

**SERVING VITAL INTERESTS:
AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC PLANNING IN PEACE AND WAR**

**FROM DEFENCE TO SECURITY:
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC
PLANNING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

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In the 1990s Australian defence planners are faced with a situation of reduced strategic threat but increased strategic uncertainty. In times of uncertainty there is often a tendency to invoke what are sometimes viewed as the 'lessons of the past' and to argue about their relevance to the present and future. In the 1990s, some old ghosts of Australian strategic planning have returned to haunt contemporary thinking. Once again geography and history appear to complicate military planning by presenting policy-makers with competing demands. In addition, old tensions between the notions of continental defence and forward defence have resurfaced in the guise of modern ideas of defence self-reliance and regional-engagement.¹

The post-Cold War era shows indications of a revived Australian defence debate in which the modern concepts of self-reliance, defence of Australia, credible contingencies and regional engagement are contested. There are those who favour a kind of armed neutrality free of the Americans; there are those who incline towards a notion of restrictive security, or even isolationism, through variations emphasising primary concern for defence of Australia based on geography; and there are those who are internationalists and believe that Australia must develop a broad view of *security* as opposed to a narrow view of *defence*. Advocates of these positions—neutralists, restrictives, isolationists and internationalists and those who straddle these threads of strategic thought—tend to have one thing in common—they justify their intellectual stance by appealing to the relevance or irrelevance of history.

Representative of the neutralist position is the recent work of John Hirst on the relationship between defence policy and conscription.² In 1992 Hirst, one of Australia's best known historians, examined why Australian nationalism had not produced a tradition of independent defence based on armed neutrality. He was highly sceptical of the idea of strategic planning based on the present notion of defence self-reliance, and he argued that 'when Liberals warn of the dangers of relying on alliances and when Labor people urge the necessity of conscription, then I'll know that the era of our [defence] independence has dawned'.³ Hirst concluded that since defence self-reliance was novel, the prior history of Australian defence planning was irrelevant to its subsequent evolution.⁴ He was not the first person to advance the notion of the essential irrelevance of Australian military history to contemporary defence questions. In 1976, Sir Arthur Tange, one of the major figures in the modernisation of Australian defence policymaking, expressed similar reservations. He suggested that, when it came to the future of Australia's strategic policy and planning process, Australian military history 'may be a distraction rather than—as history often is in other matters—a signpost to the future'.⁵

Yet other critics, from what might be termed the restrictive-isolationist strand of Australian strategic thought, such as Alan Thompson and Graeme Cheeseman, argue that Australia is presently engaged not in abandoning its past but in embracing it anew.⁶ Thompson has written of the rise of 'neo-forward defence', allegedly driven by the diplomatic imperatives of regional engagement and of the development of an intellectual constituency favouring strategic planning more attuned to actual commitments rather than credible contingencies. He inclines towards a restrictive concept of defence policy in order to try to preserve the fundamentals of planning for a self-reliant defence of Australia—a process which he views as incomplete.⁷ Graeme Cheeseman, whose embrace of European ideas of non-offensive defence has overtones of isolationism, shares Thompson's concerns.⁸ In Cheeseman's view, Australian defence planning in the 1990s is in the grip of a kind of historical reflex, which is dragging it back towards forward defence through Asian engagement. He argues that this process is conditioned by a peculiar Australian strategic culture based on a history of alliances, ANZAC mystique, task forces and martial proficiency.⁹

Two other writers, Robyn Lim and AD McLennan, have developed a powerful critique of Australian defence and strategic planning from an internationalist perspective.¹⁰ For them, the new and uncertain balance of power emerging in East Asia in the 1990s means that Australia has a clear choice between passive and positive policies. A passive policy is to concentrate on self-reliance and defence of Australia—which they consider to be a variant of continental defence. In contrast, a positive policy involves making a contribution to the evolving strategic balance of power in Asia by emphasising the enduring importance of Australian interests.¹¹ Lim and McLennan dismiss the concept of 'self-reliance inside a framework of alliances' as being a political construct of the Hawke-Keating Labor Governments, 'a policy of conscious ambiguity', designed to satisfy the contending factions inside the Australian Labor Party—especially the Left which has traditionally been isolationist. The legacy of 'conscious ambiguity' is, they assert, undefined strategic guidance and inadequate strategic planning. This has resulted in an Australian Army force structure designed for unrealistic 'low level contingencies' on Australian soil and unable to project power beyond the shoreline.¹²

Like Hirst, Thompson and Cheeseman, Lim and McLennan enlist the force of history to justify their argument. They observe:

History's lesson for Australia, because of its remoteness from the centres of international tension and its surrounding seas, is that major strategic threats may develop as a result of distant disruption of the balance of power, as occurred in both World Wars and during the Cold War. Australia could have sought to avoid the consequences of such threats by averting its gaze and not fighting 'other people's wars'. Instead, it chose, responsibly, to intervene. By adding its weight to the efforts of the compatible side it helped ensure a favourable outcome; and by taking the fight to the enemy, Australia reduced the risk of war on its own territory. This policy recognised that Australia would find life very difficult in an international order dominated by hostile powers, even if Australia itself were not invaded.¹³

Historically, in international crises, Australia's interests have always been secured by timely military intervention to ensure that a satisfactory power equilibrium would be struck at a distance, not on home shores. For Lim and McLennan, this policy has now become difficult because self-reliance, narrowly defined through direct defence of Australia planning, encourages the strategic illusion that threats diminish with distance.¹⁴ This then is the internationalist critique—a critique which has resurfaced as a Coalition Government takes office for the first time in 13 years.

All the participants in the post Cold War debate over Australia's defence planning have justified their arguments on the altar of continuity or change in historical experience. Here the past weighs heavily on the present and the danger of distortion is very real. But, as the American historian, John Lewis Gaddis, has pointed out, if professional historians ignore contemporary security concerns, they risk leaving an understanding of how the past has shaped the present to political scientists, journalists and novelists. They also risk condemning themselves to irrelevance as far as the world of policy-making is concerned. While being aware of the dangers of presentism, historians should try to use their discipline as a rigorous tool of forensic analysis in order to illuminate current issues and to take into account an understanding of sequence.¹⁵

Accordingly, this paper attempts to provide a brief conceptual overview of the history of Australian defence planning employing three perspectives. First, it argues that the concept of defence self-reliance as a historical idea in twentieth century Australian strategic planning has always been controversial, largely because Australian security has been determined not by the constants of geographical position but by the variables of international relations. In this context, Australian strategic planning has been as much about diplomacy as it has been about the application of military force. Second, and related to the above, this essay postulates that the conceptual foundations of Australia's current strategic planning system based on ideas of self-reliance from the 1970s and 1980s may not be intellectually secure as we approach the end of the twentieth century. Third, it suggests that the major intellectual problem in Australian defence planning since the 1980s has been a failure to understand, and

to adopt, the modern concept of national security planning in which defence—that is the actual conditions under which force is applied—becomes part of a coordinated national machinery of decision-making based on an understanding of interlocking domestic and international interests. It is arguable that uncoordinated foreign, defence and trade policies are as anachronistic as single service planning.

Self-Reliance as an Idea in Australian Strategic Planning, 1901-1973

The enduring dilemma of Australian strategic planning has been tension between geography and history. Geography is a *constant* but history is a *variable*. The very methods needed to bring about an independent and national defence policy based on Asian geopolitics have often been prevented by Eurocentric historical attachments that have reinforced dependency.¹⁶ Because of this dichotomy, the idea of developing an independent national defence strategy seemed, for much of the twentieth century, a course designed to diminish rather than enhance Australia's security. Thus to some observers, Australia had, until recently, no real tradition of national self-defence. In their 1991 book *Australia's Foreign Relations*, Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant encapsulate this view by observing that 'one of the curiosities of Australian history is that we developed a martial tradition without contemplating the essential art of self-defence'.¹⁷

Yet from the very beginning of Federation, viewing 'the essential art of self-defence' as an autonomous concept was contentious because of the contradictory tensions caused by Eastern geography and Western history. There were persistent questions. First, should there, and could there, be a predominantly national defence plan? Or should Australian forces be designed primarily in a British imperial context to reinforce the Royal Navy and to support the British Army? Second, how was it possible to proceed with national defence planning to meet the Asian context with its great power threat from Japan when this was contradicted by the international pull of British race nationalism? And third, how could the legacy of bitter domestic politics over conscription for overseas Imperial defence in 1916-17 be reconciled with Prime Minister Alfred Deakin's 1907 vision of a national defence effort 'of the people, for the people and by the people'?¹⁸

Such questions ensured that Australian strategic planning could never be purely a defence matter nor confined to national geography. Australia's membership of the British Empire ensured that defence preparations would always have to be placed in a diplomatic and international context.¹⁹ As Prime Minister Joseph Cook put it in early 1914, the resolution of Australia's defence planning was 'the art and the problem of highest statesmanship'.²⁰

It is in the attempts to resolve the defence conundrum that one finds the origin of the division between what the first General Officer Commanding in Australia, Major General Sir Edward Hutton, described in the early years of the twentieth century as the 'narrow' (meaning primarily national) and the 'broad' (meaning primarily international) policy of Australian defence planning; between the 'Australia First' school and the 'Empire First' school—later simplified as continental defence and forward defence.²¹ It is really variations on Hutton's narrow and broad differentiation which endure today through such modern concepts as self-reliance and regional engagement.

The Federation generation led by Alfred Deakin, Andrew Fisher and Joseph Cook favoured a narrow or 'Australia First' approach as a primary concern but not as an exclusive concept. While they laid down comprehensive plans for an Australian Navy and a Swiss-style national militia, they remained conscious of imperial commitments. They were colonial not independent nationalists; sceptics of, rather than separationists from, Empire.²² They recognised international obligations because they knew that in any crisis Australia could not fight a first-class power alone. Andrew Fisher's 1911 view that a RAN would make Australia 'a great self-dependend Naval base for the Empire in the Pacific' neatly sums up the relationship between local and imperial defence.²³

Thus the early drive for a national defence capacity was conditioned by a desire for balance not independence. But those who favoured an 'Empire First' approach to strategic planning such as Hutton, Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) WT Bridges and Captain (later General) CB Brudenell White saw national defence as an expression of geographical determinism—a dangerous distraction from reality. As Major General Hutton put it in April 1902, Australia, an island nation like Britain itself, could not adopt defence policies of 'a purely passive kind'. Australia had to be prepared to defend not just its own land mass but also 'the vast interests beyond her shores upon the maintenance of which her present existence and her future prosperity must so largely depend'.²⁴

The First World War established the supremacy of the broad template of Australian defence planning based on imperial and international commitments. Australia was, as Prime Minister Billy Hughes once put it, defended in France.²⁵ In 1926 Prime Minister Stanley Bruce stated that the guiding principle on which all our defence preparations are based, whether for the Sea, the Land, or the Air Force, is uniformity in every respect ... with the fighting services of Great Britain in order that in time of emergency we may dovetail with any formation with which our forces may be needed to co-operate'.²⁶ Australia's mistake in the inter-war years was not reliance on Singapore and the Empire, but the disease of national passivity about defence in general. In the Depression years between 1929 and 1932, resources for credible self-reliance were removed by the abolition of compulsory military service and the adoption of the raid theory for national defence planning.²⁷ Yet even if defence planning had become a priority in the 1930s it is likely this would have been subject to the ebb and flow of international events rather than national policy. Given national polarisation over conscription for overseas service, it seems unlikely that Australian forces could have prevented the fall of Singapore and Japanese hegemony in 1942.

In the Second World War, direct threat and the task of dislodging Japan from New Guinea and the northern islands demonstrated the value of forward deployment inside a powerful coalition as opposed to concentrating on anti-invasion planning. To many of the decision-makers of the 1950s and 1960s, the lesson of the Second World War was that Australia had to avoid the passivity of the 1930s and seek to shape its security environment not merely to react to it. This could best be done through strategic planning based on Hutton's philosophy of broad interests rather than upon narrow defence of geography; by operating in the overall context of a regional-global framework rather than in that of local defence posture. This in turn put a premium on statecraft through the integration of diplomacy with defence; it placed emphasis on alliance planning instead of independent strategic preparation.

Apart from the later 1940s, when the Chifley Labor Government flirted with a narrow notion of Australian national defence based around regional interests—and aroused the charge of 'strategical isolationism' from the then Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton, Lieutenant General SF Rowell and Air Commodore FRW Scherger—the broad approach prevailed until Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam in the early 1970s.²⁸ The Coalition Government led by Robert Menzies which came into office in 1949, just as the Cold War was developing, institutionalised a broad approach to strategic planning based on the primacy of interests over geography. Menzies' philosophy was that, since no communist power possessed a maritime capability, direct defence of Australia against invasion, was little more than a form of isolationism 'a sort of Fortress Australia or Maginot Line concept'— a policy which he associated firmly with the Australian Labor Party.²⁹

In a memorable phrase on 22 September 1950, Menzies described forces raised for defence of Australia to be 'the equivalent of a wooden gun'. Concentrating on defending Australian territory was, he believed, an isolationist stance, which if followed, would rob the Western democracies of some of the best troops in the world' in the struggle against international communism.³⁰ For reasons of Western security, Menzies was favourably disposed towards Australian planning to support Britain in the Middle East and subsequently he built Australian strategic planning around Anglo-American power and a triangle of alliances—the Australia, New Zealand and British forces in Malaya arrangement (ANZAM), the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO).³¹ By 1957, forward defence based on defence-in-depth through alliances was the mode of planning. Forward defence, as a mode of strategic thinking, is probably best seen as an Australian variant of Western containment.

It is now well known that the Menzies Cabinet ignored strategic advice from the Defence Committee in 1959, which proposed that Australian forces should be designed primarily with the capability to act independently, rather than in concert, with allies.³² It is sometimes claimed that this decision retarded the development of an autonomous conceptual framework for defence planning and crippled the evolution of an appropriate force structure for twenty years.³³ There may be truth in this assertion, but historians have to remember that politicians and public officials must deal with actualities they find, not the potentialities later commentators discover. As the Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, observed in 1954, 'the time has gone by when Australia could rest securely within its own borders. Instead of living in a tranquil corner of the globe, we are now on the verge of the most unsettled region of the world'.³⁴

In such an atmosphere, the strategic planning context was defined by alliances, not by notions of autonomy. In following the policy of forward defence Australia was not unique. It is sometimes forgotten that other British Commonwealth settler states in the 1950s, such as the Union of South Africa and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, practised variations of forward defence, and in this respect it was an international phenomenon.³⁵ Australian forward defence seemed appropriate for the times. It fused strategy with diplomacy; it integrated threat perception, defence in depth, collective security and alliance politics into a matrix for planning. It made defence planning an expression of policy—and as the Prussian military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, reminds us, war may have its own grammar but it has no logic without policy.³⁶

Can one say then that Australia lacked in what Evans and Grant call 'the essential art of self-defence' between 1901 and 1973? If one thinks in terms of planning to defend physical geography then clearly this is so. Because of international factors, Australia has always found great difficulty in seeing defence as an autonomous national concept. But if one conceives of self-defence as planning to protect vital interests, then clearly Australia was highly successful in preventing war on its own soil because actual commitments determined its military capabilities. Overall, region and world were seen as too dangerous to allow a narrow, geographically fixed approach to defence to prevail. The broad Hutton-like approach, with its fusion of defence with diplomacy, expressed Frederick the Great's famous maxim that the sword is fashioned to serve the state and, that diplomacy without arms is like an orchestra without instruments.

The Relevance of the Current Australian Strategic Planning System

In the 1970s and 1980s, for possibly the first time in the twentieth century, Australia was the beneficiary of a benign regional environment free of fears of Japanese militarism and perceptions of Chinese expansionism. These conditions permitted the development of a more autonomous strategic perspective reminiscent of the spirit, if not the content, of the Federation generation's national defence ideas prior to 1914 and the views of some strategic planners in the late 1950s.

Between 1973 and 1987, there was a conceptual revolution in Australian defence in which 'self-reliance within a framework of alliances' and, for the first time, defence of Australia and its maritime approaches (the sea-air gap) became the determinants for Australia's strategic planning and force structure development.³⁷ The key planning concepts are well known and include warning time, credible contingencies based on capability planning for low-level conflicts, the force-in-being and the expansion base.³⁸ Australia has never in its history possessed a defence planning edifice of this level of intellectual sophistication and designed to meet the needs of its own strategic geography. But increasingly the question in the mid-1990s, in the wake of the Cold War, must be: are the defence concepts developed for another era still relevant to Australia's changing security requirements?

This essay argues that in the 1990s, three weaknesses have developed in the edifice of defence of Australia/self-reliance policy—all of which impact on strategic planning as a process. The first weakness concerns the primacy of untested theory in defence thinking; the second weakness resides in the problem of structural restriction in operational planning; and the third flaw is the lack of political instrumentality in defence planning.

The Primacy of Untested Theory in Australian Defence Thinking

The mode of Australian strategic planning since the 1970s has, as Sir Arthur Tange accurately predicted, little connection with the Australian historical experience of warfare. This has created an intellectual vacuum for the intrusion of elegant and imaginative but largely untested ideas. Thus defence of Australia/self-reliance ideology contains a set of inner contradictions and inconsistencies which have not been tested against the realities of military experience. Taken together, these contradictions and inconsistencies tend to fulfil Lim and McLellan's charge of a defence policy built on the politics of 'conscious ambiguity', which in turn has resulted in strategic guidance which lacks clarity.³⁹ For instance, strategic guidance elevates strategic geography and defence-in-depth but does not supply the necessary financial and human resources to exploit them; it posits self-reliance but not self-sufficiency which is the essence of independent capability; guidance also implies a narrow continental focus in defence planning but maintains a broad alliance context and peacekeeping obligations; and it seems to some critics, notably Air Marshal David Evans, that current defence planning and policy is reactive rather than proactive.⁴⁰

While the relatively predictable East-West balance of the Cold War lasted, such contradictions could be camouflaged by rhetoric or safely ignored. But the fluidity of post-Cold War international relations is now exposing them to greater scrutiny and criticism. In the 1990s, as in the past, the power of international variables again suggest that Australian Defence Force (ADF) deployment is far more likely in forward operations than in direct defence of Australia.⁴¹ This reality challenges current planning assumptions based on geographic constancy and applies an inexorable pressure for matching capabilities with commitments in Australian strategic planning

The Problem of Structural Restriction in Australian Operational Planning

The second weakness in contemporary Australian defence planning is the structural assumption that military difficulties will be tactical and operational rather than strategic in nature. This is because credible contingencies, in their current form of short-warning conflicts, are, it is believed, most likely to be found at those levels.⁴² Short-warning conflicts are low-level threats proclaimed to be confined to Australian soil, but like the 'mere raid' theories of the 1930s, which they seem to resemble, they are probably unlikely. As an operational planning tool, short-warning conflict is structurally restrictive. It limits options in pursuing wider deployment for national objectives not defined by geography. This means that inflexibility at the operational level has the potential to impact on Australia's strategic versatility and broader security planning. The risk with short-warning conflict is that it will produce an Australian Army employable only in Northern Australia. In other words it may be a variation of Menzies' 'wooden gun', or—to use another metaphor—short-warning conflict planning might come to resemble a sword, meticulously honed, but forever confined to its scabbard.

There is also an intellectual price to be paid for concentrating on conflict at the lower level of the military spectrum. Since low-level contingencies are manpower intensive, questions of the expansion base, reserve forces and surge capacity consume much of the ADF's intellectual attention into low-level planning. Escalation to more substantial conflict; possible force structure variations to meet regional developments in coalition operations, issues of higher doctrine (for instance compatibility with the America-Britain-Canada-Australia Armies Standardisation Programme or ABCA doctrine) and organisation—from deploying from international niche capabilities up to brigade group—receive, in comparison, inadequate amounts of intellectual attention. Indeed, in the 1994 Defence White Paper, the process of expansion to major conflict is rather ill-defined, stating blandly that 'while Australia maintains the ability to adapt and expand our forces quickly enough to meet any development by others of forces for major attack on our continent, we do not need to maintain the actual force structure for such operations now.'⁴³ The danger is that the sword may only leave the scabbard as a rapier when a sabre may be required.

In 1989, Defence Minister Kim Beazley, the political architect of defence self-reliance, proclaimed that the ADF was a balanced force. He stated 'the old dichotomy between forward defence and continental defence has no analytical force today, because we can, in a sense, do both'. Australia could meet self-reliance on the one hand and alliance commitments on the other.⁴⁴ But in force structure and resource terms, such a 'dual capability' is not evident across all three services—at least not in the Army.⁴⁵ Balancing lower level contingency planning for defence of Australia with the higher level possibilities of more substantial conflict—probably in a fluid region—remains the central intellectual issue in Australian strategic planning into the next century.

Lack of Instrumentality in Australian Defence Planning

The idea of focusing on narrow, geo-strategic planning for defence of Australia encourages thinking about defence in autonomous and abstract terms, in a strategic discourse which lacks political context. This is the third weakness in current policy and, to use the analogy of fencing, it resembles the approach of the technical duellist not of the military swordsman. From 1983-96, the Hawke-Keating Government's preference was that foreign policy should not drive defence policy; rather defence should concern itself with what it called 'the enduring features of Australia's geography'.⁴⁶ Yet it is arguable that in strategic formulation, geography determines *how* to fight, not necessarily *where* to fight. In the 1980s, it was proclaimed that the politics of alliances should not interfere with the intellectual basis of defence policy.⁴⁷ Yet it is arguable that such a separation is neither realistic nor desirable. It is, after all, in the nexus of diplomacy and defence that credible contingencies are most likely to arise. A major weakness of self-reliance is, therefore, its lack of instrumentality in addressing a broader range of security interests and scenarios which are not defined by geography. At its core, self-reliance lacks real political instrumentality.⁴⁸

The difficulty for defence planning in the 1990s is that foreign policy and trade considerations have driven regional engagement with Asia through the December 1989 doctrine of multidimensional security.⁴⁹ The foundations of defence self-reliance have been under pressure from the concept of defence cooperation developed in accordance with a regional security doctrine which embraces much more than physical integrity.⁵⁰ Thus the 'sword in the scabbard' syndrome of structuring military forces for the narrow defence of Australia based on strategic geography is contradicted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's broad search for regional security.

In the 1990s Australian regional engagement is occurring at a time when Asian defence spending is averaging five per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)—thrice that of the Middle East—against two per cent for Australia. Asian defence spending by 2000 will eclipse that of Western Europe.⁵¹ Australia's approach to East and Southeast Asia in the 1990s has some parallels with the policy of the French Third Republic towards Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s. The French approach to Central and Eastern Europe was one of deep diplomatic engagement, but strategic planning was restricted to the defence of France along the national frontier. A military force structure and strategic doctrine of impressive conceptual elegance—described by one historian as 'a masterpiece of Cartesian logic and bureaucratic compromise'—was built for the defence of a continuous front.⁵² Yet when French interests came under pressure in Central and Eastern Europe there was no supple military capacity to support France's regional alliance and security framework.⁵³ The sword was restricted to the scabbard and when drawn in 1940 it failed the state. The lesson is that strategic planning should be closely aligned with a nation's diplomatic activity, while the management of alliances is usually essential to national security.

The three weaknesses identified in the edifice of self-reliance/defence of Australia planning have the potential to undermine the credibility of Australian security. The primacy of untested theory, which has created strategic guidance replete with inconsistency and contradiction, is the mark of a lack of historical education in strategic thinking. The second problem of structural restriction, caused by short-warning planning, has the capacity to impact on

strategic versatility and encourages what has been referred to in this essay as the 'sword in the scabbard syndrome'. The third problem of a lack of political instrumentality is symptomatic of the poor co-ordination which exists between Australian diplomacy, defence planning and alliance management. This raises the final perspective of this paper—the need for Australia to adopt the notion of national security planning.

The Need for a Concept of National Security in the 1990s

The predictable international system which allowed Australian defence planners to concentrate on the constant of strategic geography in the 1970s and 1980s no longer exists. It has been replaced by the familiar variable of international uncertainty—this time emanating from a changing balance of power in East Asia.

International uncertainty combined with the forces of regional engagement based on active diplomacy symbolised by involvement in the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) initiative, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) process and the December 1995 security treaty with Indonesia are injecting centrifugal pressures for a more broad approach to Australian defence planning. Although the 1994 White Paper recognised these trends, it provided no clear rationale on how to balance self-reliance with regional engagement. It is therefore best seen as a transitional document, produced in the confusion of moving from Cold War to post-Cold War strategic thinking.

Regional engagement does not, necessarily imply a return to forward defence planning. But it may mean a greater emphasis on developing dual capabilities through preparing for forward deployment in coalition operations, in order to meet Australian strategic interests which transcend geography. International obligations mean that Australia must move towards the concept of national security planning in order to synchronise defence of geography with defence of interests. Some thorny conceptual difficulties are likely to be encountered if such a transition occurs. For instance, defence planning is a narrow concept, concentrating on the basis of military capability through force structure. Security planning is, in contrast, a broad concept, focusing on the actual use of military capability in the context of national policy. Ultimately, the concept of national security is about policy freedom and room for strategic manoeuvre. It is about deterring threats from whatever source they emanate—near or far.⁵⁴ For these reasons, and given finite resources, defence planning will probably have to be integrated with diplomacy and trade to create a national strategy compatible with Australia's multidimensional security needs. The need is for a national security system, designed to reconcile the growing tensions between Australia's core security policies of recent years: defence self-reliance and regional engagement.⁵⁵ Without such guidance, Australian defence planning risks developing in a vacuum with a serious imbalance in its essential assumptions.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to illuminate some of the historical ideas being used in the debate in Australian strategic circles concerning the viability of, and balance between, the present policies of self-reliance and regional engagement in the 1990s. It has sought to do this by developing a conceptual overview of the history of Australian strategic planning in the twentieth century employing three perspectives.

First, it has assessed the role of a geographically-defined defence of Australia based on military self-reliance as an historical idea in Australian strategic thought. Although aspects of such a policy were favoured during the first decade following Federation, these did not survive the pressures of international relations and the outbreak of the First World War. It has been argued that, from 1914 onwards, Australia's security interests have transcended geography. Consequently, a policy of self-reliance has always been less important than a policy based on achieving security through alliances. For most of the twentieth century, then, Australian defence planning has been driven largely by the variables of international diplomacy rather than by the constants of geography. Australia has always responded to the pressure of a major international crisis by adopting a broad, rather than a narrow, approach to strategic planning and this has allowed it to avoid the ravages of modern warfare on its own territory.

This represents a considerable achievement by Australian diplomacy and Australian arms. The pale battalions of Australian headstones in overseas cemeteries are symbols, not of participation in 'other people's wars', but of the successful defence of the homeland.

Second, this essay has questioned the continuing relevance of the current Australian defence planning system, based on self-reliance ideology, under the impact of new international conditions. A viable self-reliance/defence of Australia policy was only developed conceptually in the late Cold War era of the 1970s and 1980s under both Coalition and Labor governments. From a historical perspective, it is arguable that the essential condition for such a policy was a relatively predictable international security system. In the 1990s, such international predictability no longer exists and, consequently, the policy of defence self-reliance—which began as a powerful form of conceptual and intellectual balance—should not, under different conditions, be allowed to harden into an orthodoxy, complete with its own lexicon and priesthood. It must be remembered that strategic planning is, above all, a process of dynamic interaction; it is about connecting policy purpose to operational capability and logistical feasibility. It was not for nothing that Napoleon, that most exacting of the Great Captains, once compared the concentrated analysis involved in strategic planning to the effort and unpredictability of childbirth.⁵⁶

Third, this essay has suggested that the rise of new strategic conditions in Asia requires that Australia consider developing defence planning inside a broad framework of national security. Such an approach would have the effect of synchronising and balancing diplomatic requirements with defence capabilities. Under the rubric of self-reliance, defence planning has diverged from diplomacy in recent years and has tended to be developed in terms of geographic imperatives rather than in accordance with the needs of political instrumentality. Yet for most of Australia's history, policy-makers and military planners have considered diplomatic variables to be a crucial factor in maintaining Australian security.

Finally, it is worth noting that Australian defence planning has always been Janus-faced—looking to both East and West. As Australia approaches the millennium, it is caught between the worlds of Western military alliance and Eastern economic prosperity; between the comfortable certainties of twentieth century Western strategic ideas and twenty first century change, in which Asian ideas of security may come to predominance in strategic discourse. All of this demonstrates that strategic planning can never be an abstract or clinical process; rather it is conditioned by memories of the past, conditions of the present and images of the future. It is in the balance of these factors that a nation finds not merely its physical defence but its lasting security and this, as Joseph Cook observed over 80 years ago, remains, as always, 'the art and the problem of highest statesmanship'.

Endnotes

1. The terms continental defence and forward defence have a long and complex history. In this essay I employ the term continental defence to imply a primary focus on the protection of Australia's land mass and its maritime approaches. In contrast, forward defence emphasises the defence of Australia by engaging an adversary at a distance from home soil.
2. See John Hirst, 'Will We Defend Ourselves?', *Quadrant* (March 1992), 16-19; 'Australian Defence and Conscription: A Re-assessment', Parts 1 and 2, *Australian Historical Studies* XXV (1993): ci, 608-27, and XXVI (1994): cii, 39-56. Hirst's interpretation is influenced by the earlier work of David Martin and Max Teichmann on armed neutrality. See David Martin, *Armed Neutrality for Australia* (Melbourne, 1984) and Max Teichmann, *Australia—Armed and Neutral?* (Melbourne, 1966)
3. Hirst, 'Will We Defend Ourselves?', 19.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Sir Arthur Tange, 'Defence Policy Making in Australia', *Army Journal* (April 1976), 5.
6. Alan Thompson, *Australia's Strategic Defence Policy: A Drift Towards Neo-Forward Defence* (Canberra, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, Working Paper No 29, November 1994); Graeme Cheeseman, *The Search for Self-Reliance: Australian Defence Since Vietnam* (Melbourne, 1993); 'Back to "Forward Defence" and the Australian National Style', in Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce (eds), *Discourses of Danger & Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking After the Cold War* (Sydney, 1996), 251-71.
7. Thompson, *Australia's Strategic Defence Policy*, 10-15. On p 10, Thompson justifies a restrictive view of defence planning by separating defence policy from diplomacy. He states; 'foreign policy and defence policy are not the same ... the basic purpose of the Australian Defence Force is not for it to be used as an agent to improve international relations'.
8. For Cheeseman's advocacy of non-offensive defence, see *The Search for Self-Reliance*, chapter 7.
9. Cheeseman, 'Back to "Forward Defence" and the Australian National Style', 258-68.
10. Robyn Lim and AD McLellan, 'Self-Reliance as Panacea: Muddling Strategic Thinking in Australia', *Agenda* III (1966): iii, 267-75.
11. *Ibid.*, 267.
12. *Ibid.*, 267, 269-70.
13. *Ibid.*, 274-75.
14. *Ibid.*, 275.
15. See John Lewis Gaddis, 'Expanding the Data Base: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Enrichment of Security Studies', *International Security* XII: I (Summer 1987), 3-21.
16. For a discussion see TB Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations since 1788* (Canberra, second edn 1991), chapter 21.
17. Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s* (Melbourne, second edn, 1995), 22. Other writers who are inclined to emphasise this theme include Ross Babbage, *A Coast Too Long: Defending Australia Beyond the 1990s* (Sydney, 1990) and Alan K Wrigley, *The Defence Force and the Community: A Partnership in Australia's Defence* (Canberra, 1990).
18. These issues have been analysed by several authors. See especially, Neville Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14* (Sydney, 1976); John Mordike, *An Army For A Nation: A history of Australian military developments, 1880-1914* (Sydney, 1992) and John Hirst, 'Australian Defence and Conscription; A Re-assessment', Parts 1 and 2; Deakin in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates 1907-8* (House of Representatives), XLII, 13 December 1907, 7534-35.
19. For a perspective on the relationship between defence and foreign policy see David Horner, 'The Security Dimension of Australian Foreign Policy', in FA Mediansky (ed), *Australia in a Changing World: New Foreign Policy Directions* (Sydney, 1992), 83-99.
20. Cited in Meaney, *The Search for Security*, 265.
21. Hutton's views on a 'broad' versus a 'narrow' defence policy are expressed in his correspondence between 1902 and 1904. See the detailed discussion on Australian defence policy in Meaney, *The Search for Security*, 58-75. Hutton's April 1902 Defence Minute does not employ this specific terminology of 'broad' and 'narrow' approaches to defence but it does develop, in detail, his view of the need for the paramountcy of a 'broad' policy. See Commonwealth of Australia, 'Military Forces of the Commonwealth: Minute upon the Defence of Australia by Major-General Hutton, Commandant, 7 April 1902', *Parliamentary Papers*, House of Representatives, 1901-2 Session, vol 11,1-3.
22. For a view of Australian defence history as an ideological contest between imperialism and nationalism and an unflattering view of Hutton see Mordike, *An Army For a Nation*. For a view which reconciles imperial and national concerns see Craig Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past: John Mordike's An Army for a Nation', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* XL (1993): 1, 52-65.
23. Cited in the Hon Kim C Beazley MP, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, 'The Importance of Strategic Thinking', Inaugural University College Lecture, Australian Defence Force Academy, 10 September 1992, 4; Meaney, *The Search for Security*, chapter 7.
24. 'Military Forces of the Commonwealth: Minute upon the Defence of Australia by Major-General Hutton, Commandant, 7 April 1902', 2.
25. Hirst, 'Australian Defence and Conscription: A Re-assessment', Part 2, 625.

26. John McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence 1918-1939: A Study in Air and Sea Power* (St Lucia, 1976), 14-15.
27. For a discussion see John McCarthy, 'Planning for Future War 1919-1941: The Armed Services and the Imperial Connection', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire* 72 (1990), 112-22.
28. David Lee, 'Britain and Australia's Defence Policy, 1945-1949', *War & Society* 13:1 (May 1995), 61-80.
29. Sir Robert Menzies, *The Measure of the Years* (Melbourne, 1970), 77; Menzies speech, 7 March 1951 in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History* (Melbourne, 1985), 598-602. See also the overview of Australian defence by TB Millar, 'Australian Defence, 1945-1965', in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper (eds), *Australia in World Affairs 1961-1965* (Melbourne, 1968), 251-311.
30. Menzies broadcast, 22 September 1950, *Current Notes XXI* (1950), 664, and in Meaney, *Australia and the World*, 597.
31. For an account of Menzies' approach see David Lee, 'Australia and Allied Strategy in the Far East, 1952-1957', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 16: 4 (December 1993), 511-38.
32. The most accessible evidence can be found in Commonwealth of Australia, 'Key Elements in the Triennial Reviews of Strategic Guidance Since 1945' (Department of Defence Submission to the Inquiry of the Joint Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade into the Management of Australia's Defence, Submissions and Incorporated Documents Volume II, Official Hansard Report, 17 February 1987), S306-307. The Defence Committee consisted of the Chiefs of Staff and representatives from the Department of Defence.
33. See the Hon Kim C Beazley, MP, Minister for Defence, 'Thinking Defence: Key Concepts in Australian Defence Planning', Roy Milne Memorial Lecture, Perth, 6 November 1987, 7. See also Beazley, 'The Importance of Strategic Thinking', 6.
34. Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates 1954* (House of Representatives), V: 2382.
35. A South African Air Force squadron served in Korea and the South African Army was required to plan to provide an armoured division for service in the Middle East, while the South African Navy was locked into the defence of the South Atlantic under the 1955 Simonstown Agreement with Britain. Rhodesian infantry battalions served in Malaya during the Emergency, along with a Special Air Service Squadron, which was later deployed to Aden. Elements of the Royal Rhodesian Air Force served in the Middle East until the early 1960s.
36. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, 1976), book eight, chapter six, 605.
37. See the assessment by one of the revolution's principal architects, Paul Dibb, '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 TB Millar* (Canberra, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No 112, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1995), 31-48.
38. Paul Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development* (Canberra, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No 88, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1992).
39. Lim and McLellan, 'Self-Reliance as Panacea', 1-2.
40. For strategic guidance see Commonwealth of Australia, *The Defence of Australia* (Canberra, 1987), and *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994* (Canberra, 1994); Air Marshal David Evans, *A Fatal Rivalry: Australia's Defence at Risk* (Melbourne, 1990), chapters 3 and 6.
41. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, Australian service personnel have served in the Gulf, in Somalia, Cambodia and Rwanda.
42. The concept of short warning conflict was first introduced in *Strategic Review 1993* (Canberra, 1993), to assist in capability development. It was refined in *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994* as a prime focus for ADF planning. See *Strategic Review 1993*, 43, and *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, 24; 32, para 4.44.
43. *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, 24, para 4.10.
44. Beazley in the *Australian Financial Review*, 14 September 1989. See also his views in 1992 in 'The Importance of Strategic Thinking', 9.
45. Dual capability may be easier for the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal Australian Navy, but the Army is hampered by logistics and the vexed question of reserves. Without ground forces capable of significant force projection, no defence force can claim to be balanced.
46. See for instance *Strategic Review 1993*, 42.
47. Beazley, 'The Importance of Strategic Thinking', 8.
48. A cynic might argue that self-reliance has instrumentality in that it is a politically palatable way of justifying defence expenditure. But such a justification is not necessarily related to real security issues.
49. Senator the Hon Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia's Regional Security* (Canberra, December 1989).
50. See Thompson, *Australia's Strategic Defence Policy*, 10-15.
51. Dibb, 'The Evolution and Future of Australian Defence Policy', 43.
52. Robert A Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine 1919-1939* (Hamden, 1985), 187.

53. See Robert J Young, *In Command of France: French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), especially chapters 1, 3 and 5. On p 63, Young points out that French diplomacy required 'increased [military] mobility within an offensive context' but this was prevented by the military's defensive planning. I am not suggesting that contemporary Australian defence planning is in the grip of a kind of French-style 'Maginot mindedness'. I am merely trying to illustrate the vital relationship which exists between diplomacy and defence planning.

54. Some of these issues are assessed in Michael Evans, 'Strategic Manoeuvre: A Study in Military Method and Policy Technique' (Sydney, Headquarters Training Command, 1996 forthcoming).

55. Several of these issues are analysed by Desmond Ball, 'Australia's Strategy for Security Engagement in Asia', in Bell, *Nation, Region and Context*, 27-30, and in Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement: Australia's Asia-Pacific Security Policy in the 1990s* (Sydney, 1996). See also Gary Brown, *Australia's Security: New Issues for the New Century* (Canberra, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1994), chapters 6-7.

56. David Chandler, *Napoleon* (London, 1973), 181.