack helicopters.

Besides the continuing need for overseas facilities, the US military clearly envisions a larger and even more integral role for its allies and partners in implementing transformation. Future US missions will likely involve more and closer cooperation, not less, with Asia–Pacific allies and friendly states. As the 2006 QDR put it:

In the Pacific, alliances with Japan, Australia, Korea and others promote bilateral and multi-lateral engagement in the region and cooperative actions to address common security threats. India is also emerging as a great power and a key strategic partner. Close cooperation with these partners in the long war on terrorism, as well as in efforts to counter WMD proliferation and other non-traditional threats, ensures the continuing need for these alliances and for improving their capabilities ... The [US Defense] Department will continue to strengthen traditional allied operations, with increased emphasis on collective capabilities to plan and conduct stabilization, security, transition and reconstruction operations. (USDoD 2006a: 88)

The QDR also talks about making a critical shift ‘from static alliances—to dynamic partnerships ...’ (USDoD 2006a: vii).

US defense transformation—an Australian view

Mark Thomson

In late 1969, the then US president, Richard M Nixon, laid down what become known as the Guam doctrine. In doing so, he set bounds on the extent of US support to allies by saying that the US would 'look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense'. This was more than just sophistry to justify leaving South Vietnam to its fate; it was a clear message to allies to take responsibility for their own defence. Australia's response was the 'Defence of Australia' doctrine.

Almost forty years on, a new doctrine of US national security has emerged under George W Bush. But rather than limiting US engagement, it does the opposite by lowering the threshold for military action. Accompanying this new doctrine is a 'transformational' vision for the US military. A vision for a transformation in equipment, basing and, most critically, a transformation in what the US expects from its allies.

So how should Australia respond this time? Unlike when the Guam doctrine forced us down the path of self-reliance, the present 'transformational' shift by the US leaves us with latitude as to how to respond. So far, Australia's response has been—and will likely continue to be—both limited and cautious. Limited because we continue to put our own interests above US expectations, and cautious because the transformation agenda looks to be losing momentum. What's more, in some areas the implications are slight in any case.

Take US basing for example; the so-called US 'realignment' amounts to little more than fiddling at the edges compared with its withdrawal from Thailand and Vietnam in the 1970s and the Philippines in the early 1990s. It's hard to see how Australia will play anything more than a peripheral part. Aside from our long-standing joint facilities with the US and a modest expansion of our capacity to host joint Australia-US training exercises, not much else is likely. There are certainly no plans to develop pre-positioned forward operating bases on Australian soil, and permanent US basing on a substantial scale would almost certainly be defeated by strong public resistance.

So what about the increased military contributions from allies that the transformational agenda presumes? It's difficult to judge how happy the US really is with the contributions Australia has made to coalition operations over the past several years. In public, at least, they seem satisfied. But we have clearly avoided putting our armed forces under anything like the pressure that the US military is experiencing. And our disproportionately small and carefully circumscribed deployments have been little more than symbolic, especially when compared with the sacrifices made by the United Kingdom and more recently Canada.

Certainly our actions have done nothing to give credence to a US strategy based on substantive support from partners. This is unlikely to change. The demands of our immediate neighbourhood coupled with growing public antipathy to what appears to be an unravelling US strategy (and an untested tolerance for casualties in the Australian electorate) make larger or riskier coalition deployments a remote prospect. Consistent with this, the moves to bolster the ADF's ability to mount far flung operations have been modest, with the possible exception of the surprise C-17 acquisition.

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Arguably, the greatest transformational challenge for Australia is to remain interoperable with an ally that's investing in military R&D at close to Cold War levels. But while the goal of interoperability has caused us to pre-select US systems in a couple of critical areas for 'strategic reasons', we continue to source most of our equipment competitively from the broader world market. As a result we are no more, or less, interoperable with the US than the European countries we often purchase from.

That's not to suggest that we have anything approaching seamless integration with the US military. Nor are we ever likely to given the difficulty of building a 'joint' ADF that can interoperate with the four disparate US military arms, for whom 'joint operations' are more rhetoric than reality. Unavoidably, our Army, Navy and Air Force face a tension between interoperability among themselves or with their counterpart US services; a tension that is invariably resolved in favour of interoperability within the ADF. It's not that we don't want to be as interoperable with the US as we can, but there are practical limits to what we can do until they take a more joint approach.

In the final analysis, aside from the technical problem of interoperability which has been with us for a long time anyway, the demands on Australia from US transformation do not seem that onerous. It's well that this be the case; otherwise we might make the mistake of investing too much in a transformation agenda that looks increasingly shaky.

Consider the situation. The argument for relying on smaller, lighter and more nimble armed forces that looked persuasive following the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001 has stalled in the quagmire of 'post-war' Iraq. Similarly, the expectation prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq that allies would take on the messy task of stabilization (the sort of assistance assumed in defense transformation) has been shown to be wishful thinking at best. As to the future as set out in the 2006 QDR, aside perhaps from the moderate boost to Special Forces capabilities, transformation initiatives are conspicuous by their absence. In fact, the slow process of replacing conventional Cold War era equipment simply rolls on. Even more importantly, the chief proponent of transformation, US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld, has been forced out of the Pentagon. A direct result of the deteriorating situation in Iraq and the grinding consequences that has for the US Army and Marine Corps.

It should go without saying that Australia needs to put its own interests foremost when adapting to changed expectations from the US. But with a transformational agenda as perishable as that proposed, we need to be doubly cautious in eroding our defence self-reliance. The next US president, due in 2009, might well follow Nixon's lead from 1969 when looking for an exit strategy from Iraq.

Therefore, interoperability will have a much higher priority for the US military in the future, particularly when it comes to regional or even out-of-area operations. The US will need its allies and partners even more to help combat terrorism, piracy on the high seas and proliferation, to engage in peacekeeping and stabilisation operations, and to deter or contend with more traditional threats.

One result of this stress on greater interallied jointness and interoperability has been the decision by the Pentagon to move I Corps from Fort Lewis, Washington, to Camp Zama, Japan, in order to create a deployable, joint taskforce-capable command; at the same time, the Japan Ground Self Defense Force will establish a Central Readiness Force Command at Zama to facilitate closer coordination between the two headquarters. In addition, the US military and the Japan Self Defense Force plan to create a joint bilateral operations coordination centre at Yokota Air Base for air and missile defence, in an effort to strengthen cooperation between US and Japanese air and missile defence command and control elements, including the sharing of relevant sensor data. One particular element of this command will aid US and Japanese patrols of missile defence-capable destroyers operating in the Sea of Japan.

The need for increased interoperability also highlights the widening ‘capabilities gap’ between the US military and its allies and partners.

The need for increased interoperability also highlights the widening ‘capabilities gap’ between the US military and its allies and partners. Consequently, the US military increasingly speaks of encouraging its allies and partners to transform their own militaries by modernising their forces, doctrines and strategies. For example, the *Global Posture Review* envisions expanded US–host nation joint training as a consequence of new basing schemes. The 2006 QDR presses this theme even further and talks of joint transformation efforts:

The United States will work with allies and partners to integrate intelligence sensors, communication networks, information systems, missile defenses, undersea warfare and counter-mine warfare capabilities. It will seek to strengthen partner nations’ capabilities to defend themselves and withstand attack ... (USDoD 2006a: 30)

Concluding thoughts

The current IT-led RMA and the subsequent process of defence transformation are generally regarded to be a defining moment in the character and conduct of modern warfare. The IT–RMA entails the combination of new technologies and innovative operational and organisational concepts that are supposed to fundamentally alter the way one thinks about war and war fighting. Certainly, the IT–RMA has the potential to be truly revolutionary in its impact on the future of the US military and how it conducts military operations.

At the same time, there may be less than meets the eye in US defence transformation. As laid out in the QDR and other Defense Department documents, force transformation is perhaps not nearly as radical or as comprehensive as many proponents of the RMA would

prefer. Current transformational activities are noteworthy, but they're more indicative of a process of *sustaining* and *evolutionary* change, rather than disruptive, revolutionary change (see Dombrowski and Ross 2003).

The US military certainly faces considerable challenges in implementing its current transformational vision. It's by no means assured that these objectives will be implemented as envisioned, or that the end result will be truly 'transformational' or revolutionary in scope and effect. Nevertheless, given the strong emphasis in the US military on pursuing defence transformation, there's a certain sense of inevitability at work here, and the sooner the militaries in the Asia-Pacific region come to grips with America's force transformation, both as a paradigm and as an operating concept, the better it will be for them.



Chapter 3

REACTIONS OF ALLIES AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS: AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA AND SINGAPORE

US defence transformation will have a considerable impact on the security calculus in the Asia–Pacific region, as it entails major changes in the ways US forces will operate in the area. These include changes to the future basing and deployment of US military forces, to where and how they'll operate, and to the kind of equipment they'll require. Consequently, US defence transformation will significantly affect Washington's relationships with key allies and partners in the region. For example, the US military will have a greater need for allies and partnering states to meet such emerging military requirements as counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, counter-proliferation, maritime security and missile defence; at the same time, US force transformation will put considerable pressures on allies and partners when it comes to joint operations, interoperability, basing rights and capability gaps. Transformation may also affect how those countries pursue their own RMAs and force modernisation efforts. Therefore, it's critical to assess how allies and partners are reacting to US defence transformation as it affects the region.

Australia

Australia has been strongly influenced by US defence transformation. As Australia shifts the focus in its security strategy away from a static, continental defence in favour of expeditionary operations both in the 'immediate neighbourhood' (e.g. East Timor) and further afield (e.g. Afghanistan and Iraq), US transformational concepts of

Photo opposite: A Standard Missile 2 launches from the destroyer USS O'Kane (DDG 77) during a live-fire exercise conducted off the coast of Hawaii as part of exercise Rim of the Pacific on July 7, 2006. The exercise, commonly called RIMPAC, brings together military forces from Australia, Canada, Chile, Peru, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States in the world's largest biennial maritime exercise. US Navy photo

mobility, versatility, sustainability, precision-strike and, above all, networking have found particular favour in the Australian Department of Defence. At the same time, the ability to cooperate with other forces—particularly the US military—in coalition operations has become paramount. As Australia's 2005 *Defence Update* put it, the US–Australian alliance 'remains the cornerstone of our national security', and Canberra expects joint operations with US forces to constitute an increasingly greater proportion of future Australian military missions (Defence 2005a: 13–14). Interoperability with US forces will therefore remain a strategic goal. Consequently, the process of US defence transformation is both a challenge and an opportunity for Australia to bind itself more closely to the US operationally and strategically.

Overall, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) wants to be capable of making a significant contribution to the US in coalition and allied operations, while at the same time maintaining an independent deployment capability in order to contribute effectively to peace and stability within its geographical area of responsibility, operating either on its own or as the leader of coalition operations. These conditions have translated into new requirements for greater mobility, versatility, firepower ('robustness'), sustainability and jointness. The ADF must be more (and more quickly) deployable, more sustainable over long periods and across long distances, and more capable of engaging in both low-level and high-intensity high-tech wars.

To meet these needs, the ADF has pursued its own transformation along the lines of force projection, precision-strike and, above all, NCW. In the late 1990s, the Australian Department of Defence established its own Office of the Revolution in Military Affairs to review technological developments and to explore strategies for implementing an Australian RMA, particularly in partnership with the US. The strategy that eventually emerged became known as the 'Knowledge Edge' and was defined as 'the effective exploitation of information technologies to allow us to use our relatively small force to maximum effectiveness' (from *Australia's Strategic Policy 1997*, quoted in Mahnken 2004). The Knowledge Edge concept was intended not only to provide the ADF with a force multiplier in order to maintain a technological edge over its much larger potential adversaries, but also to enhance cooperation and interoperability with US forces.

As a practical result, the ADF is seeking to improve its capabilities in five key areas: amphibious and expeditionary capacity; precision-strike; intelligence-gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance; interservice and interallied jointness; and logistical support.

As a practical result, the ADF is seeking to improve its capabilities in five key areas: amphibious and expeditionary capacity; precision-strike; intelligence-gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance; interservice and interallied jointness; and logistical support. These priorities are evident in three current ADF initiatives: the Hardened and Networked Army (HNA), the 2006–2016 Defence Capability Plan and the NCW Roadmap.

The HNA (Defence 2005b) is an effort to boost the capabilities of ADF ground forces, to make the ADF more flexible and effective on the battlefield. Since the Army is likely to be the ‘preferred tool of choice’ for military operations—and therefore will be used much further afield in the future, in both US- and Australian-led coalition operations—it must be capable of functioning at a much higher operating tempo. Therefore, the HNA initiative has four basic objectives:

- improved survivability and firepower—an increase in ‘combat weight’
- improved sustainability—the ADF’s ability to deploy and to support its forces over time and distance
- improved joint and coalition interoperability—more capability to work with other armies
- more network-enabling—new and better communications systems.

The equipment and systems to support both ADF ground forces and other services are laid out in the most recent ten-year Defence Capability Plan for 2006–2016. For example, the Army is acquiring fifty-nine M-1A1 main battle tanks (used, but rebuilt and refurbished to a ‘zero mileage’ standard) to replace its aging Leopard 1s, twenty-two Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopters (to be armed with Hellfire air-to-surface missiles), up to forty MR-90 heavy lift helicopters, additional ASLAV wheeled armoured personnel carriers/infantry fighting vehicles, upgraded M-113A1 armoured personnel carriers and, possibly, new self-propelled howitzers.

For its part, the Royal Australian Navy plans to buy three air warfare destroyers (AWDs), equipped with the Aegis fire-control system and outfitted with the Standard SM-2 missile. The AWDs will be capable of intercepting both aircraft and antiship cruise missiles and could later be upgraded with an anti-ballistic missile capability. In addition, the Navy will acquire two new 25,000-ton Canberra-class amphibious power projection ships, each carrying a mix of transport and battlefield support helicopters and capable of transporting 1,000 troops and 150 vehicles; these ships will provide air support, amphibious assault, transport and command centre roles.

Starting around 2012–14, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) will begin to replace its entire fleet of F/A-18 and F-111 fighter aircraft with the new Joint Strike Fighter; until that time, it will equip its current fighters (and later the Joint Strike Fighter) with new precision-strike weapons, including the Popeye air-to-surface missile, the Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-off Missile and the GPS-guided Joint Direct Attack Munition. In addition, the RAAF is in the process of acquiring six Wedgetail airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft, five multi-role troop and tanker aircraft (based on the Airbus A330 airframe) and four C-17 heavy lift aircraft.

The NCW Roadmap is a collection of several initiatives for the networking of the ADF, with the long-range goal of creating a ‘joint, seamless, network-enabled force by 2020’. For example, the acquisition of a new digital communications system, called Battlespace Communications System (Land), or BCS(L), is central to the HNA strategy. The system is intended to provide ADF ground forces with a ‘deployable, scalable, secure and integrated’ communications network, offering ‘seamless connectivity’ both within ADF and with coalition allies. The BCS(L) is being developed by General Dynamics Canada, along with two Australian firms, ADI Ltd. and Tenix, at a cost of A\$800 million (US\$600 million).

Other aspects of the NCW Roadmap include:

- the Tactical Information Exchange Domain (the acquisition of datalinks, such as Link-16, to improve information connectivity)
- the Defence Wide Area Communications Network (an improved network system for long-distance strategic communications)
- new satellite communications capabilities for long-distance strategic and tactical communications
- IFF/Blue Force Tracking upgrades, to reduce 'friendly fire' casualties.

A crucial aspect of the NCW Roadmap is its intended 'plug-and-play' functionality: the ADF wants its future NCW architecture to be modular, quickly upgradable and capable of being built on commercially available, off-the-shelf technology.

Japan

US force transformation coincides with a period of significant evolution in Japan's postwar security policy. Under former Prime Minister Koizumi, Japan has tried to pursue a foreign and defence policy more befitting a 'normal' nation, and Tokyo has permitted the country's military to play a larger and more active role in regional security missions. Presumably, this process will only accelerate under Prime Minister Abe, a conservative nationalist committed to expanding Japan's international profile and further normalising the position of Japan's military. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party has sought to upgrade the status of Japan's Self Defense Force (SDF) and legitimise the SDF's role as a military force. In particular, many in the party have called for the revision of Japan's so-called 'Peace Constitution' in order to explicitly permit the maintenance of military forces and to allow those forces to be used in international peace- and security-keeping operations. At the same time, Japan's security interests have expanded far beyond Northeast Asia and its once vaunted 1,000-mile defensive perimeter. Now, the SDF has to contend with possible contingency operations much farther afield—for example, in international military stabilisation operations (such as in Iraq), or in patrolling sea lanes in the Strait of Malacca (to safeguard access to Middle East energy supplies).

Japan's security interests have expanded far beyond Northeast Asia and its once vaunted 1,000-mile defensive perimeter.

Consequently, the SDF has greatly increased its mobility, firepower and C4ISR capabilities over the past decade. The Maritime Self Defense Force has acquired high-speed sealift ships (for logistics and transport) and amphibious landing vessels and it's currently building two new, 13,500-ton, flat-top 'helicopter destroyers', which closely resemble large amphibious assault ships. Meanwhile, the Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) is developing a new indigenous transport aircraft and may also buy C-17 cargo aircraft for long-range strategic airlift. The ASDF is also buying the F-2 fighter jet for improved air defences and antimaritime interdiction operations, as well as creating a two-tiered ballistic missile defence system, comprising the Aegis/Standard SM-3 missile Sea-based Midcourse Defense system and the land-based

Patriot PAC-3 missile. In addition, the SDF is acquiring AEW&C aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and imaging satellites for intelligence collection, surveillance and reconnaissance.

In order to create a lighter, more mobile and more deployable military, by 2010 Japan will reduce the size of its ground forces by 7,000 troops and cut its number of tanks from 900 to 600. The Maritime Self Defense Force will reduce its number of major surface combatants from 50 to 47, and the number of fighter aircraft in the ASDF will fall from 300 to 260.

These military developments come at a time when the US and Japan are more closely aligned than ever on a number of critical regional security interests. Both countries are extremely concerned about the ballistic missile/WMD threat emanating from North Korea and are keen on developing missile defences to counter that threat. More importantly, perhaps, Japan shares Washington's growing apprehensions over an increasingly expansionist China. While Tokyo officially considers China to be only a mid- to long-term security 'concern', it's increasingly wary of an ever-assertive China fuelled by growing economic and military strength. Relations between Beijing and Tokyo have soured considerably in recent years, over such issues as continuing intrusions by Chinese military vessels in Japanese waters (including the November 2004 incident in which a Chinese nuclear-powered Han submarine was detected off Okinawa), conflicting territorial claims over the Senkaku Islands and the refusal by Japan's recent prime ministers to stop their visits to the Yasukuni shrine.

... the US–Japan alliance has perhaps never been stronger.

At the same time, the US–Japan alliance has perhaps never been stronger. For example, the 1996 Japan–US Joint Declaration on Security reaffirmed that the mutual cooperation and security treaty between the two nations 'remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia–Pacific region'. Additionally, in February 2005 the US and Japan agreed to a set of common strategic objectives, including a number of areas for bilateral cooperation, such as missile defence, contingency planning, and information and intelligence sharing. Consequently, despite Japan's declaratory prohibition on collective defence, the US and Japan are likely to increase military cooperation when it comes to dealing with regional security threats. The countries have agreed in principle to joint missile defence patrols in the Sea of Japan, and Tokyo has loosened its highly restrictive arms export ban to permit closer industrial and technological collaboration with the US on missile defences. In particular, US forces based in Japan would probably be employed in the event of a US–China clash in the Taiwan Strait, and therefore Japan would, at the very least, provide considerable rear-area and logistical support to US forces.

As Japan seeks to step up its security role in Asia, US defence transformation provides Tokyo with a politically palatable cover for expanding its military missions and capabilities. The government and the SDF are, for the most part, using US force transformation as a way to become more self-assertive and more expeditionary, and to develop new combat capabilities by tying these efforts to the security needs of the US–Japan alliance. In particular, by operating in tandem with US forces in joint operations, by taking over roles and missions once performed by the US military, or by using its forces in direct support of US military operations (such as peacekeeping or stabilisation activities), Tokyo is attempting to temper

concerns others may have (particularly in South Korea, China and Southeast Asia) that its growing military muscle is an indicator of revanchist tendencies or aggressivist/expansionist activities.

In May 2006, the US and Japan agreed to a historic and sweeping reorganisation and reorientation of their armed forces, in order to more closely align their command structures through collocation, and thereby expand opportunities for coordination and interoperability. Under this accord, Japan's Ground Self Defense Force will create a Central Readiness Force Command at Camp Zama by 2012, in order to more closely coordinate operations with the US Army, which is moving its I Corps HQ there from the state of Washington. At the same time, the US Army will modernise its command structure at Zama to become a deployable, joint taskforce-capable operations headquarters. In addition, Japan and the US will establish a 'bilateral and joint operations coordination centre' at Yokota Air Base, and the ASDF Air Defense Command will relocate to Yokota in order to aid air and missile defence coordination through that centre.

Other aspects of the agreement include pledges to expand information-sharing and intelligence cooperation, increase bilateral contingency planning, improve interoperability, expand joint training, coordinate improvements in ballistic missile defence information-gathering and information-sharing, increase interoperability in responding to ballistic missile threats, and, in particular, to work towards greater coordination of ballistic missile defence command and control. As a practical contribution to increased cooperation on missile defence, the US agreed to deploy an X-Band radar for ballistic missile detection at the ASDF base in Shariki.

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In the long run, it's likely that Japan will work more and more closely with the US in regional contingencies and that the US-Japan security relationship will evolve towards a 'true security and military alliance similar to that between the US and NATO allies' (Peter Ennis, 2005: 1). In terms of roles and missions, however, it's likely that US forces will continue to act as the spear while Japan's Self Defense Force continues to act as the shield (that is, operating mainly in a defensive stance, in both posture and capabilities). In other words, Japan is unlikely to abandon its 'exclusively defense-oriented posture', despite its closer defence relationship with the US. Consequently, the SDF will probably continue to eschew a rapid-deployment or power-projection capability, or the acquisition of a long-range offensive precision-strike capability (such as land-attack precision-guided munitions) or stealth for penetrating enemy air defences (Takahashi 2004).

The growing requirement to maintain and improve compatibility and interoperability with US forces has led the Japan Defense Agency to explore the idea of implementing its own defence transformation, and a number of studies were undertaken around the turn of the century to assess the nature and needs of the 'Info-RMA'. The Japanese Info-RMA

was based on the premise that future warfare would be characterised by a huge leap in battlespace awareness capability; precision-strike engagements; coordinated attacks by widely dispersed small units; the heavy use of cyberspace and unmanned battlefield systems; the expansion of the operational theatre; increased speed; and a move away from attrition warfare to so-called ‘decisive’ (or ‘effects-based’) warfare—the objective being a ‘quantum leap in the efficient achievement of military objectives’. In particular, the Info-RMA entailed information-sharing through the creation of an all-inclusive C4ISR network; greater jointness and speed (particularly in command and control); increased combat efficiency and effectiveness; greater organisational flexibility; the protection of critical information systems (such as command and control nodes); and expanded interoperability with US forces.¹

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Many of the principles of the Info-RMA can be found in the SDF’s future defence capabilities requirements. In particular, the Japan Defense Agency’s 2003 defence posture review called for the SDF to construct a joint information-sharing network for its ground, sea and air self-defence forces, shift from a ‘scale-oriented’ force structure to a ‘technology-oriented’ force (that is, using technology as a force multiplier), and to maintain interoperability with the US by catching up with US force modernisation and digitisation.² In this regard, missile defence in particular could become a catalyst for defence transformation in Japan, as it could bring about critical policy changes (for example, amendments to Japan’s constitution to permit expanded US–Japan cooperation in collective self-defence), as well as promoting the acquisition of a joint SDF C4ISR infrastructure.

South Korea

Whereas Japan sees US defence and force transformation as a way to expand its military role by binding itself more closely to US forces, the Republic of Korea (ROK) perceives these developments as a golden opportunity to revisit and ‘rebalance’ the ROK–US alliance, and consequently to increase its independence from the US military. With the removal, redeployment and reorienting of US forces in Korea, the ROK–US alliance is undergoing a fundamental change, and South Korea is expected to play a larger role in its own defence. Seoul is exploiting this occasion to aggressively pursue a more nationalistic, self-reliant and self-assertive security and defence policy.

Under the *Global Posture Review*, USFK plans to remove 12,500 troops permanently from South Korea. Additionally, the remaining 25,000 US soldiers are to be redeployed from 43 bases scattered around the country to 16 bases, mainly concentrated in two areas south of the Han River; in particular, the US military—including the USFK Command headquarters, UN Command and Combined Forces Command—will vacate the Yongsan Garrison in downtown Seoul. More importantly, under the rubric of ‘strategic flexibility’, US forces in Korea will be reoriented towards more multifunctional, expeditionary missions and therefore

will use the ROK more as a base for regional contingencies beyond the peninsula. To underscore this new strategic flexibility and regional focus, the US will transfer its 8th Army headquarters from Seoul to Hawaii.

US force realignments on the peninsula ... have given the ROK both the need and the justification to expand its self-defence capabilities.

US force realignments on the peninsula—and especially the reorientation of USFK towards more extrapeninsular operations—have given the ROK both the need and the justification to expand its self-defence capabilities. Consequently, Seoul has officially embraced a strategy of ‘cooperative self-reliant defense’, or the ‘balanced development of the ROK–US alliance and self-defense side by side’ (MND 2004: 94, Noh 2005). According to South Korea’s 2004 White Paper on defence, for example:

The fundamental concept of cooperative self-reliant defense is that the ROK should retain the ability and mechanism to take responsibility for deterring any potential provocation by North Korea and repulsing any actual provocation, while further developing the ROK–US alliance ... (MND 2004: 94)

As a direct result of the removal of US troops from the peninsula and this growing emphasis on self-reliant defence, Seoul has agreed to the transfer of ten missions from US to South Korean armed forces:

- responsibility for security in the Joint Security Area
- rear area decontamination operations
- command and control of counter-fire operations
- rapid landmine emplacement
- management of an air-to-ground shooting range
- maritime special operations forces interdiction
- day/night search-and-rescue operations
- close air support control
- control of main supply routes
- weather forecasting.

At the same time, Seoul is in the midst of a major, multiyear recapitalisation of its armed forces in order to bolster its independent defence capability. For example, the ROK Army is acquiring a number of new systems to increase its firepower and improve its mobility. These acquisitions include the purchase of two major indigenous weapons systems, the K-1A1 main battle tank and the K-9 self-propelled 155 mm howitzer; in addition, a new indigenous XK-2 tank is currently under development. The army is also purchasing the Multiple Launch Rocket System and the Army Tactical Missile System from the US, and it’s seeking to buy a new fleet of utility lift helicopters from either Europe or the US.

For its part, the ROK Navy is buying three new KDX-3 Aegis-equipped air defence destroyers, three new German-designed Type-214 diesel-electric submarines equipped with air-independent propulsion, and two new Dokdo-class 13,000-ton amphibious assault ships, each capable of carrying 700 troops, ten helicopters, two air-cushioned landing craft and ten tanks. Meanwhile, the ROK Air Force is adding forty F-15K and approximately 100 indigenously built T/A-50 fighter jets to its arsenal. Altogether, between 2005 and 2020, the ROK armed forces will spend 67 trillion won (US\$70 billion) on new equipment.

South Korea has particularly extended the concept of self-reliant defence to building up its capabilities for command and control, early warning, intelligence and surveillance. Whereas it's generally argued that any Korean RMA—if, indeed, there is one—is still very much in its earliest stages, the ROK military is nevertheless conscious of the value of information technologies and their likely impact on future war fighting. Consequently, the ROK military has embraced the concept of 'digitisation', the centrepiece of which is the development of an independent, joint and interoperable C4ISR infrastructure. Elements of this network include the procurement of AEW&C platforms, intelligence-gathering aircraft, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles, military communications satellites, datalinks and new communications systems. For example, the ROK Army has developed a new Battalion Tactical Command System to speed up the exchange of data in the field, while the ROK Air Force plans to possess a real-time, battlespace situational awareness and command and control capability no later than 2025.

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Yet, for all its talk of 'cooperative' self-reliant defence, Seoul is also becoming much more independently minded and self-assertive in both security policy and its alliance arrangements with the US. The ROK hasn't been afraid to use US force realignments on the Korean peninsula to press the US for more autonomy in defence matters. In particular, Seoul has been demanding that wartime control of ROK forces be returned to national command authorities (under the existing mutual defence pact, they currently come under operational command of a US general, under the auspices of the US-led United Nations Command). Moreover, South Korea has been much less disposed than other regional allies to acquiesce in new US-led security and defence initiatives, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative or missile defence, two programs in which Seoul has so far deferred participation. Finally, whereas Seoul doesn't oppose USFK capabilities being used in regional or out-of-area contingency operations, it has ruled out Korean military operations beyond the peninsula and has so far been reluctant to discuss extraterritorial operations with the US. In particular, South Korea doesn't want to get dragged into any conflict in which it has no direct stake (such as a Taiwan Strait crisis) or in which it would be forced to cooperate formally with Japan in a tripartite alliance.

At the same time, Seoul has become much more aggressive in pressing its own interests in regional security matters. Generally, it has a much more sanguine view of North Korean provocations than has Washington, and it has refused to condemn North Korean missile

tests or to side as strongly with the US as Japan has in the Six Party Talks (although Seoul has stepped up its criticisms of Pyongyang in the light of North Korea's October 2006 nuclear test). The ROK is also building up a blue water navy, as much to compete with Japan (for example, over the escalating Dokdo/Takeshima island sovereignty dispute) as to protect sea lanes (and certainly not to take on a weak North Korean navy). Finally, South Korean President Roh's talk of the ROK becoming local 'balancer' in Asia underscores Seoul's desire to increase its independence of action in regional security affairs.

Singapore

Singapore is one of the few non-US allies in the Asia–Pacific region to have developed close operating ties with the US military. Singapore has cooperated with the US in counter-terrorism efforts, for example by arresting several suspects in December 2001 on suspicion of plotting attacks on US, Australian and British targets inside the country. In addition, Singapore has been an active participant in various cooperative regional security initiatives, including the Proliferation Security Initiative and protection of sea lanes in the Strait of Malacca, both of which are strongly supported by Washington. The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) also deployed troops to East Timor and to Iraq, as well as aiding victims of the 2004 tsunami.

Singapore is currently engaged in a 'third-generation' (3G) transformation of its military. The SAF's interest in defence transformation stems from three factors:

- a perception of new unconventional threats—such as terrorism, piracy, insurrection and destabilisation in a neighbouring state—resulting in new types of warfare, such as urban warfare and the protection of key installations
- Singapore's traditional strategic weaknesses—a lack of strategic depth, a small and ageing population and relatively limited defence resources
- Singapore's economic and technological advantages, particularly its highly educated workforce and its strengths in IT.

Consequently, the SAF sees technology—and particularly IT—as a critical force multiplier (Huxley 2004: 2). Moreover, since Singapore sees its relationship with the US as 'key to its defense position', a vital objective of the 3G SAF is to be better able to interoperate with US forces (Urquhart 2006).

Singapore's transformational efforts ... emphasise the acquisition, development and integration of technologies for command and control with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems and precision-guided weapons.

Accordingly, Singapore's transformational efforts—designated the Integrated Knowledge-based Command and Control doctrinal concept—emphasise the acquisition, development and integration of technologies for command and control with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems and precision-guided weapons. RMA-related areas where the SAF is currently focusing much of its efforts include advanced electronics and signal

processing, information systems security, advanced guidance systems, communications, electronic warfare, sensors and unmanned vehicles. Additionally, the SAF has either acquired or is acquiring several new types of systems for force projection, increased mobility and expanded firepower. The navy has taken delivery of two new indigenously designed and constructed Endurance-class landing ships, each capable of carrying 350 troops, eighteen tanks, four helicopters and four landing craft. It's also currently acquiring six French-designed Lafayette-class 'stealth' frigates and has bought four used submarines from Sweden. The Republic of Singapore Air Force recently placed an order for twelve F-15SG fighter jets, and future buys of up to sixty more aircraft could be realised; additionally, the air force will likely be a customer for the Joint Strike Fighter. Other SAF purchases include AH-64D attack helicopters, lightweight armoured vehicles and artillery systems, and long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles.

The US has long maintained a Forward Operating Site at the Sembawang port facilities in Singapore. The Command, Logistics Group Western Pacific (COMLOG WESTPAC) has been headquartered in Sembawang since 1992, providing logistic support for the US 7th Fleet in its operations in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. In addition, in November 1998, Singapore agreed to permit US Navy ships to dock at the new Changi Naval Base and use its facilities and services. With its 6.2-kilometre (four-mile) berthing space, Changi can even accommodate aircraft carriers—the USS *Kitty Hawk* made its first port call at Changi in early 2001.

Endnotes

- 1 Japan Defense Agency, Defense Policy Division, *RMA and Japan Defense Agency*, briefing presented to the author, March 2004, 6–13.
- 2 Japan Defense Agency, Defense Policy Division, *RMA and Japan Defense Agency*, briefing presented to the author, March 2004, 18.



Chapter 4

REACTIONS OF A PEER COMPETITOR: CHINA

Few countries have been more affected and influenced by US defence transformation than China—and for good reasons. The US increasingly regards China as the key peer challenger to US primacy in the Asia–Pacific region. China was singled out in the 2006 QDR as having, among the ‘major and emerging powers ... the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States’ (USDoD 2006a: 29). The QDR goes on to say, without explicitly mentioning China, that the US will:

... attempt to dissuade any military competitor from developing disruptive or other capabilities that could enable regional hegemony or hostile action against the United States or other friendly countries ... Should deterrence fail, the United States would deny a hostile power its strategic and operational objectives. (USDoD 2006a: 29)

While this might sound like a reasonable hedging strategy to the US, it has generally been viewed with increasing alarm in Beijing. China is concerned that the current realignment and transformation of the US military in the Asia–Pacific region is mainly directed against it. ‘Strategic flexibility’, for example, implies that US forces once dedicated solely to the defence of South Korea or Japan will now be made available for counter-Chinese operations in the Taiwan Strait or South China Sea—and the US military has done little to assuage Beijing’s fears. Moreover, Tokyo’s expanding security relationship with the US—bordering on collective defence—and Japan’s growing power projection capabilities have caused Beijing to suppose even more strongly that it’s becoming the object of a US-led multilateral strategy to contain China (King 2006).

Photo opposite: A parade of ships led by USS Nimitz (CVN 68) prepares to pass under the Golden Gate Bridge while entering San Francisco Bay in California October 7, 2006. US Navy photo

At the same time, the US is moving more military equipment closer to China. As part of the QDR decisions, for example, the US military plans to add an additional aircraft carrier to its Pacific fleet and base a nuclear-powered carrier at Yokosuka, Japan, and to shift 60% of its submarine forces into the region. Guam, 3,000 miles closer to the Taiwan Strait than the US Pacific Command's main operating bases in Hawaii, is also being built up as a forward staging area for US forces operating in the western Pacific, particularly as a base for long-range bombers armed with Joint Direct Attack Munition precision-guided bombs and cruise missile-carrying submarines.

Consequently, US efforts to transform its forces along the lines of the RMA have served both as a challenge and a guide to Chinese military modernisation. China's current efforts to modernise and transform its military are largely intended to counter or blunt US power projection capabilities in the region, particularly in the event of a China–Taiwan conflict. Under such circumstances, China would want to deter, delay or complicate any US intervention on behalf of Taiwan, while also being able to carry out offensive operations against Taiwan, including air and missile attacks, a naval blockade or even an outright invasion of the island.

China has long studied the writings of US military theorists on the RMA, as well as the process of defence transformation in the US military. US combat operations in Iraq in 1991, in Kosovo in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001 and again in Iraq in 2003 were sobering lessons for the Chinese, and they reinforced the importance of reforming and modernising the People's Liberation Army (PLA) along the lines of greater mobility, jointness, power projection, precision-strike and, above all, greater attention to information capabilities. In particular, the PLA saw how other countries, operating more or less along the lines of traditional Chinese war-fighting doctrine and fighting with Soviet equipment (which still mostly equips the PLA), were soundly beaten by a technologically superior force using quite different tactics and strategies. Overall, the PLA became one of the most avid consumers of RMA literature produced by US and other military writers, much of it translated into Chinese and discussed widely in Chinese military publications.

China has been particularly influenced by the emerging IT-based RMA. Beijing is currently engaged in a determined effort to transform the PLA from a force based on Mao Zedong's principles of 'People's War' to one capable of fighting and winning 'Limited Local Wars under High-Tech Conditions' or, more recently, 'Limited Local Wars Under Conditions of "Informatisation"'. This new doctrine revolves around what some have termed 'rapid war, rapid resolution', entailing short-duration, high-intensity conflicts characterised by mobility, speed and long-range attack; employing joint operations fought simultaneously throughout the entire air, land, sea, space and electromagnetic battlespace; and relying heavily on extremely lethal high-technology weapons. PLA operational doctrine also increasingly emphasises pre-emption, surprise and shock value, given that the earliest stages of conflict may be crucial to the outcome of a war.

Additionally, many in the PLA see considerable potential for force multipliers in such areas as information warfare, the digitisation of the battlefield and networked systems (You 2004a). At the same time, adversaries who are highly dependent on advanced technology—such as the US—are seen as susceptible to low-tech countermeasures or attacks on their own command, control and communications capabilities. Consequently, the PLA has devoted increasing attention to the development of asymmetric responses aimed at enabling 'the inferior to defeat the superior'.

In recent years, the PLA has put considerable effort into acquiring new capabilities for mobility, power projection and precision-strike. This has meant de-emphasising ground forces in favour of building up the PLA's air, naval and missile forces. For example, the PLA Air Force is in the process of acquiring up to 300 modern Su-27 and Su-30 fighter aircraft from Russia, and will soon take delivery of the new indigenous J-10 'fourth generation-plus' fighter jet; these fighters are being equipped with new stand-off air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions. The PLA Air Force is also buying additional transport and air-to-air refuelling aircraft and strengthening its airborne assault forces (Blasko 2006: 69–70, 160–162).

For its part, the PLA Navy has greatly expanded its procurement of large surface combatants and submarines. The navy is currently acquiring twelve Kilo-class submarines and four Sovremennyy-class destroyers (armed with supersonic SS-N-22 antiship cruise missiles), as well as a navalised version of the Su-30 fighter–bomber. Just as importantly, there's been a significant expansion in Chinese naval shipbuilding since the turn of the century. In that time, China has begun construction of at least six new destroyers, seven frigates and eight diesel-powered submarines—more than double the rate of naval ship construction during the 1990s. Many of these ships are of very modern designs. For example, in 2001 China began work on the first in a new class of domestically developed, 9,000-ton guided-missile destroyer, the Type-052B, equipped with a long-range air-defence missile system and incorporating low-observable features in its design. A further refinement on this class, outfitted with a rudimentary Aegis-type phased-array radar, is the Type-052C destroyer, first launched in 2003. In addition, the PLA Navy is building two new classes of diesel–electric submarines (the Song and the Yuan classes), a new class of nuclear-powered attack submarines (the Type-093), the 'stealthy' Type-054 frigate and several new amphibious landing craft.

Finally, the PLA is building up—both quantitatively and qualitatively—its arsenal of conventional missile systems, including the 600-kilometre-range CSS-6 and 300-kilometre-range CSS-7 short-range ballistic missiles and a new category of land-attack cruise missile. Many of these missile systems are being fitted with satellite-navigation guidance for improved accuracy and with new types of warheads (such as cluster submunitions and fuel–air explosives) for higher lethality.

At the same time, China's military is increasingly focused on the IT side of the RMA. According to You Ji, the PLA is currently engaged—as part of an ambitious 'generation-leap' strategy—in a 'double construction' transformational effort to simultaneously pursue both the mechanisation and 'informatisation' of its armed forces (You 2004b). Initially, the PLA is attempting to digitise and upgrade its current arsenal of conventional 'industrial age' weapons through improved communications systems, new sensors and seekers, greater precision, night-vision capabilities, etc. Concurrently and with equal effort, the Chinese are trying to leapfrog development in building informationalised capabilities by putting greater effort and resources into C4I infrastructures, surveillance and reconnaissance systems, networking and information warfare.

The PLA places a high priority on developing advanced integrated C4I networks, utilising fibre-optic cables, satellites, microwave relays, long-range high-frequency radio and technologies for high-performance computing, communications networking and switching, and information security. In addition, the PLA is acquiring AEW&C aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, attack drones and new satellites for reconnaissance and navigation missions, as well as computerising its logistics system. It's reportedly experimenting with offensive

information warfare operations, and it has established special information warfare units to carry out attacks on enemy computer networks, in order to blind and disrupt an adversary's C4I systems (USDoD 2006b: 35–36).

In many instances, PLA informatisation efforts have benefited from leveraging advances and improvements in China's commercial IT sector. Chinese telecommunications satellites are basically commercial, as is China's rudimentary Beidou navigation satellite system, but both serve military purposes as well. In particular, recent Chinese successes in launching earth observation satellites (such as the CBERS-1 and CBERS-2) have critical military applications in providing near-real time and increasingly high-resolution imagery intelligence. In addition, many of the technologies being developed for commercial reconnaissance satellites, such as charge-coupled device cameras, multispectral scanners and synthetic aperture radar imagers, have obvious spin-on potential for military systems. Much of the hardware and skill base for conducting information warfare has also been pulled from the commercial IT industry.

Beijing is combining these force modernisation efforts with actions intended to increase professionalisation and jointness within the PLA. PLA officers and noncommissioned officers are receiving more training and education, while recent military exercises have emphasised amphibious warfare with 'limited multi-service participation'. The PLA Air Force and PLA Navy are devoting more training time to supporting amphibious operations, while PLA ground forces are increasingly integrating training and exercises with maritime, airborne and special operations forces, and have to put greater emphasis in their training on jointness, rapid mobilisation, deployability and over-the-sea operations (most likely with a Taiwan contingency in mind).

The PLA has shed hundreds of thousands of soldiers and vastly increased defence spending in order to put more resources into the hardware and software of transformation. Since the early 1990s, China's armed forces have shrunk by more than half, to around 2.3 million soldiers in 2005. In addition, Chinese military expenditures have nearly quadrupled in real terms since the mid-1990s; China's official 2006 defence budget is 281 billion yuan, or US\$35 billion—a 14.7% increase over the previous year—and continues a decade-long trend of double-digit real increases in Chinese military spending. The annual procurement budget alone has increased from US\$3.1 billion to an estimated US\$11 billion between 1997 and 2006, and this likely does not include extrabudgetary spending on R&D and arms imports, which together probably total around US\$3 billion to US\$4 billion a year. This upward trend is likely to continue for some time. In May 2006, Beijing approved a new fifteen-year national development plan for defence science and technology. The plan will boost military R&D spending and focus on developing high-technology weapons and 'IT solutions' for the PLA, support advanced manufacturing technologies and cultivate more collaborative international defence R&D efforts, with the goal of 'transforming the PLA into a modernized, mechanized, IT-based force' (Vogel 2006).

Overall, the PLA has been engaged in a 'vigorous and methodical ... implementation of transformation initiatives' since the late 1990s (Hu 2005). This transformation of the PLA is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the Chinese are currently engaged in building an 'army within an army': a small force—perhaps 15% of the entire PLA ground forces—equipped and trained to carry out rapid attacks, supported by missile strikes, coordinated air and sea attacks with precision-guided weapons, increasingly sophisticated tactical C4ISR systems and offensive information warfare capability (Marquand 2005). While such a force

would mostly likely be used to attack and defeat Taiwan, while also deterring or denying US intervention on Taipei's behalf, these capabilities could also be applied to other regional contingencies, such as conflicts over natural resources.

Second, it's important to note that 'informatisation' is a potentially critical new development in the PLA's war-fighting capabilities, implying a fundamental shift from *platform-centric* towards *network-centric* warfare. Over the long run, China's military—more than any other armed force in the Asia-Pacific region—could mimic the US in the ambition and scope of its transformation. Consequently, long-term trends in Chinese military modernisation have the potential to 'pose credible threats to modern militaries operating in the region' (USDoD 2006b: i) and, in particular, to challenge the US at its own game.

A few caveats should be kept in mind. First, China has a long way to go before it can say that it has truly transformed its military, and history has shown that it experiences considerable difficulties turning such aspirations into reality. For example, the PLA still has no centralised C4ISR infrastructure, and it has 'only an incomplete foundation for IT networking, leading to poor cooperation and coordination between different services in the battlefield' (You 2004b: 5). Additionally, the 'double-construction' approach of concurrent mechanisation and informatisation is fraught with risk: attempting to leapfrog development by skipping certain steps might turn out to be more time-consuming and expensive than expected, and there's always the danger of going down the wrong technology pathways.

Finally, it's possible that PLA transformation may turn out to be much less revolutionary in practice. According to Dennis Blasko, the current concept of limited, informationalised war is simply People's War adapted to 21st century requirements and capabilities. He argues that:

The Chinese see no contradiction in using the most advanced weapons and technology available to them in conjunction with existing, often antiquated, weaponry to fight a Local War on China's border using the principles of People's War. People's War still is often referred to as China's 'secret weapon'. (Blasko 2006: 95)

In particular, Blasko points out that, while the PLA appreciates the effectiveness of such 'transformational' concepts as information warfare and massed, conventional missile attack, it does *not* see these weapons in and of themselves as decisive in battle. He quotes the PLA officer's training manual, which states that 'in the employment of forces, one should mainly rely on high tech "magic weapons" ... while at the same time maximising one's superiority in conducting a People's War ...' (Blasko 2006: 101).

Nevertheless, the PLA has made undeniable progress since the late 1990s in expanding its military power in several specific areas, particularly missile attack, power projection over sea and in the air, and precision-strike. Additionally, China's ongoing efforts in digitising its armed forces, information warfare and 'trump card' weapons for asymmetric warfare should be viewed as critical developments in the long-term improvement of its war-fighting capabilities. Chinese military power relative to its potential competitors in the Asia-Pacific region—particularly the US—will likely increase considerably over the next ten to twenty years, and China's readiness to confront the US politically, economically and militarily in Asia—over Taiwan, in the East and South China Seas and elsewhere in the region—will likely rise accordingly.



CONCLUSIONS

Defence transformation poses a significant challenge both to the US and to key states in the Asia–Pacific region. Transformation has been touted as a radically new way of engaging in the business of warfare, by combining disruptive technologies with innovative operational and organisational concepts. Implementing transformation—and especially NCW—is intended to make US armed forces smarter, more flexible, agile, deployable and interoperable, more lethal and ultimately more effective. At the same time, US forces in place overseas will be less dedicated to the defence of a specific area (such as the Korean peninsula) than they will be considered available for a variety of roles and missions in regional or out-of-area contingencies.

Defence transformation ... implies a critical shift in US alliance relationships, from static coalitions to more dynamic military partnerships.

Defence transformation, therefore, also implies a critical shift in US alliance relationships, from static coalitions to more dynamic military partnerships. The US will increasingly expect its allies and partners to support its new policy of ‘strategic flexibility’. At a minimum, the US will expect them to provide main operating bases and forward staging areas for expeditionary US forces and, increasingly, to cooperate and interoperate with US forces in fighting terrorism, combating proliferation, engaging in peacekeeping and stabilisation operations, and even actively supporting (and fighting alongside) US troops in regional conflicts.

Photo opposite: A landing craft air cushion from Assault Craft Unit Four enters the well deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1). US Defense Department photo

The ambiguous future of US defence transformation

These new capabilities and requirements promise to make defence transformation truly revolutionary in its impact on the future of the US military, the way it conducts military operations and the way it interacts with allies and partners in the Asia–Pacific region. However, it's not at all certain that transformation will be as far-reaching a solution as originally envisioned or intended. As we've seen, current force transformation efforts are more indicative of a process of sustaining, rather than disruptive or revolutionary, innovation. Just as importantly, defence transformation, as it's currently being implemented, is still somewhat ambiguous and poorly executed. These circumstances make it more difficult for allies and partners to anticipate and to respond to US force changes, and particularly to future US expectations for military partnerships.

Part of the reason for this is that, despite its best efforts, the US military remains infatuated with technology for its own sake. To repeat the mantra of most RMA supporters, defence transformation is not supposed simply to be a techno-fix overlaid on an existing force structure and an existing defence doctrine. While the American military's strengths in transformation can be seen across ideas, innovation and technology, it still has a widespread tendency towards 'techno-faddism'—that is, seeing technology as the central and most critical factor in defence transformation.

Sometimes this faith in the power of technology to effect significant increases in military capability can put US forces at a disadvantage, or even endanger the lives of US servicemen and servicewomen. During the 2003 Iraq War, for example, a US Army battalion assigned to capture and hold a key bridge across the Euphrates River was attacked by 8,000 Iraqi soldiers equipped with seventy tanks and armoured vehicles, in a battle that demonstrated the current limitations to NCW. Despite the presence in the battlespace of numerous sensors—including unmanned aerial vehicles, reconnaissance satellites and airborne ground surveillance planes—the US taskforce was caught largely by surprise by the Iraqis, who were hidden in bunkers and buildings, and behind camouflage. US military intelligence had lost track of the Iraqi units beforehand and didn't know they were there, and the local command and control system had only a limited data architecture to find, track and inform US forces of these threats. Meanwhile, US units found that they quickly outran their intelligence and communications networks, while events on the ground moved too fast for US commanders to update their information grid effectively. The US taskforce eventually defeated the attacking Iraqis, prevailing more through superior equipment, training and leadership than through any transformational, network-centric capabilities (Talbot 2004; Grant 2005).

At the same time, transformative technologies may be ill-suited for certain missions ...

At the same time, transformative technologies may be ill-suited for certain missions, for example against low-level threats such as terrorism or counter-insurgencies. In particular, substituting information for armour or for mass mightn't always be the wisest course of action. As postwar operations against insurgents in Iraq have demonstrated, small, lightly armoured units operating in areas where information about the adversary's whereabouts

or strengths is imperfect or changing rapidly have found that a little extra protection can be lifesaving.

As a corollary, an adversary may also try to defeat a transformed, high-tech conventional force by pursuing a variety of offsetting asymmetric responses. These include engaging in low-intensity insurgency and guerrilla tactics, emphasising WMD capabilities (particularly nuclear weapons and ballistic missile delivery systems), or pursuing offensive information warfare (to blind and disrupt an armed force heavily dependent on C4ISR and other network-centric systems).

Finally, the current process of defence transformation is complicated by the fact that the US Defense Department remains unclear about its own vision of transformation and precisely how to implement it. Too often, those charged with thinking about defence transformation have failed to bridge the gap between their ideas and those in the military who must implement transformation in a practical sense. For example, the Office of Force Transformation typically described transformation as a ‘continuous process’, with ‘no definite end state in mind’, but this does little to help war planners (USDoD 2003b: 8). As three serving US Army officers point out:

While [force transformation is] clearly an ongoing procedure, the lack of precisely defined waypoints, operating parameters, a bounded and developed transformational concept for joint operations, or disciplined programmatics means that service and joint planners cannot easily prioritize programs and resources to satisfy what remains an ambiguous agenda. (Hooker, McMaster and Grey 2005: 21)

Consequently, defence transformation is still a ‘somewhat elliptically’ defined process. To their own ultimate disadvantage, the prophets and advocates of transformation have done a poor job of delineating their conceptualisation of what transformation is supposed to be, operationally and organisationally. These efforts are not helped by the fact that most advocates of transformation are still being informed by a highly abstract vision of the RMA. Translating the RMA into defence transformation will be a difficult, if not impossible, task as long as we lack a good definition of ‘disruptive’ innovation and know what a ‘paradigm shift’ that ‘fundamentally alters’ the character and conduct of warfare looks like.

This isn’t to say that the ideas behind the IT-led RMA are no longer relevant, or that NCW and new reconnaissance–strike systems won’t make a significant contribution to future military capabilities and effectiveness and perhaps, in the long run, truly alter warfare and war fighting. But it’s legitimate to question whether we’re really in a ‘revolutionary’ state, or whether it’s even valid to speak of a revolutionary process of change. In this sense, therefore, it’s perhaps better to visualise defence transformation as a more limited process of evolutionary, steady-state and sustaining innovation and change.

Rumsfeld’s departure as Secretary of Defense and the concurrent decision to disband the Office of Force Transformation cast even further uncertainty on the future of US defence transformation. In a relatively short period, the transformation process has lost two of its strongest proponents in the Defense Department, and while NCW/reconnaissance-strike concepts and slated global force structure changes will likely survive, implementation may be even more limited—and certainly less dramatic than originally conceived of by RMA advocates.

Asia–Pacific reactions

The ambiguity surrounding the conceptualisation and implementation of US defence transformation makes it all the more difficult for some Asia–Pacific countries to respond positively and proactively to these activities. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that US transformational activities have had some unintended consequences that have complicated US security planning in the region.

In the case of South Korea, for example, US force transformation has given Seoul an opportunity to re-examine and renegotiate the bilateral alliance. Consequently, US initiatives to reduce and realign its presence on the Korean peninsula have encouraged the Koreans to pursue a much more fiercely nationalistic and independent line in national security and defence. In particular, current ROK force modernisation efforts are as much oriented towards expanding South Korea’s stand-alone regional reach as they are to defending against a supposed North Korean military threat. This newfound self-assertiveness on the part of Seoul has introduced considerable tension into an important alliance relationship, and it has particularly affected US political and military leadership regarding a critical Asian ally. While the US–ROK alliance will almost certainly survive, it’s transforming into something very different from what it was during much of the post–World War II era. Both Washington and Seoul recognise a continuing need for each other, but at the same time alliance requirements are mutating, and that process of change is likely to be contentious and discordant.

Whether South Korea can transform itself into a more militarily independent regional power remains problematic. Despite its ambitions, it’s limited both by funding (a defence budget of less than US\$20 billion a year) and by technology (an inadequate defence R&D base). In the end, Seoul might succeed only in alienating US political and military support, while gaining little by way of a truly independent defence capability.

Meanwhile, Beijing has interpreted US force transformation as a response and challenge to China as an emerging power in the Asia–Pacific region. The US military build-up in the western Pacific and America’s stress on possessing flexible and expeditionary forces in the region are perceived as directly confronting Chinese strategic interests. At the same time, the US-driven RMA—particularly the idea of harnessing IT for military purposes—has had a profound influence on Chinese military modernisation. If China does succeed in upgrading its armed forces along the lines of ‘informatisation’, it will be in no small part due to the groundwork laid down by US transformational conceptualisation.

Non-allied partnering countries, such as Singapore, might have particular problems responding to US defence transformation.

Finally, many Asia–Pacific countries will have varying degrees of success in responding and adapting their defence policies to US defence transformation and the new emphasis on mobility, flexibility and net-centricity. While the US military stresses the need for greater interoperability with allies and partners in the region, it remains vague about how those countries will collaborate with US forces in specific contingencies and the tools that they’ll need. There’s a particular cause for concern about a growing ‘digital divide’ in harnessing

IT—American NCW and C4ISR assets might eventually become so technologically advanced that allies and partners won't be able to interoperate effectively with US forces. As the US presses ahead with the transformation of its armed forces, its allies and partners could be left behind, with little ability to make an effective contribution to mutual defence and joint operations. As a result, those countries could either be relegated to 'tool box' status, playing only minor roles in coalition operations, or, even worse, be a net drag militarily.

Non-allied partnering countries, such as Singapore, might have particular problems responding to US defence transformation. A central goal of Singapore's 3G force modernisation plan is to be better able to interoperate with US forces, but it's unclear how Singapore's defence transformation efforts will dovetail with US requirements, or whether the US, beyond providing base access, is even much interested in Singapore's contributions to common roles and missions.

Japan may have the toughest time working with a transformed US military. As we've seen, Tokyo is revising and revamping its postwar security and defence policy, and is trying to expand its military role in the Asia-Pacific region. In this respect, cooperative military missions with the US offer Japan an important fig leaf—one that tries to reassure Japan's neighbours that it's not embarking on a revanchist militaristic course and that its military activities will be bounded and constrained.

On the other hand, Tokyo is under increasing pressure from the US to expand its military activities even further. Washington generally perceives Japan as its closest and most important military ally in the Asia-Pacific region, but there's still considerable resistance to Japan becoming America's 'Asian Britain' (that is, a closely cooperative and capable partner with the US in regional and out-of-area contingencies). According to Aurelia Mulgan, Japan's 'defense dilemma' lies in the fact that it:

... wants to become a 'normal' state, but it does not necessarily want a 'normal' alliance with the US. It fears entanglement in regional and global conflict and wants to preserve the strategic freedom it exercises under constitutional constraint. (Mulgan 2005)

Japan is particularly concerned about being drawn into a conflict between the US and China over Taiwan. Tokyo is increasingly suspicious of China's long-range intentions in the region. It's especially apprehensive about what it perceives to be rising Chinese military power, so it views the military alliance with the US as an important bulwark against Chinese aggression. At the same time, Japan wants to clearly demarcate its responsibilities in any possible joint military operations with US forces against China. Consequently, Japan's emphasis on an exclusively defence-oriented posture will likely remain unchanged, and the SDF will probably want to focus its efforts on critical non-combat functions, such as logistics, surveillance and intelligence-sharing, or on the protection of rear areas, such as bases in Japan. Missile defence would be another area of acceptable joint military activities.

The Japanese ban on collective defence is likely to continue for some time to come, and there's currently no consensus among the Japanese population for revising the constitution to allow unfettered collective defence or for increasing Japan's defence efforts. Of course, the prohibition on collective defence can be and has been fudged. For example, Tokyo has quietly relaxed its restrictions on collective defence to permit cooperative engagement with the US against missile threats. However, openly revisiting and attempting to eliminate the ban may still be too much, too soon.

Implications for Australia

So where does US defence transformation leave Australia? Does it make sense for the ADF to try to emulate the US transformational vision, or to tie its future too closely to interoperability and joint missions with the US armed forces? For a country with a small population and small defence budget, Australia has laid out a very ambitious transformational strategy for itself—much of it intended to make the ADF more compatible and interoperable with transformed US forces. This priority on interoperability—and therefore on networked expeditionary forces—offers the ADF an opportunity to substantially boost its military effectiveness and make a substantive contribution to allied operations. An ‘Australian RMA’ keeps the relatively small ADF relevant in the age of 21st century warfare, therefore.

At the same time, transformation poses significant challenges to the Australians. First of all, it won’t be cheap. The 2006–2016 Defence Capability Plan is expected to cost A\$51 billion (US\$38 billion); consequently, the Australian Government has vowed to increase defence spending by three per cent annually out to and beyond 2010—a commitment that might not be sustainable. Furthermore, most of the Defence Capability Plan programs won’t be procured until the second half of the ten-year timeframe, creating a bow wave of spending after 2010.

There are concerns ... that Australia is linking its future defence strategy and force structure changes too closely to the US.

There are concerns, too, that Australia is linking its future defence strategy and force structure changes too closely to the US. First, while US defence transformation and the requirement for interoperability are largely driving changes in the ADF, some have argued that Australia still has its own unique security requirements and that it must maintain capabilities for independent military action. An overemphasis on service-based interoperability with US forces could come at the price of less jointness within the ADF.

Furthermore, any increase in Australia’s expeditionary capabilities might still be too small to make any real difference to US forces in contingency operations. The ADF comprises only five active Army battalions, and even after acquiring the two new Canberra-class amphibious assault ships (and even then not until 2015) it will still only be capable of lifting one armoured battalion, even though its new doctrine calls for moving a 3,000-man brigade. In addition, the RAAF has only a limited capacity to provide air cover to maritime expeditionary forces deployed any further than a few hundred kilometres from Australia, and only limited capability to deliver sustained air support to land forces. All in all, therefore, the ADF could end up spending a lot of bucks and still not add much bang in terms of its *military* contribution to coalition operations (Bostock 2006).

Finally, some have argued that the ADF might be putting too much trust in technology—and particularly the ability to quickly upgrade with commercially available, off-the-shelf technologies—and that the stress on interoperability might lead Australia to become overdependent on the US for technology, particularly for network-centric capabilities. The necessary technology might be too expensive for Australia to acquire, or else the US might restrict its release, leaving the ADF with less-capable systems.

Concluding thoughts

Overall, US defence transformation, even if imperfect and less ‘revolutionary’ than originally intended, will still have considerable implications for Asia–Pacific security. Efforts to modernise the US military along the lines of NCW, to make it more expeditionary and more strategically flexible and still able to deliver considerable firepower, to refocus its force structure and basing in the Asia–Pacific region from providing for local static defences to a posture geared towards rapidly deployable forces capable of engaging adversaries in the region and beyond, will resonate throughout the region. Even limited changes could have significant consequences in such a large and reverberating echo chamber as the Asia–Pacific region.

US defence transformation will affect a number of critical regional security concerns, such as alliance relationships and interoperability, regional competition and cooperation, and local force modernisation activities. In particular, the transformation is taking place at a time when the regional security calculus in the Asia–Pacific region is evolving—for example, with the rise of China and an increasingly independent South Korea. These developments may gain new momentum and new resonance as the US security and defence role changes.

The interplay between US defence transformation and regional security is likely to have repercussions far beyond the original intent, therefore. Whatever one may think of the RMA or of ‘defence transformation’ in particular, the fact remains that US forces in the Asia–Pacific region are undergoing significant changes in terms of force structure, roles and missions, operating concepts, and the like. At the very least, therefore, these are developments that countries like Australia should continue to monitor closely and to which they should react cautiously.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AEW&C	airborne early warning and control
ASDF	Air Self Defense Force (Japan)
ASLAV	Australian Light Armoured Vehicle
AWD	air warfare destroyer
BCS(L)	Battlespace Communications System (Land)
BCT	Brigade Combat Team (US)
C4ISR	command, control, communications, computing, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
GIG	Global Information Grid (US)
HNA	Hardened and Networked Army (Australia)
IT	information technology/technologies
NCW	network-centric warfare
PLA	People’s Liberation Army (China)
QDR	2006 <i>Quadrennial Defense Review</i> (US)
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RMA	revolution in military affairs
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SDF	Self Defense Force (Japan)
USFK	US Forces Korea
WMD	weapon of mass destruction

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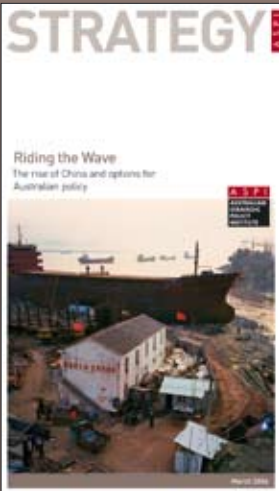


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Transforming the US Military Implications for the Asia-Pacific

Under the stewardship of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, transformation became the guiding principle of the US military.

Ongoing developments and breakthroughs in such areas as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, precision-strike, stealth technologies and command and control have made the US military the most formidable armed force in the world.

One result of this transformation process is a significant change in the US military force posture, particularly overseas. As flexibility, agility and mobility become more important requirements, maintaining large numbers of US soldiers around the globe has become less imperative.

Overseas bases, while perhaps becoming fewer and smaller, more austere and more impermanent, will be increasingly valued as forward staging areas for expeditionary operations. The US military will likely come to rely even more than ever on its allies and partnering states.

Defence transformation, has major implications for the future course of US military and security policy, particularly when it comes to the Asia-Pacific region. As the US continues to transform its forces, this process will have a profound impact on the ways in which US forces operate in the region, including their future basing and deployment, where and how they'll operate, and what kind of and what kind of equipment they'll require.

The report examines how US defence transformation affects the leading nations and militaries in the Asia-Pacific region, and how those countries and their armed forces are responding to a transforming US military. This two-way dynamic will have repercussions for regional security that will be felt for many years to come.

US defence transformation will affect a number of critical regional security concerns, such as alliance relationships and interoperability, regional competition and cooperation, and local force modernisation activities.

US forces in the Asia-Pacific region are undergoing significant changes in terms of force structure, roles and missions and operating concepts. These are developments that countries like Australia should continue to monitor closely and to which they should react cautiously.