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Australia's strategic fundamentals

by Rod Lyon

Over the last year the subject of Australian strategy has been the basis of considerable—and considered—discussion. Hugh White has written a paper for the Lowy Institute, *Beyond the Defence of Australia*, which advocates 'finding a new balance' in Australian strategic policy.[1] Allan Gyngell, in an address to the ASPI Global Forces conference in September last year, observed that 'the balancing of our security interests is likely to become harder.'[2] And Paul Dibb, in a seminar last October to celebrate the 40th anniversary of ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, pointed to a drift in ADF force structure planning that threatened to leave Australia with a 'hybrid' force, suitable for neither continental defence nor global expeditionary missions.[3]

At its core, Australian strategy is not particularly complicated. It is the answer to the question, 'What sort of world do we want to live in and what can we do to maximise our chances of doing so?' Unfortunately, Australian strategy doesn't operate in a vacuum. It would be comparatively easy to design the world we wanted if we were the only player. But we aren't. Indeed, the number of 'players' in the field of global strategy is increasing, as a range of non-state and transnational actors stake claims for larger roles.

Nor is our strategic policy merely our defence policy, though it clearly has implications for that policy. Similarly, the Australian Defence Force is merely one of the instruments we might use to achieve the Australian 'project' for the world. Getting our defence policy right is important, because that's where we're spending big buckets of money. It's also where the consequences of success or failure can be profound. But getting our strategy right is even more important, because it stands both above, and logically precedent to, the missions that we will be asking the ADF to perform.

Geography, history and strategic arguments

Australians (almost 21 million of them in June 2007) inhabit a continent straddling the Southwest Pacific and the Indian oceans. Australia is a trading nation. It has no land borders. Nor does it have current conflicts with any of its immediate neighbours—a big plus for Australian security, since academic research on conflict patterns reveals most interstate conflict occurs between neighbours.[4] But nor are those immediate neighbours Australia's major economic or security partners.

Australia lacks the comfort of being surrounded by affluent, stable democracies.

It is not 'embedded' within its region in the same way that a typical western European country is, for example, where the EU organises regional trade, and NATO knits together a seamless web of security cooperation. Some have said, teasingly, that Australia has no region. In a literal sense, obviously it does. But the key global strategic drivers of the world in which Australia feels most comfortable—both the major power cores and strategic flashpoints of that world—are relatively distant from our shores. Our ability to achieve the sort of world we want to live in is diluted if we always stay close to home.

That point has long been evident to Australian policy-makers who have sought some principle for balancing our global, our regional, and our continental strategic interests. Historically, modern Australia was established as the colony of a European empire. So in colonial days our strategic reflex was an imperial one, and for a very good reason: as the British empire went, so went Australian security. Since Federation, a debate has quickened over the relative weightings we should accord our various strategic interests. 'Globalists' have argued that Australian security is essentially determined by the global order, that the global order is critically determined by events distant from Australia, and that our strategic policy therefore should be an extroverted one. 'Regionalists' have argued that Australia needs to come to terms with its Asia–Pacific strategic environment, that Britain's 'far east' was always our 'near north', and that Australia should build security with Asia rather than from it. 'Continentalists' have argued that the defence of Australia must be the primary focus of the ADF, that Australia's defence problems are unique, and that we should build a defence force which maximises our ability to protect the continent by exploiting the sea-air gap to our immediate north.

All three 'schools' have important things to tell us about Australian security. The continentalist school can still point to fundamental patterns of war to argue that Australia should continue placing a high priority on its own neighbourhood. That priority they would argue is further justified by the proximity to Australia of both a set of weak microstates and the most populous Islamic country in the world. The regionalists point to the dynamic of change in the Asian power balance to tell us that we should give that region far greater attention. And the globalists point to two anomalous conditions—unipolarity and the rise of transnational terrorism—to suggest that the most important strategic shifts are actually happening at the global fulcra.

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The standard criticism of the three schools is that they threaten to pull Australian defence priorities in competing directions. They raise a question as to how we allocate priorities within that framework. How do we weigh the relative merits of our involvement in Afghanistan, for example, as against our involvement in the Solomon Islands? But none of the three schools has a monopoly on wisdom, and the general thrust of our strategic policy has been towards finding options that allow us to act at all three levels. ANZUS, for example, has been an instrument that allowed us to do just that. At the global level, it provided the framework for our contribution to the global network of Western alliances in the Cold War. At the regional level, it allowed for the security partners to consult and act in concert in relation to common dangers in the Asia–Pacific. And at home,

it provided the basis for strengthening the ADF, and enhancing the relative strategic weighting of Australia against its neighbours.

The central argument between the schools has actually been over a bigger issue: *how* to think about Australian security issues. Even today, one of the hardest tasks confronting Australian security planners is to find a principle of strategic reductionism that appropriately addresses our most important threats. For those at the globalist end of the spectrum, the appropriate principle of reductionism has often been 'order': they argue that Australian security is maximised by focusing on issues of order. For those at the continentalist end of the spectrum, the appropriate principle has usually been 'geography'. Regionalists live somewhere between the two principles, concerned most by looming power contests within the broader Asian theatre, but tending to think that Australia needs to come to terms with its geographical location.

National self-confidence and defence self-reliance

In the wake of World War II and the onset of the Cold War, a series of Australian governments decided that Australia had to partner with great and powerful friends to live safely in a world where revisionist great powers threatened to upset the existing strategic order. The ANZUS Treaty was the product of that age. But the ANZUS Treaty did more than offer us American assistance in a crisis: it provided a set of mechanisms—an extended nuclear deterrence guarantee, training opportunities for the ADF, access to high-technology defence equipment, and a prolific supply of intelligence—that gradually allowed Australians to feel more self-confident about their ability to handle a set of smaller security worries independently.

Amongst those smaller security worries was the actual physical defence of the Australian continent. The task was one of the smaller security worries precisely because of the waning of the threat of great power revisionism, and the emergence of a more stable Indonesia under President Soeharto. By the 1970s and 1980s, Australian strategists were talking about the Defence of Australia doctrine as the central pillar of Australian strategic thinking. A competent ADF was seen—by then Foreign Minister Senator Gareth Evans amongst others—as an instrument that reduced our reliance upon the United States, and increased Australia's capacity for independent action in the world. Since Australia had little capacity to be an 'order'-shaper in its own right, Australian defence planners began—especially in the wake of the Dibb Review of 1986—to talk about geography as the key reductionist principle in our planning.

Formulated at a high point of nationalist sentiment in the 1970s and 1980s, the Defence of Australia (DOA) doctrine spoke to Australians about their own rising self-confidence and national importance. Its resonance was magnified by the Vietnam war, and by President Nixon's 'Guam Doctrine', which urged US allies to carry the major burden of their own defence. The doctrine appealed especially to a generation of Australians who believed that dependency was shameful and that distant wars were, in fact, 'other people's wars'. Moreover, as a guide to force development, the doctrine provided a standard lacking in a more diffuse notion of Australian strategic priorities. 'Self-reliance' came to mean that Australia needed to be able to defend its own continent without relying on the combat forces of other countries.

Objectives and strategies

But the DOA doctrine begs a central question: is this principle of strategic reductionism the one which best addresses our needs? The answer to that question depends, of course, on what we think our needs are. If we use the formula that the Prime Minister John Howard used last year about the sort of outcomes we want from our strategy, then the principle of reductionism has to allow for the full span of our strategic interests:

> '...territorial integrity...[and]...a global balance of power, favourable to our interests and to those of our allies; secure sea and air lanes as sinews of peace and prosperity; and a framework of international norms conducive to individual freedom, economic development and liberal democracy.'

This articulation of our strategic interests suggests, almost in its very phrasing, that geography is not a particularly useful principle from which to approach the task of maximising our own security. True, we can do something that contributes to those objectives close to home, but the bulk of the objectives will be won or lost in distant theatres.

Howard said as much himself:

> 'The belief that the protection of our continent and citizens starts well beyond our shores has formed an essentially unbroken line in Australian strategic thinking — from the sacrifices on the Western Front 90 years ago to our commitments today in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Geography alone has never determined our strategic horizons.'

The blurring of the DOA standard

As the title of Hugh White's Lowy paper suggests, the DOA doctrine looks to have had its day. It was the product of a particular historical time: a time when Australian nationalism was on the rise, but also a time when our views of Southeast Asia took a particular form. When DOA was on the rise we saw Southeast Asia as a geopolitical 'shatterbelt', a region marked by great diversity and conflict. As Southeast Asia has developed a greater degree of strategic coherence, its image as a shatterbelt has faded. So our worries about the need to protect our sea-air approaches against threats coming from or through the Indonesian archipelago have faded too.

The fading of that concern has been paralleled by a rhetorical blurring of what the doctrine actually meant. Especially after the election of the Coalition government in 1996, government ministers have stressed that the doctrine involved defending Australia *and its interests,* and did not mean simply defending the coastline. In essence, then, DOA has become not one doctrine but a spectrum of different doctrines, any of which might be appropriately deployed to argue for or against a particular engagement.

And even DOA defenders—while decrying the notion that the ADF should be structured for 'expeditionary missions'—have long talked about the ways in which a force structure designed principally for countering threats coming through the sea-air gap to Australia's north would, in fact, provide sufficient options for Australia to engage in other missions further afield.

Is geography irrelevant? No. Military force has to be applied in the real geographic world. And the Australian population will obviously feel more strategically exposed to troubles close at hand than troubles far away. But in an era of quickening globalisation and heightened strategic complexity, what is clear is that the continentalist end of the DOA spectrum offers too crabbed a vision to serve as the mainstay of Australian strategic

thinking. To believe that Australia can satisfy its fundamental strategic interests by sailing around its own continent is simply delusional.

But nor are things important to us *just because* they are distant, any more than they are important to us *just because* they are proximate. That fallacy is merely an inversion of the geographic principle of proximity. Perhaps it is time to admit that geography is not a sound basis for strategy, and to consider the case that order might provide a stronger basis for Australian strategy. As an example, how might our notion of self-reliance be affected by shifting from a geographical mindset to an order mindset?

Self-reliance and partnerships

Because DOA has remained essentially a crabbed construct for thinking about Australian strategy, self-reliance has tended to assume similar crabbed dimensions. In terms of our declaratory strategic posture, we have talked about being self-reliant in defending our continent rather than being self-reliant in achieving our broader strategic objectives. But in behavioural terms, we have been increasingly moving towards the latter. The reinvigoration of a metropolitan leadership role in the South Pacific, for example, shows that Australia has been thinking about its own capacities to build a favourable regional order here; to encourage economic development and a liberal democratic form of good governance within its own neighbourhood.

Similarly, the recent security agreements with both Japan and Indonesia show an Australia that sits forward in the saddle on the emerging regional security order in Asia — an order in which the role of the United States, our traditional ally, will be increasingly supplemented by the roles of other regional great powers. In both agreements, we have attempted to build relationships that are 'order-enhancing': drawing Japan more into the region on terms that encourage it to supply a greater share of regional 'public goods'; and stabilising our bilateral relationship with Indonesia.

This form of activity might be described as an enhanced form of strategic self-reliance. It makes sense for us to act—independently and self-reliantly—in ways that bolster the sort of global and regional order we wish to see emerge. We should, for example, press China to be a liberal order-enhancer precisely because the pay-off is high from such an outcome. Similarly we should accept the role of Australian leadership in the South Pacific as a means of showing that we take the issue of regional order seriously in our own backyard.

But however we cast it, self-reliance has its limits. We should also be sufficiently self-confident about our own role in the world to see that unilateralism is no better a strategy for us than it is for a superpower. Unilateralism is usually a strategy of desperation. In a globalised world, interconnectedness is a central theme. And interconnectedness means that strategic partnerships will usually offer a better mechanism for achieving our objectives than self-reliance.

Setting a course

Australian strategic policy must have at its foundation the safety and security of Australia and its people. But what makes us feel safe and secure?

From what we know of conflict patterns in this world, Australia should work to sustain the current pacific dyadic relationships that it has with its neighbours. Since neighbouring countries are often the combatants in wars (India-Pakistan, Iran-Iraq, Israel-Lebanon, for example), a good piece of strategic advice is to build good and stable relationships with the neighbours. We know from academic research that dangerous dyads are

characterised by contiguity, the absence of alliances, the absence of advanced economies, the absence of democratic polities. We can't do much about geography, but we can work in the long-term to strengthen our security partnerships with our neighbours, to assist them in growing strong economies, and to encourage the growth of democratic forms of good governance.

But we should not kid ourselves about why Australia currently feels relatively safe in the world. It is not because we are an island continent. Nor is it because of the competence of the ADF, competent though it undoubtedly is. It is because Western countries not only do much to shape the modern security environment, but that they have been doing it for five centuries. Australia feels at home in the modern world because it is principally a Western-designed world. If Western countries were not the world-shapers, or if authoritarian countries were to become militarily predominant in this world, then Australia's position would seem much different.

This point is not widely appreciated by the Australian public, perhaps because modern Australia—the Australia that has emerged since European settlement—has lived its entire existence under global conditions where Western countries dominated the global order. Since Federation, only one change of global leadership has occurred: the United States took over the role of global leader from Britain. The comparative ease of that transition for Australia belies the importance of great-power shifts, and tends to dilute them in our strategic thinking.

Yet the global order sets the context for the way we address our first-order strategic challenges. Maps that look like the traditional 'concentric-circles' map so beloved by Australian defence planners are worryingly deficient on this score. Those maps pretend that Darwin is the centre of Australia's strategic universe, and that Australia's principal strategic worries lie close to our coastline. The map does not even show our main ally, which is in fact the strongest power in the world. The map does not show the globe's main power centres, save for the northeast Asian ones.

Great power balances are important to us. And it matters to us who runs the world.

During the age of great-power revisionism, Australia's strategic fortunes were not determined primarily by events close to its own coastline: they were set by the key global force balances in distant theatres. We believed that shifts in the strategic balance between the world's great powers were important, because great power contests generated powerful waves which disturbed a global order favourable to our interests and rippled into our own comparatively quiet strategic backwater. Great power balances are important to us. And it matters to us who runs the world.

Still, the events of September 11, 2001 show that our traditional worry about great powers has now been augmented by a new threat. War-making units are getting smaller as technology diffuses. Smaller groups, including many non-state groups can now wage 'international war'. And they can do so at great distances. This is neither an insignificant nor a temporary strategic change. Smaller groups, including terrorist groups, increasingly have the capacity to generate strategic outcomes. They can increasingly generate waves that ripple into our own strategic interests. Moreover, the West has not yet 'mastered' the countering

of small adversaries. Iraq and Afghanistan are both illustrations of just how challenging that task is. But we are past the time when we could safely ignore distant small threats.

Order and services

One of the major themes of the Defence of Australia school is the primacy of maritime strategic forces over land forces. This primacy has much to do with the quantity of 'blue' on the concentric circles map. In short, it is a direct result of the geography principle. But at various times, this theme has been so prevalent in Australian strategic thinking that the Australian Army has been obliged to argue a role for itself in relation to islands in the sea-air gap, to avoid being relegated to a 'goal-keeper' role in the big soccer-team of the ADF.

The 'order' principle does not automatically prioritise the maritime services over the land services. Indeed, many aspects of order-building require boots on the ground and not just keels in the water. The specific demands of order-building in particular instances determine how we apply military force in particular cases. Sometimes the order-building is done through deploying a meaningful contribution to a coalition force, which will require Australian forces to work interoperably with others. On other occasions we will be order-building more self-reliantly, on an intervention mission in the South Pacific, for example. Sometimes we will be restoring order by using naval forces for the delivery of emergency assistance after a disaster. And sometimes we may even be deploying forces for high-intensity conflict to defend a particular vision of global or regional order.

An 'order'-based vision of Australian strategic policy suggests that we shouldn't be designing our forces in geographically-limiting ways. Indeed, it even suggests that attempting to redesign military equipment for 'Australian conditions' might be an unnecessary, expensive, and fundamentally flawed approach to thinking about the sorts of force structure we need. Rather, both the order vision and the current heterogeneity of strategic threats which we are obliged to address suggests that we should be trying to maximise flexibility and adaptability in our force structure, eschewing the narrow in favour of the broad.

Dollars and strategy

Sometimes, too, the debate about strategy becomes a debate about the sort of strategy we can afford. Some participants in the defence debate are fond of recalling a saying of Sir Arthur Tange's, to the effect that 'if you haven't talked dollars, you haven't talked strategy.' They use this saying to argue that our vision should be constricted to match our resources. This is a cute aphorism—and one which suits the crabbed continentalist vision—but patent nonsense. Dollars certainly do argue for a sensible allocation of priorities in defence strategy. And they mean that wildly ambitious strategies simply can't be achieved. But by themselves do not dictate one particular strategy over another.

Applying an 'order' principle to Australian strategy

Challenges to order exist for all three of the traditional schools of Australian strategic thinking. But the challenges are not those of the Cold War. At the global level, the primary challenge to order stems from the dominating structural condition: the strategic contest between the global hyperpower and catastrophic terrorism. This contest takes the form of an asymmetric war, and it seems likely to last into the indefinite future. This war remains utterly unfamiliar to us, as it does to other Western societies.

One effect of the current asymmetric global contest is that war-making units currently seem clustered at the extremes of the power spectrum: and include the very strong and the very weak. War seems to have been displaced from the middle of the spectrum: the usual habitat of most nation-states. The distribution of coercive capacities within the system seems no longer to obey a power law—a rule whereby coercive capacities and power are directly correlated—but rather to describe an 'anomaly in the Force'.

Players that we have traditionally seen as weak actors unable to shape strategic outcomes have become more important by exploiting the key enabler of globalisation. Locking hostile weak actors out of the avenues of globalisation may—in theory—be possible, but in practice it is hard to see how it can be done (or at least how it could be done without severely damaging our own societies and economies). Globalisation allows weak power to ripple, and that makes smaller war-making units more potent security threats. Increasing the importance of smaller players also has a direct and important consequence: it increases the prospects that 'global war' will be a tool of the radicalised and the fundamentalists, and not merely of the more status-quo-inclined great powers.

Our traditional global order concern—the revisionist great power—is not currently one of our security worries. Some argue that a peculiar variant of this concern still exists, accusing the United States of becoming a 'revisionist' hyperpower. The basis of this argument is that a highly unequal distribution of power at the global level permits Washington to exercise a degree of unilateralism that, particularly under the Bush administration, has been disruptive to the practices of cooperation in a normal global order. The strength of this argument depends upon the judgments we make about US culture and policy-making. True, in conditions of unipolarity, the character of the unipolar power is a key determinant of the global order. But the United States has traditionally been a power-sharer: it built the multilateral structures of international order after World War II. Even now, the strength of public opposition to the war in Iraq within the United States shows that the Americans are only 'reluctant crusaders', to use Colin Dueck's phrase. The strongest restraint on US power given the current international structure is likely to be US culture.

A host of concerns from climate change, to global epidemics, to reconstruction of failed states, to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cry out for attention.

If we could afford to concentrate simply on the asymmetric threat, enhancing security at the global-order level would be a straight-forward task for us. It wouldn't be easy but it would be straight-forward. But the asymmetric threat is not our sole concern. A host of concerns from climate change, to global epidemics, to reconstruction of failed states, to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cry out for attention. Those are all serious issues capable of disrupting global order, and they reflect the new diversity in security threats that we now face. Proliferation is a particular concern for Australia's strategic planners, not least because some analysts are now beginning to contemplate a 'nuclear tipping point' for the world.[5]

At the regional level, the principal challenge to order is not catastrophic terrorism. Rather, it is the looming, long-term shift in the Asian security order which is already under way.

That shift will dilute an order characterised by US hegemony and construct an order based more around the emergence of the three key Asian powers—Japan, China, and India—as load-bearers of regional security. The challenge is a much more familiar challenge than the asymmetric contest that characterises the global level of international order. But it will not be a simple one. Power transitions between dominant and rising powers are difficult to manage, and it is not clear how that shift will play out during the next decade or two. There are grounds for optimism that the shift will not be violent. China—the non-democratic rising power—does not pose the same sort of strategic challenge to the current order that earlier rising powers did: surrounded itself by strong powers, it cannot threaten to dominate other power cores in a manner that would undermine vital US interests.[6]

The optimistic scenario might not occur; things might go wrong. Our best prospect for helping to ensure that it does occur is to draw both China and the other regional great powers into stabilising roles in the transitional regional security order. Essentially that means we want to see Japan, China and India begin to pick up the burden of supplying 'public goods' to the emerging regional security order, and to do so in a cooperative fashion. The Australia–Japan security pact signed in March this year between the two prime ministers is important precisely because it pulls Japan towards that supply of regional public goods.

But the challenges to the regional order—just like those to the global order—are also complex and diverse. Indeed, many of the global-order worries are replicated at the regional level, including the spread of AIDS, the resource-management challenges, the issues of development, and the abilities of local terrorist groups to pose threats beyond their national boundaries.

At the level of the immediate neighbourhood, the threats to order are more limited, but still worrying. They arise because we have lost faith in the belief that the microstates of the South Pacific can be self-righting when they capsize. The golden age of South Pacific independence was premised upon a set of beliefs about the self-stabilising character of the region: that transitions to independence had been non-violent; that conflict levels were low in the region; that a core of regional norms (the 'Pacific Way') buttressed habits of consensus and cooperation; and that Pacific Island leaders—like Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, for example—were well-educated and responsible administrators of their nations' interests. That golden age has given way to a second age of South Pacific independence, within which we believe that the problems of the South Pacific are not self-curing, and where a range of Pacific Island countries face deep-seated problems. In that second age, Australia must act to preserve stability, and supply its share of 'public goods' to the neighbours in our own backyard. We have become much more of an interventionist, metropolitan power to our Pacific neighbours.

But the challenges to the regional order—just like those to the global order—are also complex and diverse.

To our immediate north lies Indonesia, an immensely complex country, and one with which Australian ties have traditionally been fragile. Even today, after the establishment of regular cooperation on counter-terrorism and a range of assistance packages after the tsunami, the relationship is often tested by small events, such as the arrest of drug-couriers. The Australia–Indonesia security declaration was intended to signal a greater degree of predictability within the

relationship and to add ballast to its more positive aspects. In essence the post-Soeharto period was a nervous moment for Australian strategic planners; many of the gains of the New Order might have been lost by a failure of the democratic transition. But the democratic transition has not failed: indeed, it is approaching its first decade of successful implementation. That achievement is immensely important to Australia: a stable, democratic Indonesia brings great advantages for Australian security in the 21st century.

Finally, of course, at the actual continentalist level, an entirely new challenge has emerged in recent years: the possibility of a strategic threat from within. Homeland security has become a new focus for Australian security-planners, tied integrally to the growth of the transnational actor worry. The traditional security paradigm drew a clear distinction between internal and external threats, and that distinction, while still important in some regards, is eroding. In its place, we have a much greater concentration on the idea of the 'home front', signaling the death of the world where all strategic threats are external, and where all internal security worries are mere policing worries.

Australia increasingly confronts a set of security problems that can't be handled by staying close to home and attempting to insulate itself from a more dangerous world.

Indeed, globalisation has lent a new level of interconnectedness to the traditional schools of Australian strategic thinking. Globalists worry more in the post-September 11 world about homeland security. Regionalists acknowledge that regional terror groups have developed worrying global-level ties. And continentalists know that no amount of frenetic activity in the sea-air gap could have protected Australia from an attack similar to the September 11 attacks. Australia increasingly confronts a set of security problems that can't be handled by staying close to home and attempting to insulate itself from a more dangerous world.

So what can we do?

Our 'security' is now shaped by a broad category of both military and non-military challenges. It is no surprise today for the ADF to find itself involved in everything from military combat to stabilisation and reconstruction missions, humanitarian intervention, fisheries protection, disaster relief, counter-terrorism, and illegal immigration. Operations Other Than War has been a growth part of the spectrum, and the objectives that we have hoped to achieve through such operations have moved steadily from the periphery to the centre of strategic planning. Already we are more conscious of Australian security as a whole-of-government responsibility, and the increased need for our own security agencies—the ADF, intelligence, diplomatic service, police and customs, to name just a few—to work more closely together.

But our capacity to respond to current and future strategic challenges is constrained by what we might broadly call our Australian strategic culture. That culture places a high value on Australia having: small standing armed forces, which are expanded only in times of emergency; an alliance with the dominant maritime power of the day; a capacity to defend forward to forestall the emergence of threats closer to our homeland; the ability to make meaningful, but finely calibrated, contributions to coalition or alliance engagements abroad; supportive multilateral arrangements for interventions

in which we might be either a leader or a contributor. That strategic culture tells us something about how Australia sees its own role: as a defensive, rather than an offensive strategic actor; as an ally which partners with others for common strategic purposes; as pragmatic in its choices about where and when to use force; and as willing to intervene as an order-defender rather than as an order-disrupter.

With the challenges to order so diverse across the different schools, it is easy to see that we will need a defence force capable of a variety of missions. At the global level, where the principal challenge will come from asymmetric actors, we will need to have available capacities for fighting exactly the sort of conflict that Western militaries haven't been much good at fighting. The dominant form of conflict will be one which pits states against non-state adversaries, usually in cluttered, urban environments, where war occurs simultaneously alongside stabilisation and reconstruction.

At the regional level, the principal challenge will be much more of the interstate variety, and we must have some capacity to respond to malign shifts in the Asian security order as well as to positive ones. But if we are to play a role in drawing the regional great powers into cooperative arrangements for the supply of public goods—countering piracy, assisting with disaster relief, safeguarding the sea-lanes, providing peacekeeping forces when needed for stabilisation missions, for example—then we will also need an ADF capable of partnering the great powers in those fields.

And at the level of the immediate neighbourhood, we require our ADF and Australian Federal Police to have the forces to conduct intervention missions around the South Pacific: missions which might require a durable presence and a sizeable commitment of dollars to stabilise a fragile state and rebuild its economy. Across all three levels, we will increasingly need forces that are well-trained, linguistically-skilled, and culturally aware. Our defence forces will increasingly be called upon to work with civilian partners, both Australian and foreign, and to apply force discriminately in difficult situations.

Conclusion

Every layer of our strategy now excites strategic controversy and political debate. That debate is generated by a greater sense of confusion over what is—or ought to be—the 'ordering principle' of Australian strategic thinking. The splintering effects of the debate are everywhere throughout our own society. Ought we to consider the 'War on Terror' a war? Ought we to devote scarce strategic resources to 'weak actor' threats when such threats have traditionally been handled by law enforcement and intelligence capacities? Ought we to be quite so ready as we are to use force given our limited capacity to sustain a demanding level of operational commitments? Ought we still to think about our continent and neighbourhood as meriting 'special' attention just because of geography? Ought we to take greater care to differentiate our strategic 'product' from Washington's?

Not surprisingly, all these questions have proved unsettling and disruptive of the traditionally high levels of bipartisanship in relation to Australian strategic policy. The Defence of Australia doctrine, by its very name, pulled us towards a defensive mindset in relation to a defined geographic space. Then a strategic planning document was an algorithm with comparatively few variables. But no such condition now exists. Indeed, the set of challenges to order which now exist vary radically across globe and region. Securing Australia's fundamental strategic interests in the 21st century will be a task of vast complexity.

Endnotes

1 Hugh White (2007) *Beyond the Defence of Australia*, (Sydney: Lowy Institute)

2 Allan Gyngell (2006) 'Balancing Australia's security interests', Speech to the Global Forces 2006 Conference, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 27 September.

3 Paul Dibb (2006) 'Self-reliant Defence of Australia: the History of an Idea', SDSC 40th Anniversary Seminar Series Paper, Australian National University, Canberra, 10 October

4 See, for example, Stuart Bremer (2000) 'Who fights whom, when, where and why', John Vasquez (ed.) *What Do We Know About War?* (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield)

5 Kurt Campbell, Robert Einhorn and Mitchell Reiss (eds.) (2004) *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* (Washington DC: Brookings)

6 This argument is nicely developed by Robert Art (2007) 'Agreeing to Agree (and Disagree)', *The National Interest*, No.89, May-June, pp.33-39.

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