

THE
CENTRE
OF GRAVITY
SERIES

**A NEW FLANK:
FRESH PERSPECTIVES
FOR THE NEXT
DEFENCE
WHITE PAPER**

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ABOUT THE SERIES

The *Centre of Gravity* series is the flagship publication of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) based at The Australian National University's College of Asia and the Pacific. The series aspires to provide high quality analysis and to generate debate on strategic policy issues of direct relevance to Australia. *Centre of Gravity* papers are 1,500-2,000 words in length and are written for a policy audience. Consistent with this, each *Centre of Gravity* paper includes at least one policy recommendation. Papers are commissioned by SDSC and appearance in the series is by invitation only. SDSC commissions up to 10 papers in any given year.

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Cover photo of Signalman Kit Drury on tower guard duty as part of Operation Catalyst, Iraq. Cover photo courtesy of the Australian Department of Defence.

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Introducing *A New Flank* Associate Professor Brendan Taylor

Founded in 1966, the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) is the oldest University institute dedicated to the study of Strategic and Defence policy issues in Australia and the broader Asia-Pacific. Reflecting its national and international standing, SDSC was recently ranked as the 26th Best University affiliated Think Tank in the world in the 2012 edition of the University of Pennsylvania's definitive *Global Go To Think Tanks Report*.

Throughout its history, SDSC has provided an intellectual home for many if not most of Australia's leading strategic thinkers, including the likes of Ross Babbage, Desmond Ball, Coral Bell, Paul Dibb, Alan Dupont, Robert O'Neill and Hugh White. Yet for most of its nearly half century of existence, SDSC has been staffed by a relatively small cohort of academics.

Over the last two years, an expansion in our teaching programs – including the establishment of a ten-year partnership with the Australian Command and Staff College - has resulted in a significant growth in the size of our faculty. By the end of 2013 we expect the Centre to be comprised of 20 full-time academic staff members.

This *Centre of Gravity* paper – appropriately entitled 'A New Flank' - showcases a sampling of the talent that the SDSC has been fortunate to attract to its academic ranks over the past two years.

The purpose of this *Centre of Gravity* paper is to offer a range of new and fresh perspectives that we hope might contribute towards the formulation of the Australian Government's upcoming Defence White Paper, as well as the important policy and public debates that will almost certainly continue well beyond it.

This goal is in keeping with the long standing mission of the SDSC which, in short, is to provide academically rigorous research of a policy relevant nature.

Two of the contributions contained in this *Centre of Gravity* paper address the strategic implications of growing global economic austerity for Australia, two analyse Australia's Asia-Pacific neighbourhood, whilst the remaining two cover uses of the military and force structure issues.

Should journalists, policymakers or other interested members of the Australian strategic and defence policy community wish to discuss the range of issues canvassed in the contributions contained herein, please feel free to contact the authors directly.

Should you wish to learn more or become more involved in the other broader activities of the SDSC, please also feel free to contact either myself (brendan.taylor@anu.edu.au) or our Outreach convener Dr Andrew Carr (andrew.carr@anu.edu.au) for further information.

We very much look forward to hearing from you.

Dr Brendan Taylor
Head, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
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Great illusions: economics and Asia's changing strategic order

Dr Amy King

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- > Australian policy demonstrates increasing clarity about the economics driven strategic shift that is taking place in the Asia-Pacific region.
- > However, Australia cannot afford to take for granted the assumption that economic interdependence will mitigate conflict in the region.
- > To date, Australia's existing policy frameworks have failed to adequately integrate economic and national security planning.

The Australian policy context

Since the publication of Australia's 2009 Defence White Paper, Australian policy has shown increasing clarity about the way in which Asia's economic growth is reshaping the international strategic order. The 2009 White Paper recognised the economic growth taking place in the Asia-Pacific region, but remained deeply ambivalent about the long-term strategic impact of those economic changes. Since then, two more recent Australian policy statements have demonstrated far greater clarity about the nature and effects of these economic-led strategic shifts. The 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* states 'the economic growth and broader international interests of Asia's large powers, especially China and India, are having an impact on the established strategic order'.¹ Linked to this, Prime Minister Julia Gillard's 2013 *National Security Strategy* notes that 'the growing economic and political weight of China, India and other Asian powers, is also changing the established strategic order'.²

Stemming from this, both the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* and *National Security Strategy* acknowledge the potential for great power competition or conflict in this changing strategic environment. Nevertheless, both consider the prospect for conflict to be relatively low because of the 'constraining' or 'stabilising' force of economic interdependence.³ While we should welcome the greater clarity in how Australian policy characterises the relationship between economic growth and the strategic changes taking place in our region, there are two problems with the current assessment. First, there is mixed evidence that economic interdependence is a force for peace and stability between states. This is a claim that needs to be better interrogated. Second, even if we accept that economic interdependence will be a stabilising force, Australian policy-makers—including those in Defence—cannot afford to leave economics to the economists.

Will economic interdependence constrain or enhance conflict?

Optimistic analysts point to the long-held liberal position that economic interdependence is a force for peace between states. Countries with significant economic ties are less likely to engage in conflict with one another because they fear the losses that would arise from the breaking of economic relations. Economic interdependence is also the basis for institution-building between states, which can foster mechanisms for information sharing, trust-building and conflict resolution. Finally, economic interdependence provides states with non-violent methods of signalling their intentions, thereby allowing states to display their resolve without the need for costly military conflicts.

Both historical and contemporary evidence give us good reason to be optimistic about the potential for economic interdependence to foster stability in the Asia-Pacific region. During the early, conflict-prone decades of the Cold War in Asia, countries such as Communist China, Japan and Australia found ways to circumvent the political and strategic divide, and to use trade and investment as a way of forging 'unofficial' relations with one another.⁴

Though limited, these early economic ties formed the basis for the booming trade and investment relationships that exist today. Moving forward in time, we see that highly integrated trade and investment networks in Asia are relatively resistant to disruption from ups and downs in bilateral political and security relations. For example, despite a decade or more of tense political Sino-Japanese relations, Japan continues to produce almost a third of its manufacturing output in China.⁵

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economists.”

For the pessimists, however, there is just as much evidence that economic interdependence in Asia will enhance, or at least fail to constrain, competition and conflict. Economic interdependence may be a source of conflict if states' dependence on one another is not evenly balanced, thereby allowing the less dependent state to exploit the more dependent state.

Economic interdependence borne out of preferential trade agreements can also sow the seeds for conflict if some but not all states are allowed to participate in these trade agreements. Finally, pessimists fear that interdependent countries are more not less likely to be conflict

prone because both states assume they can escalate security concerns without fear of retaliation by the other.⁶

Contemporary developments in the Asia-Pacific region have underscored pessimists' concerns about the failure of economic interdependence to constrain conflict. For example, high levels of economic interdependence in China's relationships with Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam, and in Japan's relationship with South Korea, have not prevented serious territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas. Furthermore, in recent years, economic disagreements between the US and China have amplified tensions in other areas of the relationship; complaints about currency valuation, trade protectionism and securities violations have grown increasingly shrill as US-China strategic competition has increased.⁷

While we should not overstate the existence of economic tensions in the prosperous Asia-Pacific region, it would be dangerous to assume that economic interdependence is always a source of peace. Indeed, in all probability, economic interdependence in the Asia-Pacific region is simultaneously enhancing and constraining the prospects for conflict between states in the region.

Nevertheless, there are a number of things that Australia can do to better ensure that we benefit from the conflict-constraining effects of economic interdependence, and avoid the conflict-enhancing effects of interdependence. This brings us to the second problem facing Australian policy.

Can we afford to leave economics to the economists?

For all the weight that is placed on the power of economic interdependence to mitigate conflict, Australian defence policy remains surprisingly silent on how this might be achieved. Indeed, more generally, Australia's existing policy frameworks do not adequately integrate economic and national security planning.⁸ The 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* speaks with great command about the opportunities for enhancing Australia's economic interdependence in the Asia-Pacific region, but does not address the strategic risks that come with economic growth and interdependence in the region.

Similarly, the 2013 *National Security Strategy* acknowledges the connection between economics and the changing international strategic order, but focuses only on the hard power instruments of Australian policy. This is a missed opportunity. Worse, given that the Australian government places such great expectations on interdependence to constrain great power conflict, leaving economics to the economists may be dangerously inadequate.

At a time when Asia's strategic landscape is shifting as a result of economic growth, Australia cannot afford to let its strategic and economic planners each address only half the problem. While we should not expect Defence to manage Australia's day-to-day trade and investment ties in the region, the 2013 Australian Defence White Paper should weigh in on the future shape of Australia's economic environment.

One way in which this can be achieved is by building strategic and economic dialogues with key regional partners. The 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* and 2013 *National Security Strategy* advocated that Australia build stronger and more comprehensive relationships with China, India, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea. As we do so, Australia should ensure that it builds into these relationships a high-level Ministerial dialogue that explicitly links strategic and economic affairs.

“The 2013 Australian Defence White Paper should weigh in on the future shape of Australia's economic environment.”

Secondly, a number of different multilateral trade agreements are currently being negotiated in the Asia-Pacific region.⁹ Of these, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has received considerable attention because it proposes a particularly ambitious set of free trade standards, and has become a core aspect of the US 'rebalancing' strategy in the Asia-Pacific.

However, the strict standards on intellectual property rights, labour, the environment, and the regulation of state-owned enterprises that the US is pushing for will make it extremely difficult for transitional economies such as Indonesia and China to qualify for membership of the TPP. Indonesian policy-makers therefore remain sceptical that Indonesia's economy will benefit from the TPP, and are instead prioritising preparations for the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).¹⁰ Furthermore, in China, the TPP has been interpreted by some as locking China out of a key regional economic grouping.¹¹

While it is too soon to tell how the TPP and other regional trade processes will unfold, Australia should be cautious about participating in regional trade agreements that restrict the participation of an important rising economy and neighbour such as Indonesia, and which may enhance rather than constrain competitive behaviour between the US and China.

The 2013 Defence White Paper should acknowledge that competition or conflict can arise when states are excluded from regional trade agreements, and that, historically, Asia's peace and prosperity has coincided with region-wide economic interdependence rather than periods in which divisive economic blocs were the norm.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

In order to ensure that Australia benefits from the conflict-constraining effects of economic interdependence, the 2013 Defence White Paper must weigh in on the future shape of Australia's economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.



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Making waves: a new maritime approach

Dr Andrew Carr

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- > The global financial crisis confirmed Australia's status as an Asia-oriented economy.
- > Given the expansion of regional submarine capacity, ASW to protect commercial trade as well as military assets should be a priority.
- > Defence should embrace its role in maritime border protection, especially the identification and monitoring of irregular maritime vessels.

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) revealed a structural deficit within Australia's budget. Fixing the budget and establishing a surplus position is critical to Australia's long-term security. Given the absence of short or medium term threats, now is the ideal time to address the national budget constraints.

Along with domestic responses, Australia's resilience during the GFC can also be attributed to Australia's growing status as an Asian economy. Along with the much remarked trade with China, Australia has significant trade links with South Korea and India as its third and fourth largest export markets, and Singapore and Thailand as its fourth and fifth largest import markets.¹ This shift in economic focus provides Australia with some measure of resilience against another economic shock coming from the US and Europe. It also helps Australia strengthen its relationships with key Asian states and increases its regional diplomatic leverage. Yet Australia's increasing economic reliance on Asia and the risk of future economic instability highlight two areas of concern: Trade and Irregular Maritime Arrivals.

Trade and Anti-Submarine Warfare

Australia's increase in trade to Asia represents an expansion of our trading partners, but a narrowing of our trading routes. Currently, 99 per cent of all Australian exports are by ship², 40 per cent of which pass through Indonesian waters. As Australian trade with Asia increases, so does the level of national trade passing through a narrow set of sea lanes to our near north. This growing reliance on a limited set of sea lanes is occurring at a time of substantial regional investments in submarine capacity.³

While Australia's own submarine force is a significant deterrent against a future submarine threat to its military or economic interests, even 12 fully functional next-generation submarines would not be able to provide complete protection, certainly not for commercial trade as well. Therefore the development of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capacities must be a substantial part of Australia's force structure.

This capacity not only protects against current regional developments, it will also support medium term defensive capabilities should there be a delay in the delivery of future submarines.

Should there be a conflict in Northeast Asia, Australia and nearby nations like Indonesia would not automatically participate, yet our commercial trade to the region would inevitably be put at significant risk. Australia's ability to monitor and capably protect its trade, especially through its ASW capacity will be vital for preventing economic damage and reducing the likelihood of Australian assets' being targeted. Given current tensions in Northeast Asia, Australia should also

encourage trade relations with Africa, South Asia and Latin America, as these countries and trade routes will be less affected by a Northeast Asian conflict.

Should Australia become involved in a regional conflict, ASW capacity will be vital for protecting Australian and allied deployments, ports and facilities. The last Defence White Paper recognised the significance of ASW (8.35, 9.14), however this needs to be re-emphasised in the 2013 paper. This is due to both the significant regional increases in submarine fleets since 2009, along with the increasingly stretched nature of Australia's submarine monitoring capacity, especially the increased use of maritime surveillance aircraft to monitor irregular migrant vessels (discussed below). The purchase of 24 Seahawk helicopters is a good step, as is the intended ASW-capable future frigate.

ASW should be a major priority for the next Defence White Paper. This could be an avenue of profitable regional cooperation, such as through increased ASW-related intelligence sharing and capacity building with nearby countries, especially Indonesia and Singapore, and potentially with US support. Domestic ASW capacity will be a fundamental strategic resource for protecting Australia's economic trade and thus Australia's long-term military capacity.

Some attractive options include increased use of permanent seabed monitoring, a renewed focus on improved integration and networking of Australia's various ASW systems and resources, and continued study and investment in future unmanned aircraft and vessels (both air and

“Domestic ASW capacity will be a fundamental strategic resource for protecting Australia.”

seaborne) as was highlighted in DWP 2009 (9.70). Access to US intelligence and technology will be crucial, especially with their implied shift from 'platform intensive' to 'sensor rich' ASW approaches that may be more cost-effective over the long-term.

If there was a significant interruption to regional trade, Australian resilience would be tested. Its fuel supplies are substantially lower than many countries, and given a significant amount of domestic transportation occurs via road (instead of rail), this could quickly lead to shortages on shelves and at petrol stations.

The Australian public is unused to such shortages and could react badly if the government was not seen as taking, or having taken, all available measures.

As a 'mature regional power'⁴ Australia should therefore seek to possess the capacity to affect the status of critical Southeast Asian trade routes and protect Australian commercial and military vessels from harassment, coercion or attack by the growing submarine fleets in Asia. Conventional threats are not the only risk faced. Non-conventional challenges such as irregular migration could substantially increase should the global financial environment worsen.

Embracing long-term monitoring of Irregular Migration

The Australian government should also re-examine the organisation and operation of its maritime border protection, of which Defence plays a substantial role. Recent flows of irregular migrants have stressed existing Australian capacity in a way that is not sustainable long-term.

While the Australian government is seeking to reduce the overall level of arrivals, the choice of destination countries is largely determined by external issues.⁵ The likelihood is that irregular maritime arrivals will continue to arrive in their thousands every year hence.

A regional economic or security crisis could lead to the movement of a substantial number of irregular migrants towards Australia. This would severely challenge Australia's border control and put lives and resources at risk. There are a number of sources of potential new irregular migration

flows, from a second global economic crisis, environmental degradation (such as sustained flooding in low lying countries), or conflict in the South China Sea or Central Asia which may create flows in the tens and hundreds of thousands.⁶

Since 2001 irregular migration has become a substantial part of the day to day role of the Department of Defence. Yet, the 2009 White Paper makes only limited reference to these challenges and the requirements needed for servicing and sustaining Australia's maritime border protection. In recent years problems have emerged with significant stress on resources and personnel. Defence should embrace its role monitoring and intercepting irregular maritime arrivals. Not only is it of growing security and border integrity importance for Australia, no other Australian agency is capable of this task. Defence should plan for how to sustain and resource *Operation Resolute* over the long-term (out to 2030) with capacity for sustained annual arrivals as well as occasional peak influxes.

A review of the appropriateness of the Armidale class Patrol Boats for this task should be undertaken. Greater recognition of the long-term importance of *Operation Resolute* would help prevent the use of resources designed for high-intensity tasks, such as ASW being diverted for use on low-intensity, non-conflict tasks such as monitoring arriving irregular migration vessels as has occurred in the past. Higher recognition of the importance of this task would also have positive psychological implications within Defence. *Operation Resolute* and future missions of this ilk should be regarded as core, long-term business with commensurate status. The awarding of the Australian Service Medal in 2012 was a good start but more needs to be done.

The Global Financial Crisis demonstrated the importance of national economic resilience, and restoring that capacity must be Australia's immediate priority. Beyond that, Australia needs to substantively respond to the growing submarine fleets in its region by developing its ASW capacity, particularly to protect commercial shipping interests. The ADF also needs to accept and embrace the long-term challenge of irregular migration vessels and consider developing specific capabilities for this task.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Defence should focus on improving its Anti-Submarine Warfare capacity as a way to protect Australia's core interests, especially commercial trade. It should also accept and embrace maritime border protection, particularly towards irregular migration vessels as long-term core business.



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Neighbourhood watch: great power gambits in the South Pacific

Dr Joanne Wallis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- > Although our Neighbourhood, the South Pacific, is not presently an 'arc of instability', in light of China's engagement and the US re-balance to the Pacific, Australia faces strategic challenges arising from:
- > The remote risk that China and the US may engage in strategic competition; and
- > The more pressing risk that China's activities may exacerbate state weakness, leading to instability, to which Australia is obliged – often at great expense – to respond.

Successive Defence White Papers have correctly identified that the security, stability and cohesion of the South Pacific comes only behind the defence of Australia in the hierarchy of Australia's strategic interests. From the late 1990s and especially in the aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the South Pacific was characterised as an 'arc of instability',¹ which was at risk of penetration by terrorists and transnational criminals.

These concerns were used as partial justification for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003, the Enhanced Cooperation Program in Papua New Guinea in 2004, and stabilisation missions to Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Tonga after riots in 2006.

Australia is also the largest aid donor to the South Pacific, and with budgeted aid of A\$1.16 billion in 2011, it provides more than 50% of donor funds.² In 2012 the stabilisation mission in Timor-Leste withdrew, and in 2013 the small military component of RAMSI returns home, while its other components scale-back (although an Australian policing and governance presence remains in the medium-term). In 2012 Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste held relatively peaceful elections, and both have formed fairly stable governments. The performance of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu governments has improved. In 2012 the military regime in Fiji confirmed that elections will be held in 2014, and created a commission to make a new constitution.

As the South Pacific is not presently an 'arc of instability' it might be tempting for the Defence White Paper to conclude that Australia can shift its focus from the region. This would be a mistake. Regardless of recent improvements, the region remains vulnerable to instability.

Australia has a strategic interest in ensuring that the South Pacific does not become a source of threat to Australia, and that no major military power could use the region to challenge our control of our air and sea approaches or project force against us. Australia also has long-standing economic interests in the South Pacific, particularly in its rich natural resources, and trade worth A\$11.33 billion in 2011.³

China's engagement with the South Pacific

Although China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Cui Tiankai declared in 2012 that China does 'not seek any particular influence, still less dominance'⁴, in 2006 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao observed that: 'As far as China is concerned, to foster friendship and cooperation with the Pacific island countries is not a diplomatic expediency. Rather it is a strategic decision.'⁵

The South Pacific is presently marginal to China's strategic calculations, but China may develop an interest in the region as part of its 'island chain' strategy. China has also sought access to ports and to undertake signals intelligence monitoring, most obviously via the satellite tracking station it built in Kiribati in 1997. US diplomats are reported to think that China wants 'to demonstrate big-power status in the region.'⁶

The South Pacific's rich natural resources are attractive to China, as is the region's role in competition for diplomatic recognition with Taiwan. In 2009 China pledged aid of US\$26.67 million, plus loans of US\$183.15 million.⁷ China has encouraged investment⁸ and trade, which a recent assessment claims was worth US\$3.66 billion in 2010 (a 50% increase from 2009).⁹ China is said to have the highest number of diplomats in region¹⁰ and there has been a long history of Chinese migration.

The US pivot to the South Pacific

In 2011 then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton admitted that: 'We are in a competition with China... China is there [in the South Pacific] every day in every way trying to figure out how it's going to come in behind us, come in under us.'¹¹ Although Clinton was more circumspect in 2012, declaring that 'the Pacific is big enough for all of us',¹² the US is making efforts to catch-up with Chinese influence.

The US has a long association with the Micronesian sub-region, which is regarded as the US' security border', the defence of which is considered vital to maintaining sea lines of communication.¹³ Accordingly, the US has air force bases and missile defence test sites in the region. The US also runs the annual Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) and Pacific Partnership military and humanitarian exercises.

The US has resumed a more active diplomatic role. In 2011 it opened the USAID Pacific Island Regional office in Papua New Guinea and increased its aid to an estimated US\$300 million.¹⁴ The US also has growing interests in the region's natural resources. There are large numbers of Pacific islanders living in the US.

Strategic implications for Australia

Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs Richard Marles has stated that: 'China's increased presence in the Pacific is fundamentally welcomed by Australia.'¹⁵ However, it may have strategic implications, which could be complicated by the US re-balance to the region.

The possibility that China and the US will compete through the build-up of military forces is low and there is only a remote chance that China could use positions in the South Pacific to approach the US asymmetrically. If they did, this could see Australia faced with a difficult – and potentially alienating – choice very close to home.

The more serious implication arises if China's aid and other interests (which may increase if it competes with the US), exacerbate the weakness of South Pacific states. Unlike Australian aid, Chinese assistance comes 'without any political strings attached'¹⁶ and is not conditional on governance performance. As most South Pacific states are aid-dependent, it can be relatively easy to acquire significant influence via this assistance. Concerns have also been raised about sustainability of China's loans and exploitation of natural resources.

There are already claims that China and Taiwan's diplomatic competition has made South Pacific politics 'more corrupt and more violent.'¹⁷ Chinese and Taiwanese interests are said to have fuelled the 2006 riots that destroyed much of the capitals of Solomon Islands and Tonga, and to have contributed to Prime Ministers losing office in Vanuatu in 2004 and Papua New Guinea in 1998.

Given that Australia is the largest aid donor and has undertaken a number of costly missions to ensure the South Pacific's stability, it is in Australia's strategic interest to ensure that the region does not again emerge as an 'arc of instability'.

“The South Pacific is presently marginal to China's strategic calculations, but China may develop an interest in the region.”

The Defence White Paper should accordingly propose constructive ways to achieve a whole-of-government approach that integrates Australia's strategic and defence interests with its developmental and diplomatic activities to strengthen South Pacific states.

The Defence White Paper should also propose ways that Australia can encourage cooperation with China, and between China and the US, to promote stability. Cooperation could occur first via relatively uncontroversial aid projects. Progress has already been made.

In 2008 Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi attended a ministerial strategic dialogue in Canberra, where he agreed to 'strengthen regional cooperation to mutually promote regional peace

and stability.'¹⁸ More recently, Cui Tiankai has agreed that China is 'open to work with them [the US and others] for the benefit of the recipient countries.'¹⁹

Encouragingly, China has signed the Kavieng Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which aims to localise the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in the South Pacific. Further encouraging evidence includes the 2012 announcement that China will partner with New Zealand to improve water provision in the Cook Islands, and that the US and China are in talks to cooperate on development programs in Timor-Leste.

Cooperation could also occur via military exercises. Promisingly, since 2010 the US and China have held 'US-China Consultations on the Asia-Pacific', and the US recently announced that it will invite China to participate in the 2014 RIMPAC exercise. This cooperation could build to joint humanitarian and disaster relief operations, and perhaps later to joint military operations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Defence White Paper should propose constructive ways to achieve a whole-of-government approach that integrates Australia's strategic and defence interests with its developmental and diplomatic activities to strengthen South Pacific states.

The White Paper should recognise that the South Pacific may constitute an 'arc of opportunity' where Australia can encourage cooperation with China, and between China and the US, to promote stability.

Cooperation could occur first via relatively uncontroversial aid projects and military exercises, build to joint humanitarian and disaster relief operations, and perhaps later to joint military operations.

The South Pacific offers the opportunity to develop these proposals on a relatively small and low-risk scale, so that the lessons learnt and the confidence gained may benefit broader Asia-Pacific stability and security.



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17. Graeme Dobell, *China and Taiwan in the South Pacific: Diplomatic Chess versus Pacific Political Rugby*, Canberra: Australian National University, 2007 p. 10; Joel Atkinson, 'China-Taiwan diplomatic competition and the Pacific Islands', *The Pacific Review* 23(4) 2010, p. 407-427.
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Flashpoint Korea: Ignored at Australia's peril

Dr Emma Campbell

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- > In the shift of focus from Northeast Asia to the Indo-Pacific Australia risks being unprepared for the most likely source of instability – North Korea.
- > Australia's current defence policy does not reflect the importance of stability on the Korean peninsula for Australia's security.
- > Australia's current defence policy does not adequately recognise our likely commitment to securing the Korean peninsula in the case of instability.
- > By focusing on the nuclear threat, current policy misses more immediate and serious challenges presented by instability on the Korean peninsula.

The Australian policy context

The 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* marks Asia's importance for Australia's future prosperity and highlights Australia's continued economic, political and cultural integration into the region. While this presents tremendous opportunity for Australia, as our interests become increasingly entwined with those of the region, Australia becomes more vulnerable to volatility in Asia and the responsibility to act in the event regional instability increases.

The importance of Asia for Australia's defence and security is also recognised in other key policy documents including the 2013 *National Security Strategy* and the 2009 Defence White Paper. However, the 2013 Defence White Paper's expected shift in focus from Northeast Asia to the Indo-Pacific risks diverting the attention of our defence planning away from one of Asia's most likely flashpoints – the Korean peninsula. Conflict or instability on the Korean peninsula would have direct and serious implications for Australia's national interests and defence commitment and we ignore it at our peril.

The 2013 *National Security Strategy* asserted that 'an assessment of the strategic environment suggests that the outlook for Australia's national security over the next decade is largely positive'. However, 'miscalculation or escalation' was possible 'by countries of strategic concern, such as North Korea'. Yet overall, the Korean peninsula attracts minimal attention in Australia's security considerations. North Korea received only two lines of comment in the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* and Korean was not considered a priority Asian language. The 2009 Defence White Paper devotes some space to the threat to Australia of proliferation of nuclear technology by North Korea and the possibility of conflict on the peninsula but suggests that 'other scenarios' are much more likely.

The implication is that Australia's defence and security policy framework assigns limited importance to conflict on the Korean peninsula in assessing threats to Australia. This reflects an underestimation of the importance of a stable Korean peninsula for Australia's future and highlights a significant weakness in Australia's defence and security planning. In particular, the so-called 'other scenarios' should be of interest to Australia's defence planners. Threats to Australia emanate not only from the conventional and nuclear capabilities of North Korea, but the growing number of non-traditional security threats presented by the decaying and corrupt

North Korean political, economic and social system. Failure to recognise these hazards present a noticeable and concerning gap in Australia's security policy-making.

The Korean Peninsula and Australia's risks

In the case of political change in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), through conflict or the range of 'other scenarios', the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the broader Northeast Asian region will face significant instability. The so-called 'other scenarios' might include the collapse of the DPRK government, gradual political and economic decay, reform and opening of the DPRK, weapons proliferation by the North, a move by South Korea to obtain a nuclear capability, and conflict between Japan and the DPRK.

Conflict, collapse or other events on the Korean peninsula have a variety of defence and security implications for Australia. The first is the inevitable impact on the South Korean and wider region's economy. South Korea is Australia's third largest export market and fourth largest two-way trading partner. Australia's interest will thus lie in the swift and effective restoration of peace and stability. The participation of the ADF in such efforts would be inevitable. The second relates to criminality on the part of the existing regime or other groups within North Korea that may seek financial gain in the midst of volatility to proliferate weapons and other contraband to governments and groups adverse to Australia's interests.

The third relates to the humanitarian situation in the North which will demand an international effort to meet the vast and acute humanitarian needs of the North Korean population. The fourth relates to the ADF's ongoing role in the management of refugees coming by boat, the numbers of whom would be expected to increase in the case of instability on the peninsula.

The fifth relates to North Korea as a source of biohazards - prevalence of Tuberculosis, for example, is one of the highest outside of sub-Saharan Africa and 18 per cent of North Korea's TB cases are drug-resistant. Finally, consideration must also be given to Australia's possible role in the case of conflict between the DPRK and the ROK or between other protagonists involved with the Korean peninsula – not least the United States and China in the case of the DPRK's collapse.

The 2009 Defence White Paper recognised that the collapse of the North would require 'deft management by the Korean people, but also by the major powers of the region... All states would have a common interest in assisting the Korean people to successfully manage any reunification of the peninsula'. Given Australia's economic reliance on Korea, its historic precedent of involvement on the peninsula and its growing status as an Asian nation, our role in any peace-keeping, humanitarian or stability-promoting exercise would not be insignificant. Australia may be called upon to carry out these duties in the case of instability on the Korean peninsula and Australia's defence policy and planning must explicitly recognise this in the forthcoming 2013 Defence White Paper.

“Threats to Australia emanate not only from the conventional and nuclear capabilities of North Korea, but the growing number of non-traditional security threats”

Policy Suggestions

Preparedness

Australia's defence policy and planning must reflect the potential for instability, the direct implications for Australia's national interests of volatility and the likely involvement of the ADF in the restoration of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Defence planning must account for so-called 'other scenarios' that may emerge outside of the outright conflict between North and South Korea and the ongoing nuclear issue. Defence should put a priority on the enhancement of existing expertise on the Korean peninsula including analysis and planning functions and the development of language skills, as well as political and cultural knowledge among ADF personnel. In particular, Australia must develop a complex understanding of plans for the Korean peninsula in case of the DPRK's collapse given the potential for conflict between the various protagonists involved with the Korean peninsula. This will involve proactive defence diplomacy with China, the United States and the ROK.

Building relationships between the ADF and ROK Armed Forces

Building meaningful links with the ROK Armed Forces must be a central part of any defence policy relating to the Korean peninsula. Opportunities include staff college student exchange, participation of ROK officers at the Australian Defence College, command-level summits, familiarisation tours, and Australia-ROK joint operations. Other opportunities may be realised through relationships and understanding developed in the defence procurement process.

Security and Diplomacy

Australia is a leader in the Asia-Pacific and needs a strong and active diplomatic presence across the region. If Australia wants to have a stake in the future of the Korean peninsula and the wider Asian region a direct diplomatic presence in Pyongyang is essential. Australia should also encourage the re-establishment of the North Korean embassy in Canberra. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the G20 also are important institutions where Australia can play a more proactive role in issues relating to the Korean peninsula including the promotion of defence cooperation between regional partners (for example Korea and Japan).

Countering the nuclear threat

The Six-Party Talks should continue to be acknowledged as the main route for negotiation on North Korea's nuclear programme. However, Australia has a unique regional position holding diplomatic relations with both North and South Korea. This provides Australia with the opportunity to act as a conduit for communication with the DPRK when the Six-Party Talks are not active. This should be in close cooperation with its allies, the United States and ROK, and does not preclude concurrent efforts in defence preparedness.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Australia's defence planning must recognise that insecurity on the Korean peninsula will not only directly impact Australia's national interests but may also give rise to a responsibility to contribute defence resources. The 2013 Defence White Paper must clearly recognise the need for defence preparedness in the case of volatility on the Korean peninsula.

All aboard: ADF and regional defence diplomacy

Dr John Blaxland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- > The drawdown from Afghanistan represents an opportunity to focus on Australia's inner arc region.
- > The introduction of Landing Helicopter Dock Ships represents a significant new opportunity for the ADF to practice middle power diplomacy based on the US marines model.
- > Developing a robust, deployable Information Communications Technology (ICT) network will aid coalition efforts in the region and across a variety of Australian Government agencies.

As the Afghanistan commitment winds down, the ADF must refocus on bolstering security and stability in Australia's inner arc. Australia's 'arc of instability' is now seen as an 'arc of opportunity'.¹ But geo-strategic concerns point to heightened risks of conflict and environmental crises in the Indo-Pacific. Increased uncertainty suggests conflict could be sparked at short notice, potentially drawing in Australia in support of international norms and regional security partners. So a variety of war fighting skills and capabilities need to be maintained by the ADF at a relatively high level.

Since the mid-1970s, successive Defence White Papers have varied little from the standard formula of maintaining around ten warships, a handful of submarines, 100 fighter aircraft and three land combat brigades with special forces. This formula reflects the consensus which remains largely unaltered with the exception of the new Air Warfare Destroyers (AWDs) and amphibious Landing Helicopter Dock ships (LHDs).

While the threat of near-term conflict in the Indo-Pacific is greater than for many years, there also remain significant prospects of environmental catastrophe requiring military intervention. The ADF therefore must prepare for short-notice humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) related tasks. As it happens, ever since the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its regional partners including Australia have recognised the remarkable utility of HADR-related multilateral military engagement. Such engagement helps prepare forces for likely contingencies, while also building trust, understanding and mutual respect. In the face of constrained funding, enhancing regional security and stability through HADR-related exercises and planning activities needs to become a top priority.

For such tasks the LHDs will provide an excellent platform enabling rapid response with medical, engineering, logistic and other support as required. The American experience on this is instructive. US Navy-Marine amphibious groups routinely conduct humanitarian assistance operations globally. These operations are best described as 'military diplomacy'.

Three-ship amphibious groups deploy with an embarked Marine battalion along with integral engineer and medical teams and an air support element. The planning preparations follow the standard military process, challenging participants to exercise almost all the skills necessary for war fighting; not just HADR-related tasks. In addition, the equipment and procedures involved challenge many facets of the Navy-Marine team in much the same way as would be the case



when planning for the conduct of more dangerous operations. But in this instance, the training and equipment is put to good use building schools, participating in community projects, providing medical and dental services as well as fostering good will and building confidence. National leaders are hosted on board and honoured with receptions which leave lasting and deep impressions. The effect in terms of good will is palpable. In short, this is military diplomacy at its best.²

The introduction into service of the LHDs will be a game-changer for Australia, particularly in the Pacific. The opportunity will enable the LHDs to emulate the US Navy-Marine approach to military diplomacy with a combined embarked Australian Navy- Army-Air Force team. Such a team can generate good-will and enhance regional security and stability as well as confidence in Australia as a reliable and well-intentioned middle power.

With the prospect of cyclones, floods, sea level rise, earthquakes and tsunamis, there is much scope for the ADF to hone many war fighting skills as a joint team while also making tangible and practical contributions to meet immediate needs across the South Pacific and maritime Southeast Asian regions. Indeed the swift response to such crises may well contribute to a sense of confidence and mutual trust that conceivably may reduce the prospect of conflict as well.

With significant constraints and heightened uncertainty, Australia should assign a substantial portion of its limited forces to initiate and develop regional HADR exercises and operations. The LHDs will provide an invaluable platform for virtually all such contingencies. Neighbouring Indonesia should be invited to work alongside Australians on board as partners when such exercises are mounted. Others should be included periodically as well. This approach will foster mutual understanding and improve interoperability to help respond when the inevitable crises emerge.

To facilitate regional collaboration, a robust 'coalition' ICT network is required as well. Australia built an ad-hoc network when it led the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) in 1999. Back then firewalls and interoperability problems caused delay, inconvenience and embarrassment. Today, even more than in 1999, armed forces not connected with secure and robust communications links are significantly constrained from effective collaboration.

Trust and reliability is essential and is most tangibly evident in terms of ICT connectivity. To best prepare for HADR-related tasks involving more than one nation, Australia's Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQ JOC) should establish a deployable regional secure ICT network. This will take time to generate, confirming protocols and ensuring regional sensibilities are taken into consideration, but it will provide a practical and necessary collaborative tool.

HQJOC's regional engagement plan also should focus on using the LHDs and should be coordinated with key stakeholders. These include Defence's International Policy Division, Military Strategic Commitments Branch and the Australian Civil Military Centre.

They also include the office of the National Security Adviser, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Customs and Border Protection Service and AusAID. In recent years, and with a high tempo of operations, government inter-departmental crisis-handling procedures have been refined. This needs to be consolidated and become routine.

Australia's neighbours need to be closely engaged as well, including Papua New Guinea, East Timor and the Pacific Island states. In Southeast Asia, engagement should capitalise on established links through the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) with Malaysia and Singapore, as well as New Zealand and Britain. Thailand and the Philippines also should be included, aligned with scheduled FPDA events.

“Australia, as a middle power, must rise above its small power pretensions.”

Even Myanmar should be engaged to encourage consolidation and extension of reform initiatives and to bolster ASEAN's role. Much of this could be done alongside Australia's principal ally, the United States. But the most important country for Australia to engage with in Southeast Asia is unquestionably Indonesia.

Australia's security is intimately linked with that of Indonesia, so the relationship needs careful management, attuned to the different cultural predispositions and respectful of their mores and their proud and independent heritage. This points to the need for the ADF to enhance its level of cultural awareness and regional language skills. With modern technology and methods, much of this can be done economically on a distributed basis.

In the meantime, in the Pacific, the Pacific Patrol Boat program, which has seen 22 Australian-built boats delivered to Pacific island states, should be expanded. This program generates goodwill, helps protect natural resources, reduces transnational crime, bolsters regional security and obviates the need for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) to extend its reach unduly.

A concern remains that budget cutbacks erode capabilities required for contingencies that arise at short notice. Projected budget allocations to maintain easily-degraded military capabilities are not enough for extant capabilities, let alone new ones like the AWDs and LHDs.

A sober reflection on the geostrategic realities should be the main determinant for funding. With so many contingencies to be prepared for, Australia still needs to maintain a balanced joint force adaptable to a wide range of possible eventualities, with sufficient air, sea and ground forces to respond to the challenges expected in modern conflict.³

The budget decline needs to be reversed to capitalise on these new capabilities and to best position the ADF for foreseeable regional challenges.

A visionary, comprehensive and co-ordinated regional engagement plan is needed to mitigate some of the security and environmental concerns now faced. With so many challenges, Australia, as a middle power, must rise above its small power pretensions.

To protect and enhance regional security and stability the ADF needs to be funded properly and tasked to exercise visionary, responsible, collegial and respectful middle power leadership in the region.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Defence's main focus should shift to where the ADF can act confidently as a regional middle power, incorporating increased language and cultural awareness training.

War fighting skills remain critical, but military diplomacy can bolster security and stability through innovative engagement with regional security partners.

New amphibious ships will provide surprisingly useful platforms for regional confidence building initiatives and managing future disasters. Indonesia and others should be invited on board and an ICT network built for regional collaboration.

Facing a spectrum of near-term security and environmental challenges, and new capabilities coming on-line, budget cutbacks should be reversed.



Endnotes

1. Joanne Wallis, 'The Pacific: from 'Arc of Instability' to 'Arc of Responsibility' and then to 'Arc of Opportunity', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Summer (Canberra: 2012).
2. The author participated in one such operation in the Pacific early in 2001.
3. That is, conflict short of nuclear war – a defence against which Australia is principally dependent on the United States through the ANZUS alliance.

Think north: force posture and the next Defence white paper

Dr Peter Dean

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- > Fiscal restraints mean that priorities for force posture should be orientated around engagement in the north and northwest of Australia and into Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.
- > There is no 'peace dividend' in the drawdowns from recent operations, rather the ADF should be undertaking its own 'rebalancing' towards operations to Australia's north with the US and regional partners.
- > Facilities upgrades should focus on developing infrastructure for the new ADF amphibious capability and RAAF and RAN forward operating bases in the north and northwest of Australia (including the Cocos Islands).
- > Over the longer term priority should be focused on RAN bases in the west and northwest to support increased engagement by the United States Navy as well as the future frigates and future submarine force.

Potential Operating Environment

The 2012 Force Structure Review (FSR) provides critical policy recommendations for the 2013 Defence White Paper. During the period since the last FSR the ADF has continued to operate in peace keeping, monitoring and enforcement operations round the globe, but has also undertaken significant operations in East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Iraq, and Afghanistan as well as border protection. This has been a period of high-tempo operations for the ADF that has combined distant expeditionary deployments with operations closer to home.

With an end to a number of these operations and a significant drawdown of personnel from Afghanistan the ADF has entered a period of transition. At the launch of the National Security Strategy in January the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, announced an emphasis on three new imperatives; our region, state over non-state actors and diplomacy. These imperatives provide a platform for refocusing the ADF's force posture.

While the ADF's deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan form part of a long tradition of distant expeditionary deployments in support of our major alliance partner, such operations should not represent the future of the ADF's force posture. As we move into a post '9/11' decade the focus has moved firmly to Asia. The rise of China and India and the shift of global economic activity and strategic competition to our region means that Australia's security interests must be focused on the Indo-Pacific region.

This regional emphasis has been underscored by recent ADF operations in East Timor and the Solomon Islands as well as the continued instability of Australia's 'Pacific inner arc'. The potential for Australia and its military forces to intervene in a range of scenarios, not least humanitarian assistance, in the South Pacific points to the ongoing importance of this region. As Paul Dibb has noted Australian engagement in any conflict in this region is a "non-discretionary task"¹ for Australia's defence forces.

In addition the growth of China and India, our continued dependence on maritime trade and Australia's enduring strategic geography fix the ADF's force posture future firmly on the areas to Australia's north and northwest. The enduring prominence of these areas to Australia's security is reinforced by our long-term engagement in this region through conflicts from the world wars

to INTERFET and RAMSI. This region has also been significant for defence cooperation through a series of formal defence arrangements with regional partners. Prominence to this region was also emphasised in the designation of the ADF's "Primary Operating Environment" (POE) in the 2009 Defence White Paper.²

Of critical importance to Australia's force posture and engagement with this region is the 'rebalancing' of our major alliance partner, the United States. Changes to Australia's force posture must be made in concert with the United States. In addition Australia should also seek to deepen its engagement with Indonesia and our defence ties with Southeast Asia. The US 'pivot' including the rotation of US Marines through Darwin and increased US Navy visits to Australia should be viewed as an opportunity to enhance Australia's defence engagement with the region.

2012 Force Posture Review

In the current constrained financial environment priorities around developing Australia's force posture must be set. These priorities should be orientated around developing a posture³ that provides for the ADF to have a stronger presence in the north and northwest of Australia and into Southeast Asia and the South Pacific through training and exercises, port and familiarisation visits and regional military diplomacy and engagement. In doing so there is no need for a permanent large scale re-deployment of ADF personnel and assets to Australia's north or northwest. The necessity for an increased presence in these areas can be achieved by staging the ADF in robust, updated, forward bases to provide increased capacity for training, exercises and deployments in this region.

Despite fiscal constraints the Commonwealth needs to recognise that the required changes to the ADF's posture are in response to the changing, and uncertain, strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region. This means that there is no 'peace dividend' from the drawdown of recent operations.⁴ Rather it is essential that the ADF undertake its own 'rebalancing' towards operations to Australia's north.

“It is essential that the ADF undertake its own 'rebalancing' towards operations to Australia's north.”

This is essential to reinforce our alliance partnership, undertake burden sharing with the US and conduct military diplomacy and engagement operations in the region. Such measures also are critical if Australia wishes to continue to develop a capability to 'lead coalitions' in our neighbourhood.⁵

The proposed infrastructure developments in the FSR should be focused on key areas. The ADF amphibious capability has the potential to be the cornerstone of an ADF military diplomacy and regional engagement posture and therefore the immediate priority should be to upgrade key

bases in order to ensure that the 'required amphibious mounting areas for the assembly and embarkation of land forces are in place, with adequate facilities to store and load a joint task force's equipment and supplies.'⁶ Such a move is consistent with the approach laid out in the 2009 Defence White Paper, which noted that;

We need to maintain a strong capability to project military power from mounting bases and forward operating bases in northern Australia and, if required, from strategically significant offshore territories, which have enduring defence value. Our expansive strategic geography requires an expeditionary orientation on the part of the ADF at the operational level, underpinned by requisite force projection capabilities.⁷

This is in line with the need to develop the RAN's forward operating bases in the north and northwest. In addition the importance of maritime trade, the sea lines of communication and maritime choke points in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean means that the FSR's emphasis

on the development of RAAF facilities in the north and northwest, especially Cocos Islands, for the operation of KC-30 and P-8 aircraft should be a near term priority.⁸ The next major priority should be the development of the Navy's base at HMAS Stirling, and forward bases in the northwest, in order to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to support increased USN engagement in the region as well as the RAN's future frigates and future submarine force.

Given the low risk of direct threats to the Australian continent, the FSR's recommendations relating to regional surveillance units, base hardening and continental defence exercises can be consigned to lower priorities. These elements of the FSR can be reviewed in the future at a time of improved fiscal standing balanced against ongoing risk assessment.

However with the changing strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region this continued risk assessment should be coupled with considerations of the often neglected areas of warning time and force expansion. Such an analysis should consider how Australia would potentially respond to a range of possible major power conflicts in the region and 'judgements on the characteristics that should be retained or enhanced in the force-in-being' so that the ADF can remain effective as an expansion base.⁹

The shift of global economic weight and strategic competition to the Indo-Pacific region means that it is essential that the ADF's force posture is focused firmly on engagement to our north in both the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. This posture must be reflective of a 'rebalancing' of the ADF to the region, an increase in military diplomacy and regional engagement and the development of bases and infrastructure to facilitate these moves.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The ADF should focus on 'rebalancing' its force posture towards operations in the arc from Solomon Islands to Cocos Island with appropriate basing and logistic infrastructure to facilitate offshore work. This focus should include military engagement and diplomacy with the United States; near neighbours Indonesia, East Timor, PNG and the Pacific Islands, as well as close ASEAN partners.

Endnotes

1. Paul Dibb, 'The importance of the Inner Arc to Australian Defence Policy and Planning', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (Canberra: 2012) p. 14.
2. Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2030*, (Canberra, 2009), p. 51. Of note is that similar regional designations have been a perennial feature of White Papers since the 1970s previously known as the 'Area of Direct Military Interest.'
3. The definition provided by the authors of the review is that "force posture" embraces 'bases (in their various manifestations such as homeports, forward operating bases and mounting bases) as well as operational activities such as post visits, training and exercises.' (emphasis added)
4. Albert Palazzo, 'There is no peace dividend, just a liability', *The Interpreter*, (Sydney: 6 November 2012) Lowy Institute for International Policy.
5. Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2030*, (Canberra 2009), p. 50-51, 59.
6. Hawke & Smith, *Australian Defence Force Posture Review*, p. 3, para 1.17.
7. *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century*, p. 51-52, para 6.42.
8. This includes the need for a renewed emphasis on anti-submarine warfare given the increasing number of such platforms operating in this region and would also serve to support Operation Resolute.
9. Richard Brabin-Smith, 'Force Expansion and Warning Time', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Canberra: 2012) p. 46.

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