Regional reactions to the Australian Defence White Paper 2009: an introduction

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In early May, the Prime Minister released Australia's 2009 Defence White Paper in Sydney, on board HMAS Stuart at Garden Island. The paper, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, presents a detailed statement of Australian strategic policy in a complex international and regional security environment.

While the White Paper has attracted its fair share of commentary from within Australia, ASPI wanted to solicit a range of opinions from regional commentators, and so provide some insights into how the White Paper is being viewed around the region. To this end, we contracted a small collection of prominent strategic analysts from around the region to send us their views. Our contributors include:

- Teruhiko Fukushima from Japan's National Defence Academy
- Zhang Chun from China's Shanghai Institute of International Studies
- Uday Bhaskar from India's National Maritime Foundation
- Rizal Sukma from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Indonesia
- See Seng Tan from the Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore
- Thomas-Durell Young from the US Naval Postgraduate School, and
- Lance Beath from the Centre for Strategic Studies in New Zealand.

Like all Defence White papers, the current one runs the risk of offending some and pleasing others. In such a complex environment, it even runs the risk of puzzling some, despite Australia's best intentions of promoting the ideas of transparency and openness about strategic policy planning. In the contributions to this Strategic Policy Forum that follow, readers will find an interesting range of views and thoughts from a talented pool of regional strategic analysts. That range of views is a confirmation of the old adage that White Papers have many audiences.

In all cases, we think the contributions are thoughtful and engaging, and we thank our contributors for their efforts. But it would be wise for readers not to take the contributions as the defining word on each country's 'national perspective' on the White Paper. Each contributor has essentially given us a personal view about the paper. In all countries, there are probably multiple views about that document. And our authors are not officials commenting on behalf of their governments, but academics and analysts expressing their own thoughts. Still, we are pleased to present here a set of 'regional perspectives' on this year's White Paper.

Enjoy!

Australian Defence White Paper 2009: An Indonesian perspective

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Indonesia's reaction to the release of Australia's latest Defence White Paper (DWP 2009), *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2030,* is a curious one. Unlike previous releases, the document did not attract much discussion among Indonesian officials, defence analysts or Australia watchers. Media reports on the document have also been sparse, focusing primarily on the event when the document was officially released, rather than on the document itself.

The only official statement came from Minister of Defense Juwono Sudarsono who confirmed that Indonesia is not worried about Australia's plan to boost its defence capability. He even maintained that the plan is 'natural' and 'will not threaten regional stability.' In the absence of public reactions from others in Indonesia, Minister Sudarsono's views suggest, overall, a positive reaction to Australia's DWP 2009.

What explains that reaction from Indonesia, and the absence of a more wide-ranging debate about this latest iteration of Australian strategic policy? Several reasons might have contributed. First, the latest White Paper views Indonesia in a much more positive light—the first time that an Australian DWP has done so. It assesses that, 'Indonesia will continue to evolve as a stable democratic state with improved social cohesion.' More importantly, the DWP 2009 also recognises Indonesia as 'a strong partner' for Australia.

Second, the DWP was released after a time when the relationship between Indonesia and Australia had experienced a substantial improvement. Bilateral relations between the two countries, which grew stronger in the wake of the Bali Bombings in October 2002, were consolidated further with Australia's support for the reconstruction of Aceh since 2005 and the ratification of the Lombok Treaty on Security Cooperation in 2008. More importantly, since the election of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister, Indonesia has been determined to transform its relations with Australia into an enduring partnership.

Third, the position of Indonesia as a source of problems or threats to Australia has been apparently replaced in this DWP by China. Within this context, the plan to significantly upgrade Australia's defence capability detailed in the DWP is not seen in Jakarta as being directed against Indonesia. Judging from the fact that Indonesia's perceptions of China are still characterised by persistent ambiguity, Indonesian elites seem to hold 'a degree of understanding' about the defence upgrade plans.

However, the place of China in the DWP has also caught the critical eye of Minister Sudarsono. He believed that the China factor had been exaggerated in the DWP 2009. 'If you look at China's internal problems', he said, 'I wouldn't worry too much about their so-called military rise.' Despite those reservations, Minister Sudarsono acknowledged that, in light of the 'recalibration' of the US military presence in the Asia–Pacific, Australia's plan to strengthen its naval strike force with extra submarines and frigates was justified. (*The Age*, 27 May 2009).

Still, Minister Sudarsono's remarks about China's place in the DWP point to an unspoken question in some Indonesian minds about the real reasons behind the plan to significantly boost Australian defence capability. While real security threats to Australia come from non-traditional sources—such as people smuggling, refugees, and internal conflicts in the immediate

neighbourhood—one would be hard-pressed to understand why it needs to boost its war-fighting capability by acquiring 12 new Future Submarines, 8 new Future Frigates, and 100 F-35 JSF.

Indeed, it is rather hard to grasp Australia's real intention contained in this defence policy document. The language is cautious and measured, but at times registers a degree of ambivalence. For example, while the DWP believes that US primacy will continue at least until 2030, it also implicitly believes that the US will be increasingly tested and challenged 'as other powers rise.' And, according to the DWP 2009, the 'rising power' with the greatest potential to challenge the US is none other than China.

What matters most to Indonesia is that the DWP 2009 provides a stronger foundation for Indonesia and Australia to work more closely in addressing regional security issues. The DWP clearly recognises and advocates the need to promote shared security interests between the two countries. One such shared security interest is the imperative of preventing the emergence of 'a security environment dominated by any regional power or powers.' In that context, Indonesia, Australia, and also South Korea, need to start working on a new regional security architecture that would prevent any power, or powers, from coercing and dominating others in the Asia–Pacific.

The 2009 Defence White Paper's messages for Japan

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As a Tokyo-based 'Australia watcher', I was a bit surprised that the weight given to Japan in the 2009 Defence White Paper (DWP) was larger than I expected. Paragraph 4.21, for example, raises a concern that without the reliance on the US alliance, Japan's 'strategic outlook would be dramatically different, and it would be compelled to re-examine its strategic posture and capabilities'. On the other hand, paragraph 11.13 hails Japan as 'a critical strategic partner in our region', and advocates a more active contribution by Japan both to 'the security and reconstruction of fragile states' and to humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and peacekeeping operations.

These remarks sound to me like the Rudd government's hidden messages to Japan: You may well feel more deserted with the Obama administration than its predecessor. With North Korea's missile threat looking imminent, you may be enticed to rush into strengthening your military buildup, adopting a strategy of preemptive strikes, or even considering development of nuclear weapons. But don't be so reckless. It will pay more not only for yourself but also for the Asia–Pacific, including Australia, if we can work together more closely towards regional security cooperation, especially for the fragile states in the Pacific.

Kevin Rudd's Labor predecessor, Paul Keating, has long warned against the possibility of Japan's developing nuclear weapons. It is interesting to point out that Keating and Rudd share much in common in advocating closer regional cooperation and promoting Australia–Japan security exchanges and cooperation. Both the Keating and Rudd prime ministerial periods have also been the ones when North Korea has demonstrated its nuclear weapons and missile programs. But the growing unpopularity of the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the resultant political unpredictability were such that Japan could not handle those crises in an effective manner. Under such circumstances, Japanese voters—who have long been indulged in sentimental pacifism and not well-trained in strategic thinking—may well find the hawkish nationalists' propaganda for nuclear armament more seductive.

Any sign of a nuclear weapons program by Japan would surely provoke extremely harsh reactions not only from North Korea and China but also from South Korea and even the United States. This is a situation most likely to cause the sort of 'miscalculation' which may trigger a 'growing confrontation' between the major powers in the region, as indicated in the DWP, paragraph 4.19. It is intriguing to note this judgment is placed only two paragraphs before the reference to the concern about Japan without the US alliance. Growing tension in North East Asia would distract the US—and other friends—from Australia's more immediate concerns. Then the worst nightmare for Canberra would be simultaneous crises of instability in the fragile South Pacific states, which Australia would have to tackle almost single-handedly.

That may be why DWP gives special reference to Japan as a 'critical strategic partner'. Rudd's addresses on the Asia–Pacific community proposal carry a similar tone. I interpret these messages as follows: You (Japan) can expect far better strategic benefits from security cooperation with Australia than from reckless unilateral actions. Security cooperation will broaden your capabilities to tackle non-traditional threats. It will help promote mutual confidence building in the region now that South Korea, your closest neighbour, has not only concluded with us a document similar to the 2007 Joint Declaration between Australia and Japan but also participated in the Proliferation Security Initiative. Your peace building efforts in the region will be highly

appreciated and will increase the prospects for Japan eventually attaining permanent membership in the UN Security Council. So let's turn our eyes to not only Asia but also the Pacific. That will help us a lot, too.

Some may wonder whether the newly elected Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) under Yukio Hatoyama will listen to the DWP's messages. Its prospective coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party, persists in purely pacifist lines, advocating immediate withdrawal of the Maritime Self Defense Force from the refuelling mission in the Indian Ocean and the anti-piracy patrols off Somalia. DPJ's election manifesto is somewhat more ambiguous about those issues. With North Korea's missile threat still intact, however, it is unlikely that the Hatoyama government would dissociate itself from the US and other security partners in the region.

Japanese voters have recently experienced a change of government. The onus is now on the DPJ to explain—sincerely and in plain language—why the government needs to follow such foreign and defence policies. The problem is that, despite the transformation of the political scene, strategic thinking has not matured enough in Japan's domestic circles to allow a proper grasp of international circumstances and an appreciation of the real benefits of promoting security cooperation with Australia. Such cooperation is still typically seen just as an attachment to the American alliance—a point argued frequently by leftist critics. Tackling this problem will be a challenging but exciting task.

Rebuilding middle power leadership for Australia

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The 2009 Australian Defence White Paper has raised fundamental questions about what role Australia will play in the future and how to balance its relationship with China, the potential great power, and the USA, the current great power. These questions are common for most of the middle powers that once played a leading role in the Cold War period. Within the context of a transformational international system, middle powers are finding new opportunities to rebuild their leadership roles. As far as Australia is concerned, the White Paper is the most recent effort.

Heroes emerge in troubled times

Since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed important shifts in the international system:

- the overflow of various crises—from national to international, and from traditional to non-traditional
- changes in the distribution of global power, especially the rise of China and other emerging powers, while the USA has faced a range of troubles
- and most fundamentally, the transformation of the Westphalian system itself, facilitated by the rise of non-state actors.

Since the onset of these troubled times, those once-glorious 'middle powers', like Australia, have lost the privilege of acting as balancers between large and small, between East and West, and between developed and developing.

For the military, however, trouble means opportunity. That's why the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper emphasises various threats, for example, terrorism, power transition, state fragility, global financial crisis, and climate change. To justify increased defence spending, the White Paper highlights the new characteristics of crises, including their ready transmission from the traditional to the non-traditional security field; their durability; their transnational nature.

Thus, the troubled times ask for a stronger military force and a leading role for Australia at both regional and global levels. Or in other words, they ask for rebuilding of Australian middle power leadership.

China as the perceived threat

Unfortunately, it's simply a case of old wine in new bottles. Identifying new threats, the White Paper proposes old resolutions. First of all, it differentiates the future Australian strategy at four levels: the domestic, the sub-regional (or neighbour areas), the regional (Asia), and the global level.

More importantly, it identifies the rise of China as the main source of threat. The White Paper argues that, 'China by 2030 will be the strongest Asian military power, …its military modernisation will be increasingly characterised by the development of power projection capabilities.' It also notes that, 'The pace, scope and structure of China's military modernisation have the potential to give its neighbours cause for concern….'

As Ric Smith of the Lowy Institute for International Policy argues, since 1968 a 'China consensus' has developed in the Australian military community: that China's rise is the best justification for increasing defence spending. Even as that community has embraced the views that China's first priority is economic growth and that the nature of China's growth locks it into interdependency with the global economy, it has worried that China's economic growth will change regional security and strategic relativities.

US as ally and final resort

Although it recognises that a power transition from the Atlantic to the Asia–Pacific is underway, the White Paper still adheres to an old and conservative approach as to how to deal with and respond to this process. It proposes relying on Australia's special relationship with the US to balance against the rise of China.

The White Paper believes that Australia's alliance with the United States—the ANZUS alliance—is still its 'most important defence relationship.' Indeed, Australia traditionally has enjoyed a close alliance relationship with the US, a relationship that some have called another 'special relationship', similar to the US–British special relationship. Thus, like the traditional logic of using the rise of China as justification for increasing defense spending, this special relationship is the final resort of Australian leadership among the middle powers.

In conclusion, the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper finds new excuses to rebuild Australia's middle power leadership role, but is still haunted by an old mindset. Most importantly, the fundamental root of current crises lies in lack of development, which has been illustrated by the theory of a 'development–security nexus'. To address this nexus, there are three different approaches: development first or developmentalisation, security first or securitisation, and a development–security integration approach. With the special relationship with the US in mind, the Australian Government follows the US 'example' of securitisation, addressing all issues from a security perspective. That the rise of China is viewed as a source of threat is the best example of this approach. Maybe we can find an excuse for it because it is a Defence White Paper rather than a Development White Paper, even as we hope for future White Papers to strike a better balance between security and development imperatives.

Australia's Defence White Paper 2009: One view from India

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Australia's Defence White Paper 2009 (DWP 09) is a comprehensive document and this initiative is to be commended—more so for it seeks to grapple with a very complex subject—national defence. The document is courageous—for in the face of many imponderables and uncertainties about threats to Australian national security, it goes to the extent of outlining a force level for 2030 with a clear objective: 'capable of meeting every contingency the ADF may be required to meet in the coming two decades.'

From the perspective of one Indian analyst, this clarity about the final objective is not reflected to the same degree in the rationale and assessment about different exigencies that have been elucidated in individual chapters. An inherent ambivalence permeates DWP 09 and much of this relates to the 'big picture' as it were. Australia has no doubts about the correlation between its domestic security and the regional strategic–security ambience. Southeast Asia is the proximate region that is central to Australian defence planning and this assertion, that 'a secure and stable Southeast Asia is in Australia's interests as neither a source of broad security threat, nor as a conduit for the projection of military power against us by others,' is unexceptionable. Similarly, it is unsurprising that the Paper looks towards a 'Southeast Asia [that] should remain largely stable, and reform-minded enough to sustain reasonable rates of development.' Allusion has also been made to the primacy of Indonesia in Canberra's security calculus and I daresay the reference to 'a heightened defence posture on Australia's part' in the event of Indonesia becoming a 'strategic liability' will have many regional interpretations and related reverberations.

The ambivalence and, on occasion, contradictory tenor is evident in relation to the specifics of the emerging strategic contours of the 21st century—and the texture of the relationship between some principal interlocutors. DWP 09 acknowledges the advent of 'multi-polarity' (I personally would have preferred the 'polycentric' semantic) and the nuance is appropriate. On one hand it identifies the USA as the most powerful and influential strategic actor till 2030—but also notes that, 'China, India, Russia, Japan and the EU will exercise global influence in differing degrees.' It is in regard to China that DWP 09 is at its ambivalent best. The politico-diplomatic dilemma here for the Australian Department of Defence is all too real. Chapter 4 attempts to contextualise the strategic implications of the 'rise of China' in five pithy paragraphs and pragmatic reticence is the preferred orientation. While democracy seems a desirable outcome elsewhere, as for instance in Indonesia, in relation to China, DWP 09 exhorts China only to, 'take its place as a leading stakeholder in the development and stability of the global economic and political system.' Can one infer therefore that DWP 09 is tacitly preparing for the emergence of a G–2 within the multi-polar construct of the early part of the 21st century? If so, the opaque hedging that is discernible in DWP 09 about how Canberra will deal with the US–China dyad is rather prudent.

Predictably, the Indian Ocean region finds adequate mention, and a strong case is made for maritime Australia to invigorate its naval capability. The force levels envisaged are impressive and, if realised as per schedule, the RAN by 2030 will indeed be a very credible navy in the region. As a sailor, I plead guilty of sectarian bias in dwelling at some length about the maritime part of DWP 09. The paper avers that the Indian Ocean, 'will have greater strategic significance in the period to 2030.' This is axiomatic of the post Cold War/post 9-11 international system, for the maritime focus of the world has gradually shifted from its Atlantic–Pacific fixation to a Pacific focus in the early 1990's and is now evolving into a Pacific–Indian Ocean combine. DWP

09 then opines that, ‘a number of major naval powers are likely to increasingly compete for strategic advantage in this crucial maritime region.’

The formulation is valid and all trend indicators are pointing to this exigency. But DWP 09 does not stray into examining the implications of such diverse and extra-regional naval presence in the Indian Ocean region. Ambiguity is complemented by reticence and one presumes that this document—public and transparent—may not be the most appropriate forum for such strategic ruminations.

Proliferation of WMD has been flagged and it is instructive that DWP 09 perceives ‘the possible addition of Iran to the group of states with nuclear weapons.’ The AQ Khan network is not referred to explicitly but only alluded to, and the linkage with religious radicalism and related terrorism is not rigorously explored.

But the spectrum of issues covered is wide and on the whole, DWP 09 provides a very useful document for further debate and deliberation in a robust democratic framework.

Australia's new Defence White Paper: Not quite grand strategy, but part of one?

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In a key sense, the ongoing debate over Australia's latest Defence White Paper, launched in May 2009, can be understood as the latest edition of a longstanding deliberation about 'Australia's project in the world', to use defence analyst Alan Dupont's phrase. Have the trustees of Australia's national defence devised a coherent security strategy—one that befits the country's self-image as an influential middle power—or are they muddling through as they have hitherto done? The surfeit of intense reactions to the White Paper suggests that few if any among the company of Australian security intellectuals seem convinced that the document amounts to a national strategy, let alone a grand one.

Anticipating the likelihood of a decline in American primacy and concomitant rise in Chinese power, and with it, the prospect for Australia of imminent strategic competition with China, the White Paper prescribes a multibillion dollar build-up of the nation's naval and air—less so ground—assets in order to balance against growing Chinese military capabilities. At the same time, there are the capabilities of India and a resurgent Russia to worry about as well. Australia's chariness over China has been condemned by a People's Liberation Army general as 'crazy', 'stupid' and 'dangerous'. After all, China's rise, as its champions unfailingly insist, is inherently benign and peaceful. Moreover, China has surpassed all others to become Australia's largest trading partner.

The paradox of balancing militarily the very nation from whom one is benefiting economically is by no means an uncommon practice. That Australia is resorting to hedging against the Chinese is emblematic of how many other countries, including the United States, view and treat China today. So while the White Paper seems a radical break from Canberra's traditional resistance to identifying enemies (while maintaining a technological advantage over its regional neighbours), the proposed plan might equally be seen as a reflection of the indistinct international security environment in which Australians—and, indeed, everyone else—currently find themselves.

Nonetheless, it is not inconceivable to imagine the new defence plan, warts and all, as part of an emerging broader policy that could qualify tacitly as an embryonic national security strategy. Crucially, defence alone does not make a security strategy. Three observations come to mind regarding this rudimentary vision.

Firstly, to the extent Canberra's broader policy bears, if at all, the hallmarks of a national strategy, it necessarily includes a diplomatic element. In this regard, the planned build-up cannot be seen apart from another equally big idea from the Rudd government, namely, the call for an overarching Asia–Pacific institution. Issued twelve months before the White Paper, the regional community idea positions Australia in a leading role in the creation of a new architecture that spans the entire Asia–Pacific. According to the Australian Prime Minister, this comprehensive institution would handle 'the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action in economic and political matters and future challenges related to security'—a one-stop shop for all things Asia-Pacific, in effect. Crucially, Rudd's proposal identifies five key countries—America, Japan, India, Indonesia, and of course China—which presumably, together with Australia, comprise the pillars of the envisaged community. Taken together, the complexity of Australia's emerging

multipronged riposte to China—a strategy combining defence and diplomacy, as well as national power, alliance, and regionalism instruments—is in fact quite astounding, even if it lacks the requisite coherence.

Secondly, intended or otherwise, the emerging though inchoate strategy cultivates the impression that 'the Aussies are (still) riding shotgun for the Yanks', as it were. Indeed, the Americans seem a lot less troubled by the proposed build-up since it converges more or less with their own apprehensions about rising Chinese power and what ought to be done about it. Far from distancing Australia from the unfortunate image, self-styled by the Howard government, of the nation as willing deputy to America's sheriff to the world, the White Paper in effect nudges Canberra towards strategic congruence with Washington and greater reliance on the American nuclear deterrent than before, even as the two close allies differ over Iraq policy.

Finally, to the extent Australia's new security posture ends up hardening China's stance, the prospect of a new cold war in the Asia–Pacific is certainly not good news for the region's residents, not least the member countries of ASEAN which have worked long and hard at socialising China towards cooperative security. To be sure, it seems unlikely that an Australia–America strategic tandem against China, should it materialise, would cause the Chinese to forsake their strong participation in and promotion of Asia–Pacific regionalism, even a future Australian-inspired one. Yet it is a risk Australia—and, for that matter, any of us—would do well not to ignore.

2009 Defence White Paper: Something for everyone?

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The 2009 Defence White Paper is an impressive document, both in terms of its length, and in terms of the Rudd government's almost tortuous intellectual struggle to find that illusive objective that has long obsessed Australian defence planners. That is, a pragmatic balance between a long-standing Australian desire (some might describe it an 'obsession') to create an ADF capable of defending Australian sovereignty, whilst also being capable of supporting the country's desire to be a responsible and responsive member of the Western world. Given obvious finite resources and the ADF's immense geographical area of responsibility, it should not be surprising that there has raged an intellectual battle between those who would have the ADF's orientation and capabilities limited by geography ('defence of Australia': DoA), and those who would argue that priority should be given to structuring the ADF to undertake those missions for which the ADF has been historically employed (expeditionary).

If nothing else, the Rudd government should be complimented for its confidence in issuing a White Paper that for the first time since 1972 does not dwell, *in extremis*, on the question of the US security commitment to Australia. This past practice has resulted in more officials in Canberra being able to cite line and verse of President Nixon's 1969 speech in Guam, whereas one would be hard pressed to find anyone in Washington who can even recall its existence, let alone its content and context. Thus, this should be seen as an attempt to move away from a deterministic questioning of the US commitment which, in effect, weakens a key argument behind DoA.

That said, the document in some ways raises as many questions about the future of Australian defence as it attempts to answer. A thematic practice that the paper regrettably continues is the maddening dichotomy between the planning for the 'defence of Australia' (supported by the document's unconvincing argument for Australia's unique planning realities) and the cold fact that the ADF continues its distant and dangerous overseas deployments. Whilst the paper does recognise the ADF's participation in operations in Afghanistan (which has, indeed, recently increased as part of the West's 'surge' policy), such obvious force structure determinants would appear not to constitute a high priority, when compared to the almost ethereal imperatives of DoA.

This is an important point given the fact that following the ADF's early operational experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, I had the unique pleasure of belonging to an Australian-US team that produced a comprehensive review of impediments to interoperability. At that time (under the previous government), improving the ADF's interoperability with the US was accorded a high priority. With the benefit of this analysis, one would have either to suffer from operational myopia, or unbridled optimism, to assume that those numerous challenges identified by the review have either been solved, or have been sufficiently mitigated. Indeed, one might have thought that improving the ADF's ability to operate effectively in a dangerous Afghanistan would have been a major priority for force requirements: alas not. In fact, Army is almost an after-thought, and once this deployment is over, will Army be relegated to its previous role, to quote Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, as a 'strategic goal-keeper'?

For, in the end, a white paper, perforce, *is* about establishing resource priorities. In this respect, I find the immense shopping list of new capabilities outlined for procurement ambitious; and the means to pay for them, unconvincing. The final section on financing Defence is simply too short on details to provide one with any certainty that there has been a comprehensive and accurate costing. And when one considers that these acquisitions (which essentially include the re-capitalisation of the RAN and RAAF); do not include a clearly articulated list of priorities, it is difficult not to feel that this is something that we've seen before. The paper's assertion that government is confident that it will find A$20 billion in efficiencies to help finance this program simply is not convincing. Perhaps, had government initiated this review (and reforms) before the defence review, it would be a stronger position.

It would appear, therefore, that the Rudd government, like its predecessors, has slipped back into a regrettable DoA orientation and has not fully accepted the reality that Australia is in the mainstream of globalisation and needs to realign long-standing defence policy precepts accordingly. Thus, the resulting effect of proffering something to everyone. Perhaps, pragmatically, these tensions will never be completely resolved, let alone agreed. But, at the same time, a re-reading of Sir Michael Howard's incisive (and apparently heretical) analysis of Australia's defence orientation in 1972 still rings true to this long-time observer of Australian defence policy: Australia's ultimate security is inexorably tied to the Western international political and economic system, rather than to the security conditions in its own immediate region. Notwithstanding the balancing act by the White Paper, Australia's defence policy has yet to align itself to these realities.

Regional reactions to the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper: New Zealand reactions

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The New Zealand reaction to the publication of the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper in early May was predictably low key. NZ Defence Minister, the Hon. Wayne Mapp, interviewed on television, confined himself to the observation that New Zealand, in conducting its own Defence Review and White Paper exercise this year, would probably take a more restrained view of its future defence capability requirements than had Australia. He did not think that New Zealand would be likely to want to significantly increase the size of its current investments in Defence (currently running at around 1% of GDP or a little less).

For a New Zealand observer, the striking thing about this Australian Defence White Paper is the sheer scale of the intended investment in new as well as upgraded defence capability out to 2030, including the emphasis on enhancing maritime capabilities, upgrading air combat and other long range strike capabilities and strengthening aspects of Australia's land forces and special forces. These future investment decisions are all the more impressive considering the constrained global fiscal environment in which even Australia found itself immersed at the height of the White Paper decision making process.

New Zealand ministers and other public commentators have been careful to avoid a discussion of the extent to which New Zealand shares the Australian assessments that underpin the White Paper. New Zealand, like Australia, sees the pre-eminent fact about the future regional strategic environment as being the re-emergence of the great Asian powers of India and China, and the challenge this represents to the strategic primacy of the United States. We accept that this means that New Zealand, like Australia, will find itself dealing increasingly with contested agendas based on competing sets of values, and that we will need to become comfortable and more agile working within deeply held cultural and intellectual traditions that are different from the Western values with which we have been more familiar up until now.

New Zealand, partly perhaps because it is an Asianising society, and partly perhaps because of our privileged geographic setting distant from potential trouble spots including contested sea lines of communication, sees no reason to doubt that China and India will be anything other than responsible stakeholders as they seek to secure their own great power requirements in the region. Yet we have also observed that both powers display a deep awareness of their own national identities and a unique sense of their individual destinies. These feelings of nationalism and emerging greatness are creating, to borrow an expression, a new form of Asian *exceptionalism*. We will need to be able to deal with this fact, and deal with it most likely in an era of sharply increasing resource competition and other challenges posed by global climate change.

How do New Zealand views on these issues differ from Australian assessments? We will need to await the New Zealand Defence White Paper, due for release in early 2010, for a definitive answer, but my sense is that New Zealand's views may be more nuanced than Australia's. Freed from the responsibilities that flow from active membership in a security alliance with the United States we would not, I am sure, wish to prejudge in advance whose 'side' we might be on in the event of major interstate conflict in the region (to be fair, the Australian White Paper does not regard interstate warfare as a likely outcome in the period out to 2030). And nor would we think *ab initio* that US strategic primacy is a necessary precondition for regional stability and good order, which seems to be an implicit assumption on which parts of the Australian paper are based.

I think that a future New Zealand government could contemplate with reasonable equanimity the emergence of either China or India, or both of them, as *the* great powers of the region, even if that day may still be several generations off.

In the meantime the significance of this White Paper to New Zealand may turn out to lie in the small print. First is the invitation to New Zealand to look for increased opportunities to integrate Australian and New Zealand force elements in the Anzac tradition. Examples given (see para. 11.29) include the possible integration of air transport logistics through to an Anzac task force 'capable of deploying seamlessly at short notice into our immediate region'. This invitation, reinforced more recently when Prime Ministers Rudd and Key met in Sydney on 20 August and tasked their defence chiefs to get on with the integration studies, is clearly something that deserves serious thought. As the White Paper itself notes, operational integration would need to be without prejudice to future policy options in both Canberra and Wellington, yet would be a sensible and practical response to growing operational demands on what, by regional standards, are still two very modestly-sized defence forces.

Second is the requirement for defence reform. Australia, in the context of this White Paper, has committed itself to a Strategic Reform Program that aims to overhaul the entire Defence enterprise, potentially freeing up some A$20 billion from increased efficiency to reinvest in defence capability. I expect a very similar message to be the main outcome of the New Zealand Defence Review and accompanying White Paper. That we need to increase New Zealand defence capability significantly over the period ahead can hardly be in serious doubt. Given also that the New Zealand Government is unlikely to want to increase the scale of its investments in Defence, the only way that we can increase defence capability is through a serious, indeed unprecedented, program of very deep structural reform. For both defence forces, these reform and modernisation programmes will be the most significant non-operational challenge in the period immediately ahead.