

CUTTING EDGE

THE EVOLUTION OF CAPABILITY ADVANTAGE IN AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY DISCOURSE 1968-2009

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of the Australian National University

94,553 words

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Statement of Originality

I confirm that the material contained in this thesis is my own original work, and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

Capability edge is one of the most expensive ideas that Australian politicians have ever had. The notion of using technology to offset demographic and economic limitations on Australia's military emerged in the early 1970s alongside the concept of defence self-reliance. It began as a means to bolster Australia's credibility as a regional security partner as British security commitments to Southeast Asia waned. By the twenty-first century it became a recurring policy concept and featured in public statements and diplomatic signals at the highest levels of government. Although the need for an 'edge' in military capability was articulated consistently in policy and political statements, the meaning of the concept changed over time. This evolution provides insight into key strategic policy decisions and offer lessons for scholars, policymakers and analysts alike, but has not been directly examined.

This thesis traces transformations of the concept of an edge from its emergence in the 1970s through to the twenty-first century. It conducts a comparative analysis of publicly-released policy documents and archival records of speeches made by Prime Ministers and Ministers for Defence in order to identify the ways in which the concept evolved and how transformations were represented in political statements. It finds that three conceptual links were crucial in the evolution of the edge. The first was the link between credibility and technological advantage which emerged in the early 1970s and cemented the notion

that technology mitigated Australia's strategic deficiencies. The second was the gradual entrenchment of the principle that Australia required a degree of relative advantage, which created a narrative of confidence that was based on the condition of superiority. The third was the explicit link between technology and quality which occurred in the late 1990s and conceptually mapped the concept of advantage, which had changed significantly from its origins, back to credibility.

These processes have created a conceptual trap in which expectations of Australia's defence policy risk becoming untenable but have been a fundamental tenet of the dominant defence narrative for so long that it will be a serious challenge to change the discourse to accommodate new realities. The evolution of the edge is a cautionary tale to the extent that there remains a significant risk of incurring enormous expenses in pursuit of an objective which gained prominence in a different policy context. As regional militaries modernise, they will in combination, if not individually in some cases, eclipse Australia's capacity to retain an edge. This will challenge a political idea which has become a principal element of defence force structure planning, a core measure of the standard of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and a key expectation of the Australian public. Understanding the evolution of the edge from its inception to 2009 is crucial to making an informed decision about the next evolution of capability edge.

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List of Acronyms

| | |
|-----------|--|
| ADF | Australian Defence Force |
| ADR | Australian Defence Review |
| ASEAN | Association of South East Asian Nations |
| C4ISR | Command, Control, Computers, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance |
| C4ISR(EW) | Command, Control, Computers, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| DOA | Defence of Australia (doctrine) |
| EBO | Effects Based Operations |
| EW | Electronic Warfare |
| FIC | Fundamental Inputs to Capability |
| FPDA | Five Power Defence Arrangements |
| HMS | Her Majesty's Ship |
| HMAS | Her Majesty's Australian Ship |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| INTERFET | International Force East Timor |

| | |
|-------|---|
| IOR | Indian Ocean Region |
| ISR | Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance |
| JOC | Joint Operations Command |
| JORN | Jindalee Operational Radar Network |
| JSF | Joint Strike Fighter |
| KWIC | Key Words In Context |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation |
| NCW | Network Centric Warfare |
| NEC | Network Enabled Capability |
| ORMA | Office of the Revolution in Military Affairs |
| OTHR | Over The Horizon Radar |
| PGM | Precision-Guided Munitions |
| QDA | Qualitative Data Analysis |
| RAAF | Royal Australian Air Force |
| RAN | Royal Australian Navy |
| RMA | Revolution in Military Affairs |
| RN | Royal Navy |
| RNZN | Royal New Zealand Navy |
| SEATO | South East Asian Treaty Organisation |
| SLOC | Sea Lines of Communication |
| TAG | Tactical Assault Group |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States of America |

Introduction

Pursuing a qualitative advantage in military technology is among the most expensive ideas that Australian politicians have ever had. The Commonwealth Government spends billions of dollars every year on acquiring and maintaining cutting edge defence technology. Currently planned major capital expenditure projects are by far the most expensive in Australia's history.¹ Nonetheless, successive governments have upheld commitments to ensure that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is equipped with high technology weapons and communications systems. This practice began in the 1960s and has intensified significantly since. The rationale for maintaining a high-technology defence force emerged in Australian strategic policy during the late 1960s and early 1970s, largely in response to significant changes in the strategic environment in Southeast Asia caused or exacerbated by the waning interest of the United States of America (US) and Great Britain. Emphasis on Australia's advanced technological and industrial capacity paralleled the emergence of the concept of self-reliance in defence at first.

¹ See Department of Defence, "Defence Capability Plan 2009: December 2010 Update," *Public version* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2010).

However, by the late 1970s technological advantage had become a discrete policy concept.

Since its introduction in the Australia's 1976 defence white paper² the stated rationale for qualitative advantage has evolved, both in strategic policy and in policy guidance delivered publicly by senior politicians. The broad conceptual family of qualitative advantage in military capability stems from a general idea of an *edge* in military technology that emerged and evolved throughout the period 1968-2009. For the purposes of this study, this time frame will be broadly labelled the era of self-reliance, referring to the prominence of defence self-reliance in Australian strategic policy.³ Throughout the era of self-reliance a focus on high-technology military capability and relative advantage in qualitative terms has underpinned the evolving concept of an edge. An umbrella term for the concept under examination is *relative qualitative advantage in military capability and systems*. For the purpose of clarity this can be shortened to: *relative advantage*. The concept of relative advantage has featured prominently in discussions regarding Australia's force structure and posture, major acquisitions and strategic policy.⁴ It has been used as a rhetorical device to structure and frame policy debates and is now central in Australia's defence lexicon.

² *Australian Defence*, Defence White Paper (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976).

³ See Hugh White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia: Reflections on Australian Defence Policy over the Past 40 Years," *History as Policy*, ed. Ron Huiskens and Meredith Thatcher (Canberra: ANU ePress, 2007).

⁴ For example, see Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), para. 3.15.

The relationship between rhetoric and reality is a long-standing feature of strategy. Language shapes strategy because it can direct or misdirect military effort, it can isolate enemies and motivate allies, it can galvanise a society toward a common purpose and it can attract support from neutral parties. For this reason, Shy and Collier contend that ‘the rhetoric of political conflict becomes the reality of political theory.’⁵ Rhetoric is equally important in strategic policy as it is in strategy and theory. The concepts that are used in strategic policy discourse can shape and constrain the avenues of action available to political actors.⁶ But these concepts are not static. Once introduced into the strategic policy corpus,⁷ concepts are influenced by the instruments, forces and people who implement policy programs.⁸ Concepts evolve over time, often through institutional and political discourse. The causes for conceptual evolution often reveal important contextual processes which can exert influence on the policy cycle and explain policy changes in greater detail than descriptive historical approaches.

The purpose of this research is to examine the evolution of an idea employed in Australia’s strategic policy discourse in order to understand how it has been conceptualised since its inception and what factors may have influenced its transformation. The thesis investigates the evolution of a frequently deployed but hitherto under-examined political concept from two perspectives: as a rhetorical device employed

⁵ John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War," *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 821.

⁶ Jeffrey H. Michaels, *The Discourse Trap and the Us Military: From the War on Terror to the Surge* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).; Shy and Collier, "Revolutionary War," 821-22.

⁷ Tony Bastow, "Defence Discourse II: A Corpus Perspective on Routine and Rhetoric in Defence Discourse," *Language and Power: An Introduction to Institutional Discourse*, ed. Andrea Mayr (London and New York: Continuum, 2008).

⁸ Lincoln P. Bloomfield, "From Ideology to Program to Policy: Tracking the Carter Human Rights Policy," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 2, no. 1 (1982): 2.

by political actors and as a concept used in policy documents. It articulates the concept of relative advantage used in policy documents and traces the coevolution of relative advantage in policy documents and policy statements throughout the period of defence self-reliance. It then identifies relationships between relative advantage and other concepts which have dominated strategic policy discourse during the period 1968-2009. Such examination of relative advantage contributes to existing debates by introducing unique data and a different perspective to inform policy formulation and analysis. This research does not intend to present a critique of relative advantage as a policy or to provide an historical narrative of the development of policy within the Department of Defence (Defence), bureaucracy. There are rich and complex stories of how specific technology and force structure policies were developed within Defence, but they fall outside the scope of this study.

Research problem

A technology-based edge in military capability is an idea that emerged in Australian defence policy in the late twentieth century. It has been employed in political rhetoric to justify billions of dollars in expenditure, to reinforce perceptions of Australia's military professionalism to domestic and international audiences and to validate force structure planning and concepts of operations for the ADF. The fundamental principle of investing in high-technology or 'cutting edge'⁹ military platforms and systems has become widely

⁹ Defence Material Organisation, "Priority Industry Capability Innovation Program," <http://www.defence.gov.au/dmo/id/picip/>; "Building Defence Capability: A Policy for a Smarter and More Agile Defence Industry Base," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2010), 85-91.

accepted by politicians, the bureaucracy and the Australian public.¹⁰ The 2009 defence white paper explicitly prioritised investment in the exploitation and application of ‘new advanced technologies’¹¹ in order to offset some of Australia’s strategic constraints,¹² chief among them an exceptionally weak force-to-space ratio.¹³ Although relative advantage is not the only solution presented, it is a significant conceptual approach to mitigating the disparity between Australia’s geographical responsibilities, delineated by a large continental landmass and extensive maritime patrol zones, and the size and capacity of the ADF. As a result, emphasis on the need for a ‘strategic edge’¹⁴ has become a largely unchallenged principle in policy and academic debates regarding Australian strategic policy. Given the gravity of some decisions founded on the policy principle that Australia needs to maintain a ‘strategic capability advantage,’¹⁵ deeper analysis of the idea of relative advantage is warranted.

References to the need for an ‘edge’¹⁶ in defence policy debates and in recent defence policy documents¹⁷ often allude to the use of qualitative superiority to offset quantitative deficiencies or to mitigate limitations such as Australia’s small population and economy,

¹⁰ Department of Defence, "Looking over the Horizon: Australians Consider Defence," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2008), pp.13-17.

¹¹ "Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030," *Defence white paper* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2009), para 8.57.

¹² *Ibid.*, para 8.54.

¹³ Michael Evans, "Australia and the Quest for the Knowledge Edge," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 30 (2002): 43.

¹⁴ Desmond J. Ball, ed. *Maintaining the Strategic Edge : The Defence of Australia in 2015*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence N° 133 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1998).

¹⁵ Department of Defence, "Force 2030," para 8.53.

¹⁶ Ross Babbage, "Australia's Strategic Edge in 2030," *Kokoda Paper N° 15* (Canberra: Kokoda Foundation, 2011).; Ball, *Maintaining the Strategic Edge : The Defence of Australia in 2015*.

¹⁷ For example, the 2009 defence white paper has a section entitled ‘maintaining a strategic capability advantage’ Department of Defence, "Force 2030," 66.

demographic trends and low levels of public support for a significantly larger ADF.¹⁸ But the notions of *capability* and *edge* used are imprecise and inconsistent across policy documents and literature. The term is used in two distinct contexts which are often conflated in debate concerning relative advantage. In the first instance capability is a categorical term and refers to an individual piece of hardware. For example, a Main Battle Tank may be referred to as *a* capability. In the second instance, capability is used to infer the capacity to achieve a policy outcome.¹⁹ Precisely what kind of edge should be pursued is unclear and includes a diverse range of options: capability edge, technological edge, knowledge edge, information edge and decision edge.²⁰

A dominant technocratic rationale²¹ has developed in Australia's strategic policy discourse and has been used to justify large capital expenditure in capability debates, the acquisition of in-service military platforms and in current procurement policy.²² Yet, the validity of the strategic imperative to pursue relative advantage has not been substantiated or debated in policy, strategic guidance from political leaders or through policy analysis.²³ This suggests that the underlying principle of relative advantage, a perceived need for

¹⁸ Ibid., paras 8.53-8.55, 8.63.

¹⁹ The Defence Organisation uses the term Fundamental Inputs to Capability (FIC) to explicitly outline the conception of capability used in official policy. For further explanation, see "The Strategy Framework," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2010).

²⁰ Martin Burke, "Information Superiority, Network Centric Warfare and the Knowledge Edge," *Technical Report (DSTO-TR-0997)* (Canberra: Defence Science and Technology Organisation, 2000).

²¹ Technocracy is not unique to matters of Defence and is prevalent in a wide variety of public policy debates. See Alan Fenna, *Australian Public Policy* (Sydney: Pearson Longman, 2004), 11.

²² Department of Defence, "Defence Capability Plan 2009: December 2010 Update."; Mark Thomson, "The Cost of Defence: Aspi Defence Budget Brief 2008-09," (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2008).; Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "Australian Defence Procurement," *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1979).

²³ According to Mark Thomson, 'strategic guidance sets out the approach that Australia will employ to defend itself and protect its interests.' Mark Thomson, "The Challenge of Coherence: Strategic Guidance, Capability, and Budgets," *History as Policy*, ed. Ron Huiskens and Meredith Thatcher (Canberra: ANU ePress, 2007), 139.

Australia to maintain a defence force that is technologically advanced relative to potential adversaries,²⁴ has become entrenched in the way key policy-makers understand Australia's strategic circumstances and needs. In this sense, it is an institutional idea: an idea which is embedded in the logic common to an institution which is self-reinforcing.²⁵ In Searle's terminology, this situation represents an institutional fact: social facts which are common to a group and are often self-referential in the sense that they create the circumstances they represent.²⁶ Thus, for an institutional fact to exist, it must be accepted as existing. This is different to objective facts, which are true without agreement or consensus.²⁷

Viewing relative advantage as an institutional idea or fact highlights the role that it may play in shaping perceptions of Australia's circumstances. This is important because institutional facts underwrite the perceptions of key decision-makers.²⁸ Political ideas in general, including institutional facts, also underpin constellations of concepts which frame the ways in which political actors interpret events.²⁹ Political leaders, like all

²⁴ It is important to note that the specific adversaries envisaged in this concept have changed over time. This is discussed at greater length in chapter 2.

²⁵ Terrence J. McDonald, "Institutionalism and Institutions in the Stream of History," *Polity* 28, no. 1 (1995): 132.; see also Vivien A. Schmidt, "Analyzing Ideas and Tracing Discursive Interactions in Institutional Change: From Historical Institutionalism to Discursive Institutionalism," *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting* (Washington, DC2010).

²⁶ John R. Searle, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 34.

²⁷ For example, a mountain remains the same geographical feature regardless of whether or not people agree what it is. Conversely, money has no inherent value and is only valuable to the extent that people in a community agree to attribute value to it. See *ibid.*, 32-33.

²⁸ Marijke Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 54.

²⁹ Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 12-14.

human beings, have interpretive schemes which they use to understand policy issues.³⁰ These perceptions are influenced by institutional facts and contexts and, once entrenched, they often endure despite changing circumstances because they provide the basis for an individual's conception of the world.³¹ The ideas which inform a leader's worldview are important to understanding their decision-making process because ideas influence policy agendas, validate assumptions about political issues and can legitimate particular institutions or policies.³²

Because leaders approach policy challenges within the context of their individual worldview, knowledge, values and experience, political ideas like relative advantage can potentially be integral to key decisions even if they do not have a direct bearing on the issue at hand. A concept that reflects the scope of the influence that longstanding ideas can have on the policy process is Vickers' *appreciative system*, which encapsulates the combination of 'values, preferences, norms and ideas' used by humans to understand the world.³³

The role of relative advantage in influencing policy it is not limited to a matter of perception. It is also active in shaping and influencing policy decisions, primarily through discourse. Leaders use terms which re-emerge in political rhetoric and can influence

³⁰ Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 6-7.; see also Geoffrey Vickers, *Making Institutions Work* (New York: Wiley, 1973), 122.

³¹ Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction*, 54.

³² Daniel Beland, "Ideas, Institutions, and Policy Change," *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no. 5 (2009): 704-05.; see also: Paul J. Quirk, "Book Reviews: Public Policy," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 5, no. 3 (1986).

³³ Martin Rein and Donald A. Schon, "Reframing Policy Discourse," *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Plannign*, ed. Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 146.

institutions by legitimating certain ideas and values.³⁴ The rhetoric of speeches, memos and guidance delivered by leaders can legitimate specific terms and ideas in four ways: institutional or personal authority, by reference to value systems, by reference to goals and exercise of institutional action and through political narrative which reward legitimate ideas and punish defection.³⁵ In particular, the legitimation of ideas and terms through policy narrative, which marginalises defection from key concepts,³⁶ can create a dominant discourse in which it is difficult to challenge or alter ideas. In this context relative advantage represents a dominant discourse and potentially a self-fulfilling construct; a phenomenon which Michaels labels a ‘discourse trap.’³⁷ A discourse trap occurs when rhetorical signals create expectation or obligations which constrain policy-makers’ agency by delegitimising certain decision options or undermining the credibility of particular courses of action.³⁸ This is significant because dominant discourses can be difficult to challenge or change and can limit the policy responses available to decision-makers.

³⁴ Martin Reisigl, "Rhetoric of Political Speeches," *Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Veronika Koller (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 246-47, 58.

³⁵ Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).; see also Maarten A. Hajer and David Laws, "Ordering through Discourse," *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. Michael J. Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). and Michael van Eeten, J. G., "Narrative Policy Analysis," *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, ed. Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller, and Mara S. Sidney (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2006).

³⁶ Fairclough elaborates on this in his discussion of the technologisation of discourse, one aspect of which is the standardisation of discourse practices. See Norman Fairclough, "The Technologisation of Discourse," *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 73, 77.

³⁷ Michaels, *The Discourse Trap and the Us Military*.

³⁸ Flemming Splidsboel Hansen, "The Eu and Ukraine: Rhetorical Entrapment?," *European Security* 15, no. 2 (2006): 116-18.; James Gardner March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 23.

Using discourse to shape the ideas used in institutions to create and implement policy represents a valuable aspect of control over a political discourse and the policy it informs. Such control is widely recognised as a symbolic resource which defines the powerbase of an institution.³⁹ Political discourse becomes the basis for institutional ideas which, in this context, constitute lenses used by government agencies to interpret policy issues and potential solutions, thus reinforcing the discourse trap phenomena. For example, Michaels' examination of US rhetoric in reference to the War on Terror demonstrates that '...the political-military discourse motivated and constrained, rather than merely reflected, the way in which strategy was formulated and operations were conducted.'⁴⁰ Frequent reinforcement of a dominant discourse through pervasive institutional adoption makes it very difficult to challenge the political concepts associated with the discourse within a bureaucratic knowledge community.⁴¹ Because the discourse employs political concepts that contain the fundamental assumptions, conceptual tools and appreciative systems used to interpret policy issues and formulate policy, the range of options perceived by actors and the prioritisation of policy issues becomes skewed and this constrains policy action.⁴²

Political discourse is a powerful tool. It can legitimate and reinforce institutional ideas which underpin policy paradigms. Relative advantage can be conceptualised as an

³⁹ Teun A. Van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis," *Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Veronika Koller (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 355.

⁴⁰ Michaels, *The Discourse Trap and the Us Military*, 16.

⁴¹ Tanja A. Börzel, "Organizing Babylon - on the Different Conceptions of Policy Networks," *Public Administration* 76, no. 2 (1998).; Jerald Hage, Jonathon E. Mote, and Gretchen B. Jordan, "Ideas, Innovations, and Networks: A New Policy Model Based on the Evolution of Knowledge," *Policy Sciences* 46, no. 2 (2013).

⁴² Charlotte Linde, "Narrative in Institutions," *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Schriffin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 519-21.; Ellen M. Immergut, "Institutional Constraints on Policy," *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. Michael J. Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 565-67.

institutional idea that has been incorporated into the current approach to conceiving strategic issues and appropriate policy responses. That paradigm fundamentally shapes Australia's strategic outlook and is, therefore, of paramount significance to understanding Australian defence policy. This raises several contingent questions. First, has relative advantage been used in discourse as a prescriptive concept or a descriptor? In other words, is relative advantage a concept that is applied in force structure planning and then reported on or is it shorthand used to explain decisions already made for other reasons? Second, is relative advantage used in rhetoric by policy-makers for reasons which are not related to force planning? Some other purposes for relative advantage could include reassuring or deterring other states and validating defence expenditure to the Australian public. Third, has relative advantage created a discourse trap in which Australia has explicitly linked its credibility and force structure planning to advanced military technology to the extent that opposition is discouraged or marginalised?

There is no simple answer to any of these questions. However, they do raise an important avenue of inquiry for this research. As there has been surprisingly little debate about what relative advantage means in the Australian defence policy literature, it is important to understand the degree to which relative advantage has been used in policy discourse primarily for its ostensible purpose (a strategic concept used for planning purposes) or for other purposes. It is equally critical to examine how certain political actors may have used the concept to mean different things and may have contributed to the conceptual evolution of the idea. Most political rhetoric, public domain policy documents and external analyses have seemingly taken the premises of relative advantage for granted.

The combination of intuitive appeal and the employment of the concept as an intrinsic feature of sophisticated strategic debate have served to legitimate relative advantage in Australian strategic policy discourse. Relative advantage is sufficiently entrenched to circumscribe debate to its own terms and this circumstance warrants deeper exploration. There is no substantive debate about what relative advantage means in the twenty first century, how it has evolved since its introduction or what goals it is intended to achieve. But there ought to be.

Research significance

The questionable implications of assuming that a qualitative edge has inherent strategic value suggest that relative advantage is a dubious policy concept in these narrow terms. This begs the question: does the concept of relative advantage have other uses, beyond purely strategic imperative? The literature on strategy and strategic communication indicates that strategy plays various policy roles: some material, some functional and some communicative.⁴³ A rhetorical view of conceptual change suggests that it is not possible to construct an autonomous history of concepts.⁴⁴ Because concepts are imbued with meaning in their use, they contain no inherent meaning in themselves and can only be studied through their application in discourse.⁴⁵ This approach has been employed in a similar way by Bousquet, who argued that technology 'is first and foremost a tool and one

⁴³ Stephen Biddle, "Strategy in War," *Political Science and Politics* 40, no. 03 (2007).; James P. Farwell, *Persuasion and Power: The Art of Strategic Communication* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Kari Palonen, "Quentin Skinner's Rhetoric of Conceptual Change," *History of the Human Sciences* 10, no. 2 (1997): 72.

⁴⁵ Quentin Skinner, "A Reply to My Critics," *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 283.

that only takes on meaning and purpose within the specific social and cultural formations in which it is deployed.’⁴⁶ In this instance, the central concept under study is not technology, but the idea of relativity in the ability to wield technology for military purposes.

Taking a rhetorical view supports a central contention of this thesis: that there is not one concept of relative advantage, but several. Firstly, the concept has transformed over time and different iterations of the concept have distinctive features that are related to other elements of policy. Secondly, even within periods in which the concept has remained reasonably consistent in conceptualisation, it has been deployed for different purposes when communicated to different audiences. This suggests that the use of relative advantage in rhetoric has a value of its own and that, in order to understand the concept of relative advantage, it is necessary to understand the ways in which it has been exercised in policy and strategic communication. Political concepts are transformed by changes in the meaning attributed to them by agents. Consequently, there can be no fixed meanings associated with concepts as they are relative to their context.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is essential to examine the political use of the relative advantage concept in order to understand its transformation in policy.

Understanding the evolution of the relative advantage concept is significant for three reasons. Firstly, there has been no investigation into the concept in order to define or

⁴⁶ Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity* (London: Hurst and Company, 2009), 2.

⁴⁷ Frank Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 49.

conceptualise it; essentially it has been accepted as self-evident. However, the specific meanings of: a) the term strategic capability advantage; b) the strategic benefit that relative advantage provides; and c) the logic of the causal mechanism between quality of high-technology weapons and systems and military capability, are elusive. This in itself is a serious concern for future policy analysis within and outside government. If future defence policy is to include a conception of relative advantage, then it should be more clearly defined and rationalised than its precedents. Furthermore, if the use of the concepts related to relative advantage in former defence policy is to be examined, then understanding the origins and conceptual evolution of the concept is essential. In addition, the validity of any future application of the concept is contingent on comprehensive analysis of transformations in the conceptualisation of relative advantage and the strategic context of conceptual changes.

Secondly, although the concept of relative advantage has demonstrably changed over time, the change has not been overtly addressed in policy. This indicates that the relative advantage has been considered relevant to strategic guidance and communication in the same way despite conceptual changes that may have altered its relevance to or relationship with guidance. It is germane that the concept has varied in close parallel with shifts in Australia's broader strategic policy. In particular, the way that the role of technology has been conceptualised in force structure planning and capability development has mirrored changes in the strategic policy context of relative advantage. Links between strategy, force structure, doctrine and the precept of relative advantage illuminate the political utility of frames used by various actors at different times

throughout the era of self-reliance. They also explain why fundamental changes in Australia's approach to relative advantage were subsumed by broader strategic debates relating to strategy and force development priorities, particularly in the highly transformative decades on either side of the end of the Cold War.

Thirdly, the ways in which the concept of relative advantage has been deployed in policy, strategic guidance and political communication throughout the period 1970-2010 has not been examined in any other study. Changes in the political discourse of relative advantage have not been analysed or explained. This is possibly the most significant aspect of the research, because the ways in which relative advantage has been communicated by government in policy and by political leaders in guidance and public communication contain distinct uses of the concept, often aimed at different audiences for divergent purposes. This is salient to the history of relative advantage because astute political agents are able to deliberately transform the political concepts they employ in order to ensure that their concepts cohere with their policy or politics.⁴⁸ Understanding the chimeric nature of relative advantage in political discourse will enable deeper analysis of conceptual undercurrents in strategic guidance that influence and shape the development of defence policy.

The current lack of a specific definition of relative advantage requires redress. The most useful way to holistically analyse the conceptual evolution of the idea of relative advantage is to examine its use as a strategic precept, a policy tool and a means of

⁴⁸ Don Herzog, "Books in Review: Transforming Political Discourse," *Political Theory* 19, no. 1 (1991): 141.

strategic communication. As a strategic concept, relative advantage has evolved alongside technological developments. This is consistent with Australia's incorporation of technology into its strategy and its self-image as a small but highly capable military power, able to 'punch above its weight'⁴⁹ due to qualitative superiority. As a policy implement, relative advantage has enabled government to simultaneously reassure the public that the ADF is capable of defending Australia and justify expenditure on high-cost and high-end major weapons. As a communicative tool, relative advantage has proven useful in signalling Australia's intentions regarding the use of force and the ADF's military expertise to security partners and potential adversaries alike.⁵⁰ Knowledge of, firstly, each of the various facets of relative advantage and, secondly, how each of these facets cohere into a single concept will be important to historical and forward-looking policy analysis regarding Australian strategy, force structure priorities and capability development debates.

Chapter structure

The thesis consists of five substantive chapters. The first chapter examines conceptual transformation in political discourse, reviews literature on Australia's strategic policy to establish the ideational context of relative advantage and explains the research

⁴⁹ Mark Thomson, "Punching above Our Weight? Australia as a Middle Power," (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2005).; Paul Kelly, "Punching above Our Weight," *Policy* 20, no. 2 (2004).; Albert Palazzo, "The Myth That Australia 'Punches above Its Weight'," *Anzac's Dirty Dozen: Twelve Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2012).

⁵⁰ Australian Defence Force, "Australia's Approach to Warfare," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2002), 19-20.

methodology and data collection and analysis methods. The remaining chapters present data and analysis from discrete time periods and constitute the main body of the thesis.

Chapter one presents the concept of relative advantage as a political idea. It substantiates the basic premise of the research by establishing links between policy narratives and policy change in order to demonstrate that specific narratives can influence change in policy ideas and policies. Chapter one examines the methodological issues involved in a history of ideas approach to inquiry and discusses the challenges associated with interpreting policy narratives and identifying and analysing causation in political rhetoric. It then explains the rationale for the data used in the analysis and details the data collection and reduction methods used to process the data set into its final form. Finally, chapter one explains the methods used in the analysis by explicating the research questions and variables, detailing the coding scheme used to identify and track specific concepts throughout the data and providing data sheets which validate the research model used.

The core chapters, two through five, each examine one period of conceptual transformation within the era of self-reliance. The relative advantage concept is not taken to be static in each period; rather periods are distinct due to fundamental differences in the way concepts of technology and advantage were conceptualised in political discourse. *Chapter two* covers the period from 1968, when self-reliance began to emerge, through the 1970s, where the concept of the technological level fuelled significant debate about the capacity of Australia to use high-tech weapons and military systems to defend itself,

to 1978. *Chapter three* begins in 1979 when the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan both shook and confirmed many assumptions which Australian defence policy community had held about the international strategic environment. It covers the extensive defence debates of the early 1980s through to 1986, when the iconic Dibb review was submitted to government. *Chapter four* covers the period from 1987, beginning with the release of *The Defence of Australia*,⁵¹ through the force structure review and strategic policy debate of the 1990s, finishing in 1996 with the change of government. *Chapter five* covers the period from 1997, beginning with the release of *Australia's Strategic Policy*,⁵² through the defence updates and renewed force structure debate of the 2000s,⁵³ and concludes in 2009, coinciding with the release of *Force 2030*.⁵⁴

Each core chapter contains five sections. The first section identifies relevant key political actors and their communication styles for each time period. The personal clashes and agendas of individual actors provides significant context for examining the content of their rhetoric in relation to strategic policy. The second section of each chapter provides an overview of the strategic context of the period under examination. The range of sources used to establish the political context of each period is wider than the data analysis. In addition to the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) data set, it also includes academic literature, policy documents which were not immediately released to the public

⁵¹ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*.

⁵² *Australia's Strategic Policy* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1997).

⁵³ Alan Dupont, "Transformation or Stagnation? Rethinking Australia's Defence," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 1 (2003); "Our Forces Must First Be Functional," *The Australian*, 14 Apr 2009; Hugh White, "Australian Defence Policy and the Possibility of War," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 2 (2002); "A Focused Force: Australia's Defence Priorities in the Asian Century," *Lowy Institute Paper N° 26* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2009).

⁵⁴ Department of Defence, "Force 2030."

or widely disseminated, research generated by government or military agencies and think tank policy analyses. The chapters then analyse three elements of the political discourse regarding relative advantage in separate sections. The third section of each chapter is the policy context in which the concept transformed and measures the scope and referent actor(s) associated with relative advantage. The fourth section is a survey of the dominant institutional ideas⁵⁵ about the role of technology in Australia's force posture which influenced the way in which relative advantage transformed. The final section is the strategic communication of the concept to international audiences for purposes of deterrence to potential aggressors and credibility to allies and to domestic audiences for the purpose of justifying defence policies and expenditure and reassurance that the ADF is capable of defending Australia.

The purpose of each chapter is to capture the evolution of the concept of relative advantage in its strategic policy, institutional and communicative contexts within each period. As such, each coding node tree corresponds to one section of the core chapters and to one of the three subordinate questions identified in the research design. The data is presented in each subsection of the core chapters as a table of figures and illustrative examples of text from documents and transcripts to show the data in their original context and to allow deeper analysis of the data.

⁵⁵ John L. Campbell, "Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy," *Theory and Society* 27, no. 3 (1998).; Robert C. Lieberman, "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change," *The American Political Science Review* 96, no. 4 (2002).

Chapter 1

Research design

The concept of relative advantage is not easily linked to policy action. Relative advantage represents a broad aim for force structure planning, yet there is little evidence of its impact on specific procurement decisions. At the same time the idea of relative advantage has been a recurring theme in Australian defence policy for decades. This supports the widely-held belief that ideas matter in policy,⁵⁶ but it does not account for how much certain ideas matter to particular policies or political discourses. This research examines the evolution of a particular idea employed in Australia's strategic policy discourse in order to understand how it has been conceptualised since its inception and what factors may have influenced its transformation. The research has been designed to identify and account for the process of conceptual change, but does not seek to determine causation at each stage of conceptual change.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Alan Finlayson, "Political Science, Political Ideas and Rhetoric," *Economy and Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 530-36.; Frank R. Baumgartner, "Ideas and Policy Change," *Governance* 26, no. 2 (2013); Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Why and How Ideas Matter," *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Charles Tilly and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁵⁷ This is consistent with process-tracing methodology used to identify patterns and events in unstructured historical data and within the scope of the thesis. Identify causal explanations of conceptual is only become possible after process-tracing has occurred.

The need to identify and trace the process of evolution in relative advantage is an important first step towards understanding the causal processes which influenced the changes observed, particularly where political actors used the idea in contrary ways. For example, in the 1970s, relative advantage was seen as a way to mitigate Australia's strategic limitations, in particular the lack of large numbers of personnel. By 1995, Robert Ray claimed that Australia 'had a traditional technological edge within our region which has allowed us to have a small standing force.'⁵⁸ The reversal of causation in the stated rationale for maintaining relative advantage indicates that the concept was understood very differently at different stages of its evolution. This is an important phenomenon because political statements can have significant effects in shaping and constraining policy by mapping specific concepts or values into policy objectives. Political statements can also create rhetorical entrapment,⁵⁹ a situation in which political actors are held to account against their previous assertions or commitments and have, often inadvertently, linked their legitimacy or credibility to a particular path of action.⁶⁰ As such, understanding the narratives used to validate assumptions, expectations and value judgments represented in policy is an important component of understanding tides of policy change across decades.

At the broadest methodological level, this research conducts an historical examination of the evolution of the concept of relative advantage. The historical examination of the

⁵⁸ Robert F. Ray, "Defence into the Future: Maintaining the Edge," *Address* (Canberra: National Press Club, 1995), 3.

⁵⁹ Michaels' term discourse trap refers to a situation in which concepts in discourse legitimise certain actions and delegitimise others. Rhetorical entrapment is where actors' credibility is challenged on the basis of their former commitments.

⁶⁰ Frank Schimmelfennig, "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union," *International Organization* 55, no. 1 (2001): 72-76.

evolution of a political concept in policy and discourse necessitates a form of process tracing methodology. The research design of this thesis incorporates a ‘history of ideas’⁶¹ approach at the methodological level to capture the conceptual transformation of relative advantage throughout the period under study. A QDA research model is used to capture and analyse empirical data drawn from the official Australian defence policy discourse during the era of self-reliance. Finally, themes identified through narrative analysis are used to demonstrate correlations between conceptual transformations in relative advantage and contextual policy factors.

The chapter begins by presenting relative advantage as a political idea and a unit of analysis. The first section reviews the key changes to the use of the relative advantage concept over time. It then examines relative advantage as an example of technocracy in political rhetoric and as a tool of strategic communication. This shows the concept in different perspectives to demonstrate the methodological utility of treating relative advantage as a political idea. The second section explains the rationale for using a history of ideas methodology to analyse the conceptual evolution of relative advantage in Australia’s strategic policy discourse. It explains the concepts used to examine policy narratives and strategic communication and used to substantiate the selection of data and use of methods. The third section explains the rationale for the data used, the data collected and the collection and reduction methods used to create the data set used in the analysis. The final section presents the research model used to analyse the data set in each

⁶¹ Mark Bevir, "Mind and Method in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 36, no. 2 (1997); Maurice Mandelbaum, "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy," *ibid.* 5 (1965).

substantive chapter. It articulates the research variables used and provides a codebook for the QDA process.

1.1 Relative advantage as a unit of analysis

Despite significant variations in the conceptual elements of relative advantage, the concept is a single idea which has transformed in policy. This is informed by Fry who, in reference to the concept of regional security in Australian defence policy, noted that:

This case rests on the observation that, while particular circumstances varied, the conceptual approach inherent in these doctrines- whether they influenced policy or not – remained the same.⁶²

This rests on the methodological premise that social reality, rather than having an objective existence independent of human perceptions, is constructed by humans. The implication of this premise is that the practice of policy and the interpretation of evidence within a narrative analysis framework are tempered by human perception, in accordance with a constructivist approach to political theory.⁶³ Foster illustrates this point by noting that it is one thing to conclude from the historical record that the Soviet Union was considered to be an evil empire by some of its contemporaries, but it is another thing to ascertain why.⁶⁴ To this Waltz adds that

Evaluating a theory requires working back and forth between the implications of the theory and an uncertain state of affairs that we take to be the reality against which the theory is tested.⁶⁵

⁶² Greg Fry, "Australia's Regional Security Doctrine: Old Assumptions, New Challenges," *Australia's Regional Security*, ed. Greg Fry (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991), 9.

⁶³ Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Gregory D Foster, "A Conceptual Foundation for a Theory of Strategy," *The Washington Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1990): 47.

⁶⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 4 (1997): 916.

This section examines three different conceptions of relative advantage as a policy idea throughout the period 1968-2009. It begins with an overview of the basic evolution of relative advantage as a discrete political concept. It then examines relative advantage as a representation of technocracy in Australian defence policy. Finally it examines relative advantage as a form of communication. This contrasts three different versions of the same idea in different political contexts which often cut across policy domains.

Conceptions of relative advantage

For four decades, Australian defence policy has featured a recurring theme emphasising a qualitative lead in military capability. The concept emerged in defence policy and discourse during the 1970s at roughly the same time as policy was adopting and then endorsing the notion of defence self-reliance. It has featured prominently in major open-source strategic policy documents since. The importance of Australia's technological level was stressed in the 1970s. The formal use of relative advantage began in a discussion about the technological level of Australia's military forces in the 1975 strategic basis of Australian defence policy.⁶⁶ The technological level had initially referred primarily to Australia's industrial base and capacity for expansion to sustain conventional force generation. Based on ideas that had emerged in the early 1970s, the technological level debate sparked a larger discourse about the degree of relative advantage that Australia ought to pursue, precisely which countries that advantage should be relative to and whether high-technology capabilities were to be prioritised according to

⁶⁶ Defence Committee, "1975 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1975).

their capacity for expansion, their deterrent value or their suitability for operational use in low-level 'credible contingencies.'⁶⁷

The conceptualisation of military technology has been a key influence on Australian strategic guidance since at least the 1987 defence white paper, *The Defence of Australia*.⁶⁸ A 'clear military technological advantage' relative to Australia's region⁶⁹ was cemented in policy as a cornerstone of Australia's capacity to defend itself and contribute to cooperative security arrangements in the 1980s.⁷⁰ At this point, the role of technology in providing an advantage had been clearly linked to qualitative performance. This reflected not only a change in the role of technology in facilitating relative advantage, but also a significant change in the way self-reliant defence was conceptualised in policy. Paul Dibb, principal author of *The Defence of Australia*, noted that the two key features of the approach to strategic guidance offered by the 1987 defence white paper were the focus on strategic geography and the specific need for technology-based military advantage in Australia's region.⁷¹ A strategy of air and maritime denial coupled with a relative

⁶⁷ John Osborne Langtry and Desmond J. Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment: A Methodology for Planning Australian Defence Force Development* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1979), 58-60.; Tony Godfrey-Smith, "Low Level Conflict Contingencies and Australian Defence Policy," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence N° 34* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1985).; Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "The Australian Defence Force: Its Structure and Capabilities," *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1984).

⁶⁸ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*.

⁶⁹ Paul Dibb, "The Self-Reliant Defence of Australia: The History of an Idea," *History as Policy*, ed. Ron Huiskens and Meredith Thatcher (Canberra: ANU ePress, 2007), 19-20.

⁷⁰ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*.; Paul Dibb, "Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities," *Report for the Minister for Defence* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986).; "The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence N° 88* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1992).

⁷¹ "The Self-Reliant Defence of Australia," 19-20.

capability advantage has become a staple feature of Australian strategic guidance and force structure planning since.

Relative advantage was further expanded throughout the 1990s in tandem with the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)⁷² to incorporate popular Western ideas which emphasised information-superiority in the coordination of military forces, leading to an emphasis of what Australia termed the 'knowledge edge.'⁷³ Technology was considered to be a force multiplier, a critical enabler and a means for coordinating joint forces to disproportionately increase their combat effectiveness. By the 2000s, relative advantage included new military-scientific concepts, in particular Network-Centric Warfare (NCW) and Network-Enabled Capability (NEC),⁷⁴ which feature prominently in Australia's defence vernacular,⁷⁵ and the concept was termed *strategic capability advantage* in defence policy.⁷⁶ This evolution of relative advantage conceptualised technology as qualitatively superior weapons, essentially the 'technological edge' of the 1980s, in combination with the communication and intelligence technologies that

⁷² Tim Benbow, *The Magic Bullet? Understanding the Revolution in Military Affairs* (London: Brassey's, 2004).; Williamson Murray, "Thinking About Revolutions in Military Affairs," *Joint Force Quarterly* 16(1997).

⁷³ Department of Defence, "In Search of the Knowledge Edge: The Management Component," *Media release (MECC 250800/00)* (2000).; Paul Dibb, "The Relevance of the Knowledge Edge," *Working paper N° 329* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1998).; Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, "Knowledge Systems Equipment Acquisition Projects in Defence," *Review of Auditor-General's Reports 2000-01: First Quarter* (Canberra: Australian Parliament House, 2000), para.5.4.

⁷⁴ David S. Alberts, John J. Garstka, and Frederick P. Stein, *Network Centric Warfare: Developing and Leveraging Information Superiority* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2000); Jeff Cares, *Distributed Networked Operations: The Foundations of Network Centric Warfare* (Newport, RI: Alidade Press, 2005); Norman Friedman, *Network-Centric Warfare: How Navies Learned to Fight Smarter through Three World Wars* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009).; Department of Defence, "Force 2030," para 8.60.

⁷⁵ For example, see: "Explaining Ncw: Network Centric Warfare," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2006); "Ncw Roadmap 2009," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2009).

⁷⁶ "Force 2030," para 8.53.; see also *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000).

facilitated the 'knowledge edge' of the 1990s and the technical and doctrinal expertise to maintain and operate a high-technology military.⁷⁷ This conception of relative advantage has been validated by the latest defence white paper and has been widely disseminated in the public domain. Community consultation conducted by Defence in 2008 found that a majority of respondents supported the maintenance of a capability edge for the ADF in three areas: technology, information and training. The community consultation program also reported broad support for further investment in high technology force enablers, such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets and electronic warfare systems.⁷⁸

Thomson suggests that the rationale for increasing focus on high technology military capabilities has largely been an outcome of the increasing availability of that technology rather than strategic concepts developed with defence. He argues that

The clearest trend to emerge from our 40 year survey is that the level of preparedness and modernisation of the force (and the size of the Army) is driven largely by the operational tempo of the day. Far less clear is the existence of any nexus between strategic guidance and the evolution of the force structure. In fact, once the impact of technology and the changing face of warfare is taken into account, it is surprising how little has changed— notwithstanding that our survey covers three distinct epochs of Australian defence thinking. Aside from the changes to disposition wrought by the 1980s incarnation of the 'defence of Australia', the really significant changes to the force structure—the demise of the aircraft carrier and the rise of the amphibious force—are difficult to ascribe to a changed strategic vision of how to defend the country (or at least one that was articulated at the time). The result is that the basic defence force conceived and developed by Robert Menzies back in the 1960s under the doctrine of 'forward defence', persisted through the years of 'defence of Australia'... Despite inflated rhetoric, since the Second World War Australia has been a regional maritime power with a boutique army. Although the narrative developed to explain why Australia needs to do so changes, the reality remains inviolate.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Michael E O'Hanlon, *The Science of War: Defense Budgeting, Military Technology, Logistics, and Combat Outcomes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).; Lawrence J. Korb, "Requirements of a High-Tech Military: Manpower and Organization," *Technology and Strategy: Future Trends*, ed. Shai Feldman (Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990).; Mark D. Mandeles, *The Future of War: Organizations as Weapons* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005).

⁷⁸ Department of Defence, "Looking over the Horizon," 13-17.

⁷⁹ Thomson, "The Challenge of Coherence: Strategic Guidance, Capability, and Budgets," 139.

This argument reduces emphasis on policy ideas and places it more firmly on available technology and internal drivers within the individual services of the ADF. Thomson notes that each of the services has a vested interest in acquiring the most advanced replacements for retiring systems that they can afford and that the bureaucratic politics within the ADF and the Defence Organisation more broadly make it difficult to significantly alter the whole-of-force distribution of capabilities and expenditure.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, politicians, bureaucrats and analysts are often preoccupied with searching for a solution to confounding policy challenges. Political concepts and policies are often presented to the public as solutions to problems. In practice, no policy has been an effective solution for long and no problem has been static for long enough for a policy to become a silver bullet.⁸¹ The record is dominated by incremental policy changes which have been shaped by unpredictable events. From an analytical perspective, the effectiveness of a policy is not only measured by its performance against its objectives, but also by the effect it had on the nature of the issue it was intended to address and by whether or not it opened new avenues for future action.⁸² However, the general policy impetus to search for a new solution when merged with the infatuation of Western militaries with high-tech military platforms leads to a technocratic imperative. This has manifested in Australian strategic policy as a penchant for high-tech solutions to

⁸⁰ Ibid., 140.

⁸¹ James A. Morone, "Seven Laws of Policy Analysis," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 5, no. 4 (1986): 818.

⁸² Ibid.

fundamental strategic and operational challenges, despite a rising potential for concomitant ‘technology traps.’⁸³

Relative advantage as technocracy

Australia’s attraction to high-technology military weapons and systems reflects a technological romanticism that is widespread amongst Western allies and is strongly associated with America’s strategic culture.⁸⁴ The scientific approach to warfare now popular around the world is underwritten by a techno-scientific regime of order that emerged alongside modernity.⁸⁵ Smit notes that the legitimization of military technology in the West has largely paralleled the broad co-evolution of technology, politics and societal development in Western countries.⁸⁶ The RMA is a natural extension of the industrial Western society because it ‘incorporates both a political preference for minimum risk warfare and a technological quest for continued military potency by advanced Western liberal societies.’⁸⁷ While Australia was not as enthusiastic as America and some other allies about the possibilities offered by new military technologies, it was so enamoured with the RMA that it raised a short-lived Office of the Revolution in Military Affairs (ORMA) within the Military Strategy Branch of ADF headquarters.⁸⁸ The strategic

⁸³ Frederick Nils Bennett, "The Amateur Managers: A Study of the Management of Weapons System Projects," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence* N^o 67 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1990), 61-65.

⁸⁴ Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the Us, and Israel* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2010), 85-87.

⁸⁵ Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity*, 13-16.; see also Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict* (New York and London: The Guildford Press, 1997).

⁸⁶ Wim A. Smit, "Military Technology and Politics," *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Charles Tilly and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 732-33.

⁸⁷ Michael Evans, "Seeking the Knowledge Edge: Australia and the Revolution in Military Affairs," *Quadrant* 46, no. 3 (2002): 31.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

rationale that paralleled the emergence of defence self-reliance matured in capabilities-based planning and culminated, thus far, with the theoretical adoption of the RMA concept. The increasingly technocratic conception of relative advantage entails six assumptions which need to be addressed in order to substantiate the strategic rationale for pursuing a technological edge.

The first is that superior technology creates more capability. This is not necessarily the case.⁸⁹ In a simple model, Lanchester's square law⁹⁰ demonstrates that a small numerical advantage requires a relatively larger qualitative advantage to offset.⁹¹ More complex combat modelling indicates that more capable individual units cannot necessarily be relied on to overcome numerically superior units of relatively poorer quality.⁹² This is a challenge for an ostensibly capabilities-based⁹³ approach to force structure planning that relies on a qualitative advantage to offset a large relative gap in quantity. This does not suggest that Australia's approach to defence procurement is blind to the non-linear relationship between materials and operational performance. This and a range of similar issues are dealt with extensively in Australian capability development and acquisition

⁸⁹ Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, "A Common Misapplication of the Lanchester Square Law: A Research Note," *International Security* 12, no. 1 (1987).; John W. R. Lepingwell, "The Laws of Combat? Lanchester Reexamined," *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Alan R. Washburn and Moshe Kress, *Combat Modeling* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 79-85.; Robert L. Helmbold, "The Constant Fallacy: A Persistent Logical Flaw in Applications of Lanchester's Equations," *European Journal of Operational Research* 75, no. 3 (1994).

⁹¹ James G. Taylor and Samuel H. Parry, "Force-Ratio Considerations for Some Lanchester-Type Models of Warfare," *Operations Research* 23, no. 3 (1975).; James G. Taylor and Gerald G. Brown, "Annihilation Prediction for Lanchester-Type Models of Modern Warfare," *ibid.* 31, no. 4 (1983).

⁹² Andrew Ilachinski, *Artificial War: Multiagent-Based Simulation of Combat* (New Jersey and London: World Scientific Publishing, 2004).; James G. Taylor, "Solving Lanchester-Type Equations for 'Modern Warfare' with Variable Coefficients," *Operations Research* 22, no. 4 (1974).

⁹³ Thomas-Durell Young, "Capabilities-Based Defense Planning: The Australian Experience," *Armed Forces and Society* 21, no. 3 (1995).; Dibb, "The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development."

policies.⁹⁴ However, while Australia has been vigilant at the policy implementation level, the tenuous link between highly capable individual platforms and increased *capability* has been pervasive at the strategic level and is reflected in Australian attempts to intellectualise high-technology adoption and doctrine.

The second is that reliance on high-tech platforms assumes that incremental advances in technology will be the dominant form of innovation in military systems. However, history demonstrates that disruptive innovations, those that create disparities in defensive and offensive capabilities and circumvent capability advantages,⁹⁵ are unpredictable and devastating to existing platforms. Technological innovation is strongly correlated with an impetus to manage uncertainty. Rather than incremental responses to the technological advancement of others, innovation is related to the strategic uncertainty generated by the capability of others.⁹⁶ This distinction is significant because it suggests that rapid shifts in the employment of weapons and systems can spur more innovation than incremental advancements which do not produce the same degree of uncertainty.⁹⁷ Overreliance on technology is potentially dangerous because it emphasises technical performance above doctrinal adaption and operational initiative, thereby inhibiting the intellectual tenacity in

⁹⁴ For example, see: Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, "Knowledge Systems Equipment Acquisition Projects in Defence."; Defence Material Organisation, "Building Defence Capability: A Policy for a Smarter and More Agile Defence Industry Base."; Department of Defence, "Defence Capability Plan 2009: December 2010 Update."

⁹⁵ Terry C. Pierce, *Warfighting and Disruptive Technologies: Disguising Innovation* (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2004), 1-4.; Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1997).

⁹⁶ Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 52.

⁹⁷ "New Ways of War: Understanding Military Innovation," *International Security* 13, no. 1 (1988).

the military.⁹⁸ An RMA is not typified by advancement in technology and weapons.

Rather it is the by-product of military adaption to new technologies and weapons. Thus:

[t]he central tenet of an RMA is that advances in technology must lead to significant changes in how military forces are organised, trained, and equipped for war, thereby reshaping the way in which wars are fought.⁹⁹

This implies that procuring the next generation of an existing capability may not be a bulwark against a disruptive innovation which employs a technology or doctrine that negates the former capability advantage.

The third assumption is that staying one or more generations ahead of regional competitors is a sufficient technological edge to provide capability overmatch.¹⁰⁰ Innovation cycles suggest that being generations ahead can also be very dangerous. Australia's technological lead over much of Southeast Asia is at least one generation across virtually all high-tech weapons platforms and in some instances several generations ahead in certain niche capabilities, such as combat aircraft and surface combatants, although regional defence spending trends are not favourable.¹⁰¹ Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction¹⁰² suggests that a new generation of innovation is easier to field for competitors with the resources to leapfrog innovation

⁹⁸ Michael I. Handel, "Numbers Do Count: The Question of Quality Versus Quantity," *The Strategic Imperative: New Policies for American Security*, ed. Samuel P. Huntington (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1982), 198.

⁹⁹ Elinor C. Sloan, *The Revolution in Military Affairs* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 3.; see also Mandeles, *Organizations as Weapons*.; Elinor C. Sloan, *Military Transformation and Modern Warfare: A Reference Handbook* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ O'Hanlon, *The Science of War: Defense Budgeting, Military Technology, Logistics, and Combat Outcomes*. ; E. Kelly Taylor, *America's Army and the Language of Grunts* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), 250.

¹⁰¹ Defence Intelligence Organisation, "Defence Economic Trends in the Asia-Pacific 2010," (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2011).

¹⁰² Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Can Capitalism Survive? Creative Destruction and the Future of the Global Economy* (New York and London: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2009 [1942]).

cycles, as was the case with the British Dreadnought.¹⁰³ Having the most advanced capabilities, but in fewer numbers means that Australia places itself in a potentially precarious situation. Unlike other high-technology military forces, which generally enjoy a favourable force-to-space ratio, although some European states are exceptions, the ADF is small relative to its geographical scope and relies on its skill and high-tech capabilities to a greater extent. Moore's law means that capabilities that cost large sums to develop become relatively less expensive for others to adopt and allow for competitors to catch up rapidly, an experience which is supported by Australia's experiences in procuring established US platforms, such as the F/A-18 Hornet.

The fourth is that where Australia relies on high-technology capabilities, it should procure cutting edge replacements because regional powers will have the ability to adopt ageing systems at the same rate as they are superseded. However, this straightforward inference assumes that regional states that are inclined to modernise to legacy platforms are able to afford and integrate numerous logistical, support, training and maintenance systems that are required to sustain ageing systems. The adoption-capacity of individual states is relative to their material and financial ability to acquire, operate and sustain new capabilities.¹⁰⁴ For example, some high-tech weapons platforms may become available and affordable quickly while the information networks and technical expertise required to

¹⁰³ The dreadnought was invented when the Royal Navy enjoyed naval supremacy, but it was so advanced that it rendered the rest of the RN obsolete. When Germany copied the Dreadnought (which was easier to replicate than create), it undermined the bulk of the RN and rendered it largely obsolete. The Dreadnought proved to be a net loss in terms of capability for the RN. See John Brooks, "Dreadnought: Blunder, or Stroke of Genius?," *War in History* 14, no. 2 (2007).; Angus K. Ross, "Four Lessons That the US Navy Must Learn from the Dreadnought Revolution," *Naval War College Review* 63, no. 4 (2010).; Nicholas A. Lambert, "Transformation and Technology in the Fisher Era: The Impact of the Communications Revolution," *Information and Revolutions in Military Affairs*, ed. Emily O. Goldman (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

operate them might be far behind. Adoption of new systems might also require a state to commit to undesirable supply contracts¹⁰⁵ or might necessitate the purchase of other high-end capabilities in the future to ensure interoperability and complementarity of systems. An example of this is Australia's decision to purchase the F-35 Joint Strike fighter (JSF). In some roles, the JSF is shaping up to be an inferior platform to what had been originally expected, but it is the only fifth generation multirole aircraft with the necessary C4ISR(EW)¹⁰⁶ infrastructure¹⁰⁷ for Australia to realise its Future Joint Operating Concept.¹⁰⁸

The fifth is that once the technology becomes available, states will be able to incorporate them into their doctrine and utilise them efficiently. This underestimates the challenges presented by the organisational changes needed to effectively employ new capabilities in operations.¹⁰⁹ Military organisations have varying levels of ability when it comes to change management, transformation and innovation.¹¹⁰ A common generalisation is that 'the complexity of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is negatively related to its rate of adoption.'¹¹¹ One critical success of Western military organisations has been their ability to adapt to new technologies, new doctrines and new

¹⁰⁵ Renaud Bellais and Renelle Guichard, "Defense Innovation, Technology Transfers and Public Policy," *Defence and Peace Economics* 17, no. 3 (2006): 283-4.

¹⁰⁶ C4ISR(EW) is an acronym used in the Australian defence lexicon. It stands for: Command, Control, Computers, Communications, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare.

¹⁰⁷ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority," *Inquiry Report* (Canberra: House of Representatives, 2007), paras. 6.25-6.30.

¹⁰⁸ Australian Defence Force, "Joint Operations for the 21st Century," (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2007), 3.

¹⁰⁹ Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 28-35.

¹¹⁰ Max Boot, "The Struggle to Transform the Military," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2005).; Mark D. Mandeles, *Military Transformation Past and Present: Historic Lessons for the Twenty-First Century* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007).

¹¹¹ Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York and London: Free Press, 2003), 257.

strategic challenges.¹¹² The rapid reformation of the US military to conduct hybrid warfare in the post-9/11 era is testament to an underappreciated capacity for organisational change that is not present in many military forces,¹¹³ especially those of Australia's neighbours.¹¹⁴ While Australia has invested substantial intellectual and technical expertise into adopting high-technology weapons and systems into its military,¹¹⁵ such resources have been lacking in the region. In general, Southeast Asian states have not been enthusiastic about technological and doctrinal adoption in the region and have viewed widespread adoption of the RMA as a poor fit for their strategic priorities.¹¹⁶

The sixth assumption is that high-technology weapons and systems reduce the manpower required to conduct military operations. This logic is frequently repeated in Australian policy in support of investing in expensive capabilities in order to pursue relative advantage. However, high-technology platforms and systems come with personnel costs

¹¹² Paul Murdock, "Principles of War on the Network-Centric Battlefield: Mass and Economy of Force," *Parameters* 32, no. 1 (2002).; A. Fusano, H. Sato, and A. Namatame, "Multi-Agent Based Combat Simulation from Ooda and Network Perspective" (paper presented at the UkSim13th International Conference on Computer Modelling and Simulation, Cambridge, March 30 -April 1 2011); Christopher R Smith, "Network Centric Warfare, Command, and the Nature of War," *Study paper 318* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2010).

¹¹³ Chad C. Serena, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation: The Us Army in the Iraq War* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).; Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹¹⁴ J. N. Mak, "The Rma in Southeast Asia," *The RMA in the Asia-Pacific: challenge and response* (Rydges Hotel, Canberra Australian Defence Studies Centre and Office of the Revolution in Military Affairs, 2000).

¹¹⁵ Gary Waters and Desmond J. Ball, "Transforming the Australian Defence Force (Adf) for Information Superiority," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence N° 159* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 2005).; Australian Defence Force, "Joint Operations for the 21st Century."; John Baker, "Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia," *New Technology: Implications for Regional and Australian Security*, ed. Desmond Ball and Helen Wilson, *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence N° 76* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1991).; R. Wylie, S. Markowski, and P. Hall, "Big Science, Small Country and the Challenges of Defence System Development: An Australian Case Study," *Defence and Peace Economics* 17, no. 3 (2006).

¹¹⁶ Evans, "Seeking the Knowledge Edge: Australia and the Revolution in Military Affairs," 33.

in other areas. The numbers of operators relative to the combat lethality of particular weapons may be lower, but the expertise required to operate and maintain the weapon may be higher.¹¹⁷ Consequently, the costs of military preparedness, in terms of the level of readiness, measured in personnel numbers, training levels, material capabilities, and expenditure,¹¹⁸ can be much higher for high-technology militaries than for larger, lower-technology militaries. More sophisticated major platforms generally necessitate the recruitment and retention of more intelligent and better trained personnel. This can be debilitating because the personnel required to operate and maintain high-technology capabilities might not always be available and any significant manpower deficit can have a disproportionate impact on operational effectiveness.¹¹⁹

The link here is that technocracy underpins every aspect of Australia's infatuation with the concept of qualitatively-based relative advantage in military capability. For relative advantage to be justified as a central element of Australian strategic policy it must be the case that maintaining technological superiority affords the ADF with the maximum capability for the associated opportunity costs. This logically entails that broad force structure guidance to maintain an edge is the most effective way to equip and structure the ADF to perform its military role. In some areas this is almost certainly correct. For example, C4ISR(EW) and enabling capabilities, provide niche opportunities to the ADF that cannot be achieved through other means. Technologies that enable wide-area maritime surveillance and rapid communication amongst force elements from various services operating in the same space are critical to the functionality of the ADF in the

¹¹⁷ O'Hanlon, *The Science of War: Defense Budgeting, Military Technology, Logistics, and Combat Outcomes*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31-43.

¹¹⁹ Handel, "Numbers Do Count: The Question of Quality Versus Quantity," 198.

contemporary security environment. However, some staples of relative advantage, such as the incremental modernisation of some major platforms may yield a less significant return on investment in terms of a capability edge. The validity of relative advantage as a strategic concept used to justify the acquisition of cutting edge military technology across the spectrum of major platforms is under question.

Relative advantage as communication

Relative advantage has been used for a variety of purposes in Australian strategic policy since the 1960s. It has also performed several key signalling roles in Australia's defence policy discourse. This study identifies three themes in the strategic communication used in the Australian defence policy discourse. The themes are based on the type of signal and the intended audience of that signal. The first theme is deterrence, which is comprised of signals sent to potential adversaries for the purpose of dissuading them to undertake a certain course of action, in this instance any kind of armed attack against Australia for its interests. The second theme is reassurance, which is aimed at existing or potential security partners or allies to persuade them that Australia is willing and able to meet any commitments it has made to them. The third theme is validation, which constitutes signals sent to the Australian public to assure them that the government and the ADF are capable of deterring or defeating armed aggression against Australia; to bolster morale and appeal to nationalism; and to justify the significant expenditure required to maintain the Defence Organisation and to acquire new equipment and assets.

In Australian defence policy, deterrence is largely aimed at regional states. The ADF emphasises its credibility as a fighting force for the purposes of deterring military operations against Australia.¹²⁰ Deterrence and dissuasion are forms of coercion, which entails 'efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action.'¹²¹ Deterrence requires the threat of harm to manipulate a potential adversary's behaviour.¹²² Deterrence is more specifically focused on defensive and retaliatory capabilities of a political actors. Dissuasion is less specific and is used to raise costs of undesirable actions without necessarily making threats. Dissuasion still involves overt signalling which is directed at framing the undesired issue and often requires significant publicity in order to succeed.¹²³ In either conception, the efforts of these signals are coercive in nature. Signals to potential adversaries about the ADF's relative military capability are focused on the disproportionate costs that the ADF can impose on would-be aggressors in relation to the potential gains to be made through military operations against Australia.

Coercion is often conceived of in defensive terms and discussed with terms associated with defence rather than offensive actions or capabilities. Coercion can be conceptualised in two distinct ways. One is the use of threats (implied or explicit) to influence an adversary's decision-making.¹²⁴ The other is the use of what Schelling calls brute force,¹²⁵ the resort to armed violence, to convince an adversary to adopt or refrain from a particular

¹²⁰ Australian Defence Force, "Australia's Approach to Warfare," 20.

¹²¹ Alexander L. George, "Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics," *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, ed. Alexander L. George and William E. Simons (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 7-8.; Gordon Alexander Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 196.

¹²² Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 1977), 9.

¹²³ Langtry and Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment*, 43-44.

¹²⁴ Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Might* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

¹²⁵ Thomas Crombie Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008 [1966]), 2-3.

course of action. Coercion can be considered the successful manipulation of an adversary's decision-making. This means that the adversary has not been materially defeated, but instead makes a deliberate decision to desist while further resistance remains within their capacity.¹²⁶ The essential element is deliberately altering an adversary's perception of events in order to affect their strategic calculations.¹²⁷ These calculations can relate to perceived costs or benefits because it the relationship between these calculations that policy actors base their decisions on.¹²⁸ Therefore, coercion relies on the manipulation of symbols and information.¹²⁹ This involves 'perceptions management' which includes 'statements, decisions, and actions taken by one state in order to influence another state's assumptions about the first state's intentions and capabilities.'¹³⁰

A similar approach to perceptions management occurs when states want to reassure their partners and allies about their intentions, commitment to promises and expectations of their relationships. The Australian Government has often been preoccupied with ensuring that it maintains defence credibility in the eyes of other nations.¹³¹ Morrow outlines the strategic choice rationale for maintaining credibility in the eyes of security partners:

The strategic-choice approach suggests that alliances are signals or commitment devices. They might operate as signals of mutual interest among the allies, deterring threatening powers. The threatening power's uncertainty about the allies' willingness to come to one another's aid is reduced by an alliance precisely because forming an alliance is costly.

¹²⁶ Robert Anthony Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 13.

¹²⁷ Byman and Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Might*, 3.

¹²⁸ Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, 13.

¹²⁹ Stephen J. Cimbala, *Military Persuasion in War and Policy: The Power of Soft* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 34.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³¹ The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, "The Australian Army," *Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1974), 2.18.

Alliances might serve as commitment devices so that leaders will live up to their commitment if push comes to shove. National leaders intervene on behalf of their allies because they will be punished if they do not intervene.¹³²

For Australia, relative advantage has been an important means to emphasise the ADF's strengths in response to limitations in Australia's population size and force projection capabilities which have at times been perceived as strategic inadequacies. The rationale for maintaining a high technology defence force was directly linked to reassuring regional security partners that Australia's commitments remained credible after the US and UK reduced their respective levels of engagement in Southeast Asia during the late 1960s.¹³³

The final way relative advantage is used in strategic communication by the Australian government is validating the ADF and broader Defence Organisation to the public. This is done in three key ways: a) establishing the ADF's credibility as a force that can provide *security* to Australia; b) promoting *morale* and nationalism by inspiring pride in the ADF and casting the ADF as a representative of desirable national values; and c) providing *justification* for major force structure decisions and defence expenditure. Relative advantage is promoted to the Australian public as desirable in many of the same ways that it is promoted to security partners and potential adversaries. An ADF operating high technology weapons is presented as necessarily more capable than a low technology force and the degree of advantage offered by high technology also appeals to the popular notion of Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen as qualitatively superior to others. This promotes a sense of national security. This is linked to morale, which is characterised by

¹³² James D. Morrow, "The Strategic Setting of Choices: Signaling, Commitments, and Negotiation in International Politics," ed. David A Lake and Robert Powell, *Strategic choice and international relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹³³ For example, see Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para.254.; "1976 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1976), para.398.

the degree of confidence Australians have in the ability of the ADF to adequately defend Australia from armed attack. The need to maintain a high technology force structure and to invest heavily in emerging technology to maintain a qualitative relative advantage is supported by these signals and was sometimes mentioned directly when governments have proposed significant increases to defence expenditure.

1.2 A history of ideas methodology

This section examines the established methodological approaches to historical investigation of conceptual transformation. Inquiry into origins and changes of specific concepts is based on a fundamental approach to understanding the history of *ideas*. To study the history of an idea is to examine the meaning attributed by humans to their knowledge, culture and experiences, from a historical perspective.¹³⁴ Examining the social meaning of ideas across disciplines allows for ‘illuminating and explanatory’ relationships between ideas, interpretations and actions through time to be traced in a more comprehensive context.¹³⁵ In this context history is conceived less as a ‘*body* of knowledge’ and more as ‘a *way* of (or approach to) embodying knowledge.’¹³⁶ Moreover, the history of communication is equally important to understanding conceptual transformation. Communication is used for specific strategic purposes to influence politics and ‘without common concepts there is no society, and above all, no political

¹³⁴ Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.; Samuel James, "Recent Tendencies in the History of Political Thought," *History of European Ideas* 37, no. 3 (2012): 401-02.

¹³⁵ Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Reflections on the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1, no. 1 (1940): 3-4. ; Jotham Parsons, "Defining the History of Ideas," *Journal of The History of Ideas* 68, no. 4 (2007): 684.

¹³⁶ Preston King, "Thinking Past a Problem," *The History of Ideas*, ed. Preston King (London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983), 21. (original emphasis) ; Donald R. Kelley, "The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History," (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 105-06.

field of action.¹³⁷ The narratives used to explain policies create a system of assumptions and expectations which embed causal ideas and value judgments into policy views and paradigms. A history of ideas methodology accounts for both the evolution of political ideas and the processes through which political statements shape and influence conceptual change.

An idea in history

Tracing the evolution of a political concept begins with the study of the process of evolution of an idea or ideas that are central to the concept. The history of ideas as a methodological approach to historiography involves examining how ideas were expressed and represented in historical discourses. In general terms, this is a deceptively simple proposition: an idea that is expressed in the present must have evolved in some way from earlier ideas.¹³⁸ However, the specification of variables, even simple ones such as the meaning of the term *idea*, is a source of controversy in the discipline.¹³⁹ The word *idea* is ambiguous in meaning¹⁴⁰ and has itself changed over time. The theory of ideas has been a recurrent theme in the history of philosophy since it emerged as a point of difference between Plato and Aristotle.¹⁴¹ More contemporary philosophical debate has focused on

¹³⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 74.

¹³⁸ King, "Introduction," 3.

¹³⁹ Bevir, "Mind and Method in the History of Ideas," 167.; Judith Squires, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Ideas," *Economy and Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 427.

¹⁴⁰ For example, see Melissa Lane, "Why History of Ideas at All?," *History of European Ideas* 28, no. 1-2 (2002): 33-41.

¹⁴¹ Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 20-21, 34.; see also Henry Jackson, *Plato's Later Theory of Ideas* (London: Macmillan, 1885).

similar issues, particularly on whether words directly signify ideas or things¹⁴² and whether or not ideas are reducible to things.¹⁴³ Three dominant conceptions of an idea consider the term to mean: a) an expression of knowledge; b) a 'fact' in either objective or subjective terms; and c) a plan of action.

When used as an expression of knowledge, in order to refer to that which is known, the word idea is employed in two senses: the first being a statement of truth which may be accepted or falsified and the second being an object or a person.¹⁴⁴ To know in each instance is a distinct proposition. One may know the Prime Minister of Australia in the first sense without knowing them in the second. Similarly, we cannot know that two plus two equals four in the second sense; we can only know it in the first sense. We *know* some things, but we can only *know about* others. The distinction is analogous to the difference between objective knowledge and subjective experience.¹⁴⁵ Much of what we know is based on models: systems of understanding based on the evolution and accumulation of knowledge and methods of interpreting that knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Subjective experience can enable us to know an object or person without necessarily understanding or knowing about it. This explains why two people with a similar degree of familiarity with an idea can disagree vehemently about its meaning.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² E. J. Ashworth, "'Do Words Signify Ideas or Things?' The Scholastic Sources of Locke's Theory of Language," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (1981): 301.

¹⁴³ Louis O. Mink, "Change and Causality in the History of Ideas," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2, no. 1 (1968): 9.

¹⁴⁴ George Boas, *The History of Ideas: An Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 3-4.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁴⁶ Bruce Schneier, "The Security Mirage," *TEDxPSU* (2010).; *Beyond Fear: Thinking Sensibly About Security in an Uncertain World* (New York: Copernicus Books, 2003), 28-29.

¹⁴⁷ Boas, *The History of Ideas*, 4-5.

When dealing with political ideas, a further complication emerges. An idea of knowledge could be a matter of fact or a matter of political advocacy. Ideas may be represented as factual statements, for example something which *is* or *is not* true, or as declaratory statements, for example something that *should* or *should not* be done.¹⁴⁸ These categories are not mutually exclusive because policy is conditioned by facts. However, facts of realisation are often omitted from declaratory statements.¹⁴⁹ For example, a policy that individuals are entitled to total equality omits the facts of inherent disparities in physical and mental attributes which prevent the full realisation of such a policy.¹⁵⁰ The opposite may also be true. There are no immutable facts in policy because facts can be and often are conditioned by existing interpretations, policies or beliefs.¹⁵¹ A salient Australian example is the paradoxical interpretation of Australia's strategic geography encapsulated by the phrase 'oceans divide, oceans unite.'¹⁵² Perceptions of isolation and distance¹⁵³ have been more instrumental in crafting Australian security policies than the objective fact of geographic location and disposition. This is clear in the interpretation of Australia's geography as the primary source of its inherent indefensibility for much of the twentieth century and as the primary source of its defensibility through strategic denial from the 1980s onward.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Jamie Whyte, *Crimes against Logic: Exposing the Bogus Arguments of Politicians, Priests, Journalists, and Other Serial Offenders* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 48-49.

¹⁵¹ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, 13.; see also Boas, *The History of Ideas*, 6.

¹⁵² Carolyn O'Brien, "Oceans Divide, Oceans Unite: The Concept of Regional Security in Australian Defence Planning," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 25, no. 2 (1979).

¹⁵³ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2001).; Michael Evans, "The Tyranny of Dissonance: Australia's Strategic Culture and Way of War 1901-2005," *Working Paper N° 306* (Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2005).

¹⁵⁴ Paul Dibb, "Is Strategic Geography Relevant to Australia's Current Defence Policy?," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (2006): 247-8, 54-5.

Applying a history of ideas methodology to a political idea necessitates interrogation of the role of conceptual change in political discourse. This in itself is an enduring challenge as various historical methods used to examine conceptual change stem from various meanings of the term concept.¹⁵⁵ Clearing differentiating between political concepts can be difficult because a single word often refers to multiple concepts.¹⁵⁶ For example, the word security is used to express two different and distinct concepts: a situation of relative threat in a particular situation and a perception of relative risk in a particular situation.¹⁵⁷ The empirical is objective and measurable; the perception is almost impossible to measure as it is subjective, influenced by a broad range of biases and can be the product of inaccurate or irrational thought.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, differentiation between the two concepts of security is essential to rigorous analysis. Understanding the definition of a term being used is subordinate to an understanding of the concept represented in the use of the term.¹⁵⁹ Differences among underlying ideas influence the application of political concepts because of the value that actors place on the system of interpretation they infer.¹⁶⁰

Conceptual transformations occur across time and can be identified through the shifting use of language in a particular political context. The transformation of political concepts

¹⁵⁵ Ola Hallden, "Conceptual Change and the Learning of History," *International Journal of Educational Research* 27, no. 3 (1997): 201. ; James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1984), 89-91.

¹⁵⁶ Felix Oppenheim, *Political Concepts: A Reconstruction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 3.

¹⁵⁷ Bruce Schneier, *Schneier on Security* (Indianapolis: Wiley Publishing, 2008).

¹⁵⁸ *Beyond Fear: Thinking Sensibly About Security in an Uncertain World*, 25-28.

¹⁵⁹ Quentin Skinner, "Language and Political Change," *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.; *ibid.*, 46-47.

¹⁶⁰ Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," 12-13.; William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Oxford: Martin Robertson and Company, 1983), 190-92.

is underpinned by changes in the shared social meaning attributed to specific concepts by a political community.¹⁶¹ As such, there can be no fixed meanings associated with the concepts, actors or events within a particular political context. Longevity of political concepts is entirely possible, but even enduring concepts are relative to their context.¹⁶² Such relativity means that political concept cannot be interpreted universally or objectively because social meaning is inextricably linked to a particular context in which it was created.¹⁶³ While an *idée fixe*, a fixed notion, along with the social institutions founded on it, may prolong or forestall conceptual shift, it can also add impetus to the formation of new ideas which have great persuasive and mobilising power.¹⁶⁴

Marx famously noted that people do not live in self-selected circumstances, but under conditions left to them from the past.¹⁶⁵ This highlights the long shadow cast by the institutionalised ideas of previous generations and how those ideas may influence the ways in which later ideas are formed. The ideas of the past are reference points from which the evolution of ideas and concepts can be evaluated and through which the social and natural world is interpreted.¹⁶⁶ Past ideas further influence conceptual change by framing beliefs that need to remain consistent with changes in ideas. Beliefs and values need to be consistent with one another at a fixed point in time, but also need to be stable

¹⁶¹ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).; Samuel H. Beer, "Political Science and History," *Essays in Theory and History: An Approach to the Social Sciences*, ed. Melvin Richter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

¹⁶² Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, 49.; Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9.

¹⁶³ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, 49.

¹⁶⁴ Neta C. Crawford, "How Previous Ideas Affect Later Ideas," *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Charles Tilly and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 266.

¹⁶⁵ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. Daniel De Lion (Rockville, MD: Serenity Publishers, 2009 [1852]), 9.

¹⁶⁶ Crawford, "How Previous Ideas Affect Later Ideas," 267-68.

across time in order to be considered rational.¹⁶⁷ The conceptual priority of coherent beliefs over time is contingent on an assumption that beliefs only change in response to new evidence or reasoning.¹⁶⁸ Key ideas which are central to political institutions within a society infer particular norms which are founded on beliefs that are not easily rejected.

Framing and policy narratives

The rise of central ideas, beliefs and attitudes to prominence within a particular social and political context is often linked to particular ways that individuals attribute meaning to issues and events. These *frames* are founded upon, and influenced by, socially constructed meanings that are imposed on subjective experiences of the world.¹⁶⁹ A policy frame is a 'normative-prescriptive story that sets out a problematic policy problem and a course of action to be taken to address the problematic situation.'¹⁷⁰ Policy frames, considered as distinct representations of knowledge, are key tools in shaping interpretations and constructing shared knowledge in political discourse. The act of framing is important to the extent that it is

...a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading, and acting.¹⁷¹

Framing can be used to cultivate or reinforce a collective worldview in relation to a specific issue or discourse. In this way frames can foster a group identity which is

¹⁶⁷ Donald Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *The Journal of Philosophy* 60, no. 23 (1963): 685.

¹⁶⁸ Bevir, "Mind and Method in the History of Ideas," 180-84.

¹⁶⁹ Frank Fischer, "Reconstructing Policy Analysis: A Postpositivist Perspective," *Policy Sciences* 25, no. 3 (1993): 333.

¹⁷⁰ Martin Rein and David Laws, "Controversy, Reframing and Reflection," *Theory, Policy and Society* (University of Leiden 1999).

¹⁷¹ Rein and Schon, "Reframing Policy Discourse," 146.

underwritten by a 'subjective sense of belonging.'¹⁷² Deeply embedded frames can be so familiar to a political community that they appear to be fundamental truths, but human agency is required to interpret political issues in the terms of a frame.¹⁷³

Frames are an important component of political discourse for three key reasons. First, frames give different answers to the same questions. This is primarily a product of the divergent worldviews, value and assumptions that are associated with frames. Second, each frame attributes different significance to particular types of political issues. This is because frames uniquely define political challenges, value judgments and modes of interpretation.¹⁷⁴ Third, by propagating acceptance of particular values, beliefs and assumptions about the world, frames empower agents within a certain discourse. In this sense, discourse theory moves away from the idea that actors within institutions influence or shape interests and towards the view of discourse as a medium of power in its own right.¹⁷⁵

Part of political and conceptual change is policy argument, which occurs largely at the edges of conflicting frames. The construction and reconstruction of policy problems through different and evolving frames is necessary to ensure that policy processes and

¹⁷² Yves Surel, "The Role of Cognitive and Normative Frames in Policy-Making," *Journal of European Public Policy* 7, no. 4 (2000): 500.

¹⁷³ Rein and Schon, "Reframing Policy Discourse," 158.

¹⁷⁴ John S. Dryzek, "Policy Analysis and Planning: From Science and Argument," *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 222.

¹⁷⁵ Foucault termed this the *discursive régime*, which refers to effects of power that are 'peculiar to the play of statements.' This accounts for the capacity of powerful individuals to set political agendas through framing processes.; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon (New York and Toronto: Random House, 1980), 113.; Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, 44.

outcomes remain relevant to changing circumstances and to deal with varying degrees of uncertainty which are associated with policy challenges.¹⁷⁶ One method for imposing order on uncertain policy situation is through discourse.¹⁷⁷ Frames are a strong ordering device, particularly when policy actors have the capacity to define policy problems and convince others to accept their problem definitions.¹⁷⁸ Frames serve as a basis for both discussion and action.¹⁷⁹ The power of narrative is that it is at once objective and subjective. A collective narrative, presented as objective, becomes subjective to the individual through their experience and interpretation of it. The narrative is simultaneously unique to the individual and common to the social unit which created or endorsed it.¹⁸⁰

Narratives can be framed in two ways which roughly align with the types of discourse they employ. The first is coordinative discourse which allows policy actors to manage procedural policy and to organise some aspects of substantive policy processes. The second is communicative discourse which allows communication of policy ideas between institutions and between the government and external parties, including the public.¹⁸¹ This is more closely related to substantive policy and attracts most interest on policy narratives

¹⁷⁶ "Deliberative Policy Analysis as Practical Reason: Integrating Empirical and Normative Arguments," *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, ed. Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller, and Mara S. Sidney (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2006), 225-26.

¹⁷⁷ Hajer and Laws, "Ordering through Discourse," 251-52.

¹⁷⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 8-9.

¹⁷⁹ David Laws and Martin Rein, "Reframing Practice," *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, ed. Maarten A. Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 173.

¹⁸⁰ David E. Apter, "Duchamp's Urinal: Who Says What's Rational When Things Get Tough?," *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Charles Tilly and Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 783.

¹⁸¹ Vivien A. Schmidt, "Discursive Institutionalism: Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings," *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice*, ed. Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 305.

because it is where debates about policy issues and instruments are usually played out. Policy narratives are used to legitimise both procedural and substantive policies, but attract the most attention when used to communicate political accounts of events, policy action or changes to policy instruments. These political accounts are central to politics and policy because they outline actors' responses to contested issues and emerging circumstances.¹⁸² Therefore, policy narratives require proposing solutions within domain-specific and institutional constraints, but can also involve stretching the boundaries of what is considered to be possible in relation to a policy issue.¹⁸³

However, narratives are rarely overtly innovative. One reason for this is that political language tends to be banal, predictable and reassuring.¹⁸⁴ It standardises problem definitions and perceptions of policy issues, introduces familiar policy instruments to the policy process and provides reassurance during crises.¹⁸⁵ This is central to the act of using political speech to impose order on contested political issues. Another reason is that policy change tends to be incremental and slow to change.¹⁸⁶ Narratives are constructed with a specific political purpose in mind, but are construed in reference to events. Roth offers the caveat that

A narrative is not determined by sequencing some prior set of events. Rather, what comes first is some more general view of what counts; the particular events—the elements relevant to one's narrative—emerge from this.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² W. Lance Bennett, "The Paradox of Public Discourse: A Framework for the Analysis of Political Accounts," *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 3 (1980): 792.

¹⁸³ Giandomenico Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 35.

¹⁸⁴ Murray Jacob Edelman, *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 98.

¹⁸⁵ Bennett, "The Paradox of Public Discourse: A Framework for the Analysis of Political Accounts," 797.

¹⁸⁶ Morone, "Seven Laws of Policy Analysis," 818.

¹⁸⁷ Paul A. Roth, "How Narratives Explain," *Social Research* 56(1989): 445.

This indicates that narratives are used to select and order events and information for the purpose of ascribing meaning to, rather than to understanding, them. This is consistent with the overarching purpose of a policy narrative which is intended to legitimise preferred courses of action and engender support or tacit acceptance of a particular policy agenda.¹⁸⁸

Narratives often appeal to and rationalise policy status quos to societies because familiar cognitive structures are readily accepted by both those who benefit from existing social institutions and those who do not necessarily benefit from the status quo, but use it as a reference point for their identity or self-esteem, or who have been socialised to accept it as essentially benevolent.¹⁸⁹ As a result, narratives rely on familiar terms and non-contentious proposals, which explains the pervasive ambiguity and contradiction of concepts employed in mainstream policy frames.¹⁹⁰ This approach allows actors to tailor a general narrative to affect specific ideas in a policy domain. Table 1¹⁹¹ shows the intersection of narrative influence on causal and normative idea types on different levels of policy debate.

¹⁸⁸ Murray Jacob Edelman, "Political Language and Political Reality," *PS* 18, no. 1 (1985): 11.; see also Frank Fischer, "Policy Analysis in Critical Perspective: The Epistemics of Discursive Practices," *Critical Policy Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): 100-02.

¹⁸⁹ Murray Edelman, "Language, Myths and Rhetoric," *Society* 35, no. 2 (1998): 132-33.

¹⁹⁰ Edelman, "Political Language and Political Reality," 11.

¹⁹¹ Adapted from Campbell, "Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy," 385. and Michael Howlett and M Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 233.

Table 1: Narrative influence on policy ideas and debate

| | | Level of policy debate affected | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | Concepts and theories (foreground of policy debate) | Underlying assumptions (background of policy debate) |
| Level of ideas affected | Causal ideas (cognitive) | <p><i>Program ideas</i></p> <p>Ideas as prescriptions that aid policy-makers in selecting a clear course of action from available alternatives within a policy paradigm</p> | <p><i>Policy paradigms</i></p> <p>A set of ideas in a policy subsystem that form a doctrine or school of thought that shapes the goals that policy-makers set and pursue</p> |
| | Value ideas (normative) | <p><i>Symbolic frames</i></p> <p>Ideas, symbols and concepts used in political discourse to legitimise policy solutions to the public and to exogenous actors</p> | <p><i>Public sentiments</i></p> <p>Normative background assumptions that constrain policy by limiting the range of alternatives which are perceived by policy-makers as acceptable to the public</p> |

Narratives are commonly used to explain policy issues and are often highly resistant to change, even when challenged with contradictory evidence, because they have value to policy actors. This value arises from their utility in creating stability in uncertain, volatile or ambiguous policy situations.¹⁹² The starting point for analysing narratives is identifying policy stories which dominate a political issue and *counterstories* which challenge the dominant view.¹⁹³ The end point is to examine metanarratives which differentiate between dominant narratives and other secondary or contrary narratives

¹⁹² Emery Roe, *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 2.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

across a debate in the same policy domain. This essentially creates an overriding narrative which analyses the interaction of policy narratives.¹⁹⁴ The relevance of narratives to policymaking is apparent in the centrality of familiar stories in a metanarrative. Policy actors use storytelling as an interpretive and explanatory device to make claims, propound arguments and contest contrary ideas.¹⁹⁵ By examining how policy actors narrativise their actions, objectives and rationales, an observer can identify what was important to that actor and what was marginal.¹⁹⁶ This is a central feature of political communication and enables policy actors to broadcast deliberate signals to their audiences.

Inquiry and causation in narrative analysis

Analysis of the transformation of political concepts and political discourses necessitates particular methodological aims. Three are relevant to the study of relative advantage in Australian strategic policy discourse. The first aim is to determine which concept or concepts in particular had their meanings altered during the period of study. The second aim is to explain how these changes occurred over time. The final aim is to identify the influence of the conceptual change on the discourse.¹⁹⁷ This study uses narrative analysis to show how politically and socially meaningful actions, objects and practices came to be socially constructed and what influence they have on socio-political institutions and interactions.¹⁹⁸ Roe specifies two objectives for conducting narrative policy analysis:

¹⁹⁴ van Eeten, "Narrative Policy Analysis," 255-56.

¹⁹⁵ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, 167-68.

¹⁹⁶ Hendrik Wagenaar, "Bureaucratic Order and Personal Order: Negotiating Administrative Work through Narrative," *European Consortium for Political Research* (Grenoble, France 2001).

¹⁹⁷ Terence Ball, *Transforming Political Discourse: Political Theory and Critical Conceptual History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 14.

¹⁹⁸ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, 73.; Martin Rein, *Social Science and Public Policy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

...first, to underscore the important and necessary role that policy narratives have in public policy everywhere and, second, to establish the usefulness of narrative analytical approaches that allow one to reformulate increasingly intractable policy problems in ways that make them more amenable to the conventional policy analytical approaches of micro-economics, statistics, organizational theory, law, and public management practice.¹⁹⁹

The central objective of narrative policy analysis is to identify how power and politics are articulated and realised in a particular policy domain and how actors employ narratives in controversial and contested debates which revolve ‘around issues of extreme uncertainty, complexity, and polarization.’²⁰⁰ Narrative analysis enables for a close inspection of the role of instrumental policy narratives in both ‘shaping *and* determining major policymaking controversies.’²⁰¹ The purpose of the discourse analytical method is to explain ‘how the discourses, which structure the activities of social agents, are produced, how they function, and how they are changed.’²⁰² This approach to explanation implies the possibility of explaining policy action and inaction and conceptual changes within a particular discourse.²⁰³ However, it also invites the causation problem: there is no satisfactory explanation of the cause and effect of ideas. At best, intellectual historians are able to trace the emergence, dissemination and evolution of ideas in detail.²⁰⁴ Yet, ideas matter in policy analysis. The role of ideation and framing in policy formation and

¹⁹⁹ Roe, *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice*, 1.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 14. (emphasis in original)

²⁰² David Howarth, "Discourse Theory," *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 115.; Christopher Hart, "Analyzing Political Discourse," *Critical Discourse Studies* 2, no. 2 (2005): 189.; Katharina T. Paul, "Discourse Analysis: An Exploration of Methodological Issues and a Call for Methodological Courage in the Field of Policy Analysis," *Critical Policy Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009): 242.

²⁰³ "Discourse Analysis: An Exploration of Methodological Issues and a Call for Methodological Courage in the Field of Policy Analysis," 242.; Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2006), 28.; Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 120.

²⁰⁴ George Boas, "Some Problems of Intellectual History," *Studies in Intellectual History*, ed. George Boas (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1953), 20.

implementation is widely accepted in the social sciences, but sometimes contested in naturalism-oriented political science.²⁰⁵

Establishing and validating causation in the social sciences is a difficult task. In the social world causes are often multiple, complex and indeterminate. Consequently, ideation is generally only one factor of many likely partial causes that influence conceptualisation of ideas that frame policy formation.²⁰⁶ Measuring causal connections between ideas and ideation on one hand and political concepts and policy on the other is a difficult proposition because each variable is differentiated and reducible to distinct sub-variables.²⁰⁷ This suggests that causation in the strict logic of analytical philosophy²⁰⁸ is exceptionally difficult to substantiate in social and political science. Functional relation provides a more flexible measure of causation in social behaviour than explicit, or mechanical, causation.²⁰⁹ Relative causation, measured as the intensity of association of concepts, entails constructing a 'pattern of knowledge' which substantiates the strength of partial causal relationships between variables.²¹⁰ This study uses a large qualitative data set to examine the functional relation of coded concepts to demonstrate the evolution of

²⁰⁵ Donald Davidson, "Causal Relations," *The Journal of Philosophy* 64, no. 21 (1967).; Mark Bevir and Asaf Kedar, "Concept Formation in Political Science: An Anti-Naturalist Critique of Qualitative Methodology," *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 3 (2008).

²⁰⁶ Paul Humphreys, "Causation in the Social Sciences: An Overview," *Synthese* 68, no. 1 (1986): 2.

²⁰⁷ Albert S. Yee, "The Causal Effects of Ideas on Policies," *International Organization* 50, no. 1 (1996): 70.

²⁰⁸ John Dewey, *Logic - the Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc, 1938).

²⁰⁹ Kenneth R. Howe, "Mixed Methods, Triangulation, and Causal Explanation," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 6, no. 2 (2012): 90.; Karl Pearson, *The Grammar of Science* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911), 160. Robert H. Strotz and H.O.A. Wold, "Recursive Vs. Nonrecursive Systems: An Attempt at Synthesis," *Econometrica* 28, no. 2 (1960): 422.; Herbert A. Simon, "Spurious Correlation: A Causal Interpretation," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 49, no. 267 (1954).; Frederica Russo, *Causality and Causal Modelling in the Social Sciences: Measuring Variations* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), 8.; Davidson, "Causal Relations," 692.; and J. L. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1965).; Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," 686-89.

²¹⁰ Russo, *Causality and Causal Modelling in the Social Sciences: Measuring Variations*, 8.

relative advantage while avoiding more difficult causal questions which would be needed to explain precisely why changes occurred as they did.

1.3 Research data

This section explains the data analysed in the study. It begins by examining the role of strategic communication in shaping public policy discourse. It then explains the rationale for specifying the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence as representative policy actors for the data set. Finally, it provides an explanation of the data collection process and a rationale for the preliminary analysis and data reduction techniques used to validate the data set used in the primary analysis.

Strategic communication

Deliberate communication is a central function of political leadership and is central to policy-making processes and to policy action. Policy actors use communication to influence the views of others, to create and respond to policy arguments, to issue statements of intent and to deliver tailored signals to specific audiences.²¹¹ Turnbull takes functional and structural views of government communication,²¹² which differentiates between communication aimed at fulfilling policy aims and communication aimed at structuring debates and framing issues. Chilton simplifies this dichotomy by focusing on

²¹¹ Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

²¹² Noel Turnbull, "Perspectives on Government Pr," *Government Communication in Australia*, ed. Sally Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 119-21.

the strategic use of language.²¹³ Strategic communication has two elements: validity claims and strategies. Chilton uses Habermas' four main validity claims include appeals to understandability, truth, telling the truth and righteousness. These claims assert that a speaker makes sense, is speaking an objective truth, is sincere in their subjective belief of that truth and has the normative authority to make a valid argument. Strategies are used to dispute validity claims and include coercion, legitimisation and delegitimation, and representation and misrepresentation.

A key aim of strategic communication is to establish the legitimacy of their policy narrative. Theo van Leeuwen proposes four categories of legitimation which can be used to examine political discourse. The first is authorisation, which is achieved through reference to a tradition, custom, institution or law which possesses a recognised authority in a policy domain. The second is moral evaluation, which is legitimacy derived from reference to value systems. The third is rationalisation, which appeals to social norms and goals which are accepted to be valid in a political system. The fourth is legitimacy achieved through rewarding preferred actions and punishing others.²¹⁴ This final form is similar in content to Foucault's *domination* in that powerful actors are able to moralise through coercion.²¹⁵ Similarly, representation of political information allows policy actors to insert frames and normative judgments into ostensibly factual statements.²¹⁶ These strategies enable an actor to use power to compel certain behaviour, to appeal to or

²¹³ Paul A. Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 42.

²¹⁴ van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Analysis*, 105-06.

²¹⁵ David Howarth, "Power, Discourse, and Policy: Articulating a Hegemony Approach to Critical Policy Studies," *Critical Policy Studies* 3, no. 3-4 (2010): 316.

²¹⁶ John Wilson, "Political Discourse," *Handbook of Communication in the Public Sphere*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Veronika Koller (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 399-401.

declare the legitimacy or illegitimacy of an issue or event and to exert control over the availability of information used to frame policy issues.²¹⁷

Often the kinds of messages embedded in strategic communication are complex and interwoven with a policy narrative. For example, a political leader could use a budgetary announcement to several political purposes simultaneously. The same call for increased defence spending could serve to: criticise a previous government, garner support from a sympathetic constituency, reassure the public, divert attention from another politically sensitive issue, or comfort or caution foreign governments.²¹⁸ In addition, political speech often uses conceptual metaphors to influence the way that specific ideas and concepts are received by audiences. For example, political actors use concept mapping to use properties from one domain to explain another. The use of metaphors maps one conceptual schema, the schema being elements of a policy paradigm in this instance, onto another. The purpose is to create a situation in which the intended audience understands and experiences one argument or account in terms of another experience or policy frame.²¹⁹ This process influences common understandings of policy issues and can help create strong narratives even in the face of new information, changing circumstances or contradictory evidence.

²¹⁷ Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*, 42-47.

²¹⁸ James Farr, "Understanding Conceptual Change Politically," *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27.

²¹⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (London: Chicago University Press, 2003), 5.; Dvora Yanow, "Interpretation in Policy Analysis: On Methods and Practice," *Critical Policy Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): 115-17.

However, the expectations established in political communication can also constrain political action and discourse often has unintended consequences. This can create *rhetorical entrapment* for policy actors when their previous statements serve to either compel them to take certain actions and not others or undermine their credibility.²²⁰ Common instances are mandatory sentencing and red line issues which contain conditional warnings. A further obstacle is what Michaels terms a discourse trap. This occurs when an entire policy discourse creates rhetorical entrapment or steers a policy process in an unintended direction.²²¹ Cimbala uses the US security guarantee to Taiwan as an example of policy 'self-entrapment.'²²² He notes that American policymakers 'have held this contradictory and anachronistic view for so long, we cannot reconsider that commitment even if conditions have changed without appearing to be weak.'²²³ Discourse traps serve as a demonstration of the power of political communication. They may be subtler and wider in scope than rhetorical entrapment, but discourse traps represent the same fundamental process of communication influencing deliberate policy decision-making. As a consequence, discourse can be discounted as purely rhetorical in the absence of clear commitments to states principles.

Although rhetoric can be a powerful tool, statements of intent can lack credibility if they appear to be over-reaching in scope or beyond a policy actor's ability to action.

²²⁰ For examples of this phenomenon, see Schimmelfennig, "The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union."; Jean-Frederic Morin and E. Richard Gold, "Consensus-Seeking, Distrust and Rhetorical Entrapment: The Wto Decision on Access to Medicines," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 4 (2010).; Roger C. Aden, "Entrapment and Escape: Inventional Metaphors in Ronald Reagan's Economic Rhetoric," *Southern Communication Journal* 54, no. 4 (1989).

²²¹ Michaels, *The Discourse Trap and the Us Military.*; Adam Hodges, *The 'War on Terror' Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²²² Cimbala, *Military Persuasion in War and Policy*, 242.

²²³ *Ibid.*

Consequently, strategic communication often involves demonstration of commitment to establish credibility.²²⁴ The bigger the claim, the greater the show of commitment might need to be.²²⁵ This distinguishes ‘cheap talk’ which lacks credibility from credible signals.²²⁶ Credible or ‘costly’ signals can require generating ‘audience costs’ for the sender.²²⁷ This involves making statements and commitments which deliberately entrap actors and will impose costs on them if not upheld.²²⁸ Another means of establishing credibility through signalling is by demonstrating the stated capacity to undertake particular policy responses. An extreme example would be nuclear weapons tests, but a more common example would be demonstrating military capabilities to external audiences. Many countries try to actively influence external perceptions of the professionalism and abilities of their military forces. Australia sees this as a key component of its strategic signalling, stating that

A nation's 'strategic posture' is the expression of how it seeks to secure its strategic interests, including by reducing the risk of conflict in the first place, and how it would potentially use force in relation to its strategic interests.²²⁹

This combines the capacity to undertake specific tasks and the political commitment to do so in certain circumstances. In addition, the ADF carefully considers its appearance as a

²²⁴ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.; Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²²⁵ Valentin Krustev, "Strategic Demands, Credible Threats and Economic Coercion Outcomes," *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2010).; Michael G. Findley and Joseph K. Young, "Terrorism, Democracy, and Credible Commitments," *ibid.* 55, no. 2 (2011).

²²⁶ Press, *Calculating Credibility*, 8, 15.; James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 1 (1997): 69.

²²⁷ "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," 69.; Joe Clare, "Domestic Audiences and Strategic Interests," *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 03 (2007).

²²⁸ See Vesna Danilovic, "The Sources of Threat Credibility in Extended Deterrence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 3 (2001); James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994).

²²⁹ Department of Defence, "Force 2030," para. 6.1.

formidable opponent to other militaries in order to maximise its credibility as a fighting force.

The ADF uses the term 'defence posture' to describe itself, in terms of size, disposition, capabilities and activities, and also Australia's political disposition regarding the use of armed force.²³⁰ Equal to the physical determination of military capability is the signalling of Australia's intentions for the use of military capability. Therefore, Australia's defence posture needs to be consistent with strategic guidance set by government.²³¹ Accordingly, the ADF aims to master the profession of arms and also to be perceived internationally as a formidable and responsible fighting force. In order to maximise credibility as a fighting force, the ADF focuses its training and force structure on high-intensity conventional warfare.²³² Australia will promote international recognition of the ADF's proficiency in military operations in order to maximise its credibility as a deterrent force. Defence will also respond to military threats to Australia.²³³ Defence and ADF policies and publications further intend to signal to the international community that the ADF is: able to defend Australia from attack without assistance from another country's combat forces; able to control or deny Australia's air and maritime approaches; primarily defensive in nature; and able to contribute to international coalitions and similar contingencies as they arise.²³⁴ The emphasis placed on signalling indicates that communication is deliberately considered in the formulation of Australia's strategic policy.

²³⁰ Australian Defence Force, "Australia's Approach to Warfare," 19-20.

²³¹ "Foundations of Australian Military Doctrine," *Australian Defence Doctrine Publication-D* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2005), para. 2.30.

²³² "Australia's Approach to Warfare," 20.

²³³ "Addp-D," para. 2.33.

²³⁴ "Australia's Approach to Warfare," 20.

Actors in Australian policy rhetoric

Australia is a Westminster styled parliamentary democracy in which the Executive has a large amount of influence and discretion regarding foreign policy and diplomatic affairs.²³⁵ The Prime Minister is the central voice of foreign and defence policy guidance to government departments, the Australian public and international audiences. Through their position as the central exponent of Australian foreign and security policy, the Prime Minister plays a more significant role than any other individual politician in articulating the Commonwealth government's policy objectives and priorities.²³⁶ The Prime Minister has historically played a large role in defence policy debates by framing security issues and delivering statements about defence issues to the public. The Prime Minister is the most authoritative source of strategic level signalling of Australia's political intentions because they are recognised both domestically and internationally as the highest political authority in the Commonwealth Government.²³⁷ This means that their statements have the most validity to various audiences and can be taken as important policy guidance to government departments.

The second most prominent political voice in defence policy is the Minister for Defence, who is responsible for the Department of Defence, ADF²³⁸ and much of the Defence Organisation apart from Defence Materials. The Minister for Defence is the central voice

²³⁵ Alan J. Ward, *Parliamentary Government in Australia* (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2014), 129-35.

²³⁶ Paul Strangio, "Prime Ministerial Government in Australia," *Contemporary Politics in Australia: Theories, Practices and Issues*, ed. Rodney Smith, Ariadne Vromen, and Ian Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 238-40.

²³⁷ Patrick Weller and Jenny Flemming, "The Commonwealth," *Australian Politics and Government: The Commonwealth, the States and the Territories*, ed. Jeremy Moon and Campbell Sharman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18, 34-39.

²³⁸ Defence Act 1903 (Cth) Sect 8-9

of defence policy decisions and regularly announces changes or additions to Australian defence priorities, capabilities and policies. The Minister for Defence sets the agenda for the Defence Organisation by framing policy issues and assigning priority values to particular objectives and tasks. They also reflect core institutional ideas embedded in the bureaucracy of the Defence Organisation because the way that briefs and advice generated within the institution are framed and filtered.²³⁹ The Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence collectively account for the vast majority of policy statements regarding capabilities, technology and relative advantage. They are also the most respected authorities due to their role in overseeing the governance of defence policy.²⁴⁰ For these reasons, the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence have been selected as the focus of the political discourse regarding capability advantage.

It is important to note that other political actors have also participated in the political discourse of capability advantage. Most notably, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Defence Material, leaders of the opposition, and Shadow Ministers for Defence, Foreign Affairs and Defence Material. However, their statements have not been included in the study for three interrelated reasons. First, other ministers have made relatively few statements regarding capability advantage. The Minister for Defence Material often discusses military capability, force structure decisions and procurement projects. However, due to the scope of the portfolio, they frequently discuss capability and procurement issues from a technical or project management perspective rather than a

²³⁹ Maria Maley, "Politicisation of the Executive," *Contemporary Politics in Australia: Theories, Practices and Issues*, ed. Rodney Smith, Ariadne Vromen, and Ian Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 240-47.

²⁴⁰ John Ravenhill, "Foreign Affairs and Trade," *Developments in Australian Politics*, ed. Judith Brett, James Gillespie, and Murray Goot (Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia, 1994), 404-07.

defence policy perspective. Second, other politicians in government have made substantially fewer statements on capability advantage than the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. This presents two challenges for inclusion: consistency of data and relevance of statements to decision-making and agenda-setting. Third, shadow ministers and to a lesser degree ministers from other portfolios lack comparable domain-specific authority in government. They engage in debate in ways that influence public and external opinions about Australia, but they do not have the ability to make and enforce decisions in the government of the time. Shadow ministers may reflect political ideas which later come to prominence, but they also have domestic political incentives to criticise government policies which they may not intend to change if they come to power.

Data collection and reduction

The data set used includes all principal policy documents released in the public domain and selected public speeches and statements made by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, as the two most authoritative sources of credible signalling of Australia's strategic policy, and Parliamentary statements and responses by the Minister for Defence regarding military capability and relative advantage.²⁴¹ Selection criteria for inclusion in the data set was reference to any issue relevant to: existing or planned military capability at the strategic level, capability development and force structure planning, the role of technology in force posture or employment decisions, the use of military technology to provide security to the Australian public, the adoption of military capabilities or

²⁴¹ Only primary sources which originated during the period of study are included in the data. This preserves the consistency of data used, ensures relevance to establishing historical events in their original context and prevents issues of hindsight, bias and self-interest from affecting recollections of events in reflective research methods such as interviews, questionnaires and surveys.

technologies that influenced concepts of operations or military doctrine, Australia's strategic interests or objectives, the scope of Australia's military interests and the signalling of Australia's intentions vis-à-vis any of the above. Not included in the data set were items which related to: specific operational-level policies,²⁴² policy implementation and specific material procurement projects. The scope of the discourse was delineated by the relevance of modes of communication in influencing common conceptions of political concepts.²⁴³ Thus, strategic-level communication is more likely to influence strategic-level political concepts than discourse reflecting policy machinations.

The data set includes 2,189 documents. These were drawn from a larger body using the data reduction techniques explained in the *data collection* section of this chapter. The data set is comprised of all key policy documents which were released to the public at the time of publication or, in the case of the 1989 *Strategic Planning* document, soon after initial publication. Table 2 lists the sources included as policy documents in the data set. The data set includes statements made by Prime Ministers during the period 1968-2009 regarding capability advantage. The kind of statements used in the data set include speeches, prepared policy statements, transcripts of television or radio interviews and transcripts of responses to media questions during public announcements and doorstep interviews. Table 3 lists all Prime Ministers during the period of study in chronological order and the number of sources attributable to each one.

²⁴² The term operational is used here in the public policy sense, rather than the military sense. The military equivalent would be the tactical level of analysis. See Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley, *Making Australian Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 33-35.

²⁴³ Ball, *Transforming Political Discourse*.

Finally, the data set includes statements made by all Ministers for Defence throughout the period 1968-2009, concluding with Joel Fitzgibbon's departure in late 2009. The period in late 2009 where John Faulkner became Minister for Defence is not included in the data set as it did not produce sufficient data to be significant. The kind of statements used in the data set include speeches, prepared policy statements, statements made to Parliament, transcripts of television or radio interviews, Hansard extracts and transcripts of responses to media questions during public announcements. Table 4 lists all Ministers for Defence during the period of study in chronological order and the number of sources attributable to each one.

The data set is organised into four periods to reflect major changes in the defence policy discourse through the period 1968-2009. The first period, 1968-1978, includes the earliest clear discussion of self-reliance issues with reference to technology through the development and articulation of the technological level concept in the 1970s. It begins with an Australia still reeling from the withdrawal of Britain from Southeast Asia, through the latter half of the Vietnam War and into the vigorous defence debates of the mid-1970s that culminated in the first white paper. The second period, 1979-1986, begins with the year of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This was a major international event with significant influence on the Australian defence discourse. It brought sharp focus to some aspects of the defence policy debate and was a catalyst for a change in policy actors' approaches to discussing defence issues. This continued into the early 1980s, with renewed discussion of Australia's force projection needs with the impending retirement of HMAS Melbourne and infighting and stymied progress on long term force structure planning priorities. The third period, 1987-1996, follows the debate from the watershed

1987 defence white paper through the early 1990s and up to the Howard government's strategic policy paper of 1997. The late 1980s and early 1990s was a tumultuous period for Australia's defence policy, with the reimagining of defence self-reliance, the end of the Cold War, several crises in North Asia and a change of government all in the space of a decade. The final period, 1997-2009, begins with the Howard government's document *Australia's Strategic Policy* and its conceptual successor, the 2000 white paper. It also includes Australia's post-9/11 policy responses, including three defence policy updates, up to the Rudd government's 2009 defence white paper *Force 2030*, which returned much of Australia's defence policy debate to key principles outline in the 2000 white paper.

Table 2: Key policy documents in data set

| Period | Documents |
|-----------|--|
| 1968-1979 | <p>Defence Committee (1968). <u>Strategic basis of Australian defence policy</u>. Canberra, Department of Defence.</p> <p>Defence Committee (1971). <u>Strategic basis of Australian defence policy</u>. Canberra, Department of Defence.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1972). <u>Australian Defence Review</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Defence Committee (1973). <u>Strategic basis of Australian defence policy</u>. Canberra, Department of Defence.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1975). <u>Australian defence: major decisions since December 1972</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Defence Committee (1975). <u>Strategic basis of Australian defence policy</u>. Canberra, Department of Defence.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1976). <u>Australian defence</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Defence Committee (1976). <u>Strategic basis of Australian defence policy</u>. Canberra, Department of Defence.</p> |
| 1980-1986 | <p>Dibb, P. (1986). Review of Australia's defence capabilities. <u>Report for the Minister for Defence</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> |
| 1987-1996 | <p>Department of Defence (1987). <u>The defence of Australia</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1989). <u>Australia's strategic planning in the 1990s</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1991). <u>Force structure review</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service. DPUBS 35/91.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1993). <u>Strategic review</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1994). <u>Defending Australia</u>. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> |
| 1997-2009 | <p>Department of Defence (1997). <u>Australia's strategic policy</u>. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.</p> |

| |
|---|
| <p>Department of Defence (2000). <u>Defence 2000: our future defence force</u>. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2003). <u>Australia's national security</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2005). <u>Australia's national security: Defence update 2005</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2006). <u>Explaining NCW: Network Centric Warfare</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2007). <u>Defence ISR roadmap 2007-2017</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2007). <u>Australia's national security</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2008). <u>Looking over the horizon: Australians consider Defence</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2009). <u>NCW roadmap 2009</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2009). <u>Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: Force 2030</u>. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> |
|---|

Total = 24

Table 3: Prime Ministerial speeches in data set

| Prime Minister | Date | Number of documents |
|----------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Gorton | 1968-1971 | 144 |
| McMahon | 1971-1972 | 86 |
| Whitlam | 1972-1975 | 146 |
| Fraser | 1975-1983 | 257 |
| Hawke | 1983-1991 | 327 |
| Keating | 1991-1996 | 185 |
| Howard | 1996-2007 | 365 |
| Rudd | 2007-2009 | 273 |

Total = 1,783

Table 4: Minister for Defence speeches in data set

| Minister for Defence | Date | Number of documents |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Fairhall | 1968-1969 | 8 |
| Fraser | 1969-1971 | 21 |
| Gorton | 1971-1971 | 1 |
| Fairbairn | 1971-1972 | 5 |
| Barnard | 1972-1975 | 5 |
| Morrison | 1975-1975 | 6 |
| Killen | 1975-1982 | 29 |
| Sinclair | 1982-1983 | 32 |
| Scholes | 1983-1984 | 7 |
| Beazley | 1984-1990 | 34 |
| Ray | 1990-1996 | 47 |
| McLachlan | 1996-1998 | 5 |
| Moore | 1998-2001 | 13 |
| Reith | 2001-2001 | 21 |
| Hill | 2001-2006 | 108 |
| Nelson | 2006-2007 | 26 |
| Fitzgibbon | 2007-2009 | 14 |

Total = 382

The data collection process involved identifying all available records of policy documents and transcripts or recordings of relevant statements made by Prime Ministers and Ministers for Defence. The initial data set comprised a total of 3,418 documents. These were reviewed for relevance and the data set was manually reviewed and reduced to 2,995 documents based on relevance of content. Documents were then entered into QDA software and thematically free coded.²⁴⁴ Free coding was conducted in line with Grounded Theory open coding approaches which identify concepts and then organise them into categories.²⁴⁵ This allowed data reduction techniques, such as simplification and structural coding,²⁴⁶ to reduce the data set down to 2189 documents.

A Key Word In Context (KWIC) analysis²⁴⁷ was run on the free coded data set to validate and refine the initial coding schema developed. A simple Content Analysis (CA) was also used to validate the key concepts used in the coding scheme. These analyses identified some necessary conceptual changes to the initial coding scheme and led to some reorganisation of the QDA model subsequently used for data analysis. The declassified *strategic basis* from the 1960s and 1970s documents were then removed from the final data set because they were not publicly released policy statements at the time they were in use and were not comparable to publicly released policy guidance documents. The

²⁴⁴ Greg Guest, Kathleen M. MacQueen, and Emily E. Namey, *Applied Thematic Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011).

²⁴⁵ H. Russell Bernard and Gerry W. Ryan, *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches* (London: Sage, 2010), 271-73.; Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 541-45.

²⁴⁶ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994), 10-12.; Emily E. Namey et al., "Data Reduction Techniques for Large Qualitative Data Sets," *Handbook for Team-Based Qualitative Research*, ed. Greg Guest and Kathleen M. MacQueen (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 140-44.

²⁴⁷ Bernard and Ryan, *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, 192-93.

unavailability of current classified policy planning documents within defence meant that the strategic basis papers would also create an inconsistent data set.

The complete data set was then coded from scratch using the new coding scheme. The number of documents from the data set which contained directly useful information was 730. These documents were coded and used in the data analysis because they contain information identified as directly relevant to the study. Documents which were not coded were retained in the data set because they give context to the coded documents in two ways. First, they allow a simple metric of sources which discuss defence policy issues compared to the proportion of sources which directly discuss capability advantage. This is a useful comparison because it demonstrates the prevalence of capability in broader defence policy discourse. Second, they offer context to specific decisions and issues which arose during the period of study. This means that at any point where a significant policy is announced, there are documents which show what other issues were prominent in the defence discourse at the same time. This is useful because it shows the relative weight of capability advantage issues compared to other important policy priorities at the same time.

It is also important to note that the starting data set of 2,189 documents is significant because it shows the number of times relevant defence issues were raised. This is a useful benchmark when examining the final data set of 730 documents as it gives a crude indication of the proportion of defence statements which actively discussed relative advantage and the related concepts or issues identified in the coding scheme. The frequency of usage is presented as numerical data in *Appendix B: Data Sheets*, but the

numerical data are not considered as evidence in their own right. Although the data set is empirical and often uses numbers to demonstrate frequency of coding in the data, the analysis is qualitative and not quantitative in nature. As such, numerical data are used only for illustration and not for quantitative analysis of statistically significant trends.

Table 5: Key policy documents (coded)

| Period | Documents |
|------------------|--|
| 1968-1979 | <p>Department of Defence (1972). Australian Defence Review. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1976). Australian defence. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> |
| 1987-1996 | <p>Department of Defence (1987). The defence of Australia. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1989). Australia's strategic planning in the 1990s. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1991). Force structure review. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service. DPUBS 35/91.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1993). Strategic review. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (1994). Defending Australia. Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service.</p> |
| 1997-2009 | <p>Department of Defence (1997). Australia's strategic policy. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2000). Defence 2000: our future defence force. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2003). Australia's national security. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2005). Australia's national security: Defence update 2005. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2007). Australia's national security. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> <p>Department of Defence (2009). Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: Force 2030. Canberra, Defence Publishing Service.</p> |

Total = 13

Table 6: Prime Ministerial speeches (coded)

| Prime Minister | Date | Number of documents |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Gorton | 1968-1971 | 39 |
| McMahon | 1971-1972 | 25 |
| Whitlam | 1972-1975 | 33 |
| Fraser | 1975-1983 | 59 |
| Hawke | 1983-1991 | 70 |
| Keating | 1991-1996 | 49 |
| Howard | 1996-2007 | 103 |
| Rudd | 2007-2009 | 38 |

Total = 416

Table 7: Minister for Defence speeches (coded)

| Minister for Defence | Date | Number of documents |
|-----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Fairhall | 1968-1969 | 6 |
| Fraser | 1969-1971 | 18 |
| Gorton | 1971-1971 | 1 |
| Fairbairn | 1971-1972 | 3 |
| Barnard | 1972-1975 | 5 |
| Morrison | 1975-1975 | 3 |
| Killen | 1975-1982 | 23 |
| Sinclair | 1982-1983 | 24 |
| Scholes | 1983-1984 | 6 |
| Beazley | 1984-1990 | 33 |
| Ray | 1990-1996 | 39 |
| McLachlan | 1996-1998 | 4 |
| Moore | 1998-2001 | 11 |
| Reith | 2001-2001 | 16 |
| Hill | 2001-2006 | 75 |
| Nelson | 2006-2007 | 23 |
| Fitzgibbon | 2007-2009 | 11 |

Total = 301

1.4 Research model

The research method used in the core chapters is a QDA model which allows for thematic and narrative analysis of policy documents and Ministerial speeches and statements. It is quite powerful in that it uses a large volume of data to create a substantial empirical basis for comparison. However, it also faces two key limitations. The first is that interpretive policy analysis requires some degree of informed interpretation regarding the intended message of a particular statement.²⁴⁸ This inferred meaning is accounted for in the coding scheme, but may not be entirely accurate in application due to researcher error, ambiguous, unclear or misspoken statements. The second is that narrowing the scope to public discourse of a policy prevents uncovering the ‘real story’²⁴⁹ of what happened behind closed doors in sensitive policy domains such as defence.²⁵⁰ This is not a significant limitation for this study as relative advantage has been a concept which was discussed publicly, signalled deliberately and directly to the public and to external audiences and used in open source literature to explain policy. Although there may be a *real story*²⁵¹ of what happened within the Department of Defence, the story being examined here is strictly the public discourse of relative advantage. Although the policy machinations within Defence would doubtlessly tell an interesting story about the use of

²⁴⁸ Dvora Yanow, *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 14-23.

²⁴⁹ Marten D. Shipman, *The Limitations of Social Research* (Essex: Longman, 1997), 58-59, 67-70.

²⁵⁰ Although public policy studies often gravitate toward behind-the-scenes ‘real stories’ from involved parties, the viewpoint of practitioners is not objective and cannot be considered to be the only relevant account for historical events.

²⁵¹ The term ‘real story’ is used here to refer to the perspective that Defence officials would have, which would be based primarily on information available in their workplace, including secret information which was not shared with the public, rather than on the public discourse of strategic policy.

the concept of relative advantage in policy, that story would answer fundamentally different research questions.²⁵²

This section explains the research model used in the core chapters. It begins by detailing the three core variables used to thematically differentiate concepts in the data. It then explains the coding scheme developed and applied to the data set. Finally, it provides the QDA data sheets which were used as validity tests and which demonstrate the broad trends in the discourse which support the main arguments of the thesis and justify the specific periodisation used to compartmentalise the data and separate it into chapters.

Research variables

The central purpose of the research is to examine the conceptual evolution of relative advantage in Australian strategic policy in the era of self-reliance. This research objective entails four subordinate questions. *First*, how has relative advantage been defined throughout the period? This question needs to be answered in several contexts: time period, medium of communication, political agent and referent actors. *Second*, have related political ideas influenced or coincided with conceptual change? Answering this question requires an examination of the correlation between conceptions of technology and, more specifically, the role of technology in Australian strategy and force structure planning within the Defence Organisation and shifts in the ways relative advantage was conceptualised. *Third*, how has the concept of relative advantage been deployed as a tool of strategic communication? This question differentiates between the communication of

²⁵² The reason for this being that perspectives of bureaucrats on specific policies they worked on is a very different object of study to the public discourse of policy.

relative advantage as a policy implement and the rhetoric of relative advantage as a tool of communication for signalling purposes. Any answer to this question requires several typological contexts, including: audiences, overarching signal types and time period. *Finally*, has relative advantage been used in discourse as a prescriptive or descriptive concept? In other words, has the evolution of the concept occurred in response to changing strategic circumstances that warranted differing conceptions of relative advantage, or did evolution describe changes that occurred for other reasons?

The analysis is based around three core variables. The first variable examines the *policy context* in which relative advantage has been used and elements of that context which correspond with conceptual changes within and across periods. The first step in establishing the policy context is a qualitative examination of the use of key terms in discourse. Specifically, terms which relate to technology, capability and advantage are counted and analysed. The CA is followed by a KWIC analysis of key terms to verify contextual usage. This indicates the meaning attributed to key terms by political organisations and leaders in each period. The second step is an examination of the scope of Australia's strategic interests and objectives as communicated in official documents and by political leaders in public addresses and Parliamentary questions. This indicates the potential strategic reach of relative advantage. The final step involves measuring the emphasis placed on referents of relative advantage. The referent actor(s) for the concept are the state or states that a military advantage is intended to be relative to. This determines the quality and type of capabilities required to maintain an advantage relative to the capabilities of the states identified.

The second variable is the role of institutional ideas, specifically *strategic concepts*, in shaping conceptual change.²⁵³ The most important institutional ideas to relative advantage are dominant approaches to force structure planning and force employment concepts of operations. These ideas may also indicate the degree of influence that the availability of new technologies had on force structure planning and whether strategic objectives determined capability needs or available capability influenced Australia's strategic ambition. Another key institutional idea is the role of technology in how the purpose of relative advantage is conceptualised, what technology or capability is intended to do within the concept and what the purpose of relative advantage was in achieving the strategic objectives of the time. The role of technology in institutional thinking establishes the purpose of the concept: what it is intended to do in terms of strategic objectives. It also conceptualises how technology is intended to be used to achieve this purpose. These considerations are interrelated. For example, if the technological level is primarily about a) an expansion base for the capability that is actually desired and b) signalling Australia's industrial strengths to adversaries, allies and the Australian public, then there is a discrete relationship between the purpose of technology, as an expansion base, and the purpose of generating and sustaining the terminal force.

The third variable is communicating and sending *strategic signals*. At the highest level, this is performed by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. At the organisational level, strategic signalling is performed by the Department of Defence and the ADF. The combination of policy statements which signal political intent with demonstrations that

²⁵³ Lieberman, "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change."; John L. Campbell, "Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28(2002).

show the ADF to be a skilled and formidable military creates the ADF's force posture.²⁵⁴ For example, then-Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard signalled that Australia's '...defence force in being should be adequate to indicate our resolution and our ability to defend Australian interests and to support others, should the need arise.'²⁵⁵ The political communication of the relative advantage concept demonstrates themes in the discourse that are directed toward three audiences: potential adversaries, allies and regional security partners, and the Australian public. This variable examines signalling themes that relate to deterring potential adversaries or competitors, reassurance of allies and regional security partners, and validation of Australia's capacity for self-reliant defence to the public.²⁵⁶ Validation to the public also involves justification for significant defence procurement expenditure and provides a discursive mechanism in the public policy process.

These variables examine the way that relative advantage has been discussed and communicated in open source political discourse in Australia to shape perceptions of Australia's defence credibility among three target audiences: potential aggressors, security partners and the Australian public. Each of the core chapters analyse these three elements of the political discourse regarding relative advantage in separate sections. The first is the policy context in which the concept transformed and measures the scope and referent actor(s) associated with relative advantage. The second is a survey of the

²⁵⁴ Australian Defence Force, "Australia's Approach to Warfare," 19-20.

²⁵⁵ Lance Herbert Barnard, "Ministerial Statement," *House of Representatives Hansard* (1974), 1.

²⁵⁶ McAllister and Makkai hypothesise that individuals characteristics, such as status and values, combined with political and partisan preferences influence public attitudes towards defence policy. See: McAllister, Ian, and Makkai, Toni, 'Changing Australian Opinion on Defence: Trends, Patterns, and Explanations,' *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 2(3), 1991: 196.

dominant institutional ideas²⁵⁷ about the role of technology in Australia's force posture which may have influenced the way in which relative advantage transformed. The third is the strategic communication of the concept to international audiences for purposes of deterrence to potential aggressors and credibility to allies and to domestic audiences for the purpose of justifying defence policies and expenditure and reassurance that the ADF is capable of defending Australia. The purpose is to capture the evolution of the concept in its strategic policy, institutional and communicative contexts within each period. As such, each coding node tree corresponds to one section of the core chapters and to one of the three subordinate questions identified in the research design.

Coding scheme

The coding scheme used in the thesis is based on the above three core variables, dealing with policy context, strategic concepts and strategic signalling. Each of the variables represents one major node in the coding scheme, with each of these major nodes being the top of a three level node hierarchy. Each major node is broken down into three subordinate nodes and each subordinate node has a number of nodes below it, ranging from two to six, which represent attributes of each subordinate node.

Policy Context

The policy context node represents the first variable examined in the research design. It captures the context in which relative advantage was expressed across the four time

²⁵⁷ Campbell, "Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy."; Lieberman, "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change."

periods studied. Policy context is broken into three key nodes: content analysis, referent actor and policy scope.

CA (Content Analysis)

The content analysis node records the instances of key terms and concepts used in the data set. It measures the concepts of advantage, capability and technology.

Advantage

The advantage node records the number of references to the concept of relative advantage, often expressed as an edge, in the data.

Capability

The capability node records the number of references to military capability (capacity) or capabilities in the data.

Technology

The technology node records the frequency of references to technology or technological level in the data.

Referent

The referent node captures a range of attributes associated with the type of actor referred to in claims regarding relative capability or material resources. This

identifies the actors who were considered benchmarks for Australia's relative advantage.

Great Powers

The great powers node records references to maintaining a technological level relative to great power alliance partners or other major powers. It includes references to interoperability in situations where high-technology systems were deemed necessary to match the material capability of alliance partners.

Indonesia

The Indonesia node records instances where Indonesia was referred to, either explicitly or as a separate actor to the rest of the region, as a referent object of relative advantage.

Neighbourhood

The neighbourhood node records inferences to an advantage relative to states of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, often termed Australia's 'immediate regional neighbourhood' in policy documents.

Regional

The regional node refers to regional actors in the wider Asia-Pacific region, rather than the immediate neighbourhood.

Policy Scope

The policy scope node records the scope of Australia's publicly stated strategic interests and signalled intentions for the acquisition and use of military capability.

DOA

The DOA node captures instances where strategic objectives were related to the security and defence of Australia.

Global

The global node records instances where the scope of strategic policy statements extended to expeditionary operations or complementarity with allies for the purpose of conducting coalition warfare.

Regional

The regional node records instances where the scope of strategic policy statements related to regional security and stability.

Concept

The strategic concepts node includes the policy ideas and strategic concepts used in defence and strategic policy documents or statements. It records the rationales offered in policy statements about the reasons for Australia's pursuit of relative advantage. The concept node is broken into the edge, posture and rationale nodes.

Edge

The edge node records the type of 'edge' proposed in policy statements and the role that technology is presented as playing in facilitating that edge.

Coordination

The coordination node records instances where the type of edge identified in policy statements was information or knowledge based or involved communications technology or Network Centric Warfare.

Core Force

The core force node records instances where the type of edge identified in policy statements was based on technology as an enabler for a core force or force-in-being with significant existing capabilities and the potential for expansion within accepted warning timeframes.

Expansion

The expansion node records instances where the type of edge identified in policy statements presented technology, or a level of industrial or technological development in society, as a base for rapid expansion of the ADF into a terminal force which could take a range of forms to meet emerging threats.

Material

The material node records instances where the type of edge identified in policy statements involved a technological edge in the ADF's existing military platforms, including force multiplication capabilities.

Posture

The posture node examines force posture and force structure signalling, including signalling of intentions and interests and dominant force structure considerations.

Contingencies

The contingencies node records signalling of force structure planning for ‘credible contingencies’ of armed aggression against Australia.

Core Force

The core force node records signalling of force structure priorities that emphasise a core force as an expansion base for a terminal force.

Denial

The denial node records signalling of force structure planning that emphasises a clear deterrent or intention to control Australia’s threat environment.

Expeditionary

The expeditionary node records signalling of force structure planning that emphasises expeditionary capabilities and/or complementarity with allies for forward deployment purposes.

Self-reliance

The self-reliance node records signalling of force structure principles which emphasise self-reliance in the defence of Australia

SSTR

The SSTR node records signalling of force structure planning for low-intensity security, stability, transition and recovery type operations, including regional stabilisation and humanitarian missions.

Rationale

The rationale node examines the technological and political justifications presented for Australia's claimed need for relative advantage.

Cutting Edge

The cutting edge node records references to Australia materially possessing high technology military weapons and systems.

Industry

The industry node records references to the role of Australian defence industry in Australia's relative advantage or a stated need to support the Australian defence industry to supply high-technology weapons, equipment and systems.

Mitigating

The mitigating node records references to high-technology platforms or relative advantage to offset costs of Australia's strategic disadvantages, such as population and quantity or military personnel.

Relative

The relative node records references to a need for capability or military technology to create or sustain a relative advantage over any other actor.

Signals

The signals node examines references to defence interests, force posture and capability edge in public statements and documents intended to signal or communicate a political or policy message to an audience. The signals node is broken into the deterrence, reassurance and validation nodes.

Deterrence

The deterrence node examines signals sent to potential adversaries to emphasise Australia's military capability in order to dissuade or deter military action against Australia or its interests

Force Employment

The force employment node records deterrence signals based on the employment of force elements such as force multipliers, doctrine and training advantages as well as enhanced co-ordination offered by advanced C4ISR(EW).

Platform

The platform node records deterrence signals based purely on the qualitative capability advantage associated with specific major weapons systems and platforms.

Reassurance

The reassurance node examines signals intended to reassure allies and regional security partners of Australia's security commitments and defence capabilities.

Credible Ally

The credible ally node records signals that Australia is a credible security partner with a defence force able to deter aggressors and offer support to security partners and allies in a conflict or crisis.

Response

The response node records signals that Australia has the intention and/or capability to provide assistance in response to a security crisis, such as SSTR operations and humanitarian assistance and internal stability support.

Support

The support node records signals which support Australia's intention and capacity to provide niche skills and equipment, such as logistics, intelligence and special operations forces, to security partners and allies.

Validation

The validation node examines signals intended to justify the need for (and costs of) relative advantage to domestic audiences.

Justification

The justification nodes records signals validating significant public expenditure on high-technology defence capability or platforms or equipment specifically intended to create or maintain relative advantage.

Morale

The morale node records signals which appeal to the morale and sense of nationalism of the Australian public, including the representation of the ADF as an inherently and qualitatively superior fighting force to other states' militaries.

Security

The security node records signals which discuss the security (to Australia and Australian citizens) provided by the ADF and claims that a high-tech ADF is more capable of providing security to the Australian people.

Chapter conclusions

This chapter presents a framework for analysis designed to examine data on Australian defence policy discourse. It began by conceptualising relative advantage in three distinct ways: as an evolving concept, as a representation of technocracy in Australian defence policy and as a means of communication and strategic signalling. It then explored the methodological issues involved in a history of ideas approach to process tracing and the challenges associated with interpreting policy narratives and identifying and analysing

causation in political rhetoric. It then explained the rationale for the data used in the analysis and detailed the data collection and reduction methods used to process the data set into its final form. Finally, the chapter explained the methods used in the analysis by explicating the research questions and variables, detailing the coding scheme used to identify and track specific concepts throughout the data and providing data sheets which validated the research model used. The data sheets also support two central arguments of the thesis: that specific aspects of relative advantage and broader concepts in Australian defence policy have been emphasised at different times and for different reasons; and that the progression from one form of relative advantage to another was not a linear progression but rather the result of a haphazard reformulation of various policy objectives and strategic interest which made sense in their own contexts but so not cohere into a sensible pattern in the context of relative advantage.

Chapter 2

1968-1978: Emergence of the technological level concept

In 1968-1970 Australia's great power allies began to rethink their commitments to the Asia-Pacific. Britain announced that it was withdrawing its forward based forces from Southeast Asia and the US raised the threshold for military assistance to its allies in Southeast Asia. Although Australia continued to receive support from its allies, the possibility of maintaining the existing policy of Forward Defence without the presence and material contributions of at least one great power ally was remote. Then-Prime Minister John Gorton believed that the British withdrawal underpinned a 'fundamental change'²⁵⁸ in the basis of Australia's strategic planning. He believed that the combination of the accelerated withdrawal from Malaysia and the uncertainty of British commitments to return to militarily support the defence and stability of the region. In Gorton's view, a significant consequence for Australia was that:

...a concept of forward defence by troops stationed outside Australia, valid when based upon participation with local forces of a major power, needed minute examination when the forces of that major power were to be withdrawn and the circumstances of their re-entry were unknown.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ John Grey Gorton, "Speech by the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. J. G. Gorton, M.P.," *National Press Club* (Hotel Canberra Rex, Canberra 1968).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

With Forward Defence becoming untenable, Australia began to view itself for the first time as a more independent actor in its own defence. The prospect of self-reliance was daunting at first, but by the late 1970s Australian defence policy had completely reversed the previous perspective of indefensibility and replaced it with self-reliant policy and force structure. Part of that conceptual change was the emergence of technology as a means to enhance the military credibility of the ADF.

This chapter examines the emergence of the 'technological level' concept, which was based primarily on the utility of Australia's industrial base as a platform for force expansion, and its relationship to the political need to promote Australia's credibility as a security partner within the region. It begins with the domestic political context of Australia's defence policy during the period 1968-1979, which was characterised by tension between traditional policy goals and waning support for the long-incumbent Coalition government on one side and the broadly reformist policy agenda of the Labor opposition, which embraced the changing ideals and attitudes of a dissatisfied electorate. The chapter then examines the emergence of defence self-reliance in Australian strategic policy which was spurred by perceptions of British and American equivocation on their commitments to regional security in Southeast Asia and which had been building momentum through the 1960s.²⁶⁰ The chapter then analyses the data from this period, concluding that the concept of relative advantage which emerged in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s was a distinct political concept which was qualitatively different to later conceptualisations of advantage.

²⁶⁰ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia."

2.1 A break from tradition

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a tumultuous period in Australian politics. The disappearance of Harold Holt and elections which followed, combined with personality clashes within the coalition and mounting public opposition to national service and the Vietnam War created a challenging environment for political actors to navigate. The Coalition entered the 1970s with two decades of leadership experience behind it, but struggled to match the pace with the reinvigorated Labor party and its ambitious agenda for widespread policy reform.²⁶¹ Although it was ultimately short-lived, the Whitlam Government introduced number of key principles into Australian politics, particularly in relation to equity issues, and which reflected the contemporary electorate's attitudes towards social and political issues. The Coalition reclaimed power in the mid-1970s under the leadership of Malcolm Fraser and found itself managing a number of Labor's ambitions. These broad trends are reflected in the development of Australia's strategic policy, particularly in the emergence of relative advantage, as the Commonwealth negotiated the gap between the more aspirational policies that the electorate desired and the pragmatic limits on what the government could deliver. Seen in this light, Australia's rapid journey from a junior partner in a security partnership between regional and major powers to a self-reliant and credible security partner in its own right appears to be less a reaction to defence policy circumstances than a parallel to the machinations of domestic politics and the interplay between politicians and the bureaucracy.

²⁶¹ Rodney Sullivan, "Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96," (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 1997), 6.

The coalition at war

Harold Holt's disappearance in December 1967 allowed simmering tensions between key members of the Coalition to rise to the surface. John McEwen served briefly as Prime Minister in the interim, but was replaced after only 19 days in office when the party held a leadership vote. McEwen supported John Gorton in the leadership vote, laying an effective veto against William McMahon by announcing that the Country Party would not serve in the Coalition under McMahon. This marked the beginning of a dark period for the Coalition during which internal squabbling and occasionally outright hostility between members drew attention from Labor's emerging voice as a serious challenger to the Coalition's traditional approach to policy. When McEwen retired from politics, in 1971, Gorton was replaced by McMahon. However, the Coalition's internal focus compounded popular perceptions that Cabinet had become too reliant on the bureaucracy to develop policy and became a thorn in McMahon's side when he ran against Whitlam in the 1972 election.

Gorton had become Prime Minister as the British and American commitments to Southeast Asia were waning and popular support for the Vietnam War had stalled. Defence was a hot political issue and Gorton recognised that substantial changes to the way that Australia planned for its defence were on the horizon. Nevertheless, he was known to draw heavily on the advice of his bureaucracy and often circumvented long lines of communication and decision-making.²⁶² In 1969 both Allen Fairhall, Minister for Defence, and Sir Henry Bland, Secretary of the Department of Defence, retired, leaving Gorton with the task of finding suitable replacements. He appointed Malcolm Fraser

²⁶² Ian Hancock, *John Gorton: He Did It His Way* (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2002).

Minister and together they sought out Sir Arthur Tange for Secretary. Tange's appointment to Defence undercut McMahon, who was serving as Minister for External Affairs, and who had also intended to appoint Tange as Secretary.²⁶³ Tange was seen as a reformer, capable of continuing the administrative restructuring undertaken by Bland before his retirement.²⁶⁴ Tange took over a department in the process of instituting unpopular but necessary reforms. However, instead of adopting the same approach as his predecessor, Tange was intent on taking his own stock of the vast Defence empire and beginning a long-tailed restructuring which would ultimately take decades to realise.²⁶⁵

One of Tange's first observations as incoming Secretary was that, after only weeks in office as Minister for Defence, Fraser's frantic tempo was already taxing the senior Defence staff.²⁶⁶ Tange and Fraser initially butted heads, exchanging terse notes regarding Fraser's intrusion into the Department of Defence and the demands he placed on Tange's staff. In September 1970, during a personal meeting between Fraser and Tange, a formidable relationship emerged. Fraser and Tange became powerful allies and began a program sweeping reforms to Defence in a short period of time. Tange continued the work even after Fraser was replaced as Minister for Defence in 1972.²⁶⁷ Tange respected Fraser's strategic outlook, but came to see Fraser's policy vision, encapsulated in the 1970 *Defence Statement*,²⁶⁸ as a victim of a vicious cycle in which liberal

²⁶³ Arthur Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 19-20.

²⁶⁴ "Sir Henry's Legacy of Dissatisfaction," *The Canberra Times*, 28 August 1970, 2.

²⁶⁵ *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980*, 22-26.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁶⁷ Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2010), 192-5.

²⁶⁸ John Malcolm Fraser, "Ministerial Statement on Defence," *House of Representatives* (1970).

governments made defence commitments for good reasons but later failed to follow through with, often expensive, capabilities needed to realise their earlier ambitions.²⁶⁹

A cornerstone of Fraser's thinking on Defence reform was to 'ensure that each of the services prepares for the same kinds of conflicts, in the same places and in the same time scale.'²⁷⁰ In effect, Fraser foreshadowed the kind of joint operational planning which would later come to define many of Australia's defence policies and doctrines.²⁷¹ But he had to balance the program of change within Defence which he had promised to the Australian public with the unpopular deployment of Australian troops in Vietnam and the technical issues and fierce diplomatic rows which plagued the F-111 project.²⁷²

Within Defence, Fraser found himself at odds with the Army and at the centre of political dispute involving the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Daly, and Gorton.²⁷³ Outside of it, he had to contend with the growing popularity of proposed reforms emanating from Whitlam's shadow government.

Although Gorton and Fraser had worked together well at first, their relationship quickly soured. Fraser became disillusioned with Gorton's authoritarian approach to management and, despite backing Gorton's bid for leadership of the Liberal Party in 1968 and having a mixed relationship with McMahon, Fraser was instrumental in Gorton's downfall as

²⁶⁹ Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980*, 21.

²⁷⁰ Fraser, "Ministerial Statement on Defence."

²⁷¹ Australian Defence Force, "Joint Operations for the 21st Century; Department of Defence, "New Roadmap 2009."

²⁷² Fraser and Simons, *The Political Memoirs.*; Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980*, 29-30.

²⁷³ Hancock, *He Did It His Way.*; Fraser and Simons, *The Political Memoirs.*

Prime Minister in 1971.²⁷⁴ When McMahon came to power, he attempted to refocus the Coalition's message on the stalwarts of conservative policy. His reliance on staying the course emphasised the Coalition's long tenure in government and his own experience in Parliament. However, this approach did little to alleviate concerns that the coalition was not up to the task of meeting the challenges that the 1970s presented, especially with regard to foreign and defence issues.²⁷⁵ Sullivan notes that:

While Labor in the late 1960s and early 1970s enjoyed one of the most creative policy eras in its history, the Liberal–Country Party Coalition locked itself into the status quo, prepared to consider only minimalist and incremental policy change. Thus the McMahon Government withdrew some combat troops from Vietnam but retained unpopular, and probably unnecessary, conscription legislation which Labor readily turned to its political advantage.²⁷⁶

Exogenous events reinforced perceptions that the Coalition was falling behind the times. Alongside a suite of domestic reforms, most notably Medibank and a number of expanded Commonwealth social responsibilities, Whitlam promised to abolish national service, recognise the People's Republic of China, withdraw Australian troops from Singapore and oppose French nuclear tests in the Pacific. McMahon's government slipped further behind as the Vietnam War spiralled out of control and the US sought Rapprochement with China, allowing the Opposition to present itself as better prepared to engage with emerging policy issues.²⁷⁷ The McMahon Government suffered in public debates because of its commitment to traditional policies. Tange characterised the policy position in terms of rhetorical entrapment, stating that 'the McMahon government had become hostage to its doctrinal attachment to 'forward defence' and to the associated deployments in

²⁷⁴ Fraser, Malcolm, and Simons, Margaret, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2010: 182, 189-90, 219-25; Hancock, *He Did It His Way*.

²⁷⁵ Sullivan, "Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96," 6.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Gerald Henderson, *Menzies' Child; the Liberal Party of Australia, 1944-1994* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1994), 209-10.

Malaysia and Singapore.²⁷⁸ McMahon was further hamstrung by the Coalition's record of commitment to its traditional policies. Not only was his government ill-equipped to deliver the kind of radical new policy initiatives which would be needed to counter Labor's challenge, but the attempt would undermine the Coalition's position. Any dramatic shifts in policy to match Labor's narrative would have been an indictment of the Coalition's existing policy and a tacit agreement that the record of leadership which McMahon had staked his credibility on was, in fact, hollow.²⁷⁹

The Whitlam interregnum

The 1972 election saw the end of an era of Australian politics. After more than two decades of coalition leadership, the electorate broke from tradition and took Whitlam up on his many offers to create change. Whitlam was well received. So too were his promises to establish new standards of social equity to match society's changing values and his ambition to pursue modern ideals which reflected a keen understanding of politics, politicians and voters alike. The prospects of universal medical care, urban renewal, more accessible higher education and more independent foreign and defence policies gained a lot of traction with an electorate which was at least partially disenfranchised from conservative politics and which was deeply divided by Australia's participation in the Vietnam War.²⁸⁰ Whitlam had a gift for agenda setting and, like many great innovators past and present, knew that people often had interests which they weren't aware of or could not easily articulate. His intent to 'make the issues which are important to the future' created demand for policy which was either non-existent or too quiet to be heard in

²⁷⁸ Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980*, 45.

²⁷⁹ Rodney Sullivan, *Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96*. Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 1997.

²⁸⁰ Geoffrey Barker, "Why There's Still Life in Labor," *Australian Financial Review*, 23 February 1996, 20.

previous political debates.²⁸¹ However, demands necessitate supply and as soon as Labor formed government it faced the challenge of delivering on its promises.

One of the Whitlam government's first public acts was to enact its popular election promise to abolish national service and to complete Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam.²⁸² Whitlam also had other designs for defence policy. Despite steadily increasing total defence expenditure in each of its three budgets,²⁸³ the Whitlam government sought to limit overall defence expansion and change focus from materials to service personnel by improving their pay and conditions.²⁸⁴ Whitlam saw the Liberal Party's approach to defence as unduly fixated on forward deployment capabilities. He believed that ADF equipment and training was excessively focused on the jungles of Southeast Asia and ill-suited to the defence of Australia. Whitlam's government instituted 'an equipment program designed to provide Australia's forces with a modern technological weapons system.'²⁸⁵ Whitlam argued that Australia could not match the personnel available to other regional states and that the ADF would be best served by 'the sophisticated weaponry which a professional defence force backed by a technologically advanced community can deploy.'²⁸⁶

Whitlam's vision for the ADF was not universally popular and the Government had to invest time and resources in reassuring both the electorate and a handful of key international allies that Australia continued to observe its alliances and that it was not

²⁸¹ Billl Hayden, *Hayden: An Autobiography* (Pymble, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1996), 132.

²⁸² Edward Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government: 1972-1975* (Melbourne: Viking, 1985), 153.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 159.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 155-6.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

withdrawing from its international security commitments. In late 1973 and early 1974 Barnard travelled extensively abroad in his capacity as Minister for Defence, in part to visit Washington and calm some of the Pentagon's apprehensions about the Whitlam Government.²⁸⁷ At the same time Nixon sent a very senior State Department official, Marshall Green, to take up the post of US Ambassador to Australia and to closely monitor the political relationship with Canberra.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in July 1974, the Defence policy debate ran hot in the media. Fraser, as Leader of the Opposition, widely criticised the government's defence policy while James Killen, then-Shadow Minister for Defence, made theatrical statements about the Coalition's defence policy ambitions.

Despite the general tendency for dramatic flair in statements of policy intentions from a shadow government, Fraser and Killen intimated that the Coalition was moving away from its earlier fixation on garnering US support and toward a platform of a more self-reliant defence posture.²⁸⁹ By occupying what had previously been Labor's exclusive policy territory, Fraser obviated the defence policy dichotomy which had worked against the Coalition in the previous election. Just as Howard would reframe the Coalition's position in the 1996 election, Fraser reinvented the Coalition's policy platform, eroding Labor's self-styled monopoly on hot-button issues and policy innovation. As the gap between the Whitlam Government's policy aims and policy outcomes widened, the sudden burst of rapid reform soured and the electorate seemed almost evenly divided by the allure of the new and the stability of the familiar.

²⁸⁷ Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980*, 83.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

A dangerous ally

The dismissal of the Whitlam government was a central moment in Australian politics. Whitlam had been immensely popular with much of the public, so Fraser's campaign focused on management rather than popularity. In an attempt to appease the disgruntled manufacturing industry, Fraser made an ambiguous statement about protecting Australian industry to contrast Whitlam's reduction of entry barriers to the Australian market. Protection of industry was a key component of both the election campaign and the Fraser government, aligning closely with the increasing focus on Australia's industrial base as a Defence resource.²⁹⁰ Fraser aligned the Government's interests in the manufacturing sector and defence policy with the concept of maintaining Australia's technological level in order to ensure that the military remained a professional fighting force capable of timely expansion in a contingency. This was a minor adaptation of statements developed for the 1976 white paper, which had been prepared largely under the Whitlam government, and was ultimately released by the Fraser government. Fraser also continued the Defence reorganisation which had begun under Barnard and Tange's leadership in 1972 and had been passed as the *Defence Force Re-organization Bill* in 1975.²⁹¹

Despite the long-term goals of Defence reorganisation, the public debate was skewed towards matters of controversy rather than substantive policy. While the media often focused on trivial concerns, such as whether civilians or military officers would win from the reorganisation or from particular policy contests and which service had won the most items from its inventory wish list, Fraser began a campaign to change some long-standing

²⁹⁰ Fraser and Simons, *The Political Memoirs*, 318-20.

²⁹¹ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government*, 154-8,738.

attitudes in the electorate.²⁹² The 1976 defence white paper represented a major step in challenging embedded attitudes towards defence politics in Australian society. In particular, it presented a more measured view of Australia's ability to use its military capability to secure desired political objectives and placed less emphasis on the US alliance as a zero-sum counterpart to a more self-reliant force posture.²⁹³

However, Fraser did not always respect the views of his bureaucracy. Contrary to limitations which Defence largely accepted as operational constraints, such as force projection, logistics and political opposition to conscription, some of Fraser's more ambitious Defence statements exceeded Australia's military capacity to reasonably deliver. Along with then-Foreign Minister, Andrew Peacock, Fraser often publicly discussed concerns about the increasing Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean and included the balance of power in the IOR as a threat against which the ADF should be prepared to respond.²⁹⁴ These wider ambitions were reined in by the broad cuts to planned Defence spending necessitated by high inflation rates in the late 1970s.

In 1979, Killen accepted advice from his Department to link the capability requirements of defence self-reliance with alliance obligations, both in contributing to defence in the Pacific region and in avoiding free-riding behaviour. Killen justified his focus on self-reliance and the necessity of budget cuts along two lines. The first was the successful introduction of stand-off weapons and surveillance systems, which would offset Australia's personnel limitations. This was consistent with the increasingly technological

²⁹² Tange, *Defence Policy-Making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980*, 102.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 103-4.

focus of Australia's defence acquisition priorities. It also reaffirmed the renewed focus on Australia's approaches and near neighbourhood as the primary area of operations for ADF force structure planning. The second justification was defence warning time. Killen argued to the public that the capability to project sufficient military power against Australia to overwhelm the ADF and to also maintain logistical chains to sustain operations in Australia's approaches was beyond the means of all but the most powerful of nations. In the event that one of those powers developed hostile intentions towards Australia or that another power developed sufficient capability to threaten Australia, the warning time would allow the ADF to prepare accordingly. Although that line of argument would be contested throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the symbolic value of these statements was well-received. Tange recalls seeing...

...a cause for satisfaction in that, subject to the ebb and flow of simplistic political rhetoric, there emerged at last a consensus that Australia should make defence of its own territory the first duty of a self-respecting nation without looking first to others.²⁹⁵

2.2 The emergence of defence self-reliance

This section reviews the wider strategic and political situation during the period 1968-1978. It examines the emergence of self-reliance in Australian defence thinking and the precursory events that build up to the shift to self-reliance in later policy. It also examines the shift from forward defence towards the new concept of defence self-reliance, focusing on the emphasis on technology in defence policy discourse and the emerging priority of credibility in defence policy documents.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 108.

The Forward Defence era

From Federation through to the Second World War Australia's defence was conceived largely in terms of Imperial Defence. Ostensibly, Australia's interests were subordinated entirely to its role in securing the British Empire. Initially, Australia continued to see itself as dependent on the Empire, as it had been as individual colonies prior to Federation. Australia's distance created the geographical dichotomy 'oceans divide, oceans unite.'²⁹⁶ Australia felt isolated by distance, so pursued Imperial unity to close the distance between itself and its allies. One consequence of this approach was that Australia's regional interests were pursued as a component of Britain's global interests, limiting Australia's scope of action. However, during the inter-war years Australia began to view itself more as an outpost of the Empire that gave it reach into the Asian region. This transformation led to the formulation of independent Australian interests in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.²⁹⁷ By the 1920s, precursors of Forward Defence had begun to emerge in Australian defence policy. For example, the Singapore guarantee was seen as a compromise between Australia's regional and Britain's global interests.²⁹⁸ For Britain, Singapore was a link in the Imperial highway,²⁹⁹ but to Australia, the Singapore strategy appeared to be a great power supported barrier against intrusion afield from the continent and a means of security.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ O'Brien, "Oceans Divide, Oceans Unite," 201.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Some General Principles on Imperial Defence," (Whitehall Gardens: United Kingdom National Archives CAB 53/14, 1928), 190-98A.

³⁰⁰ Craig Stockings, "Other People's Wars," *Anzac's Dirty Dozen: Twelve Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2012), 77.

In the aftermath of World War Two, Australia faced a new strategic environment and a new diplomatic reality. Great Britain was no longer able to play a significant role in the defence of Australian territory or interests. In particular, the Royal Navy was no longer positioned to protect maritime trade routes in the Asia-Pacific which were essential to Australia's long-term prosperity. Because Australia envisaged Southeast Asia as the first line of defence against communist intrusion,³⁰¹ it sought to bind America, its new great power ally, and Britain to the region. The strategy that would become known as Forward Defence involved encouraging an allied presence in Southeast Asia to act as a buffer between Australia and potentially hostile near neighbours.³⁰² The purpose of this buffer was to keep potential adversaries as far from the Australian continent as possible. Any conflict would be fought on other countries' territory rather than Australia's own and would be fought in concert with major power allies and local states also threatened by an intruder.³⁰³

Forward Defence is often perceived in terms of grand ambitions in the scope of Australian defence policy in the period from Federation to the Vietnam War. Australia's emphasis of Imperial and Cold War interests obscured a policy which also contained more self-serving and locally focused inclinations.³⁰⁴ For two decades after the end of the Second World War, Australia aligned its interests and policies closely with its major power allies and largely subordinated its force structure decisions to interoperability needs, which necessitated armed forces that were tactically proficient and easily

³⁰¹ Defence Committee, "1956 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1956), para. 12.

³⁰² Thomas Bruce Millar, "The Defense of Australia," *Daedalus* 114, no. 1 (1985): 266.

³⁰³ "Trends in Australian Defence Policy," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 2, no. Special Issue 01 (1971): 49.

³⁰⁴ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 164.

integrated into allies' command structures.³⁰⁵ Defence policy stated that Australia was 'unable to defend herself unaided against a major power'³⁰⁶ and that 'her dependence on outside assistance, compels her to accept that the strategic employment of her forces will be governed by considerations wider than those of a purely regional nature.'³⁰⁷ Forward Defence implied that Australia's best means for ensuring its security involved meeting any threat where it arose in cooperation with allies.³⁰⁸ This complicated Australia's freedom of action due to a relatively minor influence on coalition operations. Emery Reves argued that small powers often face such constraints because

All great powers act like gangsters and all small powers act like prostitutes. They must. Under present conditions (not unlike those of the wild West), each great power mistrusts the others, must be permanently armed, keep his gun loaded and within easy reach to shoot it out with the others, if he wants to survive and keep his position. And the smaller powers, who have no guns and who would never dare shoot it out with one of the big fellows, must go with those who promise them the most, and in return for this protection, do whatever is demanded of them.³⁰⁹

Such sentiment was reflected in the 1968 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, which notes that

...it been a case that we have deliberately, doubtless in our own interests and perhaps inescapably, tied Australia to the strategy of others...Like all small countries we can best ensure our security by participating in regional security arrangements; as a result we find ourselves involved in situations not of our choosing and in the formation of which we have negligible, if any, influence.³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ Graeme Cheeseman, "From Forward Defence to Self-Reliance: Changes and Continuities in Australian Defence Policy 1965-90," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 3 (1991): 430.

³⁰⁶ Defence Committee, "1947 Appreciation of the Strategic Position of Australia," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1947), para.1.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 3(b).

³⁰⁸ Cheeseman, "From Forward Defence to Self-Reliance," 430.

³⁰⁹ Emery Reves, *The Anatomy of Peace* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), 222.

³¹⁰ Defence Committee, "1968 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1968), para. 174.

This statement was made as the rationale for Forward Defence was eroding. The rationale had first been undermined by Britain's indifference to opposing *Konfrontasi*.³¹¹ It was further weakened by the 1967 announcement of Britain's decision to withdraw from Southeast Asia.³¹² The final blow came in 1969 with Nixon's announcement of the Guam Doctrine.³¹³

As much as Forward Defence was the manifestation of Australia's sense of insecurity and inclination toward great power allies, it was also a response to regional security concerns. Many of these concerns were precipitated by the political upheaval in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific that resulted from decolonisation and by the seemingly pervasive spectre of Communism.³¹⁴ Forward Defence was an attempt to focus great power attention to issues that threatened Australia's interests. This was acceptable to Australia's great power allies because they had interests of their own to pursue in the region and welcomed Australia's political and military support.³¹⁵ Yet, even throughout the era of Forward Defence, the reliability of allies was questioned and the need for some degree of self-reliance was revisited in successive defence policy documents. As early as 1959, the Defence Committee articulated a need for Australian forces to be primarily shaped toward independent action rather than designed specifically for ease of integration into coalition operations.³¹⁶ By the early 1960s, absent a formal change in declared policy, the Menzies

³¹¹ Robert Menzies, "Message from Sir Robert Menzies to Mr Harold Wilson," (National Archives of Australia, 1965).

³¹² Andrea Benvenuti, "The British Military Withdrawal from Southeast Asia and Its Impact on Australia's Cold War Strategic Interests," *Cold War History* 5, no. 2 (2005): 199-201.

³¹³ J.L.S. Gurlings, "The Guam Doctrine," *International Affairs* 46, no. 1 (1970): 48-62.

³¹⁴ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 164.

³¹⁵ Millar, "The Defense of Australia," 266.

³¹⁶ Defence Committee, "1959 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1959), para.44.

Government had begun thinking about transforming the ADF into a force that could defend Australia unaided.³¹⁷ Although Forward Defence could be observed to continue until the Australian withdrawal from Vietnam in 1972, it had become impractical with the departure of US and British forces from mainland Southeast Asia.³¹⁸ Having seen the writing on the wall, Menzies had put into motion acquisition decisions that would enable the ADF to become more self-reliant in defending Australia and its regional allies without immediate assistance from major power allies.³¹⁹

From self-assurance to self-reliance

In 1968, Australian policy began to specifically consider independent defence capability in the context of limited self-reliance. A ‘self-contained’ force was deemed to be best suited to both Australia’s collective security arrangements and the possibility of sustaining independent joint service operations.³²⁰ At first, the possibility of self-reliance was alien to the Australian public and then-Prime Minister John Gorton argued vigorously that the need to establish a self-reliant ADF was politically imperative and economically necessary, stating that:

...we find ourselves in Australia in a completely changed world situation. For almost two hundred years we lived under the protection of the British Navy and England, and we did little or nothing to help ourselves in between the crises that occurred in the world. We left it to others to protect us, except, of course, that when the Boer War broke out, or the First World War broke out, or the Second World War broke out, or the Malayan emergency broke out, or the Korean war broke out, then we came in as a people, wholeheartedly and completely... But that has changed. We do not have and will not have this protection from abroad any more. We ourselves must protect ourselves, and this calls for resources which I do not myself wish or like to give resources that must be diverted to ships and soldiers and aircraft and guns and ammunition resources I would prefer to devote to

³¹⁷ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 164.

³¹⁸ Millar, "The Defense of Australia," 266.

³¹⁹ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 164.

³²⁰ Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para. 213.

development and to social progress. But these resources must be diverted, according to the judgment of your Government if we are, in the changed situation of the world, to be able to take the first brunt of any attack which in the future may fall upon us and to help in maintaining stability in the area to our north a situation which has never faced this nation before but which now faces us in all stark reality.³²¹

This precursor to self-reliance is qualified by the concurrent needs for self-reliant capability for the purposes of conducting independent operations and fielding sufficient independent capability to avoid charges of excessive alliance free-riding. Despite the new emphasis on greater self-reliance, the 1968 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy* also stipulated that the most likely deployment of Australian forces would be in the form of a coalition operation led by a major power ally.³²² Australia continued to define its interests in terms of the security of neighbouring states, lines of communication through maritime Southeast Asia and underwriting regional confidence in collective security measures.³²³ The need to reassure regional security partners was evident in the language of the 1972 *Australian Defence Review*, which stipulated requirements for an 'increasingly self-reliant' defence force able to 'project Australian strength' beyond the continent.³²⁴ It further stipulated that Australia had allies in the region that shared its interests and could be strengthened through political and military support.³²⁵

A significant aspect of the emerging concept of self-reliance in Australian defence policy was a repeated emphasis on reassuring regional states, both friendly and potentially

³²¹ John Grey Gorton, "Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton," *Paterson Federal Electorate Conference* (Maitland Town Hall, Maitland, N.S.W.1968), 3.

³²² Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para. 221.

³²³ Cheeseman, "From Forward Defence to Self-Reliance," 432.

³²⁴ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1972), para.11.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

hostile, of Australia's military capability. Initially, this emphasis was directed toward the issue of deterrence.³²⁶ In the early 1970s the tone of Australian policy changed and documents began to emphasise credibility rather than deterrence. The earliest example is the 1971 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, which pinned 'Australia's political and military credibility' to its ability to defend Australian territory, independence and identity.³²⁷ The 1972 *Australian Defence Review* specified that Australia's capability must be both 'evident to other countries'³²⁸ and balanced between offensive and defensive capabilities to ensure that 'considerations of credibility and or long term deterrence'³²⁹ are substantiated. Demonstrating the credibility of Australia's defence capability and commitment to collective security was as an important policy imperative.³³⁰ Defence policy underscored the need to use Australia's technical and industrial strength, political stability and military capabilities to reassure regional allies and assuage their misgivings regarding Australia's ability and intention to influence their security in the event of a crisis.³³¹

In 1973, policy linked Australia's ability to 'demonstrate a military capability that lends credibility and authority to [its] foreign policy'³³² with technological advantage. In this view Australia's unique position in the region was underpinned by its 'resources, technology, and ability to operate and maintain more advanced military equipment'³³³

³²⁶ Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," paras.207, 10.

³²⁷ "1971 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1971), para. 17.

³²⁸ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para.11.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, para.58.

³³⁰ Henry S. Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 225.

³³¹ Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para. 21.

³³² "1973 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy," (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1973), para.21.

³³³ *Ibid.*

than local states. The issue of Australia's increasingly independent foreign policy became a political football, with the criticism that Australian policy 'lacked credibility if based on a weak or misplaced defence policy.'³³⁴ The Senate Standing Committee further introduced the concept of warning time as a condition of credibility, stating that:

Since the lead times for introducing equipment and training highly skilled manpower are sometimes longer than strategic warning times, Australia needs to maintain forces 'in being' capable of meeting limited threats to our security.³³⁵

The result was that 'assured defence strength in being'³³⁶ was held to be integral to legitimating self-reliance and the foreign policy positions that were based on Australia's military posture and commitments.

Meanwhile, Sir Arthur Tange was substantially reforming the Department of Defence and recommended changes in the way Defence prioritised capability decisions to ensure that procurement served Australia's self-reliance needs.³³⁷ Successive strategic basis papers further reinforced that Australia's technological and industrial base afforded it greater credibility as a military power. They emphasised Australia's ability to sustain military expansion through economic, industrial and technical advantages, stating that:

Military strength and credibility depend not only on forces in being, but also on the strength of the national economy, its rate of growth and capacity for technological advance, and the skills of the population.³³⁸

The Defence Committee also noted that Australia enjoyed relative wealth and technological advantage over the countries of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific. In

³³⁴ Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor*, 226.

³³⁵ The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, "The Australian Army," para 2.4.

³³⁶ Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para.22.

³³⁷ Department of Defence, "Australian Defence Reorganisation Report," (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973), para. 109.

³³⁸ Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para. 176.; "Strategic Basis," paras. 22, 36.

combination with Australia's privileged access to advanced military technology, Australia's wealth enabled it to field military capabilities beyond the reach of its regional neighbours.³³⁹

Technology and credibility

What had begun as an observation in the late 1960s became a discrete policy objective towards the middle of the 1970s. Earlier policy documents had noted Australia's ability offset its small population and defence force with more advanced weapons, efficient operation of military systems, logistical support networks and effective command and control infrastructure.³⁴⁰ Later documents discussed technological advantage as an overt objective of Australian defence policy. The 1975 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, determined that

...because of Australia's greater domestic industrial, scientific and technological base compared with countries in our neighbourhood, selective adoption of a suitably high level of military technology in our weapons, equipment, training of men and support which satisfy certain objectives.³⁴¹

A broad gauge for the desired level of technology to maintain was to: reduce recurring manpower costs and/or lifecycle costs, retain a favourable comparative position in the neighbouring region, ensure that the technological base was sufficient to support rapid expansion if required and provide interoperability, although not necessarily technical parity, with major allies' systems.³⁴² The 1976 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy* further refined this aim, stating that

³³⁹ "Strategic Basis," para. 34.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ "Strategic Basis," para.253(d).

³⁴² Ibid., para.254., see also "Strategic Basis," para.398.

Advanced technology should be favoured where it offers measurable compensating advantages – e.g. in simplicity of operation and support, or sufficient savings in additional equipment, manpower and life-cycle costs, or is otherwise peculiarly suitable to Australia's assessed strategic situation.³⁴³

Advanced capabilities were desirable so long as they were relevant to neighbouring regional, but not global military capabilities. Defence policy limited the scope of the technological level to ensuring that Australian was 'in a position to increase selectively the technological level of its forces in order to maintain a favourable position relative to countries in its neighbouring region and the weapons they might acquire.'³⁴⁴

The language used in 1976 in Australia's first defence white paper introduced a new tone to the discussion of the technological level of military capability. The white paper noted that Australia ought to be 'seen as a nation that takes defence matters seriously' and that the newly formed Australian Defence Force should have 'capabilities and competence' that commanded respect.³⁴⁵ It further stated that, as a requirement for defence capability, the ADF 'should at all times demonstrate Australia's serious attitude to defence matters, military competence and capacity to absorb and operate high-technology equipments.'³⁴⁶

The white paper exuded a new confidence in the ability of Australia to pursue a self-reliant approach to defence. Australian policy now saw a technological edge in military capability, relative to neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, as a means of self-realisation as a regional power. The paper went on to confirm that

³⁴³ "Strategic Basis," para.401.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., para.400.

³⁴⁵ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, para. 3.18.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., para. 3.27.

Australia 'should exploit the capabilities of advanced military equipment rather than rely on masses of men'³⁴⁷ to pursue its interests.

At the same time, Sir Arthur Tange announced that the new Department of Defence would be concerned with fielding the mix of defence capabilities which were best suited to meet Australia's requirements. Those requirements included self-reliance and a focus on defending Australia and its interests which truly reflected the needs of an independent Australian defence policy.³⁴⁸ By the late 1970s defence policy reduced its previous emphasis on validating Australia's commitments through demonstrations or assertions of credibility. Instead it had begun to consider Australia as a serious contender in the regional neighbourhood, even absent the presence of a great power ally, and was redefining its abilities and interests. A significant element of this transition was the technological edge that Australia had over its neighbours and the ability to reinforce regional security policies with military capability. This concept ushered the self-assuring narratives of credibility from Australian defence policy in the early 1970s and replaced it with a narrative of strength and proficiency. However, this narrative brought with it a new set of challenges in finding the right force structure and capabilities to realise the self-reliance that Australia now aspired to.

2.3 Policy context

The policy context for the late 1960s through to the mid-1970s was one of substantial change. Key concepts such as technological level and a focus on military forces capable

³⁴⁷ Ibid., para. 8.2.

³⁴⁸ Arthur Tange, "A Step Forward," *Defence Force Journal* 1(1976): 5.

of independent action replaced concepts of forces designed primarily to contribute to operations of major power allies. As the US and Britain reduced their presence on Southeast Asia, Australia began to emphasise technology as a means to increase its profile as a regional actor. For the first time, Australia began speaking of self-reliance in defence and a shift away from forward defence and towards greater independence in military capabilities and as a regional player.

Key concepts

During the first period the concept of capability was most frequently used. This was particularly true of policy documents, which tend to skew results across all periods due to their liberal usage of the concept of capability, but was also present in Ministerial statements. Technology was also used substantially, often in the context of industrial capacity and technological level although sometimes also in the context of military platforms or support capabilities. The concept of advantage was rarely employed in policy documents or in Ministerial statements, reflecting a broader tendency to frame technology and capability issues in terms of credibility rather than superiority.

Both documents and debate focused largely on the kinds of military capabilities which would be required for Australia to transition from a supporting role in allies' forces to an independent and self-reliant military actor. In the late 1960s and early 1970s much of the debate centred on the acquisition of the F-111 strike aircraft for the RAAF. This major capability project was seen as a means to revolutionise Australia's defence credibility as it would afford the RAAF a long range strike capability. Capability was often used to

denote both the capacity to perform an operational task and a specific military platform which could be deployed.

Technology was mentioned substantially more in policy statements than in the 1976 defence white paper. It was primarily referred to as a technological base for expansion which would afford Australia a strategic advantage over regional militaries who would not be able to expand or sustain operations at a similar level. In 1968 Fairhall argued that capital expenditure was not a high priority and that defence spending could be better directed towards other outputs, such as infrastructure and munitions. However, the priority of sustaining the technological base meant that defence spending needed to focus on assets and capabilities which would enable expansion rather than a high technology force-in-being which would use technology to increase the performance of specific military platforms or increase coordination between force elements to increase the joint force's overall effectiveness.

Conversely, Fairbairn framed technology as crucial to defence planning:

Programming reconciles, as far as possible, all the pertinent criteria such as the rate of obsolescence of existing equipments, the time needed to bring new equipment into service, the development of new technology, the strategic outlook, our industrial situation, the financial situation at the time, and the extent of the long term financial commitments that would be entered into and handed on to future governments and parliaments.³⁴⁹

Similarly, the 1972 ADR emphasised capability development projects which would give Australia access to 'the world's most advanced military technology.'³⁵⁰ The 1976 white

³⁴⁹ David Fairbairn, "Ministerial Statement," *Defence Programme* (House of Representative Hansard, 1972), 2.

³⁵⁰ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para. 4.3.

paper emphasised Australia defence credibility through the ADF's 'high standards in the professional employment of forces using modern technology.'³⁵¹ It further argued that

Australia's forces should use suitably high technology in Australia's weapons systems, equipment, training and support. Because Australia has close affiliations with the United States and Western Europe, and sufficiently developed technology to make use of those links, a wide choice is available.³⁵²

The 1976 defence white paper further advocated that technology should be exploited to increase the precision and effectiveness of weapons and increase the relative military strength of ADF force elements at a reasonable cost to government:

Advances in the guidance of weapons offer prospects of precise direction from far off at modest cost. Using this ability to attack crucial targets selectively, it is possible to increase military power but decrease unnecessary destruction. Of particular interest to Australian scientists is the breadth of evolving technologies in propulsion, in new forms of microelectronics, in materials, in warheads, in guidance and in sensors to seek out and identify targets in adverse conditions. These new technologies may transform the nature of warfare and it is important that Australian scientists can both absorb them and exercise careful selection of areas within our resources. We are looking into the capabilities that sophisticated and highly accurate missiles or 'smart weapons', including lasers, will confer.³⁵³

However, technology was not always presented as inherently superior and many caveats were presented in documents and speeches. For example, the 1976 defence white paper cautioned against overstating the role of advanced technology in providing superior individual capabilities and instead made the case that many individual platforms did not need to be state of the art. It claimed that the technological level should focus on providing niche high technology capabilities which would give the ADF a substantial

³⁵¹ *Australian Defence*, para. 3.14.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, para. 3.33.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, paras. 8.11-8.13.

advantage in key operational asks and focus on creating the capacity to expand and to support expansion if it occurred.³⁵⁴ Similarly, Killen noted in 1977 that

When it comes to technology a country like Australia has to be highly selective. Not only can advanced technology be very expensive to buy; it can be more suited to the requirements of powers in very different strategic circumstances from Australia. At the same time, however, advanced technology can often offer us important advantages, for example in greatly increased accuracy of firepower. We must also be able to move to higher levels of technology should this become necessary, and be able to operate together with the advanced systems of allies.³⁵⁵

Referent actors

Given that the period 1968-1978 coincides with the Vietnam War, the withdrawal of British forces from Southeast Asia and the announcement of the Guam doctrine, it is unsurprising that the most frequent referent of military capability and technology is great powers. It is interesting, though, that the Southeast Asian region was close behind even in the 1970s.³⁵⁶ Despite its lagging military modernisation and industrial technology, the region was largely regarded in the data set as an important benchmark for the development of the ADF.

As Minister for Defence, Fraser recalled that the F-111 order was made at a time when the British were still stationed in Singapore and reflected that the British withdrawal had created a capability gap for Australia in Southeast Asia that the new strike aircraft were intended to fill.

I reminded the United States that when we originally ordered this aircraft the British had a significant strike capability stationed in Singapore. It is a capability that will no longer be

³⁵⁴ Ibid., paras. 3.21, 3.33.

³⁵⁵ Dennis James Killen, "Ministerial Statement," *House of Representatives Hansard* (1977), 2.

³⁵⁶ See Appendix C, Table 9

committed to the region and I argued that this made it all the more important for this gap in Australia's weapon systems to be adequately overcome.³⁵⁷

Shortly after that the 1972 ADR explicitly distanced Australia from its former Forward Defence predilections and focused instead on regional security

This positive outlook upon our environment is seen to be the more necessary because, in the new world balance, Australia would be prudent not to rest its security as directly or as heavily, as in its previous peacetime history, on the military power of a Western ally in Asia. As for other nations, self-reliance in situations of less than global or major international concern will lay claim to being a central feature in the future development of Australia's defence policy.³⁵⁸

The 1972 ADR also made specific reference to Indonesia when discussing Australia's security interests, noting that 'Indonesia, our immediate neighbour, with a population roughly nine times our own, is by far the greatest of our northern neighbours in size, in resources and in regional influence.'³⁵⁹

Yet defence policy retained a keen interest in global events, as evidenced by then-Prime Minister Fraser's statements about great power influence on regional security. Speaking in reference to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), he noted that the prospect of a declared neutral zone was contrary to Australia's interests because it could alter the balance of forces there, tacitly linking Australia's force structure to regional force levels.

It would certainly not be in Australia's interests to see an uncontrolled build-up of naval forces in this region, and, what we advocate is a policy of balance and restraint the achievement of a balance at the lowest practical force levels.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ John Malcolm Fraser, "Statement by the Minister for Defence to the Parliament Concerning the Strike Bomber Capability for the Royal Australian Air Force," *Parliament* (Canberra 1970), 11.

³⁵⁸ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, 3.33.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 3.15.

³⁶⁰ John Malcolm Fraser, "Address at the Special Session of the House of the People's Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1976), 8.

The 1976 defence white paper further linked global strategic circumstances to the potential for regional security concerns which might affect Australia's defence policy, stating that

...regional rivalry and confrontation between external powers could develop. Prolonged regional tension could lead the regional states to develop capability for conventional military operations on a regional scale.³⁶¹

Policy scope

During 1968-1978 Australia largely abandoned references to global interests in its defence planning. Many statements and documents refer to the possible of global or great power war destabilising the region and threatening Australia's security interests. However, emphasis on any need to pursue security objectives wider than the Asia-Pacific region is rarely apparent.³⁶² Instead, the scope of Australia's security interests is limited primarily to the region. Meanwhile, the defence of Australian territory and interests began to build momentum from the early 1970s onwards. Defending Australia became a prominent concept in the 1976 defence white paper, although region interests and credibility as a security partner remained central to defence policy guidance. Table 10 provides an overview of the coding frequency of the policy scope node.

In 1968 Prime Minister Gorton framed Australia's national security interests in broad terms:

For I believe, and I suggest to all you Australians that what best promotes our national security and the national security of other small States, what best guarantees our national survival, along with the survival of other small powers as truly Independent nations, Is

³⁶¹ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, para. 2.32.

³⁶² See Appendix C, Table 10

that we should have a world in which aggression by one nation or part of one nation against another is shown to be unsuccessful and does not succeed in whole or in part.³⁶³

In the context of the Australian commitment to the Vietnam War, this is understandable and despite its significant discussion of global security issues, the 1972 ADR articulated a primarily regional scope for Australia's policy interests.

The future stability of Australia's broad strategic environment in the decades ahead became much more uncertain when, during the 1960s, the previously dominant economic and military strength of the United States and the Soviet Union began to be challenged by other nations and groups of nations.³⁶⁴

It linked a regional focus to force development priorities which were the first example of a geographical approach to defining strategic interests:

...the kind of forces Australia needs in the 1970s and 1980s derives from four broad influences: first, the geography of our environs and Australia's tangible interests located in our homeland and dependencies, on the continental shelf, and on and under the seas and in the air spaces that link us with trading partners and military allies; second, the expectations that Allies and friends have of us and we of them to contribute to collective security; third, the degree of probability of a threat or resort to force in the area of Australian concern, the magnitude of the threat from time to time, the nature of the environment in which it would require to be countered, and the likelihood of Australian involvement; fourth, the options we would wish future governments to have as to the nature of our involvement in foreseeable or contingent situations of conflict.³⁶⁵

The 1976 defence white paper similarly framed Australia primary security interests as:

For practical purposes, the requirements and scope for Australian defence activity are limited essentially to the areas closer to home - areas in which the deployment of military capabilities by a power potentially unfriendly to Australia could permit that power to attack or harass Australia and its territories, maritime resources zone and near lines of communication. These are our adjacent maritime areas; the South West Pacific countries and territories; Papua New Guinea; Indonesia; and the South East Asian region.³⁶⁶

However it also issued the caveat that the potential for global war between the superpowers remained a central strategic concern for Australia:

³⁶³ John Grey Gorton, "Opening Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton.," *Higgins By-Election Campaign* (Caulfield Town Hall, Melbourne 1968), 3.

³⁶⁴ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para. 3.1.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 5.1.

³⁶⁶ *Australian Defence*, para. 2.24.

The global powers of the modern era, the US and the USSR, maintain strategic nuclear forces at a level of destructive capability unprecedented in history. Their relations directly affect the security of all nations. Military conflict between them would risk widespread devastation by nuclear weapons.³⁶⁷

...because they alone in the contemporary era are able to project military power on a significant scale into regions distant from their homelands and relevant to Australia's strategic circumstances.³⁶⁸

2.4 Strategic concepts

The defence policy discourse from 1968-1978 saw significant change in the strategic concepts employed. The type of advantage sought was largely principled on the notion of technological level as Australia's mitigating advantage for the ADF. Force posture debate ranged from assertions in 1968 that defence self-reliance was implausible and unrealistic to formal statements of policy that self-reliance was not only possible, but achievable. Concurrently, the rationale for technological advantage was centred largely on defence industry and Australia's general industrial capacity for the purposes of expansion. This was entirely consistent with the emergence of the technological level concept and reflects the challenges that Australia faced in the dramatic reshaping of its approach to defence policy.

Type of advantage

It is important to note that the concept of advantage was still largely tied to the emerging notion of an Australian approach to defence founded on self-reliance. The consequence of

³⁶⁷ Ibid., para. 2.1.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., para. 2.17.

this is that relative advantage was not directly mentioned very much in the first period and that its use was quite diverse.³⁶⁹

The technological level of Australia's industrial base and the concept of a technology-based core force for the purpose of expansion were equally emphasised across the entire period. Gorton linked Australia's increasing capacity to conduct military operations to an increasing technological level when he said that 'Australia's capacity to fight will increase and the industrial capacity to back our fighting forces will also expand.'³⁷⁰

As Minister for Defence, Fraser commented as early as 1971 that an expansion base alone was not sufficient for defence planning. Rather than relying on the capacity to exploit Australia's industrial base to create a useful terminal force, Fraser argued that the ADF needed to have a material ability to conduct military operations on short notice in order to be a useful national asset and to deter potential adversaries and to reassure regional and great power allies. He articulated this position to the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Victorian Branch), noting that 'defence arrangements can only have validity if we have forces in being.'³⁷¹ The 1972 ADR echoed this sentiment, stating that

The balance between capabilities in being, those in reserve, those sustained on a limited 'State of the Art' basis, and those whose acquisition may be deferred, will need continuing review with an eye to changes in technology, and in operational concepts and to the strategic uncertainties of the longer term.³⁷²

³⁶⁹ See Appendix C, Table 11

³⁷⁰ John Grey Gorton, "Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 1968-69.," *Parliamentary Debates: Budget Debate* (1968), 3.

³⁷¹ John Malcolm Fraser, "Background to Defence: An Address by the Hon. Malcolm Fraser, M.P., Minister for Defence," *The Australian Institute of International Affairs (Victorian Branch)* (Melbourne 1971), 12.

³⁷² Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para. 57.

Meanwhile, it also pronounced that the ADF should maintain ‘a regular force, versatile and highly trained, mobile... supported by reserve forces with the potential for expansion should the situation require.’³⁷³

The core force rationale became more influential after the review was released and in 1974 Barnard argued that

...the defence force-in-being should be adequate to indicate our resolution and our ability to defend Australian interests and to support others, should the need arise. In times of low-threat probability, as at present, the basic concept is that of a viable core force capable of timely expansion.³⁷⁴

Barnard further claimed that

Developing military technology and Australian technological strength also give guidance. The force will not be manpower-intensive, and should continue to contain a core of sophisticated military components and skills.³⁷⁵

The 1976 defence white paper was a tipping point for this aspect of the defence debate as it sees a significant turn from a technological level logic toward the core force and expansion model which was based more on warning times than industrial capacity and became prominent in the 1980s. However it cautioned that Australia should use technology selectively, mainly due to the costs of cutting edge equipment across the entire force, noting that

To acquire high-level technology in weapons and equipment now throughout our forces may give us advantages in effectiveness, but it would be very expensive. Advanced technology should be favoured where it offers compensating advantages, for example, in simplicity of operation and support, or avoidance of early obsolescence, or sufficient savings in additional equipment, man-power and life-cycle costings or is otherwise particularly suited to Australia's assessed strategic situation. Australia should aim to

³⁷³ Ibid., para. 62.

³⁷⁴ Barnard, "Ministerial Statement," 1-2. Ministerial statement

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

maintain its present relatively favourable position, and be prepared to increase selectively the technological level of its forces if this should be called for.³⁷⁶

After the 1976 white paper, Ministerial statements frequently considered the force-in-being in relation to defence warning times and the ADF's capacity for timely expansion. As Prime Minister, Fraser still used the phrase technological level, but it was now directly linked to specific capabilities in the force-in-being as well as part of Australia capacity to expand the ADF

...advantage will be taken of the enhanced capabilities made possible by new techniques which have produced weapons with unsurpassed accuracy. Examples of this may be seen in the capabilities that will be available in the new long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft and the new destroyers. The weapons system associated with these two purchases will herald a significant advance in the technological level of Australia's forces.³⁷⁷

In 1978 Killen further demonstrated this view, emphasising the force-in-being and not only a core force for later expansion:

We said in the White Paper in 1976 that we saw no credible threat in the short term of an attack upon our territory. But we concluded that we needed to maintain a defence force so structured that it would be capable of timely expansion, should longer term international uncertainties develop unfavourably. For a country determined to possess a capacity to defend itself, we must have in our three Services a wide variety of skills- albeit in modest quantities at a time when we are not living in the shadow of a direct threat. We said in the White Paper that we must have a core of readily available forces possessing the ability to respond promptly to lesser military contingencies involving Australian national interests- contingencies which could arise at shorter notice than could the threat of direct attack upon our country.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, para. 3.33.

³⁷⁷ John Malcolm Fraser, "Address to the R. S. L. Congress," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1976), 4.

³⁷⁸ Dennis James Killen, "Ministerial Statement," *Defence Review* (House of Representatives Hansard, 1978), 1.

Force posture

The type of force posture envisaged in the 1968-1978 period was diverse and saw expeditionary capabilities and self-reliance compete for prominence. When combined with credible contingencies of an armed attack against Australia (including its offshore assets), the defence of Australia is clearly the most often emphasised force posture priority.³⁷⁹

This period saw the emergence of self-reliance as a legitimate concern in defence policy. In 1968 Gorton could not envisage defence self-reliance ever being a realistic goal for Australia and bluntly stated that

...in no future that I can foresee can we in Australia rely on ourselves alone, or remain secure without alliance with some friendly and significantly powerful ally... No small nation such as ours can, in the world as it is today, I suggest to you, live with happiness and security and safety without protection of that kind.³⁸⁰

Less than a decade later the concept of defence self-reliance would be cemented in the policy debate and affirmed in a publicly released policy document. The 1976 defence white paper stated that 'the force-in-being and planned should have a substantial capability for independent operations.'³⁸¹ It also set self-reliance as a benchmark for capability development and as a minimum requirement for the ADF, declaring that

...our forces and associated capabilities should be able to operate with substantial independence in our own environment. We should avoid development of defence capabilities that are not relevant to our own requirements.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ See Appendix C, Table 12

³⁸⁰ Gorton, "Opening Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton.," 2.

³⁸¹ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, para. 3.27.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, para. 3.19.

A concomitant concern was developing a force structure for the ADF which provide an adequate force-in-being to act as a deterrent to potentially adversaries and which could meet credible contingencies at short notice. As Minister for Defence, Fraser cats this in simple terms of preparedness, stating that

The whole purpose of defence preparedness is to establish circumstances in which you will not have to go to war; to provide a capability which will do much to help achieve stability in your own region. You do not wait until you have a specific target before you equip your air force with a strike bomber capability.³⁸³

Soon after, the 1972 ADR specifically referred to the need to meet contingencies in Australia's force structure planning

...Australia's force structure should be built partly to meet evident and foreseeable needs, some of which are referred to below, and partly to provide readiness against threats of varying orders of probability or intensity which cannot be predicted so far ahead and are, therefore, best described as estimated contingencies.³⁸⁴

Barnard further elaborated on the force-in-being concept, stating that

No regional power has or is likely to acquire for many years the capability and motive that might require an Australian defence response. The possibility of low-level situations on relatively short notice, for example in our maritime resources zone, continues; insofar as these were not susceptible to political handling, they must be met by our defence force in being.³⁸⁵

...we are now required by strategic and international political developments - and we ourselves wish - to deal on our own with any local situations that may arise, to assert an independent strategic influence, and to pursue political- policies more independently of United States views and interests. Therefore, we must keep in being a viable national defence force with manifest capability for expansion, and maintain its development at the modest rate now required by the assumption of larger national responsibility, by the current strategic guidance, and by longer term uncertainties.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Fraser, "Statement by the Minister for Defence to the Parliament Concerning the Strike Bomber Capability for the Royal Australian Air Force," 8.

³⁸⁴ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para. 3.

³⁸⁵ Barnard, "Ministerial Statement," 3. Ministerial statement

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

1976 defence white paper further refined the force-in-being concept and also expanded the kinds of contingencies set as a benchmark for preparedness.

The force-in-being should be capable of performing current and foreseeable tasks and dealing with selected shorter-term contingencies - for example, maintenance and expansion of the training base; sea control in areas of Australia's maritime jurisdiction; quick detection of and response to any maritime or coastal harassment; aid to the civil power in counter-terrorist operations, as requested and appropriately authorised; exercising with allies and regional defence associates; maritime surveillance and display in areas of Australian interest; support for defence co-operation programs; and contributing to UN peace-keeping.³⁸⁷

The force should be of a size and versatility and possess or have under development or acquisition the structure, equipments and professional skills adequate for timely expansion against a range of contingencies of various types and timings, as indicated by the strategic guidance from time to time and having regard to the long lead times of certain equipments and skills.³⁸⁸

Killen also noted the impact of the expansion base rationale on the force-in-being:

...let me say here and now that we shall always need an army large enough to embrace and keep abreast of the most modern skills of land warfare and to provide a basis for expansion, while being ready for lesser contingencies that may require the deployment of some part of it. We have a total army of 54,000 today- 32,000 regulars and 22,000 reserves. It is highly professional and so regarded internationally. It trains hard. It is the core of leadership and skill around which, in some future defence emergency, we would build.³⁸⁹

This is interesting because it clearly articulates the warning time idea as a determinant of a core force structure decision to keep the ADF top-heavy. Killen further elaborated that

A core force concept such as we have will not work unless it embraces also the concept of that core force maintaining exceptionally high professional standards. I would like to comment here about a related matter which is not widely understood. It is sometimes said that our peacetime defence force is 'top heavy'. Of course it is. I do not think this is an area where we can indulge ourselves in parsimony. There is a long lead time for producing senior commanders, staff officers, top-flight NCOs upon whom we would depend to lead an expanded force in war.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, para. 3.27.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ Dennis James Killen, "Ministerial Statement," *House of Representatives Hansard* (1979), 5.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Rationale for advantage

During the first period the rationale for an advantage was largely based on industry interests and state of the art technology. Relatively little attention was given to mitigating Australia's strategic constraints and maintaining capabilities relative to other actors compared to later periods.³⁹¹

As Minister for Defence, Fraser emphasised relative advantage in his desire for the ADF to acquire the F-111, stating that 'we need the strike bomber capability in the Australian Force Structure. Without it our policies will lack credibility.'³⁹² He elaborated that

No other aircraft embodies such highly developed and proven technological equipment to ensure the delivery of its weapons precisely on target day or night; and there is no other aircraft which can equal the F-111 in its designed ability to carry a heavy weapon load over such a wide radius of action and penetrate the most sophisticated enemy defences under any weather conditions.³⁹³

Fraser further argued that advanced forces were needed to deter and defeat attacks against Australia.

I would like to restate and emphasise that it is the Government's view, strongly supported by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, that an air strike force is an essential element of a balanced defence force for Australia. Without a strike force, we could not carry out effective counter air operations against aircraft on the ground, air bases and supporting installations. Counter air operations are a critical element in any air defence capability. An air strike force has deterrent value. The U. K. deterrent force will have gone from South East Asia. The last decade demonstrated the rapidity with which threats can change. The lead-time involved in reintroducing an aircraft, assuming one is available, into actual operational readiness could be several years from the decision date.³⁹⁴

Meanwhile, the 1972 ADR presented a rationale for a technological edge based on mitigation, advocating an ADF which takes '... full advantage of military skills and

³⁹¹ See Appendix C, Table 13

³⁹² Fraser, "Statement by the Minister for Defence to the Parliament Concerning the Strike Bomber Capability for the Royal Australian Air Force," 21.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

technology to compensate as much as practicable for limitations of manpower...'³⁹⁵

However this was an exception to the emerging confidence in Australia's ability to defend itself. In 1975 Whitlam spoke with bravado as he emphasised Australia's military advantage over Southeast Asia:

...there is no airforce within thousands and thousands of miles of Australia which could compete with the R.A.A.F. There is no navy within thousands and thousands of miles of Australia which could compete with the R.A.N. and there are no armed forces which could land in Australia which the Australian Army couldn't promptly eliminate.³⁹⁶

However, the 1976 defence white paper largely emphasised the technological level as a means for expansion, noting that Australia's advantage was contingent on its capacity to match the force expansion of a potential adversary on short notice.

A further objective is the progressive development of a range of basic technologies and capacities which would facilitate an intensification and diversification of present activities to match force expansion, should the need arise.³⁹⁷

2.5 Strategic signalling

This period was quite narrow for Australia's strategic signalling. There was little discussion of deterrence while Australia was still finding its feet as a self-reliant actor in matters of defence. Reassurance focused almost exclusively on convincing regional countries that Australia retained the capacity to assist them even absent the British presence. Similarly validation was largely aimed at convincing the Australian public that the ADF was capable of adequately defending Australia from external threats, which was a stark break from long-held belief about Australia's indefensibility and an alien concept to most of the Australian public.

³⁹⁵ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para. 62.

³⁹⁶ Edward Gough. Whitlam, "Prime Minister's Interview," *Channel 7 - State File Special* (Perth1975), 8.

³⁹⁷ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence*, para. 8.26.

Deterrence

Statements which stressed Australia's military proficiency to potential adversaries were relatively rare during the period 1968-1978. Deterrence emanated almost exclusively from Ministerial statements and not from publicly released policy documents. Furthermore, when deterrence was mentioned, it was rarely a significant proportion of a statement and was more often mentioned in passing.³⁹⁸ For example, Fraser, as Minister for Defence, stated that

...the ability of modern strike aircraft to deliver significant weapon loads on deep penetration missions, with relative immunity from even the most sophisticated defences gives them the offensive capability which is an essential requirement of effective deterrent forces. Any sustained attack against Australia or its Territories would have to be supported over sea lines of communication and through ports and base areas. The possibility that ports and base areas could be interdicted by a strike force would be a significant deterrent to any foreign power considering such an attack.³⁹⁹

Similarly, McMahon argued that Australia 'must maintain a defence capability that is evident both to friendly countries and to potential enemies, and which we could develop in adequate time should more immediate threats arise.'⁴⁰⁰

The 1972 ADR linked long term force structure planning to both deterrence and credibility, stating that

...an opportunity exists for Australia to move progressively in the 1970s and 1980s towards a more independent and improving national defence capability which, while meeting current continuing requirements, is shaped also to equip us for the longer term military threat situations which are contingencies in that period, indefinite though these may now seem... The balance between capabilities in being, those in reserve, those sustained on a limited 'State of the Art' basis, and those whose acquisition may be deferred, will need continuing review with an eye to changes in technology, and in operational concepts and to the strategic uncertainties of the longer term... The balance

³⁹⁸ See Appendix C, Table 14

³⁹⁹ Fraser, "Statement by the Minister for Defence to the Parliament Concerning the Strike Bomber Capability for the Royal Australian Air Force," 9.

⁴⁰⁰ William McMahon, "Future of Australian Forces in Vietnam, and National Service: Ministerial Statement," *Parliamentary Debates* (1971), 3.

between essentially defensive capabilities and weapons of attack also requires review. Considerations of credibility and of long term deterrence suggest modification in favour of the latter.⁴⁰¹

By the mid-1970s, deterrence became a clearer theme in policy statements and documents. For example, the 1976 defence white paper noted that the ADF ‘should at all times demonstrate Australia's serious attitude to defence matters, military competence and capacity to absorb and operate high-technology equipments.’⁴⁰² It also emphasised strategic strike force elements for the Navy and Air Force specifically to ‘deter potential adversaries’⁴⁰³ and that ‘Australia's strategic and geographic circumstances call for strike forces that can deter attack.’⁴⁰⁴ The 1976 white paper also came to the sober conclusion that Australia

...may have to rely upon military force to deter a threat to our interests, it is important that we be seen as a nation that takes defence matters seriously and that our military capabilities and competence should command respect.⁴⁰⁵

Reassurance

Reassurance coding frequency demonstrates that the vast majority of statements made to allies were based on asserting Australia's credibility as a security partner.⁴⁰⁶ This is consistent with sources not eligible for inclusion in the data set, particularly the *strategic basis* series of papers, which strongly emphasised credibility throughout the early 1970s.

⁴⁰¹ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, para. 5.57.

⁴⁰² *Australian Defence*, para. 3.27.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, para. 3.32.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 4.25.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 3.18.

⁴⁰⁶ See Appendix C, Table 15

An early example of credibility statements to security partners is Gorton's reassurance that Australia would not be impotent in the absence of a strong British presence in Southeast Asia:

Australia, the most industrially and technically advanced nation in the region, surely would not wish, in these circumstances, to refrain from helping the region in all ways. We could not turn our backs on our neighbours, refuse to help provide forces for their security, and wash our hands of the possible consequences to them and to ourselves.⁴⁰⁷

Gorton later outlined his view on Australia's role in Southeast Asia at length:

Well, I would answer that question as to how I saw our role there. And I see it this way. I see it in the need to show a real involvement in the area and a willingness to participate and help in all kinds of ways to give economic help, to give technical help, to assist with development, to try and open trade channels and also to be prepared to show that we are interested in helping to counter any military attack which may be launched on the area. Up until the present and perhaps still for a short time Britain has been responsible for the defence of Malaysia and Singapore and has accepted fully that responsibility herself as a major power and has looked to assistance from Malaysia, from Singapore, from ourselves, from New Zealand. Now, we can't accept responsibility for the defence of the area and look for assistance. Rather must the area defend itself and look to assistance from us and from New Zealand. There is a change in emphasis there.⁴⁰⁸

He further noted that

One of the ways in which we decided to do so is by the retention of some Australian forces in the area, a visible presence, a continuing visible presence, a presence which has been described - not by me but I see the validity of the description as something which may appear to others - at any rate to be the tip of the iceberg. We are retaining ground forces which will, for the best military, logistic and financial reasons and for great reasons of common sense, be based in Singapore, provided Singapore wishes them to remain in the area; forces which will not, however, be confined to operations or exercises in Singapore, forces which are there under the concept that defence against external attack is, as far as Singapore and Malaya are concerned, in our view indivisible.⁴⁰⁹

Then-Minister for Defence, Fraser frequently reiterated the need for an ADF capacity to contribute to military operations to protect the security of the Southeast Asian and Western Pacific region.

⁴⁰⁷ John Grey Gorton, "Defence: Ministerial Statement," *Parliamentary Debates* (1969), 2.

⁴⁰⁸ "'This Week': Television Interview Given by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton," *HSV-7* (Melbourne 1969), 1.

⁴⁰⁹ "Opening Address by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton," *Five Power Conference* (Parliament House, Canberra 1969), 2.

Within our resources, our military capability must be geared for deployment in the region of which Australia is part when this is demanded by our concepts of regional security, as well as to meet possible threats to Australian territory.⁴¹⁰

McMahon reaffirmed this sentiment, saying that

We are too developing all those skills that the technological age demands and through the combination of all these qualities and virtues we are becoming a middle power. I think we have a significance in the Pacific theatre that is out of all proportion to the wealth that is being produced in my country. I believe we are getting into this position of trust, a position where people consult us because they know that over the years we have been a completely trustworthy and reliable ally.⁴¹¹

McMahon further signalled Australia's interests in supporting its regional neighbours in order to promote security and stability in the region.

Asia remains a critical area of the world in which the quest for peace and security will be concentrated in the future... I want to emphasise Australia's growing and continuing interest in the South-East Asian region. Australia is deeply interested in the wellbeing of our Asian friends and we are anxious to assist them in their search for economic growth and regional security.⁴¹²

The 1972 ADR took a more ambiguous tone, stating that

Australia should avoid concepts limiting its military interest and potential military involvement to within the nation's coastline, and should contribute, explicitly without provocation, to confidence and security in our region of the world.⁴¹³

...it would be an unwarranted optimism to assume that events will never take a course which requires Australian military support for countries... ...our defence preparations need to be such that future Australian Governments are not deprived of the practical option to offer quick and effective support of a military nature, if that is what is required.⁴¹⁴

In similarly loose phrasing it also suggested that Australia would use its advanced technology to support its security partners

⁴¹⁰ John Malcolm Fraser, "Notes from an Address by the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Malcolm Fraser, M.P.," *The United Services Institute of Hobart* (1971).

⁴¹¹ William McMahon, "Prime Minister's Address to National Press Club," *National Press Club* (Washington 1971), 2.

⁴¹² "Departure Statement," *Visit to Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia* (Sydney 1972), 2.

⁴¹³ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, 3.32.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.13.

In our defence co-operation with countries in South East Asia, Australia's relatively advanced military technology enables us to offer contributions in forms which mutual strategic needs suggest.⁴¹⁵

As Prime Minister, Fraser presented a strong view that 'our first concern must be to ensure that Australia is seen as a nation that is militarily competent, capable of independent effort and that has a realistic understanding of its strategic situation.'⁴¹⁶

Validation

In the late 1960s Australia's efforts to reinforce the idea of security to the Australian public were palpable.⁴¹⁷ Then-Prime Minister Gorton stressed the significant change in Australia's security environment in the aftermath of the British announcement that it was withdrawing from Southeast Asia. He further iterated that Australia was no more vulnerable as a result of the change to the regional security environment

Well, I don't think Australia is any more vulnerable at all, if you're talking in the terms of an invasion or a likely incursion across the borders of Australia by some hostile power. I believe without question that the ANZUS Treaty covers Australia and New Zealand and we have ourselves increased our own capacity to defend ourselves. So if that is the sense in which one is talking I believe we are no more vulnerable at all.⁴¹⁸

Gorton followed this closely with the caveat that the region was destabilised by the British withdrawal and US interest in distancing itself from the region, nothing that

But nevertheless, it would be true to say that Britain's accelerated withdrawal and the debate going on in the United States as to the extent of involvement and the kind of involvement that country should have in South-East Asia, would have created conditions there less stable than before these things happened.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., para. 4.6.

⁴¹⁶ Fraser, "Address to the R. S. L. Congress," 4.

⁴¹⁷ See Appendix C, Table 16

⁴¹⁸ John Grey Gorton, "Four Corners Interview with the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. J. G. Gorton," *A.B.C.* (1968), 1.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

He reiterated the impending need to reorient Australian strategic outlook and defence planning away from reliance on great power allies and towards independence in the defence of Australia and its approaches.

...we have entered a new period in Australia's history, a time of change, a need to contribute constantly to our own defence, more than I personally like to contribute because I have always in my mind the knowledge of what could be done with what must be put into this defence expenditure. But I have also in my mind, and your Government and its supporters have in their mind that in this time of change we must keep up the enormous expansion of resources for our own defence as an insurance policy, and if we are with some measure of safety to own what we have and progress in the way that is possible.⁴²⁰

This required going to lengths to reassure the Australian public and Australia's regional allies that the ADF was able to deter attacks, provide national security and contribute to regional security. Gorton also frequently asserted that the Commonwealth government had an inherent responsibility to defend the country. This extended to defence funding, with Then-Prime Minister Gorton stating that Australia 'shall progressively increase the sums spent on defence in the years ahead, for to do less would weaken our own security and invite the suspicion of our allies both within the region and without.'⁴²¹

Fairbairn later said that

In so acting Australia must be able to protect its interests beyond, as well as within, its continental boundaries; to support its friends and its allies in the protection of mutual interests in the region; and, having these capabilities, to be able to continue to contribute responsibly to the development of a climate of confidence and security in the region and to the deterrence of threats generally.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ "Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton," *Greensborough Liberal Party Branch Luncheon* (Bundoora, VIC1968), 2.

⁴²¹ "Federal Elections 1969: Policy Speech," (1969), 4.

⁴²² Fairbairn, "Ministerial Statement," 1.

Barnard discussed expenditure in alternate terms, countering threat perceptions held by others and arguing for expenditure restraint whilst promoting security

I mentioned the increasing uncertainty in our strategic assessments the further ahead we try to look. Our defence policy and force structure must have regard to this. However I do not share the attitude, apparent in some public comment on our defence posture, that change in our strategic environment means that we shall necessarily be less secure, and that we must now act on the assumption that, when uncertainties resolve, things will be worse. We have external developments under continuous review, and I see no reasons at this time to modify the strategic prospect that I presented last year. I shall not be pushed into much larger demands on the taxpayer to satisfy those who are either unwilling or unable to state a case for defence expenditure that we may all examine and debate, but rely instead on vague assertions about future possibilities of threat and shaky analogies from the past.⁴²³

Chapter conclusions

The data show that Australia's approach towards relative advantage emerged throughout the 1970s and was qualitatively different to later conceptualisations of advantage. Policy context was strongly anchored in establishing Australia's credibility as a more self-reliant actor than it had previously been. The key concepts used were capability and technology. Advantage was rarely used because Australian was trying to position itself as an independent security actor for the first time in its history. The primary referents of Australia's defence capability interest were global but at the same time its interests had become far more regionally focused. This indicates a divergence between where the defence policy discourse was heading in terms of long term interests and objectives and how the defence organisation and Ministers conceived of Australia's military capabilities and proficiencies.

⁴²³ Barnard, "Ministerial Statement," 3. [Ministerial statement](#)

The use of strategic concepts was fairly narrow in the first period. The role of technology was initially linked to industrial capacity and the technological level but later became more focused on military capabilities. However, even where this occurred the advantages of technology were conceived largely in terms of being state of the art rather than through mitigation or maintaining a lead which was specifically relative to other actors. Policy statements often discussed technology in absolute terms of the best available technology. Meanwhile, Australia's force posture was still split between the capacity to conduct expeditionary or overseas contingency operations and the defence of Australia and capabilities in which Australia could maintain defence self-reliance.

Strategic signalling was heavily dominated by a reaction to Australia's new self-reliant circumstances. Deterrence did not feature prominently in this period, although it was infrequently mentioned. Reassurance focused heavily on Australia's credibility as a security partner to regional countries with whom it shared a security relationship. This is consistent with the emergence of self-reliance and the end of forward defence as a planning and ordering principle of Australia's defence policy. Validation was focused primarily on reiterating to the Australian public that Australia was capable of defending itself from armed attack. This was contrary to Australia's entire history of defence thinking and it required substantial political reassurance to reinforce self-reliance as a realistic objective after forward defence collapsed. Validation also had to convince the Australian public that self-reliance was affordable as well as possible. Defence spending had to increase significantly to accommodate the new capability initiatives that had begun entering defence policy priorities as early as Menzies' 1965 decision to acquire the F-111 strike aircraft for the RAAF. Gorton in an interview acknowledged that the F-111

purchase was related to Indonesia but would not comment on whether it was still warranted.

Chapter 3

1979-1986: Technological level and the core force concept

The period 1979-1986 was marked by some of the fiercest debate about defence policy priorities and force structure decisions that Australia has ever experienced. During the 1970s, much of Australia's attention had been consumed by regional interests and the reformation of the Defence Organisation in the aftermath of the Tange reforms. The policy priority of self-reliance had dominated much of the defence discourse and public debate was centred primarily on how to structure the ADF to perform core tasks related to the defence of Australia. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a shock to the debate. Although the possibility of great power conflict disrupting international security had never slipped from the Defence Organisation's priorities, it had not featured as prominently in debate as issues related to self-reliance. The sudden reorientation of discussion from primarily self-reliance and regional issues to include the importance of global security and the potential for great powers to invade smaller powers dramatically altered the policy debate and wider discourse.

This was particularly apparent in the representation of relative advantage in defence policy discourse. It provided ammunition to supporters of the concept of strategic denial as a means for Australia to defend itself. It also supported arguments that Australia needed a stronger force-in-being which could respond to short-warning conflicts without the delays involved in expansion. This introduced the idea of differentiating between short-warning and longer-warning contingencies and became a central force structure principle. It is important to note that this period does not contain any formal defence policy documents. It is between the 1975 and 1987 defence white papers and there were no publicly released policy information papers from within defence at the time. There were several important defence policy documents originating from other government sources, such as parliamentary inquiries, but these are not included in the data set. Therefore, the data this period are unique in the study to the extent that they are derived solely from Ministerial statements.

3.1 More with less

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a hotly contested period in Australian politics, particular in relation to defence issues. Although Labor and the Coalition had reached an implicit consensus on the broad strokes of Australia's new approach to defence, they differentiated fundamental aspects of their policies more starkly than had been the case throughout the 1970s. In the area of strategic policy, the period is largely defined by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Australia's renewed concerns about the possibility of a major theatre war between West and East. Into the 1980s the looming retirement of HMAS Melbourne and the debate over a potential replacement was a vehicle through key

actors used rhetoric to publicise their policy initiatives for Australia's defence.⁴²⁴ Meanwhile, wider policy discourse was tempered by the pragmatic limits of growth. Despite an optimistic outlook, Australia suffered from global economic trends which lowered the ceilings of its seemingly infinite expectations for continued expansion in the early 1980s. The decade became characterised largely by neo-liberal economic reform, with Hawke as the unifier who infused Labor's policies with his own standards of social and political equity.⁴²⁵ The economic path Australia began in the 1980s was essentially bi-partisan and many of the reforms pushed by the Hawke government were criticised by the opposition for their modesty rather than their excess or extremism.

The Afghanistan crisis

The crisis in Afghanistan was a watershed moment for the Fraser Government. It brought the issue of international security back into Australia's foreign and defence policy debates with renewed vigour. While Fraser had long-held personal reservations about the strength of America's commitments to its allies, he saw the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as the single greatest affront to international peace and security since the outbreak of World War Two.⁴²⁶ As a result, Fraser was prepared to set aside his misgivings about the Western alliance in order to present a united front against the spectre of communism.⁴²⁷ This created a wedge between Fraser and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrew Peacock. By 1980 Fraser and Peacock were at odds over the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and Australia's continuing recognition of the Khmer Rouge. Peacock believed that Pol Pot's

⁴²⁴ Robert JL Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs* (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1994), 227-9.

⁴²⁵ Paul Kelly, "The Politics of Economic Change in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s," *Reserve Bank of Australia Annual Conference* (Kirribilli, NSW1996).

⁴²⁶ Fraser and Simons, *The Political Memoirs*, 472.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 473.

atrocities precluded the possibility of ongoing recognition from Australia. Fraser and his entire cabinet supported Peacock's view that Pol Pot's regime was abhorrent and unacceptable, but did not go so far as to withdraw Australia's recognition of the regime. Fraser saw the invasion of Kampuchea as part of a broader Soviet attempt to influence the countries of ASEAN and prioritised pragmatism and solidarity with regional states over de facto support for the Vietnamese in Kampuchea.⁴²⁸

While Fraser deferred to pragmatism in international issues, he prioritised his values in many domestic political spats. While Fraser's co-authored memoirs paint him as a servant to his principles, those principles were understandably flexible in the case of resisting potential Soviet expansion by continuing to recognise brutal regimes in Southeast Asia. In matters closer to home, Fraser saw loyalty to his values as more important than loyalty to his friends or his party. This cost him dearly in the second half of his Prime Ministership, particularly in the aftermath of the Costigan Commission.⁴²⁹ The Commission followed organised crime deep into the support base of the Liberal Party and Fraser faced a contradiction between his loyalty to his values and his loyalty to his party. Fraser felt that his commitment to his principles resulted in a number of Ministerial resignations and reinforced perceptions that he was a detached and disloyal leader.⁴³⁰ Another perspective may be that the inconsistency in his absolutism when it came to principles was tantamount to hypocrisy. In any event, the Coalition entered the 1983 double-dissolution election battered and Bob Hawke, the newly elected Labor leader, contrasted the Coalition's internal collapse with the slogan *Bringing Australia Together*.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 479-81.

⁴²⁹ Francis Xavier Costigan headed the *Royal Commission on the Activities of the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union* which began in 1980.

⁴³⁰ Fraser and Simons, *The Political Memoirs*, 585-91.

The 1983 election campaign was criticised for being a personality race rather than a contest based on policy substance. The *Australian Financial Review* characterised the election as a barometer of the electorate's judgment about the two would-be leaders and their suitability as potential heads of government.⁴³¹ Some commentators believed that the personality-based campaigning was a deliberate move by both parties to side-step difficult policy questions. Although the campaign ultimately brought both parties face to face with some of the most intractable policy issues of the time, the campaigns did play on the individual qualities of Fraser and Hawke significantly. This approach was explicitly acknowledged by Graham Richardson, who had been a member of Hawke's campaign committee in 1983. Richardson believed that Labor had promoted its leader more than its policies because the party saw the Hawke of 1983 as a perfect fit for what the Australia of 1983 wanted in a leader.⁴³² Ultimately the image of a leader focused on national unity won over the electorate's impressions of Fraser's combative leadership style and the Government was defeated by a resurgent Labor Party at the polls.⁴³³ Hawke had won the day, but had set high expectations for his government in the process.

The rise of rationalism

Once Labor took office in 1983 it began turning even further away from its traditional policy objectives than Hawke's election campaign had signalled. Hawke and his Deputy, future Prime Minister Paul Keating, saw economic reform as a principal objective for their government. They immediately distanced the Labor Government of the 1980s from

⁴³¹ "Too Much of a Good Thing," *Australian Financial Review*, 17 February 1983, 12.

⁴³² Graeme Richardson, *Whatever It Takes* (Sydney: Bantam Books, 1994), 127.

⁴³³ Sullivan, "Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96," 8.

both the ideology of the Whitlam Government and the orthodoxy of the Fraser Government. Instead Hawke and Keating painted themselves as pragmatist who believed that a new approach was not only desirable, but necessary.⁴³⁴ Hawke's turn toward economic rationalism began a sweeping reform of policies with significant social and political implications which ignited a series of debates and which cast a long shadow in Australian politics. Policies which began under Hawke and were continued under Keating challenged traditional views about Australia's global and regional identity with a progressive vision of integrating the Australian economy with Asia to a much greater extent. The same policies also bridged some of the long-standing gaps between Labor and the Coalition in areas of economic policy, sometimes redrawing party lines in unlikely ways.⁴³⁵

Labor's new focus on internationalism was coupled with a renewed intellectualism in the leadership and quickly distanced policy development from the party and its Whitlam-era support base in the wider Australian community. As early as 1984 some Party members felt alienated from the decision-making process, with Hawke's own election campaign director lamenting his lack of knowledge about the Prime Minister's major policy initiatives leading into the election.⁴³⁶ From the mid-1980s onwards Labor increased its focus on its more traditional areas of policy, introducing a suite of progressive social and environmental policies which were linked to the reform of the Australian economy. A range of income redistribution packages targeted low-income earners, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation aimed to alter the composition of the workforce, and

⁴³⁴ Kelly, "The Politics of Economic Change in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s," 223.

⁴³⁵ Sullivan, "Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96," 8.

⁴³⁶ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1992), 138.

superannuation pensions sought to safeguard Australia's ageing population from economic dependency in their twilight years. Labor appeared to be swinging back towards its roots. Yet, it simultaneously pushed a complicated economic agenda which combined rationalism with trade liberalisation and a continued embrace of globalisation. Despite a seeming contradiction in policy directions, Labor sought to reconcile its past and future. An essential component of the Hawke Government's plan for Australia's transition to economic liberalism was social equity. Driving a reform agenda underwritten by equity was at once a precondition of support from Labor's constituency, a tactic to justify market-based policy development, and a discrete aim of pursuing economic liberalism at all.⁴³⁷

Another element of Labor's reimagining of Australia's global identity was a major shift in Defence policy. Hawke believed that, more than an expansion capacity, Australia needed a credible and relevant military capability which could provide for the defence of Australia against armed aggression.⁴³⁸ He opposed the Coalition's proposal to acquire an aircraft carrier to replace HMAS Melbourne and believed that it was Labor's task to rebuild the 'basic military supplies' which the coalition had allowed to dwindle over the preceding decade.⁴³⁹ In addition, Hawke sought to refine Australia's strategic outlook by focusing it more on the defence of the Australian continent and offshore assets. He further wanted to substantially change the ADF's force structure by equipping with the mix of capabilities which best suited Labor's approach to prioritising strategic objectives. Hawke

⁴³⁷ "The Politics of Economic Change in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s," 224.

⁴³⁸ Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs*, 227-9.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

appointed Kim Beazely as minister for Defence and commissioned Paul Dibb to report on the capabilities required to defend Australia as Labor envisaged.

Hawke's major challenge was to produce a defence policy which could be sold to the wider Labor Party but which also demonstrated that his government was not shying away from core defence issues. This meant closing the gap between the Coalition and Labor policies to ensure that Labor couldn't be criticised as weak in matters of defence. It also meant making a case for a high-capability defence force at a time where some of Labor's support base may have been attracted to New Zealand's 'path of de-facto non-alignment.'⁴⁴⁰ On one hand Hawke limited the number of uranium mines in Australia, appeasing the far left. On the other hand, he renewed his government's commitment to Western alliances, particularly ANZUS, under the banner of self-reliance within alliances. Hawke and Beazely presented a united front to both supporters and critics of the US alliance by focusing on the mutually beneficial elements of self-reliance and reinforcing the message that Australia's credibility was bolstered by its capacity for unilateral action.

Who do we think we are?

In 1986 the Labor Government published the unclassified version of the Dibb Review and opened a debate with the community about the future of Australia's defence. Although the review itself dealt primarily with matters of capability, it raised deeper questions of identity which stoked long-held concerns about security which were embedded in society. Dibb himself famously responded to some expansionist proposals regarding Australia's

⁴⁴⁰ Peter Jennings, "The Politics of Defence White Papers," *Security Challenges* 9, no. 2 (2013): 5.

defence role by exclaiming ‘who do we think we are?’ This was no hyperbole. The question resonated deeply in the community and discussions of what could be done with material capabilities were often linked to discussions of what should be done and why Australia ought to be prepared to do it. In some ways the Dobb Review sparked a conversation about Australia’s place in the world which illuminated latent undercurrents of the xenophobia and insecurity which had been integral to the identity of earlier generations of Australians and had become entrenched in how many Australians understood their nation and themselves.⁴⁴¹

The Dobb Review and subsequent debate regarding the upcoming 1987 Defence White Paper presented Hawke with a unique opportunity to dovetail his defence and trade policies. Self-reliance provided a new lens for Australians to view and understand their near neighbours. Hawke believed that Australians had by and large interpreted Asia as a looming threat and that the time had come to see the region in terms of opportunities instead of dangers.⁴⁴² The Government leveraged the rhetoric of a stronger and more self-reliant Australia to bolster its narrative of embracing Asia as an economic and political partner. Although Labor did not make significant progress in recasting Australia’s self-image in the 1980s, it laid the ground for many of its later policy narratives by framing both defence and economic policies in terms of national characteristics which were transferrable to values and, by extension, to interpretations of national identity.⁴⁴³ The first step to unifying Labor’s vision was selling the Defence of Australia, still in its conceptual infancy, to the electorate. Much of this burden fell onto Beazley’s shoulders

⁴⁴¹ Anthony Burke, *Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁴² Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs*, 229.

⁴⁴³ Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*.

and he was both a blessing and a curse in the campaign to develop and defend Labor's strategic policy vision.

Although Beazley was generally well-liked as an individual in both major parties, he was a polarising Minister for Defence. Some believed that he was the finest minister that the Department had ever had. Beazley enjoyed a glowing record of major reform all the way from strategic interests and objectives down to long-term force structure planning, capability acquisition and military training and doctrine. He also struck a difficult balance between the Hawke Government's views on defence self-reliance with the necessity of the US alliance and in the process forged strong relationships with many prominent American politicians.⁴⁴⁴ Beazley was also seen as overzealous and militant. He was criticised for his fascination with expensive high-tech capabilities, particularly the Collins class submarines, and for reductions in the size of Australia's ground forces.⁴⁴⁵ Some commentators also objected to his readiness to use force in regional matters and characterised his approach to defence a new militarism. In balance, these criticisms were likely overstated.⁴⁴⁶ Despite Beazley's vehement rhetorical support for defence, the Department's budget actually contracted during his tenure. In addition, the size of the ADF, primarily the Army, shrunk significantly under the Hawke and Keating governments.⁴⁴⁷ Beazley faced vigorous debates on many aspects of Labor's strategic policy agenda. Selling a new Australian identity was a tall order under such circumstances and Beazley did not gain significant traction until he neared the end of his

⁴⁴⁴ David Leser, *The Whites of Their Eyes: Profiles by David Leser* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), 62.

⁴⁴⁵ Brian Toohey, "Beazley Ill Advised to Stand on Defence," *Australian Financial Review*, 8 October 2001.

⁴⁴⁶ Leser, *The Whites of Their Eyes: Profiles by David Leser*, 62.

⁴⁴⁷ Peter Reith, "Beazley's Not the Man for Our Times," *The Age*, 11 October 2001.;

tenure as Minister for Defence. Nevertheless, the Hawke Government planted the seed of a narrative of Australian identity which continued to evolve under successive Labor and Coalition governments.

3.2 The force structure debate

The defence policy background for the period 1979-1986 is defined largely by the force structure debate which had begun in the 1970s and continued until the late 1980s. This section examines the origins of the force structure debate, the emergence and controversy of the core force concept and the evolution of defence planning priorities. It examines the state of debate after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, through the parliamentary inquiries into threats to Australia and the ADF's force structure and criticisms of the viability of multipath expansion to an unknown terminal force.⁴⁴⁸ It concludes with then-Minister for Defence Kim Beazley's decision to commission Paul Dibb to conduct a review of force structure planning for the ADF and the release of Dibb's findings in his *review of Australia's defence capabilities* report in 1986.⁴⁴⁹

The force posture debate

The late 1970s and early 1980s were a period of significant defence debate in Australia. The implications of self-reliance had not yet been teased out and a cohesive implementation policy was needed. Public support for self-reliance was not immediately

⁴⁴⁸ Ross Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 150.; Desmond J. Ball, "Equipment Policy for the Defence of Australia," *The Defence of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*, ed. Robert O'Niell (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1977), 119.

⁴⁴⁹ Dibb, "Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities."

forthcoming and many citizens believed that Australia lacked the strategic weight to fend for itself.⁴⁵⁰ Important questions emerged that defence policy could not yet answer, particularly in the realm of force structure planning, operational concepts and doctrine, the scope of the interests that Australia was willing to pursue with armed force and the priorities that would determine appropriate capabilities to develop in order to meet the types of threats that Australia sought to defend against in the future. This reinforced the fundamental nature of the shift in policy away from Forward Defence and toward self-reliance.⁴⁵¹ The ADF now faced an operational and doctrinal transition from its historical preparations for land war in Asia or further afield and toward the defence of the Australian mainland and its expansive air and maritime surrounds.⁴⁵² Meanwhile, the Department of Defence was still adjusting to the Tange reforms and faced the daunting task of translating new strategic guidance into actionable policy.

Then-Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser characterised the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as the worst international crisis in 35 years. His rationale for this claim was that the economic implications of Soviet control over Afghanistan and the potential to dominate or invade Iran and the Persian Gulf region. He elaborated:

There have been a number of crises, especially in the Cold War period - Berlin, Korea, Cuba. Now all of those were important in a regional context... But there is an additional element that was not present in the Berlin matter, North Korea or Cuba. And that is, if the Soviets take the step further we were talking about, if they do a turn into Iran and start to gain an entrance or a control over some part of Middle East oil production then they have an addition, the capacity to vastly damage or even to destroy the economies of advanced industrial countries. And that is why I believe you have not only the strategic circumstances, you have an economic element that was not present on earlier occasions.

⁴⁵⁰ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 167.

⁴⁵¹ Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, xx-xxi.

⁴⁵² Millar, "The Defense of Australia," 270.

And that is why I think it is more dangerous and more important than those earlier occurrences.⁴⁵³

Fraser later added further concerns:

It is not just that our strategic perceptions have altered, but that the strategic environment in which we live has also changed dramatically. The security, thought to be conferred by detente, was shattered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan... and it certainly has clear implications for our attitude to national and regional defence. These fundamental changes in Australia's national circumstances require a number of re-assessments and responses.⁴⁵⁴

The 1976 defence white paper had grand designs for the new role of the ADF and promises of healthy investment in new capabilities and infrastructure from the Fraser government. What it lacked was a clear idea of how it would translate its new resources into strategic outcomes.⁴⁵⁵ A first step toward rectifying this was a range of inquiries, both public and private, into Australia's strategic circumstances. The 1981 Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence inquiry report on threats to Australia's security found four basic types of threats: global war, invasion of Australia, intermediate threats to Australian interests and low level contingencies.⁴⁵⁶ The report concluded that even though the likelihood of any major threat was very low the ADF needed to retain high technology capabilities with long lead times in order to hedge against the rapid development of offensive capabilities by a regional power and to 'act as a deterrent to hostile action.'⁴⁵⁷ A caveat to this conclusion is that being able to meet a challenge is not

⁴⁵³ John Malcolm Fraser, "'Willisee at Seven': Prime Minister Interviewed on Situation in Afghanistan," *Willisee at Seven* (1980), 6.

⁴⁵⁴ "Speech at the Commencement of Work on the Australian Defence Force Academy," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1981), 1.

⁴⁵⁵ Cheeseman, "From Forward Defence to Self-Reliance," 435.

⁴⁵⁶ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "Threats to Australia's Security: Their Nature and Probability," *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981), vii, para. 9.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 52, para. 3.

necessarily the same thing as deterring it.⁴⁵⁸ Deterrence must not only apply to attacks of many varieties, but also to threats of attack.⁴⁵⁹

One outcome of the program of inquiries and reports was a renewed focus on the concept of defence warning time. While the concept would not be clearly articulated in its full form until the late 1980s, many of the precursory concepts had already been outlined by the early 1980s. A key aspect of warning time which emerged was the differentiation between short-warning conflicts and long warning time conflicts and the necessity for a force-in-being able to deter or defeat short-warning escalation. The terminology of short-warning conflicts was largely overtaken by the more familiar but conceptually ambiguous terminology of 'credible contingencies.'⁴⁶⁰ The only major difference being that short-warning conflicts largely considered Australia's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) as contingencies the force-in-being should be capable of defeating, whereas credible contingencies were often limited to attacks against Australia or offshore assets and harassing operations in the northern approaches. However, this may have been a reflection of the wider debate about whether or not to retain an aircraft carrier capability once HMAS Melbourne was retired.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ David Martin, *Armed Neutrality for Australia* (Blackburn, Vic: Dove Communications, 1984), 5.

⁴⁵⁹ Victorian Branch Australia Defence Association, *The Defence of Australia: A Statement of Views* (Melbourne: Australia Defence Association (Victoria), 1980), 1-19.

⁴⁶⁰ Ross Babbage, "Managing Australia's Contingency Spectrum for Defence Planning," *Working Paper N° 108* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1986).; see also "Looking Beyond the Dibb Report," *Working Paper N° 110* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1986).

⁴⁶¹ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "An Aircraft Carrier for the Australian Defence Force," *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982).

The core force concept

An important carryover from the Forward Defence era was the concept of a force-in-being or core force that would provide an expansion base for a rapid increase in the size of the ADF in response to an emerging threat.⁴⁶² Ostensibly this would provide a wide ranging deterrent at an acceptable cost. One difficulty in maintaining a core force was ensuring that it could provide an acceptable base for expansion. A senate inquiry into the Australian Army tabled in 1974 identified three points which it found underpinned the concept of an expansion base. The first was that there is a critical minimum-sized Army, below which 'the nation ceases to have a useful asset.' The second was that Australian forces should be organised, trained and equipped primarily as a base for expansion in the event of a contingency. Thirdly, that parliament and government must be prepared to respond to any deterioration in Australia's 'advantageous strategic and technological position.'⁴⁶³ Despite its focus on the Army, the inquiry's points of concern were largely applicable to the wider ADF and Parliament was apprehensive about elements of the core force concept because if a threat did arise, the logic would be to rapidly change the composition of the ADF to meet that threat. The implication of this expansion path being that Australia could develop an inappropriate force if a different contingency required the deployment of ADF assets.⁴⁶⁴

The expansion path problem underpinned significant debate regarding the ways in which the core force concept could be applied in Australia's defence planning. Critics, such as Langtry and Ball, argued that 'the core force concept suffer[ed] from a number of quite

⁴⁶² Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," paras.255-60.

⁴⁶³ The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, "The Australian Army," para 2.5.

⁴⁶⁴ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "Australian Defence Procurement," 42.

debilitating inadequacies.’⁴⁶⁵ One of which was the significant gap between likely warning times and lead times for expansion. Then-Minister for Defence Jim Killen countered that Defence would maintain a range of capabilities broad enough to allow the Commonwealth Government options for expanding the core force in numerous directions in response to emerging threats. In Killen’s view, the Government would have the ability to being increasing the force-in-being in response to changes to the strategic environment in advance of full blown expansion towards a specific terminal force.⁴⁶⁶ This would further enable Australia to shape the strategic circumstances in which hostilities could arise. Killen’s view echoed earlier statements by then-Defence minister Lance Barnard that

Our approach is therefore one of response to developing circumstances from which we assess pressures or an actual threat could later emerge and mature. By such response we would aim progressively to influence the circumstances which might lead to ultimate threat, to deter such threat should it nevertheless take shape, and to be ready in time to deal with it should our policy fail to avert it. Clearly, with this approach Australia needs to maintain reliable strategic associations with a number of countries, so as both to enlarge our influence over strategic developments and to provide for co-operation in any future contingency.⁴⁶⁷

The main policy challenge identified through this debate was that the core force concept was essentially reactive, requiring defence planners to expand and contract various force elements in response to unfolding strategic circumstances.⁴⁶⁸ This is problematic due to the potential for a shortfall between warning time and lead time.⁴⁶⁹ It is also impossible for Defence to determine the optimal configuration of a fully mobilised ADF. Because the

⁴⁶⁵ John Osborne Langtry and Desmond J. Ball, "The Development of the Australian Defence Force," *Strategy and Defence: Australian Essays*, ed. Desmond Ball (1982), 267.

⁴⁶⁶ Dennis James Killen, "The Government's View," *Australian Defence Policy for the 1980s*, ed. Robert O’Niell and David M. Horner (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 34.

⁴⁶⁷ Barnard, "Ministerial Statement," 1. Ministerial statement

⁴⁶⁸ Gary Brown, "Prospects and Problems for Australian Higher Defence Organisation after the Report of the Defence Review Committee," *Legislative Research Service, Discussion Paper N° 3* (Canberra: Department of the Parliamentary Library, 1983), 34.

⁴⁶⁹ See Defence Committee, "Strategic Basis," para. 256.

fully mobilised ‘terminal force’⁴⁷⁰ is reactionary, it could take on any number of forms. A core force must therefore be able to support expansion into any number of significantly different force structures, which presents enormous practical challenges to expansion.⁴⁷¹ This necessitates extensive multi-path force expansion planning and a wide range of high technology capabilities to facilitate multi-path expansion.⁴⁷² The result is a diffusion of resources across a broad range of units and equipment, which waters down the overall potency of the ADF and limits economies of scale in any one area.⁴⁷³

One possible solution to this problem was a ‘split force’ which combined a small number of high technology platforms with a larger number of low-cost systems of moderate performance.⁴⁷⁴ In 1982 the higher defence machinery review found that the concepts of versatility and adaptability used in force structure planning were appropriate as a basis for defence planning.⁴⁷⁵ The review noted organisational concerns regarding the ambiguities between the roles of the Force Structure Committee and the Force Development and Analysis Division⁴⁷⁶ and the lack of input from the Force Development Branch in shaping strategic guidance.⁴⁷⁷ This was problematic because the Australian Strategic Analysis and Defence Policy Objectives (ASADPO) document did not ‘provide sufficient guidance,

⁴⁷⁰ Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, 150.

⁴⁷¹ D. O. Magee, "Limitations to Army Expansion," *Problems of Mobilisation in the Defence of Australia*, ed. Desmond J. Ball and John Osborne Langtry (Manuka, ACT: Phoenix Defence Publications, 1980); Raymond A. Sunderland, "A Methodology for Mobilisation Planning," *ibid.*

⁴⁷² Ball, "Equipment Policy for the Defence of Australia," 119.

⁴⁷³ Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, 150.

⁴⁷⁴ Desmond J. Ball, *The Politics of Defence Decision-Making in Australia: The Mirage Replacement* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1975).; see also Langtry and Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment*.

⁴⁷⁵ Defence Review Committee, "The Higher Defence Organisation in Australia: Final Report of the Defence Review Committee," (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1982), para. 6.4.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 5.130.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 4.66.

particularly for the purpose of determining relative priorities for the development of Defence Force capabilities.’⁴⁷⁸ The 1984 Parliament inquiry report *the Australian Defence Force: its structure and capabilities* found that strategic guidance from government was inadequate and that Australia lacked appropriate organisational machinery for translating national security objectives into strategic concepts and force structure.⁴⁷⁹

Planning priorities

Part of the problem was an incoherent policy process and part was conceptual. At the time Australia incorporated elements of three different approaches to defence planning.⁴⁸⁰ The first was the contingency probability approach, which emphasised shaping the ADF to meet likely threats. This approach was considered to be undesirable because it necessitated a force structure that was oriented to performing low level operations and did not require capabilities to deal with improbable high intensity contingencies. The second was the terminal force approach, which was an evolution of the core force approach advocated in the 1970s. Although the term core force had been replaced in policy documents with the term force-in-being, the concepts had the same foundations. The terminal force approach was criticised as an open-ended commitment to high technology capabilities that would become prohibitively expensive to maintain. The third was the deterrent approach, which focused possessing demonstrable military capabilities optimised for medium and high intensity combat. The deterrent approach conceded that a

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., para. 4.9.

⁴⁷⁹ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "The Australian Defence Force: Its Structure and Capabilities," para. 4.10.

⁴⁸⁰ Stephen Newman Gower, "Options for an Australian Defence Technological Strategy," (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1982), 22.

gap between lead and warning times was likely, but sought to mitigate the associated risk by pre-empting it with capability expenditure.⁴⁸¹

In response to criticism of the government's investment in the ANZUS alliance, then-Minister for Defence Ian Sinclair shifted emphasis in his strategic calculus away from global level threats and towards regional contingencies in which Australia would expect to operate more independently and in which a technological basis for expansion was integral.⁴⁸² Amidst the changing focus of ongoing force structure and defence policy debates, Sinclair made frequent reference to material capabilities being acquired by government,⁴⁸³ although these were not regularly linked to specific strategic policy outcomes or requirements. After the 1983 change of government, incoming Prime Minister Bob Hawke quickly signalled his government's intentions to maintain Australia's commitments to its great power and regional security alliances and to reform defence policy to provide for a force structure which effectively utilised military technology and afforded the ADF a qualitative advantage in Southeast Asia.⁴⁸⁴

Soon after, then Minister for Defence Gordon Scholes articulated a comprehensive approach to defence policy which would become a significant aspect of strategic guidance for policy formation. Scholes used the term 'graduated readiness'⁴⁸⁵ to describe his

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 12-21.

⁴⁸² For example, Ian M. Sinclair, "Government Response to the Report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence: Threats to Australia's Security - Their Nature and Probability," (1982).

⁴⁸³ For example, "Major Elements of Defence Expenditure 1982-83," *Parliament* (1982).

⁴⁸⁴ See Robert J. L. Hawke, "Foreign Correspondents' Press Conference," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1983).; "An Australian View of the World," *Opening of 50th Anniversary Conference* (Australian Institute of International Affairs 1983); "The Way Ahead," *John Curtin Memorial Lecture* (Perth 1983).; "International Security and Disarmament: Prime Minister's Speech Notes," *CHOGM* (New Delhi 1983).

⁴⁸⁵ Gordon G. D. Scholes, "Statement by the Minister for Defence," (1983): 21.

thinking on how best to manage modernisation and budget constraints. Political needs such as managing public expectations regarding defence expenditure and reassuring allies that a new government would maintain committed to long-standing relationships had a strong correlation with new expressions of technological advantage in the mid-1980s.

Successive commitments to long-term acquisition plans were undermined by a lack of funding for major capital projects that saw ADF capability lag behind the force structure decisions identified in the 1976 defence white paper and flagged for procurement by 1981. This shortfall was compounded by a proclivity within Defence to purchase relatively expensive high technology replacements for retiring equipment and capabilities.⁴⁸⁶ By late 1984 Defence had become dysfunctional and mired in intra-organisational disagreements over definitional and conceptual issues that presented an obstacle to meaningful policy development.⁴⁸⁷ Then Defence minister, Kim Beazley appointed Paul Dibb to conduct a review of Australia's defence capabilities. The primary terms of reference for the report were to

...undertake a review of the content, priorities and rationale of defence forward planning in the light of the strategic and financial planning guidance endorsed by the Government; to advise on present and future force capabilities and on the present and future balance between resource elements such as manpower, activities, operating stocks, facilities and equipment—where appropriate that advice should indicate priorities for changes to particular defence force elements within various time-frames...⁴⁸⁸

The emphasis on capabilities represented a popular concern that the post 1976 white paper defence debate had focused largely on abstract strategic concepts and not on how

⁴⁸⁶ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "The Australian Defence Force: Its Structure and Capabilities," para. 5.16.

⁴⁸⁷ Dibb, "The Self-Reliant Defence of Australia," 17.

⁴⁸⁸ "Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities," xv.

the ADF could be structured to effectively operate as in the self-reliant defence of Australia.

The *Dibb Review* set out to address that concern quickly becoming the scaffolding for the first defence white paper in over a decade and casting a long shadow in its influence on defence policy through the 1990s and 2000s. Together, Beazley and Dibb transformed the earlier vision of defence self-reliance presented in the 1976 defence white paper into robust strategic guidance that linked Australia's defence priorities to a concrete force planning process.⁴⁸⁹ The 1987 white paper, *the Defence of Australia*, followed soon after and was instrumental in enabling progress in Australian defence and force structure policies and generated wide debate over how Australia might utilise its resources to pursue its newly articulated objectives. However, the some aspects of the defence debate of the early 1980s remained unresolved. The tension between Australia's global interests and its regional strategic circumstances had become more apparent in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At the same time serious debate about the announced replacement of HMAS Melbourne with another aircraft carrier, HMS Invincible, intersected force structure planning debates and questions about the scope of Australia's strategic interests.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 166.

⁴⁹⁰ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "An Aircraft Carrier for the Australian Defence Force."

3.3 Policy context

The policy context for relative advantage did not change significantly during this period. Capability remained an important consideration, while technology was more closely linked with communications and the development of self-reliant capabilities. The primary referent remained great powers, which is almost certainly due to concern about Soviet adventurism and increased uncertainty in Australia regarding great power conflict, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region. Nevertheless, the scope of Australia's defence policy began to take a decidedly regional focus, with greater interest in international peacekeeping missions being offset by direct focus on Southeast Asia in determining Australia's defence policy priorities.

Key concepts

In the period 1979-1986 The primary concept articulated in defence policy discourse was technology. These included discussion of specific platforms and technologies. For example, in 1979 Killen noted that

There has been a revolution in fighter aircraft technology. Designs have been radically changed. Engines are much more powerful. New concepts have been adopted. Flybywire control systems, new non-metallic structural materials, integrated avionics and weapons systems controlled by on-board digital computers- these are but a few of the more significant advances.⁴⁹¹

Discussion also ranged from statements on technology generally, such as Killen's remark that 'the pace of technology is unrelenting,'⁴⁹² to comments regarding the necessity for the ADF to maintain cutting edge capabilities. For example, Killen commented that 'the

⁴⁹¹ Dennis James Killen, "Tactical Fighter Force Evaluations," *Ministerial Statement* (House of Representatives Hansard, 1979), 1.

⁴⁹² "Defence Budget 1980-81," *Ministerial Statement* (House of Representatives Hansard, 1980), 6.

Defence Force must keep up with modern technological developments.’⁴⁹³ In 1980, Killen also made a clear statement that the capability benchmark for the ADF was relative advantage over the region, announcing that ‘the first test is the strength of the force vis-à-vis the countries that are within striking distance of Australia.’⁴⁹⁴

Then-Prime Minister Fraser said in 1981 that

Our efforts to secure the nation's defence, through a well-developed defence infrastructure, necessarily place a premium on technological capacity, well-trained manpower, and an officer corps which is sensitive to the kinds of co-ordinated tactical responses which a modern defence capacity requires.⁴⁹⁵

Gordon Scholes was concerned that the implications of a high technology defence force included increased demand in the skill levels of ADF personnel and a cost-benefit trade off of certain capabilities over others. In 1983, Scholes stated that

Technological developments have changed perceptions of the relative value of some weapons. Precision guided munitions have begun to demonstrate accuracy and reliability that was previously only a prospect. Electronic warfare technology is rendering some weapons less effective and opening up new needs. Wide area surveillance systems are making it possible to detect ships, submarines and aircraft hundreds and even thousands of kilometres away. Reliable, secure communications are necessary over greater ranges, if these developments are to be effectively countered or exploited... Despite some predictions, these complex new technologies seen demand more, and more skilled, Service manpower. Increasingly, it is becoming clear that if these new and more costly capabilities are to be acquired we must give up some of the things that change has rendered relatively less important in the strategic environment of Australia today.⁴⁹⁶

Scholes also linked skilled manpower to the capacity of the ADF to act as a successful deterrent and, in extremis, to defend the country against hostile military operations.

With regard to defence, the major problem that any country has now, and a country of Australia's size has that problem in a greater proportion is the rapid development of technology, the capabilities of which have to be required if the equipment which needs to be acquired, and to a significant extent the skills which are necessary in order to make a

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ "Ministerial Statement," 2.

⁴⁹⁵ Fraser, "Speech at the Commencement of Work on the Australian Defence Force Academy," 2.

⁴⁹⁶ Scholes, "Statement by the Minister for Defence," 9-10.

modern defence force a workable, viable and reliable deterrent and security force for the country in question.⁴⁹⁷

Beazley focused on technology in general terms, noting that ‘modern defence equipment frequently incorporates leading edge technology’⁴⁹⁸ and that ‘there is a requirement for a high level of technological capability in our defence infrastructure.’⁴⁹⁹ However, Beazley also offered the important caveat that

It is a prime example of that most basic of traps - assuming that higher technology is, by definition, always the answer. What we require is not higher technology per se but appropriate technology. This may well include higher technology, but not as a precondition.⁵⁰⁰

Referent actors

During the period 1979-1986 much more of the defence discourse was centred on Australia’s regional security interests. However, the main referent mentioned in the data set remained great powers.⁵⁰¹ This is largely attributable to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Australian government’s reaction to what it saw as a precedent of a superpower dominating a small power with very little effort from the international community to keep the conflict in check. There is also a significant emphasis on regional actors in the data set and some concepts, which later became defence policy staples, emerged for the first time.

⁴⁹⁷ "Opening Address by the Minister for Defence," *CESRF National Conference* (1983), 2-3.

⁴⁹⁸ Kim Christian Beazley, "Defence Science and Technology - a National Resource," (The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences 1986), 103.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ "The Development of Australian Maritime Strategy," *RAN Naval Symposium* (1987), 182.

⁵⁰¹ See Appendix C, Table 17

Fraser, speaking about the then-planned acquisition of HMS Invincible from the Royal Navy said that it would 'provide a very substantial increase in Australia's national defence capabilities, and will greatly enhance our ability to-deter aggression in our own region in the decades ahead.'⁵⁰²

Speaking of the F/A-18 Aircraft, Sinclair claimed that 'this 'state of the art' aircraft will maintain the RAAF's position as the most advanced air force in the region.'⁵⁰³ Similarly, Hawke proclaimed that

The F/A-18s are perhaps the most impressive and tangible expression of this policy to date. They will make a major contribution to our ability to present ourselves as a formidable and independent defence presence in our region.⁵⁰⁴

In both instances, the F/A-18 was linked directly to affording the RAAF a formidable position in relation to regional militaries.

Beazley made the same claim, but was more extensive in scope, noting that

...we have access to the latest military technology and hardware. The availability of US military technology means, effectively, that our Defence Force will remain a qualitative jump ahead in regional terms for the foreseeable future.⁵⁰⁵

Speaking further about the region, Beazley continued to link the validity of ADF capability to regional benchmarks:

...these forces constitute by far the strongest long range strike capability in the region. They provide us with the ability to operate against a full range of targets, not only in our area of direct military interest, but well beyond. The capabilities we need for defence in depth are determined, among other things, by our assessments of the capabilities we may face... The Government has carefully analysed the defence capabilities within our

⁵⁰² John Malcolm Fraser, "Electorate Talk," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1982), 2.

⁵⁰³ Ian M. Sinclair, "Defence: Annual Cdfs Conference," *Commonwealth Record* 30 August to 5 September(1982): 1198.

⁵⁰⁴ Robert J. L. Hawke, "Speech to Government Aircraft Factories," ed. Prime Minister's Department (Avalon1984), 3.

⁵⁰⁵ Kim Christian Beazley, "Self-Reliance - a New Direction?," *Just Defence Committee* (1987), 140.

region.... Two important assessments emerge. The first is that no regional power has the capability to mount a major attack on Australia.... The second is that the capability to mount smaller scale-but still serious-military operations against us already exists in our region.⁵⁰⁶

Beazley also linked Australia's desire for a leading edge in the region to capabilities-based defence planning.⁵⁰⁷

...we need these capabilities now, we need them in the force-in-being. Again I am not suggesting that any willingness or intention to threaten Australia in this way exists in the region. But, as I have said, proper defence planning must be based on contingencies which reflect a realistic assessment of prevailing and developing regional capabilities. Inherent in the defence paper and in the government's implementation of defence self-reliance is the linking of practical defence policy with our allies, and our role in the region as a military power.⁵⁰⁸

Policy scope

By the early 1980s the scope of Australia's strategic interests and objectives had begun to narrow. Although regional interests featured most prominently as a proportion of coding frequency, defending Australia from armed attack became a close rival. Again, although there were significant references to global actors, global level interests did not feature significantly in statements regarding the scope of Australia's strategic interests and objectives.⁵⁰⁹

Despite looming concerns about Soviet aggression, Australia's global interests began to diversify. Australia now focused on long-held but often deprioritised interests in global security which served to reinforce international norms. A commitment to these norms and

⁵⁰⁶ "1987 Defence Policy Information Paper," *House of Representatives Hansard* (1987), 4.

⁵⁰⁷ Young, "Capabilities-Based Defense Planning: The Australian Experience."; Dibb, "The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development."

⁵⁰⁸ Beazley, "1987 Defence Policy Information Paper," 7.

⁵⁰⁹ See Appendix C, Table 18

a history of contributing to their legitimacy was thought to be beneficial in projecting Australia's image of itself as a self-reliant middle power. Speaking of the UN operation in Namibia, Fraser said:

We have a real capacity to contribute to the success of this United Nations initiative. We believe that this is above all a time when our sense of responsibility in international affairs and our commitment to the settlement of disputes by peaceful means needs to be firmly underlined. This is a time not for withdrawal but for participation, for the acceptance of a commitment which is within our capacity.⁵¹⁰

However, traditional security issues still underpinned Australia's heightened interest in selective participation in international peacekeeping operations. Speaking about the proposed peacekeeping mission to the Sinai in 1981, then-Prime Minister Fraser said that

The starting point is that Australia has a clear and strong national interest in the progress of peace in the Middle East. It is first and foremost a matter of deciding what it is in our own national interest to do, and then acting accordingly. Without question, the continued progress towards peace in the Middle East is of enormous significance to Australia. An outbreak of conflict would have repercussions not only for the region but for the peace of the world which would affect us profoundly and in manifold ways. It would affect our allies and friends in ways which could not but impinge greatly on our international relationships and with risks for the strategic balance of great moment to our national security. Australia's interest is in seeing what is probably the single most serious threat to world peace removed. Further warfare in the Middle East could trigger off a much wider war. Australia has a legitimate interest in preventing this. This point is so evidently true that I believe it does not require elaboration here.⁵¹¹

The last sentence in the quote above is particularly instructive. Fraser states that Australia's national interest in contributing to action taken to prevent wars which could trigger wider international conflict is self-evident.

Sound defence relationships with our near neighbours to the north, Indonesia and Papua-New Guinea, are fundamental to Australia's security. These two countries are very different in their national experience, their defence needs and their perceptions of ways in which Australia might best work with them for the presentation of regional stability.

⁵¹⁰ John Malcolm Fraser, "Namibia Peacekeeping Force," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1979), 3.

⁵¹¹ "Statement to the Parliament on the Sinai Peacekeeping Force," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1981), 5.

Nevertheless, the Government bases its defence policy on the recognition that geography determines that the security of each of the three is of abiding interest to the others.⁵¹²

Direct references to the region as scope for Australia's strategic interests were less common, although they did occur. Hawke made a clear point of identifying regional interests in a 1983 speech when he said that v

South East Asia is strategically important to Australia. Australia shares with the ASEAN countries a strong sense of the need to maintain regional peace and stability. Australia is deeply concerned by any developments that might either threaten regional security or put at risk the territorial integrity and stability of regional countries.⁵¹³

3.4 Strategic concepts

Australia's strategic concepts changed quite noticeably during this period. Self-reliance, denial and contingencies became more significant force posture concepts. This is consistent with other policy considerations and the emphasis on self-reliance throughout all facets of defence policy discourse during the period 1979-1986. Rationale for technological advantage still emphasised industry concerns, but references to cutting edge technology became prominent as well, suggesting that the idea of an inherent need for state of the art technology and capabilities was gaining traction in the defence policy community.

Type of advantage

By the early 1980s the type of advantage being advocated in the data set was largely related to the use of emerging information and communication technologies to allow

⁵¹² Scholes, "Statement by the Minister for Defence," 7.

⁵¹³ Robert J. L. Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Bob Hawke," *Thailand: State Dinner* (1983), 4.

improved coordination between ADF force elements. Material advantage in individual weapon platforms was also emphasised, often in conjunction with the need for the industrial base to sustain them.⁵¹⁴

In the late 1970s Killen had focused mostly on expansion and warning time, stating that

We must sustain a defence force containing men with the right skills, possessing the right weapons, that could train and develop an expanded force as and when a major threat to Australia begins to emerge.⁵¹⁵

Throughout the 1980s, Beazley continued many of the same points about warning time and expansion. For example, in the lead up to the development of the Defence of Australia white paper, Beazley noted that

The second point concerns our capacity for expansion. As a developed western country with the world's most powerful nation as a strong ally, we clearly have a substantial capacity in relative terms for timely military development.⁵¹⁶

Beazley further stated that

The future holds very challenging prospects for the Army Reserve. With a role of real responsibility in defence of the north, a major part in maintaining expansion capabilities, and continued emphasis on integration and affiliation of reserve and regular units to enable the development of skills and knowledge.⁵¹⁷

However, Beazley also focused on the material component of a technological edge with the observation that

Provided our strategy is right, contemporary military technology means that we can defend our approaches. That technology can render our approaches transparent. Technology means also that we now have the mobility to use that information to defend ourselves.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ See Appendix C, Table 19

⁵¹⁵ Killen, "Ministerial Statement," 1.

⁵¹⁶ Kim Christian Beazley, "New Directions in Australian Defence," (The Fabian Society 1986), 6.; "New Directions in Australian Defence," *Conference on Australia's Defence* (The Fabian Society 1986), 70.

⁵¹⁷ "The White Paper - Implications for the Army Reserve," *Chief of Army Reserves Conference* (1987), 7-8.

⁵¹⁸ "The Defence of Australia," *Darwin Decision Makers Luncheon* (1987), 114.

This echoed Killen's earlier sentiment that

In the interest of rational defence debate, we must resist a somewhat old fashioned concept of measuring the country's military capability in terms of the number of men in our Army, or the number of men we could contribute to overseas expeditionary forces in a major conflict in a distant theatre.⁵¹⁹

Fraser led in references to coordination, making observations such as

Modern warfare requires both high technologies and rapid communications so as to ensure that these capabilities are co-ordinated effectively... The Defence Force needs advanced command and control facilities which can support the movement of troops, aircraft and ships.⁵²⁰

Fraser also issues comments which would later be echoed in the ADF's later joint operating concept and the creation of Joint Operations Command (JOC). He noted that

In the past, single-service contingents have operated, more or less, as self-contained tactical forces. But advances in technology, and radical changes in operational situations and methods have led to a blurring of the lines which formally separated the individual services.⁵²¹

Force posture

Unsurprisingly, in the 1980s much of the political debate was focused on defence self-reliance as a key principle for Australia force posture. Self-reliance was by far the most frequently coded force posture concept, followed by strategic denial and contingencies.⁵²²

In combination, self-reliance, strategic denial and contingencies account for the vast majority of all coding instances for force posture. These priorities all relate to maintaining

⁵¹⁹ Killen, "Ministerial Statement," 5.

⁵²⁰ Fraser, "Electorate Talk," 1.

⁵²¹ "Speech at the Commencement of Work on the Australian Defence Force Academy," 1.

⁵²² See Appendix C, Table 20

a force-in-being able act independently, deny Australia's air and maritime approaches to an adversary and deter or defeat limited attacks against Australia and its offshore assets. Consequently, the data show that the period 1979-1986 hosted a strikingly different debate about how Australia should approach the ADF's force posture and prioritise long-term force structure planning. At the same time, discussion of core force and expeditionary priorities in force posture planning were extraordinarily rare. Even when they were discussed, it was often in the context of using existing capabilities to expand or conduct expeditionary operations rather than as an endorsement of those capabilities as force structure priorities.

Fraser demonstrated a broad view of Australia's force posture, including international peacekeeping in the spectrum of operations he believed the ADF should contribute to when the government felt it was appropriate to do so. In reference to the proposed UN peacekeeping operation in Namibia, Fraser said

We have a real capacity to contribute to the success of this United Nations initiative. We believe that this is above all a time when our sense of responsibility in international affairs and our commitment to the settlement of disputes by peaceful means needs to be firmly underlined. This is a time not for withdrawal but for participation, for the acceptance of a commitment which is within our capacity. If we are not prepared to participate in an initiative sponsored, amongst others, by the United States and Great Britain, adopted by the United Nations and accepted by the conflicting parties, how can we expect others to fulfil their obligations to act responsibly and cooperatively in efforts to settle disputes and restore stability in areas of conflict?⁵²³

⁵²³ Fraser, "Namibia Peacekeeping Force," 3.

Fraser also claimed that 'a balanced defence force is one in which the whole range of contingencies which might threaten our security can be met in a co-ordinated and integrated way.'⁵²⁴ Killen reinforced this view, noting that the ADF's force structure

...must address all credible contingencies- including the contingency that in some calamitous situation we might again find, as was once our experience, territory to Australia's north occupied by a country with hostile intent towards us. Australia's force must exploit the advantages of the sea and air spaces which would separate us from the bases of such an enemy. We cannot assume that all threats could necessarily be disposed of at a distance. I do suggest nevertheless that we would be well advised to reflect a little more carefully than some commentators do upon our present and future capabilities.⁵²⁵

Yet by far the most common discussion of Australia's force posture was with reference to self-reliance. Given that this concept was percolating in policy discussion and would be promulgated through official channels by the mid-1980s and enshrined in the 1987 white paper, it is unsurprising that Beazley often mentioned self-reliance and discussed it in a range of contexts. For example, Beazley said that

Another advantage Australia derives from our relationship with the US is that we have access to technology, equipment and intelligence that would otherwise be unavailable to us. Consequently, Australia is able to maintain a level of defence capability that enables us to realistically aim for defence self-reliance, and at a cost that is acceptable to peace time governments facing periods of economic stringency.⁵²⁶

Beazley also referred to strategic denial while discussing self-reliance, noting that

Our extensive sea and air approaches do offer considerable strategic advantages, particularly against the possibility of major attack. At the same time, those advantages are only available while we have the ability, firstly, to know what is going on in the maritime environment and, secondly, to be able to control activities there, or at least to deny an adversary freedom to exploit them against us.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ "Electorate Talk," 1.

⁵²⁵ Killen, "Ministerial Statement," 2.

⁵²⁶ Kim Christian Beazley, "Post Budget Statement," (Parliament 1987), 154.

⁵²⁷ "Australia and the World: Prologue and Prospects," *Strategic and Defence Studies Seminar* (Australian National University 1988), 242.

Rationale for advantage

During the 1980s the rationale for pursuing an advantage was broadly similar to the 1970s in that it focused primarily on industry concerns.⁵²⁸ The 1979-1986 period involved some quite different reasons for prioritising industry which differentiate it from the 1970s. Rationales offered for technological advantage began with self-reliance and simple capability statements. For example, Fraser asserted that

...Australia's defence policy must be one of self-reliance. For a country with a small population, a large land mass, an even larger territorial sea, extensive lines of international communication and a developed industrial base - self-reliance means a defence capability based on high technology rather than simple numbers.⁵²⁹

Moreover, Fraser argued that 'modern warfare requires both high technologies and rapid communications so as to ensure that these capabilities are co-ordinated effectively.'⁵³⁰

Sinclair similarly focused on force coordination and communications technology, stating that

Assessing our Defence task, we have to look at both the offensive and defensive requirements of a modern defence force inevitably facing far more sophisticated weapon systems in the future than has been the case in the past. Modernising the Forces increasingly is a matter of ensuring that software as well as hardware is up to date with tomorrow's Technology.⁵³¹

For Fraser, the purpose of utilising technology was largely related to mitigating Australia's strategic limitations.

Australia has got to have [its] own independent defence capacity and by the standards of many countries we spend a modest amount on Defence. It's a little less than 3 percent of everything we produce although present projections will build it up to that and it's a small force, small in numbers, and that's one of the reasons why you need modern, highly sophisticated and harder hitting equipment - whether it's for the Airforce, the Army or the

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Table 21

⁵²⁹ John Malcolm Fraser, "Launching of F/a-18 Aircraft," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1981), 2.

⁵³⁰ "Electorate Talk," 1.

⁵³¹ Ian M. Sinclair, "Official Opening by Rt Hon. Ian Sinclair, Minister for Defence," *AJWE Media Seminar* (RAAF Williamstown 1983), 2.

Navy and I suppose in a sense you make up for lack of numbers by making sure that your own people are very well equipped indeed.⁵³²

For Killen, the main emphasis was that technological advantage was relative to regional states. In 1979 he declared that 'like every country Australia must sustain its military standing in its geographical neighbourhood through which attacks upon its territory could be launched.'⁵³³ Killen claimed that Australia's level of advantage was appropriate to its regional circumstances.

We, in the meantime, possess maritime capabilities which, by standards relevant to our immediate strategic requirements, are substantial, and will remain so. Let me say something about them, and also about our strike capabilities, reminding the House at the same time of my earlier comment about our needing to sustain a force that would deter interference with Australia's sovereignty and protect our supply lines in adjacent maritime areas... I put it to the house that our maritime capabilities in our region do not lag behind the second tier of maritime nations, and are not in danger of slipping behind them.⁵³⁴

Beazley mirrored this approach in 1986 when he set regional militaries as a direct benchmark for assessing the ADF's force structure

If we take as our force structure yardstick the minimum requirement of Australian self-defence in the context of regional capabilities, we have a quantifiable measure for reacting to changes in our region.⁵³⁵

By far the most significant change in rationale related to industry, with the vast majority of references to advantage referencing industrial capacity generally or the Australian defence industry directly. Fraser spoke of industry in general terms

During this period there has been a good deal of technological change and much talk about it. Some people say it is best to put up the shutters against technological change because it tends to reduce the number of jobs. That again is a defeatist attitude and it is not an option I believe that is open to us because our industries depend on being

⁵³² John Malcolm Fraser, "Interview with the Prime Minister of Australia, the Rt. Hon. Malcolm Fraser, C.H., M.P.," *The John Laws Show* (Sydney: Radio 2UP, 1981), 4.

⁵³³ Killen, "Ministerial Statement," 1.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵³⁵ Beazley, "New Directions in Australian Defence," 70.

competitive, they depend on being able to do well or better than the same industries in other countries. We are not going to be able to do that with outmoded technology which can either produce a product that is not so good, or if they can produce one that is good they might produce it at considerably higher cost. So new technology is inevitable, we need to embrace it and use it to our advantage.⁵³⁶

Meanwhile Killen, for good reason, focused more directly on defence issues. For example, in 1979 he said that

We must also plan for the parallel advances that will have to be made in Australian industry. The new technologies of the fighter will have to be learnt and practised in our industry so that local production and servicing capabilities will be available of the kind that I have indicated.⁵³⁷

The kinds of industry concerns that were used to rationalise a high technology edge were different because they were related more to self-reliance and supporting the ADF than to maintaining an industrial base for future expansion. In 1980 Killen stated that

Extensive opportunities will open up in defence industry - vitally important for increasing our self-reliance - in design, development, production and continuing support of a wide range of new equipment. Technological skills will be upgraded. We will continue to emphasise the development of this essential component of our capability.⁵³⁸

In 1981 he added that

The tactical fighter force project is a major national enterprise, it will involve not only the RAAF, and my department, but a host of contractors and sub-contractors in Australia's defence-related industry. It will provide us with a central element of the forces needed to defend our nation's security. It will develop our technological and industrial capacity in an area critical to our defences but also important on a wider national basis.⁵³⁹

Sinclair, too, made specific reference to the F/A-18 Hornet project, noting that

For the future there is the decision to purchase the F/A-18 Hornet for the tactical fighter force. This 'state of the art' aircraft will maintain the RAAF's position as the most advanced air force in the region, being selected to serve its fighter requirements into the

⁵³⁶ John Malcolm Fraser, "Opening of the National Youth Conference," ed. Prime Minister's Department (Canberra 1979), 6.

⁵³⁷ Killen, "Tactical Fighter Force Evaluations," 1.

⁵³⁸ "Defence Budget 1980-81," 3-4.

⁵³⁹ "Statement by the Hon. D. J. Killen, M.P., Minister for Defence," *Defence* (1981), 10-11.

twenty-first century. This acquisition will also inject important technological knowledge into Australian industry, representing an investment in increased defence self reliance.⁵⁴⁰

3.5 Strategic signalling

During the period 1979-1986 Australia's strategic signals contained a strong focus on deterrence. Deterrence was communicated in two key ways: by showcasing ADF capabilities and professionalism to external audiences, and by promoting the material advantage that ADF capabilities had over regional states. Reassurance was based primarily on Australia's ability to contribute to alliance relationships than on credibility as a security partner, which was a break from the focus on credibility during the 1970s and primarily attributable to concern about the Soviet Union. Validation focused on promoting the ADF's ability to defeat attacks against Australia and to justify increased defence spending on certain capabilities.

Deterrence

In the early 1980s deterrence was mixed between a focus on dissuading major powers from viewing Australia as a viable target and deterring regional states.⁵⁴¹ For example, Fraser identified the Soviet Union as a target of deliberate deterrent signals: '...we must maintain absolute clarity and certainty in our signals to the Soviet Union, in order that our interests and the limits of our tolerance are not misread by Moscow.'⁵⁴² Meanwhile, Killen made reference to deterrence signalling in generic terms, stating that

⁵⁴⁰ Sinclair, "Defence: Annual Cdfs Conference," 1198.

⁵⁴¹ See Appendix C, Table 22

⁵⁴² John Malcolm Fraser, "Address to the Queensland State Council of the Liberal Party," (1980), 7.

We must sustain a defence force which supports our diplomacy so that both in combination effectively deter interference with Australia's sovereignty by the military forces of a foreign power.⁵⁴³

In 1982 Sinclair combined the capabilities of the force-in-being with Australia technological potential for expansion to issue deterrence signals to both short-term and long-term potential threats

Australia is able, with its present and planned military capabilities, to make low or intermediate-level attacks against it costly and hazardous. Furthermore, we are well equipped to expand these capabilities in the face of an emerging threat because of our alliance relationships; our economic circumstances and potential for growth; our industrial, transport and communications expansion base; and the whole Australian community's level of education and skill, including our capacity to absorb new civil and military technology.⁵⁴⁴

Hawke was focused primarily on the visibility of the force-in-being, noting that '...there is Australia's defence effort itself. Here we aspire to a capability that is visibly defensive and sufficiently potent to be a credible deterrent.'⁵⁴⁵ Beazley, too, clearly reinforced the deterrent value of the ADF and announces its commitment to operations:

Many commentators have suggested that the strategy proposed by Paul Dobb is too defensive. They say that Dobb has advocated a reactive posture which commits Australia to sitting and waiting for an attack, rather than going out to meet it. This is linked with a claim that Dobb's capability recommendations would, if implemented, undermine the deterrent presented by the ADF to a potential attacker. Much of this comment is based on a misunderstanding of the 1000 nautical mile limit placed by Dobb on Australia's area of primary military interest. This has been assumed by some commentators to be a kind of operational limit beyond which Australia would never deploy forces. That is quite wrong: as Dobb makes clear, the area defined as within 1000 nautical miles of Australia's coastline is an area within which Australia's forces must be able to prevail. It is, in short, a minimum rather than a maximum boundary for military operations... From the misunderstanding about Dobb's 1000 nautical mile limit flow several more fundamental misunderstandings of this Government's defence posture. One is that the posture is purely defensive and commits Australia to waiting for an attack while surrendering the initiative to an enemy. There is no such commitment. The Australian Defence Force is, and will remain, capable of offensive and pre-emptive operations, including land strike.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Killen, "Ministerial Statement," 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Sinclair, "Government Response to the Report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence: Threats to Australia's Security - Their Nature and Probability," 8.

⁵⁴⁵ Hawke, "Speech to Government Aircraft Factories," 2.

⁵⁴⁶ Beazley, "New Directions in Australian Defence," 68-69.

However, he also placed significant caveats on the value of deterrence as a force structure priority in itself, noting the failure of British capability to deter Argentina during the Falklands war.

A related misunderstanding concerns the issue of deterrence. No one doubts that deterring wars is better than winning them, but it is a mistake to imagine that this is a recipe for developing a force structure. In particular. The requirements of deterrence do not necessarily dictate long range offensive strike capabilities. A potential aggressor could easily calculate that political limitations would prevent Australia striking home bases in response to low level harassments... Clearly when deciding on the capabilities needed to meet the most credible threats to Australia, ie low level contingencies, we cannot use the possession of major offensive strike forces acquired for deterrent potential as the force structure determinant. As the superpowers discovered over twenty years ago, comprehensive and effective deterrence requires that credible responses be available to the entire range of threats, and that means a range of capabilities must be available to provide those responses.⁵⁴⁷

Reassurance

Despite substantial changes to the government's concept of the ADF and its role in defending Australia and contributing to wider regional security circumstances, Ministerial statements continued to showcase Australia as a credible ally. However, credibility was linked to the quality of potential ADF contributions to regional contingencies and international multilateral operations. During the period 1979-1986 Ministerial statements placed more emphasis on supporting regional countries with the ADF through direct assistance, training and logistical support and defence cooperation initiatives. However, the data do not include any instances of reassurance in the context of humanitarian or logistical assistance in response to a natural disaster or humanitarian crisis.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁵⁴⁸ See appendix c, Table 23: 1979-1986 Reassurance coding

Killen spoke of operational contingencies and reassured Australia's security partners that the ADF had adequate resources to contribute to regional security.

We need a defence force with capabilities affording the Government of the day the option of giving defence help to regional friends with whom we have common security interests, should they wish this- whether this be the south-west Pacific, Papua New Guinea, or other countries to our immediate north. Subject to our giving priority to capabilities needed for operations in our own environment, our defence force should also provide the Government of the day with the practical option of contributing to Pacific defence in accordance with the ANZUS Treaty.⁵⁴⁹

Fraser emphasised cooperation on matters of regional security, noting that

We cannot enhance our security, however, without due regard to the security of our friends and allies. Defence is not simply a national endeavour. It is a co-operative effort, in a regional sense as well.⁵⁵⁰

Sinclair, speaking about the defence cooperation program, stated that

This programme with its two way benefits is emerging as an increasingly significant part of our national defence effort, encompassing as it does twelve countries in the ASEAN and South West Pacific area. The knowledge, skills, and resources of the Australian Defence Force and our defence related industries, have helped significantly in increasing the capability of each of these nations to resist external aggression.⁵⁵¹

Beazley made the less direct claim that 'a self-reliant Defence Force will be capable of providing physical support to an ally should the Government of the day deem this appropriate.'⁵⁵² He also linked defence self-reliance to an increased capacity to contribute to or support regional security:

The fact is that our new defence posture makes us a better ally. We will be a better [W]estern alliance partner in the South Pacific and South-East Asia with a more effective force structure.⁵⁵³

Validation

⁵⁴⁹ Killen, "Ministerial Statement," 1.

⁵⁵⁰ Fraser, "Speech at the Commencement of Work on the Australian Defence Force Academy," 2.

⁵⁵¹ Ian M. Sinclair, "Major Elements of Defence Expenditure 1982/83," *Australian Parliament* (Canberra 1982), 9.

⁵⁵² Beazley, "The White Paper - Implications for the Army Reserve," 133.

⁵⁵³ "The Defence of Australia," 116.

Rattled by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the shock to the stability of the international system that it represented, the Australian government responded by reasserting its capacity to defend Australia from credible contingencies.⁵⁵⁴ This coincided with a lengthy discussion regarding force projection as Australia was investigating a replacement for HMAS Melbourne and oscillated between positions, announcing the purchase of HMS Invincible from Great Britain⁵⁵⁵ and then ultimately foregoing a replacement carrier when HMAS Melbourne was decommissioned.

Fraser considered defence a fundamental responsibility, announcing that 'Australia's defences are strong and relevant to today. The Government is fulfilling its fundamental responsibility - to keep this nation secure.'⁵⁵⁶ Hawke reiterated this sentiment with a pronouncement of his government's national security priorities, stating that 'providing for national defence is the most fundamental of all government responsibilities'⁵⁵⁷ Fraser also used the term responsibility to characterise his view of defence, proffering the view that 'Australia's defences are strong and relevant to today. The Government is fulfilling its fundamental responsibility-to keep this nation secure.'⁵⁵⁸ Fraser also emphasised the strength of the ADF in lauding its ability to defend the nation, stating that 'the strength and capability, of the Australian Defence Force is greater than it has ever been in peacetime.'⁵⁵⁹ Beazley similarly characterised defence as a duty of the government to the public, claiming that

⁵⁵⁴ See Appendix C, Table 24

⁵⁵⁵ John Malcolm Fraser, "Electorate Talk," (1982), 2.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁵⁷ Hawke, "Speech to Government Aircraft Factories," 1.

⁵⁵⁸ Fraser, "Electorate Talk," 2.

⁵⁵⁹ "Opening of Darwin Patrol Boat Base," ed. Prime Minister's Department (1982), 1.

The Australian people expect that Australia should be able to defend itself. The Australian government accepts its duty to provide Australia with defence forces able to meet that expectation.⁵⁶⁰

But this duty came at significant expense to the taxpayer and in the early 1980s, Ministerial statements frequently emphasised the need for greater investment in defence expenditure, often citing neglect from previous governments⁵⁶¹ as a rationale for increased funding to maintain the ADF. Killen argued for increased defence expenditure to sustain growth of ADF capabilities to desired levels in accordance with the 1976 white paper's guidance, noting that

The 1980-81 Budget introduces a commitment to sustained development which will lift the Defence Force and the national defence infrastructure to a higher level of capability, preparedness and self-reliance. We will continue to develop the basic capabilities we need. These include surveillance, reconnaissance, patrolling and strike capabilities, mobile and versatile land forces, air defence and strategic and tactical air support.⁵⁶²

Killen also pointed to other countries' force structures to justify the level of expenditure he believed to be appropriate for the ADF:

It is not difficult to flip through Jane's Fighting Ships to find second or third tier navies that possess more units than ours: fast, inshore, missile-armed patrol boats, for example, tailored to the operational requirements of the inland waters of the Baltic and the Mediterranean, or the enclosed waters of the South East Asian archipelago. One can distil plenty of parliamentary questions out of researches such as these. It is quite another matter to distil a credible, transoceanic strike force that could overcome our own sea-borne capabilities on, in and over the seas around our own country, defeat our land-based aircraft, blockade us and shepherd an invading force to our shores, and go on supplying and resupplying it.⁵⁶³

Fraser added to this, stating that

We have got quite effective defence forces and we shouldn't forget that. We've got some very good and very advanced equipments in the three services, and over the last three years we've been trying to get a larger share of the, defence vote, which itself has been increasing, into the purchase of more modern equipment which is very important for a defence force which inevitably because of the number of people in Australia, will remain

⁵⁶⁰ Beazley, "1987 Defence Policy Information Paper," 1.

⁵⁶¹ Fraser, ""Willisee at Seven": Prime Minister Interviewed on Situation in Afghanistan," 5-6.

⁵⁶² Killen, "Defence Budget 1980-81," 1.

⁵⁶³ "Ministerial Statement," 2.

small in size. Now Mr. Killen in this last week made a statement in the Parliament which indicated that we've already made decisions that involve a greater rate of increase in defence spending than we had in mind at the time of the last Budget.⁵⁶⁴

Soon after, Hawke took a more conciliatory tone, claiming that

The Government is taking advantage of our current favourable security outlook to concentrate on investments that will consolidate and enhance our defence capability over the longer term – particularly investments in major equipment and facilities.⁵⁶⁵

Chapter conclusions

The period 1979-1986 was an important transition point between the emergence of self-reliance and the maturation of relative advantage which occurred in the Dibb review and 1987 defence white paper. During this interim period, the force structure debate changed significantly and the ADF's force posture came to be viewed as a means for responding to 'credible' threats, those which could occur without sufficient warning to expand the ADF, and those which were estimated to require enough preparation that Australia would be able to detect and respond to the challenge as it arose. Consequently, Ministerial statements from this period emphasise many of the same concepts but in quite different ways. For example, industry was still promoted as an important rationale for technological advantage, but it was seen as a means to sustain the ADF and maintain high technology platforms rather than as a technological base to expand from in the event of major aggression against Australia or its interests.

The policy context for relative advantage did not change much in this period. The primary referent remained great powers, which is almost certainly attributable to the Soviet

⁵⁶⁴ John Malcolm Fraser, "Prime Minister: Talk-Back " (Penrith, NSW: Radio Station 2KA, 1979), 17.

⁵⁶⁵ Hawke, "Speech to Government Aircraft Factories," 3.

invasion of Afghanistan and increased uncertainty in Australia regarding great power conflict. Nevertheless, the scope of Australia's defence policy began to take a decidedly regional focus. Australia's strategic concepts changed more noticeably during this period. Self-reliance, denial and contingencies became far and away the most significant force posture concepts employed. This is highly consistent with other policy considerations and the emphasis on self-reliance throughout all facets of defence policy discourse during the period 1979-1986. Rationale for technological advantage still stressed industry, but cutting edge became quite prominent as well. This suggests that the idea of an inherent need for state of the art technology and capabilities was becoming more popular and possibly less contentious.

Strategic signalling contained a strong focus on deterrence. Deterrence was primarily promoted through maximising the credibility of the ADF as a professional military force employing high technology weapons and systems and by promoting Australia's material advantage over regional states. Reassurance was based primarily on the quality of Australia's potential contributions to collective action rather than on demonstrating Australia's ability to make a significant contribution. This indicates a sharp break with the 1970s, during which demonstrating Australia's credibility as a strategic actor was paramount. Validation focused on assuaging fears that decreased force projection combined with regional military modernisation would lead to a deficient ADF. It also offered justification to the Australian public and to Parliament to garner support for increased defence spending on certain capabilities.

Chapter 4

1987-1996: Technological edge in the Defence of Australia era

The late 1980s and early 1990s are an era of Australian defence policy most directly associated with the concept of a technological edge. Beginning in the 1987 defence white paper, the policy imperative to maintain a clear technological advantage over regional militaries featured prominently in defence discourse. By the early 1990s the idea had become engrained in defence discourse but was rivalled by exogenous pressures to complement the government's new diplomatic and economic approaches to Asia, which were collaborative and favoured engagement and were not entirely conducive to directly espousing military advantage in the region. Consequently, a lot of the discourse began to frame Southeast Asian military capabilities in collaborative terms, noting the kinds of capabilities that were being developed in the region as modernisation programs with favourable outcomes for Australia's security environment. Nevertheless, Southeast Asia remained the clear benchmark for Australia's technological edge.

4.1 A larger world

During the early 1990s the gap started to close between Labor and Coalition approaches to strategic policy. Labor's proposal for the Defence of Australia as a guiding principle for strategic and force structure planning was initially contested by the Coalition. However, Robert Ray's enthusiasm for technology and enhanced ADF capability resounded within future coalition leaders and closed some of the distance between Labor and Coalition positions on defence policy. The transition from Hawke to Keating and Labor's victory in its 'unwinnable' election heralded the contemporary era of personality politics.⁵⁶⁶ While previous elections had focused much more on issues of policy substance, the early 1990s saw the introduction of minimalist policy campaigns and a more concerted focus on individual leadership and credibility issues which would come to dominate Howard's election campaign in 1996. Meanwhile, Keating's approach to policy began to represent his own vision of Australia's future as a part of Asia rather than as a misplaced Western country. He saw the larger post-Cold War world as a significant opportunity for Australia to remake itself in its own region and break from its past.⁵⁶⁷ Whether this was a by-product or driver of the broader trend in federal politics isn't clear. However, Keating's personal investment in the combination of furthering the economic reforms which had begun in the 1980s and further linking Australia's prosperity to Asia was a core political issue throughout the 1990s.

⁵⁶⁶ Alan Ramsey, *The Way They Were: The View from the Hill of the 25 Years that Remade Australia*. Sydney: New South, 2011, 38

⁵⁶⁷ Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM*. Sydney: Vintage, 2002, 74

The way forward

As the Cold War ended Australia saw the US as a necessary balance to potential regional power politics and vigorously supported a continued American strategic interest in the Asia-Pacific. The importance of the US role as regional balancer was enshrined in the major strokes of Australia's defence policy, but it was combined with a more controversial political idea: that Australia ought to aspire to develop the military capability to provide for its own defence.⁵⁶⁸ The Defence of Australia positioned the Labor government's international outlook for Australia between a traditionalist focus on building defence capability and strengthening Western alliances and a revisionist focus on embracing regional states as partners in Australia's future prosperity. Defence self-reliance also saw the alliance as a mutually reinforcing relationship in which access to US technology and intelligence would underpin Australia's capacity to defend itself. Despite the significant political attention paid to emerging issues in Australian policy debates, many enduring challenges were addressed in the final years of the Hawke Government. Australia's relationship with the US in the post-Cold War era was particularly important.

In many ways, the foundations of the contemporary Australia-US alliance can be traced back to the Hawke Government. In this regard Keating and Howard, both of whom later laid claim to improving relations with America, 'stood on Hawke's shoulders.'⁵⁶⁹ Old and new priorities dovetailed under Hawke, with the Defence of Australia presented as a policy which met the needs of the both the electorate and alliance partners. Beazley was tasked with selling self-reliance to Australians as a credible defence policy and to the

⁵⁶⁸ Paul Kelly. *March of the Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2010, 167-8

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 161

Americans as a useful contribution to ANZUS.⁵⁷⁰ Labor's image of US support as a vital component of self-reliance reversed the logic of great power partnership which had dominated Australia's defence thinking since federation.

The instrumental view of the alliance did not supplant the more traditional view of great power allies as a credible deterrent against potential attack. Rather, Beazley's aim was to reimagine the alliance as a mutually beneficial relationship in which Australia drew benefit from US support and became both a more capable individual actor and a more useful ally in the process.⁵⁷¹ It was a nuanced message and Beazley struggled to explain it to the electorate and convincingly defend it from criticism. One of the biggest challenges that Hawke and Beazley faced was convincing the public that Australia was capable of defending itself from armed attack without great power intervention. Australia's long held view of itself precluded the notion of self-reliance and the nation's self-image had to be re-written to accommodate the new policy message. Perhaps complicating the adoption of a new vision of Australia was Keating's matching philosophy of embracing regionalism to ensure Australia's prosperity and security in the 1990s. In combination, these ideas were well ahead of public opinion and held implications which the electorate was not yet comfortable with.⁵⁷²

Finding the limits

As Australia began to realise some of Labor's pragmatic foreign and defence policy goals, Keating believed that the time had come to challenge Hawke for leadership of the Party.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, 161

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, 167-8

⁵⁷² Ibid, 168

Shifting from his hardnosed approach to economic reform to a more open-ended vision of prosperity, Keating attempted to revitalise ‘the big picture politics of ideas’ in Australia’s mainstream political discourse.⁵⁷³ The battle between Hawke and Keating for leadership of Labor Party was a political centrepiece for the turn of the decade, but the underlying political debate reflected renewed interest in Australia’s future amongst the electorate. Although Labor had begun the discussion about Australia’s place in the post-Cold War period, it did not have a monopoly on innovation or ambition. The Opposition engaged in the debate about Australia’s future, but, especially in Howard’s case, saw a more moderate approach.⁵⁷⁴

Keating became Prime Minister as the global political landscape was shifting to accommodate the end of the Cold War. Australians were re-evaluating their place in the world and Keating seemed to be locked on a vision of the future in which Australia’s prosperity was boundless. Labor’s 1993 election campaign leaned on the allure of modernism, technology and possibility to convey Keating’s optimism to the public.⁵⁷⁵ Keating went so far as to invoke the 1890s as an analogy for Australia’s outlook in the early 1990s. He used emotive terms when he pronounced that Australians needed to be ‘bold, determined and faithful to [their] beliefs and aspirations’⁵⁷⁶ in order to realise their potential. He further stated that

⁵⁷³ James Walter, *What Were They Thinking? The Politics of Ideas in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010, 289

⁵⁷⁴ John Winston Howard, *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography*. Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011.

⁵⁷⁵ Sullivan, "Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96," 11.

⁵⁷⁶ Paul Keating, "Election 1993-The Government's Agenda: New Visions for Australia," *Australian Quarterly*, Autumn 1993, p. 465.

As the 1890s were, so will this decade become a watershed. I believe we will emerge a robust social democracy, a player of substance in the world, integrated with our region and prosperous in a way that we have never been before: prosperous not only in material comforts but also in ideas and innovations, in our capacity to make things and sell them to the world, in opportunity, prosperous in our faith: our faith in ourselves and the life we have created here.⁵⁷⁷

Keating's use of analogy was supported by his skill as a public speaker. Regardless of the content of his messages, Keating was often able to communicate his ideas clearly to the public. His use of visual, emotive and memorable phrases was unparalleled by his contemporaries and he often used this skill to good effect.⁵⁷⁸

Too far gone?

Keating was often perceived as a Prime Minister who led from the front. He was often unwilling to compromise in his pursuit of his vision of policy as it ought to be rather than as it was. This yielded significant political results and Keating enjoyed a number of foreign policy successes which served Australia's regional interests and also 'popularised the idea of a grand Australian strategy.'⁵⁷⁹ Nevertheless, domestic politics had been embittered by the issue of economic reforms and Keating entered the 1993 election campaign as an embattled incumbent with little hope for success. The 1993 election turned out to be a turning point for Australian politics because it signalled the electorate's opposition to another round of economic reforms. This broke from recent tides in Federal politics in which the electorate had mostly supported a generally optimistic view of economic growth and sweeping reform policies. The writing was on the wall for future

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, 24

⁵⁷⁹ Kelly, *March of the patriots*, 176

governments to read. They would need to justify economic reform with an explanation of how proposed reforms would deliver tangible benefits to society.⁵⁸⁰

Despite some setbacks along the way, Keating had retained his leadership and had continued to push the limits of Australia's willingness to accept globalisation, reduced protectionism and further regional integration in both economic and political terms. Keating has made substantial progress towards realising his vision for Australia's future. However, it had become apparent to many observers that this vision was too often egocentric.⁵⁸¹ The community was divided along unfamiliar lines and mainstream voters were becoming disenfranchised with Labor. The Coalition used the slogan *for all of us* in their 1996 election campaign to simultaneously broaden the political middle-ground across the electorate and attract the wider mainstream with an appeal to solidarity. This is essentially the same narrative that Hawke used in his successful campaign against Fraser in 1983 used under different circumstances. While Hawke's message promoted national unity as an alternative to the fractious Coalition Government of the early 1980s, Howard's message promoted a party for everyone as an alternative to a Labor Government which had become focused on peripheral groups and neglected the mainstream. The coalition campaign effectively couched a derisive implication about Labor within a positive statement of self-promotion by comparison. This was a deliberate attempt to drive a wedge deep into Labor's heartland and fracture the staples of its support base. The campaign appealed to swing voters and Labor supporters alike, dividing traditional Labor voters along major policy lines.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Kelly, "The Politics of Economic Change in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s," 226.

⁵⁸¹ Kelly, *March of the patriots*, 176

⁵⁸² Pamela Williams, *The Victory: The Inside Story of the Takeover of Australia*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997, 156

4.2 The Defence of Australia era

Between 1973 and 1987 there was a conceptual transformation in Australian defence policy in which defence self-reliance, the defence of Australia, and in particular its maritime approaches, became key determinants for strategic planning and force structure development.⁵⁸³ These concepts were realised in the 1987 defence white paper and matured throughout successive policy documents through to the 1994 white paper. The period 1987 through to 1996 was characterised by DOA and the extensive debates it generated.⁵⁸⁴ The conceptual progression of key themes in Australian defence thinking occurred in stages, from the release of the 1987 white paper through the various policy documents and major international events of the 1990s, to the change of government in 1996. This is one of the most dynamic periods of conceptual debate in Australia's defence policy history.

The Dobb review and the DOA doctrine

By late 1984 Defence had become dysfunctional and mired in intra-organisational disagreements over definitional and conceptual issues that presented an obstacle to meaningful policy development.⁵⁸⁵ Then Defence minister, Kim Beazley appointed Paul

⁵⁸³ Paul Dobb, "The Evolution and Future of Australian Defence Policy," *Nation, Region and Context: Studies in Peace and War in Honour of Professor T.B. Millar*, ed. Coral Bell (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1995), 31-48.

⁵⁸⁴ For example, Babbage, "Looking Beyond the Dobb Report."; Gary Brown, *Australia's Security: Issues for the New Century* (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994).; Graeme Cheeseman, "Over-Reach in Australia's Regional Military Policy," *The New Australian Militarism: Undermining Our Future Security*, ed. Graeme Cheeseman and St John Kettle (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1990); *The Search for Self-Reliance: Australian Defence since Vietnam* (Sydney: Longman Chesire, 1993).; Peter Jennings, "Searching for Insecurity: Why the 'Secure Australia Project' Is Wrong About Defence," (Perth: Institute of Public Affairs, 1994).

⁵⁸⁵ Dobb, "The Self-Reliant Defence of Australia," 17.

Dibb to conduct a review of Australia's defence capabilities in 1985 and the seminal report was delivered in 1986.⁵⁸⁶ The next defence white paper was released in 1987 and was substantially founded on the approach to defence planning outlined in the Dibb report. During the transition from the old policy approach to the new, Beazley reiterated the phrase *defence in depth* to stress the importance afforded to demonstrating Australia's material capacity to defend itself with a high-technology defence force.⁵⁸⁷ References to military technology were subsequently linked to assertions that Australia's capacity for self-reliance was credible and desirable.⁵⁸⁸ Beazley framed DOA as a catalyst for change in the politics of defence. Changing ideational norms in the debate were, in Beazley's view, necessary to accommodate the new concepts used in planning and structuring the ADF and major platform acquisitions.⁵⁸⁹ Without contradicting the constellation of concepts that underpinned DOA, Beazley also made direct reference to the need to reassure allies of Australia's commitment to its security relationships and indicated that a high-tech ADF provided material benefits to those relationships.⁵⁹⁰

In 1989 the government released a new defence policy document, *Australia's strategic planning in the 1990s*, which set strategic level guidance for force acquisition priorities to

⁵⁸⁶ "Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities."

⁵⁸⁷ Kim Christian Beazley, "Reviewing Australia's Defence Needs," *Australia's Defence Policies: Present and Future*. (Just Defence Seminar 1986); "New Directions in Australian Defence."

⁵⁸⁸ "The Defence of Australia; "Thinking Defence: Key Concepts in Australian Defence Planning," *Roy Milne Memorial Lecture* (1987); "The White Paper - Implications for the Army Reserve."

⁵⁸⁹ "Australian Perspectives on Regional Security Issues," *Alumni International Singapore* (1987); "Self-Reliance - a New Direction?; "After the White Paper - the Challenge of Management," (National Press Club 1987).

⁵⁹⁰ For example, "Government Defence Policy - a Progress Report," (Parliament 1988); "Australia and the Asia Pacific Region: A Strategy of Self-Reliance and Alliance," *The Asia Society* (Washington 1988); "Self-Reliance and Cooperation: Australia's Regional Defence Policy," (Parliament 1988).

Defence and explained and validated capital expenditure to the public.⁵⁹¹ The strategic planning document noted the changing security dynamics in Southeast Asia, and the world, and linked force structure decisions to military capabilities which it stated were essential in securing Australia's national interests. As the 1980s drew to a close, Hawke also questioned the implications of strategic changes in the region in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and asserted that Australia's high-technology military would become an integral component of regional stability and security in the 1990s. For example, Hawke noted that:

The size of our economy, and our technical expertise, means that Australia will continue to maintain significant military capabilities, especially maritime capabilities, which will allow us to make a valuable contribution to the military dimension of regional security.⁵⁹²

At this point, the requirement for Australia to sustain a clear technological lead over its region went largely unchallenged. Ministerial statements signalled a willingness to continue to spend on high-technology systems and platforms in order to ensure that Australia continued to be seen as a credible ally, that the ADF was recognised as a well-equipped and formidable force, and that the public was reassured that defence expenditure was purposeful. However, the role that technology played in delivering Australia's edge had already begun to change.

As early as the 1991 force structure review,⁵⁹³ Australia began referring to military technology in terms of coordination. The review made note of the new roles played by

⁵⁹¹ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989).

⁵⁹² Robert J. L. Hawke, "Australia's Security in Asia," *The Asia Lecture* (The Asia-Australia Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney 1991), 12.

⁵⁹³ Department of Defence, "Force Structure Review," (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991).

information technologies in enabling the military to operate more effectively.⁵⁹⁴ Minister for Defence, Robert Ray noted that Australians had come to believe that Australia could defend itself in accordance with the central principles of DOA.⁵⁹⁵ This perception allowed political actors to reduce their focus on credibility and place more emphasis on material capability, which had come to the forefront of many defence debates since DOA was released. Technology emerged as a discussion point in its own right. The 1993 *strategic review* was the first document to expressly link military technology with interoperability,⁵⁹⁶ noting that

The overall development of the ADF will need to have a particular emphasis on the key principles of joint operations, the selective application of advanced technology, the promotion of competence and professionalism, and the application of a rigorous approach to preparedness.⁵⁹⁷

Ray noted interoperability requirements as a driver for high-technology military platforms when referring to relative advantage, but sometimes situated it within a broader commitment to alliances, including but not limited to ANZUS.⁵⁹⁸ This coincided with Keating's push for greater engagement with Asia and may have reflected political needs within government to ensure that public statements were signalling positive intentions vis-à-vis other policy priority areas.

Throughout the early 1990s it became clear that DOA did not account for the extensive transition of the strategic landscape in the Asia-Pacific region from the relatively benign

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., para 2.2.

⁵⁹⁵ Robert F. Ray, "Address to the Rsl Victorian Branch " *The RSL Victorian Branch 67th Annual Conference* (VRC Function Centre Flemington 1991).

⁵⁹⁶ Department of Defence, *Strategic Review* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993), para 5.40.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., para 5.39.

⁵⁹⁸ For example, Robert F. Ray, "The Future of Australia's Defence Relationship with the United States," *Launch of an Australian Centre for American Studies Report* (Press Club, Canberra 1993).

Asian security environment of the previous 20 years of the Cold War to the much more dynamic post-Cold War period. Two significant indicators that the doctrinal approach to defence embedded in DOA needed revision were tensions over North Korea's nuclear program in 1994 and the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996. A third challenge was the increasing likelihood that Australia might deploy forces to maintain stability in the regional neighbourhood.⁵⁹⁹ Political actors realised that the thinking which had underpinned the 1987 and 1994 defence white papers⁶⁰⁰ required adjustment and set about commissioning a new policy document which could incorporate systemic changes to the security situation in Asia and new concepts about harnessing information technologies with strategic guidance which altered but did not abandon central facets of existing defence policy which drew on key themes from DOA.

DOA after the Cold War

At the end of the Cold War the likelihood of great power conflict affecting Australia had diminished greatly. This underwrote a renewed confidence in Australia's ability to provide for its own defence and for it play a more active role in regional security and stability. New emphasis on regional engagement permeated many aspect of Australia's foreign and security policies and then-defence minister Robert Ray was under significant political pressure to ensure that defence rhetoric mirrored foreign policy statements outlining Australia's political and economic interests in the Asia-Pacific. In the wake of the Cold War, Australian commentators began to question the utility of defence concepts

⁵⁹⁹ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia."

⁶⁰⁰ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994).

developed in another era for serving Australia's interests in its new security circumstances.⁶⁰¹ Critics pointed to a lack of political instrumentality in the Defence of Australia concept. They contended that by focusing on geo-strategic planning, DOA promoted an abstract, decontextualised strategic discourse and that it surrendered too much initiative to a potential adversary.⁶⁰² Soon after taking over as Foreign Minister in 1989, Gareth Evans said that Australia's self-reliant defence policy had 'once and for all liberated Australian foreign policy.'⁶⁰³

The emphasis on self-reliance also made a subtle but important difference to the way Australia viewed the US alliance. Self-reliance helped to alleviate the stigma of dependency somewhat, because the alliance was seen to serve Australia's strategic interests. Evans elaborated that

... it is no longer necessary for Australian foreign policy to begin with the assumption that its first task is to ensure the defence of Australia by attracting the protective attention of great and powerful friends... the evolution in our defence and strategic thinking has put into sharp relief the reality that Australia's interests are multidimensional, and that to promote these interests we need policies that are equally multidimensional.⁶⁰⁴

The sense of confidence which DOA inspired was relatively short lived. Upon taking office, Howard reaffirmed Australia's wider regional concerns and that 'Korea and Taiwan remain[ed] sources of tension and possibly major confrontation.'⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰¹ Michael Evans, "From Defence to Security: Continuity and Change in Australian Defence Planning in the Twentieth Century," *Serving Vital Interests: Australia's Strategic Planning in Peace and War*, ed. Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (Canberra: University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1996), 130.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 134.; Ian M. McLachlan, *Australia's Strategic Dilemmas: Options for the Future* (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1997).

⁶⁰³ Gareth Evans, "Australia's Place in the World: The Dynamics of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Bicentennial Conference* (Canberra 1988).

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ John Winston Howard, "Opening Address: "The New Security Agenda in the Asia-Pacific Region," *HSS/SDSC Conference* (Parliament House, Canberra 1996), 6.

Critics also pointed to the limited scope of DOA as an insufficient basis for force development.⁶⁰⁶ While others emphasised the need for a broader range of capabilities to meet the kinds of contingencies and challenges the ADF was likely to face in the regional security environment of the post-Cold War period.⁶⁰⁷ A further criticism focused specifically on the use of concepts such as defence warning time as a basis for force structure planning and development.⁶⁰⁸ The defence warning time concept was based on Australia's ability to successfully estimate the likelihood of hostility and a timeframe for military operations to arise. According to *Australia's strategic planning in the 1990s* this ability rested on two key factors:

The first is the period required for a general deterioration in relationships that would precede any use of military force against Australia. This timescale is difficult to define. In present circumstances, a rapid deterioration is unlikely. In other circumstances, relations could deteriorate within months rather than years. But in any circumstances, our own actions will always be a significant factor determining events. The first hostile actions against Australia might be non-military, for instance attacks on our Embassy; aggressive assertion of fishing rights; seizure of Australian assets; restriction of our sea and air transit rights; or attacks against Australian citizens.⁶⁰⁹

The first factor depends on the ability to identify and respond to threats appropriately, which is highly contested.⁶¹⁰ It further relies on the assumption that Australia would be able to stage a graduated response to an attack, which critics argue is not guaranteed and

⁶⁰⁶ Peter J. McDermott, "Definition of a Process for Determining an Appropriate Force Structure for the Air Element of the Australian Defence Force," *Research Report AD-A217 267* (Maxwell AFB, Montgomery, AL: Air War College, 1989).

⁶⁰⁷ Gary Waters, "Future Role of Air Power in the Defence of Australia," *Paper N° 24* (Fairbairn, ACT: Air Power Studies Centre, 1994).; David W. Beveridge, "Landforce 2010: Some Implications of Technology for Adf Future Land Force Doctrine, Leadership and Structures," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence N° 95* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1992).

⁶⁰⁸ Peter J. Criss and David J. Schubert, "The Leading Edge: Air Power in Australia's Unique Environment," *Canberra Papers in Strategy and Defence N° 62* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1990), 67-68.

⁶⁰⁹ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, paras. 4.19.

⁶¹⁰ Despina Tramoundanis, "Defence Self-Reliance and the Sustainment of Operations," *Paper N° 12* (Fairbairn, ACT: Air Power Studies Centre, 1993), 3-5.

undermines the flexibility of the ADF to respond to dynamic operational circumstances.⁶¹¹

The second factor in warning is the detection of improvements to regional capabilities which would be necessary for the use of military force at higher levels against Australia. Current studies in this area conclude that a very substantial force would be necessary for any kind of major military assault against Australia. The capabilities to support and sustain an assault across the sea-air gap in the face of Australian countermeasures do not now exist. Australia would, of course, respond to such developments by expansion of our own military capabilities. So long as our own capability development maintained our relative advantages to counter effectively any power projection forces within the region, then major direct assault from any regional country would continue to remain improbable.⁶¹²

The second factor similarly hinges on Australia's capacity to monitor threat levels, to interpret events correctly and then respond to them appropriately. It further requires guaranteed access to equipment and material during a period of rapid force expansion. Criss and Schubert argue that this is a moot point as the degree of assured access required can be neither proven nor disproven.⁶¹³ The uncertainty of supply during a crisis undermines Australia's suggested capacity to expand at will in response to events.

From DOA to defending Australia

In the early 1990s Australian defence discourse invested substantially in the popular rhetoric of emerging commercial and military technologies which were thought to have the ability to revolutionise the conduct of warfare.⁶¹⁴ Popular commentary emphasised Precision Guided Munitions (PGM), Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and various military platforms which were intended to enhance battlefield

⁶¹¹ Criss and Schubert, "The Leading Edge: Air Power in Australia's Unique Environment," 67-68.

⁶¹² Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, paras. 4.20-4.21.

⁶¹³ Criss and Schubert, "The Leading Edge: Air Power in Australia's Unique Environment," 67-68.

⁶¹⁴ Benbow, *The Magic Bullet? Understanding the Revolution in Military Affairs.*; Sloan, *Military Transformation and Modern Warfare: A Reference Handbook*.

coordination, serve as enablers for information-based operations and which would act as force multipliers for existing ADF capabilities.⁶¹⁵ Meanwhile, technology played a much larger role in the defence policy guidance offered by Ray during his tenure as Minister for defence 1990-1996. Ray personally demonstrated a clear acceptance of the principle of relative advantage, but also saw new challenges to add to the long recognised limitations to technological edge. He noted that

Military technology poses new challenges. Over the longer term we will need to be more selective about those military capabilities in which we must maintain our technological advantage.⁶¹⁶

This entailed much more engagement with industry and several reports and commissions were published in the early 1990s examining rationales for further investment in industry and in technology for two inter-related reasons: the capacity for self-reliance and the maintenance of a cutting-edge defence force. In his 1992 review of the Australian defence industry, Roger Price noted that

The cost-effective use of technology to meet defence needs is one of the building blocks of Australia's policy of defence self-reliance. The technology required is often at or ahead of the leading edge for civil requirements. This requires specialist scientific expertise to discriminate between alternative technology options, to modify and to support equipment, and in some circumstances to develop indigenous capabilities.⁶¹⁷

Amidst the defence debate about technology, strategic potential and the kinds of operations the ADF needed to be able to perform to defend Australia from armed attack, a second conversation began in the media and academic literature about the scope of

⁶¹⁵ Douglas Charles Chipman, "The Raaf and Force Multipliers," *Paper No 13* (Fairbairn, ACT: Air Power Studies Centre, 1993).; John Osborne Langtry and Desmond J. Ball, "The Concept of Force Multipliers and the Development of the Australian Defence Force," *Working Paper No 66* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1983).

⁶¹⁶ Robert F. Ray, "Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994: ," *Ministerial Statement by the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Robert Ray* (1994), 7.

⁶¹⁷ Roger Price, *Defence Policy and Industry* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992), para. 5.1.

Australia's interests after DOA. Commentators debated the differences between concepts of strategic denial and sea control and whether or not the ADF needed to the ability to stage uncontested operations in Australia's approaches to adequately defend the continent.⁶¹⁸ Another key issue in the debate was whether the ADF could genuinely maintain operational preparedness and could acquire sufficient stockpiles of material to sustain combat operations from Australian resources. The Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade held the view that

Judgments on force structure and preparedness relate to the best affordable mix to generate desired military capabilities... The investment level to provide the preparedness of the mix is related to the sustainability and stockholding issues which have yet to be resolved.⁶¹⁹

This dour assessment casted some doubt on the likelihood of Australia's capacity to realise self-reliance in the defence of the continent or offshore territories. Some critics, notably Graeme Cheeseman, had similar apprehensions regarding the ADF's capacity to sustain, let alone expand, the military workforce which would be needed in self-reliant operations in defence of Australia.⁶²⁰

At the same time, a narrower debate took place within Defence. While it did not critique its guiding concepts to the same extent as some external actors, the Department did have to come to grips with some major difficulties arising from the rapidly changing post-Cold War strategic environment. Technology and economy proved to be significant emerging challenges in *Defending Australia* which directly identified economic growth in the Asia-

⁶¹⁸ See Brown, *Australia's Security: Issues for the New Century*, 28-30.

⁶¹⁹ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, "Stockholding and Sustainability in the Australian Defence Force," *The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992), para. 6.10.

⁶²⁰ Graeme Cheeseman, "An Effective and Affordable Defence for Australia," *Threats without Enemies: Rethinking Australia's Security*, ed. Gary Smith and St John Kettle (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1992), 297.

Pacific region as an important strategic trend.⁶²¹ This underpinned *Defending Australia's* focus on what it termed strategic potential, the capacity to develop and support military forces, which was linked directly to 'economic strength and technological depth.'⁶²² Defence was prepared to meet the trends it observed, but realised that it would need new conceptual approaches to its strategic policy formation to do so. *Defending Australia* noted that

...defence planning will need to accommodate these changes. Until now, we have been able to sustain a technological edge over the full range of capabilities that could be brought to bear against us. Over the longer term that advantage will not be maintained as economic growth and technological development increase the strategic potential of countries throughout our region.⁶²³

Part of Defence's response to the challenge was to broaden its strategic horizons beyond the near region to include the wider Asia-Pacific region. Great power competition, broader regional security and expeditionary operations became more important issues throughout the earlier 1990s and culminated in the view that

Planning for the defence of Australia takes full account of our broader strategic interests. Australia has important interests beyond the defence of our own territory, and the Australian Defence Force will be called upon in the future, as it has been in the past, to undertake activities and operations elsewhere in our region, and in other parts of the world, in cooperation with neighbours, allies and international institutions, particularly the United Nations.⁶²⁴

4.3 Policy context

The policy context for key concepts changed significantly during the period 1987-1996. This began with a shift in focus towards the region as the referent for advantage and was

⁶²¹ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 177.

⁶²² Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 2.9.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, para. 4.25.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 3.11.

cemented with overt benchmarks of relative advantage set against regional militaries. Technology became central to defence debates and the 1987 white paper introduced the term technological edge into the popular defence vernacular. The scope of Australia's policy also focused much more on regional interests than on DOA or global interests.

Key concepts

Technology was a significant concern in the period 1987-1997 and was the primary concept used. For example, the 1987 defence white paper mentioned technology with specific reference to military capabilities or equipment on 32 separate occasions. It also specifically declared that it was essential that Australia maintain a technological edge in the region.⁶²⁵ By the 1994 defence white paper, the Department of Defence had become equally blunt in its phrasing of long held strategic ideas. For example, it noted that 'Australia relies for its defence on advanced technology.'⁶²⁶ It also asserted that Australia's 'dependence on a small, technology-based, mobile and integrated force requires us to keep abreast and in some cases to lead developments in some areas of defence technology.'⁶²⁷ Although this technological focus leaned strongly on defence industry policy, it further announced that Australia 'must keep abreast of continuing advances in defence-relevant technology so that we will be able to defend Australia into the future.'⁶²⁸ This clearly links earlier statements about the reliance of the ADF on technology to Australia's capacity to defend itself in the future.

⁶²⁵ Para 8.9

⁶²⁶ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 12.1.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 11.10.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 12.2.

Political rhetoric in the late 1980s and early 1990s followed a similar theme. Beazley was heavily invested in his rearticulation of defence self-reliance and stated that

What makes self-reliance possible in these circumstances is not only the capability and intentions of our neighbours, but also the possibility of a technological fix. We have available to us, or are acquiring, or could acquire, a range of weapons systems, surveillance systems, and range extenders for weapons systems which are capable of dealing with those problems if resources are properly marshalled.⁶²⁹

Meanwhile Hawke drew on examples of specific capabilities to illustrate the ADF's ability to employ high technology force elements and to signal its force posture. For example, Hawke announced that

RAAF Base Tindal is the permanent base for a squadron of F/A-18 aircraft Fighter Force - a major component of Australia's Tactical Fighter Force and the most powerful operational unit in our far North. Tindal provides tangible proof of the technological strength and the strategic orientation on which Australia's defence planning will be based into the 21st century.⁶³⁰

In the aftermath of Australia's contribution to the Gulf War, the Keating government saw the potential for regional militaries to rapidly modernise their military capabilities and acquire high technology systems which would be comparable or close to comparable to Australia's level of technology. Keating offered this as an additional rationale for maintaining technological superiority, noting that

The Gulf War demonstrated the potency of high technology weapons. The technology, expertise and data once available only to the superpowers are now readily accessible to a wide range of countries. Next-to-cutting edge technology is available to those willing to pay, and there are many willing suppliers. Such modernisation can strengthen security and stability, but it can also increase the intensity of any conflict.⁶³¹

⁶²⁹ Kim Christian Beazley, "Australia's Defence Policy," (National Press Club 1985), 22.

⁶³⁰ Robert J. L. Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister," *Opening of RAAF Base Tindal* (Katherine 1989), 3.

⁶³¹ Paul J. Keating, "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P.J. Keating, MP," *Royal United Services Institute of Australia* (Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra 1994), 3.

When the Howard government was formed in late 1996, one of Ian McLachlan's earliest statements as the incoming Minister for Defence was to note Australia's high technology capabilities. However McLachlan shifted emphasis from the weapons and platforms that the ADF used to the C4ISR systems that the ADF used to coordinate and support operations. McLachlan further linked the ongoing effectiveness of the ADF's high technology capabilities to the efficiency of command and control, stating that

In order to maintain and increase the forces' very high level of capability, in order to arm them with the most effective technology and in order to develop the most streamlined command and control procedures, we need to look at how Defence is structured and how efficiently it is managed.⁶³²

Advantage was a close second in significance throughout the period, but featured much more prominently in the 1990s than it had in the 1980s or at any point prior. During his tenure as Minister for Defence, Ray had a strong penchant for discussing advantage in both technological and relative terms. He often used phrases such as 'relative technological capability'⁶³³ in Ministerial statements and publicly signalled that 'Australia maintains an edge in technologies of strategic importance to us.'⁶³⁴ Ray occasionally offered caveats, but they were generally linked to a need for more specificity in the technological edge that Australia pursued rather than a reduction of it. For example, Ray noted that Australia 'must be selective in our use of technology. This means that we must be specific about where a margin of technological superiority critically needs to be.'⁶³⁵ Ray also noted that a common point in the defence debate of the early 1990s was

⁶³² Ian M. McLachlan, "Ministerial Statement: Defence Policy," *House of Representative Hansard* (1996), 5431.

⁶³³ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 4.25.

⁶³⁴ Ray, "Address to the Rsl Victorian Branch " 15.

⁶³⁵ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, para. 4.25.

‘to what extent we need to continue the philosophy of keeping the technological edge and what areas we should concentrate on in this particular regard.’⁶³⁶

Similarly, Ray emphasised relative advantage even when discussing other policy issues. One significant example is from a Ministerial statement about defence cooperation rather than military capability in which Ray made comment on ‘the enormous disparity in size and capability of our defence force relative to those in the Pacific Island countries.’⁶³⁷ This illustrates Ray’s approach to thinking of defence capability in relative terms that is also evident in force development and force posture statements.

Referent actors

Documents and statements from the DOA period overwhelmingly emphasise the Asia-Pacific region as the referent of Australia’s level of military technology and capability.⁶³⁸ There is a large amount of discussion about regional military capabilities and much of it conveys the same essential message, that the degree of modernisation and relative improvement in regional militaries has a significant impact on Australia’s ability to maintain its leading edge and on the strategic stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

In line with changing strategic perceptions, the basis for regional force structuring has altered. The earlier emphasis on ground forces oriented to internal security has been replaced by a focus on modern maritime and air forces to support new economic and security interests. New prosperity will mean that real growth in defence spending is likely to continue, allowing the introduction of high-technology weapon systems.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁶ Robert F. Ray, "Transcript of Minister's Speech," *1994 Defence White Paper National Security for the New Century* (1994), 9.

⁶³⁷ "Statement by Minister for Defence, Senator the Honourable Robert Ray, on Cooperative Defence Activities in the South Pacific Region," (1992), 11.

⁶³⁸ See Appendix C, Table 25

⁶³⁹ Department of Defence, *Strategic Review*, para. 1.32.

More often than not the comparisons were made in favourable terms, for example noting the level of military modernisation and high technology capabilities being pursued or operated by regional militaries as a benefit to regional and thereby Australia's security. For example, the 1993 *Strategic Review* noted that '...the development of more capable conventional military forces will improve the strategic stability of the region.'⁶⁴⁰ But it was nevertheless clear that regional militaries were the benchmark for ADF capability levels. Statements and policy documents also directly linked regional military advances to the need for a technological edge and emphasised Australia's relative advantage over the region as a cornerstone of Australia's defence posture.⁶⁴¹ The 1989 strategic planning paper directly identified regional military modernisation as a point of interest for Australia, stating that

The clearest response of regional countries to changes in their strategic environment is their acquisition of modern military technologies and the development of their force structures. Relatively advanced technologies are increasingly available, and are being marketed aggressively throughout the region. Regional countries are increasingly able to absorb and support such equipment.⁶⁴²

The 1987 white paper discussed this at length,

...economic growth and expanding military capabilities throughout Asia mean that the nature and scale of forces that could be brought to bear against Australia, and to which the Australian Defence Force needs to be able to respond, will increase steadily over the next fifteen years... As regional force structures develop we will need to enhance our capabilities if we are to maintain the relative effectiveness of our Force. If we fail to make appropriate enhancements to the force structure, our capacity to defend Australia will be eroded... As sophisticated military equipment becomes more widely available and the capacity of many countries to acquire and operate military systems increases, the level of capability in the region and the potential demands of short-warning conflict will also increase. Our most important challenge over the next fifteen years will be to adapt our own forces to be able to meet these greater demands... Australia would expand its military capability to maintain a relative advantage.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 1.28.

⁶⁴¹ *The Defence of Australia*, paras. 3.15, 3.22, 8.9.; *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, para. 4.26.; *Strategic Review*, paras 3.7, 5.44, 5.53; *Defending Australia*, paras. 4.21, 4.25, 6.25, 9.10.

⁶⁴² *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, para. 5.3.

⁶⁴³ *The Defence of Australia*, para. 3.15.

The 1989 strategic planning paper directly compared strategic potential within the region, focusing on Australia's 'economic and military power relative to our neighbours' and 'available regional capabilities; the ways in which such capabilities might be used; and the purposes for which such capabilities might be used.'⁶⁴⁴ The paper was optimistic about Australia's relative advantage, commenting that 'current and prospective regional inventories do not have the capability to mount and sustain major landings against the capabilities of the ADF.'⁶⁴⁵ It was confident that the 'inability of any regional country to mount a substantial threat against Australia' would not be significantly challenged in the short term and that 'Australia would, of course, respond to such developments by expansion of our own military capabilities.'⁶⁴⁶

The timing of these judgments was crucial and after the collapse of the Soviet Union the Department of Defence articulated a much bleaker outlook.

The 1993 *Strategic Review* presented a less optimistic assessment about Australia's advantage over its regional neighbours when it noted that

...the growth of regional economies and technological skills, and the enhancement of military capability, will reduce the technological and capability edge that has traditionally been an important element in Australia's defence posture.⁶⁴⁷

The *Strategic Review* still argued that Australia's technological advantage would still provide the ADF with an edge in the neighbourhood, asserting that 'Australia's use of advanced technology will continue to be a key element in our overall defence approach,

⁶⁴⁴ *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, para. 4.21.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁷ *Strategic Review*, para 5.11.

not least for maintaining our regional standing.’⁶⁴⁸ However, it also saw that these capabilities were becoming more crucial as a minimum rather than a boon when it concluded that

... it is precisely Australia's skills in acquiring and adapting high technology for national defence, and in achieving the highest professional military standards, that are attractive to regional countries contemplating their own defence planning problems. These capabilities and skills give Australia its regional defence standing. We need to maintain this standing if we are to engage effectively with the region.⁶⁴⁹

Policy scope

After 1991, Australia dramatically changed its policy focus from the global security environment to the Asia-Pacific region.⁶⁵⁰ Although it still used the terminology of defence of Australia, the discourse largely emphasised regional security in Asia, keeping it in line with other policy documents at the time, particularly then-foreign minister Gareth Evans’ foreign policy statement on Australia’s regional security.⁶⁵¹ Defending Australia from armed attack remained the main priority and force structuring principle of the Defence Organisation, but major policy documents tried to link three recurring scoping statements together: the security of Australia and its interests, regional security and global security. This was particularly true of Southeast Asia and the defence of the Australian continent. Global security objectives underwent significant change and were more closely aligned with participation in multilateral forums, the contribution of troops to UN peacekeeping operations and the presentation of Australia as an active global citizen.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., para 5.44.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., para 5.53.

⁶⁵⁰ See Appendix C, Table 26

⁶⁵¹ Gareth Evans, "Australia's Regional Security," *Australian Senate* (Canberra 1989).

In the first half of this period global actors were mainly considered important to the extent that they contributed to or detracted from regional security and were no longer framed as a standard for ADF technology or capabilities. For example, Australia's alliance with the US was framed in regional terms and the 1993 strategic review stated that 'we now see our alliance relationship with the United States primarily in the context of our shared commitment to security in the Asia-Pacific region.'⁶⁵² Policy interests of global scope were rarely related directly to the military capabilities of great powers and interoperability with the US and NATO was framed in terms of defence industry interests and participation in international relief than in terms of defending Australia or participating in expeditionary or coalition military operations. Great powers were de-emphasised in the second half of this period, largely due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatically changed international strategic landscape.

Rather than maintaining interoperable capabilities regardless of cost, the government sought to secure Australia's position in the region and used its alliances with great powers, particularly the US, to leverage that position. Hawke also linked technological advancement to the ability to prioritise contingencies closer to home while enabling the ADF to conduct operations to secure regional and global interests:

...our policy is to build a defence force to defend Australia, because that is the ADF's principal role. But that does not mean that we believe the ADF has no other role. There still lingers in our defence debate the echoes of the old debate between forward defence and fortress Australia. But that dichotomy has been left far behind by the development of defence technology, and of the ADF itself. It might once have been the case that Australian defence policy had to make a stark choice between defending Australia and playing a role in Australia's wider region. That is no longer the case. The capabilities which the Australian Defence Force has developed and is acquiring for the defence of Australia also provide powerful capabilities to play a role in our region of broad strategic interest and beyond.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵² Department of Defence, *Strategic Review*, para. 1.4.

⁶⁵³ Robert J. L. Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister," *Opening Session of the RSL* (Canberra 1991), 3.

Developments in Southeast Asia were seen as fundamental determinants of Australia's perception of its strategic environment. In particular, regional military modernisation was linked directly to capability advantage. For example, Defence policy cited regional military capabilities as an indicator of credible threats to Australia's security. The kinds of threats deemed to be credible were then set as a benchmark for relative advantage in ADF force structure planning.

The 1994 defence white paper went so far as to link Australia's future security to the security and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region.⁶⁵⁴ It linked Australia's security to regional circumstances, when it maintained that 'we have always recognised that Australia cannot be secure in an insecure region, and we have worked hard over many decades to support security in the region.'⁶⁵⁵ The white paper went to note that Australia intended to invest in regional security and that 'Australia's engagement with countries in Asia and the Pacific as a partner in shaping the strategic affairs of the region will thus become an increasingly important element in ensuring our security.'⁶⁵⁶ This was a new take on DOA and was a significant precursor for the later concept of concentric circles, introduced in the 2000 defence white paper.

4.4 Strategic concepts

Through the early 1990s the strategic concepts used in defence policy changed to reflect more focus on certain aspects of technology, in particular the emergence of advanced ICT

⁶⁵⁴ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 1.4.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 3.13.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para. S.21.

and the international fascination with the RMA. Self-reliance and contingencies became key force posture determinants in accordance with the strategic guidance of the 1987 defence white paper.

Type of advantage

Between 1987 and 1996, defence policy documents often used the term technological edge to describe the need for military advantage relative to Southeast Asia. This was primarily in reference to material capabilities, but specific material advantage was not specifically discussed to the same extent as new technologies which would allow the ADF an advantage in coordinating its force elements and improving situational awareness. Similarly, focus on expansion, primarily in the context of defence warning time, was significant.⁶⁵⁷

The 1987 defence white paper frequently used terms such as ‘state of the art’ and ‘most advanced’ to describe the types of capabilities which Australia would require to defend its territory and interests. DOA doctrine in general emphasised the need for technologically superior platforms for the ADF and for the use of high technology equipment to mitigate Australia’s strategic constraints. Some examples are the introduction of the specific terminology of ‘technological edge’⁶⁵⁸ to the popular defence vernacular, the policy objective to maintain an actual and *demonstrable* technological advantage over regional

⁶⁵⁷ See Appendix C, Table 27

⁶⁵⁸ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 8.9.

militaries and the use of technology to mitigate relative deficiencies in the ADF's size, capabilities or resources.⁶⁵⁹

DOA further considered Australia's technological and industrial base as a form of relative advantage, particularly over regional countries that were developing, but lacked the high technology infrastructure that Australia possessed and the requisite skills and training mechanisms to successfully utilise an industrial base for the purpose of military expansion.

An expansion base is required at a lower priority to maintain the essential skills and capabilities needed for more substantial conflict, together with sufficient units on which to base timely expansion. Elements for lesser contingencies also form a large part of the expansion base. The command, training and logistic framework to support the development, operation and maintenance of the total force is also required.⁶⁶⁰

The 1994 defence white paper added the concept of flexibility to the familiar expansion base principle, stating that

Adaptability is also a characteristic of our wider national defence effort. It requires a flexible defence capability base which we can enhance or expand; a national industrial, scientific and technological base which allows us to redirect and expand our defence effort in a timely way.⁶⁶¹

Defending Australia further argued that adaptability was linked to broader economic and technological trends in Australia. It claimed that 'strategic potential - the capacity to develop and support military forces - depends directly on economic strength and technological depth.'⁶⁶² The white paper declared that Australia's advantages in strategic potential and material capability were diminishing and that Defence would need to

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., paras. 3.15, 3.22.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., para. 4.82.

⁶⁶¹ *Defending Australia*, para. 4.45.

⁶⁶² Ibid., para. 2.9.

exercise more prudent judgment in its whole-of-force trade-offs to ensure the best mix of high technology capabilities. It held that

Until now, we have been able to sustain a technological edge over the full range of capabilities that could be brought to bear against us. Over the longer term that advantage will not be maintained as economic growth and technological development increase the strategic potential of countries throughout our region. We will therefore become more selective about identifying those areas in which we need to maintain a decisive lead, and give priority to them.⁶⁶³

Ray disagreed with his white paper to some extent and asserted that the ADF's technological edge was substantial and was sufficient to mitigate Australia's smaller population.

What you do need though is a technological advantage and that's what we've sought to have in our own forces. It came back very clearly to me, visiting our neighbours in the five power defence [agreement] just how more sophisticated at the moment our aircraft are and our naval assets are compared to our neighbours. They have a large population (inaudible) we have to make up the edge by having the most technologically advanced weapons platform that we can afford.⁶⁶⁴

Part of the rationale for maintaining a technological advantage was to employ advanced ISR to monitor Australia's approaches and coordinate effective responses to incursion or low-warning contingencies. Another factor in the rationale was the use of emerging ICT, decision support systems and precise weaponry to enhance coordination between the services and between force elements during combat operations. Ray announced that

To optimise our force structure, the development of the ADF will give a particular emphasis to the key principles of joint operations, the promotion of competence and professionalism, the selective application of advanced technology and a rigorous approach to preparedness.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶³ Ibid., para. 4.25.

⁶⁶⁴ Robert F. Ray, "Strategic Review 1993," *Ministerial Statement by the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Robert Ray* (1994), 5.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

Ray also included the human element of coordination advantage, noting that 'Defence is made up of more than its equipment and technology assets, vital as these are. Of central importance are its people, military and civilian alike.'⁶⁶⁶

Force posture

Between 1987 and 1996 Australia's force posture strongly emphasised two concepts which were central to DOA: detecting and defeating low-level *contingencies* against northern Australia or Australia's off-shore territories and using *self-reliance* as the main guiding principle for ADF force structure planning.⁶⁶⁷ For example, while discussing DOA, Hawke plainly stated his government's emphasis on self-reliance

For the first time, as a result of the Government's 1987 Defence White Paper, Australia's defence policy now places full and proper emphasis on the development and maintenance of a self-reliant defence capability.⁶⁶⁸

Keating continued this line of rationale:

At the core of Australian defence policy is self-reliance, by which we mean the capability to defend ourselves against any credible attack on Australia without relying on the combat forces of other countries. The White Paper's defence equipment decisions are all directed towards strengthening that self-reliant capability.⁶⁶⁹

Ray further articulated the government's later views of self-reliance:

Self-reliance, in essence, means such structure and capabilities must give priority to the needs of national defence. We have an obligation to the Australian people, to our allies and to our region, to be capable of looking after ourselves... Thus self-reliance for Australia means developing the ability to defend ourselves, whilst also supporting collective security and the United Nations, and developing effective and practical co-

⁶⁶⁶ "Speech by the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Robert Ray," *Australian Defence Association Seminar: "Defence to 2002"* (Melbourne 1992), 12.

⁶⁶⁷ See Appendix C, Table 28

⁶⁶⁸ Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister," 2.

⁶⁶⁹ Paul J. Keating, "Statement by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P.J. Keating, MP," *The Defence White Paper* (The House of Representatives, Canberra 1994), 2.

operation with regional neighbours to promote the strategic interests we have in common.⁶⁷⁰

Ray also linked self-reliance to specific capabilities and aspects of the force structure being pursued in the early 1990s when he stated that

Our strategy for the defence of Australia remains one of defence-in depth. This strategy, and our force structure planning, give priority to presenting any adversary with a comprehensive array of military capabilities capable of independent defensive and offensive operations... Emphasis, therefore, is given to clearly-focused intelligence and surveillance operations, to strong maritime and air defence capabilities, and to highly mobile and capable land forces which can deal with hostilities quickly on our own terms. The capabilities for these roles determine the ADF's overall force structure.⁶⁷¹

This approach required a potent force-in-being which would be able to deal with credible contingencies of attacks against Australia. The 1987 white paper noted this when it stated that

In developing a defence force capable of maintaining a self-reliant defence posture, priority is given to those capabilities which are needed for the defence of Australia and its direct interests. This requires a force-in-being to defeat any challenge to our sovereignty and specific capabilities designed to respond effectively to attacks within our area of direct military interest.⁶⁷²

Ray added that a contingency-oriented force posture required moving a substantial portion of the ADF to the North of the country where it could be readily used in the defence of the Australian continent and the air and maritime gap. He also mentioned the level of readiness that defence deemed appropriate in maintaining a force-in-being able to meet credible threats.

Defence self-reliance leads very swiftly to the idea of the move to the north. The fact that there is no identifiable military threat facing Australia has considerable bearing on the particular shape that the Australian Defence Force takes in implementing our Defence policy. Given the absence of threat, it is obvious that there is no sense in maintaining, at full readiness, a disproportionately large military force.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷⁰ Robert F. Ray, "Australia and the Gulf War," *National Press Club* (Canberra 1991), 14-15.

⁶⁷¹ "Strategic Review 1993," 4-5.

⁶⁷² Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 1.10.

⁶⁷³ Robert F. Ray, "The Move to the North - the Strategic Imperative," *CGS Conference* (Darwin 1992), 7.

This reflects the rationale within Defence for differentiation between short-warning attacks, which it deemed to be of little existential threat due to the lack of technological sophistication of offensive military capabilities in the region, and longer-warning attacks, which were deemed to pose a greater threat, but which would also entail longer warning times due to the military build ups which would be needed to prosecute a substantial attack against Australia. In accordance with this logic, statements were often framed in terms which strongly resembled earlier notion of expansion. For example, Ray stated that

We have had a traditional technological edge within our region, which has allowed us to have a small standing force. We seek to have a minimal platform which will retain our competencies across a wide range of areas which can be expanded if a high level contingency threat emerges.⁶⁷⁴

Another theme throughout the period was increasing emphasis on stabilisation operations. DOA was clear that any ADF contributions to stabilisation or humanitarian operations would be drawn from the force-in-being and would not be a force structure development priority in its own right.

Development of the Defence Force for national security provides the Government with the capability for such contributions. It is not necessary to develop forces especially for peacekeeping. Like contributions to allied efforts, such contributions can be mounted from the force-in-being.⁶⁷⁵

Beazley used cautious terms to emphasise self-reliance. For example, he said that

It is obvious that our approach has not been to prepare the Australian Defence Force to act as part of an allied force in a distant theatre, but to meet the strategic requirements for the defence of Australia in the most cost-effective manner.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁴ "Defence into the Future: Maintaining the Edge," *Address to the National Press Club* (Canberra 1995), 3.

⁶⁷⁵ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 1.47.

⁶⁷⁶ Kim Christian Beazley, "Anzus: Regional Defence Implications," (The Fabian Society 1985), 24.

After the end of the Cold War, the 1993 Strategic Review was more open to participating in peace and stabilisation operations, stating that

...with the end of the Cold War, new opportunities have opened for the international community to play a more active role in peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Defence involvement in such activities is an increasingly prominent aspect of our defence approach.⁶⁷⁷

Ray used the example of the ADF's contribution to the peacekeeping mission in Rwanda to highlight Australia's interest in being more engaged in multilateral operations

This new contribution by the Australian Defence Force in Rwanda reinforces Australia's commitment to international humanitarian relief operations and to UN peace operations in general.⁶⁷⁸

Rationale for advantage

Support to the defence industry remained the primary context for rationalising a high technology ADF. However, emphasis on both state of the art technology and on a technological level relative to other militaries was much more substantial than it had been in previous decades. There was comparatively little emphasis on the use of high technology weapons and systems to mitigate Australia's strategic constraints, which suggests that confidence in the ADF's capacity to defend Australia, to operate sophisticated weapons and to present a formidable deterrent was higher in the 1990s than it had been in previous periods and probably than at any other time in Australia's history.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ Department of Defence, *Strategic Review*, para. 7.

⁶⁷⁸ Robert F. Ray, "Farewell to the Advance Party of Australian Troops Departing for Rwanda," (Townsville 1994), 1.

⁶⁷⁹ See Appendix C, Table 29

Policy documents frequently used the term technological edge and highlighted the need for effective ADF force elements. For example, *Defending Australia* stated that

As regional force structures develop we will need to enhance our capabilities if we are to maintain the relative effectiveness of our Force. If we fail to make appropriate enhancements to the force structure, our capacity to defend Australia will be eroded.⁶⁸⁰

The technological advantage referred to was often characterised in absolute terms. Policy actors often used phrasing which indicated cutting edge or state of the art technology and sometimes likened the ADF to other advanced militaries. For example, while speaking of the RAN deployment to the Persian Gulf in 1990, Hawke made reference to both the cutting edge weapons and sensors employed by the RAN and the fact that the ships being deployed were technologically equal to the US capability they would be working alongside.

Our ships are well-suited to the role we are asking them to fulfil. they are the most modern ships in our fleet, equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensor systems, and manned by crews that are as good as any in the world. The same type of ships are serving with the US Navy in the gulf region at the moment, on similar tasks to those our ships will perform.⁶⁸¹

Hawke also used phrases like ‘most modern and capable’ to describe ADF capabilities. For example, speaking of Australia’s submarines, he said that

Self-reliance means the capacity to defend yourself, if ever that is necessary. And in this sense, these vessels are the most modern and capable conventionally-powered submarines in the world. Based on the west coast of Australia they will substantially increase our capacity to defend our shores.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 14.6.

⁶⁸¹ Robert J. L. Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister," *Parliamentary Resolution on the Gulf Crisis* (1990), 6.

⁶⁸² "Speech," ed. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (1991), 2.

Policy documents also linked high technology capabilities to preparedness, noting that

The overall development of the ADF will need to have a particular emphasis on the key principles of joint operations, the selective application of advanced technology, the promotion of competence and professionalism, and the application of a rigorous approach to preparedness.⁶⁸³

The level of preparedness that was realistically achievable was a matter of contention, though. The 1989 strategic planning paper warned that

...we must be selective in our use of technology. This means that we must be specific about where a margin of technological superiority critically needs to be.... [T]echnologies relevant to the maintenance of our technological edge are likely to be both more expensive and more capable. For this reason, we may have to acquire combat systems in reduced numbers. [H]igher operating costs are generally associated with the high acquisition costs of advanced-technology equipment.⁶⁸⁴

Nonetheless, Ray emphasised that Australia's high technology approach to defence planning was no longer seen as a choice, but as a necessity when he announced that regional states 'have a large population (inaudible) we have to make up the edge by having the most technologically advanced weapons platform that we can afford.'⁶⁸⁵

This period also focused extensively on industry, linking it to Australia's capacity to achieve a self-reliant force structure and posture. DOA noted that 'we would be assisted by the relative advantage that is latent in our military and industrial base'⁶⁸⁶ which would 'provide a suitable basis for timely expansion to meet higher levels of threat if our strategic circumstances deteriorate over the longer term.'⁶⁸⁷ Hawke also linked self-reliance to defence industry capacity:

⁶⁸³ Department of Defence, *Strategic Review*, para 5.39.

⁶⁸⁴ *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, paras. 4.25-4.27.

⁶⁸⁵ Ray, "Strategic Review 1993," 5.

⁶⁸⁶ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 3.22.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 3.51.

But defence self-reliance means much more than this. Any country which aspires to defence self-reliance must be capable not only of operating the necessary defence equipment on which its security depends but also of constructing and maintaining it.⁶⁸⁸

Defending Australia announced that industry would become increasingly involved in long term force structure planning.

Increasingly, in areas of rapid technological advance such as complex command and control systems, Defence will seek ways to involve industry more in identifying capability solutions.⁶⁸⁹

Keating added that major capability acquisitions would benefit industry. In reference to the Collins submarine project, he commented that

The submarine project went much further than a decision we made to replace the ageing Oberon class submarines: it is the first part of a determination to re-establish Australia's shipbuilding industry.⁶⁹⁰

Similarly, when speaking about the ANZAC frigates developed for the RAN and RNZN, Keating also emphasised the importance of maintaining a technological advantage to sustain industry for the purposes of self-reliance:

...we will focus on our regional strengths, our industrial capabilities, our capacity for research and development, for design not simply of ships but of combat systems and weapon systems... We are building a naval ship building capacity like this here in Australasia and, of course, in Australia's case we also have a submarine program, we will soon have the Mine Hunter Program and the hydrographic ship.⁶⁹¹

Keating went even further to state that collaboration between Australia and New Zealand on the Anzac frigates was beneficial for both countries defence industries and for ADF and NZDF force postures

⁶⁸⁸ Hawke, "Speech," 2.

⁶⁸⁹ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 11.18.

⁶⁹⁰ Paul J. Keating, "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP," *Launching Ceremony for Submarine Collins* (Port Adelaide 1993), 1.

⁶⁹¹ "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP," *Launch of ANZAC Frigate Te Kaha* (Williamstown 1995), 2.

The fact that we work together collaboratively on a single class of ship, like this, that bears the name the proud name of Anzac, the history of which and the culture of which we share says something I think about the modern relationship in peace and how we can develop ourselves, develop a defence capability here. How we can see technological spin-offs in both of our countries. How, by improving and building on our defence material capability, we can, at the same time, support other industries and while giving ourselves a stronger defence posture.⁶⁹²

4.5 Strategic signalling

Strategic signalling demonstrated incremental changes throughout the period 1987-1996. Deterrence became more closely linked with strategic denial and strike capabilities as those capabilities became more central to policy objectives and as their supporting concepts were realised in policy guidance. Reassurance linked increased ADF capabilities for self-reliance to increased capacity to assist regional security partners. It also emphasised potentially distant contributions to multilateral operations using capabilities determined by a self-reliant force posture. Validation grappled with the need to justify the change in force structure planning priorities from a balanced force comprised primarily of expeditionary capabilities to a force structure ostensibly characterised by strategic denial in the defence of Australia's air and maritime approaches.

Deterrence

A significant shift in Australia's approach to signalling deterrence was the introduction of strategic denial as a principal means for establishing credible defence self-reliance.⁶⁹³ The emphasis on strategic geography and capabilities able to deny Australia's air and

⁶⁹² "The Hon. P. J. Keating, MP, and the New Zealand Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Jim Bolger," *Doorstop* (Williamstown, Victoria 1995), 1.

⁶⁹³ See Appendix C, Table 30

maritime approaches to a potential adversary imbued Australian defence discourse with a new sense of confidence in its ability to deter and defeat armed attacks against its territory and interests.

The DOA period strongly emphasised technologically advanced capabilities which would enable the ADF to detect and engage hostile forces operating in or near Australia's northern approaches. The material focus of relative advantage was founded on individual weapon platforms, such as strategic strike with advanced aircraft, the use of advanced PGM, maritime interdiction and harassment of surface combatants and sea lift with submarines. It also extended to technical capabilities which would allow the ADF to achieve information dominance over potential adversaries, including the Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN), secure communications and establishing the Joint Operations Command.

DOA clearly signals that Australia's force posture will demonstrate the ADF's capacity to deny its approaches to a would-be adversary:

This Government believes that Australia must be able to provide its own defence in circumstances, presently quite unlikely but still credible as a future possibility, of a threat posed to Australia by a nation operating within our own region. Such developments would place great demands on our defence capacity. Our force structure planning will ensure that we have, and can be seen to have, the capacity to respond effective to them.⁶⁹⁴

The terminology is instructive here because the white paper doesn't just state that Australia should have the desired capability, but stresses that it must be seen to have them. This is recurrent theme in DOA, with phrases such as 'any potential adversaries know that they will be faced with a comprehensive array of military capabilities, both defensive

⁶⁹⁴ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 3.2.

and offensive’⁶⁹⁵ and ‘our military capabilities and competence must command respect.’⁶⁹⁶ The 1989 strategic planning paper followed this trend, commenting that Australia ‘must ensure that the adversary is left under no misapprehension about our ability to interdict and employ strike against selected military targets.’⁶⁹⁷

Hawke added that Australia’s relationships had a deterrent effect, noting that

...our alliance arrangements and our firm friendships with countries in the region provide the framework within which we can not only deter aggression against Australia but also promote the security of our region and, ultimately, of the globe.⁶⁹⁸

The 1994 defence white paper suggested that in addition to ‘maintaining essential military capabilities’ the ADF’s purpose was to help ‘deter aggression against Australia’⁶⁹⁹ It further commented that

Depth in defence requires responsive national mechanisms; effective command and control of a cohesive Australian Defence Force; carefully targeted intelligence and surveillance operations; and highly capable, responsive and mobile forces that can deal with threats quickly and decisively. To make the most effective use of each of our operating environments - sea, land and air - the Australian Defence Force is structured in such a way that anyone wishing to apply military force against us would need to contend with the coordinated and efficient action of all our forces under joint operational command.⁷⁰⁰

Meanwhile, Keating specifically differentiated between the deterrence effect of capabilities and force employment:

I think credible defence does more than material purchases or procurement or weapons procurement in their own right. It is a total thing which is operational forces, combat readiness, capacity logistics as well as equipment. These are very sophisticated issues which require sophisticated judgements and most defence ministries and armed services try and make those judgements all the time.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., vii.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., para. 2.62.

⁶⁹⁷ *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, para. 4.12.

⁶⁹⁸ Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister," 2.

⁶⁹⁹ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 1.10.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., para. 4.32.

⁷⁰¹ Paul J. Keating, "Press Conference," (Theatre, Parliament House, Wellington 1993), 3.

Reassurance

In the *Defence of Australia* period, policy documents discussed credibility, support to regional partners and crisis response fairly evenly. However, Ministerial statements discussed credibility to a much more significant extent than other forms of reassurance.⁷⁰²

Policy documents and Ministerial statements both sought to link Australia's approach to self-reliance, which potentially entailed significant increases to defence capabilities, to positive security outcomes. In particular, documents and statements linked self-reliance to increases in the ADF's ability to support regional allies and both regional and global security. The kind of assistance advertised to regional security partners included the full gamut of response and support options and repeated firm signals of Australia's commitment to use the ADF to assist its allies. For example, Hawke signalled that

In planning for defence self-reliance, the Government's defence policy has focused on the need to develop and maintain a credible force able to mount operations in Australia's area of direct military interest.⁷⁰³

Credibility as an ally was emphasised substantially in this period to offset what may otherwise have been perceived as isolationism in the announcement of DOA. Hawke and Beazley went to great lengths to reassure Australia's allies that self-reliance would give the ADF the kinds of capabilities it needed to contribute to wider regional and global military operations if the Australian government deemed it necessary. They linked DOA-oriented capabilities to Australia's ability to participate in coalition operations, to meet

⁷⁰² See Appendix C,

Table 31: 1987-1996 Reassurance coding

⁷⁰³ Hawke, "Speech by the Prime Minister," 3.

burden-sharing obligations and to promote regional stability by being independently secure from destabilising forces. For example, Keating stated that

The quality of our defence partnership and the value of the contribution we each make to wider regional stability and United Nations peacekeeping depends on our maintaining credible defence capabilities.⁷⁰⁴

When pressed on the applicability of DOA capabilities for expeditionary operations, Ministers frequently asserted that the kinds of capabilities useful to defending the Australian continent and denying the air and maritime gap were conducive to operations further afield even though they weren't optimised for expeditionary operations. For example, Ray echoed Beazley's earlier pronouncements when he said that

...by developing sound relationships with neighbouring countries we can help foster a more secure regional environment, benefitting both the region and ourselves. Over and above this; we have as part of our foreign policy, a policy of 'constructive commitment' to the South Pacific region, which includes constructive commitment in the areas of defence and security no less than in other areas.⁷⁰⁵

This paralleled comments in DOA that

This Government believes that an Australian defence force able to deal effectively with the most credible challenges to the nation's sovereignty is the best contribution we can make to the continued stability of our region. Meeting our requirements for the defence of Australia will provide the Government with practical options for use of elements of the Defence Force in tasks beyond our area of direct military interest in support of regional friends and allies.⁷⁰⁶

Ray summed this up, stating that 'our capability to defend our own territory is central to our standing in the region and to the role we can play as a partner in regional security.'⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁴ Paul J. Keating, "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP," *State Luncheon* (Wellington 1993), 2.

⁷⁰⁵ Ray, "Statement by Minister for Defence, Senator the Honourable Robert Ray, on Cooperative Defence Activities in the South Pacific Region," 4.

⁷⁰⁶ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 1.34.

⁷⁰⁷ Ray, "Strategic Review 1993," 4.

Successive policy documents emphasised that contributions to regional security, although second to self-reliance, were an important consideration in Australia's force structure planning. For example, DOA stated that

The current substantial capacity of Australian forces to contribute to security in the South-West Pacific will be further enhanced by the Government's decision to increase our air and naval deployments to the region and to provide practical assistance in such fields as maritime surveillance and patrol and hydrography. In the event of a regional conflict, the forces we are developing for our own defence would have direct utility in the South-West Pacific.⁷⁰⁸

Similarly, the 1993 *Strategic Review* stated that

For Australia to maintain its security and its regional defence standing in the 1990s, we will need to continue to give our first priority to capabilities for national defence. This approach meets the responsibility of Government to provide for national security. It will also provide a secure and confident basis on which to engage in regional defence cooperation. It is precisely our strengths in planning for national defence - in acquiring, adapting and supporting modern defence equipment and developing the professional skills of a modern defence force - that are attractive to regional countries. It is these strengths that will provide the basis for industry and logistic cooperation, and, overtime, for the levels of interoperability that will be required for true regional defence cooperation.⁷⁰⁹

Ray added that this capacity held significant international prestige when he noted that 'the professionalism and capabilities of the Australian Defence Force mean Australia is among the first countries to be called on to assist in international security and humanitarian crises.'⁷¹⁰ He further linked this to Australia's capacity to contribute to regional security:

This is not to neglect alliance and regional associations and cooperation with regional neighbours. They remain essential elements of Australia's overall defence approach. As the Gulf War showed, from a self-reliant defence force structured for the defence of this nation, Australia can make a contribution to operations further afield in support of friends and allies, and activities sanctioned by the United Nations. Today's decisions will ensure that Australia continues to have the capacity to contribute to wider global and regional security.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁸ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, para. 1.36.

⁷⁰⁹ *Strategic Review*, para. 5.8.

⁷¹⁰ *Defending Australia*, para. 1.10.

⁷¹¹ Robert F. Ray, "Defence into the Twenty First Century," *Ministerial Statement* (Parliament House, Canberra 1991), para. 10.

Keating focused more on Indonesia, claiming that 'if we are to turn into reality our policy of seeking defence in and with Asia, instead of against Asia, Indonesia is the most important place it will have to be done.'⁷¹² To reinforce this sentiment, Keating publicly announced his intention for his first international visit to send a clear signal that one of his government's priorities would be its relationship with Indonesia.

I have come to Indonesia, on this my first overseas visit as Prime Minister, because Indonesia is in the first rank of Australia's priorities. As our close neighbour, as the fourth most populous country in the world, as a rapidly growing economy in the most rapidly growing part of the world, as a key player in this region where our future lies, Indonesia commands Australia's attention. Very different we may be, but we have found, I think, that the destinies of our two countries are joined. I should like this visit to signal that.⁷¹³

Keating also took conciliatory steps towards other regional states, particularly when he re-established defence ties with Fiji in 1992.

I think it is now appropriate to resume defence cooperation with Fiji. Initially that renewed defence cooperation will concentrate on maritime surveillance and training, and will include a resumption of operational Royal Australian Navy visits to Fiji, resumption of aerial maritime surveillance patrols in and through Fiji's exclusive economic zone, and also offering Fiji training places in the joint services military college in Canberra for the training of Fiji military force personnel.⁷¹⁴

Validation

One interesting trend in the validation node in the 1987 defence white paper was that the government's decade or so of investment in convincing the public that defence self-reliance was possible had begun to pay off. As a result, validation was more concerned with the ADF's capabilities and more targeted toward justifying increased expenditure. Appeals to morale often referenced the ADF's military proficiency and the utility of high

⁷¹² Paul J. Keating, "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP," *Australia Today Indonesia '94* (Overseas Passenger Terminal, Sydney 1994), 4.

⁷¹³ "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP," (Jakarta 1992), 1.

⁷¹⁴ *Press Conference* (Australian High Commission, Honiara, South Pacific Forum 1992), 2.

technology weapons and systems used to increase Australia's strategic weight. There was generally less emphasis on the ADF's credibility as a fighting force at all. Validation stressed self-reliance as a force structure principle, but was less concerned with justifying in principle the ability of or need for an ADF which could defend Australia.⁷¹⁵

Beazley frequently characterised self-reliance in the context of alliances, making a clear point about Australia's capacity and intentions to defend itself to all audiences, but at the same time recognising the practical limits to Australia's defence self-reliance. Throughout the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, validation was largely focused on cementing self-reliance and the geographical boundaries of Australia's primary force structure concerns in the Defence of Australia doctrine. DOA changed defence policy priorities which would determine force structure decisions and signalled different intentions which further altered Australia's force posture.

The Australian people expect that Australia shall be able to defend itself. The Australian Government accepts its duty to provide Australia with defence forces able to meet that expectation.⁷¹⁶

However, DOA envisaged only slight expenditure growth and did not make a vigorous case for increased spending to supply its proposed force structure.

The Government's defence planning will continue to provide for modest annual real increases in operating costs, recognising that it generally costs more to operate modern and more capable equipment than it did to operate older designs of equipment.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁵ See Appendix C, Table 32

⁷¹⁶ Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, vii.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 8.27.

In the 1990s, Defence took a different approach. *Defending Australia* made statements linking defence self-reliance to Australia's sense of confidence and to national identity:

We are rightly proud of our Defence Force, which by its ideals and achievements over nearly a century has done so much to define our national identity. Our defence self-reliance underpins our national self-confidence. Maintaining the capabilities to defend ourselves is important in the way we see ourselves as a nation.⁷¹⁸

Keating similarly employed the concept of confidence in relation to defence capabilities.

Speaking in reference to the Collins project, he commented that

The Collins class submarines increase our confidence in our ability to defend ourselves, and illustrate how, through joint cooperation ventures Australian industry can contribute to the security needs of our neighbours, and help increase regional security and stability.⁷¹⁹

Defending Australia also used more emotive terms, such as pride, to inspire public opinion and confidence on Australia's maturity as a nation able to stand tall in the international system as a result of defence self-reliance:

The foundation of the Government's defence policy is self-reliance, which requires that Australia maintain the military capabilities to defend our country without depending on help from other countries' combat forces. This approach to defence reflects our view of ourselves. Self-reliance in defence is essential to the Government's broader conception of Australia as a nation, proud of our continent and our achievements, and committed to preserving them.⁷²⁰

Another example is the combination of respect, confidence and security in a single phrase:

Our ability to defend ourselves and contribute to regional security does much to ensure that we are respected and helps us engage in the region by giving confidence that we can manage uncertainty and assure our security.⁷²¹

Meanwhile, Ray focused more on security concerns, stating that 'the first responsibility of Government is to ensure the sovereignty of Australia by providing adequate security

⁷¹⁸ *Defending Australia*, para. 1.13.

⁷¹⁹ Keating, "Speech by the Prime Minister, the Hon. P. J. Keating, MP," 4.

⁷²⁰ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia*, para. 3.3.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 1.4.

protection.’⁷²² Ray added that Australia’s security was improved by Australia’s geography and a strategy of strategic denial:

Strategically, the sea provides us with a considerable measure of security. A hostile force would have to cross a large area of open ocean to attack us. The sea-air gap across northern Australia forms the basis of our defence planning for the defence of Australia. As a result we have extensive maritime capabilities, and sizeable maritime forces.⁷²³

Chapter conclusions

The late 1980s and early 1990s are an era of Australian defence policy most directly associated with the concept of a technological edge. Beginning in the 1987 defence white paper, the policy imperative to maintain a clear technological advantage over regional militaries featured prominently in defence discourse. By the early 1990s the idea had become engrained in defence discourse but was rivalled by exogenous pressures to complement the government’s new diplomatic and economic approaches to Asia, which were collaborative and favoured engagement and were not entirely conducive to directly espousing military advantage in the region. Consequently, a lot of the discourse began to frame Southeast Asian military capabilities in collaborative terms, noting the kinds of capabilities that were being developed in the region as modernisation programs with favourable outcomes for Australia’s security environment.

The policy context for key concepts changed dramatically during this period, beginning with a substantial shift towards the region as the referent for relative advantage. Policy documents frequently linked regional capabilities to Australia’s need for an edge and overtly set regional capability levels as a benchmark for Australia’s technological edge.

⁷²² Ray, "Defence into the Future: Maintaining the Edge," 1.

⁷²³ "Opening Address," *Australia's Maritime Bridge Into Asia Conference* (Sydney 1993), 2.

The scope of Australia's strategic interests also focused much more on regional than global or, at times, even DOA interests.

The strategic concepts used in defence policy changed to reflect more focus on certain aspects of technology. The acquisition of advanced C4ISR technologies and the third stage of the JORN project were particularly relevant in demonstrating the ADF's increasingly high technology capabilities and incorporating emerging NCW capabilities into doctrine for greater coordination. Self-reliance and contingencies became far and away the most important force posture determinants, but references to regional stabilisation operations were also prominent. Between them, these concepts constituted the bulk of force posture coding and reflected a growing concern with the self-reliant defence of Australia against armed attack and an increased willingness to use the ADF to support regional assistance and international peacekeeping. This was consistent with international peacekeeping supply and demand trends in the immediate post-Cold War era, with many nations becoming more comfortable with supplying peacekeepers to UN missions than before.

Australia's strategic signals underwent mostly incremental changes. For example, deterrence became strongly linked with strategic denial and strike capabilities as those capabilities matured and were more central to policy objectives. Reassurance overtly linked increased ADF capabilities for self-reliance to increased capacity to assist regional security partners. There was also significant emphasis on using and contributing to alliances while maintaining a self-reliant force posture. Validation responded to a

perceived need to justify the change in force structure planning priorities from a focus on expeditionary capability planning and to a DOA styled force structure.

Chapter 5

1997-2009: Capability edge in the twenty-first century

In 1997 the Howard government released its first major defence policy document. *Australia's strategic policy* became the cornerstone for a wide-ranging reform to the way Australia viewed itself in terms of defence. Although many key concepts, such as self-reliance and a focus on regional security, would remain the same, some aspects of Australia's policy approach would change significantly. This was largely due to a new image of Australia in the world, one of a highly capable ADF able to contribute to expeditionary operations, able to deter and defeat attacks against Australia by using high technology weapons, ICT and by enhanced coordination of force elements and NCW. The 2000 defence white paper introduced the idea of concentric circles to Australia's prioritisation of its strategic interests, which is still prominent today. Concentric circles built on previous concepts of distance and priority, but also substantially reformed Australia's priorities in accordance with its new self-image. The defence updates through the 2000s set aside many of the key judgments made in the 2000 white paper, until 2009 realigned defence policy with the fundamental approach to strategic policy which began in 1997.

5.1 Concerned but not alarmed

Australia's political landscape throughout the 2000s was significantly influenced by security politics. Colloquially termed the 'counterterrorism decade,' the post-9/11 period drew a lot of public interest to defence and national security policy and eased the political friction which may otherwise have accompanied sweeping reforms to Australia's security apparatuses. Strategic policy didn't change significantly from the policy declarations made prior to 9/11, but operational practice demonstrated changing attitudes towards the purpose of the Defence Organisation and challenged some underlying priorities for force structure planning. Major political debates often intertwined domestic and international issues in the 2000s, replacing issues like the GST and the 1997 gun buyback program with regional security interventions, asylum seekers and Australia's contribution to the international war on terror.

Under the lens

Howard had formed the first coalition government in 13 years on the basis of his appeal to mainstream Australians. He had a targeted broad common denominator, primarily dissatisfaction with Labor's big picture focus on issues such as republicanism, increased engagement with Asia and reconciliation; issues which the Coalition painted as peripheral in comparison to core political business of ensuring prosperity, managing the economy and providing essential services.⁷²⁴ Howard's middle road appeased environmentalists and blue collar workers alike, separating Labor from some of its traditional bases of

⁷²⁴ Judith Brett, "The New Liberalism," *The Howard Years*, ed. Robert Manne (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2004), 79-81.

support. As a result, the coalition formed government in a strong position in 1996. Despite their broad-based agenda, the Coalition began delivering policy outcomes quickly, even in the face of unexpected crises such as the Port Arthur Massacre and East Timor. Howard kept his front bench calm and effective in the face of adversity as the emerging 24 hour news cycle placed more pressure on individual ministers. One of Howard's distinctive leadership traits was the political autonomy which he afforded to his Ministers. His rationale was that the public expected rapid answers from its Ministers on policy issues within their portfolios. This reasoning was borne out by the demand for political input from the evolving news media which compelled the government to change the way it conducted its affairs.⁷²⁵

As the end of the century neared, the Coalition began formulating its own Defence white paper. Foreign and defence policy had attracted significant public interest during the East Timor intervention and the dismissal of Department of Defence Secretary, Paul Barratt, in 1999,⁷²⁶ making a comprehensive statement on Australian defence an important signal to both the electorate and Australia's security partners. Howard sought to cement existing ties with Western powers, particularly the US, while pursuing a more modest agenda of political and economic partnership with Asia. This translated significantly into Howard's approach to defence policy, which retained many of the key strategic concepts of the Defence of Australia doctrine, but envisioned the ADF as a broader instrument of Australia's strategic policy and planned a force structure more explicitly capable of

⁷²⁵ Paul Kelly, "Re-Thinking Australian Governance: The Howard Legacy," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 65, no. 1 (2006): 11.

⁷²⁶ Len Pullin and Ali Haidar, "Dismissing a Departmental Secretary: An Overt Exercise of Power in Public Employment," *Department of Management Working Paper Series, Working Paper 32/04* (Melbourne: Monash University 2004).

coalition operations further away from the Australian continent.⁷²⁷ Although this policy would be validated in principle by numerous policy updates throughout the 2000s, it was quickly altered in practice. Within a year of the government's defence policy stipulating a concentric approach to matters of defence, the first of Australia's contributions to the war on terror began reshaping the ADF at an operational level. Howard continued to support the idea of defence self-reliance through strategic denial, but he also emphasised Australia's need to participate in international coalition operations to meet what he saw as common threats to Western civilisation.⁷²⁸

A war on terror

Howard was in America as the events of 9/11 unfolded and many believe that his personal experience of the attacks underwrote his commitment to the US response.⁷²⁹ Just weeks after the attacks Australian troops were deployed to Afghanistan and they were later deployed repeatedly to Iraq and Afghanistan throughout the rest of the decade and, in the case of Afghanistan, beyond. Howard publicly expressed his concern for Australia's national security after 9/11 and this impetus fuelled his desire to contribute to an international coalition to fight terrorism abroad. The Bali Bombings further drove Howard's message home, reminding Australians that they too could be targeted by terrorists and that even some prominent holiday locations, close to home and long considered safe, were now dangerous places.

⁷²⁷ Rod Lyon, "Australia's Strategic Fundamentals," (Special Report N° 6: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2007).

⁷²⁸ Matt McDonald and Matt Merefield, "How Was Howard's War Possible? Winning the War of Position over Iraq," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 2 (2010).

⁷²⁹ James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press).

The 2000s proved to be a turbulent decade for international politics and Australian domestic politics often reflected the sense anxiety that boiled beneath the surface of many Western nations. Domestic political discourses were heavily influenced by a sense of insecurity and alarmism which Marr has characterised as *political panic*.⁷³⁰ This panic made it easy for politicians to position themselves as guardians of Australian values and of national security, playing on entrenched alarmism to secure their positions, and to frame the public agenda by justifying and reinforcing the fears their policies were intended to allay.⁷³¹ This incentivised rhetorical brinksmanship, particularly at the leadership level, and was a major point of contention between the Coalition and Labor in the 2004 election. In the lead-up to the election, Beazley, then leader of the opposition, and Howard entered into a contest of one-upmanship in which each tried to sound stronger than the other on security issues, particularly on counterterrorism measures.⁷³²

Kevin '07

In the aftermath of Labor's 2004 election defeat, the party struggled with a policy platform which would dethrone the longstanding Howard Coalition reign. In late 2006, Rudd challenged Beazley for leadership and became leader of the opposition. Over the next year he won popular support across a range of political issues, presenting the new face of Labor as more in touch with the digital age and more balanced on progressive and social issues. Rudd's campaign was reminiscent of Howard's 1996 campaign. He claimed that the coalition had lost touch with mainstream Australia and that the new Labor Party,

⁷³⁰ David Marr, *Panic* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2013).

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Jennings, "The Politics of Defence White Papers," 7.

under his leadership, could better serve the country's needs. Important issues to voters were industrial relations law, particularly reforms to the government's unpopular WorkChoices legislation, as well as health policy and the economy. However, Rudd also promised to dramatically change the nature of Australia's involvement in two key areas of international cooperation: the Iraq War and the Kyoto Protocol. These proved to be areas of interest for many Australians and Rudd's promises to withdraw Australian troops from Iraq was met with support from a significant cross-section of the community.

Despite the Coalition's objectively strong track record on economic management, Howard's credibility was damaged by rhetorical entrapment when he admitted breaking an election promise to ensure that interest rates remained low. When coupled with increasing anti-war attitudes and suspicion regarding the government's national security powers and the substance of quickly passed changes to anti-terrorism legislation, Howard's image was damaged and he lost his own seat at the 2007 election. Rudd emerged victorious and immediately began enacting his personal project for Australia's future. One of Rudd's main areas of reform was defence policy. He quickly made good on his promise to withdraw the ADF from the unpopular war in Iraq, although he increased Australia's contribution to Afghanistan soon afterward, and announced that his government would produce a new defence white paper to reflect Labor's views of the Asia-Pacific region in the twenty first century.

5.2 The twenty-first century and a changing security environment

The first decade of the twenty-first century was a particularly turbulent period for Australian defence policy. International events, such as the crisis in East Timor and 9/11, rocked the stability of the strategic environment that Australia had characterised as essentially benign for much of the preceding two decades. Although creeping tensions in North Asia had been a major point of concern in the 1990s, the strategic shocks of the 2000s and Australia's simultaneous involvement in regional stabilisation operations in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands and in combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq eclipsed policy-makers' expectations of contingencies. Meanwhile, technological advancements and regional military modernisation programs exerted pressure on Defence to change the way it conceptualised relative advantage, to maintain capability development to achieve some degree of mitigation against the slowly closing qualitative gap between the ADF and regional militaries and to exploit advanced ICT infrastructure and highly trained personnel to the maximum advantage.

Australia's strategic policy

After the change of government in 1996, policymakers resolved to generate a new policy guidance document for Australia's defence planning. The Howard government identified three ways in which DOA needed revision. First, by widening the scope of Australia's regional interests from Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific to the broader Asia-Pacific region in order to include substantial developments in North Asia which affected the security environment elsewhere; second, by overtly acknowledging the potential for great power tension in the region due to China's rise; and third, by raising the profile of

peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in Australia's strategic priorities.⁷³³ This widening of Australia's security outlook coincided with a change in focus for the way technology was conceptualised in defence policy and statements. In 1997 the Howard government released *Australia's Strategic Policy*, a policy statement which sought to reshape broad concepts used in the Australian defence policy discourse in subtle but important ways.

One of these was to broaden the scope of Australia's strategic interests from the 'region of primary strategic interest' of the DOA paper and referred to in policy documents during the early 1990s. McLachlan envisaged a more forward posture for the ADF and strategic interests which included the wider Asia-Pacific region.⁷³⁴ Another was to deliberately drop the phrase 'Defence of Australia' from policy documents and statements.⁷³⁵ Paul Dibb argues that despite the change of name, many of his core ideas from the DOA 'orthodoxy' were present in Australian defence policy in and after the change of terminology.⁷³⁶ This suggests that the change of name had less to do with breaking from policy, indeed incremental changes are the norm, but to frame the debate in new terms which the new government could exercise ownership and authority over. The seminal phrase was laden with too much conceptual baggage from the previous government and was replaced with terminology which the coalition could frame in their own design and use to exert more control over the defence discourse. McLachlan clearly noted his intention that the document would boost public confidence in the government's approach to defence in the foreword of the report.

⁷³³ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 180.

⁷³⁴ McLachlan, *Australia's Strategic Dilemmas: Options for the Future.*; ASP pp9-10

⁷³⁵ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 179.

⁷³⁶ Paul Dibb, "The Self-Reliant Defence of Australia: The History of an Idea," *ibid.*, 21.

I hope this document gives all Australians a sound understanding of those challenges. But more importantly, I am confident it also provides reassurance that the Government is putting in place a strategic approach to ensure those challenges are met.⁷³⁷

Part of this reframing of key policy concepts was to introduce the term defeating armed attacks against Australia into the defence lexicon and part was to widen the ADF's remit to include defending regional interests and support global interests.⁷³⁸ *Australia's Strategic Policy* also used these interests to create a hierarchy of capability development priorities which would be the basis for force structure planning in future policy.

The government now had a conceptual toolkit of its own design to use in framing defence policy, engaging in policy debate and promoting policy action to the Australian public. However, the policy vision that had been formed in *Australia's Strategic Policy* was incomplete.

The paper did not attempt a rigorous financial analysis of capability options and long-term funding needs. All it did was sound an important warning that while current funds if carefully managed could sustain current forces in the short term, long-term cost pressures were going to force some tough choices.⁷³⁹

The 2000 defence white paper, *Our Future Defence Force*⁷⁴⁰ was the Howard government's second major defence policy document and distilled many of the ideas which had taken hold within defence since their introduction in *Australia's strategic policy*. The 2000 defence white paper was written amidst the backdrop of the beginnings of INTERFET and was focused on adapting DOA to the changing strategic environment of the mid and late 1990s. The emergence of regional security tensions, the rapid rise of China's influence in North Asia and the proliferation of UN peacekeeping operations all

⁷³⁷ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, iv.

⁷³⁸ ASP p.29

⁷³⁹ White, "Four Decades of the Defence of Australia," 181.

⁷⁴⁰ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*.

served to complicate Australia's earlier approach to DOA.⁷⁴¹ The 2000 defence white paper took the initial ideas of DOA and added to them the implicit strategic interests from further afield, overtly deprioritising them relative to defending Australia based on geographical proximity, but including forward operations as an important consideration.

Soon after the release of *Our Future Defence Force*, the world was shocked by the events of 9/11 and the strategic logic of concentric circles was largely overridden by the gravity of Australia's international concerns. Howard invoked ANZUS for the first time in the treaty's history,⁷⁴² the ADF deployed to support coalition operations in Afghanistan and later to Iraq and Australia saw for the first time the practical implications of preparing primarily for territorial defence and strategic denial. Then-Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill famously remarked that '[i]t probably never made sense to conceptualise our security interests as a series of diminishing concentric circles around our coastline, but it certainly does not do so now.'⁷⁴³ Hill went further to say that

...our strategic environment remains unsettled. It is always the case and thus the Government committed itself to conduct an annual update of the Strategic Review - which underpinned the White Paper. We have commenced work on the first of these reviews, which is due to be completed before the end of the year. It will assess the impact of 11 September on our strategic environment, consider the nature and scope of any changes necessary in strategic guidance and review the balance of priorities in the ADF's roles and tasks. This will involve re-examining the validity of our key planning principles, the priorities and challenges that face our international defence relationships, and how well our defence capabilities equip Defence to undertake the major tasks set by Government.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴¹ Ross Babbage, "Australian Defence Strategies," *Security and Defence: Pacific and Global Perspectives*, ed. Desmond Ball and Cathy Downes (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990).; McLachlan, *Australia's Strategic Dilemmas: Options for the Future*.; Michael O'Connor, "The Implications of a Regional Security Strategy," *Australia's Strategic Dilemmas: Options for the Future* (Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1997).

⁷⁴² John Winston Howard, "Joint Press Conference with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs: Anzus Treaty; Ansett," (Parliament House, Canberra2001).

⁷⁴³ Robert Hill, "Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence," *Address to the Australian Defence College* (Canberra2002).

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

The paper Hill referred to became the first of three 'updates' to the 2000 white paper released in 2003, 2005 and 2007.⁷⁴⁵ The three defence updates through the 2000s were criticised for being reactionary and inconsistent. In places they reversed the logic of concentric circles and instead focused on prioritising ADF capabilities that were ostensibly optimised to both defend Australia and participate in overseas contingency operations. However, some declared capability priorities appeared to be selected for the latter and emphasised interoperability and coalition operations as a driver of capability development.⁷⁴⁶ This highlighted the disparities between the ADF envisaged in policy and the ADF that existed in reality.⁷⁴⁷ Despite popular criticism, the approach taken in the defence updates did not necessarily detract from Australia's capacity to defend itself from armed attack. There were no reductions to existing DOA-styled capabilities and force structure enhancements served to make the ADF a more formidable fighting force than it had been prior to INTERFET.

Nonetheless, defence policy rhetoric often linked expeditionary capabilities and a willingness to participate in coalition operations to Australia's strategic interest in global security. Thus, the approach taken during the second half of the Howard government's tenure was largely focused on contributing to international security by promoting stability through Western norms and military preponderance. This fracture between core

⁷⁴⁵ Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security*, Defence Update (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2003); *Australia's National Security: Defence Update 2005* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2005); *Australia's National Security*, Defence Update (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2007).

⁷⁴⁶ John Winston Howard, "Keynote Address: Australia's Security Agenda," *ASPI Global Forces Conference* (2006).; Robert Hill, "Future Strategic Challenges in the Region: Keynote Address," *Australian National University's Strategic Studies Program Dinner* (2002).; "Australia to Join Strike Fighter Program," (2002).

⁷⁴⁷ Robert J. Worswick, "New Strategy for New Times: The Failing of 'Defence of Australia'," *Australian Army Journal* 1, no. 2 (2003): 151.

objectives in policy documents and policy instruments employed by actors generated serious debate about whether Australia's reimagining of defence self-reliance had been a delusion from the outset.⁷⁴⁸ Separately, observers also debated whether long term force structure planning for the ADF should reflect post-9/11 operational needs or should remain enshrined around the very unlikely tasks of defending Australia from armed attack.⁷⁴⁹ Various commentators discussed potential strategies and force structures for the future ADF,⁷⁵⁰ while relatively few were able to translate a laundry list of operational needs into a coherent force structure plan.⁷⁵¹ This reflected the popular aphorism that the obstacle for Australian defence policy is not in designing strategy, but in adequately providing the means to implement a strategy.⁷⁵²

Concentric circles and capability development

Throughout the early 1990s Australia had begun to style itself as a more significant regional actor than it had considered itself in previous periods. In the early 1990s the Labor government had vigorously sought partnership and engagement with Asia.⁷⁵³ This theme was continued in a different form in then-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander

⁷⁴⁸ Robyn Lim and A.D. McLellan, "Self-Reliance as Panacea: Muddling Strategic Thinking in Australia," *Agenda* 3, no. 3 (1996).; Brown, *Australia's Security: Issues for the New Century*.

⁷⁴⁹ Dupont, "Transformation or Stagnation? Rethinking Australia's Defence; "Our Forces Must First Be Functional; White, "Australian Defence Policy and the Possibility of War; "A Focused Force."

⁷⁵⁰ For example, *Beyond the Defence of Australia: Finding a New Balance in Australian Strategic Policy* (Lowy Institute Paper 16: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2006).; "Australian Defence Policy and the Possibility of War."; Alan Dupont, "Transformation or Stagnation? Rethinking Australia's Defence," *ibid.* 57, no. 1 (2003).; Mark Thomson and Andrew Davies, "Strategic Choices: Defending Australia in the 21st Century," (Strategic Insights N° 45: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2008).

⁷⁵¹ Two successful examples are White, "A Focused Force."; Babbage, "Australia's Strategic Edge in 2030."

⁷⁵² Michael O'Connor, "Talk Is Cheap, but Defence Is Not," *Quadrant* 46, no. 3 (2002): 42.

⁷⁵³ Paul J. Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000).; Derek McDougall, "Australia and Asia-Pacific Security Regionalism: From Hawke and Keating to Howard," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, no. 1 (2001).

Downer's infamous 'Should Australia Think Big or Small in Foreign Policy?' speech in 2006, which emphasised Australia's economy, GDP per capita, advanced industrial base and natural resources as reasons to think of Australia as a prominent international actor rather than a small regional power.⁷⁵⁴ Aspects of this idea proliferated with the introduction of terms such as 'activist middle power' and 'punching above your weight' to Australia's foreign and defence policy discourses. In the mid-2000s there was a lively debate about the role of middle powers in the international system and the ways in which middle powers could pursue global interests through multilateral forums and coalition action.⁷⁵⁵

This approach gelled nicely with the way policy actors viewed Australia and its interests in the 2000s. It also mirrored significant changes in the scope of Australia's strategic interests and the types of capabilities that defence policy envisioned as integral to the ADF of the twenty first century. Concentric circles attempted to reconcile Australia's competing local and global security concerns with the need for an ADF that could be self-reliant, interoperable with key allies and still able to conduct unilateral stabilisation operations, lead local coalition and concurrently contribute to expeditionary coalition operations further afield. Part of the solution was an increased focus on emerging technologies which, amidst popular fascination with RMA technologies in Western

⁷⁵⁴ Alexander Downer, "Should Australia Think Big or Small in Foreign Policy?," (Sydney: Centre for Independent Studies, 2006).

⁷⁵⁵ Carl Ungerer, "The 'Middle Power' Concept in Australian Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 4 (2007).; John Ravenhill, "Cycles of Middle Power Activism: Constraint and Choice in Australian and Canadian Foreign Policies," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 3 (1998).

militaries,⁷⁵⁶ appealed to national mythology of Australians as qualitatively superior warriors.⁷⁵⁷ The 2000 defence white paper introduced the term ‘capability edge’ into the popular defence vernacular and announced that ‘Australia’s defence planning should aim to provide our forces with a clear margin of superiority against any credible adversary.’⁷⁵⁸

Under the heading capability edge, the 2000 white paper said

Maintaining a capability edge will not be easy. In future we will no longer be able to rely, as we have in the past, on an assumption that either our technology or our trained people will be decisively better than those of other regional forces. Our focus, even more than at present, will be on the advantages we can achieve by combining well-trained people with the effective use of technology - what we have called the ‘knowledge edge’. Our capability edge will also come from the innovative ways in which we develop our doctrine, organisation and logistics.⁷⁵⁹

Force structure planning began to incorporate many of the ideals of a network enabled force that was designed to achieve Rapid Dominance,⁷⁶⁰ the official name for the more colloquial ‘shock and awe’ concept, and decisive victory through overwhelming firepower and concentration of fires. The best example of this is NCW,⁷⁶¹ an approach to warfare that emphasises rapid exchange of information between self-synchronising units at the tactical and operational levels in order to develop comprehensive shared situational

⁷⁵⁶ Martin van Creveld, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. To the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).; Ross Babbage, "Technology and Defence Planning," *Technological Change and the Military: Implications for Policymakers, the Services and the Public*, ed. N. A. Jans (Canberra: Australian Study Group on Armed Forces and Society, 1984).

⁷⁵⁷ John Connor, "The 'Superior' All-Volunteer Aif," *Anzac's Dirty Dozen: Twelve Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2012).; Craig Stockings, "There Is an Idea That the Australian Is Born a Soldier," *Zombie Myths of Australian Military History*, ed. Craig Stockings (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010).

⁷⁵⁸ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 6.39.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 6.40.

⁷⁶⁰ Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, "Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance," (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1996).

⁷⁶¹ Department of Defence, "Explaining Ncw; "Ncw Roadmap 2009."

awareness and disaggregate decision-making to the lowest possible tactical levels.⁷⁶² Part of the solution was based on increasing interoperability and part of it was investment in NEC to increase the situational awareness, information dominance and concentration of fires of the ADF.⁷⁶³ This signalled a new concept of capability advantage, one which privileged advanced C4ISR technologies, enhanced coordination and information dissemination between force elements and NCW in addition to material advantage.⁷⁶⁴ This also promoted the role of mitigation, because the ADF could increase its strategic weight without running into the hard limits of Australia's population size, industrial capacity for quantity of major platforms or the economic constraints on acquisition, maintenance and sustainment.

In the late 1990s, technology became central to Australia's 'knowledge edge'⁷⁶⁵ and enabled the ADF to coordinate its force elements to a much greater degree than had previously been possible. Information and communications technologies were viewed as the ultimate kind of relative advantage in the contemporary strategic environment. The 1997 *Australia's strategic policy* document placed the knowledge edge at the top of the government's list of defence capability priorities, stating that

⁷⁶² Alberts, Garstka, and Stein, *Network Centric Warfare: Developing and Leveraging Information Superiority*.; David S. Alberts et al., *Understanding Information Age Warfare* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program, 2001).; Smith, "Network Centric Warfare, Command, and the Nature of War."

⁷⁶³ Burke, "Information Superiority, Network Centric Warfare and the Knowledge Edge; Cares, *Distributed Networked Operations: The Foundations of Network Centric Warfare*.

⁷⁶⁴ Murdock, "Principles of War on the Network-Centric Battlefield: Mass and Economy of Force."; National Research Council of the National Academies, *C4ISR for Future Naval Strike Groups* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2006).

⁷⁶⁵ Department of Defence, "In Search of the Knowledge Edge."; Dibb, "The Relevance of the Knowledge Edge."; Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, "Knowledge Systems Equipment Acquisition Projects in Defence," para.5.4.

Our highest capability development priority therefore is ‘the knowledge edge,’ that is, the effective exploitation of information technologies to allow us to use our relatively small force to maximum effectiveness.⁷⁶⁶

Material capabilities now took a back seat to the capacity for coordination that might allow a small nation to increase its strategic weight. This reflected a powerful notion of technocracy which had swept through Western defence establishments.⁷⁶⁷ The government signalled to both external and internal audiences that Network Enabled Capability would deliver significant gains in the ADF’s capacity to win conflicts and that it was, for the Australian public, a worthwhile and necessary investment.

Australia’s traditional assumption that our forces will have an automatic technological edge over others in the region is no longer plausible. Henceforth we will have to work hard in our increasingly competitive environment—to make sure that our forces have the technology, people, education and skills to win.⁷⁶⁸

The knowledge edge

In 1997 McLachlan noted that the government no longer prioritised the universal purchase of high-technology equipment, stating that

In the past Australia benefited from being the most developed economy in our region, holding the most advanced military equipment and weapons. In some defence areas, that is no longer the case. To stay confident in our ability to defend Australia, we must be more efficient and smarter in using resources.⁷⁶⁹

What McLachlan and Defence declared to be a smarter and more efficient use of Australia’s resources related strongly to the knowledge edge and to RMA technologies which would allow the ADF to exploit its knowledge edge through coordination of force elements and concentration of fires. *Australia’s Strategic Policy* stated that

⁷⁶⁶ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 56.

⁷⁶⁷ Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare: Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity*.

⁷⁶⁸ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 47.

⁷⁶⁹ Ian M. McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy," *The House of Representatives*, ed. Office of the Minister for Defence (1997).

The so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) or the information revolution—much of which is being driven by commercial developments in the civil sector—is changing the nature of warfare all over the world. But for Australia it has particular significance. Not only will new technology provide military personnel with an expansive breadth and depth of information about the battlefield, but sophisticated strike weapons will give advanced forces the capability to destroy targets with an unparalleled degree of precision and effectiveness. Our ability to use and manage information technology will be one of the areas where we can maintain and aspire to continuing excellence. Advances in technology will put a premium on the skills of our people. We will give a high priority to investments to ensure that our military forces gain the greatest advantage from developments in this field.⁷⁷⁰

The rationale for this significant shift in approach to conceptualising relative advantage was linked to changing Australian perceptions of power relativities, particularly those in Asia.⁷⁷¹ This theme would soon re-emerge in policy statements and influenced the creation of a new defence white paper in 2000.

Although its focus was on capability advantage, the 2000 defence white paper uniquely separated information technology that related to the knowledge edge from other capabilities and treated it as a discrete capability area. It stated that

Information capabilities have been highlighted in a separate capability grouping to ensure that they receive proper attention and prominence, but in reality information systems will be profoundly important in the development of all our capabilities. For Australia, effective exploitation of information capabilities will be critical to maintaining our edge.⁷⁷²

The transition from capability to information as a point of reference for relative advantage occurred without much debate or fanfare. It appears to have been caught up in the introduction of a range of new terminology associated with the RMA and accepted as intrinsically useful by the policy community that used it. In 2003 Drobik made a specific note that the terminology used for relative advantage ‘evolved from the technology edge

⁷⁷⁰ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 55.

⁷⁷¹ McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy."

⁷⁷² Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 6.43, para. 8.81.

to the information edge with little rigour in defining the concepts or usage.⁷⁷³ However, this did not inspire any re-examination of the defence discourse or the construction and use of terms within it.

The RMA remained the central justifying principle in the renewed defence debate of the late 1990s and early 2000s. This three several distinct effects: a long timeframe for defence capability discussions, an implicit acceptance of the knowledge edge as a guiding concept in defence policy and a closer partnership with the American defence industry.

Evans argues that

Australia's response to the RMA had three main characteristics. First, Australian planners tended to use a 2025 time frame for assessing the value of RMA technologies. Second, most official Australian strategists tended to view information networking - the essence of the Knowledge Edge philosophy, involving the rapid dissemination of real-time surveillance and targeting data - as the most realistic outcome likely to emerge from RMA technologies over the next two decades. Third, while accepting the necessity for American assistance, Australian policy-makers were careful to avoid the more grandiose ideas of American RMA advocates.⁷⁷⁴

By the late 2000s the concept of the RMA had taken hold in the Australian public and was widely accepted as a necessary and desirable force structure priority for the ADF.⁷⁷⁵

In many ways the knowledge edge and capability advantage had become benchmarks for ADF performance in popular opinion.⁷⁷⁶

In the lead up to the 2009 Defence white paper, *Force 2030: Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific century*, Defence undertook wide community consultation. This consultation process found that a majority of respondents supported the maintenance of a capability

⁷⁷³ Jan Drobik, "The Role of Defence Science in Achieving Australian Self-Reliance," *Mongraph Series, N^o 3* (Canberra: Australian Defence College, 2003), 23, note 106.

⁷⁷⁴ Evans, "Seeking the Knowledge Edge: Australia and the Revolution in Military Affairs," 33.

⁷⁷⁵ Department of Defence, "Looking over the Horizon." pp.13-17

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp.13-17

edge for the ADF in three areas: technology, information and training. The community consultation program also reported broad support for further investment in high-technology force enablers, such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets and electronic warfare systems.⁷⁷⁷ The subsequent defence white paper used the phrase *strategic capability advantage* to illustrate the new government's conception of relative advantage.⁷⁷⁸ The 2009 white paper overtly prioritised investment in the exploitation and application of 'new advanced technologies'⁷⁷⁹ in order to mitigate some of Australia's strategic limitations.⁷⁸⁰ It linked capability advantage to specific knowledge edge related technologies and asserted that

Superiority in combat and other forms of military operations will hinge on continual advances in military technology, especially in areas such as EW, precision targeting, stealth and signature management, battlespace awareness, command and control and information networking.⁷⁸¹

It also, quite controversially, linked Australia's strategic concerns to China's rise, sending strong signals to the international community about Australia's ongoing commitment to international security. By this point, Australia's declared intentions related more to acquiring communication technologies to enhance coordination between force elements rather than strictly the material advantage of specific platforms.

5.3 Policy context

The period 1996-2009, more than any other in this study, involved substantial crossover between fundamental concepts used in Australian defence policy. Capability was largely

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.13-17.

⁷⁷⁸ "Force 2030," para 8.53.; see also *Our Future Defence Force*.

⁷⁷⁹ "Force 2030," para 8.57.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., para 8.54.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., para. 17.1.

infused with a technological element, making the two difficult to differentiate at times. Some actors used them in different ways, while others combined them increasingly during their tenures in Ministerial roles. The main referent of Australia's relative advantage remained regional states. However, during the tumultuous period of the defence updates global interests were often emphasised in policy and in Ministerial statements. The scope of Australia's defence policy was heavily influenced by McLachlan's approach to framing Australia's defence interests and his preference for a more forward looking defence posture. It is not clear from the data whether or not this conceptual crossover was a result of McLachlan's preferences or was a reflection of institutional approaches to framing defence from within the bureaucracy. However, it appears to have been very influential in defining the concept for future Ministers and governments.

Key concepts

The period 1997-2009 saw a significant conceptual spill over of technology into capability. Although *Our Future Defence Force* actively sought to distance the two concepts, popular usage made it difficult at times to distinguish technology from capability.

Howard emphasised the relationship between capability and effectiveness. In his formulation, technology was a means to an end, but capability was about what the ADF could do, not the tools it had at its disposal. Howard often noted his commitment to

‘maintaining the Australian Defence Force's capabilities and improving its effectiveness.’⁷⁸² Howard also asserted that

The Government does set a very high priority on maintaining a strong defence capability. We do need as a nation to spend more money on defence. The white paper will indicate the degree of additional financial commitment that Australia will make to the defence of this country and the security of the neighbourhood in which we live. It is the first priority of government and it is always the first responsibility of any government to ensure that the defence forces are not only appropriate to deal with the great unlikelihood of a direct assault upon Australia but also to make a contribution to greater stability and a more secure strategic environment in the area in which we live.⁷⁸³

In contrast to Howard, Moore took a material view, when he argued that ‘the Government takes the challenge of rebuilding Defence capability... seriously.’⁷⁸⁴ Hill favoured the most advanced technology that Australia could source and claimed that Australia could and should ‘enhance [its] security through the acquisition of other cutting-edge capabilities.’⁷⁸⁵

The 2000 white paper used a much broader notion of capability, which combined Howard’s vision with Moore and Hill’s more material views when it stated that

Capability is much more than just a piece of equipment. It includes everything that contributes to the ADF’s ability to achieve a particular result at a particular time. That means it encompasses personnel and their training, support and maintenance, logistics, intelligence, doctrine, and many other contributing elements.⁷⁸⁶

Force 2030 introduced a new category of capability, joint enablers, which it defined as:

⁷⁸² John Winston Howard, "Australia and Asia: An Enduring Engagement," *Australia-Asia Society* (1997), 7.

⁷⁸³ "Address to the Liberal Party of Australia, New South Wales Division State Convention 2000," (2000), 2.

⁷⁸⁴ John C. Moore, "Building Combat Capability in an Uncertain Environment," *Defence Procurement Conference* (Canberra1999), 1.

⁷⁸⁵ Robert Hill, "Address to Defence and Strategic Studies Course," *Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence* (Australian Defence College, Canberra2002), 3.

⁷⁸⁶ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 6.34.

Defence-wide 'baseline' enabling capabilities, such as command and control, communications, logistics, transport and movement capabilities, repair and maintenance elements, and health support, are required for all forms of operations from warfighting to humanitarian relief and disaster assistance.⁷⁸⁷

This was the result of an increasing conceptual integration of capability and technology which had been building throughout the 1990s. One clear example is where *Australia's Strategic Policy* linked ICT to increased capability:

In modern warfare, the business of winning will increasingly begin by knowing as much as possible about an adversary and their intentions. Our highest capability development priority therefore is 'the knowledge edge', that is, the effective exploitation of information technologies to allow us to use our relatively small force to maximum effectiveness.⁷⁸⁸

McLachlan also emphasised the benefits of technology for ADF capabilities, noting that

In the past Australia benefited from being the most developed economy in our region, holding the most advanced military equipment and weapons. In some defence areas, that is no longer the case. To stay confident in our ability to defend Australia, we must be more efficient and smarter in using resources. Developments in technology are working to our advantage. They are giving a greater capacity to watch our maritime approaches and offer high precision in the way we apply force in those approaches.⁷⁸⁹

Our Future Defence Force went one step further, asserting that 'Australia's future defence capability will require access to advanced technology',⁷⁹⁰ It added that

Developments in information technology, and the rapid changes they are bringing to the nature of warfare, will enhance the operational effectiveness of armed forces over the coming decade. Intelligence, surveillance, communications, command and control capabilities, and the whole spectrum of information warfare, will expand significantly.⁷⁹¹

The 2005 defence update discussed the same trend, but in terms of maintaining Australia's edge over other militaries with access to similar technologies. It commented that

⁷⁸⁷ "Force 2030," para. 8.26.

⁷⁸⁸ *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 56.

⁷⁸⁹ McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy," 2.

⁷⁹⁰ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 9.3.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 3.51.

The technology revolution has led to a diffusion of technology, particularly in the areas of information and communications. Maintaining technological superiority is increasingly difficult and expensive. The proliferation of military technologies, including to non-state groups, is particularly relevant for Australia which has relied on maintaining a technological edge in its defence capabilities.⁷⁹²

Referent actors

The period 1997-2009 is remarkably diverse in its referents, primarily due to the combination strong regional focus of the late 1990s and the substantial post-9/11 interregnum during which global interests are discussed much more frequently than at any other point in the era of defence self-reliance apart from the months following Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.⁷⁹³

Indonesia played a significant role in Australia's strategic calculus. *Australia's Strategic Policy* referred explicitly to Indonesia in several places, noting the 'unique place Indonesia has in shaping [Australia's] strategic environment.'⁷⁹⁴ It also stated that

Indonesia has unique strategic significance for Australia. It is of course by far the largest country among our nearer neighbours. Its large archipelago covers much of Australia's strategic approaches, while its large population and regional standing have made it decisively influential in Southeast Asia's strategic and political environment... Indonesia's gross national product will likely overtake Australia's in that same period, as will its defence budget. That will mark a turning point in the nature of Australia's relations with a region in which we have until now been the predominant economic and strategic power. As a result of this growth, Indonesia's strategic weight and political influence is likely to increase significantly in the years ahead.⁷⁹⁵

Australia's Strategic Policy also took a broader view of the Asia-Pacific region and signalled that Australia now had ambitions further afield than earlier policies had envisioned.

⁷⁹² *Defence Update 2005*, 3-4.

⁷⁹³ See Appendix C, Table 33

⁷⁹⁴ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 7.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

The development of wider high-technology defence capabilities throughout the Asia–Pacific region is one of the most important trends in our strategic environment. Australia’s traditional assumption that our forces will have an automatic technological edge over others in the region is no longer plausible. Henceforth we will have to work hard in our increasingly competitive environment—to make sure that our forces have the technology, people, education and skills to win. For Australian defence planning, there seems no alternative to meeting the challenge of rising regional capabilities. Australia’s forces at present are among the most capable in our region. Our present level of capabilities can be measured against two key benchmarks: we have the capability to deny our air and sea approaches to any credible regional force; and we maintain a strong regional presence as a maritime power. The Government’s aim is to ensure that the ADF continues to meet these overall benchmarks in the year ahead. In regard to individual platforms and weapon systems, we need a set of benchmarks to inform decisions about the level of capability required. By identifying how others are approaching these tasks, and how well they are doing them, we will set benchmarks against which to measure our own performance. These benchmarks will be based on the military capabilities likely to exist in the region over the next fifteen years—as a reasonable guide to the types of military capabilities we should be able to counter.⁷⁹⁶

The 2000 defence white paper focused less on Indonesia and more on the wider Asia-Pacific region. It noted that

A key factor in the evolution of Australia’s strategic environment is the development of military capabilities in the Asia Pacific region. This will influence the relationships between countries in the region, and it is a critical issue to consider in deciding Australia’s own future capability needs.⁷⁹⁷

Rudd went one step further, focusing much more on the Asia-Pacific than on the nearer region, which had been central to earlier formulations of Australia’s strategic ambitions.

In 2008, Rudd commented that

This 21st Century is the century of the Asia Pacific. We see the rise of huge new powers in our own region. Economically strong, but on the back of economic growth comes also greater investment in military expenditure. And as a result of that we have therefore, huge increases in military spending here in our own region, our own neighbourhood, our own backyard. So Australia's response to that under the Government that I lead is that Australia must be prepared. And therefore it is important that we are in a position in the future to deal with any future challenges which might arise, both through our defence preparedness but also through our wider national security policy and foreign policy actions also to try and ensure that we have a peaceful and stable environment through this century. One of the challenges we face is the fact that there is not just this increase in military expenditure across this region, but also that presents therefore challenges in terms of Australia's ability long term to defend its own sea-lines of communication.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁹⁷ *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 3.41.

⁷⁹⁸ Kevin M. Rudd, *Press Conference* (Entertainment and Convention Centre, Townsville 2008), 1.

Rudd was also concerned about regional military modernisation, noting that

As nations grow and become more affluent, they also update their military forces. We see this in our own region. We see a substantial arms build-up over time. We need to be aware of the changes taking place. And we must make sure that we have the right mix of capabilities to deal with any contingencies that might arise in the future. The growth in Asian and US military expenditures has dominated recent increases in global military spending. And, as a general observation, the modernisation of Asian military forces is being characterised by significant improvements in air combat capability, and naval forces - including greater numbers and more advanced submarines. We are also witnessing a gradually increasing ability to use military assets more powerfully through more advanced communications, joint command and intelligence systems. As we look at our own Australian defence needs for the decades ahead, we need to ensure we are at the forefront of military technology development and acquisition. Our armed forces must be equipped to deal with the emerging security environment. For that, we need to further develop key capabilities.⁷⁹⁹

The 2009 defence white paper echoed these sentiments, with comments that

Military modernisation, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, and the proliferation of advanced military technologies will mean that Australia's ability to maintain a capability advantage will come under increasing challenge. We will have to work harder to ensure that we maintain a capability advantage in the areas that matter most.⁸⁰⁰

Overall, the Asia-Pacific region was specifically identified as a referent of Australia's relative advantage in every policy document produced throughout the period. The 2009 defence white paper even went so far as to note that not only the present but 'the future operating environment of the ADF will be shaped in very large measure by changes in military technology and its employment, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.'⁸⁰¹

Policy scope

Despite increasing interest in global affairs after 9/11, Australia's policy scope remained focused on the region. Interestingly, the defence of Australia did not warrant much discussion despite being the ostensive main priority of defence policy. Policy documents

⁷⁹⁹ "Address by Prime Minister Rudd," *RSL National Congress* (Townsville2008), 3.

⁸⁰⁰ Department of Defence, "Force 2030," para. 8.56.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, para. 17.1.

briefly declared that defeating attacks against Australia and its interests were the most important priority for defence and then went on to discuss, often at greater length, regional and global circumstances and interests. Perhaps more telling, though, is the frequency with which regional issues were discussed throughout the entire period and, to a lesser extent, the frequency with which global interests were mentioned in the middle of the period, between 2001 and 2005.⁸⁰²

Part of this was likely due to McLachlan's interest in framing defence in more forward terms from the outset of the Howard government's articulation of its approach to defence policy. McLachlan made a concerted effort to position Australia's defence interests in a more regional, and particularly a more forward focused, context. This is apparent in *Australia's Strategic Policy*, which states that

Australia's principal strategic interests are today concentrated on the Asia-Pacific region... While we have important interests—including strategic interests—at the global level, the focus of our strategic attention is now more than ever on the Asia-Pacific region.⁸⁰³

The paper took this as consistent with its assertion that

The fundamental strategic outcome the Government seeks is to prevent armed attack or coercion against Australia. Our core strategic interests relate to those factors in our strategic environment which would increase the likelihood that Australia might come under direct attack, or erode our capability to resist such an attack.⁸⁰⁴

In the 1970s and 1980s, Australia defined its region of primary strategic interest as Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. At that time, strategic events in Asia beyond that closer region affected our security only through their consequences for the global balance, rather than more directly. That is no longer true. Today, our strategic interests are directly engaged throughout the wider Asia-Pacific region, because events beyond our nearer neighbourhood could have direct effects within it.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰² See Appendix C, Table 34

⁸⁰³ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 9.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

In some ways these claims are internally consistent in the document. A conceptual link is made between defending Australia and the regional strategic environment. However, it is also apparent elsewhere in the document, such as in the passage above, that the Asia-Pacific region is where policy is focused, even if it is ostensibly for the purpose of defending Australia.

Howard also framed Australian defence policy in forward looking terms, but was more restrained in his views.

Beyond our immediate neighbourhood, Australia has important interests in helping to support the stability of Southeast Asia, the wider Asia-Pacific, and the global security framework. The Government is realistic about the scale of contribution Australia can make to the security of the wider region and beyond.⁸⁰⁶

This trend is continued in the 2000 defence white paper with the introduction of the concentric circles approach:

We have given highest priority to the interests and objectives closest to Australia... in general, the closer a crisis or problem to Australia, the more important it would probably be to our security and the more likely we would be able to help to do something about it.⁸⁰⁷

Our Future Defence Force formally anchored Australia's strategic interests close to home with consideration but not deference to regional and global interests.

At its most basic, Australia's strategic policy aims to prevent or defeat any armed attack on Australia. This is the bedrock of our security, and the most fundamental responsibility of government... Australia is an outward looking country. We are engaged in many different ways - economic, cultural and personal - with the region around us and the world beyond. We are a major trading nation, with our prosperity dependent on our engagement with other countries.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁶ John Winston Howard, "Address to the House of Representatives on Presentation of the Government's White Paper on Defence Policy," (2000), 2.

⁸⁰⁷ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 4.5.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 4.2.

But like its predecessor, *Our Future Defence Force* stated that defending Australia was the most important strategic priority for Defence and then focused significant attention on regional strategic issues than on continental or territorial interests. One interesting feature of *Our Future Defence Force* is the contrast between the concentric prioritisations of interests and the reverse prioritisation of security relationships. *Our Future Defence Force* focuses mostly on the US alliance, then on major powers in the region, particularly in North Asia, and finally on allies in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The priority afforded to Australia's allies is the inverse of the weight of strategic priority encapsulated by the concentric circles approach to considering Australia's strategic interests.

After 9/11 Defence took a decidedly different view about its priorities. The 2003 defence update broke from *Our Future Defence Force*, stating that

Australia's strategic environment is different from what it was when the 2000 Defence White Paper was released... Compared to 2000, the significance of the global strategic and security environment for Australia's defence and security has become much more evident... the prospect of a conventional military attack on Australian territory has diminished... The implication is that for the near term there is less likely to be a need for ADF operations in defence of Australia.⁸⁰⁹

This sentiment was continued through the 2005 and 2007 updates. It was not until after a change of government that *Force 2030* reversed the trend of increasingly global creep in Australia's strategic interests throughout much of the 2000s and reaffirmed that Australia's 'most basic strategic interest remains the defence of Australia against direct armed attack.'⁸¹⁰ *Force 2030* then reiterated the concentric circles approach taken in the 2000 defence white paper, beginning with a verbatim restatement of Australia's second priority from *Our Future Defence Force*, the 'security, stability and cohesion of

⁸⁰⁹ *Australia's National Security 2003*, 23.

⁸¹⁰ "Force 2030," para. 5.4.

[Australia's] immediate neighbourhood.'⁸¹¹ *Force 2030* combined the next two interests from the concentric circles approach in *Our Future Defence Force* to regional stability in the Asia-Pacific and restates the final interest as global in scope and founded on a rules-based international security order.⁸¹²

5.4 Strategic concepts

The strategic concepts employed in this period primarily related to high technology systems and the potential for a high technology ADF to become more capable through enhanced ISR and situational awareness, coordination of force elements and concentration of fires. The Navy and Air Force were the main recipients of major acquisitions, with the Army receiving material upgrades which were aimed mostly at enhancing its ability to function at a high operational tempo in a range of unconventional environments. The ADF's force posture focused heavily on expeditionary and stabilisation operations and moderately on defending Australia against contingencies. The rationale for advantage was focused primarily on ensuring that the ADF had the best possible capability and on mitigating Australia's personnel limitations.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 5.7.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, 42-44.

Type of advantage

By the late 1990s the type of advantage that Australia sought was predominately based on NCW and developing the ADF's capabilities for information superiority.⁸¹³ Coordination is by far the most frequently coded node and appears in almost all relevant policy statements.⁸¹⁴

In the late 1990s focus was shifting substantially from material capabilities toward coordination. *Australia's Strategic Policy* placed some caveats on this, emphasising the quality of ADF personnel above its equipment when it cautioned that

...as the economies of East Asia grow, Australia's relative economic standing in the region will decline. Economic strength is of course an important determinant of strategic weight. So that will affect our strategic weight in our region, and ultimately our capacity to defend ourselves. As economies in the region grow, we clearly face an historic challenge in maintaining Australia's relative strategic standing... New technology is one key to these efficiencies, and will be central to the evolution of the ADF in the years ahead. But there are limits to technology. Our capability will always depend on our people, and the ADF is already among the smallest forces in our region.⁸¹⁵

Australia's Strategic Policy also explicitly noted that 'superior command is crucial to our achievement of maximum results with relatively small forces.'⁸¹⁶

Despite this, more emphasis was placed on the RMA, the knowledge edge and NCW than on command alone. For example, McLachlan stressed the importance of the knowledge edge, commenting that

⁸¹³ See Burke, "Information Superiority, Network Centric Warfare and the Knowledge Edge; Walter Perry, David Signori, and John Boon, *Exploring Information Superiority: A Methodology for Measuring the Quality of Information and Its Impact on Shared Awareness* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004); Waters and Ball, "Transforming the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for Information Superiority."

⁸¹⁴ See Appendix C, Table 35

⁸¹⁵ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 5.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

...this review puts the Defence Force at the forefront of the Revolution in Military Affairs. That is because our highest capability priority is the 'knowledge edge' - exploiting information technology so we can use our relatively small forces to maximum effect. We are giving priority to investments in three elements of the knowledge edge -intelligence, command systems, and surveillance. It is a major challenge to integrate these elements into a unified system giving commanders a complete picture of the battlefield, and enhancing their control of our forces - and doing that in real time, 24 hours a day. The knowledge edge is the area which, more than any other capability, can be the decisive factor in combat, especially when it is combined with the high capabilities of our Defence personnel.⁸¹⁷

Australia's Strategic Policy spoke of finding a balance between capability options to leverage the knowledge edge against an adversary:

As an illustration of this, complete information on an adversary's intentions and actions would be useless if we lacked combat forces to respond, yet highly capable combat forces which are unable to locate and adversary would also be of little use. We need enough information to optimise the effectiveness of our combat forces. We need to establish the 'balance point' at which a shift in resources from one capability to another would degrade our overall performance. The task for Defence planners is to match actual capabilities and resources to the desired balance point.⁸¹⁸

Material advantage was still prominent in policy documents, as exemplified by the 2000 defence white paper's assertions that

...our land forces should have sufficient firepower, protection and mobility to provide clear advantage in any likely operations in defence of Australia or in our immediate region.⁸¹⁹

The Government's aim is to maintain the air- combat capability at a level at least comparable qualitatively to any in the region, and with a sufficient margin of superiority to provide an acceptable likelihood of success in combat.⁸²⁰

However, coordination was also strongly emphasised:

Effective use of information is at the heart of Australia's defence capability. All forms of capability are being transformed by the innovative use of information technology. But this trend is more significant to Australia than to many other countries. Our strategic circumstances mean that innovative applications of different aspects of information technology offer Australia unique advantages.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁷ McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy," 7.

⁸¹⁸ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 56.

⁸¹⁹ *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 8.27.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 8.39.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 8.78.

In addition, *Our Future Defence Force* talked about C4ISR infrastructure and new technologies for the acquisition and dissemination of intelligence to tactical units, noting that: 'If effectively exploited, these can help provide a war-winning edge to forces in the field.'⁸²²

Faster secure communications and data links between tactical units... will allow them to cooperate in combat with unprecedented speed and ease. This will multiply their effectiveness significantly, allowing us to do more with our relatively small forces. And better management, logistics and command systems will improve our ability to apply our forces better to maximum effect.⁸²³

Hill also spoke extensively about coordination and NCW:

Maintaining interoperability with the United States as its military undergoes transformation is a massive challenge for the ADF. It will require significant investment and energy. It will also require the courage to re-examine entrenched assumptions and develop new concepts. For example, the ADF's ability to adapt to the imperatives of Network Centric Warfare will be vital if we are to retain the capability to integrate our forces effectively with the United States and its other core coalition partners. Iraq demonstrated this on the ground, in the air and at sea. I will release the ADF's NCW roadmap before the end of the year. Effective control of space will be a key enabler of this 21st century approach to warfighting. Space provides the opportunity for high-volume, instantaneous global communications and surveillance. This means unprecedented levels of shared situational awareness and ability to get inside the enemy's decision-making cycle. For example, satellites made it possible for the operator of a Predator UAV sitting in the United States to find, identify and destroy targets on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our alliance relationship gives us access to space we could never afford on our own.⁸²⁴

Similarly, the 2005 defence update emphasised coordination between force elements to create a concentrated effect which would enhance the effectiveness of the ADF while utilising the same material capabilities.

...the ADF must be able to operate as a networked, joint force across information, air, land and maritime domains. It must be able to operate in environments that are complex and ambiguous, and where adversaries, including non-state adversaries, have increasingly lethal capabilities. Through continuing modernisation, it needs to retain a capability edge over potential rivals.⁸²⁵

⁸²² Ibid., para. 8.84.

⁸²³ Ibid., para. 8.79.

⁸²⁴ Hill, "Address to Defence and Strategic Studies Course," 3.

⁸²⁵ Department of Defence, *Defence Update 2005*, 19.

Working together, these capabilities produce a greater joint effect than the individual platforms operating without coordination. Consequently, the ADF can produce strategic effects out of proportion to its size.⁸²⁶

Defence is exploiting communications and information technology to link sensors, weapon systems and commanders so that each shares an understanding of their environment – an approach to war known as ‘network-centric warfare’.⁸²⁷

After the change of government in 2007, Rudd retained a focus on material platforms, emphasising that the ADF was to have the best of everything

Force 2030 will mean the best fighter jets, the most versatile armoured vehicles and the most sophisticated submarines available to defend Australia's national security. This is only a brief snapshot of the capabilities that form the basis of Force 2030. It is a force that provides the ADF with greater depth, power and survivability for the next two decades. Force 2030 prepares us for the next generation of challenges that our defence force and Australia as a nation will face.⁸²⁸

However, *Force 2030* was more restrained in its ambitions. It made a comprehensive statement of the kind of capability edge it envisaged for the ADF:

Giving our forces a capability advantage is both desirable and necessary if it prevents conflict, or allows us to prevail in conflict, and minimises our casualties and materiel losses. This approach involves maximising our strengths and minimising our weaknesses. Among our strengths are the capacity to exploit technology and the innovative skills and capacities of our people. But Australia also faces challenges due to the inherent limits of our population size, infrastructure and economic resources; and a lack of ‘mass’ in our armed forces in comparison to the armed forces of some other nations. Australia therefore seeks to develop and maintain a capability advantage that can provide a bulwark against strategic uncertainty, makes up for our weaknesses, and reduces the risk of attrition of Australia's limited forces. This approach has been central to Australian defence planning for over 40 years and is accepted in these terms by our neighbours.⁸²⁹

The stated lack of ‘mass’ in the ADF became an theme of mitigation in the 2009 defence white paper and associated Ministerial statements. It also heralded a new round of emphasising NCW and coordination above material platforms at the strategic level.

⁸²⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁸²⁷ *Australia's National Security 2007*, 39.

⁸²⁸ Kevin M. Rudd, "Speech by Prime Minister Rudd," *Launch of the Defence White Paper* (Garden Island 2009), 3.

⁸²⁹ Department of Defence, "Force 2030," paras. 8.53-8.55.

However, *Force 2030's* ambitious force structure plans generated significant discussion about the kinds of major platforms that Australia would acquire to maintain its strategic edge in the region.

Force posture

Force posture signalling was quite inconsistent throughout the 2000s.⁸³⁰ This was largely due to the substantial differences in policy approaches taken at the beginning, middle and end of the decade. The 2000 and 2009 defence white papers were based on a similar approach to framing and articulating Australia's strategic interests, using the concentric circles concept of interest prioritisation to determine fundamental force posture needs. The defence updates were focused more on adapting the ADF to perform the kinds of expeditionary coalition operations which it was then conducting in Afghanistan and Iraq and the regional stabilisation operations it was conducting in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands. This introduced some debate about how the ADF ought to be optimised, either to perform the most likely operational tasks or to conduct unlikely but potentially catastrophic combat operations in defence of Australian territory, offshore assets and the air-sea gap.

In 1997 *Australia's Strategic Policy* linked force posture credibility to a minimum threshold of self-reliant capability

If Australia is to maintain a credible level of self-reliant capability—that is, maintain the ability to defend our own territory without combat assistance from the forces of other countries—there are certain key functions which the ADF simply must be able to perform.⁸³¹

⁸³⁰ See Appendix C, Table 36

⁸³¹ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 36.

It further asserted that 'Australia's strategic geography suggests we plan on operations which concentrate on defeating any aggressors in our maritime approaches, before they reach our territory.'⁸³² The 2000 defence white paper continued the same fundamental approach to Australia's force posture but also broadened the scope of action that Defence considered to be part of its core business.

Over the next 10 years the ADF will continue to undertake a range of operations other than conventional war, both in our own region and beyond. Preparing the ADF for such operations will therefore take a more prominent place in our defence planning than it has in the past.⁸³³

Howard supported the approach taken in the white paper, which echoed Beazley's articulation of DOA in the 1980s, noting that

We will not develop capabilities specifically to undertake operations beyond our immediate region. But where our interests are engaged and circumstances warrant, Australia will be prepared to contemplate providing forces to coalitions supporting regional security. The forces we develop for the defence of Australia will give us a significant range of options to make such contributions.⁸³⁴

However, in the aftermath of 9/11 Howard revisited Australia's declared intentions regarding its force posture and revised them to include a wider scope of action in support of domestic counterterrorism operations and the creation of a second Special Forces Tactical Assault Group (TAG) to be permanently based on the East Coast.

...following the terrorist attacks in the United States last month the Government has decided to significantly enhance defence's counter terrorist and incident response capability. We've decided that the terrorist attacks in the United States pointed to the need to better equip the Australian Defence Force with capacity to deal with terrorist attacks which were highly planned and coordinated. And as a result the Government decided at its meeting today to effectively double the counter terrorist capability of the Special Forces and to reinstate the specialist incident response unit whose capabilities in responding to chemical, biological, radiological and explosive incidents were in place during the Olympic Games. I should note that while the White Paper had foreshadowed the increasing involvement of the ADF in unconventional operations, the events of

⁸³² *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸³³ *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 2.8.

⁸³⁴ Howard, "Address to the House of Representatives on Presentation of the Government's White Paper on Defence Policy," 3.

September in the United States have indicated the need for a higher level of response to the threat of terrorism.⁸³⁵

While Howard initially framed the increased Special Forces capability as part of domestic counterterrorism preparedness, the Australian Army soon found its Special Forces units deployed to coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hill saw this as part of growing necessity for Australia to support its global interests and its allies through operations abroad.

The trends I have mentioned – global terrorism, instability and extremism in Australia’s region, and weapons of mass destruction – have significant implications for Defence. They underline that Defence needs a mix of capabilities to respond to this rapidly changing environment.⁸³⁶

Rudd rolled back on some of the Howard government’s aspirations to contribute to distant coalition missions in defence of international norms, but did not drop expeditionary operations from his mandate entirely. In the lead up to the 2009 defence white paper, he commented that

Australia will seek, wherever possible, to develop self reliance across the range of relevant national security capabilities to ensure an effective contribution to our own security - and to the security of our friends and allies.⁸³⁷

He further reinforced this view the statement that

There is no more important task for the Australian Defence Force than the defence of Australia and it is around this task that our force is shaped. But we also need to do conduct other tasks when it is in our interests to do so. This means we need to have the capacity to act independently where we have unique interests at stake and do not wish to be reliant on the combat forces of others, lead military coalitions where we have shared strategic interests at stake with others and make tailored contributions to military coalitions where we share wider strategic interests with others. These objectives shape the priority tasks that our defence forces will be required to undertake in the strategic environment out to 2030. These tasks are: deterring and defeating attacks on Australia by controlling our air and sea approaches against credible adversaries, contributing to

⁸³⁵ "Press Conference: Anti-Terrorism Measures," (Sydney2001), 1.

⁸³⁶ Hill, "Future Strategic Challenges in the Region: Keynote Address," 5.

⁸³⁷ Kevin M. Rudd, "The First National Security Statement to the Parliament Address by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP," *Parliament* (Parliament House, Canberra2008), 2.

Stability and Security in the South Pacific and East Timor by assisting our neighbours in dealing with humanitarian and disaster relief, and on occasion stabilisation interventions as we have done in the past.⁸³⁸

Rationale for advantage

The data frequently showed that cutting edge capabilities were linked to integration into coalition operations.⁸³⁹ Interoperability was largely synonymous with cutting edge technology. Despite claims that interoperability did not require the most advanced technology, only compatible equipment, interoperability was often used to justify the acquisition of the most advanced hardware and systems. Stabilisation operations received more attention, mainly because of Australia's experiences in regional stability missions in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.

While a regional advantage was still presented as a fundamental tenet of Australian defence capability, it was not stressed in the middle years of the 2000s. During the defence update period, regional advantage was essentially a given. Focus was more on global security and coalition operations, which were less about technological superiority over irregular enemies, which was all but assured, but rather about integrating ADF force elements into the command structures of more technologically advanced allies.

Howard noted that

...the Government has decided that Australia needs to maintain two key sets of capabilities. First, we need high-technology air and naval forces that can defend Australia by controlling our air and sea approaches. These forces can also contribute to regional coalitions in higher-level conflicts, as well as support forces deployed in our immediate neighbourhood. Second, we need highly deployable land forces that can operate both in the defence of Australia and to undertake lower-level operations in our immediate neighbourhood. To do this, we need to maintain the full range of military capabilities we have today, and significantly enhance many of them over the coming decade. We need to

⁸³⁸ "Speech by Prime Minister Rudd," 2.

⁸³⁹ See Appendix C, Table 37

increase the readiness, deployability and combat weight of our land forces, and progressively upgrade our air and naval forces to keep pace with evolving technologies and capabilities. The government is determined to ensure that the ADF will have the capability to both fight and win.⁸⁴⁰

Australia's strategic policy lists relative technological advantage as a principal factor which should inform Defence capability planning, specifically that 'the level of access we have to leading overseas technology - particularly the extent to which we enjoy privileged access that gives us an advantage over other countries in the region.'⁸⁴¹ Similarly, McLachlan combined relative advantage and cutting edge technology when he spoke of ADF capability options:

Together, the enhanced military capabilities I have outlined - and the rigorous set of priorities against which they have been developed - will give us the most modern, capable force in our immediate region. This force relies on highly-skilled personnel using high technology and modern equipment to achieve mobility, hitting power and flexibility, exploiting information technology to attain maximum effect from relatively small forces. These initiatives will bring a comprehensive enhancement of the military capabilities of the ADF over the coming decade, enabling the force to meet the key benchmarks I mentioned earlier. We will upgrade all our major combat ships and aircraft, restructure and re-equip the land force and invest heavily in technology to promote the knowledge edge.⁸⁴²

The 2005 defence update specifically mentioned cutting edge capability, noting the costs associated with state of the art technologies, but only to the extent that it interferes with budgets and long term panning:

The rising cost of 'state of the art' military equipment, particularly capabilities essential for the ADF's capacity to develop and operate as a superior networked force, is putting extra pressure on the Defence Capability Plan.⁸⁴³

Force 2030 used the phrase information superiority to replace the previous term knowledge edge, although it seemingly referred to the same concept:

⁸⁴⁰ Howard, "Address to the House of Representatives on Presentation of the Government's White Paper on Defence Policy," 3.

⁸⁴¹ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 49.

⁸⁴² McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy," 9.

⁸⁴³ Department of Defence, *Defence Update 2005*, 25.

The future ADF will use modern information technology to link sensors, weapons systems and commanders and their personnel in a networked environment. This will help our people to work more effectively together, provide common battlespace awareness and, most crucially, information superiority over an adversary so that our people can make critical decisions on the battlefield more quickly and with better knowledge than the adversary.⁸⁴⁴

The 2005 defence update also noted that ‘...smaller, technologically advanced nations will continue to acquire advanced technology systems to reduce manpower liabilities and to maintain their capability advantage.’⁸⁴⁵ *Force 2030* too revisited the idea of mitigation, which had largely been lost amidst the bolder assertions of Australia’s role as an international actor during the early 2000s, stating that

Following the earlier discussion of maintaining a strategic capability advantage, the ADF will acquire the most capable platforms and systems we can afford within our policy settings, in order to offset the relatively small size of our forces and give them a war-winning edge. Exploiting and applying new advanced technologies will be crucial to achieve this.⁸⁴⁶

There was also a significant focus on the defence industry throughout the 2000s, with Australia companies being offered lucrative new opportunities to bid for contracts in joint ventures such as the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) project. Howard commented on Australia’s interest in maintaining the defence industry for both strategic and domestic policy reasons, noting that

The Government believes that the White Paper's decisions and commitments will also provide certainty to those in industry who make a vital contribution to our defence. The ADF needs to rely on a wide range of people and businesses to develop and deliver the capabilities needed, and the Government places high priority on building effective partnerships between Defence and the private sector. We also want to use our defence investment to help foster skills, innovation and technologies in Australia and, of course, provide jobs where possible. The programs announced in this White Paper will have important consequences for many sectors of Australian industry. For example, our shipbuilding industry should benefit from plans to undertake major upgrades and new construction work.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁴ "Force 2030," para. 8.60.

⁸⁴⁵ *Defence Update 2005*, 5.

⁸⁴⁶ "Force 2030," para. 8.63.

⁸⁴⁷ Howard, "Address to the House of Representatives on Presentation of the Government's White Paper on Defence Policy," 4-5.

This echoed the 2000 defence white paper, which asserted that

Australian industry is a vital component of Defence capability, both through its direct contribution to the development and acquisition of new capabilities and through its role in the national support base. So a strong industry base benefits Defence. We must take a strategic approach to our defence industry base, and not regard its capabilities as simply a by-product of procurement decisions.⁸⁴⁸

5.5 Strategic signalling

The turn of the century heralded a significant change in Australia's strategic signalling. The operational demands of the War on Terror and simultaneous regional deployments stretched the ADF substantially more than during peacetime. The increasing securitisation of international politics meant that the ADF was invoked as a referent in a wider range of topics, particularly counterterrorism, domestic aid to the civil powers and deployments in response to natural disasters such as the ADF deployment to Banda Aceh after the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami. In addition, the cornerstone of ADF relative advantage, high technology capabilities, was being eroded by regional military modernisation and forcing Defence to invest more heavily in advanced equipment and systems or accept the gradual erosion of the capability edge to which Australia was now accustomed.

In 1997 *Australia's Strategic Policy* made some insightful comments about all aspects of signalling which serve as a good introduction to the period:

Our armed forces are at the heart of our strategic policy. They contribute to our security from armed attack in many ways. They help us shape our environment, enhance the sense of security of our neighbours, support our allies and deter potential adversaries. More broadly, our armed forces contribute both to our national self esteem and our national standing overseas. Indeed, the quality and capability of our armed forces help to define the sort of country we are. Our forces say something about the way we see ourselves. They also influence the way others see us. Our armed forces enhance our confidence and

⁸⁴⁸ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 9.1.

sense of national identity, and thereby help Australians make an effective contribution to our region.⁸⁴⁹

Deterrence

Deterrence was discussed more substantially in the first few years of this period than at any other time.⁸⁵⁰ This could be attributable to the policy focus on non-state issues from 2001 through to 2007 and the absence of a defence white paper in the post-9/11 period until after the change of government in 2007.

In 1997, McLachlan set the tone for the Howard government's views on deterrence when he stated that

Possessing the forces we need to defeat any realistic scale of attack on our territory is the basis of our wider defence posture. Maintaining this level of military capability is very relevant to how we are perceived by our neighbours and allies... A potential aggressor would have to cross our air and sea approaches, and -- having launched an attack -- sustain their forces across this gap. Our strategic geography dictates that we should plan to defeat attackers in those approaches, before they reach our territory... In recent years, Australian defence planning placed too much emphasis on reactive operations -- especially what have been called 'low-level contingencies'. Relying on reactive options runs the risk that any crisis would be prolonged. They place little pressure on an adversary to cease attacking or threatening Australia, and concede the initiative to an adversary over the pace and duration of the crisis. Pro-active operations in the defence of Australia could enable us to take the military initiative, putting pressure on an adversary to cease hostilities and providing confidence that Australian lives and property would be protected.⁸⁵¹

Australia's Strategic Policy further added that

We will develop a mix of air, surface and subsurface capabilities, including some able to operate at long range, to pose the most complex possible set of threats to any hostile forces.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴⁹ *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 3.

⁸⁵⁰ See Appendix C, Table 38

⁸⁵¹ McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy," 5.

⁸⁵² Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 60.

It also outlined McLachlan's vision of defence being predicated more on forward operations, meeting threats further from Australian shores rather than focusing the ADF's defence effort on the air-sea gap, which he considered to be a flaw of DOA which relinquished initiative to an adversary.⁸⁵³ *Australia's Strategic Policy* stated that

More proactive operations offer the opportunity to seize the initiative, impose real pressure on an adversary to stop attacking Australia, and provide better confidence that Australian lives and property would be protected... we would attack - or threaten to attack - military assets and installations which could be used to attack Australia. And having that capability can in itself be of benefit, imposing important constraints on an adversary's freedom of action.⁸⁵⁴

It also linked its priorities to specific strike capabilities:

Strike is the capability to attack targets in an adversary's own territory. The capability to mount attacks of this sort offers two advantages. Firstly, they would be a cost-effective way to counter forces that could be used against Australia. And secondly, the capability to mount attacks of this sort imposes on any adversary the need to take defensive countermeasures. This is a significant deterrent to hostile action, and itself would substantially reduce the forces available for operations against Australia.⁸⁵⁵

The 2000 defence white paper picked up many of these same themes, arguing that 'Australia's defence forces serve as the decisive deterrent to any country contemplating armed action against us.'⁸⁵⁶ It further held that

Even in benign situations, an evident capability to use force can help to keep things peaceful. When trouble starts, the ability to respond promptly with a clear predominance of force will often restore peace quickly.⁸⁵⁷

At the same time, *Our Future Defence Force* repeated some time-held assessments of Australia's relative advantage when it cast low level contingencies as the only likely threat from the regional militaries of the time:

⁸⁵³ McLachlan, *Australia's Strategic Dilemmas: Options for the Future*.

⁸⁵⁴ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 46.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸⁵⁶ *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 1.23.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 2.11.

Minor attacks on Australia, aimed at harassing or embarrassing Australia, or putting pressure on our policies, would be possible with the sorts of capabilities already in service or being developed by many regional countries. But such attacks would become credible only if there were a major dispute. Even then, it would be most unlikely that another government would miscalculate so badly as to think that it would gain by attempts at military intimidation.⁸⁵⁸

Reassurance

Unsurprisingly, after 9/11 the main focus of all discussions involving Australia's commitments to allies turns primarily to the US. Australia made numerous statements about its credibility as a coalition partner on the international stage, but relatively few regarding its intentions to support regional security partners, even as it is substantially engaged in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.⁸⁵⁹

In 1997 *Australia's Strategic Policy* talked in generic terms about Australia's credibility as military actor. It used examples like search and rescue operations abroad and joint exercises with its military partners to highlight how the ADF's actions could demonstrate its credibility to other states.

Apart from preparedness, we are also concerned with the way in which the posture of the ADF—including its use both in peacetime activities and on operations—influences other countries' perceptions about Australia's military capabilities, and the way in which we might use them... Posture is also a consideration when formulating the extent to which commitments for bilateral and multilateral exercises are met within our region, and occasionally wider afield. For example the professional standing of our force can be indicated by the way in which search and rescue operations can be conducted at short notice at long distances from Australia, or by the numbers and quality of forces that participate in joint exercises. In all such cases Australia's credibility in going about military operations in a professional and practical sense is tested, with opportunities frequently presented to impress foreign experts that we are capable of carrying out any operation that we are directed to do.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., para. 3.40.

⁸⁵⁹ See appendix C, Table 39

⁸⁶⁰ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 40-41.

Australia's Strategic Policy also linked this conception of the ADF's defence posture to Australia's alliances and partnerships, asserting that

...we have one of the most capable and respected defence forces in the region. These assets are of course closely related, with the capability of the ADF providing an essential underpinning to our defence alliances and regional relationships.⁸⁶¹

The 2000 defence white paper was more specific about the kinds of reassurances it intended to signal to Australia's security partners, particularly those in the region. It stated its intentions to explain this position in no uncertain terms:

...this White Paper explains our defence and strategic policies to Australia's allies, friends and neighbours. Australia has long been an advocate of transparency between countries in our region about national policies on strategic issues, including the basis of force development. By understanding better the foundations of one another's strategic policies, countries find it easier to work together and avoid misunderstandings.⁸⁶²

The paper then elaborated that

Our second priority is to have defence forces able to make a major contribution to the security of our immediate neighbourhood. Australia needs to be able to work with our neighbours to respond in the very unlikely event of armed aggression against them.⁸⁶³

While discussing Australia's contributions to regional stabilisation operations, Hill emphasised that Defence was still invested in local matters when he stated that 'we can and will continue to pull our weight in our immediate neighbourhood by leading effective coalitions to address regional problems – first in East Timor and now in the Solomon Islands.'⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁶² *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 1.10.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., para. 6.10.

⁸⁶⁴ Hill, "Address to Defence and Strategic Studies Course," 3.

The remainder of the Howard government's tenure was relatively ambiguous about Australia's regional intentions. The 2005 defence update made a vague reference to ADF capability signalling Australia's commitment to security:

Defence capability makes an important contribution to Australia's weight internationally. It expresses our commitment to security and our willingness and capacity to act in support of our interests.⁸⁶⁵

Rudd brought a renewed regional focus to Australian defence policy and spoke of the ADF 'contributing to military contingencies in the wider Asia-Pacific Region including by way of assisting our Southeast Asian partners to meet external challenges.'⁸⁶⁶ He further offered that

As our security is linked inextricably to the security of our region, regional engagement is crucial. This includes strengthening our bilateral relationships and effective engagement in regional institutions. It also means seeking to positively influence the shape of the future regional architecture in a manner that develops a culture of security policy cooperation rather than defaults to any assumption that conflict is somehow inevitable.⁸⁶⁷

After the 2020 summit Rudd elaborated on his position, announcing his intention to include greater contingency planning for ADF deployments to support regional states during humanitarian crises, natural disaster and stabilisation operations.

Our military capacity is first class... Whether it's in the medical field, whether it's in the civil reconstruction field or whatever, what we're seeking to do is in fact integrate both. This idea for a new civilian corps for Australians to help with counter-disaster relief in our region came directly out of the 2020 Summit last year. It was an idea from the floor, from the Australian community, saying 'we're a bunch of medicos, we're a bunch of specialists who know how to repair broken bridges, how to quickly plug in a power system which has fallen down or how to get the water system going again, but what we need is prearrangements, preparedness and rapidity of deployment to be effective.' So, that just doesn't happen by clicking your fingers when you see on the morning news that something has happened. It means having all this prepared, as we prepare for contingencies with our military capabilities as well. This is a good news story, I think, for Australia's contribution in the region.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁵ Department of Defence, *Defence Update 2005*, 12.

⁸⁶⁶ Rudd, "Speech by Prime Minister Rudd," 2.

⁸⁶⁷ "The First National Security Statement to the Parliament Address by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP," 2.

⁸⁶⁸ "Transcript of Press Conference," (Hua Hin, Thailand2009), 2.

Validation

By the late 1990s much of the discourse had turned to validating the ADF in terms of its capability in the face of military modernisation in the region. As regional states increased the quantity and quality of their armed forces, successive policy actors sought to ensure that the ADF was still seen as a fierce and capable fighting force. However, the fighting force was going to require significant funding to sustain and improve. As a result, the most frequently coded validation node in this period was justification, with much of the discourse directly mentioning the level of expenditure commensurate with increasing costs of high technology weaponry and systems.⁸⁶⁹

Morale was close behind as Howard, in particular, frequently linked the ADF to nationalism in the aftermath of 9/11.⁸⁷⁰ Similarly, McLachlan focused on the quality of defence personnel, noting that ‘we have a natural advantage in the strengths and abilities of the young people who join the ADF. This review ensures that these people will be equipped and trained in the best way possible.’⁸⁷¹

The 2000 defence white paper linked the ADF to Australia’s national identity, asserting that

Our armed forces are not simply a service provided by government. They are part of our national identity. The ADF reflects the kind of country we are, the role we seek to play in the world, and the way we see ourselves.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁹ See Appendix C, Table 40

⁸⁷⁰ McDonald and Merefield, "How Was Howard's War Possible? Winning the War of Position over Iraq."

⁸⁷¹ McLachlan, "Australia's Strategic Policy," 9.

⁸⁷² Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 1.21.

Our armed forces need to be able to defend Australia without relying on the combat forces of other countries. This principle of self-reliance reflects, fundamentally, our sense of ourselves as a nation.⁸⁷³

At the same time, many policy actors were preoccupied with trying to establish a clear picture of the budgetary situation of defence and justifying increases in expenditure to the public. *Australia's Strategic Policy* bluntly asserted that insufficient funding threatened to undermine the credibility of the ADF as a fighting force and may prevent it from adequately defending the country or Australia's strategic interests.

...we are committed to maintaining and enhancing within the Defence Organisation a culture of continuous efficiency improvements. But we are approaching the point at which further cuts to the size of the ADF would damage its credibility as a fighting force.⁸⁷⁴

...rising personnel costs, preserving and enhancing our skill base, and meeting any higher demands for readiness, along with rising investment costs for new capabilities, will place pressure on defence funding.⁸⁷⁵

In justifying the rationale for capability development in *Australia's Strategic Policy*,

Howard said that

All of this will cost a great deal. To achieve the capability enhancements set out in the Defence Capability Plan, the Government will increase defence spending... The capability enhancements in this White Paper will result in a \$23 billion increase in Defence funding over the coming decade - a significant increase in defence funding by any standard. This is a much more specific funding commitment than in any White Paper over the past twenty-five years. It will provide the first significant real increases in defence spending in fifteen years... This firm commitment to realistic increases in Defence funding will be welcomed by the vast majority of Australians, who recognise the importance of our armed forces to Australia's long-term future.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷³ Ibid., para. 6.4.

⁸⁷⁴ *Australia's Strategic Policy*, 50.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁸⁷⁶ Howard, "Address to the House of Representatives on Presentation of the Government's White Paper on Defence Policy," 3-4.

Soon after, *Our Future Defence Force* provided a full costing of its plans and was the first white paper in over a decade to seriously consider the budgetary implications of its capability ambitions. It noted that

The fact that in the first budget of my Government defence expenditure was quarantined from expenditure cuts, I made it clear, as I will be at the luncheon today, that the same will obtain in the forthcoming budget. Defence in Australia will be quarantined from further cuts in the forthcoming budget. We see defence, the defence investment as being a very important element of our projection and influence in the region.⁸⁷⁷

Howard justified the expenditure outlined in *Our Future Defence Force* and also justified increases to that plan based on new capability requirements and operational costs incurred through Australia's involvement in the War on terror.

...in December of the year 2000 we brought down a Defence White Paper. It provided for the largest increase in defence spending in more than a generation. Over a 10 year period it provided for significant increases in our financial commitment to the defence of Australia in all areas... And when you assess the world scene at present you see the wisdom of the Government's decision to produce that White Paper almost 18 months ago. That White Paper has laid the foundation of the increase in our defence capability that is required to respond to the challenges that have come and may in the future come from the changed and more difficult economic circumstances in which we live. And while that White Paper made the appropriate provision as we saw it, it may well be that in the years ahead this country will need to make an even greater financial provision in the area of defence.⁸⁷⁸

At the same time, Hill justified further expenditure as necessary to support the ADF in protecting Australia from vast and complex threats. He commented that

...the Government has no higher priority than national security. And we are committed to ensuring that Defence has the resources, guidance and support it needs to defend Australia and its national interests in the 21st century. The strategic environment might be more complex and challenging than ever, but it is the world in which we are living and it contains the threats to which we must respond.⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁷ "The Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard and the Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Hon. Jim Bolger," (Parliament Building, Wellington1997), 2.

⁸⁷⁸ "Prime Minister's Closing Address to the Liberal Party 49th Federal Council," (Hyatt Hotel, Canberra2002), 3.

⁸⁷⁹ Hill, "Future Strategic Challenges in the Region: Keynote Address," 6.

Chapter conclusions

The period 1997-2009 saw a range of important developments in Australian strategic policy which substantially altered the concept of relative advantage. Of particular note was the adoption of the RMA concept from Australia's Western allies, particularly the US, and investment in capabilities and doctrine to support NCW. This change of focus from a clear advantage in military technology to an advantage in military capability was a significant departure from earlier periods which had emphasised technology for different purposes, but had equated cutting edge technology with military advantage. The 2000s still embraced the use of technology, but the cutting edge pursued from the 2000 white paper onwards was related to the coordination of force elements and creating the most effective and cohesive ADF possible using a variety of ICT, decision support systems, EW capabilities and major weapons systems. Similarly, capability advantage still sought to mitigate limits to Australia's strategic potential. However, it increased Australia's strategic weight through coordination of fires, early warning technologies and planned for further range in strike and interdiction capabilities to enhance strategic denial.

Capability was largely conflated with technology, which often blended the two concepts together in policy statements. The main referent of Australia's relative advantage remained regional states. However, during the defence update interregnum global interests became the primary focus of most policy statements and all of the updates. The scope of Australia's defence policy was heavily influenced by McLachlan's approach to framing Australia's defence interests and his preference for a more forward looking defence posture. This was exacerbated by Hill's view that Australia needed to become a

more influential international actor. Australia's approach to explaining and signalling its force posture was inconsistent throughout the 2000s. The 2000 and 2009 defence white papers took a similar approach to framing and articulating Australia's strategic interests, but the defence updates were more focused on adapting the ADF to perform the kinds of operations it was then conducting in Afghanistan, Iraq, Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands. Strategic signalling was complicated by the increased international visibility of the ADF as Defence became a more central instrument in Australia's foreign and security policies. Meanwhile, high technology capabilities became increasingly expensive to maintain and acquire and Australia faced a trade-off between its relative advantage and the cost of maintaining an edge. Policy statements firmly advocated the increased expenditure, with the Rudd government promising a substantially enhanced ADF with the best available capability to support it.

Conclusion

The notion of using technology to offset demographic and economic limitations on Australia's military emerged in the early 1970s alongside the concept of defence self-reliance. It began as a means to bolster Australia's credibility as a regional security partner as US and British presence in Southeast Asia waned. By the twenty-first century it became a recurring policy concept and featured in public statements and diplomatic signals at the highest levels of government. Although the need for an 'edge' in military capability was articulated consistently in policy and political statements, the meaning of the concept changed over time. Relative advantage began as a limited concept, tied heavily to Australia's need to be seen as credible alongside the declining presence of its major power allies in the region. It then broadened to include Australia's industrial capacity as an enabler for rapid expansion to a high-technology terminal force. Technology then became an integral component of Australia's strategy of strategic denial and was also used to demonstrate a credible self-reliant capacity for defence. In the late 1990s, alongside widespread adoption of ICT, capability advantage reflected Australia's

capacity to conduct and coordinate joint operations to substantially increase the sum of the ADF's parts.

The conceptual transformation of relative advantage over time has not been previously documented or studied. This research sought to answer four questions about the concept of relative advantage in Australia's strategic policy: 1) How was relative advantage defined throughout the period 1968-2009? 2) Have related political ideas influenced or coincided with conceptual change in relative advantage? 3) How has the concept of relative advantage been deployed as a tool of strategic communication? 4) Has relative advantage been primarily employed in discourse as a prescriptive or descriptive concept? Answers to these questions were derived from a narrative analysis of primary data which documented the political rhetoric used by key actors in the Australian strategic policy discourse. This research demonstrates that the concept of relative advantage espoused by political actors changed over time, was related to other dominant themes in strategic policy discourse and was often used in strategic communication as both a descriptive and prescriptive concept.

This chapter explains these conclusions in four parts. The first section reviews the rhetorical evolution of relative advantage. It examines incremental rhetorical changes across four discrete time periods to demonstrate that relative advantage meant different things to different policy actors at different times. The second section examines the conceptual evolution of the concept, focusing specifically on the relationships between relative advantage and dominant institutional ideas within the strategic policy discourse, communicative strategies used to signal different aspects of relative advantage to various

audiences and instances where changes in the concept of relative advantage can be interpreted as both prescriptive and descriptive in nature. The third section explores drivers of change and focuses on the different ways in which relative advantage was framed in policy narratives across the period 1968-2009. It finds three key drivers of conceptual change in relative advantage: a link between Australia's defence credibility and its technological base, the entrenchment of relative advantage as a principle of strategic policy, and an explicit link between technology and defence capability throughout the 1990s. The final section discusses key implications of the process of conceptual change for further study of Australian strategic policy in the twenty first century.

Evolution of the edge

Although the need for a qualitative 'edge' has been reiterated in consistent ways in policy and rhetoric, the meaning of the concept has changed over time. The conceptual evolution of relative advantage has occurred in four phases, which have emphasised credibility, expansion, material advantage and coordination advantage. In its first manifestation, during the period 1968-1979, relative advantage accentuated Australia's credibility as a reliable and capable security partner to its regional allies.⁸⁸⁰ After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, concerns that global conflict could seriously threaten Australia's security affected attitudes towards defence planning and lagging progress towards greater self-reliance promised in 1976. Subsequently, defence debates gravitated toward the use of

⁸⁸⁰ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy* Canberra: Department of Defence, 5 March 1971, para 17

technology as a base for expansion from a small core force to a larger ‘terminal’⁸⁸¹ fighting force. In 1985, then Defence minister, Kim Beazley appointed Paul Dibb to conduct a review of Australia’s defence capabilities which became the basis for the 1987 white paper. The new approach to technology mandated a clear technological advantage in military capability relative to Australia’s regional neighbours.⁸⁸² As Australia encountered the RMA in the 1990s, the role of technology was expanded to include force multiplication, critical enabling and coordination for joint forces in order to disproportionately increase the ADFs combat effectiveness.

1968-1979: Emergence of the relative advantage concept

In 1968, Australian policy began to specifically consider independent defence capability in the context of limited self-reliance. A ‘self-contained’ force was deemed to be best suited to both Australia’s collective security arrangements and the possibility of sustaining independent joint service operations.⁸⁸³ This precursor to self-reliance is qualified by the concurrent needs for self-reliant capability for the purposes of conducting independent operations and fielding sufficient independent capability to avoid charges of excessive alliance free-riding. Despite the new emphasis on greater self-reliance, the 1968 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy* also stipulated that the most likely deployment of Australian forces would be in the form of a coalition operation led by a major power ally.⁸⁸⁴ Australia continued to define its interests in terms of the security of neighbouring states, lines of communication through maritime Southeast Asia and

⁸⁸¹ Babbage, Ross, *Rethinking Australia's defence* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980 150

⁸⁸² Dibb, ‘The self-reliant defence of Australia: the history of an idea,’ 19-20

⁸⁸³ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy* Canberra: Department of Defence, 19 August 1968, para 213

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, para 221

underwriting regional confidence in collective security measures.⁸⁸⁵ The need to reassure regional security partners was evident in the language of the 1972 *Australian Defence Review*, which stipulated requirements for an ‘increasingly self-reliant’ defence force able to ‘project Australian strength’ beyond the continent.⁸⁸⁶ It further stipulated that Australia had allies in the region that shared its interests and could be strengthened through political and military support.⁸⁸⁷

Meanwhile, the growing expense of major capital projects initiated during the early 1960s became a hot political issue and required frequent justification from the highest levels of government. Years before the notion of technological advantage was explicitly expressed in policy documents, then Prime Minister John Gorton stated that ‘on any criterion the second best is not good enough for any defence requirement that we have, and it is not too expensive for a nation which needs the best in the world.’⁸⁸⁸ This statement coincided with both statements and policy that signalled Australia’s military capability and intentions to regional states, both friendly and potentially hostile. Initially, this emphasis was directed toward the issue of deterrence,⁸⁸⁹ a long standing institutional idea within Defence. However, debates about defence expenditure quickly became mired in political

⁸⁸⁵ Cheeseman, Graeme, ‘From forward Defence to Self-Reliance: changes and continuities in Australian defence policy 1965-90,’ *Australian Journal of Political Science* 26(3) 1991; see also Fairhall, A., *Statement of Defence by the Hon. Allen Fairhall, M.P., Minister for Defence* Canberra: 2 May 1968.

⁸⁸⁶ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1972 para 11

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ Gorton, John Grey, *F111 Aircraft: Ministerial Statement* 26 September 1968; 2.

⁸⁸⁹ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, paras 207, 10

contests and often resulted in laundry lists of equipment purchases paraded to justify budget peaks and troughs.⁸⁹⁰

In the early 1970s the tone of Australian policy changed and documents began to emphasise credibility rather than deterrence. In 1970 then Minister for Defence Malcolm Fraser's public statements regarding Australia's strike capability needs stressed the need to be able to materially influence stability in the region and frequently referred explicitly to both deterrence and reassurance of security partners.⁸⁹¹ The earliest example of this shift in policy is the 1971 *strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, which pinned 'Australia's political and military credibility' to its ability to defend Australian territory, independence and identity.⁸⁹² The 1972 *Australian Defence Review* further specified that Australia's capability must be both 'evident to other countries'⁸⁹³ and balanced between offensive and defensive capabilities to ensure that 'considerations of credibility and or long term deterrence'⁸⁹⁴ are substantiated. Demonstrating the credibility of Australia's defence capability and commitment to collective security was as an important policy imperative,⁸⁹⁵ reinforced by the view that Australia's military capability was to some

⁸⁹⁰ For examples, see Fairhall, A., *Speech by the Hon. Allen Fairhall, M.P., Minister for Defence* House of Representatives, Canberra: 26 August 1969.; and Gorton, John Grey, 'Four Corners': *Interview given by the Prime Minister, Mr. John Gorton* 28 August 1969.

⁸⁹¹ Fraser, J. M., *Strike Bomber Capability for the Royal Australian Air Force: Speech by the Hon. Malcolm Fraser, M.P. (Ministerial Statement)* Canberra: 12 May 1970, Fraser, J. M., *Statement by the Minister for Defence to the Parliament Concerning the Strike Bomber Capability for the Royal Australian Air Force* Canberra: 12 May 1970.; Fraser, J. M., *Defence Policy: Address by the Honourable Malcolm Fraser, Minister for Defence* Berri, SA: 8 October 1970, Fraser, J. M., *Defence Policy* September 1970.

⁸⁹² Defence Committee, 1971 #1153@para 17}

⁸⁹³ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review* para 11

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, para 58

⁸⁹⁵ Albinski, Henry S., *Australian external policy under Labor* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977 225

degree the ‘currency of diplomacy and of deterrence in the region.’⁸⁹⁶ Defence policy underscored the need to use Australia’s technical and industrial strength, political stability and military capabilities to reassure regional allies and assuage their misgivings regarding Australia’s ability and intention to influence their security in the event of a crisis.⁸⁹⁷

In 1973, policy linked Australia’s ability to ‘demonstrate a military capability that lends credibility and authority to [its] foreign policy’⁸⁹⁸ with technological advantage. In this view Australia’s unique position in the region was underpinned by its ‘resources, technology, and ability to operate and maintain more advanced military equipment’⁸⁹⁹ than local states. The issue of Australia’s increasingly independent foreign policy became a political football, with the criticism that Australian policy ‘lacked credibility if based on a weak or misplaced defence policy.’⁹⁰⁰ The result was that ‘assured defence strength in being’⁹⁰¹ was held to be integral to legitimating self-reliance and commitments to regional security cooperation⁹⁰² that were based on Australia’s military posture. Meanwhile, Sir Arthur Tange was substantially reforming the Department of Defence and recommended changes in the way Defence prioritised capability decisions to ensure that procurement served Australia’s self-reliance needs.⁹⁰³ The Defence Committee had noted that Australia enjoyed relative wealth and technological advantage over the countries of

⁸⁹⁶ McMahon, William, *Speech by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. William McMahon, CH, MP* St. Kilda, VIC: 30 October 1972; 6.

⁸⁹⁷ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, para 21

⁸⁹⁸ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy* Canberra: Department of Defence, 1 June 1973, para 21

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁰ Albinski, *Australian external policy under Labor* 226

⁹⁰¹ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, para 22

⁹⁰² Whitlam, Edward Gough., ‘Prime Minister’s Address at State Dinner,’ ed. Department of Foreign Affairs (Kuala Lumpur: 1974), vol. DPMC Archive 0003139.

⁹⁰³ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence reorganisation report* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, November 1973, para 109

Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific. In combination with Australia's privileged access to advanced military technology, Australia's wealth enabled it to field military capabilities beyond the reach of its regional neighbours.⁹⁰⁴

The language used in 1976 in Australia's first defence white paper introduced a new tone to the discussion of the technological level of military capability. The white paper noted that Australia ought to be 'seen as a nation that takes defence matter seriously' and that the newly formed Australian Defence Force should have 'capabilities and competence' that commanded respect.⁹⁰⁵ It further stated that, as a requirement for defence capability, the ADF 'should at all times demonstrate Australia's serious attitude to defence matters, military competence and capacity to absorb and operate high-technology equipments.'⁹⁰⁶ During this period, Prime Minister Fraser often referred publicly to the ADF's technological level, to the need for greater capacity for independent operations and the benefits of greater burden sharing.⁹⁰⁷ Thus, as the focus on reinforcing Australia's image as a credible ally began to diversify to include more capacity to undertake military action in Southeast Asia, coherence between signals sent to various authors also began to diverge.

⁹⁰⁴ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, para 34

⁹⁰⁵ Department of Defence, *Australian defence* para 3-18

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* para 3-27

⁹⁰⁷ For example, see Fraser, J. M., 'Address to the R. S. L. Congress,' ed. Prime Minister's Department (1976), vol.; Fraser, J. M., 'Text of Address Given by the Prime Minister at the Roy Milne Lecture in Sydney,' ed. Prime Minister's Department (Sydney: 1976), vol.; Fraser, J. M., 'Address to the Symposium of Academy of Technological Sciences,' ed. Prime Minister's Department (1977), vol.

1980-1986: The technical level as a basis for expansion

The 1976 white paper had grand designs for the new role of the ADF and promises of healthy investment in new capabilities and infrastructure from the Fraser government. What it lacked was a clear idea of how it would translate its new resources into strategic outcomes.⁹⁰⁸ A first step toward rectifying this was a range of inquiries, both public and private, into Australia's strategic circumstances. The 1981 Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence inquiry report on threats to Australia's security found four basic types of threats: global war, invasion of Australia, intermediate threats to Australian interests and low level contingencies.⁹⁰⁹ The report concluded that even though the likelihood of any major threat was very low the ADF needed to retain high technology capabilities with long lead times in order to hedge against the rapid development of offensive capabilities by a regional power and to 'act as a deterrent to hostile action.'⁹¹⁰ A challenge to this conclusion is that being able to meet a challenge is not necessarily the same thing as deterring it.⁹¹¹ Deterrence must not only apply to attacks of many varieties, but also to threats of attack.⁹¹²

An important ideational carryover from the Forward Defence era was the concept of a force in being or core force that would provide an expansion base for a rapid increase in the size of the ADF in response to an emerging threat.⁹¹³ Ostensibly this would provide a

⁹⁰⁸ Cheeseman, 'From forward Defence to Self-Reliance: changes and continuities in Australian defence policy 1965-90,'

⁹⁰⁹ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Threats to Australia's security: their nature and probability* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981, vii, para 9

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 52, para 3

⁹¹¹ Martin, David, *Armed neutrality for Australia* Blackburn, Vic: Dove Communications, 1984 5

⁹¹² Australia Defence Association, Victorian Branch, *the defence of Australia: a statement of views* Melbourne: Australia Defence Association (Victoria), 1980 1-19

⁹¹³ Defence Committee, *Strategic basis of Australian defence policy*, paras 255-60

wide ranging deterrent at an acceptable cost. One difficulty in maintaining a core force was ensuring that it could provide an acceptable base for expansion. A senate inquiry into the Australian Army tabled in 1974 identified three points which it found underpinned the concept of an expansion base. The first was that there is a critical minimum-sized Army, below which 'the nation ceases to have a useful asset.' The second was that Australian forces should be organised, trained and equipped primarily as a base for expansion in the event of a contingency. Thirdly, that parliament and government must be prepared to respond to any deterioration in Australia's 'advantageous strategic and technological position.'⁹¹⁴ Concurrently, Prime Ministerial statements assured the public that military modernisation programs would ensure that Australia continued to field most technologically advanced equipment available to it.⁹¹⁵

In 1982 the higher defence machinery review found that the concepts of versatility and adaptability used in force structure planning were appropriate as a basis for defence planning.⁹¹⁶ The review noted organisational concerns regarding the ambiguities between the roles of the Force Structure Committee and the Force Development and Analysis Division⁹¹⁷ and the lack of input from the Force Development Branch in shaping strategic guidance.⁹¹⁸ This was problematic because the Australian Strategic Analysis and Defence Policy Objectives (ASADPO) document did not 'provide sufficient guidance, particularly for the purpose of determining relative priorities for the development of Defence Force

⁹¹⁴ The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *The Australian Army* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1974, para 2.5

⁹¹⁵ Fraser, J. M., 'Address to RSL National Congress,' ed. Prime Minister's Department (Canberra: 1982), vol.

⁹¹⁶ Defence Review Committee, *The higher defence organisation in Australia: final report of the Defence Review committee* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 28 October 1982, para 6.4

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para 5.130

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para 4.66

capabilities.⁹¹⁹ The 1984 Parliament inquiry report *the Australian Defence Force: its structure and capabilities* found that strategic guidance from government was inadequate and that Australia lacked appropriate organisational machinery for translating national security objectives into strategic concepts and force structure.⁹²⁰ Thus, long held ideas and debates needed to be set aside to ensure that progress could be made toward delivering on the high-technology self-reliant ADF promised in earlier policy guidance.

In response to criticism of the government's investment in the ANZUS alliance, then Minister for Defence Ian Sinclair shifted emphasis in his strategic calculus away from global level threats and towards regional contingencies in which Australia would expect to operate more independently and in which a technological basis for expansion was integral.⁹²¹ Amidst the changing focus of ongoing force structure and defence policy debates, Sinclair made frequent reference to material capabilities being acquired by government,⁹²² although these not regularly linked to specific strategic policy outcomes or requirements. After the 1983 change of government, incoming Prime Minister Bob Hawke quickly signalled his government's intentions to maintain Australia's commitments to its great power and regional security alliances and to reform defence policy to provide for a force structure which effectively utilised military technology and afforded the ADF a qualitative advantage in Southeast Asia.⁹²³ Soon after, then Minister

⁹¹⁹ Ibid., para 4.9

⁹²⁰ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *The Australian Defence Force: its structure and capabilities*, para 4.10

⁹²¹ For example, Sinclair, I. M., *Government Response to the Report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence: Threats to Australia's Security - Their Nature and Probability* 14 December 1982.

⁹²² For example, Sinclair, I. M., *Major Elements of Defence Expenditure 1982-83* 26 August 1982.

⁹²³ See Hawke, R. J. L., 'Foreign Correspondents' Press Conference,' ed. Prime Minister's Department (1983), vol.; Hawke, R. J. L., *An Australian View of the World* Australian Institute of International Affairs: 26 August 1983, Hawke, R. J. L., *The Way Ahead* Perth: 28 September 1983.; Hawke, R.

for Defence Gordon Scholes articulated a comprehensive approach to defence policy which would become a significant aspect of strategic guidance for policy formation. Scholes used the term ‘graduated readiness’⁹²⁴ to describe his thinking on how best to manage modernisation and budget constraints. Political needs such managing public expectations regarding defence expenditure and reassuring allies that a new government would maintain committed to long-standing relationships had a strong correlation with new expressions of technological advantage in the mid-1980s.

1987-1996: Technological edge

By late 1984 Defence had become dysfunctional and mired in intra-organisational disagreements over definitional and conceptual issues that presented an obstacle to meaningful policy development.⁹²⁵ Then Defence minister, Kim Beazley appointed Paul Dibb to conduct a review of Australia’s defence capabilities in 1985 and the seminal report was delivered in 1986.⁹²⁶ The next Defence white paper was released in 1987 and was substantially founded on the approach to defence planning outlined in the Dibb report. During the transition from the old policy approach to the new, Beazley reiterated the phrase *defence in depth* to stress the importance afforded to demonstrating Australia’s material capacity to defend itself with a high-technology defence force.⁹²⁷ References to military technology where subsequently linked to assertions that Australia’s capacity for

J. L., *International Security and Disarmament: Prime Minister's Speech Notes* New Delhi: 23 November 1983.

⁹²⁴ Scholes, G. G. D., ‘Statement by the Minister for Defence,’ 1983

⁹²⁵ Dibb, ‘The self-reliant defence of Australia: the history of an idea,’ 17

⁹²⁶ Dibb, *Review of Australia's defence capabilities*

⁹²⁷ Beazley, K., *Reviewing Australia's Defence Needs* Just Defence Seminar: 18 October 1986, Beazley, K., *New Directions in Australian Defence* The Fabian Society: 2 August 1986.

self-reliance was credible and desirable.⁹²⁸ Beazley framed DOA as a catalyst for change in the politics of defence. Changing ideational norms in the debate were, in Beazley's view, necessary to accommodate the new concepts used in planning and structuring the ADF and major platform acquisitions.⁹²⁹ Without contradicting the constellation of concepts that underpinned DOA, Beazley also made direct reference to the need to reassure allies of Australia's commitment to its security relationships and indicated that a high-tech ADF provided material benefits to those relationships.⁹³⁰

In 1989 the government released a new defence policy document, *Australia's strategic planning in the 1990s*, which set strategic level guidance for force acquisition priorities to Defence and explained and validated capital expenditure to the public.⁹³¹ The strategic planning document noted the changing security dynamics in Southeast Asia, and the world, and linked force structure decisions to military capabilities which it stated were essential in securing Australia's national interests. As the 1980s drew to a close, Hawke also questioned the implications of strategic changes in the region in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and asserted that Australia's high-technology military would become an integral component of regional stability and security in the 1990s. For example, Hawke noted that:

⁹²⁸ Beazley, K., *The Defence of Australia* 3 March 1987, Beazley, K., *Thinking Defence: Key Concepts in Australian Defence Planning* 6 November 1987, Beazley, K., *The White Paper - Implications for the Army Reserve* 10 April 1987.

⁹²⁹ Beazley, K., *Australian Perspectives on Regional Security Issues* 19 November 1987, Beazley, K., *Self-Reliance - A New Direction?* 24 May 1987, Beazley, K., *After the White Paper - The Challenge of Management* National Press Club: 25 March 1987.

⁹³⁰ For example, Beazley, K., *Government Defence Policy - A Progress Report* Parliament: 22 March 1988, Beazley, K., *Australia and the Asia Pacific Region: A Strategy of Self-Reliance and Alliance* Washington: 30 June 1988, Beazley, K., *Self-Reliance and Cooperation: Australia's Regional Defence Policy* Parliament: 23 February 1988.

⁹³¹ Department of Defence, *Australia's strategic planning in the 1990s* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989

The size of our economy, and our technical expertise, means that Australia will continue to maintain significant military capabilities, especially maritime capabilities, which will allow us to make a valuable contribution to the military dimension of regional security.⁹³²

At this point, the requirement for Australia to sustain a clear technological lead over its region went largely unchallenged. Ministerial statements signalled a willingness to continue to spend on high-technology systems and platforms in order to ensure that Australia continued to be seen as a credible ally, that the ADF was recognised as a well-equipped and formidable force, and that the public was reassured that defence expenditure was purposeful. However, the role that technology played in delivering Australia's edge had already begun to change.

As early as the 1991 force structure review,⁹³³ Australia began referring to military technology in terms of coordination. The review made note of the new roles played by information technologies in enabling the military to operate more effectively.⁹³⁴ Minister for Defence, Robert Ray noted that Australians has come to believe that Australia could defend itself in accordance with the central principles of DOA.⁹³⁵ This perception allowed political actors to reduce their focus on credibility and place more emphasis on material capability, which had come to the forefront of many defence debates since DOA was released. Technology emerged as a discussion point in its own right. The 1993 *strategic*

⁹³² Hawke, R. J. L., *Australia's Security in Asia* The Asia-Australia Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney: 24 May 1991; 12.

⁹³³ Department of Defence, *Force structure review* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, May 1991

⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*, para 2.

⁹³⁵ Ray, R. F., *Address to the RSL Victorian Branch VRC Function Centre Flemington*: 3 July 1991.

review was the first document to expressly link military technology with interoperability,⁹³⁶ noting that

The overall development of the ADF will need to have a particular emphasis on the key principles of joint operations, the selective application of advanced technology, the promotion of competence and professionalism, and the application of a rigorous approach to preparedness.⁹³⁷

Ray noted interoperability requirements as a driver for high-technology military platforms when referring to relative advantage, but sometimes situated it within a broader commitment to alliances, including but not limited to ANZUS.⁹³⁸ This coincided with Keating's push for greater engagement with Asia and may reflect political needs within government to ensure that public statements were signalling positive intentions vis-à-vis other policy priority areas.

Throughout the early 1990s it became clear that DOA did not account for the extensive transition of the strategic landscape in the Asia-Pacific region from the relatively banal Asian security environment of the previous 20 years of the Cold War to the much more dynamic post-Cold War period. Two significant indicators that the doctrinal approach to defence embedded in DOA needed revision were tensions over North Korea's nuclear program in 1994 and the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996. A third challenge was the increasing likelihood that Australia might deploy forces to maintain stability in the regional neighbourhood.⁹³⁹ Political actors realised that the thinking which had

⁹³⁶ Department of Defence, *Strategic review* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993 para 5.40

⁹³⁷ Ibid. para 5.39

⁹³⁸ For example, Ray, R. F. , *'The Future of Australia's Defence Relationship with the United States': Speech by the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Robert Ray* Press Club, Canberra: 1 September 1993.

⁹³⁹ White, 'Four decades of the Defence of Australia: reflections on Australian defence policy over the past 40 years.'

underpinned the 1987 and 1994 white papers⁹⁴⁰ required adjustment and set about commissioning a new policy document which could incorporate systemic changes to the security situation in Asia and new concepts about harnessing information technologies with strategic guidance which altered but did not abandon central facets of existing defence policy which drew on key themes from DOA.

1997-2009: Capability advantage

After the change of government in 1996, policymakers resolved to generate a new policy guidance document for Australia's defence planning. The Howard government identified three ways in which DOA needed revision. First, by widening the scope of Australia's regional interests from Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific to the broader Asia-Pacific region in order to include substantial developments in North Asia which affected the security environment elsewhere. Second, by overtly acknowledging the potential for great power tension in the region due to China's rise. Third, by raising the profile of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in Australia's strategic priorities.⁹⁴¹ This widening of Australia's security outlook coincided with a change in focus for the way technology was conceptualised in defence policy and statements. The rhetoric of the early 1990s, which remained locked on material capability, largely faded away when faced with the new technological paradigm of the RMA.

⁹⁴⁰ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994

⁹⁴¹ White, 2007 #512}

In the late 1990s, technology became central to Australia's 'knowledge edge'⁹⁴² and enabled the ADF to coordinate its force elements to a much greater degree than had previously be possible. Information and communications technologies were viewed as the ultimate kind of relative advantage in the contemporary strategic environment. The 1997 *Australia's strategic policy* document placed the knowledge edge at the top of the government's list of defence capability priorities, stating that

Our highest capability development priority therefore is 'the knowledge edge,' that is, the effective exploitation of information technologies to allow us to use our relatively small force to maximum effectiveness.⁹⁴³

Material capabilities now took a back seat to the capacity for coordination that might allow a small nation to increase its strategic weight. This reflected a powerful notion of technocracy which had swept through Western defence establishments.⁹⁴⁴ The government signalled to both external and internal audiences that Network Enabled Capability would deliver significant gains in the ADFs capacity to win conflicts and that it was, for the Australian public, also a worthwhile investment

Then Minister for Defence, Ian McLachlan noted his intention that the document would boost public confidence in the government's approach to defence in the foreword of the report.

I hope this document gives all Australians a sound understanding of those challenges. But more importantly, I am confident it also provides reassurance that the Government is putting in place a strategic approach to ensure those challenges are met.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴² Department of Defence, *In search of the knowledge edge: the management component* ; Dibb, *The relevance of the knowledge edge* ; Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, 'Knowledge systems equipment acquisition projects in Defence,' para.5.4

⁹⁴³ Department of Defence, *Australia's strategic policy* Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1997 56

⁹⁴⁴ Bousquet, Antoine, *The scientific way of warfare: order and chaos on the battlefields of modernity* London: Hurst and Company, 2009

⁹⁴⁵ Department of Defence, *Australia's strategic policy* iv

McLachlan also noted that the government no longer prioritised the universal purchase of high-technology equipment, stating that

In the past Australia benefited from being the most developed economy in our region, holding the most advanced military equipment and weapons. In some defence areas, that is no longer the case. To stay confident in our ability to defend Australia, we must be more efficient and smarter in using resources.⁹⁴⁶

The rationale for this significant shift in approach to conceptualising relative advantage was linked to changing Australian perceptions of power relativities, particularly those in Asia.⁹⁴⁷ This theme would soon re-emerge in policy statements and influenced the creation of a new defence white paper in 2000.

*Our future defence force*⁹⁴⁸ was the Howard government's second major defence policy document and solidified many of the ideas which had taken hold within defence since *Australia's strategic policy*. It introduced the term 'capability edge' into the popular defence vernacular and announced that 'Australia's defence planning should aim to provide our forces with a clear margin of superiority against any credible adversary.'⁹⁴⁹ The 2000 white paper was also separated technology from other capabilities and treated it as a discrete capability area. After 9/11 defence policy took a rapid turn away from self-reliance and toward expeditionary operations. The defence updates in 2003, 2005 and 2007,⁹⁵⁰ took Australia further from fundamental DOA concepts and emphasised

⁹⁴⁶ Ian McLachlan, *Australia's Strategic Policy* 2 December 1997.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁸ Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: our future defence force*

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid. 5.39

⁹⁵⁰ Department of Defence, *Australia's national security*, Defence update Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2003, Department of Defence, *Australia's national security: Defence update 2005* Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2005, Department of Defence, *Australia's national security*, Defence update Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2007

interoperability and coalition operations as a driver of capability development.⁹⁵¹ It was not until the next change of government that defence policy would be directed back toward the conceptualisation of technological edge within the context of the defence of Australia.

In the lead up to the 2009 Defence white paper, *Force 2030: Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific century*, Defence undertook wide community consultation. This consultation process found that a majority of respondents supported the maintenance of a capability edge for the ADF in three areas: technology, information and training. The community consultation program also reported broad support for further investment in high-technology force enablers, such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets and electronic warfare systems.⁹⁵² The subsequent white paper used the phrase *strategic capability advantage* to illustrate the new government's conception of relative advantage.⁹⁵³ The 2009 white paper overtly prioritised investment in the exploitation and application of 'new advanced technologies'⁹⁵⁴ in order to mitigate some of Australia's strategic limitations.⁹⁵⁵ It also, quite controversially, linked Australia's strategic concerns to China's rise, sending strong signals to the international community about Australia's ongoing commitment to international security. By this point, Australia's declared intentions related more to acquiring communication technologies to enhance coordination between force elements rather than strictly the material advantage of specific platforms.

⁹⁵¹ Howard, John Winston, *Keynote address: Australia's security agenda* 26 September 2006.; Robert Hill, *Australia to Join Strike Fighter Program* 27 June 2002.

⁹⁵² Department of Defence, *Looking over the horizon: Australians Defence*: pp.13-17

⁹⁵³ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: Force 2030*, para 8.53; see also Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: our future defence force*

⁹⁵⁴ Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific century: Force 2030*, para 8.57

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, para 8.54

Conceptual change

The concept of relative advantage has changed significantly throughout its short history. It began as a limited concept, tied heavily to Australia's need to be seen as credible alongside the declining presence of its major power allies in the region. It then broadened to include the technological level, which saw Australia as empowered by its industrial capacity and focused on the capacity for rapid expansion to a high-technology terminal force. In the DOA period, technology was no longer primarily viewed as a base for expansion and became an integral component of how Australia would conduct strategic denial in order to demonstrate a credible self-reliant capacity for defence. After the RMA, capability advantage related to the capacity to conduct and coordinate joint operations to substantially increase the sum of the ADF's parts.

The evolution of relative advantage parallels several other factors in Australia's defence policy and strategic environment. The technological level concept emphasised Australia's industrial base as a means for rapid expansion and sustainment of forces when Australia found itself more isolated from its great power allies than it ever had been. Self-reliance and technological level were closely intertwined during the 1970s, with Australia's credibility pinned to its technology and industrial capacity. As Australia developed and restructured the ADF its confidence grew. The self-reinforcing mantra that Australia was a credible independent military power helped to assuage fears that the regional security environment was more foreboding than in previous decades. By the late 1970s credible self-reliance and relative advantage became discrete, although mutually reinforcing,

policy concepts. Australia became more concerned with using technology to maintain a force-in-being with greater strategic weight than a low technology ADF would have.

Until this point technology had been viewed as a means to mitigate constraints on Australia's strategic potential and to qualitatively improve the ADF than about industrial capacity for expansion, although expansion was still an integral aspect of the core force concept. In the late 1970s and early 1980s technology was viewed more as a basis for the rapid expansion of the ADF from its core of competencies and capabilities to a much larger terminal force which could assume any number of configurations depending on the type of threats which emerged. The core force concept faced significant challenges in implementation, though. Critics contended that the prospect of multi-path expansion made the force-in-being an unreliable basis for expansion to an unknown terminal force structure. In response to this problem, the government made significant changes to the conceptual basis⁹⁵⁶ for its force structure planning and came to view technological advantage relative to the Southeast Asian region as an imperative precondition for Australia's defence. After the *Dibb Review* and the 1987 defence white paper, relative advantage became focused on maintaining superior military technologies in the region.

In addition, the concept of defence self-reliance became the key ordering principle for force structure planning and Australia's force posture changed to reflect an increasing willingness to use force to shape the immediate neighbourhood and to deny Australia's northern approaches, including the air and maritime gap, to potential adversaries. After the end of the Cold War it quickly became apparent that the Asia-Pacific region was

⁹⁵⁶ Dibb, "The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development."

experiencing a boom in productivity which was being translated into military modernisation programs which Australia would not be able to match. Australia still had a large technological lead, but the platforms being ordered by regional militaries suggested that the gap was closing. As the latest generation of technology is often much more expensive to develop and acquire than previous generations, Australia faced a significant challenge in maintaining a technological lead in the region across a balanced force. It faced another problem in that modernisation would lead to militaries with similar, although not directly comparable, quality but also with a larger quantity of systems, eroding Australia's capability advantage.

Australia's first step to remedy this situation was to prioritise specific capabilities in which it would retain a technological lead. The second step was to invest in RMA technologies which would not only improve individual weapons and platforms, but which would increase the effectiveness of the joint force. In some ways, the change to NCW planning was predicated on a lack of capacity to retain a purely material edge and by the entrenchment of the political idea that Australia required an advantage in the region to maintain a credible capacity to defend itself. It was also an incremental progression of institutional forces ranging from inter-service sensitivities about budget apportionment, a tendency to supplant retiring equipment with the most advanced affordable replacements and a policy paradigm which hosted several narratives which validated the acquisition of *superior* high technology capabilities. Interestingly, this aspect of relative advantage has not changed – what began as an attempt to demonstrate credibility became a staple of defence policy and is now a fundamental principle of Australian defence policy.

Drivers of change

Strategic policy is, like all other matters of state control, primarily public policy. Despite being afforded a certain degree of additional latitude for security reasons, strategic policy is subject to the same fundamental pressures and forms of scrutiny as other facets of public policy.⁹⁵⁷ As such, domestic policy impetus played a significant role in shaping strategic policy narratives, including changes to the use of the concept of relative advantage in policy discourse. The foundation of domestic policy drivers was the overarching narrative of national progress from the 1970s onwards. Until the late 1960s Australia's past had been widely written as a story of progress and achievement. It recounted a narrative of overcoming challenges which were often considered to be uniquely Australian in nature and linked heavily to Australia's geography and political circumstances. This history created a common sense of progress in both past and future terms, creating what Sullivan has described as 'a vision of endless improvement.'⁹⁵⁸

From the early 1970s, Australian political actors had to contend with a loss of consensus regarding their society's view of its own national past as well as the directions it ought to take in the future. The coincidence of the Vietnam War and the Whitlam Government's election and dismissal created a turbulent domestic political environment in which changes to strategic policy occurred. The Australian electorate had developed deep-seated concerns about the government's ability to maintain the momentum of past generations and over time political actors became much more attuned to issues of communication and

⁹⁵⁷ Ronald J. Stupak and Thomas C. Hone, "National Security and Domestic Policy-Making: The Similarities and the Critical Differences," *International Journal of Public Administration* 15, no. 7 (1992).

⁹⁵⁸ Sullivan, "Policy Debates in Federal Election Campaigns, 1972-96," 15.

credibility alongside issues of policy substance.⁹⁵⁹ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the political landscape was often dominated by a slow contest between visions of Australia's future as a globalised society as opposed to a view of the future largely resembling the past. The political struggle between camps which Kelly has termed globalists and anti-globalists came to define much of the substance of major domestic debates between individual political actors and the parties they represented.⁹⁶⁰ The first decade of the twenty-first century cemented the previously contested notion of a more global Australia. Political perceptions of Australia becoming a more internationally active society were further reinforced by the combination of an economic boom underpinned by international trade and a renewed focus on international politics and security after 9/11.

The ideas which became embedded in Australian politics in the late-twentieth century were often settled through argument, deliberation and reinterpretation.⁹⁶¹ Those political concepts which have been taken for granted, used to communicate with electorates and exogenous entities, debated and conceptually altered through their use have not been changed by political philosophers but by practitioners. Lovejoy argues that it has been political utility which has driven adoption and change of political concepts. Rather than altruism or internal consistency, political actors have pursued ideas which are advantageous or effective.⁹⁶² The implication being that political ideas can change rapidly to suit particular circumstances and, as Lovejoy notes:

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁰ Kelly, "The Politics of Economic Change in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s."

⁹⁶¹ Peter Loveday, "Australian Political Thought." *The Pieces of Politics*, ed. Richard Lucy. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979, 23

⁹⁶² Ibid.

What is advantageous in one situation may not be in another; what a party leader tells his members in the party press or conference is often different from what he tells the public in general. It depends on the beliefs and power of the audience and what is wanted from [the political idea].⁹⁶³

This is an important consideration for the study of the evolution of relative advantage because it links specific observable changes in the Australian strategic policy discourse with a more general trend in domestic politics. Moreover, it shows that many political ideas in Australian policy discourses, used either expressively and instrumentally, have been both enduring and malleable.⁹⁶⁴

These characteristics are similarly present in the evolution of relative advantage. Throughout the period 1968-2009 significant changes in the relationship between the concepts of advantage and credibility arose from dominant perceptions of Australia's strategic circumstances, security interests and force structure planning priorities. The drivers of conceptual evolution largely relate to the ways in which events and issues were interpreted and narrativised by policy actors. It is important to note that this study has examined the evolution of relative advantage as it occurred. This does not suggest that the evolution followed a logical or linear process. Rather, the process of evolution reflects the interaction of ideas and actors in an ongoing political debate. The contestation of ideas, the changeover of power from particular individuals to others and a wide range of exogenous events all influenced the evolution of the edge to some extent.

The evolution of relative advantage during the period 1968-2009 reflected changing political imperatives to employ the policy idea in different ways in order to dominate

⁹⁶³ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid.

strategic policy discourse in a variety of contexts and for different purposes. Primary drivers of change for relative advantage were related to political needs rather than strict and internally-consistent policy impetus. In particular, politicians have utilised relative advantage as a dominant discourse in defence debates to reflect and often legitimate political goals relating to: changing policy contexts, and in particular changes to the scope of Australia's strategic ambitions and the referent actor(s) of relative advantage; strategic concepts, especially exogenous institutional ideas which changed and where relative advantage changed to reflect them, such as ideas about force posturing, military options and the way technology should be used to enhance military capability; and different communication needs, particularly the need to send different signals to various audiences to facilitate other policy objectives.

Therefore, relative advantage has been both descriptive and prescriptive, but has largely described decisions made for a range of reasons not necessarily limited to technological necessity. It was clearly used for purposes beyond force structure panning and especially as a tool to reassure internal and external audiences of Australia's capacity to contribute to allies and to defend itself unaided against a credible threat. Relative advantage also has signs of being a discourse trap insofar as it has created an expectation, as demonstrated by the 2008 defence community consultation program,⁹⁶⁵ that Australia will retain a technological lead over regional militaries even as they modernise and that the ADF needs to field the most advanced capabilities practically available to it in order to defend Australia and its interests. Although governments have mentioned the human, doctrinal and training aspects of the ADF's lead over regional militaries, which are significant,

⁹⁶⁵ Department of Defence, "Looking over the Horizon."

these statements have largely been lost to the dominant narrative of maintain a cutting edge defence force. *Our Future Defence Force* made the particularly insightful judgment that

Wherever technology developments lead us, in the final analysis, people carry out military tasks so it is important that we continue to attach top priority to the human aspects of technology in warfare.⁹⁶⁶

However, this statement was not sufficient to challenge the technological framing of Australia's ability to defend itself which had by then been building momentum within the defence discourse for more than three decades.

This conceptual framing occurred in three distinct phases. The first was the link between credibility and technological advantage which was established in the early 1970s. This cemented the notion that technology mitigated strategic deficiencies in Australia's defence policy paradigm. While the ways in which technology has been construed as the silver bullet for Australia's circumstances have change dramatically over the decades, the general principle has remained inviolate. The second phase was the gradual entrenchment of the principle that Australia must have a relative qualitative advantage. This created a narrative of confidence based on a condition of superiority. The quality of the ADF was consistently measured against other militaries and was rarely considered against objective standards of what was necessary for defence. This logic is built into the approach to capabilities-based defence planning that Australia adopted in the 1980s and is not necessarily problematic in itself, but it does help to explain the evolution of relative advantage. The third phase was the explicit link between technology and quality which occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s. The RMA brought with it a host of positive rhetoric

⁹⁶⁶ Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force*, para. 10.17.

about how it would offer unparalleled advantages to technologically advanced militaries. The conflation of technology and quality also conceptually mapped the technological edge, which had changed significantly from its origins, back onto credibility.

These processes have created a conceptual trap in which expectations of Australia's defence policy risk becoming untenable but have been a fundamental tenet of the dominant defence narrative for so long that it will be a serious challenge to change the discourse to accommodate new realities. This is not to argue that relative advantage is inherently undesirable. It is most certainly an attractive option in its own right. However, this is a cautionary tale insofar as there remains exceptional risk of incurring enormous expenses in pursuit of an objective that developed its gravitas in a different policy era. As Australia's strategic circumstances continue to change policy-makers would be ill-advised to succumb to a discourse trap founded on an institutional idea which may no longer be relevant. In light of the uncertainty posed by the twenty first century strategic environment, relative advantage may be a useful idea until it is not.

Implications

This study has examined the evolution of the concept of strategic capability advantage from the first instances of Australia's now decades-long experience of defence self-reliance. It has found that the concept of relative advantage espoused in various forms throughout that period has been used inconsistently and has been conceptually altered by exogenous policy impetus and external strategic factors. At the same time, the central, and essentially normative, idea that Australia ought to have a clear capability edge

relative to the Southeast Asian region has become entrenched in defence thinking. This is demonstrated in strategic policy, bureaucratic terminology, Ministerial statements and in the wider community, including think tank policy analysis, media reporting, and the Australian public's expectations from the Commonwealth government. The ideational role of relative advantage was quite powerful within the Defence Organisation and across the wider defence policy community. It legitimated force structure planning and capability acquisition decisions which were rationalised very differently by the Defence bureaucracy. It also created a narrative for explaining Australia's conception of defending itself militarily, providing support to its claims to credibility and to encouraging positive perceptions of national security and defence self-reliance in the public.

Relative advantage has been a powerful policy idea and a dominant narrative of Australian defence policy for much of its history. However, the logical extension of relative advantage in the twenty first century is an expectation that Australia should maintain a strategic capability advantage. This is concerning because Australia's ability to maintain a qualitative and technological lead in Southeast Asia faces increasing uncertainty at the economic development and military modernisation of regional countries increases.⁹⁶⁷ Contrary to popular expectations, Australia is losing the edge it has enjoyed in the region for the last four decades. Australia has not had to seriously reconsider the basis of its engagement with the region during the period 1968-2009 because the answer has seemed obvious. Although Australia has not dominated Southeast Asia, it has been the most powerful individual economy and military in the region. As a consequence, Australia has been in a favourable position to provide for its own security and to

⁹⁶⁷ Defence Intelligence Organisation, "Defence Economic Trends in the Asia-Pacific 2010." [Defence Economic Trends in the Asia-Pacific 2010](#)

contribute to the security of others. As regional militaries modernise, become more capable and develop doctrine and sustainment protocols, they will in combination, if not individually in some cases, eclipse Australia's capacity to retain a capability edge.

This process is already under way and it will increasingly challenge a political idea which has become a principal element of defence force structure planning, a core measure of the standard of the ADF and a key expectation of the Australian public. Such challenge will undermine a dominant defence policy narrative which reflects, explains and justifies Australia's approach to maintaining and equipping the military, planning for the defence of the country and for setting shared expectations of security and military power. This will require conceptual change to counter; change which interrupts the line of reasoning that leads Australia towards potential self-entrapment by linking the both the ADF's credibility as a fighting force and Australia's credibility as a strategic actor to a waning capacity to maintain relative advantage in the region. The first step in further transforming the political and institutional idea of relative advantage is questioning some of the fundamental assumptions about the narratives which frame Australia's credibility and which idealise an ADF which is cutting edge. Understanding the history of the idea of relative advantage will help overcome the shock of losing the edge and may assist in realigning Australia's approach to defence policy in the twenty-first century.

Appendices

List of appendices

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Appendix A: Codebook

The coding scheme used in the thesis is based on the above three core variables, dealing with policy context, strategic concepts and strategic signalling. Each of the variables represents one major node in the coding scheme, with each of these major nodes being the top of a three level node hierarchy. Each major node is broken down into three subordinate nodes and each subordinate node has a number of nodes below it, ranging from two to six, which represent attributes of each subordinate node. provides an explanation of the node hierarchy and a brief explanation of the concept or information that each node represents.

Table 8: QDA Coding Scheme

| Node Levels | Description |
|---------------|---|
| Concept | The kinds of strategic concepts/ideas used in defence and strategic policy documents or statements (used to demonstrate relationships between policy ideas and relative advantage). |
| Edge | The kind of 'edge' postulated and the role that technology is thought to play in facilitating an edge |
| Coordination | Network Centric Warfare and information/knowledge edge |
| Core force | Technology as a basis for a core force or a force-in-being |
| Expansion | The technological level as a base for (multi-path) expansion into a terminal force |
| Material | A material technological edge (including force multiplication). |
| Posture | Force posture and force structure signalling, including signalling of intentions/interests and dominant force structure considerations |
| Contingencies | Force structure planning for 'credible contingencies' of armed aggression against Australia |
| Core Force | Force structure priorities that emphasise a core force as an expansion base for a terminal force |
| Denial | Force structure planning that emphasises a clear deterrent (controlling the threat environment) |
| Expeditionary | Force structure planning that emphasises expeditionary capabilities and/or complementarity with allies for forward deployment |
| Self-Reliance | Force structure principles which emphasise self-reliance in the defence of Australia |
| SSTR | Force structure for low-intensity regional stability and/or humanitarian operations |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Rationale | The technological (or political) rationale for tech edge |
| Cutting edge | Reference to having high technology military weapons/systems in absolute terms |
| Industry | Reference to the role of or the need to support the Australian defence industry to supply high-technology equipment/systems. |
| Mitigating | Tech-advantage discussed with reference to mitigating cost or quantity disadvantages |
| Relative | Capability and/or military technology discussed with reference to relative advantage |
| Policy Context | The policy context in which relative advantage was expressed across time |
| CA | Key terms/concepts employed (for content analysis and KWIC purposes) |
| Advantage | Use of the term or concept of relative advantage or an 'edge' |
| Capability | Reference to military capability (capacity) or capabilities |
| Technology | Reference to technology or technological level |
| Referent | referent actor with regard to relative capability and/or material resources (inferring that relativity is a concern) |
| Great Powers | Reference to maintaining a technological level relative to great power alliance partners and/or major powers |
| Indonesia | Anywhere that Indonesia is referred to explicitly or inferred as a separate actor to the rest of the neighbourhood and/or wider region. |
| Neighbourhood | Actors within the 'inner arc' often termed Australia's 'immediate regional neighbourhood' in policy documents |
| Regional | Regional actors (wider Asia-Pacific region) |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Policy Scope | The scope of Australia's strategic interests and signalled intentions for the acquisition and use of military capability |
| DoA | Any strategic objective related to the security/defence of Australia |
| Global | Expeditionary operations and/or complementarity with allies for the purpose of conducting coalition warfare |
| Regional | Regional scope of strategic objectives - stability, security, credibility |
| Signals | Reference to defence interests, force posture and capability edge in public statements/documents intended to signal/communicate a message to an audience. |
| Deterrence | Signals sent to potential adversaries to emphasise Australia's military capability in order to dissuade or deter military action against Australia or its interests |
| Force Employment | Deterrence based on the employment of force elements - i.e. force multipliers, doctrine and training advantages as well as enhanced co-ordination offered by advanced C4ISR(EW) |
| Platform | Deterrence based purely on the qualitative capability advantage associated with specific platforms |
| Reassurance | signals intended to reassure allies and (regional) security partners |
| Credible Ally | A credible security partner (an ADF able to deter aggressors and offer support in time of war) |
| Response | Crisis response (SSTR, humanitarian and internal stability support) |
| Support | Loan/use of niche equipment/skills and training (i.e. intel/logistical support) |

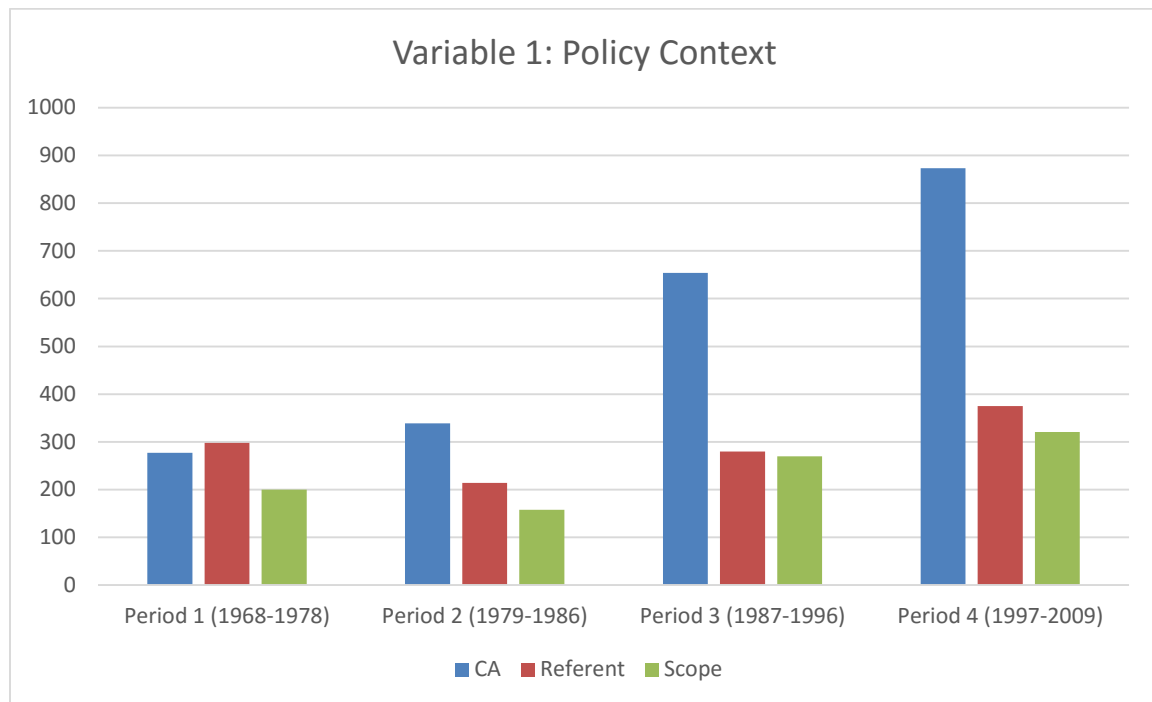
| | |
|---------------|---|
| Validation | Signals intended to validate relative advantage to domestic audiences |
| Justification | Justification for significant public expenditure |
| Morale | Morale and nationalism (qualitatively superior force) |
| Security | The perception of security provided by a high-tech ADF |

Appendix B: Data sheets

This section provides the data sheets used to validate the coding scheme. For each of the three main variables there is a simple frequency data sheet with a graph and table. This shows the aggregate coding for the secondary nodes below a main variable separated into periods. There is also a detailed frequency chart with a data table for each variable which shows the coding frequency of tertiary nodes. For each node there are four bars which show the change in frequency across periods.

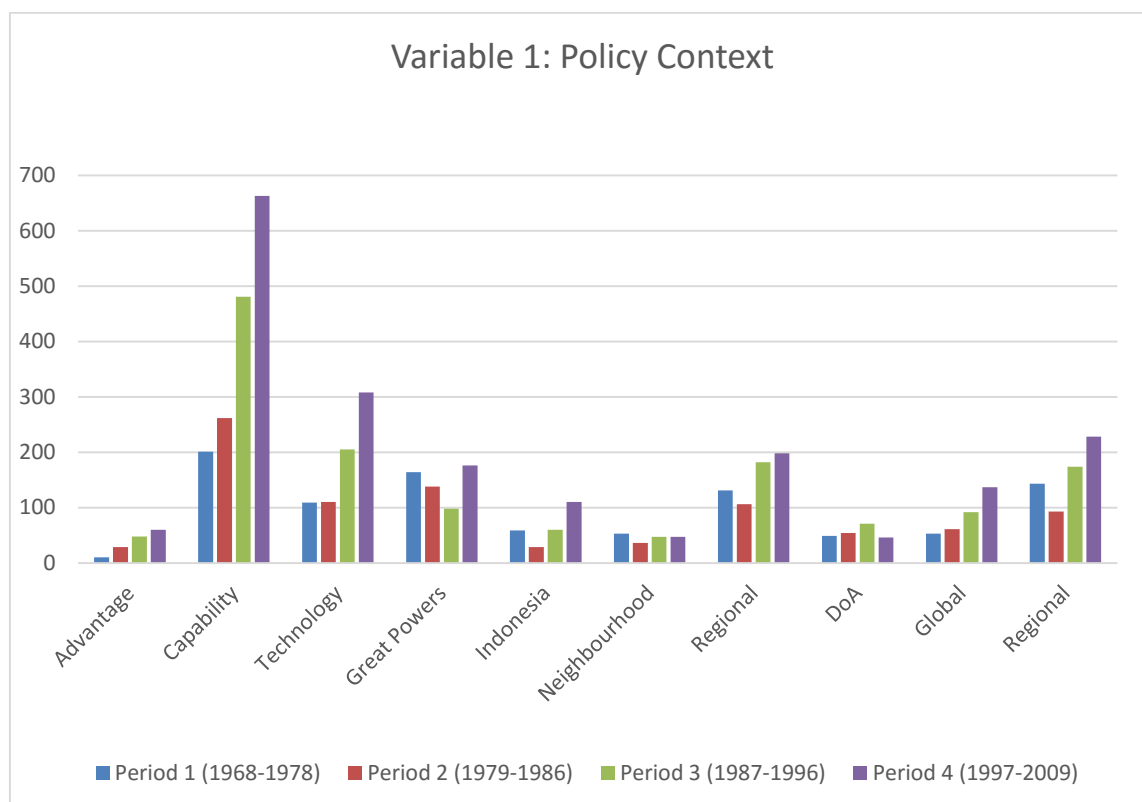
One possible criticism of this approach is that the data are presented in whole numbers and not as a proportion of speeches or coding from a particular era, which may not be an appropriate comparison as the total body of data in each period is not the same. However, the data are presented in direct comparison precisely because the body of information they are drawn from is not finite or limited. Although some periods produced more documents and statements than others, this was due to a deliberate choice of actors involved and that choice forms part of the data set because it influences the amount of communicative behaviour in the discourse. In simple terms, each period had roughly the same opportunity to engage in the defence discourse through documents and statements, so the amount of available data is based primarily on policy actors' decisions. Choosing to say nothing is still a choice. As such, each period can be fairly compared in absolute, not relative, figures.

Figure 1: Variable 1 simple coding frequency



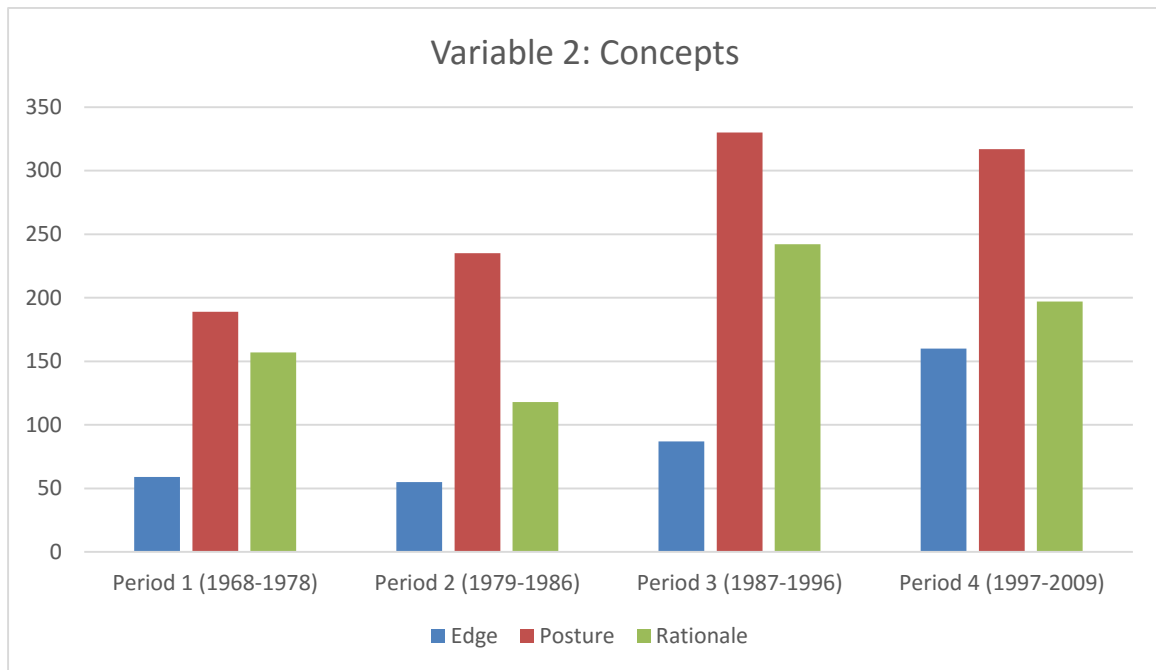
| | Period 1 (1968-1978) | Period 2 (1979-1986) | Period 3 (1987-1996) | Period 4 (1997-2009) |
|----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| CA | 277 | 339 | 654 | 873 |
| Referent | 298 | 214 | 280 | 375 |
| Scope | 200 | 158 | 270 | 321 |

Figure 2: Variable 1 detailed coding frequency



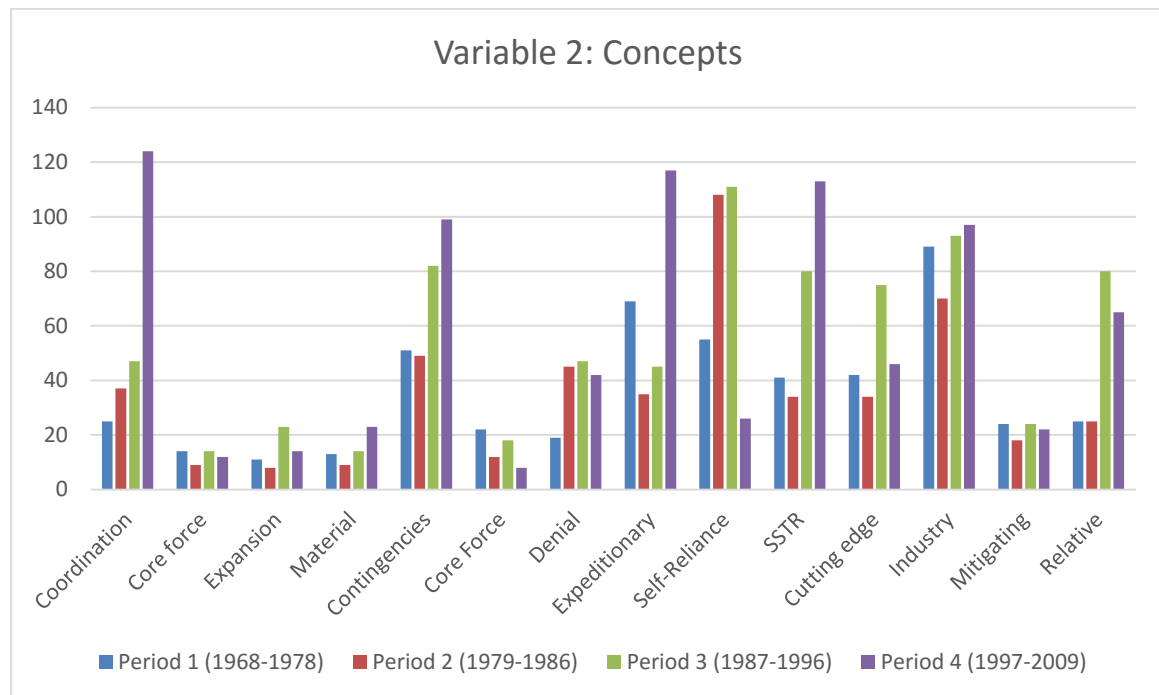
| | Period 1 (1968-1978) | Period 2 (1979-1986) | Period 3 (1987-1996) | Period 4 (1997-2009) |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Advantage | 10 | 29 | 48 | 60 |
| Capability | 201 | 262 | 481 | 663 |
| Technology | 109 | 110 | 205 | 308 |
| Great Powers | 164 | 138 | 98 | 176 |
| Indonesia | 59 | 29 | 60 | 110 |
| Neighbourhood | 53 | 36 | 47 | 47 |
| Regional | 131 | 106 | 182 | 198 |
| DoA | 49 | 54 | 71 | 46 |
| Global | 53 | 61 | 92 | 137 |
| Regional | 143 | 93 | 174 | 228 |

Figure 3: Variable 2 simple coding frequency



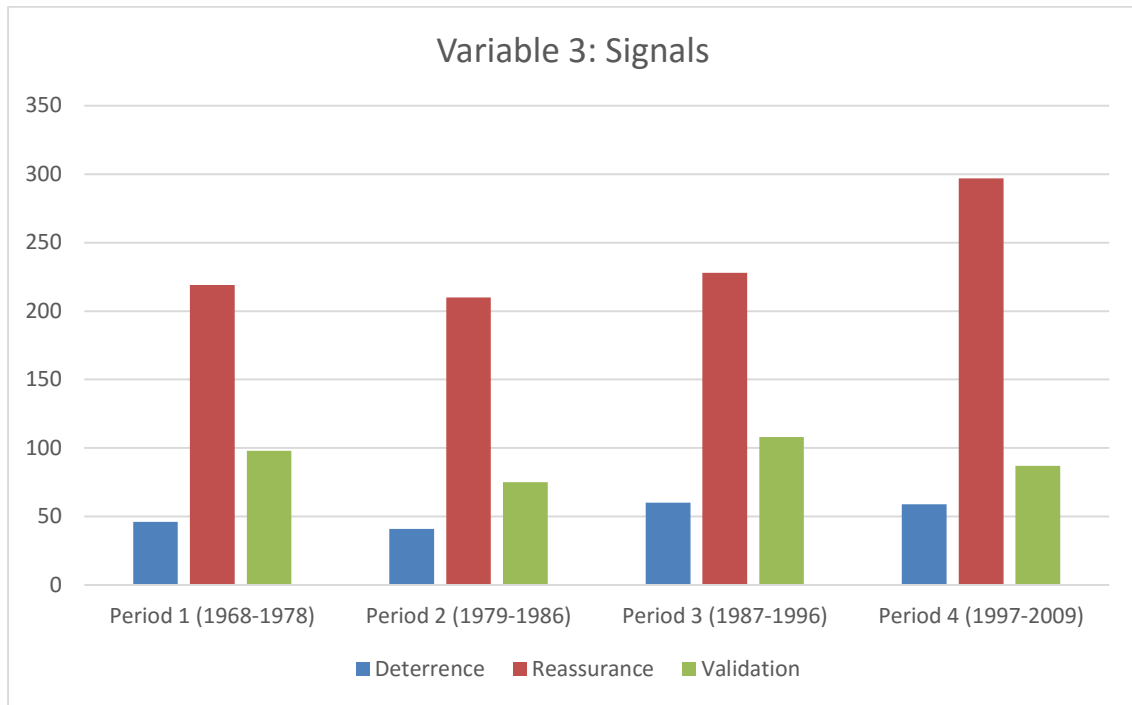
| | Period 1 (1968-1978) | Period 2 (1979-1986) | Period 3 (1987-1996) | Period 4 (1997-2009) |
|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Edge | 59 | 55 | 87 | 160 |
| Posture | 189 | 235 | 330 | 317 |
| Rationale | 157 | 118 | 242 | 197 |

Figure 4: Variable 2 detailed coding frequency



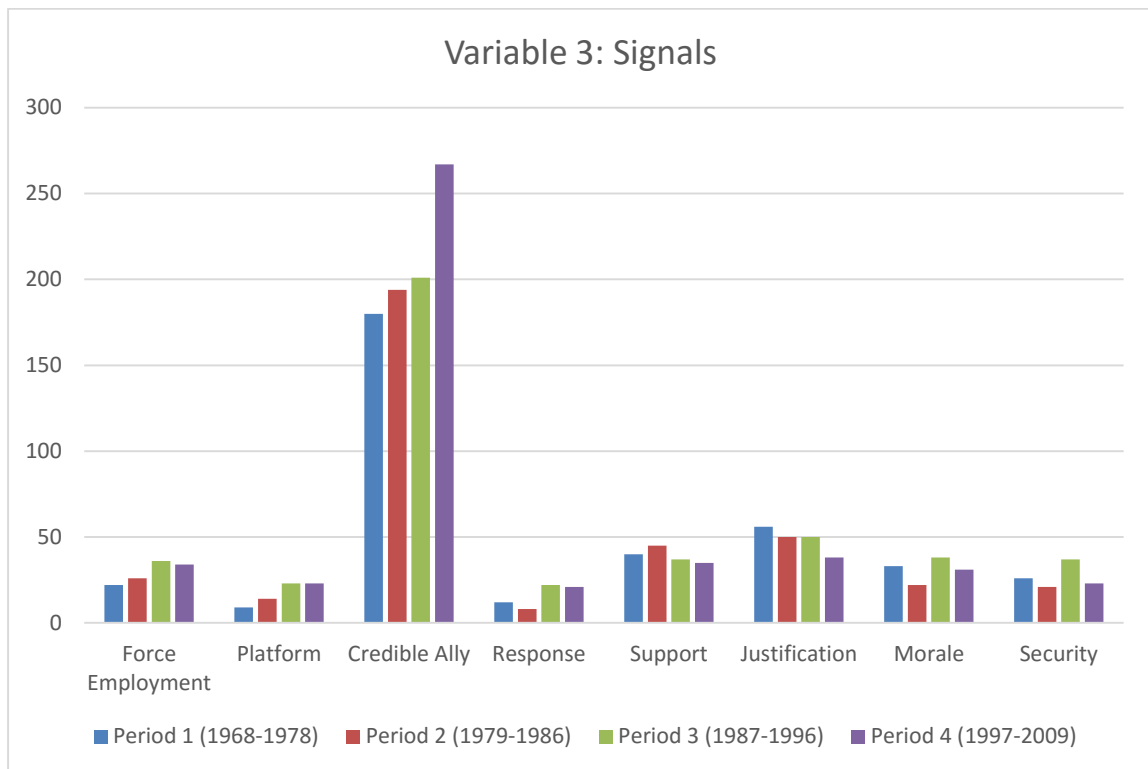
| | Period 1 (1968-1978) | Period 2 (1979-1986) | Period 3 (1987-1996) | Period 4 (1997-2009) |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Coordination | 25 | 37 | 47 | 124 |
| Core force | 14 | 9 | 14 | 12 |
| Expansion | 11 | 8 | 23 | 14 |
| Material | 13 | 9 | 14 | 23 |
| Contingencies | 51 | 49 | 82 | 99 |
| Core Force | 22 | 12 | 18 | 8 |
| Denial | 19 | 45 | 47 | 42 |
| Expeditionary | 69 | 35 | 45 | 117 |
| Self-Reliance | 55 | 108 | 111 | 26 |
| SSTR | 41 | 34 | 80 | 113 |
| Cutting edge | 42 | 34 | 75 | 46 |
| Industry | 89 | 70 | 93 | 97 |
| Mitigating | 24 | 18 | 24 | 22 |
| Relative | 25 | 25 | 80 | 65 |

Figure 5: Variable 3 simple coding frequency



| | Period 1 (1968-1978) | Period 2 (1979-1986) | Period 3 (1987-1996) | Period 4 (1997-2009) |
|-------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Deterrence | 46 | 41 | 60 | 59 |
| Reassurance | 219 | 210 | 228 | 297 |
| Validation | 98 | 75 | 108 | 87 |

Figure 6: Variable 3 detailed coding frequency



| | Period 1 (1968-1978) | Period 2 (1979-1986) | Period 3 (1987-1996) | Period 4 (1997-2009) |
|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Force Employment | 22 | 26 | 36 | 34 |
| Platform | 9 | 14 | 23 | 23 |
| Credible Ally | 180 | 194 | 201 | 267 |
| Response | 12 | 8 | 22 | 21 |
| Support | 40 | 45 | 37 | 35 |
| Justification | 56 | 50 | 50 | 38 |
| Morale | 33 | 22 | 38 | 31 |
| Security | 26 | 21 | 37 | 23 |

Appendix C: Data tables

Table 9: 1968-1978 Referent coding

| Great Powers | Regional | Indonesia | Neighbourhood |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 127 | 80 | 40 | 34 |

Table 10: 1968-1978 Policy scope coding

| Regional | DOA | Global |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| 102 | 38 | 14 |

Table 11: 1968-1978 Edge coding

| Coordination | Core Force | Expansion | Material |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 6 | 11 | 11 | 9 |

Table 12: 1968-1978 Force posture coding

| Contingencies | Core Force | Denial | Expeditionary | Self-Reliance | SSTR |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 32 | 21 | 12 | 50 | 51 | 15 |

Table 13: 1968-1978 Rationale coding

| Cutting edge | Industry | Mitigating | Relative |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 38 | 72 | 19 | 7 |

Table 14: 1968-1978 Deterrence coding

| Force Employment | Platform |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 22 | 9 |

Table 15: 1968-1978 Reassurance coding

| Credible ally | Response | Support |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 180 | 12 | 40 |

Table 16: 1968-1978 Validation coding

| Justification | Morale | Security |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 56 | 33 | 26 |

Table 17: 1979-1986 Referent coding

| Great Powers | Regional | Neighbourhood | Indonesia |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 96 | 55 | 18 | 9 |

Table 18: 1979-1986 Policy scope coding

| Regional | DOA | Global |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| 55 | 41 | 19 |

Table 19: 1979-1986 Edge coding

| Coordination | Core force | Expansion | Material |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 20 | 6 | 8 | 7 |

Table 20: 1979-1986 Force posture coding

| Contingencies | Core Force | Denial | Expeditionary | Self-Reliance | SSTR |
|---------------|------------|--------|---------------|---------------|------|
| 28 | 11 | 40 | 13 | 103 | 11 |

Table 21: 1979-1986 Rationale coding

| Cutting edge | Industry | Mitigating | Relative |
|--------------|----------|------------|----------|
| 29 | 53 | 13 | 6 |

Table 22: 1979-1986 Deterrence coding

| Force Employment | Platform |
|------------------|----------|
| 26 | 14 |

Table 23: 1979-1986 Reassurance coding

| Credible ally | Response | Support |
|---------------|----------|---------|
| 194 | 8 | 45 |

Table 24: 1979-1986 Validation coding

| Justification | Morale | Security |
|---------------|--------|----------|
| 50 | 22 | 21 |

Table 25: 1987-1996 Referent coding

| Regional | Great Powers | Indonesia | Neighbourhood |
|----------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| 109 | 47 | 34 | 26 |

Table 26: 1987-1996 Policy scope coding

| Regional | DOA | Global |
|----------|-----|--------|
| 117 | 52 | 37 |

Table 27: 1987-1996 Edge coding

| Coordination | Core force | Expansion | Material |
|--------------|------------|-----------|----------|
| 23 | 11 | 21 | 9 |

Table 28: 1987-1996 Force posture coding

| Contingencies | Core Force | Denial | Expeditionary | Self-Reliance | SSTR |
|---------------|------------|--------|---------------|---------------|------|
| 50 | 17 | 38 | 17 | 106 | 50 |

Table 29: 1987-1996 Rationale coding

| Cutting edge | Industry | Mitigating | Relative |
|--------------|----------|------------|----------|
| 66 | 75 | 16 | 50 |

Table 30: 1987-1996 Deterrence coding

| Force Employment | Platform |
|------------------|----------|
| 36 | 23 |

Table 31: 1987-1996 Reassurance coding

| Credible ally | Response | Support |
|---------------|----------|---------|
| 201 | 22 | 37 |

Table 32: 1987-1996 Validation coding

| Justification | Morale | Security |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 50 | 38 | 37 |

Table 33: 1997-2009 Referents

| Great Powers | Regional | Neighbourhood | Indonesia |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 176 | 110 | 47 | 198 |

Table 34: 1997-2009 Policy scope coding

| Regional | DOA | Global |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| 228 | 46 | 137 |

Table 35: 1997-2009 Edge coding

| Coordination | Core force | Expansion | Material |
|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 124 | 12 | 14 | 23 |

Table 36: 1997-2009 Force posture coding

| Contingencies | Core Force | Denial | Expeditionary | Self-Reliance | SSTR |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 99 | 8 | 42 | 117 | 26 | 113 |

Table 37: 1997-2009 Rationale coding

| Cutting edge | Industry | Mitigating | Relative |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 46 | 97 | 22 | 65 |

Table 38: 1997-2009 Deterrence coding

| Force Employment | Platform |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 34 | 23 |

Table 39: 1997-2009 Reassurance coding

| Credible ally | Response | Support |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 267 | 21 | 35 |

Table 40: 1997-2009 Validation coding

| Justification | Morale | Security |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 38 | 31 | 23 |

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