

Land Warfare Studies Centre

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THE TYRANNY OF DISSONANCE
Australia's Strategic Culture and Way of War
1901–2005

by
Michael Evans

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PREFACE

‘Troubled times,’ wrote the great 20th-century French political thinker, Raymond Aron, ‘encourage meditation’. Since the late 1990s, Australian defence policy-making has faced troubled times with the rise of regional instability and the emergence of global terrorism. Indeed, not since the Menzies era has Australia faced a more turbulent and uncertain security outlook. The Prime Minister, John Howard, captured this reality in April 2003, when he observed: ‘while the circumstances are different, the importance of national security interests [in Australian politics] now rivals the importance they occupied in the 1950s and 1960s’. Australia’s intervention in East Timor in 1999, its involvement in the post-11 September 2001 campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, and its nation-building efforts in the Solomon Islands are collective evidence of the rise of a new and complex era in Australian strategy. It is an era of globalised security marked by an increased need for force readiness. Such readiness is required in order to engage in short-notice offshore deployments and for an array of homeland security measures to supplement traditional measures of territorial defence.

This study seeks to throw light on the new era that Australia has entered in the early 21st century by engaging in a meditation on the country’s strategic culture and way of war over the past century. The author’s interest in this area arose from the extraordinary paradox that exists between strategic theory and operational practice in Australian defence policy. This interest was further intensified by the tendency in Australian strategy towards narrow forms of geographical determinism. Such determinism has often eclipsed cultural values in shaping the nation’s peacetime strategic posture. Yet, in every conflict and crisis since Federation, Australia has always fought not in defence of its geography, but to uphold its liberal democratic values. Nothing that has occurred in recent years suggests that this situation will change in the first quarter of the 21st century. On the contrary, values as a motive force in strategy are likely to increase in importance.

Australia's values are rooted in its history as a Western democracy. The central premise of this study is that, in terms of developing strategy, Australians cannot understand the present, nor can they speculate on the future, without an informed knowledge of their past. Such an understanding can only be conferred by a scholarly knowledge that seeks to meet applied as well as purely theoretical concerns. Scholarship should try to meet the policy-maker's need for clear explanatory concepts, provide a critical review of established ideas and employ careful empirical analysis in order to test alternative hypotheses. In this spirit, it is the author's hope that the research presented in this monograph will be of assistance to policy-makers, uniformed professionals and defence analysts grappling with the complex security problems of the new millennium.

Many intellectual debts have been incurred in the writing of this work. In the Australian Defence Organisation, I would like to thank the former Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie, AC, for his invitation to address the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) on the subject of the Australian approach to war in August 2000. I am also grateful to the current Chief of the Defence Force, General Peter Cosgrove, AC, MC, and the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, AO, for their support of this project over the past three years. Some of the key ideas in this study were first outlined in a paper entitled 'ANZUS, Australian Values and Australian Strategy', which I delivered at a US Pacific Command ANZUS Workshop in November 2001 at the US Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. During the Monterey workshop I benefited from discussions with Dr Thomas-Durell Young, whose knowledge of the dynamics underpinning Australian defence policy is unrivalled among American scholars and provided me with valuable perspectives in developing this study. Attendance at the US Army War College's Fourteenth Annual Strategy Conference at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, in April 2003 on the subject of 'The "New" American Way of War' was also important in providing a comparative perspective on Australia's strategic culture and approach to warfighting.

In terms of methodology, the preparation of this study involved an attempt to understand comprehensively the contending forces and inner tensions at play within Australian strategy. The vehicle for integration was the employment of interdisciplinary analysis. This analysis ranged from political science, sociology and literature to military history and strategic studies. In refining this approach, I received invaluable assistance from several colleagues in the Land Warfare Studies Centre (LWSC), both past and present, and would like to express my gratitude to them. Colonel David Horner, PhD, Head of the LWSC from 1997 to 2001, generously allowed me to read and quote from his unpublished and pioneering paper, 'The Australian Way of Warfighting', originally delivered at the Australian Command and Staff College, Fort Queenscliff, in June 1996. Lieutenant Colonel Ian Campbell, Dr Alan Ryan and Dr Russell Parkin provided valuable insights and encouragement as the study evolved. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to the Centre's Research Editor, Mr Ara Nalbandian, for his painstaking care in improving the quality of my manuscript. I am also thankful for the skill and dedication of two Research Assistants, Mr Naji Najjar and Mr Scott Hopkins, in tracking down diverse material, often at short notice. Finally, the views expressed in this monograph are, of course, those of the author. *Habent sua fata libelli.*

M. E.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States (alliance)

ABSTRACT

This monograph examines Australia's strategic culture and way of war over the course of a century. It seeks to analyse the relationship between ideas and practice and between geography and history in the evolution of Australian strategic behaviour. The study argues that, since Federation in 1901, there has been, and continues to be, a 'tyranny of dissonance' between Australian strategic theory and its warfighting practice. While peacetime Australian strategic theory has frequently upheld the defence of geography as a foundation stone of defence policy, strategic activity in wartime and security crisis has usually been undertaken to uphold Australia's liberal democratic values and vital political interests. The monograph goes on to explore this paradox through examining the linkages between Australia's political culture, strategic culture and approach to warfighting.

The study argues that, while Australia's political culture and warfighting practice are distinguished by pragmatism, the country's strategic culture has often been overly theoretical and, as a result, has seldom provided a sound guide to military practice in times of war and crisis. Important influences on Australia's strategic culture and approach to war such as the country's liminal geopolitical status, its continental rather than maritime identity, links between foreign policy and defence, and the impact of the ANZAC tradition are analysed in an attempt to illuminate the problem of dissonance.

The monograph then examines how the 'tyranny of dissonance' between Australia's strategic theory and its way of war was reinforced in the era between 1972 and 1997 by the adoption of a geostrategic doctrine of Defence of Australia. It is argued that a geographically based defence policy was flawed because of its incompatibility with geopolitics, its divorce from fundamental historical lessons, and by a loss of congruence between defence planning and foreign policy interests. These flaws were camouflaged by the bipolarity and relative predictability of the Cold War era.

During the course of the 1990s, however, Defence of Australia geostrategy and operational commitments began to diverge in a manner that could not be ignored. By the time of the new millennium, declaratory strategic theory bore little resemblance to actual strategic practice, as demonstrated by Australian military operations in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The study concludes with an examination of how the new globalised security environment of the early 21st century has contributed to the disconnection between doctrine and practice in Australian strategy. The paper argues that, in security conditions characterised by networks, rapid information dissemination and global interdependence, Australia can no longer afford to tolerate a dissonance between its strategic planning and operational commitments. The monograph recommends that declaratory strategy be aligned to real-world military commitments and that, in order to ensure such a situation, defence and diplomacy be closely linked in a 'strategy of security' or 'whole of government' approach to security. In an interdependent 21st-century strategic environment, only a 'whole of government' system is capable of integrating Australia's increasingly diverse, yet interconnected, security requirements.

**THE TYRANNY OF DISSONANCE:
AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE AND WAY OF WAR
1901–2005¹**

Theory cannot be accepted as conclusive when practice points the other way.

Charles E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (1896)

Traditions die hard in Australia; they do not simply collapse before the power of reason or the insight of a vigorous social-engineering capability.

Stephen R. Graubard, 'Preface', in *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium* (1985)

In June 2002, the Department of Defence issued a 25-page publication called *The Australian Approach to Warfare*. In the words of the former Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie, the publication sought to answer a basic question: 'Do we, as Australians, have a distinctive approach to warfighting?'² The content of *The Australian Approach to Warfare* suggested that there was indeed a distinct Australian way of war. The publication identified the manoeuvreist approach, a preference for advanced technology, and a requirement to engage in joint and coalition operations as

¹ This monograph is an expanded version of an article entitled 'Towards an Australian Way of War: Culture, Politics and Strategy, 1901–2004', which first appeared in the *Australian Army Journal*, vol. II, no. 1, Winter 2004, pp. 177–200.

² Admiral Chris Barrie, 'Foreword', in Department of Defence, *The Australian Approach to Warfare*, Public Affairs & Corporate Communication, Canberra, June 2002.

being the main features of an Australian way of war in the early 21st century.³ Such features are, of course, hardly unique to Australia and can be found in other contemporary Western militaries such as those of the United States and Britain.

Of much greater interest was the publication's emphasis on the role that a nation's values and culture play in the employment of a country's armed forces. *The Australian Approach to Warfare* noted Australia's strong affiliation with Anglo-Saxon cultural, diplomatic and military norms, and upheld the country's history of stable government under a Western liberal system of parliamentary democracy. The publication also affirmed Australia's 'historic commitment to defend human rights, support democratic values and foster respect for international law'.⁴ However, because of lack of space, the authors of *The Australian Approach to Warfare* were unable to pursue these issues in any detail. As a result, the content of the publication proved valuable not so much for the conclusions that it reached, but for the questions that it posed. Above all, *The Australian Approach to Warfare* raised two compelling questions: how do the cultures of politics and strategy interact in a liberal democratic society such as Australia, and to what extent have such forces shaped Australia's way of war over the past century?

The aim of this study is to explore these questions and to examine the extent to which Australia's political values and strategic ideas have contributed to the formulation of an Australian way of war. In particular, the nexus between strategic culture and operational practices in Australian

³ *The Australian Approach to Warfare*, esp. pp. 23–30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

military history are subjected to close analysis. The study takes as its basic premise the proposition advanced by the leading 20th-century American military theorist, Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles, that modern strategy is first and foremost concerned with the task of upholding and preserving a nation's values. 'The ultimate source of strategy,' wrote the admiral, 'lies in the values of the people of a nation. In a free society a strategy that is contrary to the sense of values of the people cannot be expected to succeed'.⁵ In a real sense, a nation's cultural values determine its destiny. If, in advanced liberal democracies, there is a lack of harmony between national values and declaratory strategy, then such societies risk confusion, or dissonance, between their strategic theory and their military practice.⁶

Understanding how military force has been conceived of, and used, over the past century according to cultural values is important for those concerned with the theory and practice of Australian strategy in the early 21st century. In the formulation of strategy, all methodologies of anticipation are dependent on some form of historical analysis as a signpost to the future. As a result, an investigation of Australia's strategic culture and way of war may be of intellectual assistance to military professionals, strategic planners, policy makers and defence scholars grappling with the problems of a changing 21st-century security environment. This monograph is primarily a survey of ideas and, as such, is as much a journey as a destination. As a study, it is both an essay in intellectual

⁵ Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles, 'Strategy—The Theory and Application', *US Naval War College Review*, vol. 32, no. 3, May–June 1979, p. 13.

⁶ Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles, *Military Concepts and Philosophy*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 1965, p. 53.

history and a meditation on strategy. One of the aims of this monograph is to provide fresh perspectives for the development of Australian strategy because, as the social historian Theodore Zeldin reminds us, in order ‘to have a new vision of the future it has always first been necessary to have a new vision of the past’.⁷

Seven areas are examined. First, in order to provide historical context, the idea of distinctive ways in warfare and their relationship to notions of political and strategic culture are analysed. The monograph argues that a way of war cannot be understood, even less defined, unless it is examined in relationship to the concepts of political culture and strategic culture. Second, and third, the particular components of both Australia’s political and strategic cultures are identified and assessed. Fourth, the paper examines the main features of Australia’s way of war over the past century, analysing the relevance of the ANZAC tradition and the roles of diplomacy and defence in Australian military practice. In the fifth section of the study, the politics of transformation and the attempt to redesign Australian strategic culture around the narrow features of an immutable geography during the last quarter of the 20th century are investigated. Sixth, the monograph offers a critique of the geostrategic approach to Australian defence policy, focusing on the dissonance between strategic theory and operational practice. Finally, the paper discusses the significance of the new 21st-century security environment on the future direction of Australian strategic culture and a way of warfighting. The study argues that there is a need for a ‘whole

⁷ Theodore Zeldin, *An Intimate History of Humanity*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1994, p. vii.

of government' approach to security policy in the first decade of the 21st century.

Ways of War, Political Culture and Strategic Culture

Scholars of war have long been interested in the idea that the way in which a particular nation fights reflects its political values and social structure. As already noted, the work of Admiral Eccles has placed cultural values at the core of successful strategy. Eccles's views are echoed by the American historian, Daniel J. Boorstin, who has noted: 'What a nation means by war or peace is as characteristic of its experience and as intimately involved with all its other ways as are its laws or its religion'.⁸ Similarly, the doyen of British military historians, Michael Howard, has observed: 'The military system of a nation is not an independent section of the social system but an aspect of it in its totality'.⁹

There is a diverse literature on ways in warfare that embraces both history and social science. From the historical perspective, well-known 20th-century examples of the genre include Sir Basil Liddell Hart's 1932 work, *The British Way in Warfare*; Russell F. Weigley's celebrated 1973 book, *The American Way of War*; and *Chinese Ways in Warfare*, edited by Frank A. Kiernan and John K. Fairbank.¹⁰ From a

⁸ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 375.

⁹ Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–1871*, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1961, p. 1.

¹⁰ B. H. Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare: Adaptability and Mobility*, Faber, London, 1932; Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, Macmillan, New York, 1973; Frank A. Kiernan Jr and John

theoretical perspective, in the 1960s and 1970s, the American social scientist, Adda B. Bozeman, pioneered an inter-cultural approach to international relations and war.¹¹ Her work did much to demonstrate that war is related to values, and that approaches to the theory and practice of military force around the world differ according to cultural influences. In the early 1990s, Bozeman's seminal 1976 essay, 'War and the Clash of Ideas', was reprinted by the United States Air University as an introduction to a major new study of different cultural approaches to military conflict.¹²

In the early 21st century, the way of war genre shows little sign of intellectual exhaustion. Indeed, even before the al-Qa'ida attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States revived the cultural history of war in academe, the American scholar, Victor Davis Hanson, had achieved bestseller status with a provocative study entitled *Why the West Has Won: Carnage and Culture from Salamis to Vietnam*. Hanson's book caught the popular mood in much of the English-speaking

K. Fairbank (eds), *Chinese Ways in Warfare*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1974. On China see also Scott A. Boorman, *The Protracted Game: A Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Revolutionary Strategy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1969.

¹¹ Adda B. Bozeman, *Politics and Culture in International History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1960 and 'War and the Clash of Ideas', *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 61–102.

¹² Stephen J. Blank, Lawrence E. Grinter, Karl P. Magyar, Lewis B. Ware and Bynum E. Weathers, *Conflict, Culture and History: Regional Dimensions*, Air University Press, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 1993. This study analysed Russian, Islamic, Asian, African and Latin American approaches to warfare.

West and was followed by other major studies such as John A. Lynn's *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*.¹³

The diverse literature on ways of war raises the important question of definition. When we discuss the idea of a way of war, are we discussing policy, strategy, operations, tactics or all of these? Does a way of warfighting refer mainly to strategic theory or to operational practice? Unless a degree of clarity is established on these issues, scholars of military affairs run the risk that the way of war concept will become so generalised as to have little, or no, analytical value. For this reason, there has to be an interdisciplinary approach to the subject—an approach that combines perspectives from both history and the social sciences.

The idea that countries possess distinctive ways of warfighting can only be understood in relationship to strategic culture, which is, in turn, intimately connected to political culture. Military and political cultures and their institutions are 'mutually dependent variables', and the function and character

¹³ Victor Davis Hanson, *Why the West Has Won: Carnage and Culture from Salamis to Vietnam*, Faber and Faber, New York, 2001; John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 2003. Other important studies in this vein include Richard W. Harrison, *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904–1940*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2001; Thomas G. Mahnken, *Uncovering Ways of War: US Intelligence and Foreign Military Innovation, 1918–1941*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2002; Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, Basic Books, New York, 2002; and Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Toward an American Way of War*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, March 2004.

of any professional military establishment is closely related to political views about the use of force.¹⁴ Since politics provide the context for strategic theory and practice, a strategy that fails to take note of political history, social values and ideology is unlikely to succeed. In the 1960s, social scientists such as Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba developed the concept of political culture in the quest for a better understanding of the relationship between ideas and action in politics.¹⁵ The leading American social scientist, Lucian W. Pye, has usefully defined political culture as

the set of attitudes and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. Political culture encompasses both the theoretical ideals and the operating norms of a polity.¹⁶

¹⁴ David C. Rapoport, 'A Comparative Theory of Military and Political Types', in Samuel P. Huntington (ed.), *Changing Patterns of Military Politics*, The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1962, pp. 71–98.

¹⁵ See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1963; Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, 'Introduction: Political Culture and Political Development' and Sidney Verba, 'Comparative Political Culture', in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds), *Political Culture and Political Development*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1965, pp. 1–15 and 512–60 respectively; Gabriel Almond, 'Political Theory and Political Science', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 60, no. 4, 1966, pp. 869–79; and Lucian W. Pye, 'Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture,' in Louis Schneider and Charles M. Bonjean (eds), *The Idea of Culture in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1973, pp. 65–77.

¹⁶ Pye, 'Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture', p. 68.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the study of political culture stimulated the development of the concept of strategic culture by leading Anglo-American scholars of strategy and statecraft such as Jack Snyder, Ken Booth, Colin S. Gray and Carnes Lord.¹⁷ In 1990, the British scholar, Ken Booth, provided perhaps the clearest definition of strategic culture when he observed:

The concept of strategic culture refers to a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat and use of force.¹⁸

A strategic culture is a complex accretion of ideas and habits of thought about war. Despite changing circumstances, these ideas and habits of thought tend to reappear in new guises and often demonstrate a persistent affinity with the past.¹⁹ One needs to be careful, however, not to attribute any determinism to particular strategic cultures. In 1957 the British air strategist, John Slessor, observed that the Russians could be relied on to be cautious in matters of strategy because chess rather than poker was their national

¹⁷ See Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, RAND, Santa Monica, CA, 1977; Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, Holmes and Meier, New York, 1979; Colin S. Gray, 'Comparative Strategic Culture', *Parameters: Journal of the US Army War College*, vol. XIV, no. 4, Winter 1984, pp. 26–33; and Carnes Lord, 'American Strategic Culture', in Fred E. Baumann and Kenneth M. Jensen (eds), *American Defense Policy and Liberal Democracy*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 1989, pp. 44–63.

¹⁸ Ken Booth, 'The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed', in C. Jacobsen (ed.), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, Macmillan, London, 1990, p. 121.

¹⁹ Yitzhak Klein, 'A Theory of Strategic Culture', *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 10, no.1, 1991, pp. 3–23.

game. This view is a good example of the dangers of ethnocentrism.²⁰ Obviously Slessor had never heard of the game of Russian roulette. The concept of a strategic culture should not be seen as an intellectual straitjacket that somehow dictates a nation's behaviour, but rather as a milieu, or a context, in which ideas about the use of force can be debated. As Colin Gray notes, 'as with sound geopolitical analysis, one discerns through strategic-cultural analysis influences rather than rigid pre-determinants'.²¹

What is the difference, if any, between a strategic culture and a way of war? The British scholar, Colin McInness, has argued that 'at the heart of both the idea of a way in warfighting and of strategic culture is difference: that social organisations behave and choose differently to [*sic*] given stimuli because of their distinctive experiences, beliefs and/or structures'.²² Yet, while there is an intimate relationship between the modern notion of strategic culture and the older, more historical idea of a way of war, they do differ in methodology and scope. Strategic culture is essentially about what factors influence defence policy at the highest level in government; its main concern is how to conduct wars. A strategic culture, then, deals with how a nation views the place and role of military force in statecraft.²³

²⁰ John Slessor, *The Great Deterrent*, Cassell, London, 1957, p. 156.

²¹ Gray, 'Comparative Strategic Culture', p. 28.

²² Colin McInness, *Hot War, Cold War: The British Army's Way in Warfare, 1945–95*, Brassey's, London, 1996, pp. 1–2.

²³ Lord, 'American Strategic Culture', p. 45. For discussions of the role of strategic culture and of a cultural approach to strategy in general see Desmond Ball, *Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Working Paper No. 270, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1993; Gérard Chaliand, 'Warfare and Strategic Cultures in History', in Gérard

In contrast, the idea of a way of warfighting is more restrictive in scope and is usually concerned with the operational aspects of military strategy—in other words, it concentrates on military practice or how to fight wars. For this reason, the idea of a way of warfighting is probably best viewed as a subset of strategic culture.²⁴ The notion of a way of warfighting as a reflection of the values of a broader strategic culture is well illustrated by the 1993 edition of the United States Army's FM 100-5, *Operations*. In a section describing 'The American Way of War', the manual states:

The [American] people expect the military to accomplish its missions in compliance with national values. The American people expect decisive victory and abhor unnecessary casualties. They prefer quick resolution of conflicts . . . In the end, the

Chaliand (ed.), *The Art of War in World History: From Antiquity to the Nuclear Age*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1994, pp. 1–46; Alastair Ian Johnston, 'Thinking about Strategic Culture', *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 4, Spring 1995, pp. 32–64; Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996; Michael C. Desch, 'Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies', *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 141–70; Ken Booth and Russell Trood (eds), *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Macmillan, London, 1999; and Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, May 2002.

²⁴ For discussions of the operational issues of strategic choice see Johnston, 'Thinking about Strategic Culture', pp. 46–7; McInness, *Hot War, Cold War: The British Army's Way in Warfare, 1945–1995*, p. 2; and Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, Praeger, Westport, CT, 1996, p. 84.

people will pass judgment on the appropriateness of the conduct and use of military operations. Their values and expectations must be met.²⁵

When it comes to devising a way of warfighting, the values of a nation's political culture have to be translated from the idiom of theory into the idiom of strategy. For the purposes of this study, a way of warfighting is defined as the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment about how to devise the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving the political objective of war in accordance with national values and beliefs. Moving from the general to the specific, how has Australia's political culture impacted on the nation's strategic culture and approach to warfighting over the past century? In order to answer this question, we must first examine the components of Australia's political culture and then analyse their influence on the shape of Australia's strategic culture and way of war.

'The Fragment Theory': Australia's Political Culture

Australia's political culture is deeply Western in character and—to the extent that any theory can provide a basis for understanding political behaviour—is best understood in terms of American historian, Louis Hartz's 'fragment theory'.²⁶ According to Hartz, Australia is an historical offspring of European civilisation in general and of Britain in particular—a society transplanted into an alien environment

²⁵ US Army Field Manual FM 100-5, *Operations*, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, June 1993, pp. 1-2 – 1-3.

²⁶ Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, New York, 1964.

where cultural loyalties persisted long after the growth of local nationalism. As a colonial fragment, Australia bore the powerful cultural imprint of 18th- and 19th-century British values and beliefs, symbolised by what the patriarch of Federation, Sir Henry Parkes, called, in his famous 1889 Tenterfield speech, ‘the crimson thread of kinship’.²⁷

Not surprisingly, then, the main precepts of Australia’s political culture are drawn from the worlds of Anglo-Saxon government, philosophy and law. In 1901, when the modern Australian state was formed, it was based on a political culture that reflected five broad and overlapping characteristics: utilitarianism, egalitarianism, conformism, collectivism and materialism. Collectively, these five characteristics provided the foundation stones of the Australian Federation.²⁸ In order to understand the anatomy of Australia’s political culture, it is necessary to examine each of these components in turn.

The first characteristic of Australian politics—utilitarianism—is perhaps the most important component. The impact of utilitarianism on Australia can best be conveyed by a brief comparison with the founding of the United States. Both America and Australia began existence as Hartzian colonial fragments of Britain. However, whereas America’s early

²⁷ Quoted in Gavin Souter, *Lion and Kangaroo: The Initiation of Australia*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 1992 edn, p. 21.

²⁸ Ian McAllister, *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 21–9. See also Colin A. Hughes, ‘Political Culture’, in Henry Mayer and Helen Nelson (eds), *Australian Politics*, Cheshire Publishing, Melbourne, 1973, pp. 133–42; Geoff Stokes, ‘Political Culture: A Concept and its Ideologues’, in Graeme Duncan (ed.), *Critical Essays in Australian Politics*, Edward Arnold, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 5–27.

colonising fragment was imbued with John Locke's 17th- and 18th-century ideas of individual freedom, which led to a war of independence and a utopian view of nationalism, Australia's colonial fragment did not undergo any great revolutionary struggle to establish representative democracy. Instead, Australia was, in Richard Rosencranz's words, 'born modern', and in the course of the 19th century 'won reform without nationality [and] social change without unity'.²⁹

As a result, 19th-century Australian colonial politics were dominated by the utilitarian ideas of Jeremy Bentham, the reformism of the English Chartist movement and by a social view of nationalism. These features meant that the Great South Land developed as a New Britannia rather than as a New Jerusalem. Unlike its American counterpart, Australian nationalism has never been dominated by what has been called 'the rhetoric of moralism', in which a crusading libertarian zeal plays an important role in politics.³⁰ Australian nationalism was, and remains, social and conservative rather than ideological and utopian in character.³¹ The central idea of Benthamite utilitarianism is that a civilised society should

²⁹ Richard N. Rosencranz, 'The Radical Culture of Australia', in Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*, pp. 291–2.

³⁰ Anita M. Arms, 'Strategic Culture: The American Mind', in Thomas C. Gill (ed.), *Essays on Strategy IX*, National Defense University Press, Washington, DC, 1993, p. 7.

³¹ For the evolution of Australia's social nationalism see Robin Gollan, 'Nationalism and Politics in Australia before 1855', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 1955, pp. 38–48; and Michael Wesley, 'Nationalism and Globalization', in Leo Suryadinata (ed.), *Nationalism and Globalization: East and West*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2000, pp. 175–99.

reflect the greatest happiness of the highest number of people. In Bentham's own words, the fundamental political axiom was that 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the measure of right and wrong'.³² The operation of material interests for all, not abstract ideals or special rights for some, is at the core of utilitarian political philosophy. Because there was no great struggle in Australia to establish democracy, political effort in this country was directed towards devising and building institutions to protect and equalise the concept of citizenship.³³

Those that triumphed in Australian politics by 1901—such as Edmund Barton, George Reid and Alfred Deakin—were Benthamites, and they made utilitarianism the dominant political ideology of 20th-century Australia. This philosophical consensus meant that the Australian national style of politics became pragmatic and instrumental, and was centred around social economics, emphasising the requirements of material prosperity, harmony, fairness and equality. As Ian McAllister has noted, 'to the extent that Australia has any identifiable political character, it is based on utilitarianism and a belief in common purpose, uniformity and an ultimate social good'.³⁴

³² Cited in Wilfrid Harrison, *Conflict and Compromise: History of British Political Thought, 1593–1900*, The Free Press, New York, 1965, p. 145.

³³ Rosencranz, 'The Radical Culture of Australia', p. 289; McAllister, *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*, pp. 22–3; Geoff Stokes, 'Australian Political Thought: Editorial Introduction', in Geoff Stokes (ed.), *Australian Political Ideas*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1994, p. 6.

³⁴ McAllister, *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*, p. 23.

Through utilitarianism, the Australian political system was designed to pursue social cohesion. Australian political theory not only embraced the value of practice, but concerned itself largely with pragmatism and ‘ideas embedded in practices’ such as parliamentary democracy, civic cooperation, social justice and equality.³⁵ Reflecting on the existence of an Australian ‘national style’, the political scientist, Hugh Collins, has identified utilitarianism as being at the heart of Australia’s political culture:

If we have a national style, I judge it to be that of a common-sense pragmatism. Our inventiveness lies in practical adjustment to circumstance rather than in radical innovation; we are better at improvising workable schemes than at devising grand designs. A sceptical attitude towards political ideals, an instrumental view of the state in domestic politics, a clear sense of who are our friends and enemies in international politics: these, I think, are the direct and relatively simple ways in which we are accustomed to seeing ourselves and the world alike.³⁶

Doctrinaire beliefs and ideological radicalism in Australia have usually been confined to the fringes of politics. Historically, mainstream political thought has developed in response to, and as a crystallisation of, political practice.³⁷

³⁵ Peter Loveday, ‘Australian Political Thought’, in Richard Lucy (ed.), *The Pieces of Politics*, 3rd edn, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1983, p. 26.

³⁶ Hugh Collins, ‘Theme Paper’, in A. C. Milner and Trevor Wilson (eds), *Australian Diplomacy: Challenges and Options for the Department of Foreign Affairs*, Occasional Paper No. 5, Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 1986, p. 6.

³⁷ Gregory Melleuish and Geoff Stokes, ‘Australian Political Thought’, in Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton (eds), *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997, p. 119.

The second characteristic of Australian political culture—that of egalitarianism, with its ethos of mateship and ‘fair go’—is closely related to the idea of utilitarianism. The notion of egalitarianism stems from both the need to cooperate in a harsh frontier environment and the intrinsic social character of Australian nationalism. Unlike America, Australia has historically always given priority to the needs of social and economic equality. In terms of ethical principles, the ideals of social harmony and the common good have tended to rank more highly as Australian political objectives than the ideal of individual self-expression, as enshrined in the American Bill of Rights.³⁸ One consequence of egalitarianism is that Australian political ideas and institutions tend to reflect a strongly legalistic frame of mind, as evidenced by compulsory voting and the use of methods of industrial arbitration and conciliation.³⁹

The third feature of Australian political culture—conformism—can be traced to the fact that the harsh squatter frontier did not favour individual initiative. One example of the stark contrast between the 19th-century American and Australian frontier experiences is instructive. Between 1803 and 1805, Meriwether Lewis and Lewis Clark traversed America from east to west, discovered a fertile interior and returned to proclaim America’s Manifest Destiny. In 1860–61, Robert O’ Hara Burke and William Wills crossed Australia from south to north but, on their return journey from the Gulf of Carpentaria, both men perished in a vast and infertile interior. Thus, unlike the American pioneer who could always strike out for the fertile

³⁸ Sir Frederic W. Eggleston, ‘The Australian Nation’, in George Caiger (ed.), *The Australian Way of Life*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1953, p. 12.

³⁹ Loveday, ‘Australian Political Thought’, pp. 5–30.

West, the Australian pioneer was confronted by a frontier where physical existence itself was threatened.⁴⁰

The Australian bush came to consist of scattered outback communities of free selectors and pastoral workers. The isolation and harshness of the pastoral frontier and its lack of resources placed a premium on social cooperation, or what Rosencranz calls a 'conformitarian pattern'.⁴¹ As Russel Ward points out in his celebrated 1958 study of national character, *The Australian Legend*, the typical Australian frontiersman was not a small, individualist farmer tilling his own soil with the help of family and occasional hired hands. Instead, he was generally a wage-worker employed by larger graziers or pastoral companies, and his interests were best secured by communal endeavour rather than by individual enterprise.⁴² Accordingly, in 19th-century Australia, there was a powerful emphasis on conformity of Anglo-Celtic ethnic background and on unified belief. Conformity was regulated by means of selective immigration and the White Australia policy. The identity and survival of the scattered Australian settler communities was guaranteed by conforming to a set of shared cultural values as Deakin's 'independent Australian Britons'.⁴³ In this manner, conformism ensured that the parallel values of utilitarianism and egalitarianism could be transmitted within a British cultural framework.

⁴⁰ McAllister, *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*, pp. 26–9.

⁴¹ Rosencranz, 'The Radical Culture of Australia', p. 311.

⁴² Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995 edn, pp. 243–4.

⁴³ W. K. Hancock, *Australia*, Ernest Benn, London, 1930, p. 39.

Closely connected to conformism is the notion of collectivism in Australian political culture. The spirit of a ‘levelling, egalitarian collectivism whose sum was comprised in the concept of mateship’ permeates Ward’s *The Australian Legend*.⁴⁴ Again, this feature of Australian political culture is well illustrated by a comparison with conditions in the United States. An American observer of Australia wrote that, while American individualism was the result of a ‘small man’s frontier’, ‘it is not fanciful to suggest that Australia owes much of its collectivism to the fact that its frontier was hospitable to the large man instead’.⁴⁵

Collectivism implies group action and, in the Australian context, is intimately linked to the role of the state.⁴⁶ In Australia, unlike America, the state, not the individual settler, was the creator of civil society. Government was regarded as the administrative agent of the electorate—the facilitator rather than the enemy of individual freedom and economic equality.⁴⁷ Again, unlike America, in Australia individualism was not identified with a doctrine of limited government. As a result, state paternalism—that which the

⁴⁴ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, pp. 29–31; 117–20; 19–70; 225–9.

⁴⁵ Carter Goodrich, ‘The Australian and American Labor Movements’, *The Economic Record*, November 1928, pp. 206–7.

⁴⁶ McAllister, *Political Behaviour: Citizens, Parties and Elites in Australia*, p. 26; Don Aitkin, ‘Australian Political Culture’, *Australian Cultural History*, no. 5, 1985, pp. 5–11.

⁴⁷ Sol Encel, ‘The Concept of the State in Australian Politics’, in Colin Hughes (ed.), *Readings in Australian Government*, St Lucia Press, Brisbane, 1968, p. 45; and Gregory Melleuish, ‘Australian Individualism and Australian Liberty’, in Livio Dobrez (ed.), *Identifying Australia in Postmodern Times*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1994, pp. 151–64.

French writer, Albert Métin, described in 1901 as Australia's *le socialisme sans doctrines* (socialism without doctrines)—came to be regarded as a useful means of achieving socioeconomic goals for the benefit of all. Métin observed that 'Australasia has not contributed much to social philosophy, but she has gone infinitely further than any other country in the practical field'.⁴⁸

As Australia's greatest political historian, Sir Keith Hancock, put it famously in 1930: 'Australian democracy has come to look upon the state as a vast public utility, whose duty it is to provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number'.⁴⁹ Thus, in Australia, protectionism triumphed over free trade, social welfare over private charity, and the regulation of working conditions and wages over an unregulated form of market capitalism. In short, Australian democracy was based on the embrace, not the rejection, of the power of the state. This position was well described by W. A. Holman, later Labor premier of New South Wales, who observed in 1905:

We regard the State not as some malign power hostile and foreign to ourselves, outside our control and no part of our organised existence . . . We recognise in the Government merely a committee to which is delegated the powers of the community.⁵⁰

Finally, there is materialism as a characteristic of Australian political culture. Materialism is perhaps a natural consequence of a political culture firmly based on utilitarian values.

⁴⁸ Albert Métin, *Socialism Without Doctrines*, trans. W. Wood, Alternative Publishing Cooperative, Sydney, 1977, p. 55.

⁴⁹ Hancock, *Australia*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Cited in Sol Encel, 'Politicians', in Richard Nile (ed.), *Australian Civilisation*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 145.

Australian political debate, past and present, has been firmly centred on economics and the administration of prosperity for as many citizens as possible. For critics, materialism—as reflected by the general anti-intellectualism of Australian public life and the alleged lack of ideas of a nation defined by suburbia—is a matter of despair. To quote the politician and writer Frederick Eggleston:

[Alexis] de Tocqueville remarked of Americans that they were much attached to general ideas. This is emphatically untrue of the Australian. He has no Bill of Rights; he takes them for granted; and they are never queried. Jefferson's Declaration of Independence would move him less than the Gettysburg Address of Lincoln.⁵¹

For some critics, the Australian embrace of materialism has been evidence of a political culture without intellect or ideals. Hence, Patrick White could write in 1958 of 'the Great Australian Emptiness, in which the mind is the least of all possessions'. For White, in Australia, the rich man was the important man, while journalists and schoolmasters ruled whatever pretensions existed towards intellectual debate. Similarly, the historian and writer, Robert Hughes, has asserted that 'there is no tradition of intellect in Australia. There are only intelligent men'.⁵²

By 1901 all of these elements of political culture—utilitarianism, egalitarianism, conformism, collectivism and materialism—were reflected in the great Australian Settlement that accompanied Federation. As the political writer, Paul Kelly,

⁵¹ Eggleston, 'The Australian Nation', p. 12.

⁵² Brian Head, 'Introduction: Intellectuals in Australian Society', in Brian Head and James Walter (eds), *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 14.

has noted in his seminal 1992 work, *The End of Certainty*, the Settlement of 1901, fashioned by the founding fathers of modern Australia—Barton, Deakin and Reid—came to be based on five great interconnected pillars of public policy. The first three pillars were socioeconomic in character and were designed to bring prosperity based on social justice. They were state paternalism, industry protection and wage arbitration.⁵³

The fourth and fifth pillars—the philosophy of White Australia and the ideology of imperial benevolence—were sociopolitical in nature and reinforced the first three domestic foundation pillars. White Australia buttressed the social nature of Australian nationalism by supplying a unifying philosophy that underpinned Australia's development for well over half a century. For its part, imperial benevolence permitted the Australian political system to exploit its cultural links in order to seek military security first as part of the British Empire and later in the fold of the Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) alliance.⁵⁴ In Kelly's words,

Australia was founded on faith in government authority; belief in egalitarianism; a method of judicial determination in centralised wage fixation; protection of its industry and its jobs; dependence on a great power (first Britain, then America), for its security and finance; and above all hostility to its geographical location . . . Its bedrock ideology was protection; its solution a Fortress Australia, guaranteed as part of an impregnable Empire spanning the globe.⁵⁵

⁵³ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992, pp. 1–16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* See also Francis Castles, *Australian Public Policy and Economic Vulnerability: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, pp. 91–2.

⁵⁵ Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, p. 2.

Fortress Australia: Australia's Strategic Culture

Having sketched an outline of the main characteristics of Australia's political system, what connections can one make between Australian political culture and its strategic culture? Just as Australian political culture is deeply Western in character, so too does Australian strategic culture reflect variations on Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-American ideas about the use of force by liberal democratic societies. In simple terms, for much of the 20th century, Australian strategic culture operated to protect the domestic pillars of the great 1901 Settlement against any potential threats that might emerge from the Asia-Pacific region—a region in which Australia had no natural allies.

There have been four main features of Australian strategic culture that have conditioned Australia's way of war over the first three quarters of the 20th century. The first three features have been the reality of liminal geopolitical status, the triumph of a continental philosophy over island consciousness and the irrelevance of Australian strategic theory to military practice. A fourth feature of Australian strategic culture has been the tendency to fuse statecraft with strategy in order to defend values in times of war or prolonged security crisis.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Discussion of Australia's strategic culture remains an underdeveloped field of scholarship. For insights see Neville Meaney, *Fears and Phobias: E. L. Piessé and the Problem of Japan, 1909–39*, National Library of Australia Papers Series No. 1, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1996; Graeme Cheeseman, 'Australia: The White Experience of Fear and Dependence', in Ken Booth and Russell Trood (eds), *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Macmillan, London, 1999, pp. 273–98; Thomas-Durell Young, *Australia's Security and Defense Posture:*

Some scholars might argue that the strictures of political economy in the form of a persistent tendency to seek ‘defence on the cheap’ should be regarded as a feature of Australian strategic culture. As the leading Australian military historian, Jeffrey Grey, has noted, throughout this country’s military history, ‘the primacy of the Treasury in determining force structure and equipment acquisition policy recurs again and again, as does the unwillingness of governments to think seriously about national interests in strategic as well as economic terms’.⁵⁷ However, the neglect by treasuries and a corresponding indifference by governments in devising strategy in peacetime are characteristics of most English-speaking liberal democracies. In this respect, Australia’s experience of the political economy of defence is not unique and does not provide any ideological insights into the country’s strategic culture.⁵⁸

Implications for Affecting Greater Cooperation, Working Paper, Japan Information Access Project, Washington, DC, July 2000, pp. 1–8; and Michael Evans, ‘Strategic Culture and the Australian Way of War: Perspectives’, in David Stevens and John Reeve (eds), *Southern Trident: Strategy, History and the Rise of Australian Naval Power*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001, pp. 83–96.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 3. For an illuminating case study of the economic dimension of security see David Lee, *The Political Economy of Australia’s Postwar Foreign and Defence Policy*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995.

⁵⁸ See for example David French, *The British Way in Warfare, 1688–2000*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1990—a study that is distinguished by the author’s emphasis on political economy.

Identity and Intersection: The Reality of Liminal Geopolitical Status

If one dominant feature characterises Australia's strategic culture from 1901 until the mid-1960s, it is the clash between Asian geography and European history. As T. B. Millar has observed, few societies have been shaped as dramatically by the contrast and contest between geography and history as Australia.⁵⁹ The paradox of geographical proximity to, but cultural distance from, Asia and of geographical distance from, but cultural intimacy with, the Anglo-Saxon heartlands has been at the centre of Australia's modern security dilemma. In July 1922, the Minister for Defence, George Pearce, summed up the challenge:

We are of European race. Our fathers came from Europe; we have grown up to think as Europeans, and our interests have been centred in that group of nations from which our stock has come. Whilst racially we are European, geographically we are Asiatic. Our own special immediate Australian interests are more nearly concerned with what is happening in China and Japan than . . . in Belgium, Holland, Poland, or other countries farther removed.⁶⁰

Similarly, in March 1950, Percy Spender, the Minister for External Affairs, noted that Australia was, through its location, a Pacific power and 'even though our cultural ties have been and will remain preponderantly with Europe, there is nothing we can do about our geographical position'.⁶¹

⁵⁹ T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations since 1788*, 2nd edn, Maxwell Macmillan, Sydney, 1991, p. 374.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Frank Welsh, *Great Southern Land: A New History of Australia*, Allen Lane, London, 2004, p. 408.

⁶¹ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 26, 9 March 1950, pp. 621–36.

The Janus-faced dilemma between Australia's history and geography has sometimes been portrayed by scholars in the language of danger, dread and even paranoia.⁶² Yet, while these elements have been present, it is far more useful to conceive of Australia in terms of being a liminal or 'threshold' state, as Richard A. Higgott and Kim Richard Nossal have suggested. In international-relations theory, the concept of liminality refers to a country that has an 'in-between location' and is suspended between two different worlds in which there is access to both, but in which permanence in either appears to be elusive.⁶³

It is important not to confuse the liminal or 'threshold' concept with the notion of Australia as a 'torn country'—a notion found in Samuel P. Huntington's influential 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*.⁶⁴ According to Huntington, 'a torn country is one that has a single predominant culture which places it in one civilization but its

⁶² Cheeseman, 'Australia: The White Experience of Fear and Dependence', pp. 273–98. See also Lachlan Strahan, 'The Dread Frontier in Australia's Defence Thinking', in Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce (eds), *Discourses of Danger and Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking After the Cold War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, pp. 150–76; and David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850–1939*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1999.

⁶³ See Richard A. Higgott and Kim Richard Nossal, 'The International Politics of Liminality: Relocating Australia in the Asia-Pacific', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, no. 2, vol. 32, 1997, pp. 169–85.

⁶⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996.

leaders want to shift it to another civilization'.⁶⁵ A torn country is one in which identity is difficult to define. Huntington argues that Australia is a torn country because of a widespread belief among elements of its political elite that the economics of trade with Asia will override culture in shaping national destiny. Huntington's view lacks historical perspective on Australian political culture and was largely influenced by 'the Asianisation of Australia' debate, which was popular among some journalists and politicians in the first half of the 1990s. Huntington's lack of historical perspective on Australia led him to believe that the country was in the process of being delinked from the West in favour of becoming part of Asia.⁶⁶ He suggested that such an approach was doomed to failure, stating:

If that choice [delinking from the West] is pursued . . . it will not eliminate Australia's Western heritage, and 'the lucky country' will be a permanently torn country, both the 'branch office of empire', which [Prime Minister] Paul Keating decried, and the 'new white trash of Asia', which [Singaporean] Lee Kuan Yew contemptuously termed it.⁶⁷

Insofar as it is applied to Australia, the concept of a torn country is misleading because it confuses the shifting ideas of party politics and transient media commentary with long-term trends in cultural change. Australia is not a torn country. The basic foundations of its Anglo-Celtic civilisation are not seriously contested, and there is no widespread desire among the electorate to abandon Western identity and cultural norms

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

in favour of an Asian identity.⁶⁸ Contrary to Huntington's view, the Keating Government never sought acceptance in the Asia-Pacific at the price of Australia's identity and values. As Keating pointed out in December 1993:

Claims that the Government is trying to turn Australia into an 'Asian country' are based on a misunderstanding . . . Australia is not and never can be an 'Asian nation' any more than we can—or want to be—European or North American or African. We can only be Australian, and can only relate to our friends and neighbours *as* Australians.⁶⁹

Moreover, in his 2000 memoir on his government's foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific, Keating specifically rejected Huntington's idea of Australia as being a 'torn country' perched 'on the edge of a cultural San Andreas fault'.⁷⁰ For the above reasons, the rather restricted notion of liminality, with its 'in-between' connotation, is a more appropriate analytical term to employ than the emotive idea of a culturally torn country. Applied to Australia, the idea of liminality provides a useful analytical tool to describe the nation's enduring geopolitical dilemma. Like Turkey, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Muslim-majority state, Australia is Asia's 'European-majority state'. Both Turkey and Australia are

⁶⁸ Paul Kelly, 'The Myth of Australia as a Torn Country', in *id.*, *Paradise Divided: The Changes, the Challenges, the Choices for Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2000, pp. 118–21; and D. A. Low, 'Australia in the Eastern Hemisphere', *Australian Studies*, no. 4, November 1990, pp. 60–76.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Mark Ryan (ed.), *Advancing Australia: The Speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister*, Big Picture Publications, Sydney, 1995, p. 69. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁰ Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2000, pp. 20–1.

shaped by the politics of liminal status, being simultaneously both ‘odd-man in’ and ‘odd-man out’ with their immediate geographical regions.⁷¹ Australia’s ‘natural’ geostrategic environments are regional: South-East Asia and the South Pacific; yet, for reasons of politics and cultural heritage, its major strategic allies since 1901 have been the United Kingdom and the United States, both of which have been, or are, global powers.

The significance of liminality in Australia’s strategic culture is that it has created a permanent oscillation between the imperatives of a defence policy defined by Eastern strategic geography on the one hand and by Western historical values on the other hand. The tension has been between defending territory and securing interests, between adopting a doctrine of ‘continental defence’ and embracing that of ‘forward defence’. Throughout its history, Australia has faced the dilemma of employing limited human and economic resources in either the protection of territory or the use of offshore forces in order to help preserve a favourable global balance of power. In a 1982 article, former Secretary for Defence, Sir Arthur Tange, expressed an implicit recognition of Australia’s liminal status:

⁷¹ Turkey’s geopolitical position is well analysed by Alan O. Makovsky, ‘Turkey’, in Robert Chase, Emily Hill and Paul Kennedy (eds), *The Pivotal States: A New Framework for US Policy in the Developing World*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1999, pp. 88–119; and Ian O. Lesser, ‘Beyond “Bridge or Barrier”’: Turkey’s Evolving Security Relations with the West’, in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayaei (eds), *Turkey’s New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, DC, 2000, pp. 203–21.

Preparation to defend the homeland is almost invariably the main thrust of the defence policies of countries of Australia's size and international ambitions. But geography, the history of our defence associations, and not a little political opportunism, have made it difficult for us to reconcile home defence with our international role and prepare the services accordingly.⁷²

Tange went on to note that Australia's defence policy required elements of both continental and forward defence. He warned, however, that such a mixed prescription was notable for its uncertainty and imprecision, while some large resource commitments might have to be made, 'subject to the hazard of being irrelevant to policy'.⁷³

Some scholars have suggested that Australia should try to resolve its liminal position by defining itself not as an Asian power but as an Asia-Pacific country.⁷⁴ By positing itself as a sub-region of the Asia-Pacific, Australia would be able to identify as part of the same great region as the United States, its main ally, as well as aligning itself more closely to the South Pacific. From this perspective, Australia should seek to be an asset to Asia-Pacific stability—a 'secure south' for East Asia and a 'secure west' for the South Pacific, with the ANZUS alliance acting as the glue for an overarching US

⁷² Sir Arthur Tange, 'Defence and Foreign Policies—Some Interactions', *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 53, no. 1, January 1982, p. 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ See Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, pp. 153–4; and Peter Edwards, 'Conclusion', in Peter Edwards and David Goldsworthy (eds), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia*, vol. 2, 1970s to 2000, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, pp. 325–30.

strategic engagement in the region.⁷⁵ One leading diplomatic historian has suggested that Australia's political leaders might usefully extend Sir Edmund Barton's famous description of Federation in 1901 as 'a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation' into a new 21st-century formula of 'a nation for a region and a region for a nation'.⁷⁶

A transformation towards a greater Asia-Pacific community may occur in the course of the 21st century, and, while it may alleviate the problems of Australia's geopolitical liminality, it is unlikely to eliminate them. Australia's liminal status is a permanent condition that cannot be resolved; it can only be managed by carefully balancing a static geographic position with a nimble and activist diplomacy.⁷⁷ The strategic challenge of maintaining a balance between geographical position and historical legacy has not changed in nearly a century. In 1914, Prime Minister Joseph Cook described preserving the balance as 'the art and the problem of highest statesmanship'.⁷⁸ Similarly, at the beginning of the 21st century, the current Prime Minister, John Howard, has observed that the acid test of Australian statesmanship remains in not having to make a choice between geography and history. He told an Indonesian audience in September 1996:

⁷⁵ For an outline of these ideas see Fred Brenchley, 'The Howard Doctrine', *Bulletin*, 28 September 1999, pp. 22–5.

⁷⁶ Edwards, 'Conclusion', p. 329.

⁷⁷ Higgott and Nossal, 'The International Politics of Liminality: Relocating Australia in the Asia-Pacific', pp. 169–85.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Neville Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–14*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, p. 265.

I do not believe that Australia faces a choice between our history and our geography—between our links with European and North American societies on the one hand and those with the nations of Asia on the other . . . Neither do I see Australia as a bridge between Asia and the West as is sometimes suggested.⁷⁹

For the current Prime Minister, Australia occupies a ‘unique cultural, historical and geographical intersection’ whose management is the proper task of statecraft.⁸⁰ Referring to Australia’s role in bringing human rights and independence to East Timor, Howard suggested that Australia had succeeded because of ‘the special characteristics we have; because we occupy that special place—we are a European, Western civilisation with strong links with North America, but here we are in Asia’.⁸¹ These notions of Australia occupying an ‘intersection’ and a ‘special place’ represent an implicit acceptance of the reality of the country’s liminal geopolitical status.

Unlike other members of the former British Empire, such as Canada in North America or South Africa in sub-Saharan Africa, Australia is unlikely to be able to join a larger political or regional economic union in the future. The country must therefore pursue its national interest as a unique Western state seeking cooperation in South-East Asia and the South Pacific

⁷⁹ Quoted in Owen E. Hughes, *Australian Politics*, 3rd edn, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1998, p. 483.

⁸⁰ ‘Interview with John Howard’, in Paul Kelly, *100 Years: The Australian Story*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001, pp. 249–50. See also James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004, ch. 6.

⁸¹ Brenchley, ‘The Howard Doctrine’, p. 24.

on such 21st-century problems as weapons proliferation, transnational terrorism and state failure.⁸² Thus, whether or not one defines the policy challenge as preserving the balance between geography and history or as managing a special intersection between culture, history and geography, it remains a task without a permanent solution. As such, it is worthy of the talents of an Australian Bismarck or Kissinger and, because Australia has seldom produced such towering figures, policy has often oscillated between the defence of geography on the one hand and the defence of interests on the other hand.

Barton's Formula: The Triumph of Continental Awareness over Island Consciousness

In 1964, the leading geographer, Saul B. Cohen, described Australia as a classic 'trade-dependent maritime state' whose interests were tied to a larger offshore Asian and Oceanic geostrategic region.⁸³ Yet Australian strategic culture is dominated by a powerful sense of landscape in which the country is seen first and foremost as a continent and not as an island. Some historians believe that Australia's lack of a maritime tradition is a missing element in Australia's sense of its national history.⁸⁴ As the Western Australian maritime historian, Frank Broeze, has lamented, Australians are a

⁸² Paul Kelly, 'Punching Above Our Weight', *Policy*, vol. 20, no. 2, Winter 2004, pp. 29–34.

⁸³ Quoted in Dennis Rumley, *The Geopolitics of Australia's Regional Relations*, Kluwer Academic Publications, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 1999, p. 17.

⁸⁴ John Bach, *A Maritime History of Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Sydney, 1976, p. 5.

coastal people with a continental outlook, an island–nation with an inward focus.⁸⁵

The dominance of continental awareness over island consciousness was evident from the moment Edmund Barton described the 1901 Federation as representing ‘a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation’. Indeed, in many respects, much of Australia’s defence policy in the 20th century was based on a strategic interpretation of Barton’s formula. Thus, while the ANZAC sacrifice on the beaches of Gallipoli in 1915—the greatest amphibious operation of World War I—dominates Australia’s conception of modern nationhood, neither Gallipoli nor a genuine maritime-consciousness have ever dominated the mainstream of Australian strategic thought.⁸⁶

Even the grim experience of a maritime campaign against Japan for national survival in the South-West Pacific during World War II has not proven a lasting influence on Australian strategic culture. The amphibious operations of the 7th and 9th Divisions of the 2nd AIF between 1943 and 1945 in the South-

⁸⁵ Frank Broeze, ‘Maritime Australia: Integrating the Sea into Our National History’, *Maritime Studies*, May–June 1995, pp. 9–16 and *Island–Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 1–9.

⁸⁶ Michael Evans, ‘Unarmed Prophets: Amphibious Warfare in Australian Military Thought’, *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, January–March 1999, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 10–19 and ‘Strategic Culture and the Australian Way of Warfare: Perspectives’, pp. 83–98. See also Russell Parkin, *A Capability of First Resort: Amphibious Operations and Australian Defence Policy, 1901–2001*, Working Paper No. 117, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, May 2002, pp. 23–32.

West Pacific appear to be of less significance in the Australian military pantheon. Operations at Salamaua, Lae and Buna in New Guinea and at Brunei, Tarakan, Labuan and Balikpapan in Borneo are not imprinted in the Australian strategic psyche. Rather, these actions have tended to be overshadowed by what has been described as the ‘continental ethos’ of the Australian Army, drawn from the 1st AIF’s experience of World War I battles on the Western Front such as Pozières, Bullecourt, Hamel and Amiens.⁸⁷

Australia’s strategic culture reflects dominant themes of continental awareness, not only from political culture but also from the nation’s literature and art. The theme of landscape dominates 20th-century Australian literature from the popular inter-war outback novels of Ion L. Idriess to the internationally respected works of Patrick White. Collectively, Idriess’s outback books, notably *Flynn of the Inland*, had sold three million copies by the end of the 1970s. Nobel laureate White’s acclaimed 1957 novel, *Voss*, was based on the career of the outback explorer Ludwig Leichardt. In terms of painting, great artists such as Arthur Streeton and Sidney Nolan have been concerned with the bush. Streeton, an original member of the famous Heidelberg School, created a romantic vision of a sunlit pastoral landscape, while Nolan’s famous paintings of Ned Kelly capture the interior world of the bushranger, not the

⁸⁷ Stewart Woodman and David Horner, ‘Land Forces in the Defence of Australia’, in David Horner (ed.), *Reshaping the Australian Army: Challenges for the 1990s*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 77, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1991, pp. 20; 24.

seafarer.⁸⁸ In the words of Ian Mudie, it is the outback, not the ocean, that grips the minds of Australians ‘like heart and blood, from heat to mist’.⁸⁹

Not surprisingly, then, the powerful sense of continental awareness in Australian national culture has infused military strategy. A preoccupation with landscape has ensured that, over the past century, with the exception of the period between the early 1950s and the mid-1960s—a period of prolonged security crisis—Australia has mainly sought to pursue its peacetime defence policy based around the safety of its physical geography.⁹⁰ Australia’s antipathy towards a broader maritime approach to strategy has not gone unnoticed in strategic circles. In 1930, Frederick Eggleston, one of the pioneers of modern Australian strategic analysis, observed: ‘we do not have that sense of the sea and our surroundings which is generally developed in an island people’.⁹¹

In his important 1965 study of Australian defence, the scholar, T. B. Millar, was moved to remind his readers that ‘the first point to remember about the Australian island–continent is not

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* For the influence of Idriess and White see Beverley Eley, *Ion Idriess*, Imprint Books, Sydney, 1995; and Brian Kiernan, ‘The Novels of Patrick White’, in Geoffrey Dutton (ed.), *The Literature of Australia*, Penguin Books Australia, Melbourne, 1964, pp. 461–84.

⁸⁹ Quoted by Robin Winks, *The Myth of the American Frontier: Its Relevance to America, Canada and Australia*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1971, p. 34.

⁹⁰ See Michael Evans, *From Deakin to Dibb: The Army and the Making of Australian Strategy in the 20th Century*, Working Paper No. 113, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, June 2001.

⁹¹ Warren G. Osmond, *Frederick Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p. 139.

that it is a continent but that it is an island'.⁹² In 1977, yet another defence analyst, B. N. Primrose, observed that one of the greatest intellectual weaknesses in Australia's perception of strategy was the absence of a maritime tradition.⁹³ It is possible that part of the intellectual justification for adopting a strategic policy emphasising continental defence in the 1980s may have been based on an assumption that a maritime tradition was alien to the Australian strategic experience. For example, in November 1987, Kim Beazley, then Minister for Defence, stated: 'Australia is not a maritime nation and its people do not sustain much of an interest in Australian maritime strategy'.⁹⁴

When Australia has considered the strategic role of the sea, it has tended to be drawn towards a doctrine of naval power. In this respect, it is important to note that naval and maritime strategy differ markedly in their essentials. Naval strategy concerns the employment of naval forces to a specific end. In contrast, 'maritime strategy has a much broader scope: the combined use of all arms—Army, Navy and Air Forces—in seaborne operations'.⁹⁵ In 20th-century Australian strategy, much of what passed for maritime doctrine has exhibited what

⁹² T. B. Millar, *Australia's Defence*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965, p. 30.

⁹³ B. N. Primrose, 'Insurance, Deterrence, Faith: The Search for an Integrated Concept of Defence', *Australian Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1977, p. 36.

⁹⁴ Kim C. Beazley, 'The Development of Australian Maritime Strategy', in Commonwealth of Australia, *Selected Speeches 1985–1989 by the Hon Kim C. Beazley, MP, Minister for Defence*, Directorate of Departmental Publications, Canberra, 1989, p. 184.

⁹⁵ Clark G. Reynolds, 'Douglas MacArthur as Maritime Strategist', in *id.*, *History and the Sea: Essays on Maritime Strategies*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 1989, p. 167.

the naval writer, Alan Robertson, has described as ‘a continentalist’s idea of maritime strategy’. This is an intellectual approach that owes more to a reading of the continental navalism described by Theodore Ropp than to the joint forces strategy outlined by the doyen of maritime strategists, Sir Julian Corbett.⁹⁶ Echoing Robertson, former naval commodore, Lee Cordner, has suggested that bastion defence has traditionally dominated Australian military strategy. As a result, Australia’s approach to the strategic use of the sea has, conceptually, been concerned with the narrow defence of a land perimeter and has more in common with the ‘continental outlooks’ of Russia and China than with the broader tradition of Anglo-American maritime strategy.⁹⁷ In Australian strategic culture, then, the sea has consistently been viewed as a defensive moat and not as a maritime manoeuvre space—a ‘sea–air gap’ that separates the continental landmass from the South-East Asian archipelagos.

Such a strategic approach ignores the reality of a maritime environment in which the northern archipelagos comprise a large number of islands and essentially form what is a ‘sea–air–land

⁹⁶ Alan Robertson, *Centre of the Ocean World: Australia and Maritime Strategy*, Seaview Press, Adelaide, 2001, p. 52; Theodore Ropp, ‘Continental Doctrines of Sea Power’, in Edward Mead Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1943, pp. 446–56; and Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1911, esp. pp. 13–16.

⁹⁷ Lee Cordner, ‘Australia’s Military Strategy’, *What’s Next?*, March 2004, p. 6. See also Commodore Cordner’s views in Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Maritime Strategy*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, June 2004, p. 48.

gap', which requires the use of joint military forces. Since the late 1990s, when Australia belatedly rediscovered the value of a maritime concept of strategy, its advocates have spent much of their energy struggling to escape from the straitjacket of a narrow conception of continental defence.⁹⁸ A recent parliamentary inquiry into Australian maritime strategy concluded that the committee was 'convinced that an effective maritime strategy [would] be the foundation of Australia's military strategy, and serve Australia well into the 21st century'.⁹⁹ However, it is an open question as to whether such a positive recommendation can overcome the long spell that continentalism has exercised over the Australian strategic psyche.

The Irrelevance of Strategic Theory to Australian Military Practice

Closely linked to liminal geopolitical status and a continental consciousness in Australian strategic culture is the irrelevance of strategic theory to Australian military practice. If Australia's political culture has been distinguished by pragmatism and by 'ideas embedded in practices', its strategic culture has often been distinguished by theories that are divorced from practices. In the 20th century, the dilemma caused by liminality and the influence of continentalism in Australia's strategic culture created a schism between the theoretical importance of

⁹⁸ See Michael Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, Working Paper No. 101, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 1998, pp. 8–17 and *Developing Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy: Lessons from the Ambon Disaster of 1942*, Study Paper No. 303, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, July 2000, pp. 69–90.

⁹⁹ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 71.

defending geography and the reality of warfighting practice in times of crisis.

While strategic doctrine should never be a fixed blueprint, it should provide at least some guidelines to likely military practice. Yet no-one can study Australian military history and not be struck by the fact that Australia's peacetime strategic culture has seldom matched the reality of its way of war. In terms of strategy, Australia has often come close to ignoring Immanuel Kant's famous injunction that theory must be motivationally realistic and applicable or else it becomes little more than an 'empty ideality of concepts'.¹⁰⁰ In Australian strategic history—again with the exception perhaps of the oft-maligned 'forward defence' era of the 1950s and 1960s where ideas matched practice—peacetime strategic theory has usually tended to be the exact opposite of military operational practice. Indeed, the disparity between theory and practice amounts almost to a form of strategic dissonance.¹⁰¹ If Geoffrey Blainey's tyranny of distance helped to shape Australian society for much of the 19th century, then a tyranny of dissonance has infused Australian strategy for long periods of the 20th century.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Immanuel Kant, 'On the Proverb: That May Be True in Theory but Is of No Practical Use', as quoted in Jeffrie G. Murphy, 'Kant on Theory and Practice', in Ian Shapiro and Judith Wagner DeCew (eds), *Theory and Practice*, New York University Press, New York, 1995, p. 53.

¹⁰¹ Evans, *From Deakin to Dibb: The Army and the Making of Australian Strategy in the 20th Century*, pp. 34–51.

¹⁰² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1968.

In peacetime, a vast continental geography has always suggested that the best strategy is one that mobilises the nation around Fortress Australia. In the 20th century, this approach gave Australia three great fortress strategies: the Federation era strategy of continental naval defence between 1901 and 1914; the Singapore bastion strategy of the 1920s and 1930s; and the Defence of Australia ‘sea–air gap’ strategy of the 1980s and 1990s. All of these strategies favoured naval and later air forces over land forces. Paradoxically, none of these strategies proved indicative of the reality of war or security crisis, while each in its time became a strategic orthodoxy that could only be altered by the lessons of military practice.¹⁰³

For instance, despite the emphasis on defence by sea power in Australian strategy between 1901 and 1914, Australia won its place at the Paris Peace talks of 1919 on the basis of 60 000 dead soldiers at Gallipoli, in Palestine and on the Western Front.¹⁰⁴ Similarly the theory of the inter-war Singapore naval strategy has been described as an orthodoxy that became a political slogan with a utility that ‘appeared to preclude the application of serious critical thought’. Again, it was land forces that carried the burden of Australia’s military effort in World War II.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ For an analysis of strategies to meet external threats see Alan Dupont, *Australia’s Threat Perceptions: A Search for Security*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 82, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1991.

¹⁰⁴ Evans, *From Deakin to Dibb: The Army and the Making of Australian Strategy in the 20th Century*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ John McCarthy, ‘Singapore and Australian Defence, 1921–1942’, *Australian Outlook*, vol. 25, no. 2, August 1971, p. 180. In World War II, Australia’s combat casualties amounted to 33 862, of which 21 558 were from the Army.

More recently, the sea–air gap strategy of the period from 1972 to the late 1990s became divorced from the realities of national security interests. In these years, operational deployments, dominated yet again by soldiers, multiplied beyond the confines of continental Australia. However, like the navalists of the first half of the 20th century, the Defence of Australia sea–air gap theorists became, as one writer has observed, the ‘gatekeepers of strategic doctrine’, tenaciously rejecting attempts at reform as ‘dangerous and misguided’ while denying the existence of a mismatch between strategy and operational practice.¹⁰⁶ As a result, operations in the service of political interests and national values—such as the Gulf War of 1991 and subsequent interventions in the 1990s in Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda—were declared to be marginal activities. Despite ideas being divorced from practices, the primary role of defending strategic geography through sea and air forces was considered by official strategists to be the *leitmotiv* of force structure.

The truth is that, in times of conflict and crisis—from the two World Wars through Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam to East Timor in the 20th century to Afghanistan, Iraq and the Solomons in the 21st century—the requirements of pragmatic statecraft have always demanded that Australia fight overseas. Moreover, despite a theoretical focus on air and sea forces, Australia’s practical commitment in times of war and crisis has usually involved a heavy dependence on troops for overseas service.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Alan Dupont, ‘Transformation or Stagnation: Rethinking Australia’s Defence’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 57, no. 1, April 2003, pp. 55–76.

¹⁰⁷ For discussion see Evans, *From Deakin to Dibb: The Army and the Making of Australian Strategy in the 20th Century*, pp. 34–51 and

In short, the defence of Australian national values and the upholding of political interests in order to help secure a favourable political balance of power have always taken precedence over an ideal defence built around immutable geography. The frequent irrelevance of strategic theory to military practice is a powerful reminder of how liminal status and a continental consciousness have combined to create divergent and dissonant forces in Australia's conception of its strategic culture.

Fusing Statecraft and Strategy in Times of War or Security Crisis

Because strategic theory has been such a poor guide to military practice, Australia has been most successful in managing the competing demands of its liminal geopolitical status in times of crisis, when it has sought carefully to integrate its statecraft with its strategy. Such an approach has frequently elevated interests above geography and represents the essence of a values-based approach to national security. Indeed, Australia is a good example of Edward Mead Earle's adage that 'diplomacy and strategy, political commitments and military power, are inseparable; unless this be recognized, foreign policy will be bankrupt'.¹⁰⁸ Earle's statement reflects the reality that the distinction between diplomacy and strategy is always a relative one since the resources of a nation's defence capacity are first and foremost an instrument of politics in the Clausewitzian sense. As scholars on international relations

'Strategic Culture and the Australian Way of Warfare: Perspectives', pp. 83–96.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Mead Earle (ed.), 'Introduction' in *id.*, *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, p. x.

such as Raymond Aron and Henry Kissinger have pointed out, diplomacy and strategy represent ‘complementary aspects of the single art of politics’. The two areas interact when policy-makers pursue a state’s national interest.¹⁰⁹

There are Australian variations on the views of Earle, Kissinger and Aron regarding the unity of diplomacy and strategy. For example, in 1950 Percy Spender made the organic link between the complementary aspects of foreign policy and defence policy explicit when he stated:

A nation’s foreign policy must be closely integrated with that of defence, for if the foreign policy that is followed proves incapable of achieving or maintaining peace, the departments of war must take over. Indeed, the military strength of a nation may largely condition the means employed by foreign policy in seeking to achieve its purpose.¹¹⁰

An even more emphatic statement was made in March 1951 by Sir Robert Menzies, who described the idea that defence policy could be viewed separately from foreign policy as a form of isolationism. He remarked that a conception of the defence of Australia that depended on ‘battalions and Martello Towers around our coasts’ was not only defeatist but fatal.¹¹¹ Menzies

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1962, p. 24; and Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979, p. 195.

¹¹⁰ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, vol. 206, 9 March 1950, p. 622.

¹¹¹ Quoted by Sir Percy Joske, *Sir Robert Menzies 1894–1978: A New Informal Memoir*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1978, p. 269.

went on to outline an integrated diplomatic–military vision of Australian security, stating:

We either commit ourselves with our great friends and allies to mutual action and reciprocal obligations or we do not. If we do not, then unless we are to put ourselves into a position of miserable dependency, we must attend to our own defence without calling on the aid of anybody else. If our defence is by this process to be our sole responsibility and if fighting occurs on our shores, it can only be because our natural outposts have been reduced and our allies defeated on the sea and in the air.¹¹²

In the late 1970s, echoing the views of Spender and Menzies, T. B. Millar and Alan Renouf argued that, in foreign policy, national survival was the basic national interest.¹¹³ In Renouf's words, 'the first objective of Australia's foreign policy should [always] be to preserve the country from attack and from the threat of attack'.¹¹⁴ It might be argued that the remarks of Spender, Menzies and Renouf were made during the Cold War—an unusually long era of bipolarity and ideological conflict that placed a premium on the role of security alliances in foreign policy. Yet the close linkage between Australian foreign and defence policies has been an intrinsic feature of Australia's quest for security since Federation.

For an island–continent such as Australia with a liminal geopolitical position, the interdependence of foreign policy with security and of diplomacy with defence has always been a matter of overarching purpose. A focus on unity has always

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations since 1788*, p. 24; and Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1979, ch. 1.

¹¹⁴ Renouf, *The Frightened Country*, p. 1.

transcended separate technique. That overarching unity of purpose has usually had at its core the creation of a favourable international environment to uphold Australian interests.¹¹⁵ Put simply, the fusion of diplomacy with defence has provided Australia with a supple means to overcome its liminal geopolitical dilemma through alliances based on expeditionary warfare in times of war or security crisis. From the Transvaal veldt in the early 20th century to the sands of Bagram at the beginning of the 21st century, the use of expeditionary warfare has become a metaphor of the remarkable strategic fusion between Australia's statecraft and strategy in the quest for national security.

The successful fusion of statecraft and strategy in Australian security practice has not gone unnoticed. In 1947 Frederick Eggleston observed, 'throughout the whole of the history of Australian foreign policy, we find the consistent formulation of a view of Australian interests by Australian experts within the framework of Imperial co-operation'.¹¹⁶ Similarly, the Western Australian historian, Fred Alexander, detected what he described as 'a widely prevalent, if curiously inverted form of traditional English foreign policy of limited liability in a new geographical setting'.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the uneasy relationship

¹¹⁵ Coral Bell, Hugh Collins and Ross Garnaut, 'Conclusion: The Nexus Between Economics, Politics and Strategy', in Paul Dibb (ed.), *Australia's External Relations in the 1980s: The Interaction of Economic, Political and Strategic Factors*, Croom Helm Australia, Canberra, 1983, pp. 206–19.

¹¹⁶ Sir Frederick Eggleston, 'Foreign Policy', in C. Hartley Grattan (ed.), *Australia*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947, p. 138.

¹¹⁷ Professor F. Alexander, 'The Australian People and the World', in Caiger, *The Australian Way of Life*, p. 144.

between the British Isles and Europe was occasionally employed by politicians to highlight Australia's uncomfortable geopolitical situation in the 'near north' of the Asia-Pacific. For example, in March 1946, the Minister for External Affairs, H. V. Evatt, stated that Australia 'stands to Asia geographically and politically, in something of the same relationship as the United Kingdom stands to Europe'.¹¹⁸

In Australia's case, 'limited liability' has required a skilful emphasis on diplomacy and the management of bilateral and alliance relationships in order that the country should not exhaust its human and financial resources on defence preparations. In the early 1970s, Brigadier F. P. Serong, perhaps the most important 20th-century Australian theorist of unconventional warfare, declared that a policy of limited liability combining diplomacy and defence was a key feature of Australian security. Serong noted that Australia's military impact—particularly in the second half of the 20th century—often tended to be applied on a minimalist basis. Any operations, wrote Serong, were, and should continue to be, 'essentially a military deployment in support of a diplomatic position—never the reverse'.¹¹⁹

The combination of statecraft with strategy, of diplomacy with alliance politics and offshore warfare, provided the principal means for Australia to counter 20th-century threats of German militarism, Japanese imperialism and Chinese communism. In all of these cases, Australia's interests were threatened by the

¹¹⁸ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 25, 13 March 1946, p. 200.

¹¹⁹ Brigadier F. P. Serong, 'An Australian View of Revolutionary War', *Conflict Studies*, no. 16, September 1971, p. 16.

possibility that the influence of Western liberal democracy in international politics would be displaced. As a result, Australian forces were employed outside national territory in order to uphold a global balance of power that favoured Australia's long-term development as a democratic state. It is likely that a similar diplomatic and strategic calculus will provide the principal method by which Australia, in conjunction with its allies and strategic partners, will prosecute the 21st-century war on terror against Islamo-fascism over the next decade.

The notion that safeguarding Australian security interests has traditionally required a fusion between foreign and defence policies should not be seen as a denial of the existence of discrete Australian foreign-policy traditions. As Owen Harries has argued, since the mid-20th century there have been three recognisable Australian foreign-policy traditions: the Menzian, the Evatt and the Spender–Casey or Keating traditions.¹²⁰ The Menzian tradition is one of power politics, and is a realist and interests-based tradition. It is an approach that has frequently been associated with ‘the conservative style of Australian foreign policy’, in which spokesmen for the Coalition parties ‘have constantly argued that a nation’s role in international affairs is basically determined by its military strength’.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Owen Harries, ‘Punching Above Our Weight’, Lecture Six, Boyer Lectures 2003, 21 December 2003, in Owen Harries, *Benign or Imperial?: Reflections on American Hegemony*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2004, pp. 78–83.

¹²¹ F. A. Mediansky, ‘The Conservative Style in Australian Foreign Policy’, *Australian Outlook*, vol. 28, no. 1, April 1974, p. 50; and Carl Bridge, ‘In the National Interest: Liberal Foreign Relations from Deakin to Howard’, in J. R. Nethercote (ed.), *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, Federation Press, Sydney, 2001, pp. 303–14.

The second approach—the Evatt tradition—is one of strong nationalism and liberal internationalism. This approach has sometimes been called ‘the Labor tradition in Australian foreign policy’ and is associated with a preference for the United Nations and multilateral diplomacy.¹²² Finally, there is the Spender–Casey–Keating tradition, with its strong focus on the importance of regional affairs to the national interest.¹²³ At various times over the course of the past sixty years, aspects of these foreign-policy traditions have waxed and waned or overlapped with one another. However, as a generalisation, it is true to say that, in times of war and security crisis, Australian governments—irrespective of their political hue—have always been willing to send military forces overseas in order to uphold national political interests.

Such an approach was true of John Curtin in waging the South-West Pacific campaign in World War II and of Menzies during the ‘forward defence’ era of the 1950s and 1960s. The same calculus was at work with both Bob Hawke and Paul Keating during the first Gulf War and the crisis in Somalia in 1991 and 1992–93 respectively; and of John Howard in the peace enforcement mission in East Timor in 1999, in the war in Afghanistan and during the second Gulf War between 2001 and 2003. Viewed in long-term perspective, the political

¹²² See the essays in David Lee and Christopher Waters, *Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Australian Foreign Policy*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997, esp. Gareth Evans, ‘The Labor Tradition: A View from the 1990s’, pp. 11–22; and Meg Gurry, ‘Identifying Australia’s “Region”: From Evatt to Evans’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 1, May 1995, pp. 17–32.

¹²³ Harries, ‘Punching Above our Weight’, pp. 82–3.

disagreement between the Coalition Government and the Labor opposition over Australian involvement in the 2003 war in Iraq was unusual. For the first time since the Vietnam War of the 1960s, there was a breakdown in the national consensus regarding what constituted Australia's vital national interests.

Thus, in the wars and security crises of the 20th century, particularly from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s—a period sometimes derided as being merely the road to Vietnam—Australia's fusion of statecraft and strategy proved remarkably successful. As Robert O'Neill observed in the early 1980s, while neither of the strategic policies of continental defence and forward defence could be judged to be wholly right or wholly wrong, Australia's geographical position meant that direct attack on its territory was unlikely. He concluded therefore that 'Australia's interests have been well served in most cases, with the arguable exception of the Vietnam War, by its capacity to contribute forces to support allies and help defeat aggression in other parts of the world'.¹²⁴ Indeed, Australia is a good illustration of John Gooch's observation that 'ultimately, the effectiveness of any armed force must be measured by the degree to which it successfully supports its country's foreign policy up to and beyond the point of war'.¹²⁵

Given the reality that Australia's political economy has seldom recognised the importance of adequate defence spending in

¹²⁴ Robert O'Neill, 'Strategic Concepts and Force Structure', in Robert O'Neill and D. M. Horner (eds), *Australian Defence Policy for the 1980s*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1982, p. 164.

¹²⁵ John Gooch, 'Italy during the First World War', in Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray (eds), *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 1, *The First World War*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1988, p. 185.

peacetime, the interdependence between defence and diplomacy has proven vital to the maintenance of Australia's security interests. As a result, for the first three-quarters of the 20th century, Australia was able to ensure that its defence spending did not become a drain on domestic economic development and therefore impede the spread of prosperity under the 1901 Australian Settlement.

Beyond ANZAC: The Australian Way of War

The ANZAC military tradition is sometimes seen as holding the key to an understanding of Australia's way of war. However, it is important to appreciate that ANZAC represents an extraordinary paradox: it is a military tradition without militarism.¹²⁶ ANZAC is a tradition forged by citizen soldiers and reflects Australia's social nationalism prior to 1901 rather than the principles of military professionalism after 1914. Indeed, Sir John Monash, arguably Australia's greatest soldier, was a civil engineer by profession and has been described as 'the archetype of the citizen military tradition'.¹²⁷

There are several other features of the ANZAC legend that are closely connected to Australian political behaviour. For example, the ANZAC tradition emphasises pragmatism, egalitarianism and mateship—all of which derive from the features of Australian political culture discussed earlier and all of which predate World War I. Writing about the military impact of Gallipoli, the Western Front and Kokoda on Australian nationalism, Rosencranz observes:

¹²⁶ See Sol Encel, *Militarism and the Citizen Tradition in Australia*, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 1966, pp. 2–26.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

These historic exploits have not transformed Australian nationalism. The significant fact of present-day nationalism is its social character. Australian soldiers of two world wars were called ‘diggers’, the lineal descendants of gold-camp radicals, and the wars did not make heroes of Generals Monash and Blamey.¹²⁸

Both Australian historiography and literature have been strongly influenced by C. E. W. Bean’s Tolstoyan focus on Australians at war as being a saga of individual soldiers rather than a phenomenon of military organisation and collective training.¹²⁹ As a result, in Australian historiography, ANZAC is as much about the compassion of John Simpson and his donkey at Gallipoli as it is about Albert Jacka’s ferocious combat exploits on the Western Front. A focus on individual over institution also infuses Australian war literature. For example, in T. A. G. Hungerford’s well-known novel of Australians fighting in Bougainville during World War II, *The Ridge and the River*, the hero, Corporal Alec Shearwood, is a proud Digger—a citizen in uniform, not a professional soldier. A true egalitarian, he repeatedly refuses an officer’s commission on the basis that he dreads ‘the responsibility of standing out from the ruck’. It is only when Shearwood wins a

¹²⁸ Rosencranz, ‘The Radical Culture of Australia’, p. 296.

¹²⁹ Encel, *Militarism and the Citizen Tradition in Australia*, p. 9; and Peter Pedersen, ‘The AIF on the Western Front: The Role of Training and Command’, in M. McKernan and M. Browne (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1988, pp. 167–93. For Bean’s influence, see Ken Inglis, *C. E. W. Bean: Australian Historian*, St Lucia Press, Brisbane, 1970; and Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: The Story of C. E. W. Bean*, John Ferguson, Sydney, 1983.

battlefield commission for demonstrated skill at arms that he accepts that he has earned the right to assume officer rank.¹³⁰

Because ANZAC is a military tradition that ignores virtually all of the fundamentals of modern warfare including strategy, operations, training and logistics, one needs to be cautious in making it the centrepiece of the Australian way of war.¹³¹ The significance of the ANZAC tradition for Australia's way of war lies in the sociological, not the military, realm.¹³² Since 1915, ANZAC has been most valuable to Australian soldiers in translating indigenous sociopolitical ideas—notably utilitarianism, egalitarianism and collectivism—into a military idiom for use primarily in conflicts fought away from home soil. The ANZAC tradition has acted, and continues to act, as an important transmission belt for the articulation of national values in an overseas military setting. The distinctiveness of a foreign as opposed to a domestic environment in the transmission of ANZAC ideals is well captured by Sir Keith Hancock's observation of the contradiction between the Digger and the average Australian citizen:

The Australian soldier has frequently been admired for his personal independence and individual initiative. The Australian

¹³⁰ T. A. G. Hungerford, *The Ridge and the River*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1952.

¹³¹ On this aspect see E. M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993, chapters 4 and 6.

¹³² See for example, Ken Inglis, 'The Anzac Tradition', *Meanjin Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1965, pp. 25–44 and 'Anzac and the Australian Military Tradition', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, April 1988, pp. 4–15; and Alistair Thompson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

voter has been continually blamed for his lack of initiative and for his excessive dependence on the State. Unless we are to assume that the fighters have not voted and the voters have not fought, we must seek some explanation of these contradictory reputations.¹³³

Indeed, if one is to begin to understand the Australian way of warfighting, it is necessary to transcend the sociological focus of ANZAC historiography and concentrate on how Australian warfighting has reflected an effective fusion between strategy and statecraft. In David Horner's words, 'if there is an Australian way of warfighting, it is more complex than the passing of traditions of mateship, determination and aggression in battle and the dash and enthusiasm of ordinary Australians in uniform for the duration'.¹³⁴ However, the difficulty in this endeavour is that there is little scholarship on the Australian approach to warfare beyond the confines of the ANZAC tradition.¹³⁵

As Jeffrey Grey has pointed out, Australia's approach to warfighting has always been distinguished by the quality of its expeditionary infantry.¹³⁶ Similarly, the Australian – New Zealand scholarly trio of Carl Bridge, Glyn Harper and Iain Spence have argued that the broad characteristics of an 'Anzac way of war' may be found in well-trained expeditionary infantry; participation in coalition warfare, usually as a subordinate power; and reliance on greater powers for

¹³³ Hancock, *Australia*, p. 69.

¹³⁴ David Horner, 'The Australian Way of Warfighting', unpublished paper presented to the Australian Command and Staff College, Fort Queenscliff, Vic., 24 June 1996, p. 2. Copy in author's possession.

¹³⁵ For a discussion of this issue see Evans, 'Strategic Culture and the Australian Way of Warfare: Perspectives', pp. 83–96.

¹³⁶ Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 5.

logistical and materiel support.¹³⁷ These features have remained remarkably consistent despite the transformation of the Australian military from a large citizen force in the two World Wars to a small, volunteer, long-term professional force during the Cold War era. What the sociologist, Jane Ross, has called ‘the myth of the Digger’ is a powerful psychological influence that has shaped and continues to shape the self-image of Australian soldiers.¹³⁸

The Australian way of war is best described as being based on fusing strategy and statecraft through the agency of overseas warfare, with the use of volunteer forces in coalition operations. This approach to national warfighting was used both in the unlimited struggles of the World Wars and in the limited wars that have occurred since 1945. In David Horner’s words, ‘as a generalisation, Australia has fought its wars away from its land’.¹³⁹ From the Boer War to Vietnam, there was a consistent trend towards offshore warfare, and ‘despite periods when Australia looked to home defence, when the time [of war or security crisis] came, Australia saw that it was in its strategic interests to commit forces overseas’.¹⁴⁰

The offshore character of the Australian way of war is an enduring feature of national strategic culture in times of war and crisis, and continues in the 21st century. In the 1990s, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) undertook missions to

¹³⁷ Carl Bridge, Glyn Harper and Iain Spence, ‘The Anzac Way of War’, *New Zealand Army Journal*, no. 16, December 1996, p. 14.

¹³⁸ Jane Ross, *The Myth of the Digger: The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars*, Hale & Ironmonger, Sydney, 1985, chapters 13–14.

¹³⁹ Horner, ‘The Australian Way of Warfighting’, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Somalia, Rwanda and East Timor. Between 2001 and 2003, Australian forces were deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and the Solomons. The onrush of offshore military commitments between 1993 and 2003, combined with the paradox of official peacetime strategic guidance that continued to stress the theoretical primacy of geographic defence, gave rise to an unusual reflection on Australia's approach to warfighting. Thus, in June 2002, the Department of Defence's publication, *The Australian Approach to Warfare*, sought to set out 'a clear and concise account of the Australian approach to warfare and of the constitutional, geostrategic and cultural influences on this approach'.¹⁴¹ Although, as indicated earlier, the publication was too short to answer these complex questions adequately, it served the valuable purpose of putting the debate over warfighting into the public realm.

In this respect, the work of the leading political analyst, Paul Kelly, on the Australian approach to warfighting is of note.¹⁴² In August 2002, in the wake of the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the build-up to Australian participation in the campaign to disarm Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Kelly analysed the character of Australian defence policy between 1945 and 2002. He identified the persistent expeditionary character of the Australian military tradition and the vital linkage in it between statecraft, strategy and the dominance of political interest. Kelly described the Australian way of war as being based on a careful integration of maximum political support with limited military liability within an alliance framework. In an echo of Alexander's inverted 'limited liability' and Serong's

¹⁴¹ *The Australian Approach to Warfighting*, p. 2.

¹⁴² Paul Kelly, 'No Lapdog, this Partner Has Clout', *Australian*, 28 August 2002.

minimalist strategy of ‘military deployment in support of a diplomatic position’, Kelly remarked perceptively:

For half a century [since World War II] the Australian way of war has been obvious: it is a clever, cynical, calculated, modest series of contributions as part of US-led coalitions in which Americans bore the main burden. This technique reveals a junior partner skilled in utilising the great and powerful while imposing firm limits on its own sacrifices.¹⁴³

Kelly cited the case of how, in July 1967, US Presidential envoy and later Defense Secretary, Clark Clifford, returned from a visit to Canberra ‘puzzled, troubled and concerned’. Clifford’s anxiety centred on Australia’s firm political decision to limit its military involvement in Vietnam to a taskforce in the single province of Phuoc Tuy—even though Australia’s size and wealth suggested that a greater commitment was possible. Clifford was perplexed that a country that had fielded 300 000 troops in World War II was now prepared to deploy only 7000 in South Vietnam. Despite the rhetoric of Prime Minister Harold Holt’s ‘all the way with LBJ’, Australia placed its own interests first and foremost with regard to its military commitment to South Vietnam.¹⁴⁴

Australia may well have spent much of its history as a ‘dependent ally’, but its dependency has always been clever, cynical and calculated.¹⁴⁵ As Paul Hasluck once observed, the aim of policy has consistently been to ‘make Australian

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ The term ‘dependent ally’ is taken from Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984.

decisions to meet Australian needs and interests'.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, as Neville Meaney has demonstrated, Australian politicians and diplomats have never been innocents, and have frequently resorted to the devices of power politics and expedient alliances. Writing about Australian foreign and defence policy and the coming of the Cold War in the late 1940s, Meaney has highlighted the single-minded quest for national security by Australian officials. 'The only difference between Australia and the great powers', he notes, 'was that Australia's interests were regional, not global, and were located primarily in the Pacific not Europe, and that it had to depend on great power cooperation in order to protect those interests'.¹⁴⁷

The Politics of Transformation: Redesigning Australian Strategic Culture, 1972–97

In the last quarter century of the 20th century, Australia underwent a remarkable transformation from statist political economy traditions towards a new system based on neo-liberal or economic-rationalist lines. Australia moved from being one of the most protectionist countries in the world towards

¹⁴⁶ Joan Beaumont, 'Paul Hasluck: The Diplomat as Minister', in Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters, David Lowe with Gary Woodard, *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941–1969*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, p. 140.

¹⁴⁷ Neville Meaney, 'Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1992, p. 323.

becoming one of the leaders in free-market liberalism.¹⁴⁸ Writing in 1996, Martin Painter observed:

In the past ten or fifteen years there has been a fundamental and probably irreversible break with some deep-seated Australian political traditions. The “Great Australian Settlement” has been torn up.¹⁴⁹

Between the end of the 1970s and the advent of the 21st century, most of the pillars of the Australian Settlement of 1901 were swept away by the combination of the end of the Cold War, the collapse of Marxism–Leninism, and the coming of a new age of market liberalism and globalisation.¹⁵⁰

At the turn of the 21st century, state paternalism—‘socialism without doctrines’, the main feature of utilitarian political philosophy—has been either supplemented or supplanted by a neo-liberal ideology emphasising that the proper role of the state is to provide opportunity for the individual. The 20th-century system of industry protection has largely collapsed, giving way to free-market capitalism and to the development by Australia of a competitive economy open to the international money-

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy: The Political Economy of Australian Economic Policy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 208.

¹⁴⁹ Martin Painter, ‘Economic Policy, Market Liberalism and “The End of Australian Politics”’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 31, no. 3, November 1996, p. 287; and Graham Maddox, ‘The Australian Settlement and Australian Political Thought’, in Paul Smyth and Bettina Cass (eds), *Contesting the Australian Way: States, Markets and Civil Society*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 57–68.

¹⁵⁰ Hugh V. Emy, *Remaking Australia: The State, The Market and Australia’s Future*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp. 11; 168.

market. The edifice of wage arbitration that once symbolised the essence of Australian egalitarianism has been replaced by the concept of enterprise bargaining, heralding the final victory of market forces over organised labour. The doctrines of White Australia, restricted immigration and ethnic conformity have been subsumed by a national policy of multiculturalism.¹⁵¹ Finally, reliance on imperial benevolence has diminished since Asia has ceased to be seen only as a region of threat and has instead become a zone of economic opportunity and a place of constructive security engagement.¹⁵²

Despite these significant changes, the impact on Australia's political culture from the collapse of the 1901 Settlement remains unclear. Most of the features of Australia's Anglo-Saxon liberal democratic political culture emerged in the course of the 19th century—that is, before 1901 rather than after Federation. In addition, the utilitarian character of Australian politics, a belief in egalitarianism and a concentration on material prosperity remain deeply rooted in the Australian national character. Indeed, change in the workings of Australian political culture has been most apparent in the area of social attitudes rather than core political values—as reflected, for instance, by the demise of the White Australia policy.

¹⁵¹ See Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, pp. 13–16; Stephen Bell, 'Globalisation, Neoliberalism and the Transformation of the Australian State', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 3, November 1997, pp. 345–68; and Neville Meaney, 'The End of "White Australia" and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945–1990', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 2, November 1995, pp. 171–90.

¹⁵² Roderic Pitty, 'Strategic Engagement', in Edwards and Goldsworthy, *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia*, vol. 2, *1970s to 2000*, pp. 48–80.

Because most of the traditional features of the nation's political culture are connected to strongly held liberal democratic values, they are unlikely to disappear because of economic and social change. Rather, they are likely to adapt themselves to new circumstances such as multiculturalism or to reappear in different, more modern guises such as accommodating the rise of greater gender equality. As political scientist, Judith Brett, has observed, the deep patterns of politics reveal themselves only over long periods of time. She notes: 'We still do not know the long-term impact of the institutional transformations of the 1980s and 1990s on Australians' self-understandings [*sic*]; nor where globalisation is heading'. As a result, the relationship between emerging social formations and Australian national political culture remains unclear.¹⁵³

While Australia's political culture is pragmatic and is based on the lubricant of 'ideas embedded in practice', this country's strategic culture has exhibited a much more abstract theoretical stance. This stance has, as seen in earlier discussion, frequently created a dissonance between strategic doctrine and operational practice. Dissonance intensified in the period between the end of the Vietnam War and the turn of the new century. This development occurred because of a concerted attempt by a new generation of defence planners to institutionalise Australia's peacetime strategic culture around the primacy of an immutable continental geography.

¹⁵³ Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class from Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2003, p. 217.

'Dedicated Perfectionists': Defence of Australia as Geostrategic Doctrine, 1972–97

Between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s, Australian strategic guidance reflected a narrow geographical view of defence. The supremacy of the geostrategic approach in Australian defence—as symbolised by the 1986 Dobb Report, and the 1987 and 1994 Defence White Papers—was made possible due to four factors.¹⁵⁴ First, the traditional fusion between statecraft and strategy in Australia's approach to war appeared to be discredited by involvement in the long and unsuccessful Vietnam War of the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s there was a corresponding loss of confidence among defence planners in the value and relevance of offshore operations. This situation created a vacuum that was filled by a new generation of geostrategists whose focus was firmly on refining a doctrine of continental defence.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence by Mr Paul Dobb*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986; *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987; *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994; and *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000.

¹⁵⁵ Key texts in the evolution of the defence of Australia as a geostrategic doctrine include Robert O'Neill (ed.), *The Defence of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1977; Ross Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1980 and *A Coast Too Long: Defending Australia Beyond the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990; O'Neill and Horner, *Australian Defence Policy for the 1980s*; and Paul Dobb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence*

Second, the relative predictability of the strategic environment of the latter years of the Cold War—an environment characterised by a lack of military commitments—favoured the theory of continental defence. For much of the period between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s, strategic theory ruled without a serious challenge from the acid test of operational practice.¹⁵⁶ Third, and related to the above, the relative stability of the 1970s and 1980s provided a long period in which the imperatives of continental defence could be absorbed by a generation of Australian military professionals and civilian policy-makers. The most distinctive aspect of the new continental defence doctrine was, in the words of its main architect, Paul Dibb, its attempt ‘to narrow the options [for Australian strategy] . . . by focusing on the unchanging nature of our geographic circumstances and the levels of threat we might realistically expect’.¹⁵⁷

Continental geography became, in effect, the most important conceptual determination in disciplining strategy and aligning

Planning and Force Structure Development, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 88, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1992 and ‘The Evolution and Future of Australian Defence Policy’, in Coral Bell (ed.), *Nation, Region and Context: Studies in Peace and War in Honour of Professor T. B. Millar*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 112, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1995, pp. 21–48.

¹⁵⁶ Michael Evans, ‘From Defence to Security: Continuity and Change in Australian Strategic Planning in the Twentieth Century’, in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *Serving Vital Interests: Australia’s Strategic Planning in Peace and War*, Australian Defence Force Academy at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, 1996, pp. 116–40.

¹⁵⁷ *Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities*, p. 5.

it tightly with force structure, capability development and defence expenditure.¹⁵⁸ Under the relatively predictable geopolitical conditions of the late Cold War, such an approach appeared to be feasible. As a result, there was no place for broader strategic considerations based on an appreciation that the maritime approaches embrace two northern archipelagos and represent, in truth, a sea–air–land gap.¹⁵⁹ The centrepiece of strategic effort, and the most important defence-planning concern, became the need to deny the northern maritime approaches or the ‘sea and air gap’ to an enemy, by emphasising the capabilities of strike and interdiction based on naval and air forces.¹⁶⁰

The edifice of Defence of Australia geostrategic doctrine contained an array of theoretical ideas—including those of concentric circles, credible contingencies, warning time, defence preparation time and low-level conflict—most of which were unrelated to military practice. It was an approach that put one in mind of inter-war France’s rupture of diplomatic–strategic unity. Between 1919 and 1940, French strategic doctrine became divorced from the requirements of diplomacy, with the former becoming, in Robert Doughty’s description, an unrealistic ‘masterpiece of Cartesian logic and bureaucratic compromise’.¹⁶¹ Over a period of fifteen years, a

¹⁵⁸ *The Defence of Australia 1987*, chapters 2–3 and *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, ch. 4.

¹⁵⁹ See Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, pp. 8–17.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Robert A. Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919–1939*, Archon Books, Hamden, CT, 1985, p. 187. For a detailed exposition of Defence of Australia

narrow geographical defence of Australia assumed the status of an orthodoxy among official strategic planners. This status was reflected by Dibb's biblical allusion to the 2000 White Paper as encapsulating the 'St James version' of Australian defence policy.¹⁶² Propounding such a view overlooked the reality that strategy is a dynamic discipline whose health is dependent on a constant interaction between theoretical and empirical work, between concepts and evidence. Useful strategy can develop only out of repeated confrontation with reality, and without this process it risks becoming both abstract and arid.

The final factor in the primacy of continental defence was the remarkable economic transformation of the 'tiger states' of the Asia-Pacific between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. The economic development of the Asia-Pacific region suggested the dawn of an age of regional stability that seemed to vindicate the principles of geographical defence over those of operational readiness for offshore operations. The 1989 Garnaut Report identified the rise of an 'East Asian hemisphere' as the most fundamental challenge facing Australia and called for a reassessment of Australia's approach to South-East Asia.¹⁶³ Some observers saw the coming of a new Asia-Pacific Century that would transform Australian society and called for a doctrine of 'enmeshment' in Asia. In the words of Greg Sheridan:

doctrine see Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development*, esp. chapters 1–4.

¹⁶² Paul Dibb, 'Australia's Best Defence White Paper?', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 147, March–April 2001, p. 30.

¹⁶³ Ross Garnaut, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989.

A revolution is sweeping across Australia. The nation is changing, fundamentally and irreversibly. The old order is gone, a new order is taking shape. This revolution is occurring within the Australian psyche and also within Australia's material circumstances . . . It is the transformation of the spirit and the body. I speak of the Asianisation of Australian life.¹⁶⁴

Similarly, in his 1997 book, *Is Australia an Asian Country?*, Stephen Fitzgerald suggested that Australia no longer belonged to a European or North American community. He called for the creation of a new political culture 'within which Asianisation in our society can take place'.¹⁶⁵ These claims about the imminent 'Asianisation of Australia' greatly exaggerated the real process of regional engagement and demonstrated limited understanding of the main features of Australian political culture and its powerful Anglo-Saxon institutions. It was no accident that, in his critique of Australia as an incipient torn country, Samuel Huntington contended that 'the case for redefining Australia as an Asian country was grounded on the assumption that economics overrides culture in shaping the destiny of nations [and] . . . the central impetus was the growth of the East Asian economies'.¹⁶⁶

The Defence of Australia as Geostrategy: A Critique

In the 1990s, Australia confronted a new security environment conditioned by the twin forces of globalisation and the information revolution. This new environment had been

¹⁶⁴ Greg Sheridan, *Living with Dragons: Australia Confronts its Asian Destiny*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country? Can Australia Survive in an East Asian Future?*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997, p. 62.

¹⁶⁶ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, p. 151.

evolving throughout the post–Cold War decade, but its contours only became clear as the new millennium approached. The implications of the transformed politico-strategic landscape are dealt with in more detail later in this study. At this point, it is only necessary to note the changes that occurred in the Asia-Pacific region by the late 1990s. In 1997, Asian economic growth foundered with the financial crash of that year. In 1998, the fall of Indonesian President Suharto occurred, followed by the 1999 crisis of East Timor’s independence.

These regional crises were compounded by global crisis, as symbolised by the al-Qa’ida attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. Indeed, it became clear that national, regional and global security issues could no longer be easily separated. Between 1999 and 2003, the arrival of a new and interconnected security environment became evident when Australia undertook military operations in defence of its interests in East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Solomon Islands—none of which had been foreseen by strategic guidance. In 2000, the Minister for Defence, John Moore, identified the rise of a ‘sea of instability’ emerging in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁶⁷ Several unprecedented developments—the rise of radical Islamism globally, its regional manifestations in the form of the October 2002 Bali bombing and the September 2004 terrorist attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, as well as the crisis of governance in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea—confirmed the interdependence of security issues. These events underlined the reality of what the

¹⁶⁷ *Australian*, 7 December 2000.

current Minister for Defence, Robert Hill, described in 2003 as the emergence of a global ‘arc of terrorism’.¹⁶⁸

Faced by the danger of a convergence between a ‘sea of instability’ and an ‘arc of terrorism’, Australian policy-makers discovered that their attempt over a quarter of a century to align national strategic culture around a geostrategy could not serve political interests. In an increasingly fluid and unpredictable international system, Australia soon found itself facing the familiar dissonance between its declaratory strategic theory and its actual military practice. In the words of two observers writing in 2000, ‘instead of being at the forefront in the [Asia-]Pacific Century, Australia now finds itself on the front line of the New World Disorder’.¹⁶⁹

Not surprisingly, given the above background, a narrow, continental-style Defence of Australia policy faltered in the late 1990s for three reasons. First, it became evident that a defence policy based on static geography was too inflexible to be compatible with the range of problems that were emerging in a world of fluid geopolitics. Australia learnt, once again, that geography can only ever be the grammar, not the logic, of strategy. Second, it became clear that many of the most

¹⁶⁸ Geoffrey Barker, ‘Hill Sees “Arc of Terrorism”’, *Australian Financial Review*, 10 October 2003. For background see Michael Evans, ‘Australia’s Approach to the Revolution in Military Affairs, 1994–2004’, in Emily O. Goldman and Thomas G. Mahnken (eds), *The Information Revolution in Military Affairs in Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, pp. 23–5.

¹⁶⁹ David Martin Jones and Mike Lawrence Smith, *Reinventing Realism: Australia’s Defence and Foreign Policy at the Millennium*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, London, 2000, p. vi.

important lessons of Australian military history had been disregarded or ignored by what have been called the ‘dedicated perfectionists’ and ‘strict constructionists’ who designed Australia’s geostrategy during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁷⁰ Third, it appeared that a one-dimensional geographical focus on defence planning had corroded the previously close association between diplomacy and defence. In combination, these three weaknesses in the edifice of continental Defence of Australia served to increase the tyranny of dissonance between strategic theory and military practice.

‘Dedicated Perfectionists’: Defence of Geography and the Realities of Geopolitics

In the quarter of a century between 1972 and 1997, Australia’s focus on strategic geography as the cornerstone of national defence prevented Australian defence planners from perceiving the essential dynamism of geopolitics. Indeed, a generation of Australian defence planners came close to falling into the trap of allowing geographical determinism, rather than supple geopolitical analysis, to dominate the formulation of strategy. Paul Dibb summed up the approach in 1992 when he suggested, ‘we [Australian strategists] should resist the temptation . . . to move away from the tight intellectual reasoning that reflects Australia’s unique strategic circumstances and the geography of the continent and its sea and air approaches’.¹⁷¹ Yet such a narrow approach was at odds with any notion of geography as a servant of politics. In a timeless observation, Nicholas Spykman—a Dutch–American who was one of the

¹⁷⁰ These terms are Robert O’Neill’s. See O’Neill, ‘Strategic Concepts and Force Structure’, pp. 171–3.

¹⁷¹ Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australian Defence Planning and Force Structure Development*, p. 69.

most penetrating 20th-century analysts of political geography—points out that geography only has value in the context of geopolitics.¹⁷²

In his 1944 book, *The Geography of the Peace*, Spykman observes: ‘the primary characteristic of any geopolitical analysis, as distinguished from a purely geographic one, is that it is dealing with a dynamic rather than a static situation’.¹⁷³ It is changing political conditions rather than the permanence of topography that determine the relative value of geography in the conduct of statecraft and strategy. A nation’s geography is always of strategic importance but it should never be simplified into an all-inclusive generality that is divorced from politics and technology. As Spykman put it, in a famous phrase, ‘geographical facts will not change but their meaning for foreign policy will’.¹⁷⁴

Indeed, some of the dangers in transforming geography into the lodestar of strategic policy were recognised in the early 1980s by Robert O’Neill. In 1982, O’Neill—one of the most influential intellectual figures in helping to shape Australia’s post-Vietnam defence policy—warned that a narrow, geographically based approach to defence strategy pursued with ‘dedicated perfectionism’ would be an unwise policy. He warned:

¹⁷² For Spykman’s influence see Kenneth W. Thompson, ‘Nicholas J. Spykman: Geography and Power’, in *id.*, *Masters of International Thought: Major Twentieth Century Theorists and the World Crisis*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, LA, 1980, pp. 92–6.

¹⁷³ Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1944, p. 6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The security of the home base is still a *sine qua non* of sound posture, but Australia would be ill-advised to pursue that strategic policy alone, with dedicated perfectionism. To do so would be to misunderstand how the balance of international power normally works. *Diplomacy and strategy must go hand in hand.*¹⁷⁵

For O'Neill a 'dedicated perfectionist' view of continental defence was unrealistic, not only because of the need to maintain a favourable regional security environment, but because of the supreme irony that Australia's favourable geography made a direct attack such an unlikely scenario.¹⁷⁶ The Australian geographer, Dennis Rumley, echoed the dangers of geographical determinism that O'Neill had identified. In a major study of the geopolitics of Australia's region, Rumley noted: 'Australia is located in a dynamic geopolitical environment which necessitates constant adjustment both in terms of geopolitical thinking and in security policy practice'.¹⁷⁷

Unfortunately, in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, Australian defence policy-makers largely ignored these caveats on the limitations of a defence policy built around a geostrategy. In this era it was the 'dedicated perfectionists' and 'strict constructionists' that triumphed in Australian defence policy-making. These years were marked by a concerted attempt by revisionist defence planners to meet the requirements of Australia's geographical position. Defence planning emphasised the development of military capabilities primarily to serve

¹⁷⁵ O'Neill, 'Strategic Concepts and Force Structure', pp. 171; 173. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁷⁷ Rumley, *The Geopolitics of Australia's Regional Relations*, p. 178.

strategic geography rather than to meet an essential interaction between geographical milieu, policy and strategy.

Adjustment in geopolitical thinking was not evident and, despite declaratory strategic policy to the contrary, security practice continued to follow the time-honoured Australian warfighting tradition of sending forces—particularly troops—overseas to defend values and uphold interests. However, such operations—including the Gulf War of 1991 and subsequent interventions in the first half of the 1990s in Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda—were declared to be marginal to the primary role of defending strategic geography.¹⁷⁸ Yet, as military deployments proliferated between 1999 and 2003 with missions in East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Solomon Islands, the dissonance between strategic theory and operational practice became too obvious to ignore or to justify as simply the manifestation of occasional marginal activities. In 2002, the current Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, questioned the relevance of what he termed ‘a narrow geographical approach to strategy and force structure’ that inhibited government defence policy options.¹⁷⁹ He recognised the mismatch between Australian strategic theory and operational practice:

I do think there is . . . a disconnect [*sic*] between [strategic] doctrine and reality. Our primary responsibility is the direct defence of

¹⁷⁸ *The Defence of Australia 1987*, chapters 1–3; and *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, chapters 1–4.

¹⁷⁹ Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, ‘Asia-Pacific Security after September 11: Continuity and Change’, speech to the C. E. W. Bean Foundation, 25 September 2002, <<http://www.minister.defence.gov.au>>.

Australia yet our troops are more heavily engaged [than] at any time since at least Vietnam, in a multitude of tasks around the world.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, the strategic analyst, Alan Dupont, noted the dissonance between strategic doctrine and operational reality. In 2004 he stated, '[Australian] strategy has not really accommodated the diversity in the deployments of the ADF over the last 10 or 12 years'.¹⁸¹ Such observations were not confined to Australians. The disjunction between theory and practice in Australia's geographically based defence strategy was noticed by several leading American analysts such as Robert D. Blackwill, Thomas-Durell Young and Eliot A. Cohen.¹⁸² Blackwill and Young criticised Australia's geographically bounded defence posture respectively as representing a form of 'strategic myopia' and a liturgy that had created a situation of 'profound stasis'.¹⁸³ In 2003, echoing the view of Robert Hill, Cohen commented:

¹⁸⁰ Cameron Stewart, 'Hill Orders Rethink on Troop Policy—9/11—One Year On', *Australian*, 9 September 2002.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Maritime Strategy*, pp. 63–4.

¹⁸² Robert D. Blackwill, 'An Action Agenda to Strengthen America's Alliances in the Asia-Pacific Region', in Robert D. Blackwill and Paul Dibb (eds), *America's Asian Alliances*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2000; Thomas-Durell Young, *Australia's Security and Defense Posture: Implications for Affecting Greater Cooperation*, Japan Information Access Project, Washington, DC, July 2000; and Eliot Cohen, 'New Strategic Doctrines for a New Age', paper delivered at the International Institute for Strategic Studies Global Strategic Review, Leesburg, VA, 12–14 September 2003. Paper in author's possession.

¹⁸³ Blackwill, 'An Action Agenda to Strengthen America's Alliances in the Asia-Pacific Region', p. 118; Young, *Australia's Security and*

[Geographical] ‘Defence of Australia’ remains intact in theory, but abandoned in practice, as Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen patrol East Timor, restore order in the Solomons, fight alongside American commandos in Afghanistan and Iraq, and prepare to intercept dubious merchant ships off the Korean coast. Governments rarely explicitly foreswear their strategic doctrines: rather they modify them quietly in theory, or simply abandon them in practice.¹⁸⁴

The response of the geostrategists to such criticisms was to argue that the success of offshore operations demonstrated that Australia did not need to adjust its defence policy in order to meet new security challenges. For example, Paul Dibb, the architect of the sea–air gap strategy of the 1980s, categorically denied the existence of a disconnection between strategy and doctrine. In February 2004 Dibb contended:

There is a naïve and simplistic view around that there is a conflict between practice and doctrine [in Australian strategy] . . . Yet within the force structure we have developed under successive governments within a very limited budget, 1.9 per cent of GDP, we have deployed 5000-plus troops to East Timor—and people have forgotten the 1200 troops deployed to Somalia in 1993—and there was Angola [*sic*], Cambodia and so on.¹⁸⁵

Yet, as Paul Monk has pointed out, in their resistance to new thinking, geostrategists such as Dibb tended to conflate new regional security problems with old issues of continental defence and to misunderstand the strain on military force

Defense Posture: Implications for Affecting Greater Cooperation, pp. 7–8.

¹⁸⁴ Cohen, ‘New Strategic Doctrines for a New Age’, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Maritime Strategy*, p. 65.

structure.¹⁸⁶ Dibb branded his critics as unrealistic advocates of ‘expeditionary warfare’ or of ‘long-distance power projection’ and refused to consider the possibility that Australia’s strategic priorities might require fundamental reconsideration.¹⁸⁷ His view reflected how the geostrategists had underestimated both the need for offshore military capabilities in general and the continued role of land power in particular. Between 1989 and 1999, of twenty-two offshore operations that the ADF undertook, the Army—the Cinderella service since the end of the Vietnam War—predominated in twenty of them.¹⁸⁸

As several Chiefs of Army have testified, the offshore requirements of the late 1990s and early 2000s severely strained the resources and capabilities of the land force. In June 2000, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling referred to the constraints of developing a force structure against the straitjacket of a strategy that had become a ‘blue-water Maginot Line’.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, in February 2003, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy observed that the experience of offshore operations had seriously undermined the assumption that

¹⁸⁶ Paul Monk, ‘Rethinking the Defence of Australia’, *Australian Financial Review*, 13 June 2004.

¹⁸⁷ See Paul Dibb, ‘Does Asia Matter to Australia’s Defence Policy?’, National Institute for Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, Public Lecture, 23 October 2002, Canberra, pp. 1–19 and ‘Does Australia Need a New Defence Policy?’, Blake Dawson Waldron Lecture, National Museum of Australia, 11 July 2003, pp. 1–19. Copies in author’s possession.

¹⁸⁸ Major General John Hartley, ‘A Review of the White Paper’, *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, February 2001, p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, ‘Our Army: Past, Present and Future’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, vol. 21, June 2000, p. 58.

ground forces structured primarily for a strategy of continental defence could easily accomplish complex offshore operations. He noted:

During the 1980s and for much of the 1990s, the strategic guidance given to the Army ultimately diminished land force capabilities. We gradually lost strategic agility; our units became hollow; and our ability to operate away from Australian support bases declined to a serious degree . . . When the ADF went to East Timor in 1999, it was only the tremendous efforts of our personnel in the field and in the rear that concealed these deficiencies in the Army's capabilities.¹⁹⁰

Australia's intervention in that territory exposed the limitations of a land force designed to reflect the use of military force as an instrument not of Clausewitzian politics but of a type of neo-Mackinderite geographic determinism. The Army's difficulties at the dawn of the new century were a reflection of how the dynamism of post-Cold War geopolitics had eclipsed the imperatives of geographically based defence planning. Australia's military intervention in East Timor in 1999 also served as a powerful reminder that the liberal democratic foundations of Australia's political culture were always likely to prevail over ideas about a geographically confined defence posture.

¹⁹⁰ Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, 'A Land Force for the Future: The Australian Army in the Early 21st Century', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, June 2003, p. 23.

Revisionists, Strict Constructionists and the Lessons of Military History

The attempt to develop Australia's defence policy around strategic geography in the last three decades of the 20th century has been described as the work of a 'revisionist intelligentsia' that was largely divorced from historical traditions of Australian foreign and defence policies.¹⁹¹ There is much truth in this assertion. Sir Arthur Tange set the tone for three decades of strategic theorising when he speculated in 1976 that the post-Vietnam War era of Australian defence policy meant that Australian military history 'may be a distraction rather than—as history often is in other matters—a signpost to the future'.¹⁹² Indeed, the shadow of the Vietnam War lay over the 1970s and 1980s. As the first television war and the first war of the baby-boomer generation, Vietnam became a template for what to avoid in Australian strategy.

As a result, historical successes in offshore warfare such as the South-West Pacific campaign in World War II, Korea, Malaya and Borneo were either overlooked or regarded by revisionists as artefacts of another defence era whose conditions were unlikely to recur. This view was particularly strong with regard to the regional deployments by land forces. For example, in a major study of Australian defence policy published in 1980, Ross Babbage stated: 'Australian ground forces are unlikely to be deployed again in the South-East Asian region, except

¹⁹¹ Jones and Smith, *Reinventing Realism: Australia's Defence and Foreign Policy at the Millennium*, p. 144.

¹⁹² Sir Arthur Tange, 'Defence Policy Making in Australia', *Australian Army Journal*, April 1976, p. 5.

possibly for small-scale operations of short duration'.¹⁹³ Yet, as Robert O'Neill pointed out in 1982, those who believed that land forces would no longer be required to operate in the region ignored the experience of Australia's military history. Drawing on the lessons of the past, he observed:

Warfare in Australia's neighbourhood has been waged predominantly by ground forces in the past three decades . . . Ground warfare seems likely to remain the most common form of regional conflict for some time to come. Unpalatable though the implications of this conclusion may be for many Australians in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, it would be foolish to forswear for ever the use of one of their most applicable military strengths, in situations where it could maintain deterrence or tip the balance operationally.¹⁹⁴

For O'Neill, regional deployments of troops in times of crisis used 'as supplementation, not supersession' might be necessary to maintain a favourable regional security environment and to uphold Australia's values and interests.¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, such historically informed views were ignored by the strict constructionists of the geographical Defence of Australia doctrine.

Between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s, Australian strategic theory proceeded on the basis of geographical rather than historical principles. The White Papers of 1987 and 1994, and the strategic policy reviews of 1991 and 1993 are remarkable documents in that they contain little reference to the history of Australian military practice. For example, the entire South-West Pacific campaign of World

¹⁹³ Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁴ O'Neill, 'Strategic Concepts and Force Structure', p. 170.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 170–1.

War II, with its treasure trove of lessons for defending Australia, was largely ignored by the strategic planners who devised continental defence in the decade between the 1976 White Paper and the 1986 Dobb Report.

It is in the struggle in the South-West Pacific that many of the basic principles for a sound Australian approach to strategy and force structure requirements can be found. Above all, the struggle against Japan between 1941 and 1945 demonstrated that the security of the Asia-Pacific region and that of Australia as an island–continent could not be separated. The security of the region and the nation represented, in the words of the Chiefs of Staff in 1941, ‘a single strategic problem’.¹⁹⁶ This holistic approach to defence was followed in the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War by the 1946 Chiefs of Staff strategic appreciation—one of the most interesting Australian strategic planning documents of the 20th century.¹⁹⁷

In broad terms, and taking into account the looming Cold War and peculiar British Commonwealth contexts of the mid-1940s, the Chiefs of Staff approach can be described as a maritime strategy. The 1946 document drew on the lessons of World War II in the South-West Pacific and laid solid intellectual foundations for a strategy designed to provide

¹⁹⁶ Australian Archives, CRS 2671, 64/1941, Combined Far Eastern Appreciation of Australian Chiefs of Staff, February 1941. The Australian Chiefs of Staff were Lieutenant General Vernon Sturdee, Admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin and Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett.

¹⁹⁷ AA CRS A5954/69 (Papers of F. G. Shedden), Item 1645/9, ‘An Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff on the Strategical Position of Australia’, February 1946. The Australian Chiefs of Staff were Lieutenant General Sir Vernon Sturdee, Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton and Air Marshal George Jones.

security for Australia locally, regionally and internationally—a strategy that attempted to satisfy both geographical and historical requirements. The basic aim of the Chiefs' proposals was to create a degree of operational flexibility in order to treat both onshore and offshore defence as a 'single strategic problem'. Their objective was 'the fulfilment of Australia's obligations in a wide strategical plan' based on 'securing strategical focal points'. Accordingly, the plan affirmed the 'great strategical importance' of the Netherlands East Indies and upheld the need for coalition operations and cooperative security with allies.¹⁹⁸

The appreciation also suggested that the Australian armed forces should be organised as 'a balanced Task Force of the three Services', made up of mobile naval, air and land forces capable of amphibious operations in South-East Asia and the Pacific.¹⁹⁹ The document noted that, in order to be effective, arrangements for regional security 'must be made in relation to a wider plan and not solely on local considerations'.²⁰⁰ The Chiefs concluded that continental defence was too restrictive to be regarded as the sole tool of strategic planning. They observed that developing military forces on the basis of the primacy of continental geography was undesirable since it would 'necessitate reorganisation and inevitable dislocation in the case of an emergency requiring overseas operations'.²⁰¹

Although the Chiefs of Staff Appreciation was rejected because it ran counter to the liberal internationalism of the Chifley Labor

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4; 6; 15–17.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Government, many of its ideas remain relevant in the early 21st century.²⁰² Indeed, contrary to Tange's view that Australian military history represented a distraction, in the wake of East Timor, Australia was compelled to relearn lessons that had been self-evident to the battle-hardened strategists of the 1940s. Babbage's view that Australian troops were unlikely to be deployed to South-East Asia proved misplaced as the liberation of East Timor required exactly the type of military force structure that strategic guidance had insisted belonged to a past era of forward deployments. Subsequent deployments to the Solomons in 2003 and a military humanitarian mission to the Indonesian province of Aceh in the wake of the December 2004 Asian tsunami disaster are further reminders of the regional imperative in Australian security policy.

In June 2004, a parliamentary inquiry into Australia's maritime strategic requirements concluded that a focus on a sea-air gap strategy was inadequate for future national-security requirements. The inquiry's report stated:

Previous White Papers have focused on being able to mount effective military operations in Australia's sea air [*sic*] gap . . . Australia's defence strategy must now be focused on mounting effective military operations in Australia's *sea air land* [*sic*] gap so as to influence affairs in our region. An enhanced maritime strategy is therefore supported as it gives greater focus on capability necessary to defend Australia and its non-territorial interests particularly in our region.²⁰³

²⁰² For a discussion see Lee, *Search for Security: The Political Economy of Australia's Postwar Foreign and Defence Policy*, pp. 73–83.

²⁰³ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Maritime Strategy*, p. 69. Emphasis added.

The above view echoed the ideas of the 1946 Appreciation. Indeed, had Australian students of strategy been required to study the history of the 1942–45 South-West Pacific campaign as a compulsory part of their education, both in university courses and at staff colleges, then many of the illusions of a quarter of a century of geostrategy might have been avoided. In particular, defence revisionists would have appreciated the vital role of land forces in littoral operations much sooner, thus perhaps preventing the degrading of the Australian Army's capabilities in the 1980s. By dismissing the value of historical experience, the revisionists and dedicated perfectionists of Defence of Australia geostrategy bore testimony to the reality that to ignore the past is to be unable to understand the present and to risk incapacity in judging the trends of the future.

*The Fallacy of Liberation: Decoupling
Defence and Diplomacy*

Paralleling a geographic approach to defence and the loss of historical awareness in the 1980s and 1990s was the corrosion of one of the most successful features of Australian security policy: the fusion of diplomacy with defence. Many revisionist observers in the 1980s and 1990s saw the previous close association between foreign and defence policies as a retrograde policy that had resulted in a lack of self-reliance and an unwelcome dependence on what Menzies called 'great and powerful friends'.

In an influential 1991 book on Australian foreign policy, Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant presented a good summary of the revisionist argument. The authors deprecated the history of Australian foreign policy prior to the 1980s as a one-dimensional creation of defence considerations based on

dependence and fear. They described the publication of the 1987 Defence White Paper as a ‘conceptual watershed in Australian foreign policy’ and contended that, until that date, Australia lacked a conscious sense of self-defence.²⁰⁴ As Evans and Grant put it:

One of the curiosities of Australian history is that we developed a martial tradition without contemplating the essential art of self-defence. This martial tradition was the result of expeditionary valour—in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia, alongside first the British and then the Americans.²⁰⁵

According to the authors, Australian foreign policy suffered from ‘a particularly restrictive dependency—that its first task was to attract the protective attention of great and powerful friends’. They believed that the articulation of a geographically based Defence of Australia doctrine in the White Paper of 1987 had succeeded in creating a new confidence in a self-reliant military capability. In this fashion, defence policy had ‘liberated Australian foreign policy’ to pursue broader multilateral issues.²⁰⁶

Yet the revisionist view of an unliberated history of Australian foreign policy was not tenable for three reasons. First, the revisionists ignored the way in which successive Australian governments from Deakin to Menzies had often held a distinctive view of Australia’s position in the world—

²⁰⁴ Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia’s Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 29.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

‘a Pacific-centred world’.²⁰⁷ As Menzies noted in April 1939, what Britain viewed as the Far East was Australia’s ‘near north’, in which Australia had ‘primary responsibilities and primary risks’. In the Asia-Pacific, stated Menzies, Australia ‘must regard herself as a principal providing herself with information and maintaining her own diplomatic contacts with foreign powers’.²⁰⁸ Even a cursory glance at Richard Casey’s diaries when he was Minister for External Affairs in the 1950s explodes any myth of an ‘unliberated’ Australian foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region.²⁰⁹

Second, the revisionists overlooked some of the most impressive achievements of Australian foreign policy between the 1940s and 1960s under the stewardship of such able External Affairs Ministers as H. V. Evatt, Percy Spender, Richard Casey and Garfield Barwick. In the second half of the 1940s, these achievements included Australia’s support for Indonesian independence and Evatt’s role in the creation of the United Nations. In the 1950s and 1960s, other successes embraced the 1950 Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia, the ANZUS Pact of 1952, the 1957 Australian–Japanese Treaty of Commerce and the skilful handling of the Indonesian Confrontation in 1963.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ See Neville Meaney, ‘Australia’s Foreign Policy: History and Myth’, *Australian Outlook*, vol. 23, no. 2, August 1969, pp. 173–81.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 178–9, quoting R. G. Menzies’s inaugural speech as Prime Minister, 26 April 1939.

²⁰⁹ T. B. Millar (ed.), *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G. Casey, 1951–60*, Collins, London, 1972.

²¹⁰ The achievements of Australian foreign policy from the beginning of the Pacific War in 1941 to the end of the 1960s are well described by Beaumont, Waters, Lowe with Woodard, *Ministers*,

Finally, the revisionists erred in believing that foreign policy can and should be ‘liberated’ from defence policy. Such an approach is an ideal rather than a practical view of international relations and ignores the maxim, once quoted by Sir Garfield Barwick, that ‘a foreign policy depends on three things: effective and available military power, remembered military prowess, and sheer diplomatic skill’.²¹¹ If a nation’s military posture is consciously divorced from its foreign relations, then a state is likely to find itself facing a contradiction between its available military means and the requirements for armed force that might be dictated by diplomatic obligations. In conditions of peace, crisis and war, there must always be an essential unity between strategy and diplomacy. In Clausewitz’s vivid fencing metaphor, the means of war must be governed by the logic of policy. It is policy that

converts the overwhelmingly destructive element of war into a mere instrument. It changes the terrible battle-sword that a man needs both hands and his entire strength to wield, and with which he strikes home once and no more, into a light handy rapier—sometimes just a foil for the exchange of thrusts, feints and parries.²¹²

The result of a ‘battle sword’ geographical focus on defence issues in the 1980s and early 1990s was a lack of ‘rapier’-style input into offshore security matters. Several writers have perceived a lack of coordination and a dissonance between Australia’s foreign policy and its defence policy that occurred

Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941–1969, chapters 1–5.

²¹¹ Sir Garfield Barwick, ‘Australia’s Foreign Relations’, in John Wilkes (ed.), *Australia’s Defence and Foreign Policy*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1964, p. 8.

²¹² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1976, p. 606.

in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in the realm of regional engagement. For example, Dennis Rumley has identified a ‘regional security paradox’ between a foreign-policy establishment that preferred multilateral cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific and a defence-policy elite that based its philosophy on bilateral realism. A geographical strategy of Defence of Australia was designed to repel an incursion from the region through the sea–air gap—the very area in which foreign policy was pursuing a policy of cooperative security.²¹³ In short, there was a dissonance between Australia’s diplomatic geography and its geostrategy.

Similarly, the scholar Craig Snyder has suggested that Australia’s foreign and defence policies diverged both in tone and aim in the 1980s and the 1990s. He argues that Australia’s regional security policy oscillated between a cooperative ‘order-oriented’ security approach favoured by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and a traditional ‘threat-oriented’ military approach promoted by the Department of Defence.²¹⁴ Despite the fact that Australia recognised no security threat from its neighbours, its defence posture was designed to deter and, if necessary, combat conventional military attacks on its territory. Such attacks could originate only from neighbouring states—a contradiction that, in Snyder’s view, created ambiguity regarding the cooperative character of Australian regional policy.²¹⁵

²¹³ Rumley, *The Geopolitics of Australia’s Regional Relations*, pp. 2; 166–7.

²¹⁴ Craig Snyder, ‘Australia’s Pursuit of Regional Security into the 21st Century’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4, December 1998, pp. 2; 15.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–14.

From the perspective of both diplomacy and strategy, the East Timor contingency of 1999 was a graphic example of a regional crisis unforeseen by either the foreign-policy or defence-policy elites. East Timor was a security crisis that involved both establishments in a situation that transcended neat compartments of activity and suggested the need for greater interdepartmental cooperation in order to meet the demands of a new security environment. Given Australia's unique strategic circumstances, its liminal geopolitical position and its relatively low demography, the decoupling of defence planning from foreign policy under the guise of an ideological 'liberation' via the autonomous instrument of geography proved to be an unrealistic experiment. It was an approach that ran, yet again, counter to Australia's historical experience. As Clausewitz reminds us, it is the fluidity of policy, not static geography, that is always the *ultima ratio* of strategy since 'at the highest level the art of war turns into policy' and 'must necessarily bear the character of policy and measure by its standards'.²¹⁶

Thus, in their adherence to geography over geopolitics, their neglect of military history and their attempt to decouple diplomacy from defence, the advocates of a geostrategic defence of Australia created a one-dimensional policy. Their insistence on converting, and then maintaining, Australian strategy as a geographical orthodoxy, despite radically changed political conditions, puts one in mind of John Kenneth Galbraith's warning:

The enemy of conventional wisdom is not ideas but the march of events . . . The conventional wisdom accommodates itself not to the world that it is meant to interpret but to the audience's view of the world. Since the latter remains with the comfortable and

²¹⁶ Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 607; 610.

familiar, while the world moves on, the conventional wisdom is always in danger of obsolescence . . . The fatal blow comes when the conventional ideas fail signally to deal with some contingency to which obsolescence has made them palpably inapplicable. This sooner or later, must be the fate of ideas which have lost their relation to the world.²¹⁷

Ending the Tyranny of Dissonance: The 21st-century Security Environment and Australian Strategy

Given the dissonance between Australia's strategic culture and its way of war, between its doctrine and its actions, what measures can strategists and policy-makers adopt to ameliorate the propensity for developing strategic theory that does not match likely military practice? Before answering this question, it is necessary briefly to outline the main features of the new security environment that has emerged at the beginning of the 21st century.

The 21st-century Security Environment

The 20th-century security paradigm that helped to give rise to Australia's experiments with geographically based continental strategy has now disappeared. It is important to understand why and how this situation has occurred. In the new millennium, the traditional international system that links sovereignty to Westphalian-style territorial borders is under pressure from the new age of globalisation and the information revolution. The new geopolitical reality is characterised by the arrival of a bifurcated international security system—a system that is split between a traditional 20th-century state-centred paradigm and new 21st-century sub-state and trans-state strata.

²¹⁷ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Hamish Hamilton, New York, 1958, p. 10.

The great change in the early 21st-century international system from that of the last quarter of the 20th century is the transition away from a dominant state-centric structure towards a structure marked by a greater number of sub-state and trans-state actors.²¹⁸

The globalisation of security and the resultant bifurcated international system have brought with them three other

²¹⁸ For the character of the new security environment see for example Ryan Henry and C. Edward Peartree, *The Information Revolution and International Security*, CSIS Press, Washington, DC, 1998; Makhmut Gareev, *If War Comes Tomorrow: The Contours of Future Armed Conflict*, Frank Cass, London, 1998; Jean-Marie Guèhenno, 'The Impact of Globalisation on Strategy', *Survival*, vol. 46, Winter 1998–99, no. 2, pp. 5–19; Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999; United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century, Supporting Research and Analysis*, Phase 1 Report on the Emerging Global Security Environment for the First Quarter of the 21st Century, US Commission on National Security/21st Century, Washington, DC, 15 September 1999; Michael O'Hanlon, *Technological Change and the Future of War*, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, 2000; Gwyn Prins and Hylke Tromp (eds), *The Future of War*, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, 2000; Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2002, esp. chapters 10–12 and 24–26; Christopher D. Kolenda, 'Transforming How We Fight: A Conceptual Approach', *Naval War College Review*, vol. LVI, no. 2, Spring 2003, pp.100–21; Michael Evans, 'From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War', *Naval War College Review*, vol. XVI, no. 3, Summer 2003, pp. 132–50; and Wayne Michael Hall, *Stray Voltage: War in the Information Age*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2003.

important changes: first, a shift in strategic thinking from territoriality to connectedness; second, a merging of foreign and domestic policies; and third, a merging of modes of armed conflict.²¹⁹ The first change—the shift in 21st-century strategic thinking—involves a transition away from ideas of state-based war founded on territoriality towards a greater appreciation of non-state and non-linear conflict based on connectivity. Some strategic thinkers believe that the rise of connectivity means ‘the end of geography’, not, it must be stressed, as a factor in the waging of warfare but as the main factor conditioning strategic preparation for crisis and conflict. In this respect, the 20th-century troika of mass military forces, territorial defence and industrial mobilisation that produced predictable and homogenous foes such as the Soviet Union has been supplemented by a range of new opponents spawned by globalisation and the information revolution.²²⁰

It is not that classical interstate war has disappeared, only that, under new global-security conditions, it is less likely to occur. Traditional, symmetrical threats have been supplemented by a range of asymmetrical sub-state threats across a spectrum of

²¹⁹ See Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr and Richard H. Shultz Jr, ‘Future Actors in a Changing Security Environment’, in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr and Richard H. Shultz Jr (eds), *War in the Information Age: New Challenges for US Security Policy*, Brassey’s, Washington, DC, 1997, ch. 1.

²²⁰ For a discussion of the ‘end of geography’ debate’ see Michael Evans, *The Continental School of Strategy: The Past, Present and Future of Land Power*, Study Paper No. 305, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, June 2004, pp. 102–15; and Frank P. Harvey, *Smoke and Mirrors: Globalized Terrorism and the Illusion of Multilateral Security*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2004, esp. ch. 1.

conflict. In the new millennium, the electronic interpenetration of borders has created a world of disrupted national traditions—a process that ensures the accompaniment of global consciousness by a fragmentation that creates lethal forces of polarisation and particularism. Increasingly, the new enemies of peace and order are dynamic, unpredictable and, above all, networked and global. As a result, previously clear distinctions between civil and international conflict, between internal and external security, and between national and societal security are being eroded.²²¹

In the early 21st century, security threats are increasingly aimed at societies rather than across frontiers. As such, these threats form an indivisible mosaic, with the potential to bypass the security that physical borders once afforded. As a result, a growing number of both Western and non-Western analysts now believe that a relative decline of what has been called a ‘barrier conception of geographical space’ at the hands of globalisation may represent one of the most important changes occurring in international security during the first decade of the 21st century.²²² For example, the leading American strategic analyst, Phillip Bobbitt, has observed:

²²¹ For a discussion of these trends see Michael Evans, ‘From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War’, *Naval War College Review*, vol. LVI, no. 3, Summer 2003, pp. 132–50.

²²² Robert Keohane, ‘The Globalization of Informal Violence, Theories of World Politics, and “The Liberalism of Fear”’, in Craig Calhoun, Paul Price and Ashley Timmer (eds), *Understanding September 11*, The New Press, New York, 2002, p. 80. See also Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye Jr, ‘Power and Interdependence in the Information Age’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 5, September–October 1999, pp. 81–94.

National security will cease to be defined in terms of borders alone because both the links among societies as well as the attacks on them exist in psychological and infrastructural dimensions, not on an invaded plain marked by the seizure and holding of territory.²²³

Similarly, the Canadian scholar, Frank P. Harvey, has written of a global security environment in the midst of complex transformations ‘as a result of the death of geography, the death of distance, increasing sensitivities and vulnerabilities, and the death of [strategic] independence’.²²⁴ Two Chinese strategists, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, have pointed out that the world is entering an age of unrestricted warfare in which ‘there is no territory that cannot be surpassed; there is no means which cannot be used in . . . war; and there is no territory or method which cannot be used in combination’.²²⁵ These views reflect a growing consensus that most advanced societies, particularly in the West, are now vulnerable, not so much from external attack, but from an internal disruption of the connectedness of their government, financial and economic institutions, and critical infrastructures.

The second change caused by globalised security and the bifurcation of the international system is the reality that, in the 21st century, the defence strategies and homeland security policies of advanced states are intimately connected. This interconnection is caused by the growing array of global

²²³ Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, p. 813.

²²⁴ Harvey, *Smoke and Mirrors: Globalized Terrorism and the Illusion of Multilateral Security*, p. 29.

²²⁵ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, Beijing, 1999, p. 199.

threats that now blur the distinction between internal and external crises. Increasingly, advanced liberal democracies must place a premium on possessing flexible strategies that embrace a mixture of agile joint forces for offshore coalition operations and vulnerability-based homeland security measures designed to defend critical infrastructures.²²⁶

The third change created by globalised security and a bifurcated international system is the merging of modes of armed conflict. The emergence of an interconnected security environment has seen threats such as state failure, rapid weapons proliferation, mass-casualty terrorism, and modes of conventional and unconventional conflict arise—threats that cannot simply be quarantined behind borders or diminished by distance. Moreover, there are no longer any neat categories of conflict; rather, advanced countries such as Australia face the possibility of continuous, sporadic armed conflict, blurred in time and space, and waged on several levels by a large array of national and subnational forces. Such forces might employ weapons ranging from missiles and machetes to car bombs, and be coordinated by a combination of couriers, computers and mobile phones.²²⁷

²²⁶ Guèhenno, ‘The Impact of Globalisation on Strategy’, pp. 5–19; and Evans, ‘From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War’, pp. 133–7.

²²⁷ Robert F. Pfaltzgraff Jr and Stephen E. Wright, ‘The Spectrum of Conflict: Symmetrical or Asymmetrical Challenge?’, in Richard H. Shultz Jr and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr (eds), *The Role of Naval Forces in 21st Century Operations*, Brassey’s, Washington, DC, 2000, pp. 9–28.

In what the political philosophers Michael Hardt, an American, and Antonio Negri, an Italian, call ‘the age of network struggle’, the grim reality is that the nation–state has lost its monopoly over violence.²²⁸ The real military revolution of the era of globalisation is this: for the first time since the birth of the modern state in the 17th century, it is possible to organise violence outside a state structure on a scale that is potentially devastating to an entire society. To quote Philip Bobbitt:

We are at a moment in world affairs when the essential ideas that govern statecraft must change. For five centuries it has taken the resources of a state to destroy another state; only states could muster the huge revenues, conscript the vast armies, and equip the divisions required to threaten the survival of other states . . . This is no longer true, owing to advances in international telecommunications, rapid computation, and weapons of mass destruction. The change in statecraft that will accompany these developments will be as profound as any that the State has thus far undergone.²²⁹

Bobbitt is not alone in his belief that statecraft and strategy will have to change in order to counter new transnational threats. The eminent British historian, Eric Hobsbawm, a lifelong Marxist, has observed:

The material equipment for warfare is now widely available to private bodies, as are the means of financing non-state warfare. In this way, the balance between state and non-state organisations has changed.²³⁰

²²⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin Press, New York, 2004, p. 62.

²²⁹ Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, p. xxi.

²³⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘War and Peace in the 20th Century’, *London Review of Books*, 21 February 2002, pp. 16–17.

When the broad contours of a new international security environment are accepted by figures as diverse as Western political philosophers, conservative North American security analysts, Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army strategists and British socialist historians, then clearly dramatic changes are afoot within the realm of strategy. As the US (Hart–Rudman) Commission on National Security/21st Century put it in 1999, many fundamental strategic assumptions require rethinking since 'the very facts of military reality are changing and that bears serious and concentrated reflection'.²³¹

Towards an Australian 'Strategy of Security'

Between 1999 and 2003 Australia entered the new age of globalised security, in which it became apparent that there was no longer any such phenomenon as convenient warning time or preparation for a protracted mobilisation of manpower and economic resources. Short-notice military involvement in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq was paralleled by cooperative intervention and nation-building in the Solomons, and police support for a faltering Papua New Guinea. Simultaneously, the spread of radical Islamism into South-East Asia, symbolised by the Bali and Jakarta bombing attacks, has confronted Australia with a long-term regional security problem, but one that is intimately linked to a global jihadist movement.

Because of its cultural heritage, its liberal democratic values and its geopolitical location in the Asia-Pacific, Australia

²³¹ United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century, Supporting Research and Analysis*, Phase 1 Report on the Emerging Global Security Environment for the First Quarter of the 21st Century, p. 57.

cannot escape involvement in the globalised security environment of the early 21st century. As a result, cooperative defence agreements, coalition operations, homeland security and appropriate levels of strategic interdependence between national, regional and global contingencies are likely to dominate Australian security policy over the next decade.²³² In order to facilitate such an interrelated 21st-century security policy, three measures are necessary: aligning strategic thought with operational practice; developing mechanisms for a national security strategy; and evolving an integrated strategic methodology for dealing with interconnected security threats.

In the first area—that of strategic–operational alignment—there is a compelling need for Australia to address the theory–practice dissonance between its strategic planning and military experience. If Australia is to counter the twin perils of a regional ‘sea of instability’ and a global ‘arc of terrorism’ and prevent them from merging, then its policy-makers have no choice but to align the nation’s declaratory strategy directly with real-world operational requirements.²³³ In the 21st century—a world of the unseen and the unexpected—Australian strategic culture must provide a compatible womb in which to nurture a way of war. Australia needs to align the principles governing its strategic culture with the ‘ideas embedded in practice’ of its pragmatic and highly successful political culture. Australian strategists must, then, become theorists of praxis like their political counterparts.

²³² See Rod Lyon and William T. Tow, *The Future of the Australian–US Security Relationship*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, December 2003, pp. 2–20; 28–35.

²³³ Rumley, *The Geopolitics of Australia’s Regional Relations*, p. xiii.

Unless Australian strategic ideas become embedded in military practice, they will cease to serve any meaningful purpose in the formulation of real-world policy options for governments. Strategy must be functional rather than hypothetical and, above all, it must be realistic. The threat of car bombs in Melbourne, potential suicide attacks on Sydney shopping malls, failing governance in Papua New Guinea, counter-terrorism cooperation with the Indonesian authorities and the problem of insurgent base-camps in the Southern Philippines have combined to form a new threat matrix. These threats represent more pressing matters of security than imaginary armadas and phantom raiding forces in the sea–air gap.

Moreover, sovereignty protection in the form of a modern concept of homeland security has, in 21st-century conditions, assumed a greater priority than a purely military defence of Australia's northern geography. In an era of 'come as you are' forces, the cardinal rule for force structure planning in such conditions is simple: 'organise as you intend to fight'. The way in which Australia will fight in the future will be through a combination of offshore deployments using taskforces and paramilitary homeland-security measures. The primary aim of Australian strategy must be, wherever possible, to seek to counter all threats to the nation's interests at a geographical distance rather than on home soil.

None of the new problems of globalised security confronting Australian defence and security planners should, however, be seen as implying that traditional interstate balance-of-power issues have any less significance. Relations with countries in South-East Asia, and with Japan and China, remain vital. Furthermore, it is important to understand that, in global

conditions, such issues can no longer be conveniently compartmentalised or discretely isolated. In a bifurcated international system, the harsh new reality that must be understood is that security has become multidimensional, expanding to embrace state, non-state and transnational concerns across a spectrum of conflict.

In the defence of the world's only island–continent, there are no simple solutions available to security practitioners for, as Sir Frederick Eggleston once put it, 'Australia's strategic problems are unique and require the most careful watchfulness'.²³⁴ Much is often made of Australia's strategic uniqueness, but not enough is made of the requirement for a constant watchfulness to ensure that change does not render the ideas driving defence policy in any given era obsolete. In the early 21st century, it is vital to avoid clinging to a strategy that is based, in the words of Alan Dupont, on 'a misplaced geographical determinism that ignores the diverse and globalised nature of modern conflict [and one that] has shaped the ADF for the wrong wars'.²³⁵ In short, the geostrategy designed in the 1980s now represents an obsolescent approach to national security simply because Australia is located in a dynamic 21st-century geopolitical environment that necessitates Eggleston's 'careful watchfulness' and, when necessary, major adjustments in strategic thinking.

The second measure that Australia must develop in order to meet the demands of a new global strategic environment is

²³⁴ Eggleston, 'Foreign Policy', p. 144.

²³⁵ Dupont, 'Transformation or Stagnation: Rethinking Australia's Defence', p. 57. See also Alan Dupont, 'Modern Wars can't be Based on Obsolete Battle Plans', *Australian*, 14 November 2002.

what Nicholas Spykman once described as a ‘strategy of security’. Such an approach would in today’s parlance be called ‘a whole of government’ approach to national security. A strategy of security takes a comprehensive view of national interests and is based on the premise that, in modern global conditions, ‘all fronts and all areas are interrelated’.²³⁶ Spykman was writing in the 1940s, but his observations have stood the test of time and, in an age of enemies that employ global networks and asymmetric strategies, are more compelling than ever.

The development of organisational instruments to facilitate Australian national-security strategy would help to temper the tyranny of dissonance between strategic theory and military practice, and assist in the management of liminal status. Such an approach would also assist in harmonising foreign and defence policies. Additionally, it would help in establishing mechanisms of coordination between competing national, global and regional security requirements. It is precisely because Australia is so firmly trapped in the intersection between its European history and its Asian geography that the country must focus energetically on comprehending the interactions at work within the global system. When a country inhabits an intersection between worlds, it cannot afford to look only one way if it does not wish to risk becoming transfixed in a single direction. Instead, Australia must be constantly alert in all directions if it is to be secure.

The intellectual failing in Australian strategy over the past twenty-five years has been the elevation of geostrategy as the single direction in the intersection that represents national

²³⁶ Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, p. 45.

security. Yet defending vital non-territorial interests, especially in globalised security conditions, is as much a part of the security of Australia as the protection of national territory. As the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, has put it, the ‘ability to operate both onshore and offshore *is* defence of Australia’.²³⁷ In 1941 the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that Australia needed to view its multiple security challenges in terms of a ‘single strategic framework’, and it still needs to do so. Such an approach is intellectually demanding, but it is one that the Australian Government must take seriously in an era when security demands great flexibility, and where there is a dual need to project military force over distance and to protect critical domestic infrastructure.

In terms of security, it is Australia’s fate in the 21st century always to have to look outward and in several directions simultaneously. As Hugh Collins has perceptively observed, ‘Australia is a country without a region’.²³⁸ By this statement Collins does not mean to question Australia’s location in the Asia-Pacific. Rather, his observation recognises that historically the nation has relied for its security and prosperity on a favourable balance of world order. In 1985, in perhaps an unconscious echo of Spykman’s ‘strategy of security’, Collins noted:

[Australia’s] interests and identity cannot be enclosed within a consistent set of boundaries . . . Its future and its fate lie on the

²³⁷ Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, as quoted in Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Maritime Strategy*, p. 61. Emphasis added.

²³⁸ Hugh Collins, ‘Political Ideology in Australia: The Distinctiveness of a Benthamite Society’, in Stephen R. Graubard (ed.), *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1985, p. 162.

complex networks of global interdependence. The conditions of world order are the immediate conditions of Australian security and prosperity. This gives the country a high stake in defining these international conditions, but also means that changes in international norms and transnational regimes will have direct impact upon domestic politics.²³⁹

Thus the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific, the requirements of the Australian–US alliance, the crisis of governance in the South Pacific and the rise of terrorism in South-East Asia must be treated as interconnected phenomena. Australia may not be able to resolve its liminal geopolitical status, but in the intersection between geography and history it cannot afford to embrace a one-dimensional strategy. In the future, Australian defence planners and policy-makers must improve their grasp of the art of strategic balance. They must engage in a sophisticated study of the complex interactions between geography and history, and between strategy and statecraft, in order to appreciate the linkages between national, regional and international security requirements.

Third, a national security strategy would greatly assist Australian planners in the area of improved planning methodology. Australia requires an integrated rather than a fragmented methodology to unite defence, diplomacy and counter-terrorism into a cohesive security system. The country's policy-makers need to embrace rigorous scenario-based planning measures in order to enhance government countermeasures and strategic options.

Through an integrated methodology employing scenario-based planning, Australia could synchronise the content of such

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

publications as the 2003 Defence Update, the 2003 Foreign Affairs White Paper and the 2004 papers on Transnational Terrorism and National Counter-Terrorism Policy in order to establish the foundations for a coherent, ‘whole of government’ approach to national security policy.²⁴⁰ All four of these publications demonstrate a growing congruence of understanding on such important issues as the globalisation of security, the indivisibility of threats, the strategic threat of mass-casualty terrorism and the predominance of interests over geography. However, a more structured and interdepartmental intellectual approach is required in the future. Any Australian national security strategy that emerges in the future will require both mechanism and methodology if it is to coordinate competing security interests successfully. In this respect, Australian policy-makers need to remember Edward Mead Earle’s pragmatic and holistic definition of strategy:

Strategy is the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation—or a coalition of nations—including its armed forces, to the end that its *vital interests* shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed.

²⁴⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2003; *Advancing the National Interest: Australia’s Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2003; *Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2004; *Protecting Australia Against Terrorism: Australia’s National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Arrangements*, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, 2004. For an insightful analysis of the implications of national security in the Australian context see Alan Dupont, *Australia and the Concept of National Security*, Working Paper No. 206, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, May 1990.

The highest type of strategy—sometimes called grand strategy—is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.²⁴¹

At the beginning of 2005, an observer cannot help but notice the contrast between the considerable number of new Australian operational concepts and the paucity of innovative strategic ideas. In terms of strategy and force structure there needs to be, in the words of Paul Monk, not improvisation or *ad hoc* redesign but ‘deep and consequential thought’.²⁴² Useful operational concepts such as multidimensional manoeuvre, maritime operations in the littoral environment, network-centric warfare, complex warfighting and the Hardened and Networked Army initiative are yet to be situated in a new overarching Australian national strategic calculus.²⁴³ Such an umbrella approach is essential in order to direct an effective national security effort, and in order to expend scarce financial and human resources wisely. A national strategy is also required in order to define the direction and type of force

²⁴¹ Edward Mead Earle, ‘Introduction’, in *id.*, *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, p. viii. Emphasis added.

²⁴² Paul Monk, ‘Dangers Every Bit as Great: The Australian Strategic Policy Debate through the Lens of Philip Bobbitt’s *The Shield of Achilles*’, 28 October 2004, p. 13, <<http://www.austhink.org/monk/Dangers.htm>>.

²⁴³ Department of Defence, *Force 2020*, Public Affairs and Corporate Communication, Canberra, June 2002; *Future Warfighting Concept*, Policy Guidance and Analysis Division, Canberra, December 2002; *Enabling Future Warfighting: Network Centric Warfare*, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication (ADPP-D 3.1), Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, February 2004; and Future Land Warfare Branch, *Complex Warfighting*, Canberra, May 2004.

structure that the ADF will require over the next decade. Ultimately, only the introduction of a unified national security strategy is likely to end the tyranny of dissonance between Australian strategic ideas and military practices.

Conclusion

In Graham Greene's famous screenplay for the film, *The Third Man*, the malevolent Harry Lime reminds us of the power of war on human civilisation:

In Italy for 30 years, under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed. But they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love. They had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.²⁴⁴

Fortunately, Australia was not founded on Lime's 'warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed'. Instead, in the course of the 19th century, the country's path to modern statehood was a result of constitutional evolution, not military conflict. Yet, symbolically, at the moment of Federation in 1901, soldiers from the Australian colonies were fighting overseas in South Africa, marking the beginning of a change from the peaceful pattern of 19th-century affairs. In the 20th century, war was to play a much more decisive role in Australia's maturing as an independent state, but always as an overseas phenomenon. While much Australian blood has been shed in military conflict overseas—from the South African Highveld, through the slopes of Gallipoli and the trenches of France, to Kokoda, Korea and Vietnam—to paraphrase Henry Lawson, there has been no 'blood on the wattle' in the form of an invasion of modern

²⁴⁴ Quentin Falk, *Travels in Greeneland: The Cinema of Graham Greene*, Quartet Books, London, 1984, p. 84.

Australia. The sobriquet 'lucky country' is often applied to Australia in terms of living standards, climate, and way of life. Yet, the isolated Japanese air attack on Darwin in 1942 aside, in no area of endeavour has the country been luckier than in escaping the scourge of modern warfare on the homeland.

Frederick Eggleston once wrote that Australia possessed 'politics without doctrines', by which he was suggesting that the most important political ideas were already embedded in everyday practice.²⁴⁵ The same description cannot be applied to Australian strategy, which has often been preoccupied with abstract theoretical beliefs based on a narrow geographical determinism. There has been a tyranny of dissonance between Australia's strategic culture and way of war. In its defence policy, Australia has frequently possessed 'strategy with doctrines', but such doctrines have seldom been expressed in military practice.

In peacetime, the central ideal of Australian strategic culture has been to try to develop a way of war as a manifestation of a geographical fortress in a continental rather than an island defence. Yet, in every war and security crisis that Australia has faced since 1914, the geographical ideal has always been eclipsed by the political reality of non-territorial interests. Australia has always taken up arms in defence not of its Asia-Pacific geography but of its liberal Western values. Because of the character of Australia's political culture, such an approach is unlikely to change in the future. Accordingly, the Australian way of war over the next decade will almost certainly reflect Australia's longstanding Western philosophical and cultural traditions. Australia's political system has a Benthamite

²⁴⁵ Eggleston, 'The Australian Nation', p. 10.

tradition; its foreign policy is Cartesian; its diplomacy remains Westphalian; and its defence policy is essentially Hobbesian.²⁴⁶ In Australia's case, it is culture, not geography, that is destiny.

We can learn much from Admiral Eccles's wise advice: 'modern strategy requires an intuitive synthesis of policy, political purpose, values, military power and force, military readiness and effectiveness, economics, logistics and the process of negotiation'.²⁴⁷ Any state, if it is to prosper, must harmonise its strategic culture with its way of war, and seek to understand war in general and its own approach to war in particular. A society that forgets how and why it has fought in the past and then fails to examine the way in which it might have to fight in the present and future forfeits control over its destiny. As Arthur Lee Burns observed of Australia in 1970,

We [Australians] shall manage our external relations more realistically when we are prepared to accept that Australia represents one of the British variants of European civilisation and cannot conjure up for herself a more exotic identity.²⁴⁸

In an age of strategic unpredictability marked by the rise of transnational threats, Australia needs a multifaceted security outlook—one that is simultaneously globally attuned, regionally focused and alliance-oriented. Achieving such a complex balance requires a mixture of historical awareness, geographical

²⁴⁶ Higgott and Nossal, 'The International Politics of Liminality: Relocating Australia in the Asia Pacific', p. 181.

²⁴⁷ Eccles, 'Strategy—The Theory and Application', p. 19.

²⁴⁸ Arthur Lee Burns, 'Who are the Australians: Class Attitudes Without the Class', *Round Table*, no. 238, April 1970, p. 143.

realism and nimble statecraft. Balancing such areas of knowledge is never easy for, as Henry Kissinger has noted,

It is not often that nations learn from the past, even rarer that they draw the correct conclusions from it. For the lessons of historical experience, as of personal experience, are contingent. They teach the consequences of certain actions, but they cannot force a recognition of comparable situations.²⁴⁹

Because the consequences of failure are so great, the strategist must constantly confront the task of looking backwards while moving forwards. He must distinguish between continuity and change, and between the transient and the lasting. In this respect, the study of the interactions between Australia's political culture and strategic culture and their influence on a national way of warfighting are not abstract issues divorced from questions of policy. Rather, such study helps us to improve our understanding of how the shape of the future is conditioned by the way in which the past impinges on the realities of the present. In this sense, self-knowledge becomes the greatest form of strategic wisdom, for it is only through self-knowledge that Australia can overcome the tyranny of dissonance that has, for long periods of its history, impaired its strategy by divorcing theory from practice.

²⁴⁹ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812–1822*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1957, p. 331.

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