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**Conventional Deterrence  
in the  
Australian Strategic Context**

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**by**

**Michael Evans**

**May 1999**



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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ASP97	Australia's Strategic Policy 1997 (Document)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
LWSC	Land Warfare Studies Centre
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SASR	Special Air Services Regiment
SDSC	Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
USAF	United States Air Force
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyses the relevance of deterrence theory based on conventional forces to Australian military strategy. It argues that a majority of Australian strategists did not favour conventional deterrence as an explicit strategic posture during the Cold War since it was seen as an outcome, rather than a starting point, of successful defence planning. In the post-Cold War era, conventional deterrence has become a disputed subject amongst Western defence analysts. In a multipolar world prone to regional conflict, weapons proliferation, ethnic strife and political uncertainty, the credibility of deterrence using non-nuclear forces is highly problematical.

The paper outlines the parameters of the debate in the United States over implementing a concept of dynamic deterrence based on information-age weapons systems. Australian views on conventional deterrence, ranging from the concept of disproportionate response in the 1970s to the concept of basic deterrence in the 1990s, are sketched. The paper attempts to demonstrate how interest in conventional deterrence has revived in the 1990s mainly in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in the wake of the Coalition air campaign in the 1990–91 Gulf War. It is argued that an Australian conventional deterrence strategy based on employing stand-off precision strike is both unrealistic and unlikely to meet the full range of national security needs. This is because the ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ (RMA) model of high-technology military operations represents an idealised Western approach to war which, while appearing well-tailored to the kind of operations liberal democracies would like to wage, is in fact too restrictive to deter or even control conflict in the next century.

The present and foreseeable international security environment is unsuited for a single overarching strategy based on conventional deterrence. A spectrum of conflict has now emerged which is asymmetrical in character and requires the application of a range of capabilities within the framework of a versatile approach to strategy. The paper recommends that Australia should seek to develop a joint maritime strategy based on agile forces for offshore manoeuvre and a willingness to participate in coalition military operations to reassure the present balance of power. Such a strategy should be determined by the following requirements: an emphasis on littoral operations in a maritime environment; the need for a clear recognition of asymmetric conflict; the ability to acquire affordable information technology; and, finally, by a realistic assessment of the domestic restraints that a liberal democracy such as Australia faces in employing armed force.

## **CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE IN THE AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

During the Cold War Australian defence thinkers paid comparatively little attention to Western ideas about conventional deterrence. This was largely because the use of conventional forces to deter aggression was seen through the narrow lens of superpower confrontation in Europe and in the context of nuclear deterrence theory. Both of these propositions were often difficult to apply to Australia's strategic conditions. With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar paradigm of classic nuclear deterrence has receded in Western defence circles. In the post-Cold War era, interest has focused on whether a new concept of deterrence, based predominantly on advanced conventional weapons, can be developed to promote Western security in a multipolar international environment.

This paper seeks to establish the usefulness and relevance of post-Cold War ideas on conventional deterrence as a basis for developing future Australian military strategy. The paper develops four themes. First, the background to the evolution of conventional deterrence as a modern concept during the Cold War is reviewed briefly. Second, the impact of post-Cold War Western ideas about the new nature of conflict and the relevance of conventional deterrence are examined. American literature provides much of this material because it is in the United States that the most creative thinking has occurred concerning the future of deterrence theory. Third, Australian interpretations of deterrence are examined both during and after the Cold War era. Fourth, several ideas about the linkages between deterrence, the nature of future conflict and the possible future directions of Australian military strategy are explored.

The paper suggests that, for Australia, the adoption of an explicit conventional deterrent posture would be a tenuous foundation upon which to build a twenty-first century military strategy. In a multipolar world of regional disorder, political uncertainty and intractable conflicts, deterrence is poorly suited to provide a wide range of defence responses. In addition, Australia is unlikely to acquire the size and type of advanced military arsenal that would allow it to embrace an explicit strategy of conventional deterrence. Nor does Australia's democratic political system necessarily suit a strategic posture that is based on conventional deterrence.

Instead of adopting a deterrent posture emphasising pre-emption or retaliation, Australia should seek to maximise its limited military resources with a strategy based on agility and reassurance, that is, a versatile capability for offshore deployment in support of regional interests and a willingness to supply forces to uphold the stability of the international security system. By developing a robust ADF, Australia should seek to make deterrence implicit through nimble and flexible diplomacy and military versatility.

### **Nuclear Deterrence and Conventional Deterrence during the Cold War**

The roots of the modern theory of deterrence can be traced to the evolution of strategic air power between the two world wars. Many of the propositions and modes of Cold War deterrence thinking were related to targeting and first-strike philosophies initially advanced by air power theorists in the 1930s. In the words of the British historian Richard Overy, 'deterrence is as old as fear itself; but *as a formal description*

of a strategic aim it dates from the 1950s superpower [nuclear] confrontation'.<sup>1</sup>

During the Cold War, the concept of deterrence became the 'jewel in the crown' of modern Western strategic studies and defence planning.<sup>2</sup> It was determined almost exclusively by the forces of the two opposing alliances of the superpower confrontation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact. The defence analysts Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke have defined Cold War deterrence as 'simply the persuasion of one's opponent that the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits'.<sup>3</sup> Deterrence can only work if a threat of military retaliation is credible and there are no doubts about the political will to use it. During the Cold War, deterrence was viewed primarily as a *punitive* (or countervalue strategy) rather than a *denial* (or counterforce or battlefield) strategy.<sup>4</sup> The development of deterrence theory in the 1950s did much to reverse the traditional imperatives of military strategy. Before the atomic revolution, the focus in traditional military strategy had been on victory in the field;

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<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Overy, 'Air Power and the Origins of Deterrence Theory before 1939', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, March 1992, XV, i, p. 73. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Colin S. Gray, 'Deterrence in the New Strategic Environment', *Comparative Strategy*, 1992, XI, iii, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1974, p. 11. See also Michael Howard, 'Deterrence and Reassurance', *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1982–83, LXI, ii, pp. 309–24.

<sup>4</sup> In Stephen J. Cimbala's words, 'a deterrent threat is a threat to inflict unacceptable *punishment* to the society or government of the opponent, regardless of whether or not his forces prevail in battle', Stephen J. Cimbala, *Strategy after Deterrence*, Praeger, New York, 1991, p. xii. Emphasis in original.

nuclear deterrence, on the other hand, was concerned with shaping political behaviour with weapons of mass destruction.<sup>5</sup> Modern deterrence, as developed during the Cold War era, was in effect the opposite of warfighting. It emphasised prevention, whereas warfighting emphasised coercion.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s Cold War nuclear deterrence developed a set of unique characteristics: two ideologically hostile but rational political actors in the form of the United States and the Soviet Union using cost–benefit analysis; a series of well-defined strike scenarios which were understood by both sides; continuous modernisation of nuclear arsenals but a military build-up based on the principle of faith in non-use; an assumption of assured destruction in the event of deterrence failing; and the existence of means to communicate effectively. Deterrence spawned its own lexicon and a set of levels. It embraced *capability* (the deployment of nuclear forces), *credibility* (declared intent) and *communication* (political will), while its levels were defined as *general*, *immediate* and *extended*.<sup>7</sup>

Ideas about conventional deterrence have been derived largely from classical nuclear strategy theory and the superpower confrontation.<sup>8</sup> The development of conventional deterrence in Western thinking was largely an outgrowth of the East–West

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<sup>5</sup> Keith B. Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky, 1996, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> See Glenn A. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1961, p. 4 and André Beaufre, *Deterrence and Strategy*, Faber and Faber, London, 1965, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> See Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1983.

<sup>8</sup> Gary L. Guertner, 'Conclusion', in Gary L. Guertner, Robert Haffa, Jr., and George Quester, *Conventional Forces and the Future of Deterrence*, US Army War College, 1992, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, p. 53

balance of forces in Europe. The context for analysis was the NATO Central Front and the West's unfavourable conventional force ratios vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact. Western theorising on conventional deterrence was focused on defensive measures aimed at halting a Soviet blitzkrieg in Europe and on trying to prevent escalation to an all-out nuclear exchange.<sup>9</sup>

During the Cold War, although conventional forces were used to diversify and to supplement deterrence as 'tripwires', they were never designed to replace strategic nuclear forces. This approach was as much a method of influencing the superpower political calculus as it was about formulating operational strategies.<sup>10</sup> Conventional forces came to be seen as a useful rung on the escalation ladder, a means of diversifying and supplementing nuclear deterrence in Western Europe. Conventional deterrence was appropriate only in symmetrical crises; it was coupled with nuclear weapons and became tied to doctrines such as flexible response and limited war.<sup>11</sup>

The most comprehensive study of conventional deterrence written during the Cold War was by an American political scientist, John J. Mearsheimer, who attempted to broaden Western understanding of deterrence based on conventional forces by using comparative twentieth-century historical analysis.<sup>12</sup> He drew a distinction between conventional deterrence and nuclear deterrence, by stating that the former

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<sup>9</sup> See for instance André Beaufre, *Strategy for Tomorrow*, Macdonald and Jane's, London, 1974, and Thomas Boyd-Carpenter, *Conventional Deterrence into the 1990s*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> Gary L. Guertner, 'Introduction', in Guertner, Haffa and Quester, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> See Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1983.

was more directly related to military strategy and could be defined as ‘a function of the capability of denying an aggressor his battlefield objectives with conventional forces’.<sup>13</sup> Mearsheimer’s work demonstrated the limitations of deterrence based on conventional forces. He concluded that, in many cases, purely military considerations failed to serve as a deterrent.<sup>14</sup>

### **Post–Cold War Security and the Debate over Conventional Deterrence**

The end of the Cold War demolished many of the theoretical underpinnings of almost half a century of international relations and strategic studies theory.<sup>15</sup> Cold War strategic studies, with their narrow emphasis on bipolar deterrence, have in the 1990s given way to the broader field of post–Cold War security studies, which embody national, international, regional and trans-state perspectives. Security studies are characterised by a sole superpower; regional disorder, cultural–political disharmony and information-age military developments.<sup>16</sup>

The current international system is marked by three paradoxes that illuminate the transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world. First, Western victory over communism in the Cold

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. Mearsheimer’s case studies were taken from the outbreak of World War II, from the Arab-Israeli conflict and from Central Europe during the Cold War.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203–12.

<sup>15</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, ‘International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War’, in *The Cold War and After: Prospects for Peace*, eds Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1993, pp. 323–88; Richard H. Shultz, Roy Godson and George H. Quester (eds), *Security Studies for the 21st Century*, Brassey’s, Washington, 1997, p. 6–7.

<sup>16</sup> Shultz, Godson and Quester, ‘Introduction’, *Security Studies for the 21st Century*, pp. 1–2; Gray, ‘Deterrence in the New Strategic Environment’, p. 249.

War has not brought international peace or overall security; instead it has helped to spawn the emergence of an unpredictable new international order, which is culturally diverse and prone to both political fragmentation and weapons proliferation. Second, there is the phenomenon of both increased integration through economic globalisation and, on the other hand, rising regional fragmentation based on the resurgence of ethno-nationalist political movements. Global military tension may have lessened, but the danger of regional conflict has increased. Third, conventional precision weapons and information warfare techniques, as demonstrated in the 1990–91 Gulf War, have emerged at a time when the lack of great-power rivalry may limit their full use in enforcing international security. The United States may aim to be a ‘benign hegemon’, a polity as preponderant as Rome during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in the second century AD; however, like Rome, it faces the challenge of innumerable small wars if it is to maintain a favourable international security environment.<sup>17</sup>

Western security planners are thus confronted by a complex spectrum of conflict, which is exacerbated by a receding tide of international political discipline. As the American defence analyst Edward N. Luttwak has observed, ‘now that the Cold War no longer suppresses hot wars, the entire culture of disciplined restraint in the use of force is in dissolution’.<sup>18</sup> In 1993, James Woolsey, the Director of the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), noted the challenge, stating: ‘we [the West] have slain a large dragon. But we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes.

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<sup>17</sup> Gray, ‘Deterrence in the New Strategic Environment’, p. 251.

<sup>18</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, ‘Towards Post-Heroic Warfare’, *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 1995, LXXIV, iii, p. 111.

And in many ways, the dragon was easier to keep track of'.<sup>19</sup> This transformed global security setting of a jungle full of 'poisonous snakes' has wide-ranging implications for military doctrine and strategy, not least the efficacy of deterrence theory.

In an era of regional disorder, cultural–political disharmony and information-age military capabilities, the future of deterrence, especially in its conventional form, is now disputed in Western defence circles. Deterrence has ceased to be a necessity; it has become merely one policy option in a broader conception of strategy.<sup>20</sup> Some analysts suggest that deterrence theory can be emancipated from Cold War thinking to emphasise a more dynamic modality of strategy. These thinkers base their hopes on the supremacy of American conventional forces using new precision weapons. Other analysts believe that deterrence cannot work in the new conditions of a multipolar world for the very reason that it must rely largely on conventional force, which is inherently contestable and therefore open to failure. Debate revolves around the effectiveness of conventional weapons in replacing nuclear weapons, the problems of proliferation and unconventional war, the issue of strategic culture, and the nature of Western political response to crisis.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Senate Statement, 2 February 1993, cited in Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Watman and Dean Wilkening, *US Regional Deterrence Strategies*, RAND, Santa Monica, 1995, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> For a good overview of this debate in its American context, see Charles T. Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence: In from the Cold and Out of the Nuclear Fire?', *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1994, XVII, iii, pp. 203–33.

*Dynamic Deterrence: Precision Weapons and Post–Cold War Conventional Deterrence*

For those American analysts who see a future for deterrence theory in the post–Cold War era, the new capabilities of conventional precision strike are the keys to developing a new theory of ‘general extended conventional deterrence’. This school of thought may be traced to the rise of a belief in discriminate deterrence based on emerging military technologies that grew in NATO circles during the late 1980s.<sup>22</sup> Conventional deterrence may become effective through information-age technology conferring ‘dominant battlespace knowledge’ on advanced Western forces. This new focus on conventional deterrence is built around stealth technology and the potential of precision targeting.<sup>23</sup>

Supporters of what American defence analyst Charles T. Allan has termed ‘dynamic deterrence’ argue that information-age technology gives some room for the nuclear-age model of deterrence to be transferred to conventional forces.<sup>24</sup> Gary L. Guertner points out that conventional deterrence requires technological superiority, a form of collective security, forward presence, strategic agility and theatre defence. ‘On balance’, he writes, ‘conventional deterrence that combines attempts to dissuade, capabilities to neutralise or capture,

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<sup>22</sup> See Daniel J. Kaufman, David S. Clark and Kevin P. Sheehan, eds, *US National Security Strategy for the 1990s*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208–11; Paul Nitze, ‘Is It Time to Junk Our Nukes?’, *Washington Post*, January 14, 1994; Gary L. Guertner, ‘Deterrence and Conventional Military Forces’, *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 1993, XVI, i, pp. 141–51; Robert P. Haffa, Jr., ‘The Future of Conventional Deterrence: Strategies and Forces to Underwrite a New World Order’, in Guertner, Haffa and Quester, *Conventional Forces and the Future of Deterrence*, pp. 5–30.

<sup>24</sup> Allan, *op. cit.*, pp. 208–17.

credible threats to retaliate, and the ability to defend is more credible against regional powers than nuclear threats'.<sup>25</sup>

Conventional deterrence based on precision weapons requires new conditions that are quite unlike those of the Cold War era. Above all, these new conditions relate to the need to use force to validate deterrence, the requirement for speedy response to crises and the emphasis on offensive action in asymmetrical crises. In the nuclear age, resorting to the use of force was considered to be a failure of deterrence. In the post-Cold War age, however, 'it will be necessary to use the [deterrent] force in order for it to deter'.<sup>26</sup> In short, in order to make conventional deterrence credible, states may have to fight wars to create reputations for capability and will. An explicit embrace of the use of force is needed because '*in order to communicate a credible deterrent threat, capable conventional military force must first be used*'.<sup>27</sup> This conception of conventional deterrence is the greatest departure from Cold War formulations of deterrence theory. For the proponents of dynamic deterrence, conventional forces are no longer static tripwires that are geographically fixed, but highly mobile barbed-wire hedges to be moved into position to stop aggression.

In another striking difference from classical deterrence, dynamic deterrence demands a swift response. During the Cold War, crisis response was based on the notion of gradual escalation, but in the post-Cold War era the emphasis is on terminating conflict quickly by the use of precision weapons,

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<sup>25</sup> Guertner, 'Deterrence and Conventional Military Forces', p. 147.

<sup>26</sup> Haffa, 'The Future of Conventional Deterrence: Strategies and Forces to Underwrite a New World Order', pp. 14–16; 25.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12, emphasis added; Major Ronald M. Bonesteel, 'Conventional Deterrence in Ethno-Nationalist Conflicts', *Military Review*, January–February 1995, LXXV, i, p. 25.

high readiness and power projection.<sup>28</sup> This stress on swiftness and decision, or as one air power theorist has described it, ‘the gift of time’, has influenced the rise of the halt phase strategy in the United States Air Force (USAF).<sup>29</sup> The essence of this strategy is the use of air power as the primary military force in modern conflict. According to some halt phase advocates, an aggressor employing conventional forces could be halted by air-delivered precision strike within two weeks.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, unlike the Cold War, where Western conventional deterrence was defensive and formulated on the symmetrical challenge presented by the massed forces of the Warsaw Pact, post-Cold War deterrence is likely to be offensive in capability and to be based on countering asymmetrical challenges.<sup>31</sup> In dynamic deterrence, the Cold War distinction between deterrence and compellance as representing the active and the passive uses of force respectively has disappeared.<sup>32</sup> ‘Compellance’, observes the distinguished British military historian Michael Howard, ‘usually signals a failure of deterrence, but deterrence is not likely to be credible unless the possibility of compellance is evident’.<sup>33</sup> Compellance

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<sup>28</sup> Haffa, *op. cit.*, p. 18; Bonesteel, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Grant, *Airpower and the Total Force: The Gift of Time*, IRIS Independent Research, Arlington, Virginia, 1998.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* For a critical analysis, see Earl H. Tilford, Jr., *Halt Phase Strategy: New Wine in Old Skins. . . With Powerpoint*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, July 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Haffa, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> See Robert J. Art, ‘The Four Functions of Force’, in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, eds Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, University Press of America, Maryland, 4th edn, 1993, pp. 5–6.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Howard, ‘Lessons of the Cold War’, *Survival*, Winter 1994–95, XXXVI, iv, p. 165.

involves the deployment of military power to force an adversary to change his political behaviour.<sup>34</sup>

*The Limitations of Post–Cold War Deterrence: The Challenges of Weapons Proliferation, Asymmetric Warfare and Strategic Culture*

In an age of regionalism and diverse threats, some specialists doubt the usefulness of the precision model of dynamic deterrence. A multipolar system erodes deterrence because it multiplies the risks of miscalculation. This is particularly the case when faced by weapons proliferation and by opponents with differing cultural values in decision-making.<sup>35</sup>

The strategic analyst, Keith B. Payne, points out that the spread of weapons of mass destruction is a potentially defining feature of the post–Cold War era.<sup>36</sup> He warns that successful conventional deterrence may persuade weaker non-Western states to acquire a nuclear or chemical-weapons option to offset the West’s advantages in technology and force projection. Payne cites the former Indian Army Chief of Staff, General K. Sundarji’s statement that ‘the Gulf War emphasised once again that nuclear weapons are the ultimate coin of power. In the final analysis, they [Coalition members] could go in [to liberate Kuwait] because the United States had nuclear weapons and Iraq didn’t’.<sup>37</sup> In the future, Western expeditionary forces could confront regional opponents capable of striking rapidly at troop concentrations, cities, seaports and airports, with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missile

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<sup>34</sup> Art, ‘The Four Functions of Force’, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., ‘The Future Use of Military Power’, in Shultz, Godson and Quester, *Security Studies for the 21st Century*, pp. 203–5.

<sup>36</sup> Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

proliferation could thus undermine the West's capacity to mount force projection operations at an acceptable level of risk in dealing with regional aggression.<sup>38</sup>

Future Western opponents may also choose to wage what is now often described as asymmetric warfare. The American military analyst Colonel Charles J. Dunlap, Jr. has defined asymmetric warfare as follows:

In broad terms it [asymmetrical warfare] simply means warfare that seeks to avoid an opponent's strength: it is an approach which tries to focus whatever may be one side's comparative advantages against its enemy's relative weaknesses. In a way, seeking asymmetries is fundamental to all warfighting. But in the modern context, asymmetrical warfare emphasises what are popularly perceived as unconventional or nontraditional methodologies.<sup>39</sup>

Its aim is to avoid force-on-force battles using unconventional methods such as protracted insurgency.<sup>40</sup> This form of warfare is, of course, not new. It has been the way of the guerrilla fighter since Biblical times. In its modern manifestation, it resembles in many respects what Robert Taber, writing in 1965, called the 'war of the flea', which is waged against the powerful hunting dog. Infestation of the dog's habitat by the ubiquitous flea neutralises the 'gift of time' because the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anaemia without ever having found anything on which to close its jaws or rake with its

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., 'Preliminary Observations: Asymmetrical Warfare and the Western Mindset', in *Challenging the United States Symmetrically and Asymmetrically: Can America be Defeated?*, ed. Colonel Lloyd J. Matthews, US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, July 1998, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Paul F. Herman, Jr., 'Asymmetric Warfare: Sizing the Threat', *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Spring 1997, VI, I, p. 176.

claws.<sup>41</sup> Asymmetric warfare seeks to use the physical environment and various politico-military capabilities in ways that are atypical and unanticipated by modern Western militaries, thus catching them off balance and unprepared.<sup>42</sup> The aim is to seek to control the threshold and spectrum of conflict by raising the costs of Western intervention. Much of the current writing on asymmetric conflict suggests a form of future warfare that may make conventional deterrence highly problematical.<sup>43</sup>

The problems of weapons proliferation and asymmetric warfare throw doubt on the workings of the ‘rational-actor model’ in a multipolar world. To compound matters further there is the growing problem of strategic culture, which involves a ‘set of beliefs held by strategic decisionmakers regarding the political object of war and the most effective means of achieving it’.<sup>44</sup> In the post–Cold War era, the rational actor model of classic deterrence has been challenged by a new phenomenon of a ‘strategic personality’ that is culturally diverse in values and beliefs.<sup>45</sup> Western concepts of strategic rationality may not be suited to situations dealing with religious zeal, warrior honour, or clan and ethnic rivalry. The motivations of future adversaries may make them immune to threats that would, under the Cold War system of deterrence,

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice*, Paladin, St Albans, Herts, 1970 edition, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> Herman, ‘Asymmetric Warfare: Sizing the Threat’, p. 176.

<sup>43</sup> See the useful collection of essays in Matthews, *Challenging the United States*, and also Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, Free Press, New York, 1991.

<sup>44</sup> Yitzhak Klein, ‘A Theory of Strategic Culture’, *Comparative Strategy*, 1991, X, i, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion, see Stephen Peter Rosen, ‘The Problem of Societies and Military Power’, chapter 1 in his *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1996, pp. 1–32.

have been credible in Western eyes.<sup>46</sup> The West, it has been suggested, has ‘little understanding of the risk/gain calculus as a basis for rational behaviour in the case of an actor guided by various forms of fanatical fundamentalism or in the case of parties to an ethnic conflict prepared to fight to the death for values and goals largely incomprehensible to outsiders’.<sup>47</sup> Movements that place supreme value on martyrdom (such as the Islamic Hezbollah organisation) or regimes that slaughter their own citizens (such as North Korea) are unlikely to embrace Western concepts of deterrence and stability. In the future, the strategic personality of an actor will have to be determined on a case-by-case basis if there is to be any accuracy in assessing risk-taking intentions or predicting responses.

The problems of regionalism, weapons proliferation, asymmetric warfare and culture have led prominent strategic theorists such as Colin S. Gray and John Arquilla to dispute the reliability of conventional deterrence.<sup>48</sup> Gray points out that general deterrence may allow the US and its allies to

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<sup>46</sup> Gary L. Guertner, ‘Discussion’, in Shultz, Godson and Quester, *Security Studies for the 21st Century*, pp. 201–7; Juliet A. Swiecicki, ‘Severing the Ties That Bind: Moving Beyond Deterrence’, *Comparative Strategy*, 1992, II, iii, pp. 289–91.

<sup>47</sup> Pfaltzgraff, ‘The Future Use of Military Power’, p. 181. See also Ralph Peters, ‘Winning Against Warriors’, *Strategic Review*, Summer 1996, XXIV, iii, pp. 12–21, and ‘Our Old New Enemies’, in Matthews, *Challenging the United States*, pp. 215–38.

<sup>48</sup> Colin S. Gray, ‘Deterrence in the New Strategic Environment’, pp. 247–68; ‘Deterrence Revisited: Revisiting Some Fundamentals’, *Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly*, Summer 1991, XXI, ii, pp. 13–21; ‘Deterrence and Regional Conflict: Hopes, Fallacies, and “Fixes”’, *Comparative Strategy*, 1998, XVII, i, pp. 45–62; John Arquilla, ‘Bound to Fail: Deterrence after the Cold War’, *Comparative Strategy*, 1995, XIV, ii, pp. 123–36. See also Barry Wolf, *When the Weak Attack the Strong: Failures of Deterrence*, RAND, Santa Monica, California, 1991.

shape the strategic environment, but it cannot help them to deal with specific conflicts. Deterrence is a relational variable dependent not so much on advanced weapons as political behaviour.<sup>49</sup> He notes, ‘it should never be forgotten that deterrence requires the cooperation of a foe. Deterrence does not work directly through the force of arms, but rather by the choice of the intended deteree that indeed he chooses to be deterred. There is a choice’.<sup>50</sup> For Gray, such conflicts as the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Falklands War of 1982 and the Gulf War of 1990–91 show the unreliability of conventional deterrence.<sup>51</sup> Deterrence can never replace defence as an operational mission because military forces cannot train to deter, only to fight. Deterrence then is a political phenomenon. As two US Army soldier–scholars point out:

It [conventional deterrence] is an effect and a political goal, not a military mission per se, and constant reminders that deterrence, not war fighting has top operational priority can confuse and distract both soldiers and leaders. At least at the conventional level, a capacity to fight and fight well contributes most to deterrence’.<sup>52</sup>

John Arquilla argues that conventional deterrence is problematical after the Cold War because of Western democratic culture, in which there is a preference to use force only as a last resort.<sup>53</sup> Because Western democracies operate under a web of domestic political constraints, a quick reaction to post–Cold War regional crises is difficult to organise. In liberal democracies, military action must be justified by public

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<sup>49</sup> Gray, ‘Deterrence in the New Strategic Environment’, pp. 256–7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>51</sup> Gray, ‘Deterrence and Regional Conflict: Hopes, Fallacies, and “Fixes”’, p. 56.

<sup>52</sup> Captain Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Captain Ricky L. Waddell, ‘The Future of Conventional Deterrence’, *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1992, XLV, iii., p. 88.

<sup>53</sup> Arquilla, ‘Bound to Fail: Regional Deterrence after the Cold War’, p. 123.

support, minimal and controllable use of force, clear objectives, international law, and United Nations mandate. A general unwillingness to consider the early use of force is a hallmark of democratic political practice.<sup>54</sup>

Yet deterrence is most likely to succeed in the early stage of a crisis and to become less effective as time passes and the adversary's commitment grows. The classic historical case of this syndrome is the Anglo-French failure to deter Hitler's Germany between 1936 and 1939.<sup>55</sup> The recent diplomatic behaviour of the Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic in the Balkans is a variation on this syndrome. The domestic political proclivities of Western democracies creates 'a gradualist, force-last approach to crisis management. This weakens deterrent efforts . . . and will likely contribute to future failures in regional settings, where righting the local balance of forces and quickly and clearly communicating intent and resolve will prove vitally important'.<sup>56</sup> This view is a sobering counterpoint to that of those analysts who believe that quick and accurate strike by information-age conventional weapons can become the new basis for deterrence.

In regional deterrence, it is not so much technology that matters as Western political will. Regional opponents with different cultural values may possess an unrelenting resolve that exceeds that of the West. As Arquilla puts it, 'asymmetry of relative motivation could prove the most serious external constraint on regional deterrence, for if an opponent is relatively impervious to threats that raise the specter of higher costs and risks for aggression, then the fundamental calculus of

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 123–4.

<sup>55</sup> See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1994, chapter 12.

<sup>56</sup> Arquilla, 'Bound to Fail: Regional Deterrence after the Cold War', p. 125.

deterrence is overturned'.<sup>57</sup> Because of the complex workings of Western liberal democracy, regional deterrence based on conventional forces will probably be a costly failure unless Western nations develop a greater willingness to exercise force preventively.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Australian Approach to Conventional Deterrence**

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) defines deterrence as 'the prevention from action by fear of the consequences. Deterrence is a state of mind brought about by the existence of a credible threat or unacceptable counter action'.<sup>59</sup> A survey of Australia's triennial *Strategic Basis* documents between the late 1940s and early 1970s shows little official inclination to embrace conventional deterrence as an explicit military strategy.<sup>60</sup>

In the mid-1970s and early 1980s, conventional deterrence became an important factor in the strategic debates surrounding the emerging new policies of 'defence-self-reliance' and 'defence of Australia'. After the mid-1980s, this focus waned in the face of the strategy of denial advocated by the 1986 Dibb Report and the later strategy of defence-in-

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Australian Defence Force, Australian Defence Force Publication, Operations Series (ADFP1), *Doctrine*, Defence Centre, Canberra, 1993, para. 337.

<sup>60</sup> 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, pp. S 300–18.

depth adopted by the 1987 White Paper.<sup>61</sup> Following the end of the Cold War there has been a modest renewal of interest in conventional deterrence in some Australian defence circles, particularly in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

*Debates on Conventional Deterrence in the 1970s and 1980s*

After the mid-1970s deterrence became a feature of the debate surrounding the shift from forward defence (which had dominated Australian security in the 1950s and 1960s) towards defence of the Australian continent. In October 1976, the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) of the Australian National University published the proceedings of a major conference on new aspects of the defence of Australia in which the concept of an Australian approach to deterrence was discussed.<sup>62</sup> It was suggested that the principal task for Australia's defence policy was to develop a posture that would help in 'establishing that *credible deterrence* which can keep aggressors from her shores without suffering the human casualties and physical destruction which inevitably and increasingly accompanies the actual use of force'.<sup>63</sup>

In an important essay, Robert O'Neill, one of Australia's most distinguished strategic analysts, argued that Australia's new strategic posture should be that of the 'armed defensive'. O'Neill suggested that the essence of the armed defensive was deterrence of enemy attack through being able to inflict on the

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<sup>61</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence by Mr Paul Dibb*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986 (henceforth cited as Dibb Report); *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987.

<sup>62</sup> Robert O'Neill (ed), *The Defence of Australia—Fundamental New Aspects*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1976.

<sup>63</sup> Robert O'Neill, 'Introduction' in O'Neill, *The Defence of Australia—Fundamental New Aspects*, p. 5. Emphasis added.

enemy losses that were out of proportion to what he might hope to gain from attack.<sup>64</sup> O'Neill believed:

. . . for Australia . . . our strategic posture should be clearly defensive and aimed at deterrence of all forms of attack, at high level or low, and all non-violent infringements of our sovereignty . . . Should deterrence fail with respect to the various levels of armed attack upon Australia, then the services must be able to resist the enemy's offensive with both direct and indirect methods'.<sup>65</sup>

Doctrinally, if deterrence was to be a main object of Australia's strategic posture, the ADF's force structure needed to be able to provide credible surge capacity in reserves and equipment. To 'give an enemy pause', priority needed to be assigned to the development of a strong maritime strike capability and protracted land defence doctrines.<sup>66</sup> O'Neill thought that, in the Australian context, the credibility of deterrence had to be established on a new basis using emerging precision guided missiles and new surveillance technologies. 'If deterrence is to be Australia's fundamental defence posture', he argued, 'its basis and credibility must be constantly and sceptically re-appraised'.<sup>67</sup>

In a later publication, O'Neill warned that the Australian combat force should form the basis of deterrence because 'we will have little capacity as a deterrent force if we do not look as if we can fight'.<sup>68</sup> In March 1977, the defence analyst B. N. Primrose extended O'Neill's views on a credible

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<sup>64</sup> Robert O'Neill, 'The Development of Operational Doctrines for the ADF', in O'Neill, *The Defence of Australia—Fundamental New Aspects*, p. 127.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>68</sup> Robert O'Neill, *The Defence of Continental Australia*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, Working Paper No. 1, November 1978, p. 5.

deterrent posture by arguing that Australia should adopt a concept of deterrence based upon defending a strategic archipelago. Primrose argued in favour of a joint concept of maritime deterrence.<sup>69</sup> He warned against a narrow approach to deterrence in which, as he put it, defence planners merely added ‘a maritime fringe to continental defence’.<sup>70</sup> Australia’s strategic maritime environment required that the Army consider the development of an amphibious force specialising in combined seaborne and airborne injection of troops with close naval and air support. Primrose believed that, given the right equipment and tactics, maritime deterrence would provide a suitable framework for the defence of Australia’s vital interests short of invasion.<sup>71</sup>

In November 1976, the White Paper, *Australian Defence*, outlined the policy of self-reliance and defence of Australia, and articulated views on a defensive posture which included the role of deterrence. In chapter 4, the White Paper discussed Australia’s future plans for military capabilities based on developing naval and air strike components to deter aggression.<sup>72</sup> This chapter contained a discrete section entitled ‘Strike, Reconnaissance and Deterrence’ in which it was stated, ‘Australia’s strategic and geographic circumstances call for strike forces that can deter attack’.<sup>73</sup>

The core of a strike force was seen as residing principally in the RAAF’s 24 F111-C aircraft. These platforms were,

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<sup>69</sup> B. N. Primrose, ‘Insurance, Deterrence, Faith: The Search for an Integrated Concept of Defence’, *The Australian Journal of Defence Studies*, March 1977, I, i, pp. 36–46.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44–6.

<sup>72</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Defence*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976, p.12, para. 18; p. 14, para. 32.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18, para. 25.

through a process of ‘progressive acquisition’, to be fitted with sensors and stand-off precision guided munitions by the early 1980s.<sup>74</sup> The White Paper also described the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and elements of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as having a role in deterrence.<sup>75</sup> In particular, it described submarines as a ‘potent deterrent’ capable of imposing a high strain on an enemy’s resources.<sup>76</sup>

Although the 1976 White Paper gave explicit recognition to deterrence as a strategic principle, it was ambiguous in describing the ADF’s force development needs in relation to implementing conventional deterrence. In 1979 this weakness was the subject of a major study by J. O. Langtry and Desmond J. Ball entitled, *Controlling Australia’s Threat Environment*.<sup>77</sup> This work stands as the most thorough treatment of the concept of conventional deterrence ever written in an Australian context. Langtry and Ball were critical of the lack of coherence and consensus in Australia’s approach to deterrence. They believed that the 1976 White Paper had failed to address whether deterrence should pre-empt or react to emerging threats, and this failure had led to a disconnection between strategic assessment and force planning.<sup>78</sup> The authors considered the ADF concept of planning around a ‘core force’ to be too slow and reactive to meet Australia’s security needs. In the absence of perceived threats, Australia’s defence planning should be aimed at deterring aggression. They argued that ‘the deterrence of threats to Australia’s vital interests should be an essential element of our national security policy,

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18, paras, 26–36.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18, para. 36.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20, para. 51.

<sup>77</sup> J. O. Langtry and Desmond J. Ball, *Controlling Australia’s Threat Environment: A Methodology for Planning Australia’s Defence Force Development*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1979, p. xi.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3; 58

backed up by credible and capable deterrent forces.’<sup>79</sup> They proposed the adoption of a planning methodology that allowed Australia to control its threat environment using a force structure composed of ‘both deterrent and defence capabilities’.<sup>80</sup>

To this end, they advocated an Australian concept of deterrence employing a posture of progressive deterrence based on the idea of ‘disproportionate response’.<sup>81</sup> They went on to state:

Because Australia currently has the military advantage in the region it is possible through the proper application of the theory and practice of deterrence and the concept of disproportionate response to ‘*control* her threat environment’ rather than *react* to it. It demonstrates that it is possible to develop a relatively ‘threat insensitive’ defence posture—a posture designed around ‘contingencies to be deterred’. This approach would abjure specifications of any particular threat. Rather, it would identify a range of contingencies which Australia could possibly face, from minor harassments to nuclear attack, and describe the policy and posture necessary to deter these contingencies.<sup>82</sup>

Progressive deterrence and its instrument of disproportionate response were based on Australia possessing an array of predominantly deterrent capabilities at the higher level of conflict. These capabilities and skill in escalation control should be exploited in order to force an adversary into considering lower-level military challenges.<sup>83</sup>

The aim was to present the Australian Government with a range of enhanced deterrence options through selective force capabilities that would cause a disproportionate response from

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–8; 21.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60. Emphases in original.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62–3.

any regional adversary in terms of cost, money, materiel and manpower. In terms of capabilities, Langtry and Ball favoured a joint maritime strike command in which RAAF and RAN platforms would form the heart of an effective deterrent.<sup>84</sup> A two-tier force structure was proposed consisting of a first tier of high-level forces composed mainly of RAN submarines and RAAF strike aircraft. At the second tier most of the bulk of the Army's manpower would be organised for continental defence in order to contribute to an effective deterrent posture.<sup>85</sup>

The weaknesses in the work of Langtry and Ball were threefold. First, their work lacked sufficient comparative focus on the unreliable nature of conventional deterrence. Second, although Langtry and Ball sought to draw a difference between the reciprocity and interdependence of mutual nuclear deterrence and what they defined as 'unilateral deterrence' at the conventional level, their calculus and principles were still drawn largely from classical deterrence theory.<sup>86</sup> Implicit in the approach of Langtry and Ball was the assumption that the general principles of rational interaction between opponents, capability, commitment and credibility would apply to a distinct theory of Australian conventional deterrence.<sup>87</sup> Third, the authors placed too much reliance on a notional opponent's perceptions of rational cost and risk analysis, and treated military capabilities as constant factors applying to all contingencies rather than as variables in a strategic decision-making process.

The views of Langtry and Ball were not widely shared in the Australian defence community during the 1980s. A notable

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43; 51–6.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50; 54–6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–12.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

exception was Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot, a former Chief of the Defence Force Staff, who in 1986 called for the adoption of a deterrence strategy based on retaliation by maritime strike forces.<sup>88</sup> In 1983, in discussing force structure requirements, the *Strategic Basis* paper placed emphasis on defence contingencies rather than on deterrence.<sup>89</sup> The document stated that Australia required:

A force-in-being, capable of dealing effectively with current and foreseeable tasks and the *kinds of defence contingencies* that are credible in the shorter term, including *deterrence* of such escalation as an enemy might be capable of; and capable of providing a basis for timely expansion to counter deteriorating strategic circumstances.<sup>90</sup>

The emphasis on credible defence contingencies suggests that defence officials viewed deterrence as an implicit feature of a strong force-in-being rather than as a primary determinant of Australian strategy.

Leading defence analysts, notably Ross Babbage and Paul Dibb, rejected deterrence as a suitable strategic posture for Australia. In 1980 Ross Babbage argued that the problems in determining the capacities for successful deterrence were highly complex.<sup>91</sup> In a later work published in 1990, Babbage conceded that deterrence was a highly desirable outcome for a

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<sup>88</sup> Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot, 'Basic Strategy is Wrong', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, August 1986, XIII, ii. pp. 17–18. It should be noted that Synnot's views were in reaction to the Dibb Report.

<sup>89</sup> 'Key Elements in the Triennial Reviews of Strategic Guidance since 1945', p. 17. Emphasis added. See also the discussion by Lieutenant Colonel D. M. Hodda, 'Deterrence as a Determinant of Force Structure', *Defence Force Journal*, September/October 1983, No. 42, pp. 13–20.

<sup>90</sup> 'Key Elements in the Triennial Reviews of Strategic Guidance since 1945', p. 17. Emphasis added..

<sup>91</sup> Ross Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1980, p. 101, fn 29.

defence posture; however, as a discrete strategy, it was inappropriate for Australia due to its conceptual weaknesses and imprecision.<sup>92</sup> ‘There is little evidence’, he wrote, ‘to suggest that, in the midst of serious international crises, national leaders routinely weigh up objectively and with any precision the cost–benefit equation and act accordingly’.<sup>93</sup> Such a calculation was ‘a most uncertain foundation for national defence strategy’ since it provided imprecise guidance for force structure development.<sup>94</sup>

In his March 1986 report on Australia’s defence capabilities, Paul Dibb rejected the concept of deterrence as a planning methodology. Dibb believed that peacetime defence spending was in itself largely deterrent in nature, since it was aimed at making a hostile act less likely.<sup>95</sup> Dibb went on to state:

The problem with deterrence as a force-planning concept is that there are historical examples where apparently inferior forces have attacked—that is, were undeterred—and have won. *Deterrence relies essentially on influencing the enemy’s perceptions, and this must be an uncertain basis for a conventional defence strategy.* The military balance between two opposing sides, even if correctly assessed, is only one of several considerations—including domestic political imperatives—taken into account by policy-makers contemplating war’.<sup>96</sup>

Like Babbage, Dibb viewed the concept of deterrence as too imprecise for defence planning in terms of developing equipment, technology and readiness. In terms of pre-emption or retaliatory strike forces, there could be a difference in military capabilities that were relevant to an offensive

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<sup>92</sup> Ross Babbage, *A Coast Too Long: Defending Australia beyond the 1990s*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p. 54.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>95</sup> Dibb Report, p. 35.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

deterrent posture and the defensive capabilities that would actually be needed to counter an enemy should deterrence fail.<sup>97</sup> Dibb also pointed out that the use of strike forces for punishment was governed by political restraints that reduced their value as a basis for a defence strategy. He concluded, ‘deterrence is not a basis for detailed force structure decisions, although it can be a useful element in our general defence strategy. Deterring aggression against us should be the *outcome* of our detailed defence planning and preparations, not the *starting point*’.<sup>98</sup> What might be described as the outcome philosophy towards deterrence proved influential. The March 1987 White Paper ignored deterrence as a feasible military strategy for Australia. Instead it articulated the strategy of defence-in-depth.<sup>99</sup>

In 1988 an Australian Army infantry officer, Lieutenant Colonel (now Brigadier) M. G. Smith, produced a useful survey of conventional deterrence theory which endorsed several of the views of Babbage and Dibb.<sup>100</sup> Smith argued that conventional deterrence in the Australian strategic context was a poor military strategy to adopt largely because a classic non-nuclear deterrence model could not be translated into a military strategy that was both coherent and capable of implementation.<sup>101</sup> In the Australian strategic environment, an Australian deterrent posture would be too general and could

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36. Emphasis added.

<sup>99</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1987, pp. 31–2; 22. The term ‘deterrence’ was omitted from the list of national defence interests.

<sup>100</sup> Lieutenant Colonel M. G. Smith, ‘Conventional Deterrence and Australian Military Strategy’, *Defence Force Journal*, July/August 1988, No. 71, pp. 5–16.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

convey no usable meaning in determining conventional military strategy and force structure options.<sup>102</sup>

Smith suggested that the ADF needed to concentrate on defence rather than deterrence because the latter was a non-warfighting posture that threatened the military fighting ethic. He quoted the view of Gregory D. Foster that ‘the psychological complexion of deterrent forces is . . . the antithesis of war fighting forces’.<sup>103</sup> Conventional deterrence was too abstract to be translated into military strategy or force structuring. Smith concluded, ‘deterrence, as it has been used in the Australian idiom, is the straw-man of conventional military strategy’.<sup>104</sup>

#### *Conventional Deterrence in Australian Military Thinking in the Post–Cold War Era*

In the 1990s Australian strategic guidance has continued the trend of downplaying reference to the term deterrence in its strategic policy documents. The term was missing in the discussion of strategy in *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*.<sup>105</sup> Deterrence was mentioned in the 1993 Strategic Review, but only in reference to the Western alliance and nuclear weapons.<sup>106</sup> In the 1994 White Paper, there was brief mention of maintaining essential capabilities to help deter

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10; Gregory D. Foster, ‘The Effects of Deterrence on the Fighting Ethic’, *Armed Forces and Society*, Winter 1984, X, ii, p. 280.

<sup>104</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>105</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989, pp. 2–3.

<sup>106</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Strategic Review 1993*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1993, p. 7, para. 1.13.

aggression against Australia.<sup>107</sup> In the most recent strategic guidance document published in 1997, there is mention of the deterrent value of strike.<sup>108</sup>

Since the late 1980s there has been a paucity of research on conventional deterrence in Australian defence circles. In the 1990s, only three essays appear to have been published on the subject. Two of these were by Group Captain John Harvey of the RAAF's Air Power Studies Centre.<sup>109</sup> Jeff Robinson, an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, wrote the third study.<sup>110</sup> In the light of this slender quantity of research work, it is perhaps surprising to note that the Department of Defence has recently renewed its interest in the concept of deterrence as part of its work on an Australian general military strategy.

John Harvey's work on conventional deterrence reflects a renewed interest in deterrence within the RAAF following the end of the Gulf War. In 1992, Alan Stephens, Australia's leading air power historian, suggested that the unreliability of conventional deterrence had been made obsolete by the

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<sup>107</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994, p. 5, para. 1.10.

<sup>108</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Defence Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra, 1997, p. 63.

<sup>109</sup> Group Captain J. P. Harvey, *Conventional Deterrence: A Continuing Role in Australia's Security*, Air Power Studies Centre, Paper No. 39, Canberra, December 1995; *Conventional Deterrence and National Security*, Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1997.

<sup>110</sup> Jeff Robinson, 'The Information Revolution and Australian Security: The End of Conventional Deterrence and New Roles for the ADF?', *Yolla: Journal of the Joint Services Staff College Association*, Winter 1998, pp. 9–15.

military capabilities displayed in the Gulf War. The indications were ‘that non-nuclear air power is both feasible and credible. The reach pervasiveness, speed, striking force and flexibility demonstrated during the Coalition air campaign are precisely the qualities needed to support either a defensive or an offensive strategy of deterrence’.<sup>111</sup> Stephens thought that the concern about endorsing deterrence as an Australian national defence strategy was misplaced, at least in terms of air power.<sup>112</sup> In 1997, Wing Commander P. A. Hislop suggested that, should Australia decide to acquire cruise missiles to complement its strike capabilities, then these weapons might play a major role in conventional deterrence.<sup>113</sup>

Harvey’s recent work on deterrence is indebted to the earlier conceptual work of Langtry and Ball. For instance, Harvey’s advocacy of the notion of basic deterrence through the force-in-being is similar to the Langtry and Ball idea of disproportionate response. Like disproportionate response, basic deterrence aims at controlling Australia’s threat environment using mainly air and sea assets for precision strike.<sup>114</sup> Basic deterrence is aimed at achieving two vital functions: generating warning time and creating an inverse relationship between the seriousness and likelihood of

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<sup>111</sup> Alan Stephens, ‘Strategic Land Strike’, in *Defending the Air-Sea Gap: Exploiting Advanced Technology and Disproportionate Response to Defend Australia*, ed. Alan Stephens, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1992, p. 124.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Wing Commander P. A. Hislop, *Employment of Cruise Missiles by the ADF*, Air Power Studies Centre, Paper No. 57, Canberra, 1997, pp. 38–9.

<sup>114</sup> Harvey, *Conventional Deterrence: A Continuing Role in Australia’s Security*, p. 20; *Conventional Deterrence and National Security*, pp. 79–80.

threats.<sup>115</sup> Echoing Langtry and Ball, Harvey writes, ‘in selecting forces to achieve the denial task [in the maritime approaches] the aim is to generate a disproportionate response—any aggressor would need a proportionately larger force to deter Australia’s defensive capability’.<sup>116</sup> Like Langtry and Ball, Harvey sees successful conventional deterrence at the higher level as a means of diverting aggressors to lower-level forms of challenge.<sup>117</sup>

Harvey suggests that the concept of deterrence has been unpopular in Australian defence circles because it is seen as incompatible with a movement towards more regional cooperative security strategies.<sup>118</sup> He is also critical of the policy of treating deterrence as the *outcome* rather than the *starting point* of security planning of communication and credibility. The outcome philosophy, he argues, places too much emphasis on denial as opposed to punishment or retaliation, and on capability at the expense of communication, credibility and interests.<sup>119</sup> An outcome strategy based purely on ‘defence’ would be too reactive, whereas a strategy of deterrence would be more proactive. An interesting aspect of Harvey’s work is its discussion of the limitations of conventional deterrence when applied to the broader template of Australia’s regional security interests. Harvey believes that, in the case of extended security interests, a potential aggressor would have difficulty in determining what Australia would be willing to fight for and what price it would be willing to pay. He notes that, in extended security interests:

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<sup>115</sup> Harvey, *Conventional Deterrence: A Continuing Role in Australia’s Security*, p. 19; *Conventional Deterrence and National Security*, pp. 76–7.

<sup>116</sup> Harvey, *Conventional Deterrence and National Security*, p. 77.

<sup>117</sup> Harvey, *Conventional Deterrence: A Continuing Role in Australia’s Security*, pp. 20–1.

<sup>118</sup> Harvey, *Conventional Deterrence and National Security*, pp. 2; 74.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72–3.

. . . there is every likelihood that Australia would be operating at extended ranges from its own territory and its military effectiveness would be significantly reduced, particularly as Australia has limited force projection capabilities. Acquisition of enhanced force projection capabilities may be required to give credibility to Australia's desire to deter threats to its extended security interests and to threats to broader regional security.<sup>120</sup>

Although Harvey believes that an Asia-Pacific cooperative effort is needed for collective deterrence against threats from within or outside the region, in the absence of a formal security alliance and closely integrated forces, 'there can be little confidence of deterrence success'. The key to regional deterrence continues to rest with America's extended deterrence.<sup>121</sup>

The main value of Harvey's research lies in its restatement of many of the ideas behind disproportionate response. Its weaknesses are threefold. First, the research tends to reflect the increasingly outmoded strategic guidance of the 1994 White Paper rather than new currents indicating a greater focus on regional interests that were reflected in the 1997 strategic review. Second, Harvey does not examine important issues such as the role of deterrence in a multipolar post-Cold War environment, the complex spectrum of conflict, the rise of regionalism and the concept of dynamic deterrence. Third, although Harvey mentions vital issues such as the paradox of conventional deterrence by compellance, the complexities of strategic culture and the challenge of proliferation, he does not explore in any great detail their implications for Australian security.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-4; 73.

While Harvey sees a positive role for conventional deterrence in future Australian defence policy, Jeff Robinson's 1998 analysis emphasises contestability as being the inherent weakness of conventional deterrence.<sup>123</sup> Robinson suggests that, since the 1970s, Australia's advanced conventional arsenal has underwritten Australian defence with a deterrent capability. However, in the late 1990s, the information revolution may act to erode Australia's posture of implicit deterrence.<sup>124</sup> The availability of relatively low cost, long-range precision missiles and associated information-age technologies might work to undermine conventional deterrence.<sup>125</sup> Robinson points out that 'the potential impact of the information revolution on the nature of future conflict carries significant negative implications for Australia'.<sup>126</sup> Information-age weapons pose the challenge of making denial or threat of retaliation irrelevant and undermining Australian defence strategy. With information-intensive warfare adding to the range of conventional weapons, 'the ADF is likely to face a more diverse range of potential threats, requiring a greater diversity of equipment, tactics and technologies'.<sup>127</sup>

The implications for ADF doctrine and force structure are potentially radical and, in Robinson's view, have begun to express themselves in Australia's embrace of the 'knowledge edge' as the highest capability priority for the effective exploitation of information technologies.<sup>128</sup> In future, weapons of mass destruction and long-range conventional strike weapons may bring about the demise of notions of Australian

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>124</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–15.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Australia's Strategic Policy 1997*, p. 56.

conventional deterrence. These developments would force the ADF to fundamentally review its future security challenges.<sup>129</sup>

### **Deterrence, the Nature of Future Conflict and Australian Military Strategy**

The development of an Australian strategy for the next century requires a broad conception of the use of military power rather than a narrow focus on conventional deterrence. Australia's future military strategy needs to be determined by judgments made concerning the complex state of the international diplomatic and strategic environment, the rapid development of military technology and the difficult domestic constraints under which Western democracies operate with regard to the use of force. The British defence analyst Lawrence Freedman's recent synthesis of political and technological trends in the international strategic environment is instructive for Australian strategists on all of the above points. It demonstrates how the nature of conflict is likely to preclude successful deterrence by Western democratic states.

#### *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs: Western Democracies and the Use of Military Force*

In his 1998 essay, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, Lawrence Freedman points out that the diversity of the new international system means that the formulation of strategy and the use of force will be very different from the models that prevailed during the Cold War era.<sup>130</sup> Because the post-Cold War world exhibits a striking lack of fixed form and symmetry, 'the new circumstances and capabilities *do not prescribe one*

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<sup>129</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>130</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 318, London, April 1998.

*strategy, but extend the range of strategies that might be followed*'.<sup>131</sup>

This emphasis on a 'range of strategies' being required should give pause for thought to Australian strategists seeking a single, comprehensive template for developing a general military strategy. Given the asymmetrical nature of power between the West and the rest of the world, there is likely to be a growing gulf between the kind of conflict the West would *prefer* to wage and the kind of conflict it may be *forced* to fight. Weaker powers that seek to obtain weapons of mass destruction may not respond to any model of deterrence and may have to be attacked using pre-emptive raid.<sup>132</sup>

Freedman also argues that a defining distinction of future conflict is likely to be between wars conducted *apart* from civil societies and those conducted *within* civil societies. In the case of the former, the Gulf War-style, high-technology model of warfare may be decisive; in the latter case, however, the outcome may depend more on the intangibles of social resilience.<sup>133</sup> In this respect, Freedman's analysis appears to have been influenced by Michael Howard's conception of the four dimensions of strategy: the operational, the logistical, the social and the technological.<sup>134</sup>

A good example of this 'apart and within' dichotomy of conflict is the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) school of warfare in the United States. The American RMA school stresses information technology, velocity and speed.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. Emphasis added.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>134</sup> Michael Howard, 'The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy', in Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays*, Unwin, London, 1984, pp. 101–15.

American forces of the next century will be designed for dominant manoeuvre, precision engagement, full dimensional engagement, and focused logistics to gain ‘full spectrum dominance’.<sup>135</sup> This represents what Freedman styles as a Western Way of Warfare, a way that reflects the efficiency and clinical approach of a Harvard Business School prospectus.<sup>136</sup> It is elegant, confined and highly structured warfare—based on professional armed forces, precision strike and low casualties.<sup>137</sup> Like the eighteenth century cabinet wars of Frederick the Great, it seeks to compartmentalise warfare by separating military from civilian, and combatants from noncombatants. The difficulty is that this model of warfare may not be dominant in the future. As Freedman notes:

The Western Way of Warfare, with its desire to confine warfare to professional combatants, points to decisive battlefield victories. Not only do the circumstances of contemporary conflict imply much more interaction with civil society, and a greater difficulty in separating combatants from non-combatants, but also so does the past experience of war.<sup>138</sup>

The RMA model runs counter to many of the asymmetrical realities of power in the contemporary world.<sup>139</sup> Whereas stronger military powers have a natural preference for decisive battlefield victories, ‘the weaker are more ready to draw the civilian sphere into the conflict, while avoiding open battle’.<sup>140</sup> Freedman’s perspective is not new. Over thirty years ago, analysts of Maoist insurgency such as E. L. Katzenbach, Jr., Gene Z. Hanrahan and John J. Pustay observed that the elements of time, space and will are the classic ingredients of

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<sup>135</sup> Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, p. 73.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15; 50.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

protracted warfare.<sup>141</sup> In 1991, Thomas R. Mockaitis, one of the West's leading specialists on counterinsurgency, remarked: 'while Communist "wars of national liberation" based on the Maoist model may now be less common, considerable evidence points to insurgency more broadly understood as the most common form of conflict in the next decade'.<sup>142</sup> In a recent critique of the USAF's halt phase strategy, Earl H. Tilford, Jr., of the United States Army War College, has observed that America's 'greatest threat will come from those opponents who will exploit cultural and political asymmetries to blunt our technological superiority'.<sup>143</sup> The tendency of the West to depend on the technological dimension of strategy neglects the operational and social implications of using military force.<sup>144</sup>

Non-Western adversaries in future asymmetric conflict are likely to concentrate on imposing stalemate rather than winning battles; to focus on gaining time by seeking the protraction rather than the contraction of conflict; to attempt to target the West's domestic political base as much as its military capability; and to exploit apparent Western aversion to casualties and any weakening of will in the resolution of conflict. The problem of future war for the Western

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<sup>141</sup> E. L. Katzenbach, Jr., 'Time, Space and Will: The Politico-Military Views of Mao Tse-tung', in *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him: Selections from the Marine Corps Gazette*, ed. Lieutenant Colonel T. N. Greene, Praeger, New York, 1963, pp. 11–21; Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr., and Gene Z. Hanrahan, 'The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-tung', in *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, ed. F. M. Osanka, Glencoe, New York, 1962, pp. 130–46; John J. Pustay, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Glencoe, New York, 1965.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas R. Mockaitis, 'A New Era of Counterinsurgency', *RUSI Journal*, Spring 1991, CIIIV, I, p. 73.

<sup>143</sup> Tilford, *Halt Phase Strategy*, p. 24.

<sup>144</sup> Howard, 'The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy', pp. 109–15.

democracies, including Australia, will not be to prevail, but to prevail at tolerable cost against different cultures that employ light infantry, paramilitary militia and guerrilla forces.<sup>145</sup> In asymmetric conflicts, deterrence is unlikely to succeed and the initiative may be difficult to seize from a local aggressor if stand-off precision weapons are used as a substitute for troops on the ground.<sup>146</sup> As General Charles C. Krulak, the current Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, has observed: ‘the asymmetric threats of the day after tomorrow will call for more than forces that can simply fight Desert Storm better. The future may well not be “Son of Desert Storm”, but rather “Stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya”’.<sup>147</sup>

It is possible that RMA-type forces may ultimately prove to be of limited value in international affairs, first because military power must always be judged against the political purposes it serves, and second because many US allies may not be able to keep pace with information-age capabilities.<sup>148</sup> Freedman points to the limitations of high-technology conventional deterrence by remarking:

The US might be able to extend RMA-type deterrence to its allies to persuade others that there is little point in confronting the West in a conventional battle. *The problem lies with those conflicts that cannot be readily deterred and are unlikely to be responsive to RMA-type operations.*<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, p. 41. See also Walter Laqueur, ‘Postmodern Terrorism’, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1996, LXXV, v, pp. 24–36.

<sup>146</sup> Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, p. 44.

<sup>147</sup> General Charles C. Krulak, ‘The United States Marine Corps in the 21st Century’, *RUSI Journal*, August 1996, CXXXX1, ii, p. 25.

<sup>148</sup> Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, pp. 67.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. Emphasis added.

The West can deal with the Goliaths, but handling the Davids may be more difficult, especially since twenty-first century war shows signs of becoming like General William Sherman's terrible march through Georgia—waged within and against civil society. The danger is that 'the neglect of the small-scale contingencies may increase the probability of the large scale'.<sup>150</sup> Smaller and difficult conflicts demand control lest they expand and become uncontrollable. They can, however, be costly because of the need to commit expeditionary forces; the time-consuming demands of coalition building, which affects the speed with which an operation can be mounted; and the demands of post-conflict stability support, which may require a military presence over an extended period.<sup>151</sup>

Since force needs to be conspicuous, the roles for which Western armed forces must prepare in most parts of the world will often require infantry. As John A. English and Bruce I. Gudmundsson have observed, 'when questions of whether to intervene in Somalia or Bosnia come up, the unit of account that matters, is as it was at the beginning of this century, the infantry battalion'.<sup>152</sup> Yet the information-age Western Way of Warfare points to pre-emptive air operations with stand-off weapons rather than organic firepower; it favours a limited role for ground forces as well as sharp distinction between combatants and noncombatants. It is in effect a form of idealised high-technology warfare that is unsullied by such human factors as terrorism, militias and guerrillas, and such political factors as nuclear, biological and chemical proliferation.<sup>153</sup> It is an experiment in warfare that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has recently

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73–4.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>152</sup> John A. English and Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *On Infantry*, rev. ed., Praeger, Westport, 1994, p. vii.

<sup>153</sup> Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, pp. 75–6.

launched in the form of *Operation Allied Force* in the Balkans against the Yugoslav Serbs in an attempt to prevent ethnic cleansing of the Kosovo Albanians. The weakness of the RMA model is that it ignores the ramifications of conflicts involving complex interactions with the civil societies of participants. Such intractable conflicts work to prevent sharp differentiation between combatants and noncombatants. The range of new security problems has created a spectrum of conflict that confronts Western militaries with diverse and complex challenges. As Freedman puts it:

Military planners must consider potential enemies from fanatical terrorists to disaffected great powers. They must prepare for hostile acts, which can cover the spectrum from the improvised explosive device in a shopping mall to guerrilla ambushes to traditional battle to nuclear exchanges, and perhaps even ‘cyberwar’ directed against critical information systems . . . The permutations of enemies and modes of warfare are endless.<sup>154</sup>

To meet this spectrum of conflict no single strategy, such as deterrence, can be dominant; Western governments need a range of strategic capabilities. The more warfare becomes intermingled with civilian activity through militias, terrorists and ethnic movements, the more difficult it will be to respond—let alone deter—conflict by conventional military means.<sup>155</sup> The confined philosophy of the Western Way of War, which is structured around information and designed to obliterate an enemy in open country, may simply not appear in the first decade of the next century. The kind of wars Western professionals would like to fight—force-on-force, swift and precise—are probably unlikely in the short term. Instead, war shows every sign of being small but endemic and destructive.

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77; Christopher Bellamy, *Spiral Through Time: Beyond ‘Conflict Intensity’*, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, The Occasional No. 35, August 1998, pp. 10–22.

For Western democracies, developing the political will and strategy to contain diverse and intractable conflict will be more demanding than simply mastering new technology.<sup>156</sup>

*Developing an Australian Military Strategy for the Twenty-first Century*

In Australia, Paul Dibb has criticised Freedman's assessment of the likely nature of future conflict for displaying 'narrowness of strategic vision'. Dibb argues that Freedman has overlooked the fact that a major war in which RMA capabilities would be employed could still occur in Asia—in Korea or across the Taiwan Straits.<sup>157</sup> Although Freedman may not have dealt with Asia in detail, his work does not overlook the possibility of major war. Indeed, Freedman's analysis of future conflict is of compelling relevance to contemporary Australian strategists. In particular, his emphasis on the need for a range of strategies and the growing prevalence of asymmetric conflict suggest that conventional deterrence in the post-Cold War era is too one-dimensional to serve Australia as a core military strategy. Any temptation by Australian defence planners to concentrate on models of disproportionate response and basic deterrence smack of the strategic concerns of a past age.

Australian defence planners need to be aware of a certain tendency in recent years to be too reactive and overly reliant on implied deterrence through the creation of a force structure emphasising air-sea platforms rather than a joint maritime strategy. These features are arguably a major weakness of the

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<sup>156</sup> Freedman, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–8.

<sup>157</sup> Paul Dibb, 'The Relevance of the Knowledge Edge', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, January/February 1999, No. 134, p. 43.

document, *Australian Strategic Policy 1997 (ASP 97)*.<sup>158</sup> Indeed ASP 97 contains a strategy–force mismatch because it emphasises on the one hand, *navalism* (that is, reliance on mainly air-sea platforms in a maritime approaches) and on the other, *continentalism* (that is, designing an Army mainly for mainland operations) at the expense of an integrated maritime strategy.<sup>159</sup> Ironically, in some respects, this strategy–force mismatch appears to mirror the very two-tier deterrent force structure recommended by Langtry and Ball twenty years ago.

As the optimism of the ‘new world order’ of the early 1990s has dissolved into what might be characterised as *fin de siècle* ‘savage wars of peace’, Australian defence planners have much to gain from analysing contemporary regional and ethnic conflict.<sup>160</sup> Indeed there is much value for strategists in studying the full range of twentieth-century small wars, insurgencies and imperial policing—especially their focus on asymmetrical conflict and the impact of technology.<sup>161</sup> In a new

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<sup>158</sup> For a critique of ASP 97, see Michael Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 101, Canberra, 1998.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii; 25–8; 40 for a fuller discussion.

<sup>160</sup> For a view, see David Keithly and Paul Melshen, ‘Past as Prologue: USMC Small Wars Doctrine’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Autumn 1997, VIII, ii, pp. 87–108.

<sup>161</sup> See, for instance, Captain Charles E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, London, 1903; Major General Sir Charles Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, Macmillan, London, 1934; United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, rev. ed. 1940, United States Government Printing Office, Washington D. C., 1987; Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1977; Keith Jeffrey, ‘Colonial Warfare 1900–39’ in Colin McInnes and G. D. Sheffield, *Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1988, pp. 24–50; and Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60*, Macmillan, London, 1990, and

era of diffuse conflict and fluid multipolar politics, a defence policy based on a single comprehensive response scenario will prove inadequate and even dangerous. Paul Dibb has warned Australian defence planners against allowing a preoccupation with the RMA to drive ADF force doctrine.<sup>162</sup> He notes, ‘predicting a single strategic future—which Australia has tended to do in the past—is no longer acceptable’.<sup>163</sup>

In the past most Australian strategists have seen deterrence as an unsuitable strategy for the defence of continental Australia. Their judgment was well founded and is even more valid at a time when the security environment is forcing Australia to consider a range of offshore and regional contingencies. Multipolarity has given rise to a complex new strategic landscape lacking the linear symmetry that favours deterrence theory. Even if one accepts the proposition that precision munitions have made conventional deterrence more effective, the ADF does not have platforms or precision weapons in sufficient numbers to mount a conventional deterrence strategy. In short, dynamic deterrence or the idealised form of the Western Way of Warfare using precision strike is beyond the capacity of Australia’s military arsenal.

Future conflict—small, intense and diverse—occurring in a world of ‘poisonous snakes’ is difficult to place into a neat strategic framework. Australian strategy must therefore be tailored to maximise freedom of action. For Australia, agility, innovation and versatility are required when the emerging strategic architecture is so uncertain. There must be a sober assessment of roles and missions. Australia’s conception of military strategy must be tightly integrated with all aspects of

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*British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995.

<sup>162</sup> Dibb, ‘The Relevance of the Knowledge Edge’, p. 42.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44–6.

national power. Australia's guidelines for formulating strategy into the new century should be based on four realities. First, there should be a clear focus on the importance of operating in the northern archipelago in a joint maritime strategy. If there is to be any single strategic template developed, it must concentrate on littoral operations. Second, there must be a clear recognition of the complex, non-linear and asymmetrical challenges of the post-Cold War world. Third, Australia should capitalise on affordable information-age technology and exploit the 'knowledge edge' it confers to maximise interoperability with the United States. Fourth, Australia must understand that, like that of other liberal democracies, its use of force is constrained by its parliamentary system and by the level of public support for military commitments.

This last aspect is particularly important because it emphasises the enduring social and political features of Australia's Western heritage as determinants of strategy. Defence planners need to remember that Australia's way of war will always reflect the nation's liberal democratic character and the alliance with the United States. Australia's future approach to the use of military force will almost certainly be a variant of the sociopolitical aspects, if not the technological features, of the Western approach to war as outlined by Lawrence Freedman.

In the future, the ADF is likely to be confronted by a range of contingencies: continental, regional and international. Some may be, to use another of Lawrence Freedman's formulations, 'wars of necessity' involving defeating direct threats to the survival of the state. However, it is probably more likely that Australia will be confronted by what Freedman styles as 'wars of choice'. The latter are military conflicts in which Western nations are faced with the need to try to manage the security

problems of weak states with fragile political institutions, fragmented social structures and feeble economies.<sup>164</sup>

In the complex post–Cold War era, when political uncertainty and regional conflict are prevalent, Australia’s security interests are best served by a broad maritime strategy emphasising littoral warfare and a residual capacity to supply forces for international reassurance operations. To meet the multiple demands of a spectrum of conflict, agile forces are required for joint manoeuvre in the sea–air–land gap in support of regional stability. Such missions in the northern archipelago might be characterised as ‘operations of necessity’. A commitment to reassurance should reflect a willingness to supply forces to uphold the present international balance of power, which is favourable to Australian interests. Australia needs to be prepared to join the United States and other Western nations in deploying forces in regional crises or for international humanitarian operations. Such missions might be termed ‘operations of choice’. Australia, despite its geographical position, shares many of the constraints and characteristics of the Western Way of War as any other liberal democracy. *The defence of continental Australia should be seen as resting on the success of Australia’s diplomacy and military posture in the regional and international contexts.* This reality reinforces the need for an accelerated cultural change in defence thinking which, for over a decade, has emphasised the enduring features of geography over the variables of diplomacy.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Lawrence Freedman, ‘Military Strategy and Operations in the Twenty First Century’, in *British Security 2010: Proceedings of a Conference held at Church House, Westminster*, ed. G. A. S. C. Wilson, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Camberley, November 1995, pp. 193–6.

<sup>165</sup> Michael Evans, ‘From Defence to Security: Continuity and Change in Australian Strategic Planning in the Twentieth Century’, in *Serving Vital Interests: Australia’s Strategic Planning in Peace*

## Conclusion

An Australian military strategy based on conventional deterrence, using either pre-emption or retaliation, is unsuited to manage Australia's evolving strategic landscape for three reasons. First, conventional deterrence is intellectually restrictive in the fluid political conditions of the post-Cold War era. Problems of multipolarity, weapons proliferation, strategic culture and asymmetric conflict represent a set of incalculable factors that are likely to make deterrence based on conventional forces using precision weapons difficult to implement.

Second, Australia lacks the necessary arsenal of air platforms and precision weapons to implement a strategy of conventional deterrence. The paucity of Australian research on deterrent capabilities demonstrates a lack of interest in, and understanding of, the contours of the conventional deterrence debate since the end of the Cold War. Third, in common with most other Western democracies, Australia's political system is not easily responsive to notions of conventional deterrence based on swift retaliation or pre-emption in a military crisis. Australian decision-making is, in reality, constrained in considering the swift use of force. If the ADF was to embrace a deterrent posture as a *starting point* as opposed to an *outcome point* of defence planning—colloquially termed 'going ugly early'—it would risk placing itself in a straitjacket in terms of serving the broad requirements of Australian foreign policy.

Given these factors, it is difficult to see how the concept of conventional deterrence can become a centrepiece in an Australian military strategy for the twenty-first century. The

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*and War*, eds Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1996, pp. 116–40.

ADF's force structure has deterrent value through the outcome philosophy, which has made deterrence implicit for the past two decades. A joint maritime strategy will yield deterrence through providing a strong defence posture. Finally, it should be remembered that the term 'strategy' is derived from the ancient Greek word *strategos*, which means the art of generalship. Australian proponents of conventional deterrence would do well to recall Henry Kissinger's warning that 'deterrence can furnish arguments to sustain obsolescent theories and designs', and provides 'little incentive for the kind of innovation, political and strategic, consistent with rapidly changing technology'.<sup>166</sup> Ultimately, strategy is about what to do should deterrence fail. This is the real challenge of the new century, and Australian strategic planners must be prepared to meet it.

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<sup>166</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, 'American Strategic Doctrine and Diplomacy', in *The Theory and Practice of War*, ed. Michael Howard, Cassell, London, 1965, p. 276.