



IN SEARCH OF A MARITIME STRATEGY

The maritime element in Australian
defence planning since 1901



Edited by David Stevens

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Australian Defence Planning since 1901**

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ABSTRACT

Australia is and always has been a maritime nation. From the earliest days of European settlement, the people of Australia have looked to the sea for their security. Protection was first provided under the umbrella of Imperial Defence and the Royal Navy. Later, as the nation matured, the need was identified to establish a local navy, manned and commanded by Australians.

However security is not found in one environment alone and in the years since Federation there has been a continuing struggle to reconcile differing perceptions of threat, competing defence strategies, conflicting force structure priorities and economic and political constraints. Australia's unique geographical situation provides both security and vulnerability, and in seeking either to exploit or to protect these features defence planners have had to continually adjust to the realities of the day.

This book brings together leading authorities from Australia and overseas and for the first time comprehensively examines Australia's search for an effective maritime strategy in the twentieth century. Illuminating both the similarities and the differences between eras, the volume provides a succinct overview of Australia's changing maritime priorities and the evolution of broader strategic planning. The insights gained will be of benefit not only to those interested in defence history but also to all those concerned with current issues in Australian security strategy.

Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence are a series of monograph publications that arise out of the work of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University. Previous Canberra Papers have covered topics such as the relationship of the superpowers, arms control at both the superpower and Southeast Asian regional level, regional strategic relationships and major aspects of Australian defence policy. For a list of New Series Canberra Papers please refer to the last pages of this volume.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A/A	anti-aircraft
AA	Australian Archives
ABDA	Australian-British-Dutch-American
AC	armoured cruiser
ACAUST	Air Commander Australia
ACNB	Australian Commonwealth Naval Board
ACNS	Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADFWC	ADF Warfare Centre
AEW&C	airborne early warning and control
AGS	hydrographic survey ship
AHQ	Air Headquarters
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMC	armed merchant cruiser
AMS	Australian minesweeper (<i>Bathurst</i> -class corvette)
ANZAM	Australia, New Zealand and Malaya (arrangement)
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand and the United States (treaty)
AO	auxiliary tanker
AOR	fleet tanker and replenishment ship
A/S	anti-submarine
ASTJIC	Australian Theatre Joint Intelligence Centre
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
AWM	Australian War Memorial, Canberra
CA	heavy cruiser
CAP	combat air patrol
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CDF	Chief of the Defence Force
CDFS	Chief of the Defence Force Staff
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief Pacific
CL	light cruiser
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
COMAST	Commander Australian Theatre

COMFLOT	Commodore Flotillas	MCAUST	Maritime Commander Australia (1988-present)
COMNORCOM	Commander Northern Command	MCM	mine countermeasures
CTG	carrier task group	MHC	minehunter coastal
CVL	light aircraft carrier	MHI	minehunter inshore
DCNS	Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff	MHQ	Maritime Headquarters
DD	destroyer	M/S	minesweeper
DDG	guided missile destroyer	MSA(S)	auxiliary minesweeper
DE	destroyer escort	MSC	minesweeper coastal
DJFC	Deployable Joint Force Commander	NEI	Netherlands East Indies
DJFHQ	Deployable Joint Force Headquarters	NHS	Naval Historical Section, Canberra
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence	NOIC	Naval Officer-in-Charge
EEZ	exclusive economic zone	OPV	offshore patrol vessel
FAA	Fleet Air Arm	OTHR	over-the-horizon radar
FCPB	<i>Fremantle</i> -class patrol boat	PB	patrol boat
FF	frigate	PC	protected cruiser
FFG	guided missile frigate	PF	patrol frigate
FFH	helicopter capable frigate	PRO	Public Record Office, London
FOCAF	Flag Officer Commanding HM Australian Fleet (1949-88)	RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
FOIC	Flag Officer-in-Charge	RAN	Royal Australian Navy
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements	RA/CCAF	Rear Admiral/Commodore Commanding HM Australian Fleet (1913-26)
GP	general purpose (squadron)	RA/CCAS	Rear Admiral/Commodore Commanding HM Australian Squadron (1926-49)
GR	general reconnaissance (squadron)	RAIC	Rear-Admiral-in-Charge
HQADF	Headquarters ADF	RN	Royal Navy
HQAST	Headquarters Australian Theatre	RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service
HQ 1 DIV	Headquarters 1st Division	RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy
HQNORCOM	Headquarters Northern Command	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
HQSF	Headquarters Special Forces	SDML	seaward defence motor launch
JCOSA	Joint Chiefs of Staff, Australia	SDSC	Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra
JEPS	Joint Exercise Planning Staff	SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organisation
JOR	Joint Operations Room	SFCAUST	Special Forces Commander Australia
JPC	Joint Planning Committee	SML	survey motor launch
LCAUST	Land Commander Australia	SNO	Senior Naval Officer
LCH	landing craft heavy	SS	submarine
LHQ	Land Headquarters	SSG	guided missile submarine
LPA	landing platform amphibious	SWPA	South-West Pacific Area
LRMP	long-range maritime patrol (aircraft)		
LSH	amphibious heavy lift ship		

TBD	torpedo boat destroyer
THSS	training and helicopter support ship
UAP	United Australia Party
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USN	United States Navy
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
W/T	wireless telegraphy

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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foundation president of the Association of Historians of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy.

Rear Admiral Chris Oxenbould, AO, RAN joined the RAN College in 1962 as a 15-year-old entry and later specialised in navigation. In 1984 he assumed command of HMAS Canberra. Promoted to captain in 1985 he proceeded to Navy Office to serve on the Navy's Review Team of the Defence Report. Postings to the United States Naval War College and to Navy Office as Director of Naval Force Development, were followed in 1989 by command of HMAS Perth. Rear Admiral Oxenbould was promoted to commodore in 1990 prior to assuming the appointment as the Commander of the Australian Task Group for Operation DAMASK in the Arabian Gulf, and served in this position throughout the 1991 Gulf War. In 1992 he took up the position of Director General Joint Operations and Plans, HQADF. In 1993 he was promoted to his current rank and in 1995 was appointed Maritime Commander Australia.

David Stevens has been the Director of Naval Historical Studies within the Maritime Studies Program since retiring from the RAN in 1994. He joined the RAN College in 1974 as a junior entry cadet midshipman and later specialised in anti-submarine warfare. During 1990-91 he served on the staff of the Australian Task Group Commander during Operation DAMASK and the 1991 Gulf War. He graduated from the Australian National University in 1992 with a MA (Strategic Studies) and is currently undertaking further postgraduate studies at the Australian Defence Force Academy. He has written articles on naval historical and strategic subjects for a number of newspapers and professional journals and is the editor of *The Royal Australian Navy in World War II* (1996). His first book, *U-Boat Far From Home* will be published in early 1997.

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He is currently working on two volumes on new directions for Australian security policy in the twenty-first century and the future of Australia's regional security relationships. In the MA (Strategic Studies) course, Dr Woodman has developed and teaches courses on Australian Security Planning, Strategic Studies: The New Agenda, and Defence Policy and Decision Making in the 1990s. He also coordinates the joint masters program with the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute's Military Institute and is responsible for modules on Defence and the Decision-making Process and Developing Defence Policy at the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies. Dr Woodman is frequently involved in providing policy advice on strategic issues and has assisted several regional countries in the preparation of major strategic policy documents.

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David Stevens
Canberra 1977

INTRODUCTION

David Stevens

If those who will have to carry the responsibility for dealing with the post-war Australian Defence problem will approach it with the realization that it is, and will remain, essentially maritime, they will surely keep to the forefront the needs of the Australian naval forces and the aircraft that work with them; and will ensure that provision is made for the development and expansion of these forces, in accordance with the tempo of the post-war world, towards the goal of an independent Australian defence. By such a policy they will, in my view, have gone far to ensure the life, liberty and happiness of the future citizens of Australia.

Vice-Admiral C.S. Daniel, CBE, DSO, 7 February 1945

Some historians have argued that the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as a separate organisation owes its establishment in 1911 more to Australian nationalism than strategic appreciation.¹ There is no doubt an element of truth in this assertion, however it is also clear that the individual colonies acknowledged the importance of the maritime environment to their security well before they united to become the federal Commonwealth of Australia. As early as 1855 both New South Wales and Victoria were actively acquiring their own warships for local naval defence. Certainly since 1901 the need for effective maritime power, capable of protecting the nation's coastal and offshore interests, has been a consistent thread running through the Commonwealth's defence planning.

Furthermore, and despite changes in international relations, threat, political guidance, perceived obligations and financial allocation, the succession of strategic assessments written since Federation have demonstrated some remarkable parallels. These have

¹ See, for example, B.N. Primrose, *Australian Naval Policy 1919 to 1942: A Case Study in Empire Relations*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, September 1974.

existed not only in the common problem of creating a strategy and matching it to an affordable force structure, but also in the identification of many more specific determinants of strategic planning. John Mortimer, for example, has noted the resemblance of the factors identified during the period 1901-14 to the perceptions of the mid-to-late 1980s.² These similarities include:

- lack of a clearly defined or identified threat;
- pre-eminence of the maritime environment in force structure planning;
- assessment that the threat of invasion should not be our primary force structure determinant;
- awareness of the strategic importance of Australia's northern maritime approaches and the need to develop maritime infrastructure to support operations in the north;
- focus on ship characteristics and performance directly relevant to Australia's geographic and strategic situation;
- recognition that its allies might be either unwilling or unable to come to Australia's assistance in time of defence emergency; and
- implicit acceptance of the benefits of local manufacture of defence equipment and willingness to incur the associated financial premiums.

This correlation should not be surprising. Though contemporary strategy cannot fail to be influenced by technological developments, the arrival this century of submarines, aircraft, space-based systems, and most recently information-age warfare and its associated 'revolution in military affairs', do not necessarily mean that the foundations or characteristics of a policy for national security have radically altered.³ Geography, in particular, remains central in

² J. Mortimer, 'The Foundation of the Australian Navy 1901-1914', *Defence Force Journal*, No.61, November/December 1986, p.38.

³ Colin Gray suggests that, 'revolutionary advances in the art of war tend to be self-defeating, inasmuch as foes, actual or would-be, adapt to menaces to their own strategic effectiveness'. C. Gray, 'The Changing Nature of Warfare', *Naval War College Review*, Vol.XLIX, No.2, Spring 1996, p.8.

planning a defence posture and capabilities. In Australia's case, as a sparsely populated island, remote from allies, and dependent upon overseas trade for prosperity, the continuing significance of the maritime environment, and hence a maritime strategy, would seem one of the few security constants.

Consequently, even during periods when Australia placed reliance on its 'great and powerful friends' for ultimate security, there has remained an appreciation of the versatility offered by the possession of independent maritime forces-and surface warships in particular. Inherently mobile and flexible, maritime forces are less constrained by geographical and political boundaries than other military assets. They also have integral logistic support and can operate for long periods at considerable distances from base facilities. Moreover, maritime forces possess high levels of readiness, and can play a useful role across a broad range of tasks; from humanitarian and peacekeeping operations right through to a show of force and general war. These features offer political and military leaders a wide range of response options and are especially significant when attempting to strike a balance between capabilities for purely self-defence and defence of the region's strategic environment.

The present volume is not intended to provide a complete coverage of the maritime issues and arguments that have arisen within the Australian defence planning process during the twentieth century. Neither is there an intention to identify a checklist of permanent maritime principles, nor a comprehensive strategy for the future. Indeed, the chapters herein may pose more questions than they answer. Though the military mind often seeks and expects an exact solution, the development of a security strategy is dynamic and constantly subject to changing perspectives. Equally important, is recognition that maritime forces do not form an autonomous entity within the defence organisation; that a national security policy involves many dimensions; and that a maritime strategy, though it might have an influence on several of these dimensions, can only ever be a part of the whole.

Notwithstanding these boundaries, the process of developing a credible maritime strategic concept remains vital. Australia's defence force structure and roles must be seen as appropriate, not only to the public and government, but also to its allies and potential adversaries.

This volume, by combining recent research in the first part together with extracts from original documents in the second, aims to present the reader with an initial guide to the evolution of maritime security priorities within the context of broader strategic thinking. While accepting that there will always be limitations in the historical approach, by illuminating both the similarities and differences between the different eras, the object is to provide a clearer understanding of the enduring features of the maritime aspects of the Commonwealth's defence policy.

Australia will always have substantial maritime concerns and an appreciation of this abiding feature becomes no less important as the nation makes its uncharted passage into the uncertainties of the next century. If the more common issues and interests can be established then it becomes far easier to erect a suitable frame of reference for further study. No matter how priorities shift and strategic details change, it will only be through the existence of a solid foundation that current planners will be able to formulate an appropriate defence strategy for the future.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS A MARITIME STRATEGY?

John B. Hattendorf¹

What is a maritime strategy? The question is a simple and direct one, but the answer—and there are several parts to one—is complex. To add to the complexity on this occasion, we are looking at history to enlighten us on some current issues in defence strategy. First, we must remind ourselves something about the basic problems of studying maritime strategy in history and along with them we must know about the actual practice of maritime strategy in the past. Second, we should think about the history of maritime strategic thought and the way it has changed and developed. Finally, with those basic thoughts in mind, one can say something about the way in which we currently understand maritime strategy.

Maritime Strategy in History

History has much to tell us about maritime strategy; indeed, some of the most important works on the subject of maritime strategy are analyses of history. The study of history certainly broadens our perspective and gives us deeper insight into the reasons why we have become what we have become. To study strategy in history, one must be alert to different times, different outlooks, different ideas, different problems, different mind-sets, different capabilities, different decision-making structures, and different technologies. All of these dissimilarities show us that the past is often not a precise model to follow. Despite the contrasts between past and present, however, one can perceive some broad, recurring characteristics, issues, and problems that arise for maritime strategists in the range of action and roles that they consider. From these, one can outline a broad concept of maritime strategy, but such a concept is highly influenced, if not

¹ The views expressed in this paper are entirely the views of the author. They do not represent any official policy or position of the Naval War College, the United States Navy, or any other agency of the United States of America.

entirely determined, by the historical examples from which it is derived.

One's own national history and experience in maritime strategy can help to identify continuing national interests and priorities, but over time there are changes in the structure of international relations and changes in the role that a particular nation plays within that structure. Thus, in order to understand the full range of problems in maritime strategy, one's own historical experience needs to be supplemented by an understanding of other nations' experiences, in various time periods and in differing situations. Let me try to clarify this point in the context of twentieth-century maritime strategies.

Twentieth-century Maritime Strategies

Over the past century, a variety of maritime strategies have been at work. Most recently, in the regional crises in the Adriatic, in the Gulf War, and in the blockade off Haiti, as well as in both the Vietnam and Korean wars, maritime nations concentrated on using the sea for their own purposes. They supported and carried out military actions while also imposing blockades against enemy shipping, without having to devote their full energies to countering a concerted enemy attempt to seize control of the sea for its own use. Thus, the maritime strategy of these more recent wars was different from that of the two world wars as well as different from the maritime strategies of the Cold War.

In the Cold War, the NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations developed opposing maritime strategies centred around two superpower navies, both armed with submarines carrying nuclear missiles, while many small- and medium-sized countries tailored their maritime contributions to fit broad alliance strategies through specialised functions such as mine-sweeping, air defence, or anti-submarine warfare.

By contrast, during the Second World War, the Allied nations faced the Axis powers, who posed a very serious threat as they sought to dominate large portions of the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific. Allied maritime strategy was characterised by the

struggle to oppose the nearly successful strategy of the Axis U-boats against vital merchant shipping in the Atlantic, by the great island-hopping amphibious campaigns in the Southwest and Central Pacific, as well as by the carrier-to-carrier air battles in mid-ocean and by coordinated surface, air, and submarine actions.

In both the first and the second world wars, the Allies shared similar maritime strategies that required providing critical logistical support for armies by carrying vast amounts of men and materials from one continent to another through contested waters. Similarly, the Allies enforced long and tedious economic blockades in the face of determined opposition at sea.

More prominent in the popular memory of the First World War, the naval battle of Jutland brought back memories of the great sea battles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While naval officers of the day saw the connections to a great naval tradition and had planned, and even hoped, for such a battle, others in other spheres had expected a different kind of war than that which had emerged in 1914. They had incorrectly predicted that their immediate future would hold no world-engulfing war, but rather the confined crises and limited warfare that they had seen in the Spanish-American War in 1898, the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, or the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. All of these wars required major navies to move men and equipment great distances and to fight or support wars for limited objectives and to deal with crises in distant waters.

Such thoughts seem to resonate with current American thinking. Perhaps the experience and ideas of that time contain some valuable maritime lessons and insights for the major naval powers in the present and the future.² Today, we all share an interest in the general problems of limited wars and regional crises. We also share an interest with another set of problems that maritime nations faced in both peacetime periods, 1898–1914 and 1919–39: the challenge of developing adequate naval forces and maintaining them while costs rise, technology changes rapidly, and international law increasingly

2 See, for example, Sir Julian S. Corbett, *Maritime Strategy in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905*, intro. John B. Hattendorf and Donald M. Schurman (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1995), Vol. 1, p. 41.

imposes restraint on the use of force. Here, the identification, selection, and development of new technology is interwoven with complex issues of national finance, bureaucratic decision making, personalities, and legislative politics.³

Despite such similarities, we must also remember the differences. The period leading up to the First World War was quite different from ours. It was a world of imperial rivalry and colonial expansion, a time of rising military and naval budgets, and a period in which regional tensions in Europe had immediate and world-wide impact. Similarly, the period leading up to the Second World War, a time of unresolved issues left from the First World War, was equally different from ours.

In searching for provocative ideas, studies of the maritime experience of Great Britain in the years between 1815 and 1851 might, for the moment, be more useful to American naval thinking today, while America's own experience in the period after 1815 might even be useful to some countries today.

In the decades following the long and exhausting Napoleonic wars, nearly all nations reduced their armaments. Among them, Great Britain retained a relatively large navy, although it was, in fact, drastically reduced from what it had been. In this period, there was a tendency to deal with conflict through collective security and various national navies found themselves operating in multilateral actions.

However instructive this period can be, one cannot press the parallels too far. The Congress system for collective security and the multilateral naval actions of the period, such as those at Navarino in 1827, at Acre in 1840, and even the Black Sea operations in the Crimean War at mid-century, were far less sophisticated than the approaches available today.

We can deepen our understanding of the problems involved in multilateral naval operations by studying these events, but the

³ See Jon T. Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889–1914* (Unwin and Hyman, Boston, 1989).

experience of the twentieth century has already shown us that the additional technical aspects of logistics, communications, command and control as well as detailed planning and standardised procedures are central to success in modern multilateral operations. The failure of the Australian-British-Dutch-American (ABDA) squadron in the Java Sea in 1942 provided a salutary lesson that was not lost on the survivors. By 1943–44, the Allied landings in North Africa and in Italy were remarkable feats of international and inter-service cooperation. With further insights from the experience of the war in the Pacific, only the success at Normandy in June 1944 surpassed these achievements. After months of detailed planning, British and American admirals commanded a fleet that included not only vessels of the Royal Navy, the US Navy, and Commonwealth navies, but also Polish, Norwegian, and Free French ships.

In spite of these remarkable successes, some naval leaders in the postwar period were naturally doubtful about the prospects for peacetime, multilateral naval cooperation. Much of the doubt came from ingrained habits of thought, not from a dispassionate examination of historical experience. The major stumbling block came from the fact that navies are nearly always thought of in national terms. We all tell our citizens and our sailors that the navy represents the nation. Everything about navies is organised in national terms. We have fought on the decks of our ships for our own nation. For this, we fly our national flag and our ships often carry evocative national names: the names of heroes, battles, symbols, or places that link our ships and sailors to our national heritage. Sometimes it can seem improper, even sacrilegious, to think of our navy operating in another context.

In the mid-1960s, when some naval officers in NATO first suggested the idea of the Standing Naval Force, Atlantic, senior NATO leaders were extremely sceptical that it could succeed. Yet, thirty years later, STANAVFORLANT (or SNFL as it is alternatively known) has shown itself to be a model multilateral force, with command rotating among all national participants, each on an equal footing with ships and shipmates from other countries; the smaller countries' contributions not being dominated by the larger. Over the years, within the context of NATO, the Standing Naval Force has

developed common naval tactics, publications, communications equipment, and procedures while working toward greater standardisation in logistics and repair parts. While the Standing Naval Force went on to see its first combat action in the Adriatic, NATO maritime procedures also became models for maritime operations in the Persian Gulf and off Haiti. These wider experiences in the early 1990s showed that multilateral naval operations could effectively take place outside a strongly structured alliance through the use of the United Nations, regional organisations and even ad hoc arrangements.

As defence budgets decline and navies grow smaller, the range of their responsibilities remains unchanged and may even grow. One effective way of dealing with these facts is to develop multinational maritime strategies. In 1995, to meet requests from many parts of the world, the US Naval Doctrine Command distributed a draft manual to facilitate multilateral naval operations for this purpose in various parts of the world.⁴

Taken overall, the experiences of the twentieth century clearly show that there is no one maritime strategy that is valid for all situations. Maritime strategy changes with the context, structure, national purposes, technologies, and equipment available. Our abstract understanding of maritime strategy has also changed. As we examine strategy in history, particularly for the twentieth century, we need to be aware of these changes and know that the theory of maritime strategy has been evolving over time, even if the actors in history may or may not be aware of the changes.

The Development of Maritime Strategic Thought

Nations have practised maritime strategy for centuries, but historians, political scientists, and theoreticians have only examined it analytically for a relatively short period of time. It was only a century

4 See Michael Johnson, Peter Swartz and Patrick Roth, *Doctrine for Partnership: A Framework for U.S. Multinational Naval Doctrine* (Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria VA, 1996), CRM 95-2-2/March 1996; Michael Johnson with Richard Kouhout and Peter Swartz, *Guidelines for the World's Maritime Forces in Conducting Multinational Operations: An Analytical Framework* (Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria VA, 1996), CRM 95-119/March 1996.

ago that Alfred Thayer Mahan pointed out the role of sea power in wartime national policy,⁵ and it has only been 85 years since Sir Julian Corbett first provided a more complete theoretical statement of the principles for establishing control of the sea in wartime.⁶

During the period of the naval wars in the age of sail, few people looked at any kind of strategy as a separate concept or area of practice; together, admirals and statesmen practised the craft of maritime strategy as if it were part of one great continuum, rarely putting the reasons for their actions on paper.

Although some historians have objected that leaders in this period did not think strategically, others have countered that point by showing that they acted strategically. At the very end of the period of naval wars under sail, only a very few people, men such as Karl von Clausewitz and Henri Jomini, were just beginning to think more abstractly about military strategy⁷—although not maritime strategy. Sailors continued to practise the craft of maritime strategy pragmatically until the last quarter of the nineteenth century without worrying about this subject. Both seamen and statesmen knew, from long practice, the characteristics and capabilities of their ships and men; with that knowledge, they could easily calculate a maritime strategy.

In the 1870s and 1880s, something happened in navies. Suddenly, the maritime world seemed different. Over the previous half-century, ships, weapons, and propulsion systems had changed. These innovations changed the capabilities and characteristics of ships so dramatically that people began to think that the old ways of practice had no relevance at all. Soon people saw that maritime

5 A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Little Brown, Boston, 1890). His related ideas on naval strategy are summarised in John B. Hattendorf (ed.), *Mahan on Naval Strategy*, Classics of Sea Power series (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1991).

6 Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. Classics of Sea Power series, ed. Eric Grove (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1988). Corbett's role and influence on the development of maritime strategy is examined in James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf (eds), *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Naval War College Press, Newport, 1994).

7 See Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989).

technology had not just changed once, but was changing continually. Today, we would add that it is changing constantly.

The maritime world of the late nineteenth century was at the beginning of the phenomenon of technological change that we have come to experience every day. As people came to grips with this phenomenon, many argued that the best choice was to run with the change, go wholeheartedly for the new technology and the new capabilities. The reactionaries, of course, dreamed of a return to the old days and dug in their heels to change of any kind. Some pragmatic naval officers, however, began to struggle with the same issues that we deal with today, asking the pertinent questions: Do we really need the new equipment? What new and essential capabilities will it give us? How much will it cost? How much is enough?

To provide a firm basis to answer this range of questions, some naval men began to ask a series of even deeper questions: What are the functions of a navy? What are the requirements for maritime power? What is the relationship between a navy and other aspects of national power?

The pioneer thinkers in this area (men such as Sir John Knox Laughton, Vice-Admiral Sir Philip Colomb, and Sir Julian Corbett in Britain with Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce and Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan in the United States) turned to two areas of established thought to begin to work out their answers: military theory and historical study. This effort paralleled the spread of ideas and procedures used by the German General Staff to develop war plans, to train staff officers, and to advise senior military commanders. This was the foundation of modern maritime strategic theory.

Initially, maritime strategic theory focused largely on the role of the navy in wartime. In the first stages, several of the pioneer writers turned to the historical example of the Anglo-French naval wars in the years 1660–1815, seeing in that period some parallels to the imperial rivalry and great-power clashes of the late nineteenth century.

Since that time, both the practice and the theory of naval and maritime strategy has progressed, widening perceptions. Today, there is a much larger theoretical understanding that builds, expands, and modifies these earlier ideas for wartime strategy. New technologies, new situations and new experiences brought wider practice, and stimulated further development of theory. The Second World War, for example, brought home the need for the navy, and for all the separate armed services, to work together more closely. Among theorists, Rear Admiral J.C. Wylie was the first to attempt to integrate the main, service-oriented theories into a general theory of power control.⁸ Additionally, the Cold War stimulated wide thinking about the uses of military power for deterrence, in particular, and a navy's diplomatic and persuasive uses in peacetime. These broadened perspectives have extended the foundations of theory for modern, and peacetime, maritime strategies.⁹

Modern Maritime Strategy

Both our experience of practising maritime strategy and our historical examination of other maritime strategies during the last hundred years show that maritime strategy is a kind of sub-set of national grand strategy that touches on the whole range of a nation's activities and interests at sea. In its broadest sense, grand strategy is the comprehensive direction of power to achieve particular national goals. Within those terms, maritime strategy is the direction of all aspects of national power that relate to a nation's interests at sea. The navy serves this purpose, but maritime strategy is not purely a naval preserve. Maritime strategy involves the other functions of state power that include diplomacy; the safety and defence of merchant trade at sea; fishing; the exploitation, conservation, regulation and defence of the exclusive economic zone at sea; coastal defence; security of national borders; the protection of offshore islands; as well as participation in regional and world-wide concerns relating to the use of oceans, the skies over the oceans and the land under the seas.

8 J.C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control*, Classics of Sea Power series, intro. John B. Hattendorf and postscript J.C. Wylie (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1989).

9 See the more detailed outline of these and the following developments in John B. Hattendorf and Robert S. Jordan (eds), *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power: Britain and America in the 20th Century* (Macmillan, London, 1989), Part II: Theory.

Such issues include expanding the scientific and technological understanding of the entire maritime environment, working with the full range of national organisations (the navy, the army, the air force, customs, coast guard, commerce and trade, to name but a few of the ministries, bureaus, and departments that touch on these issues) in order to bring forth a truly national concept and plan for the maritime aspects of national life.

The fundamental focus of the military element in maritime strategy centres on the control of human activity at sea through the use of armed force in order to contribute to the broad ends established in a national maritime policy. There are two parts to this: establishing control against opposition and using control, once it has been established.

In the effort to establish control and, along with it, to deny control to an enemy, there are gradations that range from an abstract ideal to that which is practical, possible, or merely desirable. In this, one can consider whether control is to be general or limited, absolute or merely governing, widespread or local, permanent or temporary.

Following the establishment of control is the use of the control in order to achieve specific ends. The effort to achieve control, by itself, means nothing unless that control has an effect. In the wide spectrum of activity that this can involve, the most important aspect is the use of maritime control to influence and, ultimately, to assist in controlling, events on land. In this, the fundamental key is to have an effect on those places, times, or routes of travel to which an adversary is sensitive, and which are critical and essential enough to move an adversary to alter plans or actions so as to accommodate one's own objectives.

The fundamental characteristics of these two, broad elements of maritime strategy stress the sequential and cumulative relationship between them. One needs to obtain some degree of control at sea before being able to use it to obtain the important ends that one seeks. This sequential nature does not exclude the possibility of simultaneously pursuing these objects, but whatever the nature of the

relative and temporal control that is achieved, it affects the nature of the end-result that is attained.

In many past wars, fighting decisive battles between great opposing fleets or blockading an enemy battle fleet in port to prevent it from getting to sea were the two principal means by which one nation prevented an enemy from establishing maritime control or from interfering with one's own use of the sea. In these ways, one navy could remove another as a threat. Today, there are additional means to achieve these wartime objects: submarine attack, missiles, mines, and air attack.

In examining the role of navies in maritime strategy, many people tend to over-emphasise the effort to achieve control, focusing particularly on battles, and to ignore the less glamorous, but far more important, ways in which maritime forces use the control they obtain. After obtaining some degree of control in wartime, the most important wartime functions of naval forces are:¹⁰

- protecting and facilitating one's own and allied merchant shipping and military supplies at sea;
- maintaining safe passage for shipping through restricted waters and access to ports and harbours;
- denying commercial shipping to an enemy;
- protecting the coast and offshore resources;
- acquiring advanced bases;
- moving and supporting troops and advanced bases;
- gaining and maintaining local air and sea control in support of air and land operations.

From a narrow perspective, all of these seem to describe a navy operating in its own unique element—the sea—using its specialised skills and equipment in a special way. But, in a wider understanding, all of these functions are closely related to other aspects of national power. In many cases, they are also parallel and complementary to the wartime functions of the other armed services.

10 Frank Uhlig Jr, *How Navies Fight, 1775–1991* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1994), summary of chart on pp. 416–17.

Maritime strategy prescribes a wide variety of other considerations for navies in peacetime, in naval operations short of open warfare, and in the non-war functions of naval power that continue even during wartime. One theorist, Ken Booth, has placed these under three general categories: the military role, the policing role, and the diplomatic role.¹¹

The *military capacity* of a navy to use force in the event of war is the foundation upon which the diplomatic and the policing roles rest. However, there are additional features of the military role in peacetime. These include both nuclear and conventional deterrence to prevent war. The military role also includes development of the necessary and basic shore facilities and procedures that are prudent to develop in peacetime, in case war should break out. Additionally, the military role involves protecting the lives, the property, and the interests of one's national citizens on the high seas, in distant waters, and on offshore possessions in time of natural disaster. Most important for all of us in the coming century, the military role includes compliance with, and active assertion of, the international law of the sea regime.

Based on its military capability, a navy has a *policing function* within a maritime strategy. A large country, with wide geographical scope and responsibility in this function, might choose to centralise these functions and assign them to a separate and specialised coast guard service. Other states, by tradition or for other reasons, may choose to share these activities among several governmental agencies. Since the policing role involves military force, it is logically a naval role. Nevertheless, it is one that involves a whole range of civil responsibilities which extend to a different realm, often involving specialised procedures and legal knowledge. This can be one reason for exercising such a naval role through agencies other than the navy itself.

Conversely, in a period of extended peace and international stability, when legislatures will not provide for a war fleet, the agency that exercises the policing role is the one through which wartime

capabilities and sea-going experience can be preserved in a contingency force while, at the same time, performing an important naval task.

In another role related to the policing function in a maritime strategy, navies can contribute to internal stability and development. This type of peaceful use of naval force is limited by geography for most countries, but can be considerable in nations made up of island groups. In case of emergencies, navies can, sometimes more readily than other agencies, supply electrical power, provide hospital facilities, and transport heavy equipment to communities on islands, along navigable rivers, and in distant coastal regions where other types of transportation are limited. In addition to ship-visits, naval shore facilities and active bases in distant areas serve as symbols of a nation for the peoples of those regions, contributing to local solidarity as well as to the local economy.

The third peacetime role for navies within a maritime strategy is the *diplomatic and international role*. In this role, navies can play an important part to reassure and to strengthen bilateral alliances and regional and world-wide international organisations through mutually supportive cooperation. From a position of moderate naval strength, nations can in this way contribute to international stability and maintain a nation's presence and prestige on the international stage, while at the same time cooperating with others to achieve collective security. Building upon the natural links and mutual experience that bind professional officers of all nations together, naval men and women can create ties between navies, even though they serve under different flags. Through such ties—nurtured through personnel exchanges, language, and cultural training as well as operational exercises—navies can help to reduce tensions and avoid misunderstandings.

Unlike other types of military force, navies offer a quality that is not readily apparent in an army, an air force, or a marine assault force. While soldiers and warplanes always appear to be menacing, ships and seamen can appear in ports around the world in ways that easily allow them to be ambassadors and diplomats—or even benign

11 Ken Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy* (Croom Helm, London, 1977).

helpers in times of catastrophe.¹² The traditional and fundamental relationship of navies to national economies, through the international freedom of the seas and its common heritage, gives maritime forces a unique character that distinguishes them from other types of forces. Traditionally, navies have found their capabilities and functions derive from two complementary, but quite different spheres of tradition, one civil and one military, providing important resources for contributing to maritime strategies in both peace and war.

In conclusion, one must underscore the point that a maritime strategy involves much more than a navy. While the terms 'naval' and 'maritime' are not synonymous, navies are very clearly an integral part of the maritime world. Within it, their work is linked in two directions. On the one hand, the navy is linked to the full range of activities in national defence; on the other, it is tied to the entire spectrum of civil activities relating to the sea. A maritime strategy is the comprehensive direction of all aspects of national power to achieve specific policy goals in a specific situation by exercising some degree of control at sea. In understanding the general concepts underlying maritime strategy, there are no absolute dicta, only a constantly evolving theory that is ever in need of modification and correction through our understanding of maritime history, our changing experiences and challenges, and our own reflective analysis on history in the light of those experiences.

12 J.C. Wylie, 'Mahan: Then and Now' in John B. Hattendorf (ed.), *The Influence of History on Mahan* (Naval War College Press, Newport, 1991), p. 41.

CHAPTER 2

THE ARMY'S ROLE IN THE MARITIME DEFENCE OF AUSTRALIA

David Horner

Most Australians with any inkling of their military history have some enduring images of the role of the Australian Army. These images would undoubtedly revolve around the army's overseas expeditions. People would immediately think of Gallipoli and the Somme in the First World War, or Tobruk, El Alamein and Kokoda in the Second World War. If they thought further they would reflect that elements of the army fought in the Sudan in 1885 and in the Boer War 1899–1902, while units were also deployed to Japan after the Second World War, to Korea 1950–56, to Malaya and Malaysia 1955–73, to Vietnam 1962–72 and to the 1991 Gulf War.

Few people would realise that the army has also played a significant role in the maritime defence of Australia. Yet for much of its existence the shape of the army has been determined not by the need to deploy forces overseas, but rather by the need to contribute to the direct defence of continental Australia. In this context, the argument often revolved around whether the army's role was to assist in maritime defence, or to defend the continent from a major invasion. In the period of some 140 years since Australians achieved responsible government, the only time in which the army was in any way shaped for overseas commitments was during the two world wars, Korea, Malaya, Malaysia and Vietnam.

This chapter will explore the extent to which the army has been shaped to meet the requirements of the maritime defence of Australia and, more broadly, the requirements of maritime strategy. Without wishing to get into a semantic argument about the meaning of maritime strategy, it seems that if a country were to apply a

maritime strategy it would need the capacity to conduct naval operations at some distance from the homeland. In this situation land forces would be required not just to secure the homeland against attack, but also to seize new forward bases or to protect existing forward bases so that the naval forces could continue to operate. It might also involve the seizure of enemy bases to deny them to the enemy. In the more limited scope of maritime defence, maritime forces might be merely attempting to prevent an enemy approaching the home shores and, in the worst case, attacking the homeland. In that situation land forces might still be needed to hold and protect forward bases, and to protect home ports from possible attack.

With these sorts of tasks in mind we might be able to make some general comments about the nature of the land forces that would be necessary to support either a maritime strategy or maritime defence. The land forces for these tasks might be quite different from those needed to conduct classical continental-style operations, in which the aim is generally to defeat an opposing army or to seize large slices of territory. In continental strategy the emphasis has generally been on the deployment of large formations with a high ratio of armoured and mechanised units. These forces need the capacity to fight protracted battles over a wide area.

By contrast, to protect naval bases, in the era before the missile age, land forces needed to include long-range coast artillery and static anti-aircraft artillery. These forces could be permanent fortresses, such as were found at major ports around the world for hundreds of years, or they could be mobile units, able to move forward to protect new bases. A typical example of such a force was the British Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation in the Second World War, which comprised a landing and maintenance group to build a naval base, a defence group, which included coast, anti-aircraft, anti-tank and searchlight batteries, and a land defence group, which included rifle companies, light artillery batteries and machine-gunners.¹ To seize forward bases, land forces would need a high degree of mobility so that they could be transported rapidly by sea or air. They would also require to be well balanced, with considerable

firepower, but without the need for a high ratio of armoured and mechanised units. A typical example of such a force is the US Marine Corps, but there is no reason why such a force cannot be found from within the army.

From the early days of the Australian colonies the prime means of external defence was the Royal Navy (RN). The Australian colonies had little capacity to defend themselves as they had no ships of their own. Furthermore, the Royal Marines and later infantry regiments of the line that were sent from England were not concerned with external threats. Their tasks included guarding convicts, providing protection from and mounting expeditions against poorly armed Aborigines, chasing bushrangers, and constructing public buildings and other facilities. Successive governors realised that enemy ships might appear unexpectedly and if RN ships were not available they would have to rely on coast guns to keep the enemy ships at bay. However, while guns were installed at Sydney and later at Port Phillip and near Hobart, the imperial authorities were reluctant to provide the men necessary to man them. In any case, the guns had only a limited range and capacity. So for over fifty years Australia was largely defenceless against enemy invasion, but equally, there was no foreign power that could mount such an invasion.

After 1850 the development of Australian colonial defences was affected by three events. The first was the institution of self-government in the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, which meant that the young colonies would now have to accept some responsibility for their own defence. The second was the discovery of gold, which meant the colonies would have sufficient funds to pay for their own defences. And the third event was the outbreak in 1854 of the Crimean War. There was now the possibility of the unexpected arrival of Russian warships and the war also meant that British troops might be withdrawn. Already in the late 1840s the Maori Wars in New Zealand had forced the transfer of some British units.

These developments led to the formation of locally raised volunteer units, but these were not suitable for manning the guns at the major ports. If an enemy ship appeared unexpectedly on the

¹ See Gavin Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria* (Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1953).

horizon there would not be time to call out the volunteers. As a result, in 1856 a battery of British regular gunners arrived in Sydney. A similar British regular battery arrived in Melbourne in 1861. The costs of these British gunners was borne by the colonial governments, but when the Victorian government was unwilling to pay for their upkeep, in 1868 the British unit left Victoria. Again the colony tried to make do with volunteers, but this proved unsatisfactory and in 1870 the colony raised its first small force of permanent artillery.²

Also in 1870 the British government announced that it would be withdrawing all imperial forces from Australia. There was a rumour that a 'filibustering expedition', or a group of buccaneers, had sailed from San Francisco with the object of raiding Sydney. So in response, in 1871 the New South Wales government announced that a permanent force of one artillery battery and two infantry companies was to be raised. This artillery battery can be traced through to a currently serving battery and thus is the longest serving permanent unit in the Australian Army.

Until this point the colonies had each developed their defences independently, but in 1876 the premier of New South Wales persuaded the other colonies jointly to seek the services of a Royal Engineer officer, Colonel Sir William Jervois, to advise on appropriate schemes of defence. Jervois was assisted by another Royal Engineer officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Scratchley, and together they began work in May 1877.

Jervois and Scratchley inspected the defences of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, and advised that primarily the colonies would have to rely for defence on the power of the RN. There was, however, the possibility that enemy raiders might attack the main coastal cities, and so they recommended the establishment of a series of forts to protect each main port. If an enemy were to attack a city successfully it would have to land a small raiding force to deal with the forts, and so Jervois and Scratchley recommended the formation of small field forces, comprised of

² For the development of coast and permanent artillery in Australia see the author's, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995).

infantry, artillery, engineers and cavalry, to deal with possible enemy landings.

These reports prepared by Jervois and Scratchley were to have far-reaching implications for Australian defence, for they resulted in the mounting in Australia of over one hundred guns, and the construction of forts such as Queenscliff, Nepean, Scratchley at Newcastle and Lytton at Brisbane, that still exist around the coast. Furthermore, if the forts were to fulfil the function of being ready to repel an enemy raider at short notice they would best be manned by permanent artillery, and even if the short notice was not a crucial factor, the complicated machinery in the forts demanded the full-time care of a permanent staff. As a result of Jervois' and Scratchley's recommendations, permanent artillery units were therefore established in four colonies and these became the nucleus of the permanent Australian Army after Federation in 1901. The field forces which were to deal with raiding parties were still provided by volunteers or paid part-time militia. Jervois also recommended the acquisition of local naval forces, and slowly the colonies acquired a number of small coastal craft.

When in 1885 New South Wales sent a small force to Sudan, the troops that were sent were volunteers, although large numbers of the artillery battery that went came from the regular batteries. The commitment to Sudan had little effect on the shape of the colony's defence force, which continued as before.

The year of 1885 also marked the beginning of inter-colonial defence cooperation. From 1877 onwards Jervois and Scratchley had pointed out that since the defence of Australia rested ultimately on the RN, there was a pressing need to protect the navy's coaling stations, such as the port of Albany in King George's Sound which was a vital strategic point between Cape Town and Melbourne. The threat of war with Russia in 1885 gave added emphasis to this recommendation, and in June 1885 the British government, which had recently established a Colonial Defence Committee, suggested that the colonies cooperate in establishing fortifications at Albany. Britain was prepared to send armaments and submarine mines to Albany at no

charge if the Australian colonies would defray the other expenses of about £6000 per year.³

The British request must be seen in a wider context. In January 1885 Rear Admiral Sir George Tryon arrived in Australia as the Commander-in-Chief (CinC) of the Australia Station. He was the first admiral to hold the post, and had express instructions from the Admiralty to persuade the colonies to abolish their local navies and instead pay the expenses of an enhanced RN squadron.⁴ In considering the problem of defending Australia Tryon urged the defence of King George's Sound and Thursday Island in Torres Strait and, as with King George's Sound, Britain also agreed to contribute to the defence of Thursday Island.

In April 1886 Tryon put his proposals for naval cooperation to the Australian premiers, and these proposals were considered at a Colonial Conference in London in 1887. The result was a ten-year naval agreement in which the colonies made a substantial contribution towards the RN, which in turn provided five fast third-rate cruisers and two torpedo boats for the defence of Australian maritime trade. During the discussions the Colonial Secretary also raised the possibility of combining the colonial forces for service outside the colonies. The colonies were reluctant to accept the proposal, but recognised that further cooperation could bring financial savings—an attractive option as the colonies moved into a severe economic depression in the late 1880s. Meanwhile, work went ahead on the building of forts at Albany and Thursday Island. This was a classic role for the army in maritime strategy; that is, the protection of forward bases and choke points.

In an effort to improve defence cooperation between the colonies, in 1889 the British government sent Major General Sir James Bevan Edwards to inspect and report on the defences. It was at this stage that appreciations for the defence of Australia moved beyond the approach of dealing with raids, to one of considering the possibility of large-scale landings in Australia, even though it is not

3 Colonial Defence Committee 5 May 1895, Public Record Office (PRO): CAB 8.

4 See Ray Jones, 'Tryon in Australia: The 1887 Naval Agreement', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1987.

clear which nation might have conducted these large-scale landings. Under the defence scheme proposed by Jervois and Scratchley, the colonies maintained small field forces that were designed to prevent enemy raiding parties attacking the coastal defences. Edwards pointed out that if an enemy landed in large numbers these small field forces would not be able to cope. The only solution was to raise a federal defence force of some 30–40,000 men that could be concentrated at the area where the threat had developed.

The Colonial Defence Committee in London quickly reminded Edwards that he had overlooked the fact that the RN would prevent a large-scale landing in Australia. Commenting on the importance of the RN, Jervois pointed out that 'if the British navy were withdrawn ... you would have the grass growing in the streets of Sydney and Melbourne'.⁵ There was, however, another reason for supporting a federal force. If such a force was formed it could be used overseas for imperial operations. But this was not an outcome that would appeal to many Australian policy makers.

While policy makers were wary of forming a force that could be deployed overseas, popular sentiment meant that substantial forces volunteered for service during the South African war. But there was no widespread support for the creation of a permanent force for overseas service after Federation in 1901. The General Officer Commanding the new Commonwealth Military Forces, Major General Sir Edward Hutton, continued to press for a federal force that could serve overseas on imperial tasks, but was unsuccessful in persuading the government. The proposals were debated at length in the federal parliament, which eventually approved a military organisation which would consist of three forces. The first of these was a permanent cadre force for administrative, technical and instructional purposes. It consisted of instructional staff, the Royal Australian Artillery Regiment, which would man the coast forts, and a small detachment of engineers. The second force was the Field Force for inter-state or Commonwealth defence, and this consisted of six brigades of light horse and three brigades of infantry raised from part-time militia. The third force was the Garrison Force, which was divided into two

5 John Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A History of Australian Military Developments, 1880–1914* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992), p. 15.

groups—the Fortress troops, which manned the fortified positions, and the District Reserves, which were mobile forces of infantry and light horse. The Fortress troops included not only the gunners and engineers who manned the fortresses, but also light horse and infantry whose task was to protect the forts from parties of enemy raiders.

The Defence Act of 1903 stipulated that there would be no permanent soldiers except for small numbers of instructional personnel, and the permanent gunners and engineers that were necessary to man the forts. All other troops would be part-time militiamen who could not be required to serve overseas. Therefore, if troops other than permanent soldiers were to serve overseas, they would have to be specially raised volunteers. Furthermore, the government could not even raise regular infantry or light horse units for service within Australia.

While it was clear that the army could not serve overseas, there was still some ambivalence about the means of defending Australia. The first line of defence was still the RN, but if enemy ships approached the Australian ports the coast artillery—which now had a much longer range—would play a crucial role. On the other hand fixed defences with large guns set in concrete and manned by permanent soldiers were more expensive than the part-time field force. Furthermore, the imperialists among the army hierarchy—officers such as Colonel William Bridges—believed that Australia's defence was best found within the framework of imperial defence. Thus, while the Defence Act precluded the dispatch of the field force overseas, there was still merit in developing in the field force those characteristics that would enable it to cooperate smoothly with a British force in time of war. If a force of special volunteers was raised it could draw on expertise that was already in existence in the militia field force. Even the Australianists in the army, such as Colonel John Hoad and Major Gordon Legge, who resisted the idea of preparing forces to be sent overseas, found merit in an expanded field force that could deal with possible enemy landings in Australia. So for the first time we see a wider acceptance of a continental role for the Australian Army.

This trend was confirmed by the moves towards the establishment of a scheme for compulsory military service. The success of the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 raised the spectre of a hostile power in the Pacific and various Australian politicians such as Alfred Deakin, who was prime minister for much of the first decade, and William Hughes, a prominent Labor Party member, advocated the strengthening of Australia's defences. Universal service was not instituted until July 1911, but it was a comprehensive scheme involving compulsory military training for young boys from the age of fourteen, and the eventual formation of a Citizen Force of 80,000 trained militiamen by 1919–20. It also involved the establishment of the Royal Military College at Duntroon.

The other strand to the expansion of Australia's defences was the formation of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). The details of this development are covered in the next chapter; however, one point worth noting is that in the future senior army officers would no longer have an open field when discussing strategic issues such as the most appropriate plan for the defence of Australia. Nonetheless, in the short term it was business as usual. It would take some time for the RAN's fleet to develop properly. Furthermore, at the 1911 Imperial Conference it was agreed that in time of war Australia's ships would be placed at the disposal of the Admiralty for the duration of hostilities. Thus Australian defence still rested on the power of the RN.

Australia's massive army commitment of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in the First World War was for purposes other than the maritime defence of Australia. At the grand strategic level, the commitment was made for the very good reason that, beyond the strong ties of kinship and sentiment, the defeat of Britain in Europe would have highly unfavourable consequences for Australia. At the operational level, the Australian Army found itself fighting continental-type campaigns which required the development of large formations with the full range of combat support.

However, it is not generally appreciated that during the war the army still had a role in the maritime defence of Australia. The first instance concerns the manning of the forts guarding ports. Even

before war was declared the permanent gunners were at their posts at Thursday Island, Brisbane, Newcastle, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide, Albany and Fremantle. Australia's first hostile shot of the war was fired by a gun at Fort Nepean to prevent a German cargo ship escaping to the high seas. Later many of the permanent gunners were relieved by militia garrison gunners. Once the maritime threat to Australia declined in early 1915, large numbers of garrison gunners managed to serve overseas as part of the Australian Siege Brigade, but many others were refused permission to enlist for overseas service. They had a frustrating war, broken by two periods of full mobilisation in early 1916 and mid-1918, when German raiders were thought to be in Australian waters.⁶

The other instance concerns the expedition to German New Guinea in September 1914. At the outbreak of war Germany had two strong armoured cruisers in the western Pacific which could threaten convoys on the Australia Station. Rabaul, the capital of German New Guinea, provided the Germans with a wireless station and well-protected harbour, so the British government asked Australia to seize this base. The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, as it was known, consisted of several naval ships and a landing force comprising a battalion of specially raised infantry plus a smaller battalion of naval reservists and ex-seamen serving as infantry. Troops were landed on 11 September and after a few skirmishes secured the area. The Australian occupation of New Britain was proclaimed on 13 September. It was a classic case of denying a forward base to an enemy naval force. Soon after, the German cruisers sailed from the Pacific, and there was no further naval threat to Australia for over a year.

After the First World War the Australian government again turned its attention to the defence of Australia, with the added incentive that Japan had gained in strength during the war and had secured territories some 1000 km north of New Guinea. In early 1920 the government convened a conference of senior officers to advise on the future organisation of Australian defence. Chaired by Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, the conference concluded that the safety

6 For a description of the role of coast defence in Australia during the war see 'Fronsac', *Garrison Gunners* (Tamworth Newspaper Co, Tamworth, 1929).

of Australia rested on two factors; the first was its membership of the British Empire, and the second was 'Australia's own ability to prevent an invading enemy from obtaining decisive victories pending the arrival of help from other parts of the Empire'.⁷ Japan posed the greatest threat.

The conference proposed an organisation that almost exactly paralleled that of the AIF in the last year of the war. It assessed that Australia could maintain a field force of two cavalry divisions and the equivalent of five infantry divisions, with the necessary army, corps and auxiliary troops making, upon war establishment, a total of about 180,000 all ranks.

The conference recognised that the role of coast defence and garrisons would be largely determined by naval considerations, which had yet to be discussed by the Committee of Imperial Defence in London. However, the conference assessed that if Cockburn Sound in Western Australia and Sydney or Port Stephens in the east were to become major naval bases then their defence had to be given high priority. After the naval bases, the next important ports were the commercial centres of Sydney (if Port Stephens were to be the naval base), Newcastle, Melbourne and Hobart. The naval bases and ports had to be capable of defending against armoured surface vessels, submarines, aircraft and enemy landing forces. The conference concluded that it was too expensive to maintain the garrison at Thursday Island, but the equipment there, and at Townsville, Brisbane, Adelaide and Albany, should be maintained until the views of the Committee of Imperial Defence were known.⁸ Faced by financial constraints, the government failed to approve any of the proposals for new equipment or for an arsenal, although on 1 May 1921 the army introduced its new divisional system.⁹

Towards the end of 1921 representatives of Britain, France, Italy, the United States and Japan met for a disarmament conference in Washington, where they agreed to reduce the numbers of their

7 Report on the Military Defence of Australia, 6 February 1920, Australian War Memorial (AWM): AWM 1 Item 20/7.

8 *ibid.*

9 Report of the Inspector-General, 31 May 1921, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (CPP), p. 8.

battleships and restrict the size of new vessels. Believing that Australia's security was now assured, the government drastically reduced the defence vote from £8,000,000 in 1921–22 to £5,200,000 in 1923–24. Nearly half the ships of the RAN were decommissioned.

The army was also cut savagely. Although the seven militia divisions were retained, the overall strength of the militia was reduced to 31,000 men—only 25 per cent of their war establishment. Training was reduced to six days in camp and four days in local centres a year. The permanent army was reduced to 1600 men, and 72 permanent officers were retired. As A.J. Hill wrote: 'Economy was elevated to the prime aim and Defence lay defenceless before the political onslaught'.¹⁰ The Conference of Senior Officers had hoped to have an army that could repel a possible invader. All that was left was a skeleton force which, with ten days' training per year, could hardly be described as a real army.

It was soon obvious that the Washington Treaty was no guarantee of long-term peace, but the Australian government thought that security might be provided by the proposed British naval base at Singapore. Under the so-called Singapore strategy, Britain undertook to send its main fleet to Singapore in time of threat from Japan. In turn, Australia accepted responsibility for the protection of maritime trade on the Australia Station, and agreed to contribute towards a naval force based at Singapore and to maintain a secondary base at Darwin. The army was to have the capacity to expand to provide an expeditionary force as well as to defend the Australian continent.

Senior Australian Army officers like the Inspector-General, General Chauvel, rejected the idea that the only threat to Australia would be from raids and wanted to prepare to resist a full-scale invasion. Over the next twelve years other senior officers, such as H.D. Wynter, J.D. Lavarack and H.C.H. Robertson, argued that Japan would attack only when Britain was preoccupied in Europe, and therefore Australia had to look to its own defences. The army failed to

¹⁰ A. J. Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1978), p. 203.

win this argument with the government, which continued to give priority to the navy.

In 1924 the government introduced a five-year programme of defence measures. Although the navy received the largest slice of the defence vote, the army was permitted to expand to 45,000 men, and a special allocation was made to purchase a small number of anti-aircraft guns, medium artillery and tanks to allow the development of skills for later expansion.

During the next five years there were modest improvements in the field army, but little progress with coast defences. In December 1925 the Committee of Imperial Defence recommended a five-year programme for coastal rearmament involving a total expenditure of £2,795,000. It was particularly important to establish defences for a naval refuelling base at Darwin and also for Albany, which had been selected as the principal convoy assembling port in Australia in time of war.

The Australian Military Board recommended an expanded version of this scheme, and General Chauvel did what he could to persuade the government to accept it. In a secret annex to his 1926 report he advised that, with the increased range of naval guns since the war, 'the armament of our forts has given cause for grave anxiety ... As we are frankly depending on the British navy for protection from invasion, it is considered that the provision of secure bases to enable ships to operate in our waters is of sufficient importance to warrant special financial provisions being made'.¹¹ The following year he pointed out that the relative power of the RN had declined: 'The British navy is now maintained at a one-power standard, and Japan is no longer an ally and is relatively stronger at sea than she was twenty years ago'.¹² However, in the Council of Defence the Chief of the Air Staff argued that aircraft could be substituted for coast artillery and, faced with conflicting views, the Council deferred a decision until 1929.

¹¹ Report of the Inspector-General, Part II, 30 June 1927, AWM: AWM 1, 20/8 pt 2.
¹² *ibid.*

Chauvel did not give up, and in a secret section of his 1928 report pointed out that if Singapore were lost then Australia would be dependent on the efficiency of its coast defences. To tie Australia's limited numbers of aircraft to the defence of particular points around the coast would be a 'a complete misuse of this arm', and the only sound course was to proceed with the rearmament of the coast defences.¹³ In his report for 1929 Chauvel simply wrote: 'I regret to say that no progress whatever has been possible towards the rearmament of our coastal defences'.¹⁴

The election of the Labor government in October 1929, followed by the onset of the Great Depression, further slowed defence spending. Compulsory military training was suspended, and replaced by voluntary training. When the United Australia Party came to power in 1932 it sought to get a grip on defence policy, but came up against the conflicting views of the navy and army. The navy continued to rely on the Singapore strategy, and considered that the army need be prepared only to deal with raids. The army continued its argument that it had to be prepared to deal with a possible invasion. The army's case was argued strongly by the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Major General Sir Julius Bruce, and his capable successor, Major General John Lavarack. Advised by the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), by the Secretary of the Department of Defence, and by the Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Sir Maurice Hankey, who visited Australia in 1934, the government continued to put its confidence in the Singapore strategy.

This meant that when more money became available for the army the government directed that it be spent on coast defences. For example, on 25 September 1933 the Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, stated that 'the gun must play the primary role on coast fortress defence ... our heavy armament is badly in need of replacement and an increasing number of batteries is essential'.¹⁵ In March 1934 he announced that Australia was to purchase two 9.2-inch guns at a cost of £35,000.¹⁶ This was the first instalment in a three-year

coast defence rearmament programme of £3.5 million in which provision was made for two 9.2-inch guns at each of North Head (Sydney), Cape Banks (entrance to Botany Bay, Sydney) and Rottneest Island (off Fremantle), and for 6-inch gun batteries at Cowan Cowan (Brisbane), Rottneest, South Head (Sydney) and Henry Head (entrance to Botany Bay, Sydney).¹⁷

The government's programme was the result of months of discussion in the Defence Committee, in which the CGS had proposed a more ambitious three-year programme for the purchase of new equipment.¹⁸ His proposals were not supported by the navy, which relied on the views of the Committee of Imperial Defence that the Japanese would not attempt an invasion of Australia.¹⁹ With the threat of Singapore in their rear the Japanese would not send their battleships or aircraft carriers south to Australia, and they would only attack with cruisers, armed merchant vessels, submarines and aircraft carried on these vessels. So it was decided to install only 9.2-inch guns. Under the Washington Agreement, Japanese cruisers were restricted to 8-inch guns, and since these out-ranged the 9.2-inch coast guns by 1200 metres, the guns would have to be emplaced at least that distance forward of the areas they were to protect. The guns at Sydney Heads protected Garden Island and the bridge; the guns on Rottneest Island protected Fremantle; and the guns at Fort Wallace protected the BHP steel works at Newcastle.²⁰

Fortunately, unlike Britain, in the early 1930s Australia did not appear to face the prospect of large-scale raids from land-based aircraft, nor was it expected that there would be organised attacks from carrier-borne aircraft. However, if the 9.2-inch guns deterred an enemy from attacking with gun-fire, then the attacker might be forced to use aircraft located on cruisers or raiders.²¹ It was not long before this idea had to be reviewed for, with the rapid expansion of the Japanese Fleet Air Arm, the chances that the Japanese might use

13 Report of the Inspector-General, Part II, 30 June 1928, AWM: AWM 1, 20/8 pt 2.

14 Report of the Inspector-General, Part II, 31 May 1929, CPP.

15 Quoted in the *Herald*, 13 March 1934.

16 *Age*, 13 March 1934.

17 'Australian Defence Policy Outstanding Questions and Their Background', 8 February 1935, AA: CRS A5954, 841/3.

18 CGS to Secretary, Defence Committee, 30 November 1933, AA: CRS A2301, Vol 2.

19 Defence Committee Agenda No. 7/1934, 2 March 1934, AA: CRS A2302, 1934.

20 Neil Gow, 'Australian Army Strategic Planning 1919-39', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, August 1977.

21 Secretary, Department of Defence to Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 30 July 1936, AA: CRS A1608, B15/1/9.

carrier-borne aircraft increased, and it became more urgent to provide adequate air defences at each major port. By the late 1930s anti-aircraft defences were being established in Sydney, Newcastle, Maribyrnong, Fremantle and Darwin.

These developments did not have the wholehearted support of the army, which would have preferred to give priority to developing the militia field force. In fact the militia did expand towards the end of the 1930s, but not to the extent that Lavarack would have liked. Even the formation of the army's first permanent infantry force, the Darwin Mobile Force, in late 1938 was justified partly in terms of maritime defence. The Singapore strategy required that Darwin be developed as an alternative naval base and fuel storage facilities were constructed in the 1920s. In the early 1930s the army began building fortifications, including four 6-inch guns. These needed to be protected against possible raids, but Darwin was too small to allow for the numbers of militiamen needed for such a task. The only solution was to provide a force of permanent soldiers.

Not all army officers took as strong a line as Lavarack over the possibility of invasion. For example, when the matter was debated in the Council of Defence in February 1938, Major General Sir Thomas Blamey, an invited member of the Council, said that 'it was reasonable for the Council to assume that invasion was unlikely and he felt that our efforts should be directed towards the provision of adequate defence against raids'. Lavarack replied that Japan was ready to take risks to undertake an invasion, but Blamey agreed with the CNS, Admiral Colvin, that Japan would have to deal with Singapore first. However, he did add that if Japan were at war with Australia, then Australia 'could not dream of sending men abroad unless the Japanese Fleet with its menace to Australia were first dealt with and overcome'.²² In a radio broadcast in November 1938, Blamey reiterated his view that the first line of defence lay with the navy:

While there is a battle fleet at sea based upon Singapore, and until it has been signally defeated in naval battle a large scale invasion of Australia would be so hazardous as to be unlikely

²² Summary of Proceedings of Council of Defence Meeting, 24 February 1938, AA: CRS A5954, 762/5.

to be attempted. But it would be very unwise to assume that no conditions can arrive in which the battle fleet available, whatever it may be, cannot possibly be defeated. So no nation can take the risk of remaining unprepared to meet invasion. Our defence requires therefore that adequate military forces be available on land to meet any possible invasion. No Army can be made in a day or even in a year.²³

Despite the strong views of the army, it can be concluded that to a certain extent during the period between the two world wars the Australian Army was structured to play its part in the maritime defence of Australia.

The first year of the Second World War was similar to the First World War inasmuch as large numbers of troops were sent overseas to support Britain in the European-Middle East theatre, and the maritime defence of Australia was of secondary importance. As in the First World War, the permanent gunners manned the defended ports and were soon relieved by the militia fortress troops. However, unlike in the First World War, the fortresses also included anti-aircraft units. Furthermore, the Fortress Combined Operational Headquarters that were located at each main defended port included a representative of the local RAAF commander. This was an acknowledgment that maritime defence now included a substantial role for aircraft.

In October 1941 the war correspondent, George Johnston, visited the coast defences around Australia and wrote an account which, despite having an element of propaganda, was particularly graphic:

In blistering heat and in bitter gales the vigil has continued, night and day, at every gun in every fort. Every night the sentries and look outs have stared over the black waters. And in the 'war shelter' of each fort men have been on duty all night, tin hats and rifles alongside them, ready for the 'Alert'

²³ A copy of the script is in AWM: PR 85/355, 8.

that would send them racing to the guns in three seconds ... Behind us the greatest city of Australia was asleep.²⁴

Johnston went on to describe the routine of the soldiers, the loneliness of the Observation Posts scattered along the coast, the supporting defences manned by the garrison battalions, and behind them 'the great searchlight batteries and AA stations - manned, like the coast guns, for every minute of every day'. Johnston then turned to the control organisation:

In secret rooms in every Fixed Defences Command all the threads of the vast system are gathered together ... skilled men, who sift reports from abroad and all over Australia; reports of an unidentified ship off the coast, of an aircraft flying out of specified lanes of traffic, plans for the co-operation of warships, aircraft, and coast defences ...

The popular conception that coast defence implies a few heavy guns dotted around the coast falls far short of the truth ...

'If these guns ever go into action it will mean that we've fallen down on our job', a senior fortress officer explained. 'They will have fulfilled their purpose efficiently only if they go right through the war and never fire a shot in action'.²⁵

In the latter months of 1940 the strategic situation affecting the defence of Australia changed dramatically. Following the fall of France, Japan marched into Indochina and made various demands on Britain concerning Burma and Hong Kong. Faced with this growing Japanese threat, and following high-level conferences in Singapore, the government decided not to send the 8th Division to the Middle East, but in February 1941 the headquarters of the division was sent to Malaya with one infantry brigade. Later in the year another brigade was sent to Malaya. This was a classic case of the army being used to protect a forward naval base. Indeed considering that Australia's defence was built around the Singapore strategy, this was a crucial task for the army.

24 George Johnston, *Australia at War* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1942), p. 47.

25 *ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

In the same period German armed merchant cruisers were active in the Pacific and Indian oceans, and in early December 1940 they sank five phosphate-carrying vessels near Nauru and later shelled the island, wrecking the phosphate plant. These incidents demonstrated the vulnerability of the islands to the north of Australia to Japanese attack and, over the next several months, the Australian government decided to send small garrisons to Nauru and Ocean Island, Rabaul, New Ireland, the Solomons, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia. Coast guns were installed at Rabaul and Port Moresby and a mobile coast artillery unit was formed for deployment to Timor. The garrison at Darwin was strengthened, guns were installed at Thursday Island, and plans were prepared to deploy forces to Timor and Ambon if the Japanese attacked the Netherlands East Indies.

Again, these were instances of the army supporting the maritime defence of Australia by securing forward bases. Some locations, such as Rabaul and Ambon, were used as bases for Australian reconnaissance aircraft. Most locations needed to be held to prevent their being used as forward bases by an advancing enemy. In fact when Rabaul fell to the Japanese in January 1942 it became for a while the main Japanese naval and air base in the southwest Pacific.

After the Allied forces were driven out of most of the islands to the north of Australia the army had to face the prospect of a possible invasion of the mainland. The army was therefore deployed to meet this threat, with divisions—once they were trained and equipped—being deployed to the likely areas of threat such as Darwin, Western Australia, north, central and southern Queensland and Newcastle. Japanese defeats at Coral Sea in May 1942 and at Midway in June 1942 made it extremely unlikely that the Japanese could invade Australia, but the government and its advisers continued to maintain divisions in the key areas for some time as a precaution.

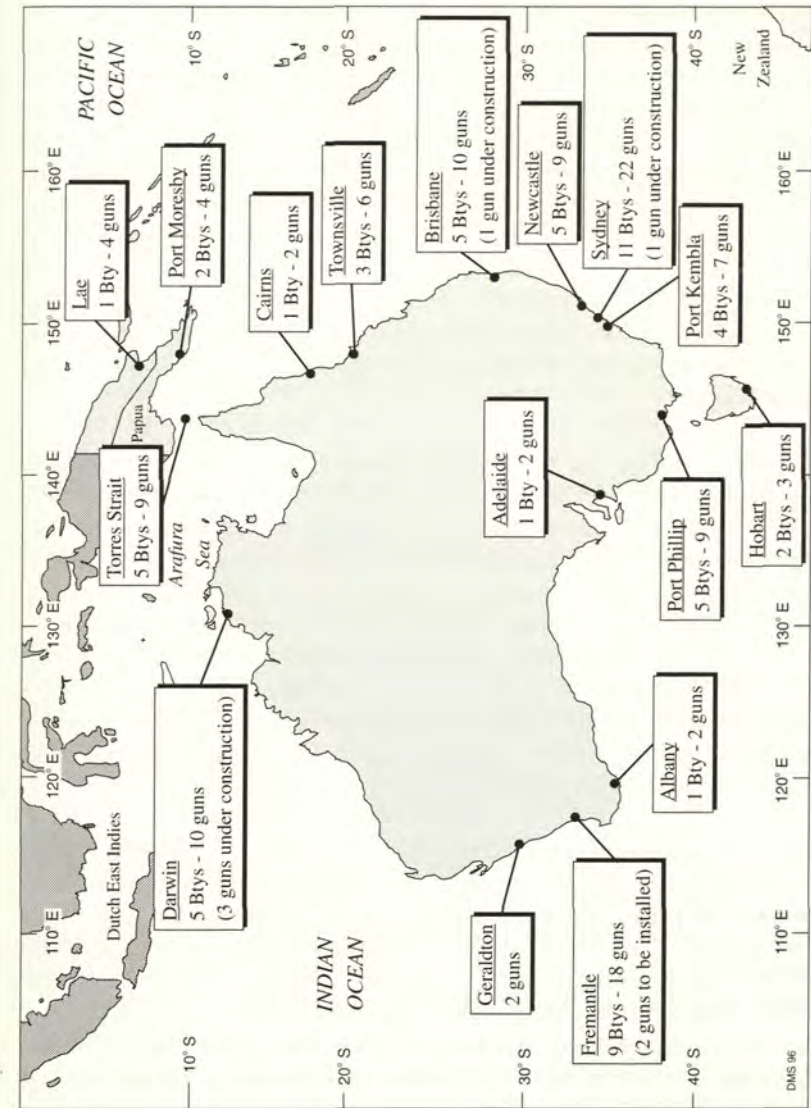
Furthermore, the coast defences were maintained through until the last year of the war. In June 1942 the guns at Newcastle fired at a Japanese submarine that was shelling the city. Map 2.1 shows the fixed defences in Australia in August 1944. Overlaid on top of this

must be the anti-aircraft defences. For example in December 1942 there were two heavy anti-aircraft regiments and 32 static heavy anti-aircraft batteries, while the total anti-aircraft force had a strength of some 32,000 men.

The campaigns of General Douglas MacArthur's South-West Pacific Area—from July 1942, when the Japanese landed on the north coast of Papua, through until his forces landed on the island of Leyte in the Philippines in October 1944—might be seen in broad terms as the application of a maritime strategy. Within that strategy, MacArthur's main weapon was his land-based air force. Since he was short of aircraft carriers his approach was to seize suitable landing areas from which he could attack the Japanese Air Force and support the next amphibious landings as he moved progressively towards the Philippines. In these campaigns the role of the army was generally to seize and protect the forward naval and air bases. For example, Australian Army units were sent to Milne Bay to protect the airfield being constructed there. The Japanese landed their marines in late August 1942 with the purpose of eliminating the Allied air base so that they could advance to Port Moresby. Later Milne Bay became an important forward Allied naval base.

The purpose of the Australian landing at Lae and Nadzab in September 1943 was to obtain a number of airfields in the Markham and Ramu valleys. The role of the 7th Australian Division was to eliminate the Japanese in this area and then protect it from enemy attack. Despite the fact that MacArthur's strategy was largely maritime in nature, he still needed large numbers of army troops. But there was no scope for the large-scale manoeuvring of brigades and divisions such as took place in more continental-style campaigns in Europe or Burma.

For a period of almost eighty years—from 1870 until the 1940s—the army was shaped for the defence of Australia, and special volunteer expeditionary forces had to be raised for overseas service if that was deemed necessary. However, after the Second World War that previous system was, to some extent, overthrown. With the formation of the Australian Regular Army in 1947, for the first time the government had a permanent army that it could send overseas in



Map 2.1: August 1944 - Fixed defences in Australia (AWM: AWM54, 243/2/1)

support of its policies at short notice. The defence of Australia was seen in terms of cooperating with Britain and the United States to prevent the expansion of communism. Should another major war occur it was expected that Australia would again deploy divisions to the Middle East. These divisions would be based on the two divisions of the Citizen Military Forces that had begun recruitment in 1948. To ensure sufficient personnel, a national service scheme was instituted, by which young men received basic training in one of the three services, and in the case of the navy and army continued with part-time training in the citizen forces. A basic flaw in the plan was that the members of the Citizen Military Forces could not be required to serve overseas, thus making it difficult to deploy the divisions to the Middle East.

The policy of 'Forward Defence', with its resultant deployments of army personnel to Korea, Malaya, Malaysia and Vietnam, is discussed in a later chapter; however, what is clear is that the idea of defending Australia with maritime forces was subsumed in the wider strategy of cooperating with allies. Little consideration was given as to how the army might be able to contribute to maritime strategy or maritime defence. Rather, the opposite was the case—the navy contributed to the policy of forward defence either through cooperating with Allied navies or by supporting the army overseas. This latter role included transporting troops and material and providing limited naval gunfire support.

For over a hundred years the army had contributed to the maritime defence of Australia by manning the coast guns that protected the ports and main naval bases. Following the end of the Second World War this function went into immediate decline, with most batteries existing on only a care and maintenance basis. It was expected that aircraft would detect and deal with enemy ships long before they approached Australian ports. By 1960 only Sydney, Darwin and Fremantle were designated as defended ports. In October 1962 the Chiefs of Staff decided that: 'There was no longer a

requirement to provide fixed coast artillery for the seaward defence of defended ports'.²⁶

The end of the commitment to Vietnam and the release of the government's 1976 Defence White Paper provided a new strategic framework. The new policy was one of defence self-reliance with an emphasis on the defence of Australia and its approaches. But the force structure and doctrinal implications of this new policy were not immediately apparent. Lacking higher level guidance, initially the army trained for continental-style operations within Australia. Then in the late 1970s and early 1980s the army made a number of changes to its structure. These included the formation of Regional Force Surveillance Units, the formation of an Operational Deployment Force of two battalions on light scales and able to move at short notice, the formation of a parachute battalion, and the beginnings of the formation of a mechanised brigade with an armoured regiment and a mechanised battalion. The problem was that there was still no clear operational concept which could link into a military strategy.

It was not until the 1987 Defence White Paper that the military strategy of defence-in-depth was articulated. The 1989–90 *Defence Report* stated that the army's objective was firstly, to provide for credible land contingencies in the defence of Australia, its territories and interests; and secondly to provide for longer term expansion should this be required.²⁷ The force structure implications included the move of the 1st Brigade with its cavalry, mechanised infantry and armoured units, to Darwin, and the transfer of the battlefield helicopters from the RAAF to the army. Concepts were developed to deal with credible contingencies (that is, low-level incursions into northern Australia), and these concepts included the protection of the northern air bases. In some ways the new Tindal air base south of Darwin became the modern version of the old defended port of Sydney.

26 Quoted in R. K. Fullford, *We Stood and Waited: Sydney's Anti-Ship Defences, 1939-1945* (Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society, Sydney, 1994), p. 239.

27 *Defence Report 1989-90*, (Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1990), p. 36.

In many respects, the present-day force structure and concepts which have been refined since 1987 reflect those associated with maritime defence and maritime strategy. The army is no longer structured for large-scale continental warfare, but is more mobile and is developing well-balanced combat groups that can be deployed over long distances at relatively short notice.

It would be a mistake to force Australia's current defence strategy into a simple characterisation as continental or maritime. It is joint in nature and is structured for Australia's particular geographic and strategic situation. But it cannot be denied that there is at present and must always be a heavy maritime element in Australian defence. In that case, defence planners must not lose sight of the fact that there is a substantial role for the army in a maritime-oriented strategy. The way that the army's force structure will be developed in the future will require imaginative and forward thinking, but the idea that the Australian Army can play a role in maritime strategy is as old as its first permanent units.

CHAPTER 3

'THE VISION SPLENDID': AUSTRALIAN MARITIME STRATEGY, 1911-23

Ian Cowman

Prior to 1909 the interest of Australian naval staff was tied to local naval defence. There were no plans to acquire vessels larger than destroyers and, consequently, little consideration of 'blue-water' strategy. But between 1911 and 1923 that view changed dramatically. Indeed Australian maritime strategy in this period divides neatly into four main phases:

- The 'fleet unit' concept of 1909, that began the process, and started Australian naval staff thinking about 'blue-water' strategy.
- Evolving out of this, an extended programme—the 1911 Henderson Plan—a 'vision' that would have seen Australia, by 1933, becoming a major naval player in the Pacific in its own right.
- During the 1914-18 war that programme was complemented by a *post-bellum* strategy, one calling for the creation of a regional security arrangement where joint contributions in ships and men came from the dominions themselves.
- The immediate postwar period presided over both the end of any plans for large-scale naval forces and also the rapid demise of the RAN as a whole.

The Fleet Unit Concept

The parochial view of Australian maritime defence as purely a local affair altered because of a special imperial naval conference held in

London in August 1909. At that meeting the Admiralty suggested the creation of indigenous fleet units, equal in size, based on squadrons which would serve on the Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada stations. Each squadron would consist of one *Invincible*-class battlecruiser, three light cruisers of the *Bristol* class, six destroyers, and three submarines, together with the necessary repair and depot ships. When combined, these heterogeneous units would form a Pacific Fleet. Indeed Admiral Sir John Fisher, the First Sea Lord, believed that adopting such a plan would mean Britain could leave the naval defence of the Pacific almost entirely to the dominions: 'We manage the job in Europe. They'll manage it against the Yankees, Japs, and Chinese, as occasion requires out there'.¹

Yet significantly the Admiralty reserved the right to transfer forces, should this prove necessary, in accordance with its 'one single navy' policy.² Australia and New Zealand were in favour, Canada and South Africa were not, but Britain generously agreed to make up any differences and the plan was duly launched. For the first time Australian naval forces would have to make concerted efforts to prepare at both local and imperial levels.³ The capital cost of the ships alone was estimated to be £3,695,000 with an annual maintenance expense of £750,000 per annum.⁴ In accordance with the anticipated Admiralty timetable, the battlecruiser HMAS *Australia* and cruiser HMAS *Sydney* joined the fleet at Sydney harbour on 4 October 1913.⁵ But shortly after the plan had been agreed to, a complete change-over took place in the upper echelons of the Admiralty. The indolent Sir A.K. Wilson replaced Sir John Fisher, a number of other sea lords were replaced, and the

1 Letter, Fisher to Esher, 13 September 1909, cited in A.J. Marder (ed.), *Fear God and Dread Nought: Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher*, Vol. II (Jonathon Cape, London, 1956), p. 266.

2 Minutes of the Naval Subconference, 10 August 1909, C.O. 386/2, 8659. See also 'Empire Naval Defence', *Commonwealth Year Book*, No. 2, 1909, p. 1086.

3 'Naval Defence', memo by Creswell, 25 March 1909, AA: MP 178/2, 2115/3/54.

4 See 'Australian Naval Policy up to 1923 and Some Consideration of Future Policy', report by the Navy Board, undated 1923, AA: MP 1587, 186AL.

5 Colin Jones, *Australian Colonial Navies* (Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1986), p. 148.

ebullient Winston Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty. The change-over in staff also heralded a change in strategy. By 13 April 1913 the Australian Minister for Defence, Senator E.D. Millen, was accusing the Admiralty of breaching the agreement. First the battlecruiser HMS *New Zealand* had been transferred to home waters rather than being sent to the Pacific, where its service had been pledged in 1909. Then the Admiralty failed to provide a third fleet unit either on the East Indies or China stations. Finally, there was talk of sending *Australia* to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. All this had been done without consultation and had been presented to Australia as a *fait accompli*. Millen went on to say that, under Churchill, the Admiralty had discarded the programme of 1909 and the basis on which the Australian Navy had been formed.⁶ That somewhat severe lesson did have a salutary effect on the Australian naval staff. They determined that never again would they be caught by similar circumstances. As the 1915 War Staff position paper noted:

Although in 1909 the Admiralty encouraged us to believe in its acceptance of a Pacific squadron, by 1914 its official head was able to reject that policy almost ostentatiously; and the course of the present war, which happens to be an almost purely Atlantic affair, will deepen in the official mind at Whitehall the traditional impression (correct enough as far as Great Britain is concerned) that the Pacific situation involves only outlying and secondary problems. We cannot safely leave it to the British authorities either to establish the protective fleet we need or to contribute the bulk of it; in the first case they might never begin, in the second they might at any time change their minds (as they did between 1909 and 1914) and withdraw their contingent at an awkward moment.⁷

6 Speech by Senator E.D. Millen, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers (CPP), 1914, 11, p. 205.

7 'Report on a Post-Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific: Part II, The Proposed Pacific Fleet', by the Naval Board, Hughes Papers, Ms 1538, Items 1538/19/44-55, pp. 3-4.

The Vision Splendid

The creation of any *true* 'blue-water' approach to the defence of the Pacific was going to require three things:

- a sufficient number of ships of the right size and type to provide a 'blue-water' capability;
- a strategic doctrine that called for some form of 'power projection' beyond mere coastal defence;
- such a major shift from destroyer flotilla to fleet unit was going to require bases; bases for repair, supply depots, fuelling facilities and training establishments. Their number, size, location, and the resources devoted to them would have to be carefully considered.⁸

Such concerns led directly in 1910 to the visit of Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson, a visit following hard on the heels of the similar Kitchener tour of army resources earlier in the year. Henderson and three assistants arrived in Western Australia in August to begin work. He was to have confined his attention to bases and dockyards, but after discussions with the Australian minister for defence and Australian naval officers, the terms of reference surrounding his brief were widened to include 'all matters concerning the formation of an Australian Fleet', and, after having toured most of the main facilities and likely sites, Henderson was able to submit his recommendations on 1 March 1911.⁹

Ships and Bases

To meet Australian requirements—a case of buying time to allow British command of the sea, the prevention of any larger scale invasion, as well as protection for Australian shipping routes—Henderson's programme called for the creation of a fleet of some 8 battlecruisers or armoured cruisers, 10 light or protected cruisers, 18 destroyers, 12 submarines, 3 depot and 1 repair ship. The fleet was to be divided into Eastern and Western divisions with squadrons for the heavy ships and

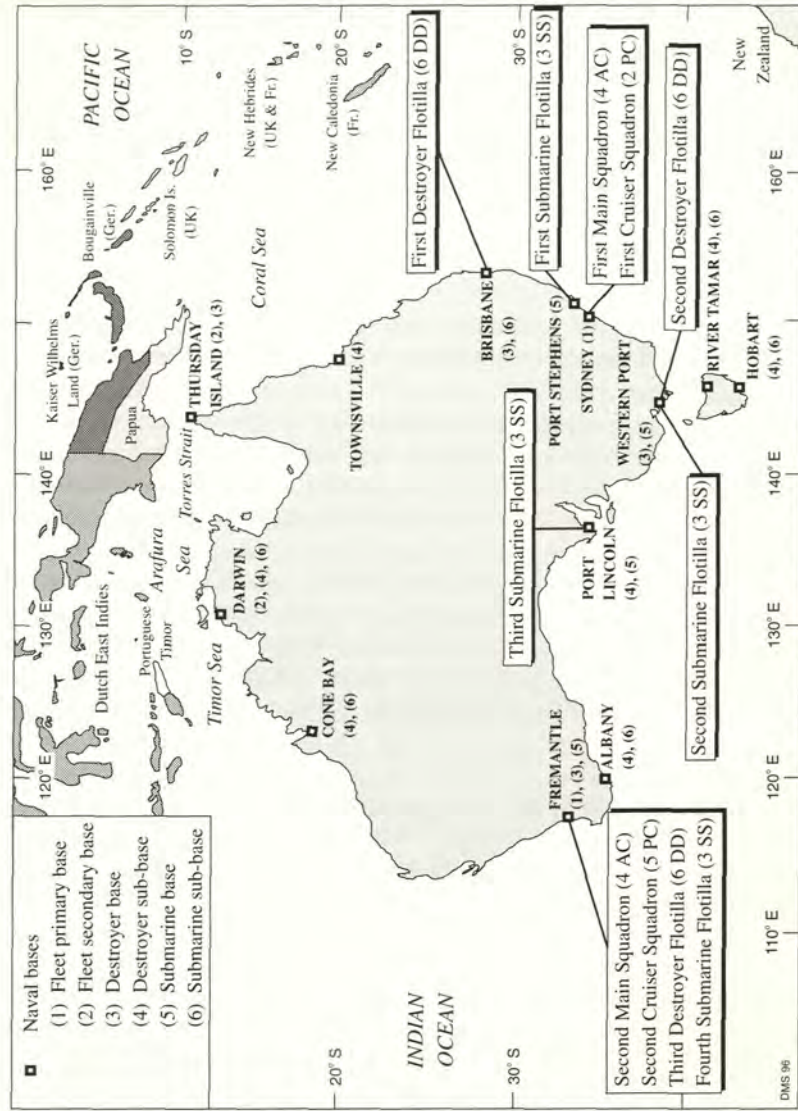
⁸ See AA: MP504, S8, 2310/7 for an outline of such concerns.

⁹ Recommendations of Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson, 1 March 1911, AA: MP 1587, 218V.

flotillas for the lighter vessels. Fremantle and Sydney were to be the two principal bases, with other bases as shown in Map 3.1. Clearly this dispersal if not profusion had a political rather than a strategic rationale—the rights of the individual states making up the recently emergent Commonwealth remained strong and continued to exert influence as they had in the past. The fact that most of these sub-bases were destroyer stations also demonstrated the continued commitment of the RAN and the First Naval Member, Admiral Creswell, to local naval defence.¹⁰

As one might have imagined, such construction was going to require enormous financial expenditure, the strain of which was to be relieved by extending completion across 22 years over four main phases. The length of the programme was determined by the amount of time it would take for Australian naval officers to proceed through all necessary training institutions and eventually reach flag rank. Because the first phase (seven years) was to be devoted to establishing harbour and docking facilities, training institutions, and the necessary infrastructure to support an estimated personnel strength of some 14,844 men, naval construction was going to be slow at first. The heaviest expenditure was intended to come in the third phase between 1922 and 1928, when three battlecruisers would be acquired, tailing off in the final period between 1928 and 1933 when two more would be added. All told the cost of the ships would be £23,290,000 with an annual maintenance cost of £1,226,000. This then was the 'vision', a wonderful vision, that continued to exert a fatal fascination on Australian naval staff between 1911 and 1923. The idea was quickly adopted by the government with vigour. Asked in October 1912 whether the federal government had adopted the report, the Prime Minister Andrew Fisher had eagerly responded:

¹⁰ Details on Creswell's involvement in the Henderson Report can be seen in letter, Thring to Bazley, 22 September 1938, Bazley Papers, AWM. The 1918 Royal Commission was critical of this over-proliferation. Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia – Royal Commission 'Report on Naval Administration', 4 October 1918, AA: MP341/1, 1918/434.



Map 3.1: 1911 - Admiral Henderson's recommendations for the naval forces of the Commonwealth

11 Speech by Andrew Fisher, 26 September 1912, and 3 October 1912, CPP No. 28, pp. 3480-6.
 12 Thring was responsible for setting up of the Naval Intelligence Service. See 'Report on the Naval Intelligence Service June 1918', AA: MP1049, S1, 18/0325.

Strategy

Out of the Henderson Report two radically different Australian maritime strategies emerged. These might be termed the forehand and the backhand solutions. One supported the idea of a coalition with the dominions and India supporting a fleet based along a strategic line from Singapore to the Solomon Islands; the other favoured trading space for time by a concentration of naval forces on bases in the southern half of Australia, which would then become the focal point for a reconquest of the ceded territories. Only one point of agreement existed between both sides, that the cause of Australian defence would be best served by combining the resources of the various colonial dependencies into a regional defence arrangement. Neither ANZAM nor ANZUS can be seen then as unique in the conduct and context of Australian maritime defence.

Let us first consider the forehand solution. From early March to June of 1913 Brigadier General Gordon, then CGS, together with Captain Hughes-Onslow, Second Naval Member, and Commander W.H. Thring, assistant to Admiral Creswell,¹² visited most of the likely base sites in northern Australia and Papua New Guinea. The main purpose of the visit was to report on Thursday Island as a fortified base and wireless station, but both the naval men on their own initiative decided to place the general strategic considerations of the Henderson Report under scrutiny,

The Government not only pin their faith to Admiral Henderson's scheme generally, so far as it goes, but there is no limit to their expenditure upon the military and naval defence of this country which necessity and unforeseen circumstance may demand. An unlimited amount will be spent should that course be considered necessary.¹¹

and found Henderson's scheme wanting, particularly the emphasis on base construction to the south of the continent:

The idea of mobilising in the South and leaving the North to itself is inviting defeat and humiliation, for the enemy once firmly established there cuts off the trade of the South on the strategic lines ... and it is only a matter of time, and a very short time, before Melbourne and Sydney would be isolated and forced to surrender; our only hope of safety is to hold the North and the strategic theatre it dominates, and to be prepared to meet and beat the enemy wherever he lands.¹³

So instead there would be a concentration on a line extending from Singapore to the Solomons encompassing Java, Timor, Papua, and Fiji. The Henderson fleet arrangement of Eastern and Western divisions continued, but relatively strong forces were allocated to Torres Strait as the conduit between east and west because that allowed concentration in either sector. It was admitted that Australia—even with eight battlecruisers—could not equal the naval forces of Japan and expect to stand against them in open engagement, but a set of 'balanced' forces, Thring and Onslow believed, could be created that would be capable of attacking both Japan's lines of communications and any substantial troop convoy intending to land on the Australian subcontinent. When the enemy was seen to be committed west or east the fleet would concentrate on the appropriate side.

The most important tactical role was intelligence gathering. Australia would require both submarines and seaplanes to act as the eyes of the fleet. Behind these forces would range destroyers for night work, and light cruisers to observe enemy movements, and lurking behind all these would be the battlecruisers, while the necessary auxiliaries to enhance fleet mobility—vessels such as colliers, storeships, and

13 'Strategical Report with Some Notes on Preparation for War', by Hughes-Onslow, undated 1913, AA: MP1587, 186AK, p. 19.

submarine tenders—would be provided. What the Thring-Onslow plan had in mind then was a layered defence:

... we require very fast cruisers with great radius of action; Battle Cruisers preferably so far as their great cost admits us as they have every chance of breaking through the enemy's screen of Cruisers and thus being able to detect the movements and direction of the convoy ... On the outbreak of war these ships would keep the seas as long as possible in the face of the advancing fleet of overpowering strength, but their role would be to scout and report, avoiding action as far as possible. In addition to these ships we require the latest, the best equipped, the most powerful and fastest Torpedo craft that money and science can provide, to keep at bay the enemy's blockading fleet and to facilitate the escape of our cruisers ...¹⁴

If an opportunity presented itself, however, the battlecruisers would conduct raids on Japanese lines of communication and on the invasion convoy itself:

Australia's Battlecruisers should be able to push through the screen of the enemy's Light-cruisers and see what is going on behind them, her Light-cruisers could pass on the news, Aeroplanes would give warning of nearer approach; and the Torpedo flotillas, stationed in the North should be able to concentrate at the threatened points, or other favourable spots for attack.¹⁵

Two principal war bases would be constructed and fortified, each acting as anchors for the line. One would be at Bynoe Bay near Darwin, and the second either along the southeast end of Papua or in the Solomons. In order to secure Bynoe Bay, Brigadier Gordon envisaged a

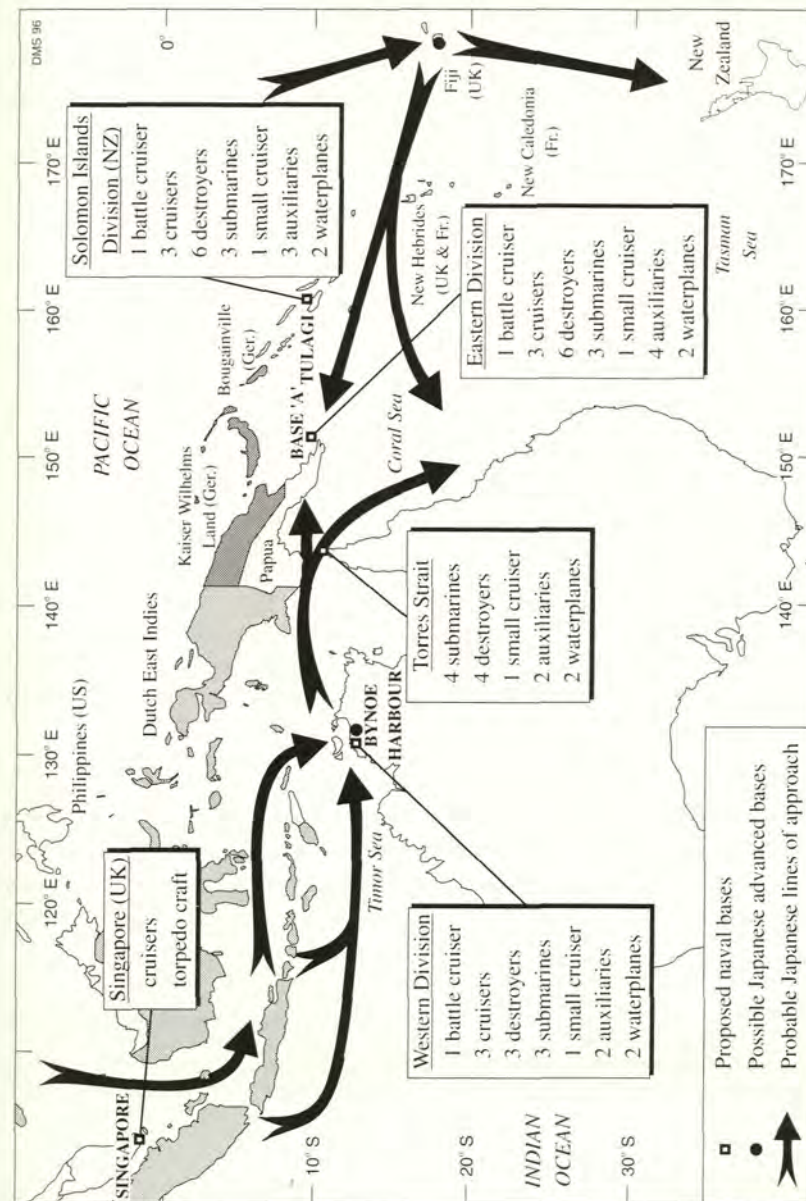
14 *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

15 Report on the Naval Defence of Australia by Commander W. H. Thring, 5 July 1913, AA: MP 1587, 186AK, p. 6.

10,000-man garrison, and connection of the Darwin-Pine Creek rail link with the Queensland system. With a fleet based at Bynoe, Japan would find it difficult to attack Western Australia, while the presence of a base at the eastern end made it equally unlikely Japan would be able to attack southern or eastern Australia or New Zealand from the direction of the Solomons. In each case unless Japan dealt with each fleet unit first, she would find her own lines of communication subject to attack and that would buy time enough for the British Fleet to affect a rescue. If New Zealand decided to join the arrangement a division similar in size based on a New Zealand fleet unit would be based in the Solomons.

But Eldon Manisty, the Naval Secretary, had other ideas. Given the scale of Japanese resources, he felt it would be strategically foolish to hold any kind of advanced line with inferior forces. It was equally inadvisable for the British to try to defend Hong Kong, British North Borneo, or the Northern Territory. Instead the China Fleet would be better falling back on Singapore or better yet Colombo. In such an event Australia could do little to ward off Japanese attack beyond holding the southern portion of the continent until help arrived. Victory under such conditions could only be won in three phases. Phase 1 would see command of the sea being exercised over the Indian Ocean by the creation of a fleet of some eight dreadnoughts, either battleships or battlecruisers. Contributions would come from each of the dominions directly involved, with at least two from the East Indies, two from South Africa, two from Australia and one from New Zealand. These would not be enough to stand toe-to-toe against the Japanese but they might be enough to slow them and throw off their programme of advance. On the outbreak of war these would concentrate at the Henderson Base at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia. Their role was to retain or regain 'control of the sea' between Western Australia and Colombo.

Dominance of the southern Pacific was reserved for Phase 2. By extending operations from Fremantle, Sydney, and Auckland, Japan would be confined to the northern Pacific. But to do this would require another four dreadnoughts (three from Australia and one from Britain)



Map 3.2: 1913 - The Thring-Onslow Plan (AA: MP1587/1, 186K)

either based entirely in Sydney or divided equally between each of the three chosen ports. In Phase 3 the remainder of the northern Pacific would be reconquered. This would require yet another strengthening of the fleet—another two ships from the Admiralty, four from Canada, and another two from Australia. Thus the completed Eastern Fleet would encompass units from the East Indies Squadron with two dreadnoughts, the China Squadron with three, the Eastern and Western Divisions of the Australian Fleet with four each, Canada with four, South Africa four, and New Zealand one.¹⁶ This then was the backhand solution.

In both cases interesting parallels can be drawn with British naval strategy in the Far East in 1941. The defence of the Malay Barrier—the *raison d'être* behind the Singapore strategy—was also an attempt to establish a defence line on a fortified locale. Admiral Phillips' attempt to interfere with Japanese convoys off the coast of Malaya on 10 December 1941 parallels the emphasis on raiding forces under the Thring-Onslow scheme. The withdrawal of all British naval forces to Colombo—as suggested by Eldon Manisty—was exactly the strategy adopted by Rear Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton on 15 December 1941, while the idea of establishing a line from Colombo to Fremantle was considered initially by Admiral Cunningham on his entry into Far Eastern waters in March 1942.¹⁷ That would seem to suggest that given Japan's general naval preponderance and taking geography into account, strategic choices in the Far East were always distinctly limited.

Unfortunately, before this debate could be sorted out, a developing imbroglio between Manisty and Hughes-Onslow erupted into a major scandal that effectively paralysed the Board and resulted in a complete change of line-up. Hughes-Onslow was dismissed from his position as Second Naval Member, and Manisty followed him out of

Australian service but a short time thereafter.¹⁸ A decision between the two strategies was to have been resolved first by a meeting of the Council of Defence and then at an imperial conference. But the Council of Defence never met to discuss the issue. Indeed there were no meetings held from 5 February 1913 to 9 February 1915. As for the imperial conference, it first suffered a deferment until 1914, then once war broke out until war's end. A meeting was eventually held in 1917 under vastly different circumstances than those envisaged four years earlier but, because of internal political wrangling at home and the conscription issue, Australia did not send representatives.¹⁹

The *Post-Bellum* Strategy

Yet in anticipation that an imperial conference might soon be called, the Board had three position papers prepared by the Australian Naval Intelligence Department in October 1915. These were first presented to the Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, on 26 June 1917, and in 1918 a second set of copies, along with the whole Thring-Onslow Report, was given to Sir John Latham prior to his departure for London to take up a position on Hughes' staff.²⁰ The first document was entitled 'Report on a Defence Policy for Australia'. It dealt with the immediate future, discussing the strength and distribution of the smallest naval force 'by which any reasonable degree of safety against sudden attack could be guaranteed'.²¹ The second report dealt with potential enemies in the Pacific, concentrating almost entirely on 'the Japanese menace'; while the third looked at the possibility of a future *post-bellum* or postwar period Eastern Fleet, one stationed in Far Eastern waters in peacetime and created by joint effort on the part of the dominions and Britain.²²

16 'Naval Policy of Australia', remarks by Naval Secretary, July 1913, AA: MP 1185/3, 2152/31.

17 See Ian Cowman, *Dominion or Decline: Anglo-American Naval Relations in the Pacific 1937-1941* (Berg Press, London, 1996), and the forthcoming 'Battle for the Indian Ocean-April 1942'.

18 See Ian Cowman, 'Captain Constantine Hughes-Onslow and the Great Naval Board Scandal', *Naval Historical Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3.

19 Eric Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War 1* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993), pp. 132-3.

20 See AA: MP 1587, 184J, for details.

21 Minute by the Navy Board, 21 October 1915, Hughes Papers, Ms 1538, 1528/19/1.

22 See 'Report on a Defence Policy for Australia'; 'Report on the Japanese Danger'; and 'Report on a Post-Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific', all by the War Staff, 21 October 1915, Hughes Papers, Ms 1538, 1538/19/16-55.

Thring was now Director of War Staff so it was understandable that the focus of Australian maritime strategy remained fixed on the north. Unlike the Thring-Onslow plan, which had focused mainly on the immediate north, any attacking formation was now expected to cross a more extended line drawn from Diego Garcia to Samoa, via one of only three routes: from the north-west past Java, from the north past New Guinea, or from the north-east past the Solomons or Fiji. The new defence scheme counteracted enemy naval preponderance first by guarding the sea passages, and second by locating forces at stations north of the line and threatening flank attacks. So in true 'blue-water' fashion this extended or advanced frontier would run from Singapore to the Tongan group with Anger, Yap, and Ponape being used either as advanced bases or observation sites.

Safeguarding this extended frontier was certain to be an imperial not merely an Australian responsibility. So the British would have responsibility for the passages as far as Timor, Australia would guard the area from Timor to the New Hebrides, while New Zealand would have charge of the Fijian and Tongan groups. Forces were to be divided between a strike unit, a patrol force, and a guard force for Torres Strait. On the opening of war the strike unit, consisting of between four and six battlecruisers, would be divided between two bases—one on the northwest and one on, or adjacent to, the northeast coast of Australia in Thring-Onslow fashion. It was expected the Royal Navy would be able to provide at least two battlecruisers and a patrolling squadron of four light cruisers and six submarines. New Zealand, with British assistance, might provide and maintain one battlecruiser, two light cruisers and six submarines. The report also emphasised that, by 1917, Australia would have to be in advance of the Henderson scheme in terms of naval construction. The greatest increase was perceived to be in light cruisers (some two or three more than Henderson had anticipated at this stage) and in submarines (another six would need to be acquired). By 1920 Thring also felt that Australia must have at least two capital ships operating and preferably three. Still it was anticipated that additional security would be forthcoming if Australia could survive until 1928; by

then the Australian squadron would comprise at least 6 battlecruisers, 8 light cruisers, 18 destroyers and 12 submarines.²³ So the 'vision' of the Henderson programme had not been abandoned on the outbreak of war in 1914 as many have assumed, but continued to exercise considerable influence on Australian naval staff into the postwar period.

The problem was that the nature of Japanese aggrandisement meant even the Henderson programme seemed too slow. In 1913, under the Thring-Onslow scheme, the nearest Japanese bases lay 3000 miles from the Australian coastline, now Japan occupied territory less than 1000 miles away. The first two reports emphasised that the rising strength of Japan, and the fact that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance fell due for renewal in 1921 meant there was perhaps as little as six years left to create a viable defence posture. For Australia to create the necessary naval force independently on such a time frame was plainly out of the question; Henderson's programme would reach maximum numbers only by 1933:

Assuming that the alliance will last its nominal term, we now have only six years in which to prepare against a pressing danger; and that time is none too long for the provision, in a practically undefended country with no great private factories of defence matériel ... it would be foolish after the events of the last two years to lay any stress on treaties in themselves as safeguards against anything; we cannot without taking unwarrantable risk count on even the six years; and we should be taking in hand at once and pressing insistently to completion a scheme described elsewhere, under which we may hope to put up a temporarily effective defence if attacked at an earlier moment.²⁴

So it was left to the final report to provide a solution, and that began by outlining that British imperial strategy had rested on a philosophy of 'the seas are one, the Navy must be one'. But this doctrine of the unity of the seas was felt by Australian naval staff to be outdated.

23 'Report on a Defence Policy for Australia', p. 6.

24 'Report on the Japanese Danger', pp. 2-3.

The rise of Japan and the resultant danger to the Commonwealth, New Zealand, and the western coast of Canada, and to the trade conducted between them had, according to Australian naval sources, invalidated the unity concept. The problem of protecting British interests in the Pacific had become a separate and distinct item from the general problem of imperial defence in the Atlantic. Forces 'must be found among those who are so exposed, and who know it'.²⁵ Therefore Australia, New Zealand, and the other dominions would have to undertake a large portion of the burden themselves. Australia could provide two battlecruisers New Zealand one, Canada one, India, Ceylon and the Straits Settlement one and Britain three. It must be emphasised, however, that the plan was not seen as a substitute for the Henderson programme, but as complementary to it. The naval staff emphasised that by 1933 security would be much improved with 62 ships operational in the Pacific region. In effect the Australian naval staff had gone full circle, returning to the 1909 Admiralty Memorandum and the 'fleet unit' concept—but rather than being part of a single imperial navy subject to alteration and transfer, each unit, while continuing to operate as distinctive segments in their own right, would instead form part of a distinctive fleet, based permanently in the Far East with its own command and control apparatus.²⁶

It was this document more than any other that paved the way for the Jellicoe Plan, a plan that in the end was less a product of the fertile mind of the former First Sea Lord—though he was quick to take full credit—and more a product of the Australian Naval Board. Australian naval staff were instrumental in formulating the principles if not the strategy behind most of his ideas. It must be emphasised too that their programme had been submitted to Australian political authorities almost four years before Jellicoe arrived in Australia in May 1919. By that stage the Australian government was becoming increasingly anxious to curb

25 'Report on a Post-Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific: Part II, The Proposed Pacific Fleet', p. 4.

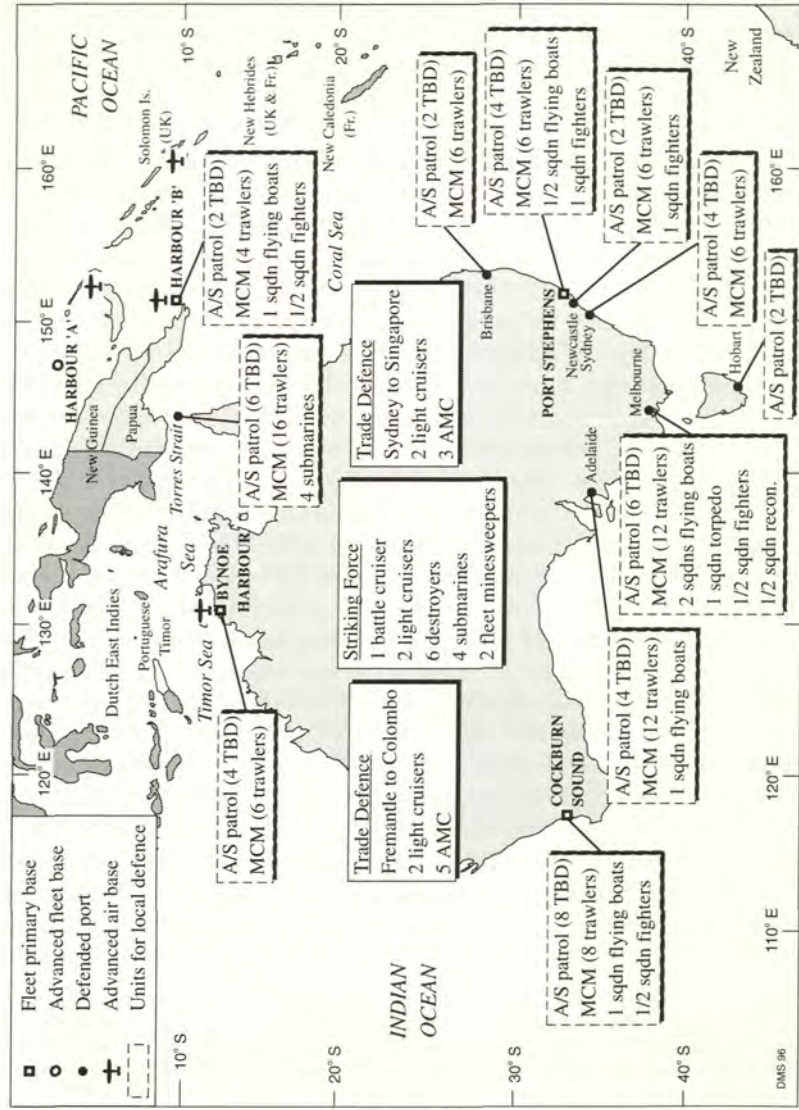
26 *ibid.*

financial expenditure,²⁷ and plainly the government was looking to the distinguished naval visitor to provide some fairly cogent reasons why base development should cease and the Henderson Plan be abandoned. If this is so, then that idea dramatically backfired.

From May to July Jellicoe travelled extensively across Australia and visited most harbours along the east coast as well as some islands off New Guinea. By August his report was complete. It was a most comprehensive document, consisting of some 251 printed pages in four volumes. Jellicoe envisaged an Eastern Fleet of eight battleships and eight battlecruisers—equal to anticipated projections of Japanese naval power for 1924—with major contributors being the British with 75 per cent, Australia with 20 per cent, and New Zealand with 5 per cent. Jellicoe's main contribution was political. He opposed too great an independent role for the dominions, and he correctly reasoned that commitments to an Eastern Fleet would be entirely out of character for Canada and South Africa. In effect he made a far more amenable programme in an imperial sense. Canada's share, for example, would be limited to a small force of light cruisers, South Africa's to a squadron to be based on the Cape of Good Hope. India might provide a fixed sum annually for the upkeep of an East Indies squadron (of one carrier, five light cruisers, and six submarines). All the battleships were to come from the British stable along with some six battlecruisers, while Australia's contribution was rationalised to one carrier, one new battlecruiser, one existing battlecruiser (*Australia*) four light cruisers with another four in reserve status, ten destroyers and eight submarines. But the rest of the plan—guarding the sea passages with strike force, guard force, and patrol force, making use of advanced refuelling bases, was pure *post-bellum*. Assuming intended destroyer and submarine gifts were forthcoming, the cost was estimated at £12,300,000 for the ships and £27,400,000 for maintenance costs across some nine years.²⁸

27 As early as September 1917 Minister for the Navy Sir Joseph Cook, at the insistence of Cabinet, submitted a request through the ACNB to the Admiralty asking whether the war had altered the Henderson scheme for naval bases. See 'Naval Bases', memo by the Naval Board for the PM, undated, AA: A981, 350, Part 1.

28 See 'The Jellicoe Report', Vol IV, 1919, AA: MP 185/4, 121/1/38.



Map 3.3: 1919 - Admiral Jellicoe's recommendations for Australian naval requirements

The Postwar Period

Many historians dealing with British Far Eastern strategy in the immediate postwar period have assumed the Singapore strategy was 'thrust down the throat' of the dominions. Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed the Admiralty fully recognised the need for battlecruisers in the Far East and even suggested the dominions acquire them.²⁹ The demise of the Jellicoe Plan had less to do with the creation of the Singapore strategy and more to do with dominion postwar financial and diplomatic constraints, constraints which rendered the plan null and void almost before the programme had even been released.

In Australia's case there were three main elements at work. First, it was clear even before 1919 that massive cutbacks in spending were likely in the near future. Concern about the necessity for expenditure on the Henderson programme had been going on for nearly two years, and the Jellicoe mission was already being viewed by Australian political authorities as a justification for budget slashes. It therefore came as no surprise to learn that in March 1919 Arthur Poynton, the acting Minister for the Navy, called a 'check' on what he termed the 'ambitious schemes' of both services. To his mind there was already a danger the Commonwealth would be landed with an annual expenditure 'far beyond the ability of the Government to meet', and it had already been decided that a return to pre-war estimates would take place over the coming months.³⁰ By October 1919 the Governor-General was predicting that shelving of the Jellicoe Report was 'almost certain'; drastic economies were bound to follow.³¹

The Jellicoe Report was kept bottled up until a summary of the New Zealand report appeared then Volume 1 was produced the very day Hughes announced a War Gratuity of £25 million to the soldiers. Simultaneously there appeared the report of the Royal

29 See for example 'Imperial Naval Defence', paper prepared by the Admiralty for CID, 4 August 1919, PRO: ADM 167/58.

30 Memo, Acting Minister for the Navy to Mr Watt, 13 March 1919, AA: B197, 1851/2/87.

31 Letter, Novar to His Majesty, 6 July 1919, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 114.

Commission on 'economy', recommending sweeping reductions on naval and military establishments, suspension of work on naval bases, building of ships, until such time as a naval policy is agreed on. Fortified by a report into the Cockatoo Dockyard by a civil servant of no experience and assisted by criticism by several Admirals at home who have cabled reports to the press—the Government will I'm sure pursue the easier road of pouring out money in benefits to soldiers and leaving the problem of defence to be solved by those who come after.³²

The news was broken to Admiral Grant—newly arrived from England as First Naval Member—only in mid-January 1920. He was told to prepare the RAN for massive cuts.³³

Second, there was a widespread belief in Australia that the country was on the verge of complete 'moral collapse'.³⁴ Concern went beyond merely the political arena. To the ills of a nation already crippled by coal shortages and a seamen's strike was added an influenza epidemic. Both Victoria and New South Wales had been quarantined and other states were set to follow. The position was one of near anticipated revolution.³⁵ Civil power had already broken down in Darwin and the administrator had been evacuated.³⁶ The navy had been forced to send in its own forces to maintain law and order:³⁷

32 Letter, Novar to Milner, 30 October 1919, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 1217.

33 Letter, Novar to Milner, 11 June 1920, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 1269. The cuts were across the board. For example the numbers undergoing army training were to be reduced from 118,000 to 30,000, this dropped the army from between 60 and 90 per cent of war establishment to approximately 25 per cent. Explanatory Memoranda on Estimates for 1922 by Minister for Defence, 7 April 1922, Hughes Papers, Ms 1538, Item 1538/19/332-343.

34 See for example, Letter, Earnest Jones to Sir John Latham, 10 August 1919, Sir John Latham Papers, Ms 1009, Box 1, Item 603.

35 Letter, J. Martyn of Steel Co Australia to Sir John Latham, 1 October 1919, Sir John Latham Papers, Ms 1009, Box 1, Item 612.

36 Cable, Navy Office to CCAF, 18 October 1919, AA: MP 1049/1, 19/0205.

37 Minute by Naval Secretary, 20 October 1919, AA: MP 1049, 19/0205.

The whole of this dear country is torn by strikes and dissension in every County. Yes, almost in Every Village. The workers seem to have placed themselves in the power of any Street Corner tub-thumping agitator who has a voice loud enough to be heard above that of Reason. Every Trade Union is out for bleeding the rest of the Community. Any plank will do as long as it appeals to passion against the so called Capitalist class and I fear the result will be the collapse of that class—the real brains of the Country—and the general collapse of credit and everything.³⁸

With elections pending, the Farmers' Party now held the parliamentary balance of power; it was no longer merely a question of conflict between the National Party caucus and the Political Labor Leagues as in 1916. The National Party was now definitely 'wobbly', for Hughes was bitterly hated by Labor—the conscription referendums and the wide 'police powers' the government adopted during wartime had something to do with this—and he was widely distrusted by the Liberals.³⁹

Facing almost certain electoral loss, Hughes sensibly turned to the only political support group that might conceivably turn the tide—the returning servicemen. It was well that he made such a choice. There were already signs that the newly formed Returned Servicemen's League was on the verge of running as a political party in its own right. As A.W. Jose pointed out, various mutinies had occurred on board ships and on shore and these had given the men 'a rebellious knowledge of their power'.⁴⁰ To woo them, Hughes was forced to commit some £68 million as repatriation plus a war gratuity payment to the soldiers of £28 million directly as an election promise. There was another £90 million later forthcoming for soldier housing.⁴¹ The war debt position was equally serious—the

38 Letter, Earnest Jones to Sir John Latham, 10 August 1919, Sir John Latham Papers, Ms 1009, Box 1 File 603.

39 Letter, Novar to Lord Stamfordhome, 11 March 1918, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 305.

40 Letter, Jose to Easton, 28 December 1918, Jose Papers, AWM: AWM39/19, 3.

41 Despatch, Novar to Secretary of State, 27 November 1919, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 2281.

government had spent £233 million on the war. Of this £153 million had been raised by a loan of which Australia had paid only £100 million, and was indebted to the British for the rest. Hughes had already postponed repayment of £18 million loaned from the Commonwealth to the states for another six years. The public debt of New South Wales alone totalled £138 million.⁴² So even if the Hughes government had fully and actively supported the Jellicoe Plan they would have been unable to afford the financial outlay required.

But in any case there was never any possibility that Australian political authorities were going to accept Jellicoe's recommendations. Australia's ebullient Mr Hughes had long since been seduced by the vision of a Monroe Doctrine for the Pacific.⁴³ By gaining a margin of control over most of the islands south of the equator Australia acquired a buffer zone, where in the fullness of time she might establish naval bases, while a status quo arrangement meant Japan was forbidden to fortify or increase existing naval facilities north of the equator. By accepting the mandate system, and giving up the idea of direct control over the former German colonies, Hughes was able to secure a promise of full British naval support in an emergency. That in turn obviated any need for any increase in Australian naval power. As Lord Novar pointed out, on his return from Versailles, Hughes fully intended to 'batten onto the British Navy' in future. That way Australia could have the best of two worlds, 'one in which she is an independent nation able to lay down and carry out for her own policy and the other (when there is trouble in the wind) in which she figures as a small part of a mighty Empire able to command the protection of the biggest fleet afloat'.⁴⁴ By early 1921 Senator Pearce was predicting that Australia would be safe from Japan for at least ten years, thanks to the Washington naval agreement which restricted

42 Despatch, Novar to Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, 13 March 1918, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 1920; Despatch, Novar to Secretary of State for Colonies, 29 January 1918, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 1901.

43 Cable, Watt to Hughes, 18 October 1918; See also Cable, Watt to Hughes, 9 November 1918; Cable, Hughes to Watt, 11 November 1918, Hughes Papers, Ms 1538, Item 16/2080.

44 Precis, Novar to Secretary of State for Colonies, 23 December 1919, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 8897.

Japanese capital ship and carrier construction.⁴⁵ Hughes himself had been vocal at the 1921 Imperial Conference on the need for disarmament.⁴⁶ The Jellicoe Plan was unnecessary, an encumbrance, in an era where faith would be placed in the League of Nations.⁴⁷

As a final tragic epitaph to the history of Australian maritime strategy, by 1923 the RAN went from a wartime strength of twenty-three operational ships to eleven;⁴⁸ most if not all of these were crippled (like Australian maritime strategy itself), unable to steam out of harbour thanks to a serious lack of coal, and because no provision had been made for oiling.⁴⁹ That same year the Navy Board finally reluctantly admitted that the RAN had abandoned any pretension of a 'blue-water' strategy and had returned to local naval defence:

Consequently what has actually happened is that Australia through force of circumstances, has at present abandoned her high seas fleet policy and has returned to the local defence policy. The defence of the greater part of the coast line and of the Commonwealth territories overseas must now devolve on the British Navy. This really means that at present Australia has no Naval Policy in the Pacific.⁵⁰

Thanks to the Washington Naval Treaty arrangements, and less than eleven years after she had steamed triumphantly through Sydney Heads to take her place as the pride of the Australian Fleet, the battlecruiser *Australia* was ignominiously towed out for her last journey, part of the sacrifice the government and the nation were making on the altar of peace. On Saturday 12 April 1924 a salute was fired, and garlands

45 Explanatory Memoranda on Estimates for 1922 by Minister for Defence, 7 April 1922, Hughes Papers, MS 1538, Item 1538/19/332-343.

46 Speech by Mr Hughes, Imperial Conference, 21 June 1921, Hughes Papers, Ms 1538, Item 1538/25/42.

47 Letter, Novar to His Majesty, 6 July 1919, Novar Papers, Ms 696, Item 123.

48 Estimates 1921-23 Department of Defence, AA: MP1049/1, 22/0307.

49 Letter, Dumaresq to Naval Board, 17 September 1920, AA: MP1049, 20/0284.

50 Memo for the Information of the Minister by the Naval Board, 3 September 1920, AA: MP1049/1, 20/0215.

of flowers laid as 'a salute to the dying. Strong men were wet eyed; many cursed. It was a tragic blunder'⁵¹

At the time of the actual scuttling we were about three or four hundred yards off the ship laying thirty miles off Sydney Heads ... it was a very dramatic moment as the charges went off and the seacocks were opened. The scuttling party were taken off in a pinnace ... and finally the old ship turned turtle and went down stern first.⁵²

Here one might have added to these comments by Ordinary Seaman Hugh Davies, that this also marked the end of an era. Australia's 'blue-water' fleet was no more. It was the end of a vision—'the Vision Splendid'.

51 Quoted by Alun Evans, *A Navy for Australia* (ABC Enterprises, Sydney, 1986), p. 103.
52 *ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY AND THE STRATEGY FOR AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE, 1921-42

David Stevens

There was nothing secret about the general strategy for the defence of the British Empire before 1939. It was public knowledge that maritime power exercised by a strong imperial navy would not only keep the sea lanes open, but also allow the timely dispatch of the British Main Fleet from Home and Mediterranean waters. The fleet would then move to 'take the offensive in the main theatre of war, in whatever ocean this might be'.¹ While the most likely threat to the Empire's interests remained in the Far East, this undoubtedly meant the Pacific Ocean. Thus in the interwar period most Australians adopted the comforting view that the Commonwealth's ultimate security was inextricably entwined with that of the Empire as a whole.

However, Australians also understood that there would be a delay before the fleet's arrival. Moreover, the fleet would need fuel and repair facilities in-theatre if it was to be in a fit condition to meet a threat after the long voyage. At the end of the First World War such facilities for modern capital ships did not exist in either the Indian or Pacific oceans and so the construction of a major naval base became central to the operation of the strategy. For a variety of reasons Singapore became the logical site. Though in British eyes the protection afforded the dominions was only one of the functions of the force to be based there, for Australia, the Main Fleet and its Far East naval base became regarded as the chief agencies in effecting the security of the nation.²

1 CID E.4, 'Empire Naval Policy and Co-operation', February 1921, AWM: AWM124 74/24.
2 Hong Kong was actually the navy's preferred advanced base for offensive operations.

Since the military disaster of February 1942, and Singapore's conquest by the Japanese, historians have made many attempts to understand Britain's failure to adequately defend Southeast Asia and the extent of Australian complicity. What has tended to be overlooked are the specifics of the Australian navy's role in the maritime defence plan. Often viewed as a mere adjunct of the imperial navy, and hence the most politically and socially conservative of Australia's three armed services, by implication the RAN has become associated with a flawed strategy and excessive dependence upon Britain.³ However, taken as the sum of the RAN's interwar role these judgements are altogether too simplistic. Australian, as opposed to imperial, naval strategy revolved around far more than the concept of a fleet based at Singapore.

The Threat

The threats foreseen by Australians in the early 1920s had remained essentially unchanged since Federation. Whether they came as an attempt to interfere with trade routes, intermittent raids or an outright invasion, defence was '*prima facie* a naval problem'.⁴ What had changed, though, was Australia's assessment of the British Empire's strategic hub. With the old order apparently crumbling in Europe it was easy to imagine that in future the western Pacific would be the centre of the world stage. The trade importance of the area was certainly growing and Japan and the United States were already seen as the inheritors of the imperial tradition. Unlike the British Empire, both these powers possessed growing naval fleets and modern support bases in the Pacific. Furthermore, their open naval rivalry was widely recognised as an increasing source of regional tension. Though some observers expressed concern that a United States–Japan conflict might result in unintentional Australian involvement, far more credible were fears of a direct Japanese threat to Australian interests.

Nevertheless, whatever the cause of hostility, the view prevailed that, as a geographically large but isolated and sparsely populated nation, Australia could not undertake the ultimate task of

3 See for example, B.N. Primrose, 'Equipment and Naval Policy 1919–42', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, 1977, pp. 163–8.

4 H.D. Wynter, 'The Strategical Inter-relationship of the Navy, the Army and the Air Force: An Australian View', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. 14, 1927.

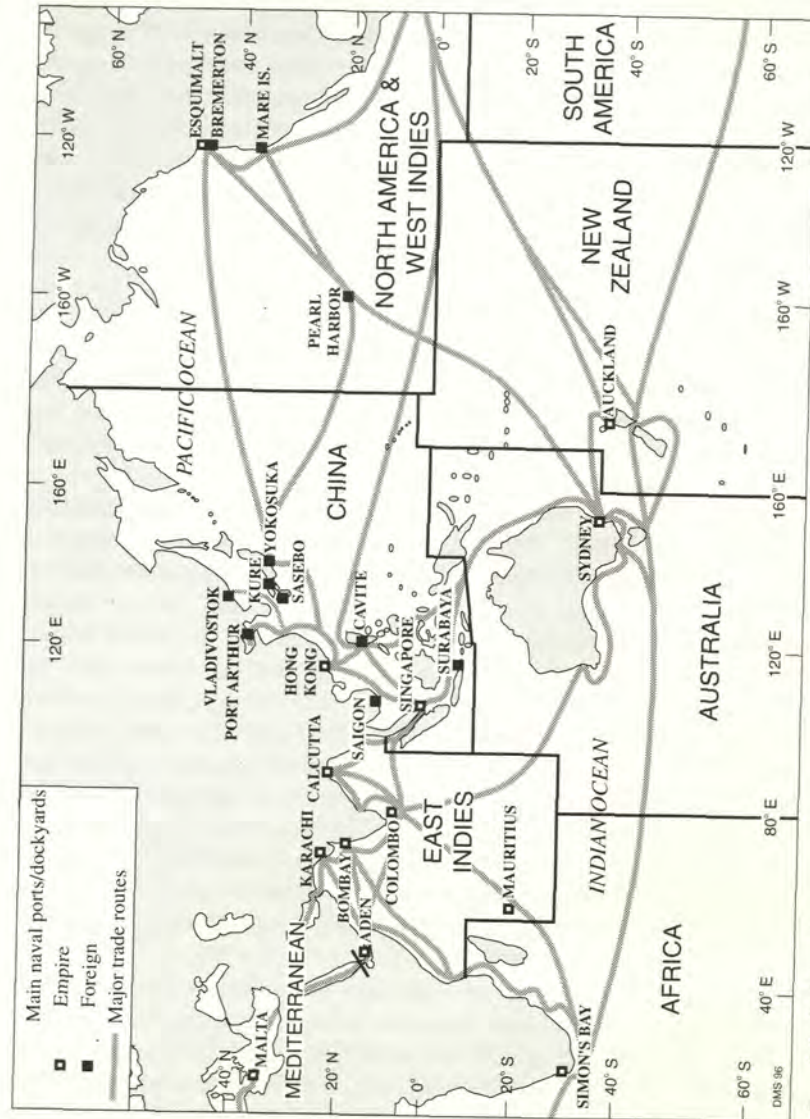
ensuring national security without external support. As discussed in the previous chapters, Australia's own armed forces suffered massive cuts in the drive to reduce defence spending after the Great War. By 1920 the Commonwealth's total naval tonnage amounted to less than six per cent of Japan's. The direct support of the Royal Navy might accommodate this weakness, but Australians could never ignore the disparity, particularly as realisation came that Britain's financial position would not allow the Empire to keep a large fleet permanently in the Pacific.⁵

The 1920s

The need for Australia to be part of a comprehensive scheme for Empire security was clear. So long as Japan remained the most likely enemy, the strategy to dispatch the British Main Fleet on the outbreak of war appeared a prudent solution. Within this scheme, though, the relatively small Australian navy could play only a subordinate role and there would be little scope for strategic initiative. To the British Admiralty the idea of allowing scattered centres to formulate naval strategy had always been an anathema and, despite the occasional misgivings of individuals, as a whole Australian officers were thoroughly indoctrinated in the Royal Naval tradition. Already deeply ingrained in the RAN's ethos was an understanding that the seas were one and that naval operations were unfettered by national boundaries. Besides, the Australia Station remained an integral part of the Admiralty's global scheme for command and control and as soon as it left local waters, Australian shipping passed into areas administered by the CinC of one of three other imperial navy squadrons. The ensuing need for a general understanding of resources and trade movements simply served to further bind the RAN into the Empire's more general naval strategy.

Regular discussions to enhance cooperation between the Australian and other Far East squadrons began in Penang in March 1921. The CinCs readily agreed to regard Singapore as the key to the whole Empire naval position in the East. A naval base on the island apparently providing a suitable place for the concentration of force and offering 'the best strategic position for countering any menace to our floating trade, possessions, and of course, Australia in

5 Report, 'Japan and the Alliance', 18 May 1920, AA: MP1049/1, 20/0256.



Map 4.1: 1919 - Limits of British Naval Stations

particular'.⁶ The initial estimate of the delay in the Main Fleet's arrival was only two to three months. During this 'period before relief' the RAN was to take on an offensive role, creating a diversion with its cruisers until it could integrate with the fleet. The Australian submarine flotilla also found itself allocated to overseas operations, leaving the light forces, which consisted of a destroyer and minesweeping flotilla, to be used for local defence in Australian waters.⁷

Thereafter, the RAN's responsibilities within Australian defence strategy divide into three main tasks. First, was the direct and indirect support given to the British Main Fleet, both before and after its arrival. Second, were patrols conducted to protect shipping in Australia's area of interest, both on the open sea and along the coast. Finally, there was the local defence of Australian ports and harbours.⁸ The emphasis given to these tasks varied throughout the interwar period according to the type, number and training state of the assets available and in response to the constraints imposed by political and economic factors. Indeed, in the absence of a definite naval policy, for most of the period treasury priorities and party politics were the greater determinants of Australian strategy.

Thus, within a year of the Penang Conference, the RAN assessed that further financial reductions had emasculated the service to a level where it could provide only ineffective protection to Sydney and Melbourne. Steaming time, and hence training opportunities, were cut back dramatically and the submarine flotilla disbanded. Commodore J.S. Dumaresq, the Fleet Commander, dismissed the RAN as 'strategically impotent and tactically inefficient',⁹ while at one point the naval staff suggested that minimum-manned cruisers might

- 6 Minute, CNS to Minister, December 1921, AA: MP1587/1, 312E. A contrary view was apparently put by Rear Admiral Sir Percy Grant, RACAS, who pointed out after the Penang Conference that in operations greater than 'diversionary' raids, Singapore was too far from the lines of communication between Japan and Australia to provide security. J. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence 1918-39: A Study in Sea and Air Power* (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1976), p. 46.
- 7 B.N. Primrose, 'Australian Naval Policy, 1919 to 1942: A Case Study in Empire Relations', PhD Thesis, Australian National University, September 1974, p. 73.
- 8 As noted in Chapter 2, the defence of the ports themselves was an army commitment but the navy was vitally interested in the security of its bases.
- 9 Appreciation of the strategic situation by CCAF, 11 February, 1921, AA: MP1049/1, 21/099.

be better moored in positions where their guns could assist in local defence, rather than risking them in battle.¹⁰

The Washington Conference of 1921–22 did little to improve regional naval matters. Hailed by politicians as a significant step in disarmament, the agreement reached had in theory removed the threat of Japan using her Pacific territories to mount a surprise attack on Australia.¹¹ In practice, the treaty ensured that imperial forces would be hard pressed if faced with a simultaneous threat in both Europe and the Far East.¹² As the First Naval Member, Vice Admiral Sir Allan Everett, remarked:

Although the Pacific Pact appears on the face of it to have reduced the peril of hostilities in that quarter for some time, it has left the Far East in a weaker position than ever before ... the net result of the Conference has been to make Japan the strongest power in the Pacific, able at will to menace Australasian and Imperial interests. Thus the Naval situation in the Pacific is to say the least of it extremely critical and urgently calls for review.¹³

The Department of Defence was equally pessimistic. A contemporary assessment concluded that the goodwill of Japan and the United States were now as important as the naval power of the British Empire in allowing Australians to hold on to their island.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in a continuing climate of economic restraint a detailed review of defence requirements was unlikely. The government instead took encouragement from the formal announcement of Britain's intention to proceed with a naval base at Singapore, Prime Minister

10 Minute, First Naval Member to Minister for the Navy, 3 September 1920, AA: MP1049/1, 20/0215.

11 The treaty prohibited the fortification of Pacific territories.

12 The Imperial Conference of 1921 had defined the 'One-Power Standard' (equality with naval strength of any foreign power) as the minimum basis of Imperial Defence. The Washington agreement, at least as far as the main units of the Battle Fleet were concerned, fixed this standard as the maximum.

13 Minute, First Naval Member to Minister for Defence, 17 October 1922, AA: MP1185/8 1846/4/25.

14 'The seriousness of the situation in the Pacific from the point of view of the defence of the Commonwealth', 23 May 1922, AA: MP1587/1 218AI.

Stanley Bruce using the decision as concrete evidence that the heart of the Empire had moved from the North Sea to the Pacific.¹⁵

The Imperial Conference of 1923 reinforced Australia's perception of where its security lay. This meeting, while highlighting that the individual dominions retained primary responsibility for their own local defence, confirmed the combined might of imperial sea power as the basis for Empire Defence. Unfortunately the conference produced no formal arrangements and the participants seemed unaware that they were approaching the concept from different directions. Attempting to weather its own financial problems, the Admiralty viewed Empire Defence as a way of encouraging the dominions to do more to relieve the imperial burden. In contrast, the Commonwealth government saw the scheme as a way to do less, and was in effect relying on the Empire's resources to offset defence reductions in Australia.¹⁶ However, since South Africa, Canada, India and Ireland intended to do nothing about sea-going naval forces, responsibility would always essentially devolve to Great Britain and Australia, with New Zealand in a lesser capacity.

In expressing its support for Empire Defence the Admiralty had also provided advice on the force structure best suited to dominion responsibilities. A paper set down Australia's principal contribution as four fast light cruisers of great endurance and a flotilla of six large overseas submarines. The cruisers would have as their first task the protection of trade on the Australia Station, while the submarines would perform invaluable service as scouts before the arrival of the Main Fleet.¹⁷ In addition, both types would have the important role of harassing and threatening the enemy's sea communications in Australia's northern approaches. This role, according to later arguments, would be fundamental in deterring any plans for an invasion of Australia. Essentially, the Japanese would never risk such a major expedition without guaranteed security along the entire length of their communications, and for the whole duration of a war.

15 Statement by Bruce, CPP, Vol. XCIII, p. 4390.

16 By 1923 the RAN had only ten ships in commission compared with 39 in 1919.

17 Admiralty document, PD01805, 11 June 1923, Naval Historical Section (NHS), Canberra.

The Admiralty suggested Sydney and Darwin as the RAN's main operating bases, with imperial oil reserves split between them. They were also in favour of Australia's possession of shipborne aircraft and, in addition to proposing that all future cruisers be built to carry an amphibian, recommended that plans be prepared to take up and fit out a merchant ship as a seaplane carrier. Destroyers, though, were seen as essentially fleet weapons and, in Australia's circumstances, uneconomic for either escort duties or local defence. The Admiralty therefore proposed that the RAN retain its obsolescent destroyers only until they had developed a satisfactory design of auxiliary patrol vessel.

Despite her basically parsimonious attitude to Empire Defence, Australia keenly appreciated the need to be seen as a responsible player. Consequently, the Commonwealth proclaimed an intention to keep the RAN as an 'effective and fair contribution' to imperial forces; though what actually constituted 'effective and fair' was never really defined. Of more practical benefit, and clearly influenced by the Admiralty's advice, in 1924 the Australian parliament authorised a major five-year naval building programme. The plan included the construction of two 8-inch cruisers, two submarines, a seaplane carrier, and fuel-oil tanks in Sydney and Darwin. When making the announcement, the prime minister did not touch upon the assistance that the RAN would give to the Main Fleet.¹⁸ He did, though, highlight the necessity of keeping Australian trade routes open and state that while Britain's capital ships would deter any country sending a great expeditionary force against Australia, the new cruisers would counter raids by minor forces.¹⁹

By 1928, however, Australia's Chiefs of Staff were demonstrating a little less faith. In a detailed written appreciation they noted that any transfer of naval strength to the Far East would depend on British political and industrial factors that varied from week to week. While agreeing that factors of distance and time made a serious attempt to strangle Australia's trade impractical, in the interval before the Main Fleet's arrival the Japanese would still enjoy a

18 Bruce's government publicly claimed that the naval commitments were entered into after a change of government in Britain brought a temporary abandonment of the Singapore base.

19 CPP, Vol. 154, p. 29.

great preponderance of force. During this period extensive raiding of Australian sea lanes and coastal areas was certain. Rather than risk their battle fleet in these operations the Japanese need only employ their older warships, submarines and shipborne aircraft, but even these would probably cause 'very grave inconvenience and loss'. Notwithstanding this assessment, the Chiefs of Staff clearly retained their ultimate trust in Empire Defence, concluding yet again that:

the purely Australian local defence by naval forces must be subordinated to concerted measures designed to allow the British Fleet to concentrate its maximum strength at the decisive point wherever that may be.²⁰

Subordination did not necessarily mean that all RAN vessels were expected to immediately move off the Australia Station. The Commonwealth government still retained the right to decide in each individual case whether to place Australia's 'sea-going forces' at the disposal of the Admiralty and these forces did not include patrol vessels and minesweepers employed solely on local defence.²¹ Moreover, in most circumstances RAN war stations could be seen as fulfilling the dual roles of support for imperial and Australian strategy.

Thus the two new 8-inch cruisers, HMAS *Australia* and HMAS *Canberra*, were now allocated to patrol between Darwin and Java and tasked to prevent the passage of individual Japanese warships planning to attack commerce. The seaplane carrier HMAS *Albatross* was to be positioned off Darwin, where it would use its aircraft to find targets for the heavy cruisers. Meanwhile the two older light cruisers—currently in reserve—would defend maritime trade in southern waters, where encounters with a superior enemy were less likely.²²

In terms of a self-reliant stance these developments were encouraging, and the RAN's envisaged objective was to become

20 'Appreciation War in the Pacific', 9 August 1928, AA: MP1185/8 1846/4/363.

21 The Admiralty recommended that local defence forces be kept at a minimum and certainly never be allowed to 'limit or starve the preparations for the Sea-going Fleet'. 'Empire Naval Policy and Co-operation', 1926, p. 4, AWM: AWM124, 74/41.

22 Letter, ACNB to Admiralty, 9 October 1931, AA: MP1049/9, 1933/2/72.

strong enough both to provide protection from sporadic attack and to act as a deterrent.²³ There is even some evidence that the naval staff began examining ways in which to base training upon more credible contingencies. These new exercises included independent patrol work against raiders, rather than manoeuvres as part of a larger British battle fleet. However, it would be going too far to say that Australia had found a coherent maritime strategy. The central role of the cruisers and the necessity of keeping them at a high state of efficiency blinkered naval thought. The squadron continued to see the prime threat in surface terms and this, combined with a continuing shortage of funds, made it difficult for other areas of naval warfare to gain recognition. Anti-submarine warfare, for example, was dismissed as a subsidiary service, applicable mainly to local defence.

The lack of attention given to minor units was understandable, at least in the context of the then current assessment that no substantial war could be expected within ten years. Such forces were relatively quick to build and could be manned at short notice by reserves. Unfortunately, the neglect went much deeper. Even if an Australian security strategy was only a minor part of the general defence scheme, matters such as inadequate industrial support, the lack of a first-class naval base, obsolescent ships and the need for offensive mining, surveying and intelligence services all required attention. Progress had nevertheless been achieved, policing and diplomatic missions had been undertaken in the region, and procedures for sea-air cooperation advanced.²⁴ By the end of the 1920s limited offensive operations were again possible beyond the limits of the Australia Station. If it had gone ahead, the second five-year programme would have added a third modern cruiser, more oil reserves and another four submarines to complete the flotilla.²⁵

The Depression Era

The impact of the Great Depression brought the RAN's brief renaissance to a halt and placed the continued appropriateness of all Australian service responsibilities under close scrutiny. The much

23 'Appreciation War in the Pacific'.

24 For an early example of the RAN's policing mission, see G. Swinden 'HMAS Adelaide and the 1927 Malaita Expedition', *Naval Historical Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1994, pp. 23-7.

25 AA: MP1049/5, 1855/2/16.

reduced defence vote would obviously not provide for the continuance of even the existing minimal organisation and in 1930 the Defence Committee authorised a strategic review by the three armed forces. The somewhat naive hope was that rather than simply apportioning the cuts on a pro-rata basis, the services themselves might agree on how to obtain the best value from the limited budget.²⁶

The service representatives began by agreeing that Japan would not declare war until the Empire was already involved in European complications. There was similar concurrence that an invasion of Australia could not take place until the Japanese had neutralised the bases at Hong Kong and Singapore. However, self-interest then took over. The RAN argued that the two bases could be adequately defended and that the British would always be able to send a naval force sufficient to deter Japan from a major expedition. It followed that invasion could be definitely ruled out when considering preparations for defence. At worst diversionary raids might be expected, aimed at containing Australia's forces. The nation's greatest vulnerability continued to be its seaborne trade and by protecting shipping and supporting imperial forces the RAN was making the most effective contribution to Australian security.²⁷

The army and the RAAF remained focused on invasion and unwilling to place so much faith in either the British fleet or the impregnability of its bases. They conceded that the defence of Australia depended on the effective cooperation of all three services, but argued that the combined cost of adequate protection at sea was prohibitive. With their existing strength the Japanese would soon possess command of the sea down to the waters north and east of Australia and there was nothing the RAN could do to influence the position.²⁸ It was therefore better to rely on mobile land forces as a 'cheap and certain' guarantee against invasion. An adequate RAAF

26 The subcommittee consisted of Brevet Colonel J.D. Lavarack (Chairman), Group Captain S.J. Goble, and Captain C.J. Pope, RAN.

27 Paper by Captain Pope, 18 March 1930, AA: MP1185, Box 3, 1846/4/363.

28 Admiral Mahan was quoted in support of the army/RAAF argument: 'All the naval power of the British Empire cannot suffice ultimately to save a remote community which neither breeds men in plenty nor freely imports them'. Paper by Lavarack and Goble, 6 March 1930, *ibid.*

would also be needed for cooperation with the army and independent action against the invader. The RAN, though, might be better administered as a unit within the British navy, with consequent savings on the costs for staff and shore establishments. Even the local defence of trade would apparently be more economical when left to the army and RAAF, these services being able to conduct both land and air attack against the enemy's advanced bases and to provide air escort of coastal shipping.

In effect, the RAN was stressing the benefits of making a contribution to forward defence through strong maritime forces, while the army and RAAF were pushing for greater self-reliance, through continental defence. The subsequent debate was protracted and acrimonious and its sophistication no source of pride for any service. The RAN's retention of its separate identity almost certainly owed more to the political imperative for an independent Australian offering to the Empire's schemes, rather than the quality of maritime strategic thought.²⁹ In any case, further funding cuts brought naval expenditure back to below the level of the early 1920s, naval aviation was neglected and the submarine force disbanded for the second time.³⁰ Once more the reduction in RAN capabilities would allow only the partial protection of the Australia Station.

Analysts pointed out the inadequate nature of the Australian contribution to both Empire Defence and Australia's own security on a number of occasions, but the government remained preoccupied with reducing taxation and balancing the budget. The need to believe in the Main Fleet strategy was such that Australia willingly allocated what little remained of her front-line forces to assist. The Admiralty was seeking ways to increase their strength in-theatre and by the early 1930s both Australia's 8-inch cruisers were tasked to defend the lines of communication between Singapore and Hong Kong. Meanwhile *Albatross*, escorted by the RAN's destroyer flotilla, was to operate in the Strait of Malacca using her aircraft to find Japanese mines and

29 This was hardly surprising, for there remained an understandable lack of senior retired RAN officers and little encouragement was given to serving officers to contribute to the broader debate. In the public arena discussion was dominated by ex-army officers.

30 By this time the Admiralty had changed its mind about submarines and was suggesting cruisers and sloops as the dominion priorities.

submarines.³¹ Even so, the ships were not expected to be available until after the arrival of the Main Fleet, the Admiralty now accepting that Australian political objections—especially the potential provocation of cruisers taking up their war stations—would prevent the vessels reaching Singapore any earlier.³²

In 1934 the Admiralty held a Flag Officers meeting in Singapore to coordinate naval war orders for the Far East. The plan to send the RAN to Singapore was reconfirmed and the best routes carefully considered. To limit the potential for political interference, the CinCs agreed that the cruisers should go via southern Australia where no immediate threat to Japanese territory could be inferred. The conference also examined the critical lack of air support and recommended that *Albatross*—then in reserve for financial reasons—be returned to service.³³ Though the RAN placed the commissioning first on its priority list, the government had already reached the limits of its contribution and refused to increase defence expenditure.³⁴

As noted earlier, the ships of the Main Fleet were to be largely drawn from the Mediterranean. During the remainder of the 1930s a series of incidents and crises brought home to many observers the precarious nature of Britain's naval presence in that area.³⁵ In Australia, meanwhile, pressure grew for more attention to be paid to local defence but, like earlier proposals, these calls were scant on detail, failed to provide a viable alternative to the Main Fleet strategy, and were often simply a demand to concentrate spending on the army and RAAF. The government continued to dismiss the concerns, stressing the global nature of sea power, the disastrous repercussions for the Australian economy if an enemy ever gained command of the sea, and its continuing faith in Britain's intention to protect Australia.³⁶

31 R. Jones, 'Singapore and Australian Naval Policy, 1919-40', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, Vol. 16, February 1990, pp. 25-32.

32 Letter, Admiralty to ACNB, 19 April 1932, AA: MP1049/9, 1933/2/72.

33 Minutes of Defence Committee meeting, 21 March 1935, AA: MP1049/5, 2026/2/96.

34 Since no offset could be found *Albatross* remained in reserve and was eventually given to the Admiralty.

35 In mid-1938 the Admiralty admitted that for the first time it was relying on a possible ally (France) to maintain maritime supremacy in the Mediterranean.

36 Primrose, 'Australian Naval Policy, 1919 to 1942', p. 254.

However, by 1937 even Australia's leaders were evidently having doubts. In the face of the worsening international situation, they sought renewed assurances at that year's Imperial Conference. The British, aware of the increasing demands to provide for local defence and to maintain Australian support, attempted to emphasise their strengths rather than their weaknesses. They reiterated their intention to get the Main Fleet to Singapore and, while admitting the delay might now be three to six months, expressed complete confidence in the island's capacity to hold out if necessary. The Conference discussions have since been described as 'injudiciously optimistic rather than disingenuous'.³⁷ The practical result for Australia was a failure by Australian authorities to appreciate both the limits imposed by Britain's own lack of preparation for war and the shift in imperial strategic priorities to the European threat posed by Germany.

Officially Australia determined to continue 'a blending of Empire Defence and Local Defence on the lines of her present policy'.³⁸ The assessment remained that it would be impossible for Australia to build up its armaments to a scale able to deal with Japan single-handed, but the need to shift emphasis to security in local waters was increasingly apparent. In April 1938 a new defence programme provided for two 6-inch cruisers to be bought from the Admiralty and two sloops to be built in Australia. Design work also commenced on an indigenous escort vessel and a start was made in developing the anti-submarine and minesweeping defences of major ports. The acquisition programme aimed to produce a more balanced and self-reliant RAN, but naval policy as a whole remained indecisive. With the long lead-time required for naval construction weighing against any major force structure changes, the RAN's future capabilities were decided more by the short-term availability of equipment.³⁹

37 *ibid.*, p. 271.

38 Minutes of Council of Defence Meeting, 17 December 1937, AA: AA 1971/216.

39 This is clearly illustrated in 1937-38 discussions concerning the acquisition of a capital ship for the RAN. The intention was that the vessel would be used as a purely Australian deterrent until the arrival of the Main Fleet. Finding the manpower and finances for the ship would certainly have posed difficulties, but in the end the plan was rejected because a capital ship could not be acquired before 1943 and the immediate need was for more cruisers for trade protection.

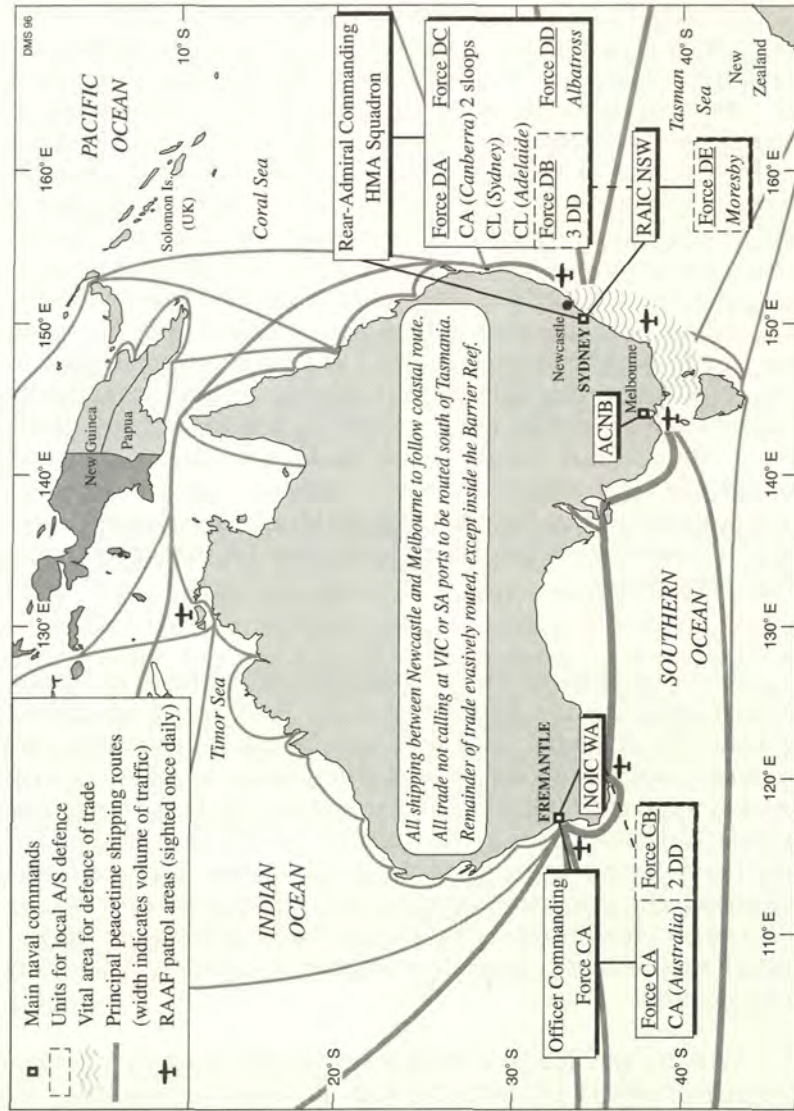
The year 1938 also marked a turning point in the employment of the RAN's major units. Apparently prompted by continuing uncertainty as to when, or if, Australian warships would be released by the Commonwealth, the Admiralty chose to remove their role in the immediate reinforcement of Singapore. Instead the RAN's object in the early stages of a war became solely the defence of trade in Australian waters, with the bulk of the fleet concentrating immediately in Sydney.⁴⁰ By the following year the Australia Station had been broken into three command areas with the RAN's war stations split between the focal areas to the south-east and south-west of the continent. A separate Northern Patrol, tasked with harassing Japanese trade, became the responsibility of a British admiral based in Darwin. It is noteworthy that the Australians rejected, as politically unacceptable, an attempt by the Admiralty to change the limits of the Australia Station that would have made the latter command responsible for the defence of the entire northern coast. Nevertheless, the discussion reinforces the point that at this juncture Australia had neither the capability nor specific responsibilities for the security of its northern approaches.

War

By the outbreak of war in September 1939 defence expansion plans were still far from complete and the RAN could adequately protect only the most vital ports and areas. Offensive operations were not a direct Australian concern and the defence of trade in local waters was uppermost in the ACNB's priorities. This is not to say that individual Australian units were incapable of offensive action. The standard of training was good and the RAN's cruisers and destroyers would soon prove extremely versatile, particularly when operating as part of a larger force. However, on its own the RAN lacked depth and the RAAF was neither equipped nor trained to work in conjunction with naval forces.

With the threat now coming from German commerce raiders and Japan's intentions uncertain the RAN remained in its stations for

40 Australia's naval staff, however, assumed that the Admiralty would attempt to substitute the Main Fleet's older cruisers with Australian vessels as soon as possible.



Map 4.2: February 1938 - War Orders for HMA Squadron (AA: MP1049/9, 1933/2/114)

a Far Eastern war. Once the likelihood of immediate Japanese entry diminished, Australia gradually released vessels to the Admiralty. These were employed as support or substitute for British units, but only on the understanding that the Commonwealth could recall them if needed. Unfortunately, the Australians still had little access to planning information and very little if any influence on the strategic decisions made. The British authorities continued to pledge naval assistance to Australia should a Japanese threat emerge. The Admiralty, however, while appreciating the political motivation, privately expressed grave concerns at the potential of these pledges to constrict the navy's freedom to concentrate forces where the immediate need existed.⁴¹

From the British perspective the immediate need was in the Mediterranean. Shortly after the entry of Italy into the war and the fall of France, Australia and New Zealand were informed that it was no longer possible to divert naval forces to the Far East. After two decades of reliance on naval power, military and air strength suddenly became favoured as the most suitable means of reinforcing Malaya.⁴² The ACNB's response was to note that the four Far East squadrons would have to remain on the defensive for an indefinite period and that Australian territory, trade and interests were liable to the heaviest scale of attack. Even now, however, the Naval Board argued that though local defences needed improvement, work should not prejudice the RAN's efforts elsewhere. Direct support for Britain continued to remain a high priority based on the reasoning that if the United Kingdom fell, the remainder of the Empire would soon follow.

The government, however, could not afford to completely ignore Japanese moves. During the second half of 1941 RAN units returned progressively to Australia while increasingly urgent attempts were made to coordinate planning with American, British and Dutch forces in the Far East. Firmly tied to the imperial view of the world, the Australians had little previous experience to call upon and for the most part remained only concerned observers.⁴³ The

41 Primrose, 'Australian Naval Policy, 1919 to 1942', p. 305.

42 Telegram, UK Government to Commonwealth Government, 28 June 1940, AA: MP1587, Box 4, 52W.

43 Even the coordination of command in the Tasman Sea with New Zealand was not established until late in 1940.

inadequate nature of pre-war preparations and an unwillingness to make commitments until the last moment ensured that the strategy for defence of the region would be ad hoc and many anomalies were never resolved. When the Japanese finally decided to make their move they were able to retain the initiative throughout the first five months of the Pacific war. Though a combined Allied naval strike force was finally assembled, it had never worked together before going into action. As highlighted in Chapter 1, its failure in the Java Sea provided a salutary lesson in the requirements for successful multinational naval operations.

The fall of Singapore and the loss of the Netherlands East Indies in early 1942 fulfilled Australia's worst strategic fears and left the continent open to serious attack. The Japanese were presented with a range of offensive options, but while raids took place and some limited attempts were made to cut Australian communications, they eventually decided that invasion was not warranted. This result owed far more to Australia's enduring geographic features and Japanese over-expansion than to the Commonwealth's interwar planning. The Australian response to the crisis was virtually inevitable. In April 1942 the directive that formed the South-West Pacific Area gave an American, General Douglas MacArthur, exclusive strategic and operational responsibility for Australia's defence. Australia had in effect surrendered a part of its sovereignty.

Conclusions

The RAN received the lion's share of the defence budget during the interwar period, but this should not obscure the fact that overall spending was inadequate. No service ever overcame the public's preoccupation with domestic matters or successfully articulated an appropriate force structure, and it would have been politically unacceptable for any government to have financed a comprehensive defence scheme. Thus the economic and strategic advantages of continued British protection made the Commonwealth's reliance on Empire Defence the only credible option. Yet the theoretical merit of inter-theatre naval mobility, enshrined in the intention to bring the Main Fleet out to the Pacific, was always undermined by the plan's lack of practicality. Though the defence of Australia was a maritime problem, Australian security was not the first object of imperial naval strategy.

It does not follow though, as some historians have argued, that without a 'battle-fleet at Singapore the decision to make the navy Australia's first line of defence made little sense'.⁴⁴ This assessment ignores the totality of the RAN's responsibilities. Not only Australia's war effort, but the nation's entire wealth and economic well-being, depended on the maintenance of sea communications. This dependence was the key issue that isolationist or purely continental defence strategies always failed to adequately address. Similarly, an enemy's own sea communications would always remain a critical vulnerability in any attempt to seriously threaten Australia.

That the Australians were in a dependent relationship with the RN for much of the period is certain. Perhaps the RAN was too attached, for it evidently failed to understand the cardinal nature of its independent role. However there was also a positive side, and by maintaining its alignment the Australian navy was able to achieve major economies in infrastructure and training.⁴⁵ Without the imperial connection the RAN would have been in a far worse position when war came, both in terms of strength and professional standards. The link also ensured that the RAN was the only armed service with responsibilities outside the local defence of Australian interests. The scope of its activities was thus much broader and it better appreciated the need to strike a balance between the requirements of purely local defence, and defence of the region's strategic environment. Whether the RAN struck the correct balance remains open to debate, but the progress made would stand Australia in good stead in postwar attempts to maintain an active engagement in the region.

44 J. McCarthy, 'Singapore and Australian Defence 1921-1942', *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 25, No. 2, August 1971, p. 175.

45 Virtually all research and development was carried out at Admiralty expense, while new equipment was provided at cost price and, with few exceptions, only after it had been proved in British ships.

CHAPTER 5
AIR POWER AS THE FIRST LINE OF
AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE:
MYTH OR REALITY, 1911-54?

John McCarthy

In 1911 two events occurred on both sides of the same ocean. In January the *Lone Hand*, a popular illustrated journal which had been running from 1907, published a two-page appeal to the Australian government to provide an 'aerial fleet' which could function as the country's first and seemingly only line of defence. In September a man called Calbraith Rodgers set off from Brooklyn in an attempt to win a \$50,000 prize offered to the first person to fly across America coast to coast inside 30 days. Rodgers was unsuccessful: after 30 days he had just reached Okalahoma. It took him 19 more days to arrive in California. Lashed to the aircraft was a crutch to support a plastered leg and his face was scarred. One might not be surprised: on the overall journey he had crashed 19 times. Four months later, though, Rodgers was dead. The impact of a bird had destabilised his fragile machine.¹

Such, it might be argued, was the state of the art or science of flight. Granted aircraft were first used as a weapon by the Italians in their 1911 war with the Ottoman Empire, but quite rightly the results of air action then were not considered 'devastating'.² Desperation alone led the *Lone Hand* to suggest that this most primitive and embryonic weapon system, which we now call air power, should comprise Australia's first line of defence and be pitted against the power of an invading seaborne force. In 1911, and not for the last time, Australia's reliance for its security on a maritime strategy controlled by a power placed 10,000 miles away had left the country defenceless.

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- 1 There is an account of this brave and determined attempt in Jeffrey L. Ethell, *Frontiers of Flight* (Smithsonian, Washington, 1992), pp. 32-42.
 - 2 Michael Paris, 'The First Air Wars - North Africa and the Balkans 1911-1913', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, 1991, pp. 97-109.

The problem of defending Australia's territorial integrity and commercial interests was simple enough. Possible invasion approaches and the vulnerable sea lanes on which the healthy economic life of the state depended had to be protected. Given a strong enough naval presence around Australian waters then all was secure. Without it, and particularly with the rise of Japan as a formidable naval power, the country faced possible disaster. The pre-1914 naval crisis which prompted the *Lone Hand* was thus very real. The thought that the newly developed German navy might be able to out-gun the Royal Navy led the Admiralty to concentrate its sea power in British home waters, and this at a time when supposedly a two-power standard was being maintained. As early as 1907 Captain W.R. Creswell set out a scenario which foresaw a German-Japanese alliance and argued:

a combination against England between a European power and Japan would make the defence of the Commonwealth a matter of extreme difficulty, or it may be frankly admitted, impossibility, *unless* we earnestly profit by the intervening years of shelter and safety to develop our powers of resistance.³

Compulsory military training introduced in 1909 could only eventually result in creating a second line of defence, although Deakin's RAN certainly contributed towards protecting trade. Indeed when war came in 1914 only HMAS *Australia* had the capability to counter the two German armoured cruisers in the Pacific. With such irrefutable evidence that Britain was overwhelmingly a European power, one must ponder the wisdom thereafter of relying for Australian defence on the disposition of forces controlled by an Admiralty with other things on its mind than the security of what after all was but a small and somewhat insignificant part of Empire.⁴

3 'Memorandum for the Prime Minister; considerations affecting the naval defence of the Commonwealth', 6 March 1907, AA: CP103/12, Bundle 6.

4 In February 1942 the British Chiefs of Staff acknowledged that Australia had an importance insofar that it supplied troops 'fighting elsewhere', but that a very considerable reduction of Australian imports would have no vital effect on Britain's war effort. The best they could recommend was that '... some communication by sea should be maintained'. 'Reinforcement for the Far East-Far East Policy in the next six months', Chiefs of Staff, 10 February 1942, PRO: Air 8/944.

Did air power provide an alternative to British sea power in the defence of Australia, at any time until *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* met that fateful appointment in the South China Sea? Certainly not before 1914. For the *Lone Hand* all was simple: aeroplanes took only a month to build, the cost compared to mustering an effective navy 'trifling', therefore within six months aircraft could constitute an effective shield against attack. Of course there was no mention of the infrastructure needed to produce and maintain even this technologically primitive 'aerial fleet'. There were only four listed 'aviators' in the country, no pilot training facilities and no trained mechanics or riggers. There was no engine manufacturing capability and no ground installations. By 1912 only one aircraft which actually left the ground had been designed and built in Australia. According to a reliable source, however, such flying had just resulted in 'hops'.⁵ In 1911, but not for the last time, it was argued the acquisition of valid air power is easy. It rarely, if ever, is.

Robin Higham reminds us that while air power was employed during the 1914-18 war in most of the roles which attract the attention of air forces today, it was not until mid-1917 that its use became respected over land and sea.⁶ The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), for example, evolved effective tactics and developed advanced technology in weapon design and navigational aids.⁷ The Germans and the British successfully employed torpedo-carrying aircraft against merchant shipping while RNAS flying boats patrolled some 4000 square miles of the North Sea. Evidence suggests that aircraft sank at least nine submarines over the period May 1917 to the end of the war. By November 1918, however, it remained true that no war industry had been crippled from the air and that the outcome of no major battle had been decided by either control of the air or lack of it. More importantly for Australia, no aircraft in the 1914-18 conflict sank or seriously disabled any major naval vessel. Success against submarines was one thing, but could such success be repeated against

5 Fred T. Jane, *All the World's AirCRAFT [sic]* (London, 1912), p. 99.

6 Robin Higham, 'Air Power in World War I, 1914-1918' in Alan Stephens (ed.), *The War in the Air 1914-1994* (Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1994), p. 24.

7 See the excellent study by Christina J.M. Goulter, *A Forgotten Offensive: Royal Air Force Coastal Command's Anti-Shipping Campaign 1940-1945* (Frank Cass, London, 1995). Perhaps more than a quarter of the book provides an analysis of the development of air power in a maritime setting from 1911-12.

powerful and well-armed naval units? An indication one way or the other might have been of benefit to Australian interwar defence planning and the creation of what we call today a force structure.

Even so, the interwar years represent for some a missed opportunity for Australia to move away from an Admiralty-controlled imperial security system. It was the Australian Labor Party (ALP) above all, but in government for just two years, which argued from 1923 that air power acting with defensive submarines should constitute Australia's first line of defence. Implicit in Kim Beazley's 1989 McKell Lecture was the idea that the ALP correctly and early saw the outcome of that reliance upon the Royal Navy which resulted in Australia's time of great crisis in 1942 and which its air power policy was designed to prevent.⁸ It must be asked: does this argument represent myth or reality? Would it have been possible to implement it anyway?

What must be acknowledged at once is that most would argue Australia was virtually defenceless when war came with Germany and not much better placed when Japan entered the war in December 1941.⁹ The army was a poorly equipped militia led by a small force of regulars who until attractive commands became available in the 2nd AIF seemed committed to waiting for the Japanese to arrive in the hope that an invasion could be defeated on the beaches.¹⁰ The 9.2-inch guns which might have offered some resistance lacked proper sighting and fire-control equipment and, as the CGS remarked in February 1938,

8 Kim Beazley, then Minister for Defence, McKell Lecture, typescript in possession of the writer.

9 For a different view see A.T. Ross, *Armed & Ready - The Industrial Development & Defence of Australia, 1900-1945* (Turton & Armstrong, Sydney, 1995). The thrust of the argument is that Australia prepared for war with Japan on the assumption that British aid would not be forthcoming. It was the result of an industrial effort, particularly in the interwar years, which persuaded the Japanese not to invade in 1942. Thus Ross might want to argue that industry and technology became the first line of Australian defence in the interwar years.

10 See the analysis of the army's position in John McKinlay, 'The Army and Imperial Defence 1932-1935' in John McCarthy (ed.), *Australia and the Threat of Japan 1919-1945* (Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1992). For the militia between the wars see C. Neumann, 'Australia's Citizen Soldiers 1919-1939: A Study of Organisation, Command, Recruiting, Training and Equipment', MA thesis, University of New South Wales at Duntroon, 1978.

... the absence of these components did not make the guns useless, the absence of shell of the type required to make the batteries efficient was of more serious concern.¹¹

It is perhaps difficult to see how matters could have been more 'serious'.

In the ten years from 1926 to 1936 the RAN had received £40,777,000, twice the amount spent on the army and almost seven times the £6,409,000 allocated to the RAAF. Detailed Admiralty advice guided its development and the Royal Navy provided its chief executive officer. It was not enough. In February 1938 Richard Casey as Treasurer told the Council of Defence that he was 'appalled' and confessed himself subject to 'great mental disturbance' when he contemplated the state of Australia's defences.¹² Little wonder: over a year later the Australian Naval Board considered the RAN would be extended to summon sufficient force to protect trade and then only and perhaps in immediate Australian waters.¹³

So much then for the ability of two Australian fighting services to act as a first line of Australian defence. As the money it had to spend might indicate, the RAAF was in an even worse position. The United Australia Party (UAP) government led by Joseph Lyons clearly had not been seduced by arguments for air power presented by the opposition. In 1936 John Curtin argued:

The dependence of Australia upon the competence, let alone the readiness, of British statesmen to send forces to our aid is too dangerous a hazard upon which to found Australia's defence policy.

By 1937 he was calling for a fifty-squadron air force equipped with 600 first-line aircraft to be established at a cost of some £15,000,000.¹⁴

11 Minutes, Council of Defence Meeting, 24 February 1938, AA: 1971/216.

12 *ibid.*

13 Acting Chief of the Naval Staff to Minister for Defence, in John Robertson and John McCarthy (eds), *Australian War Strategy 1939-45: A Documentary History* (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1985), p. 5.

14 See John Robertson, *Australia at War* (Heinemann, Melbourne, 1981), p. 6, for Curtin's 1936 statement and CPD, Vol. 154, pp. 741-2, 8 September 1937.

Lyons, however, in his final speech of the 1937 federal election campaign, stated:

A vote for the government means a vote for Empire Cooperation in naval defence for the safeguarding of our shores from foreign aggression.¹⁵

Was Curtin right in arguing that air power provided an alternative to the Singapore strategy? One thing seems certain: it was a simple argument Curtin presented and this partly recalls the simplicity of 1911. In 1939 there was only one Service Flying Training School in the country together with a Central Flying Training School. There were no specialised gunnery, wireless or navigation schools and Operational Training Units had not even been conceived. Nor was there anything like the postwar RAAF apprentice scheme in existence. Air forces are very technical services but Curtin made no provision for the essential technicians. In 1939 there were only about 160 training aircraft in the country and many of these were in private hands. Curtin had quoted figures which clearly came from Richard Williams, the long-serving Chief of the Air Staff. In 1937 Williams had calculated the capital and maintenance cost of an RAAF squadron as £213,000 plus £72,000 each year.¹⁶ Not considered was the cost of the huge infrastructure required to operate an effective air force at a time when the total defence vote for 1937–38 was just £9,773,505.

Regardless of considerations such as the supply or manufacture of aircraft there must be doubts as to cost. The costs of training aircrew alone must give pause. In 1942 the average cost of training an aircrew member to brevet standard in Australia was some £2,200.¹⁷ A 50-squadron air force would require at least some 2,000 aircrew to operate at a cost of £4,400,000 to train to a level at which they were deemed capable of undergoing further costly operational training. In the late 1930s there was considerable debate in Britain as to exactly how many strike aircraft could be deployed for the cost of a £10,000,000 battleship. One committee found that when all factors were taken into account (length of life and deterioration, capital and

15 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 1937.

16 1937 Imperial Conference, Australian Delegation Paper, AA: 1971/216.

17 John McCarthy, *A Last Call of Empire: Australian Aircrew, Britain and the Empire Air Training Scheme* (Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1988), p. 22.

maintenance costs), the cost of a battleship equalled the cost of operating just 42 twin-engined bombers.¹⁸ Archdale Parkhill, the Minister of Defence, thought that the cost of operating a 50-squadron air force would be closer to £30,000,000. It could have been a conservative figure.

In reply an 'if only' argument can be advanced. If only from 1918 there had been political will; if only the RAAF had been properly developed from 1923; if only an aircraft industry had been established long before 1937; if only the RAAF had been properly equipped with modern aircraft instead of the ramshackle collection of 164 largely obsolete types with which it entered the war – then the RAAF would have been a formidable weapon and capable of halting an invasion force and thus becoming the first line of Australian defence. From the experience of the 1939–45 war only three examples need be given to demonstrate that land-based aircraft could be highly effective against naval vessels, no matter how powerful.

In June 1941 the Royal Navy removed some 16,000 troops from Crete in a superb evacuation operation. The cost was very high. From air attack, three cruisers and six destroyers were sunk; a battleship, an aircraft carrier, three cruisers and one destroyer were most seriously damaged, while another battleship, four further cruisers and six destroyers had to undergo major repair. About 2,000 sailors were lost. Admiral Cunningham later described the battle for Crete as '... a disastrous period in our naval history'.¹⁹ In December 1941 eighty-eight Japanese bombers and torpedo bombers operating from their base in Indochina 400 miles away took just over an hour to sink *Repuise* and *Prince of Wales* for the loss of just three aircraft. Controversy surrounds the number of Japanese ships sunk in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, but undisputed is the fact that on 3 March 1943 land-based American and Australian aircraft sank all the troop-carrying transports and four escorting destroyers. As the late John Robertson observed, the Battle of the Bismarck Sea emphasised the

18 Baron Ernle Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield*, Vol. 2, *It Might Happen Again* (Heinemann, London, 1947), pp. 98–101.

19 Gavin Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series 1, Vol.2 (Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1953), pp. 317–19.

point that Australia had been made secure by air power.²⁰ This action, it could be further argued, reinforced and justified the decision made on 2 March 1942 to expand the RAAF to 73 squadrons and to give this force an anti-invasion role.²¹

A conclusion to the 'if only' argument seems clear. It would maintain that the proper development and application of air power between the wars would have made Australia secure from sea attack and from any invasion attempt. It would have tended to make a maritime strategy for Australia largely irrelevant except perhaps in mid-ocean blue waters and would certainly have negated the whole 'main fleet to Singapore' concept.

This 'if only' argument, however, is a specie of mythology. It asks us to rewrite virtually the whole of Australian history. Defence policies do not exist in a vacuum and Australia even after Federation remained largely and intensely British. The United Kingdom market was all-important for primary producers and the British banking system underwrote Australian development. Australia had no real foreign policy of its own but subscribed to an Empire foreign policy and British advice guided Australian defence planning. Australian involvement in the tragedy of the First World War and particularly the 1917 conscription crisis fractured society and split the ALP. All made the implementation of an air power policy as Australia's first line of defence impossible.

This line of reasoning can be expanded. For non-Labor supporters the experience of 1914–18 introduced at least two decades of subservience to the imperial ideal. To them the ALP with its Irish-Catholic connotations seemed 'disloyal' and its air power policy appeared as a wish to destroy the imperial defence tie. It was an ideal weapon to do so. The air force being relatively small and highly skilled, conscription would be impossible. It was not until May 1939

20 Robertson, *Australia at War*, p.24. For the controversy regarding the battle, see D. Clayton-James, *The Years of MacArthur 1941–45* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1975), pp. 292–303.

21 See *War Report of the Chief of the Air Staff Royal Australian Air Force 3 September 1939 to 31 December 1945 to the Minister for Air* (Melbourne, 1945), p. 11, for this designation of role; and Alan Stephens, *Power Plus Attitude: Ideas, Strategy and Doctrine in the Royal Australian Air Force 1921–1991* (Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1992), pp. 74–5, for details of the 73-squadron plan.

that the ALP executive agreed to contribute to imperial defence at all and then only to the extent of maintaining the territorial integrity of the Commonwealth. Such a view was quite unacceptable to that majority of Australians who endorsed the 1937 federal election slogan: 'A vote for the UAP is a vote for the Royal Navy'. Regardless of the attraction of being protected by a maritime strategy Australian taxpayers did not have to pay for, it was socially impossible in the interwar years for the majority to endorse a policy which might end in isolation from the United Kingdom and the wisdom of Whitehall.

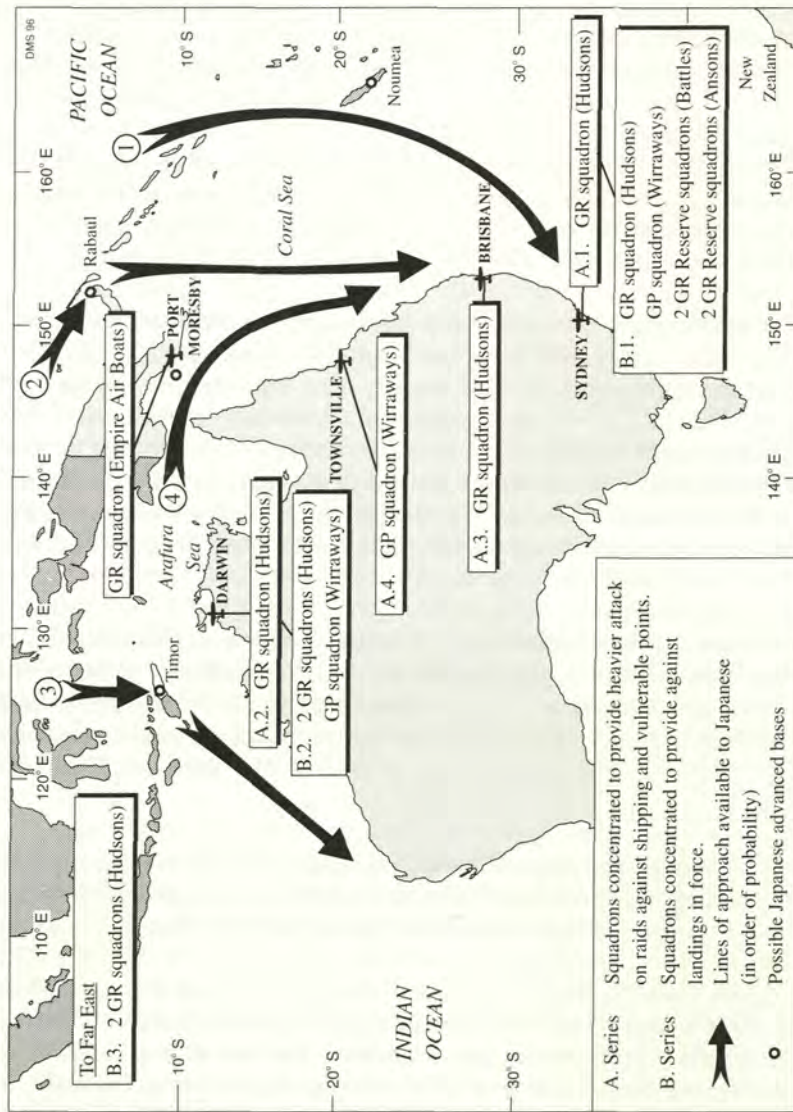
What then of post-1945? Air power was now seen as a necessary condition for victory and the RAAF ended the war operating over 50 squadrons equipped with 3187 mostly first-line aircraft. In fact by August 1945 the RAAF was possibly the fourth-largest air force in the world. Moreover an ALP government had been in office since October 1941, had overseen this massive development and had given this air force the primary task of defending the country. With all the ingredients in place, surely an air force policy would now continue. Not so.

In June 1947 John Dedman as Minister for Defence introduced his government's five-year programme. Of the £250,000,000 to be spent the RAN was to receive 29.5 per cent of this amount, the army and RAAF 24.5 per cent of it each. The balance would go to munitions supply and scientific research. In justifying this decision, Dedman argued:

Notwithstanding all the changes and developments in weapons, the British Commonwealth still remains a maritime Empire, dependent upon sea power for its existence.²²

Even allowing for the different strategic and political world in 1947, such a strong statement on the primacy of sea power in defence of Australia might make one wonder what actually would have happened if the ALP had won office ten years previously. Dedman, in

22 CPD, Vol. 192, pp. 3335–46, 4 June 1947, for the defence statement.



Map 5.1: 1940 - Employment of the RAAF in the defence of Australia (AA: MPI185/8, 1821/2/248)

a fashion which would have been a credit to the UAP, endorsed a maritime strategy which went back in fact to Deakin and offered the Admiralty '... the strategic direction of the Royal Australian Navy in wartime'. Air Vice-Marshal George Jones, as Chief of the Air Staff, may have made an ambitious bid to secure a 34-squadron force; the Chifley government gave him one of sixteen.²³

So let us dispense with the myth that the ALP held tightly to the idea that air power should be the first line of Australian defence. The reality was that the RAAF was elevated to the position of prime consumer of the defence vote and thus to a position of primacy over the other two services by the Liberal/Country Party coalition led by Robert Menzies. Of course that policy was not arrived at unaided. Menzies fell into line with policies adopted by both the United Kingdom and the United States and the forceful arguments of Sir Donald Hardman, a British officer appointed to the position of Chief of the Air Staff in 1952.

Hardman left few in doubt that he accepted with little exception the classical theories of Giulio Douhet and Brigadier General William Mitchell. Sea-lane protection could safely be left to the RAAF. In Hardman's mind the army had a dubious function and the role of the RAN was difficult to discern. Moreover if the RAAF were equipped with the British V-Bomber, this striking force with a nuclear capacity would dovetail nicely into British and American strategic thinking.²⁴ In 1954 the British White Paper on defence emphasised the primacy of a strategic bomber force and Hardman was a good spokesman for British interests. Nevertheless this position coincided with the American 1954 statement on 'massive retaliation': air power was to be the instrument. Perhaps one should not be surprised that the coalition government followed these examples. In 1954 it proposed to fund the air force to the extent of nearly £270,000,000 over three years; the army was to get £211,381,000 and the RAN just £165,114,000. Clearly it had been relegated into third place in the defence hierarchy. As Alan Stephens has remarked '... those who remembered the pre-war

23 Alan Stephens, *Going Solo: The Royal Australian Air Force 1945-1971* (Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 1995), pp. 29-34.

24 Hardman was remarkably public in his views. See 'Shaping an Air Force', *Aircraft*, Vol.31, July 1953, p. 33, and 'Unbalanced Defence', *Aircraft*, Vol.32, February 1954, p. 6.

air force coping with less than 9 per cent of defence money while the RAN got some 60 per cent must have been happy'.²⁵

So much for myth and reality in viewing air power as Australia's first line of defence. Before 1914 it was neither, but pure fantasy. Between the wars doubts have been cast on the supposition that the ALP if it had won government would have, or indeed could have, implemented its air power policy. What can be dispelled is the supposition that such a policy was pursued in the post-1945 world. The reality was that the Australian government was driven by external events and circumstances to endorse air power as its first line of defence in 1954. But given as always the dependent nature of Australian defence and foreign policy, both before the 1939-45 war and after it, one should not be surprised.

25 Stephens, *Going Solo*, p. 39.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY IN THE ERA OF FORWARD DEFENCE, 1955-75

Jeffrey Grey

The 'era of forward defence', between roughly the mid-1950s and mid-1970s, is seen in retrospect through the lens of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Like many other aspects of national life, especially during the 1960s, this distorts the view we develop, in some ways quite fundamentally. In terms of defence policy, Vietnam is seen as the logical outcome of a developing military engagement with the region beginning in at least the 1950s, and towards which everything was bent. This view is misleading where indeed it is not fundamentally wrong, and nowhere is this more true than in consideration of the roles and activities of the RAN during these decades.

The period was a difficult one for the navy. It emerged from the Second World War with its standing somewhat diminished, an understandable consequence of the failure to satisfy unreasonable expectations built up during the interwar years, and notwithstanding some creditable individual performances. In the mid-1950s Australia was still strongly, probably fundamentally, oriented upon the British, especially in terms of regional defence concerns; although ANZUS had been signed in 1951, it had less immediate practical reality than did the security arrangements gathered around the creation of ANZAM and other measures for British Commonwealth defence cooperation. By the early 1970s, however, the British had faded from the scene in all but name, and the security connection with the Americans had become paramount. The navy, of the three services, found this transformation most difficult, for reasons of sentiment and culture as well as doctrine and experience. As Rear Admiral F. Leveson George noted in his 'haul down' report upon retirement in March 1967, 'the RAN ... still has a long way to go to reach the truly

Australian character of the Australian Army and the RAAF.¹ George was talking primarily about symbols, but his observation applied equally well to most other levels of the RAN's activities.

The third factor influencing the performance of the navy in this period lay in the nature of forward defence itself, and more particularly in the operations of war in which the Australian services engaged. The early postwar defence budgets under Labor had been pared back hard from the levels recommended by the service chiefs in their 1946–47 postwar plans for the armed forces, but even so the RAN had gained approval for the acquisition and development of two carriers and a naval aviation capability. Although it required considerable levels of manpower and training support from the British to establish, the newly acquired capability proved its worth during HMAS *Sydney's* deployment to Korean waters on active service in 1952. Thereafter, however, major surface units of the Australian fleet played a very minor role in the operations to which the Australian services were committed. The Malayan Emergency was almost exclusively a ground and air campaign, while the significant maritime efforts against the Indonesians during Confrontation were carried out by small ships, principally coastal minesweepers. In Vietnam the RAN had a bit-part role, valuable perhaps for training purposes but of little real significance in the overall scheme of things, and generally lost to sight in any case. Frustration with this state of affairs led Vice Admiral Sir Hastings Harrington, in his 'haul down' report as CNS, to label forward defence a failure (although he did not say why) and advocate the development of defence capabilities to control the 'air-sea gap' to Australia's north.² The combat experience of the 1950s and 1960s was important for the development of both the Australian Army and the RAAF; it fulfilled a much less significant function for the RAN.

In considering the development of an Australian naval strategy in this period, or perhaps, more accurately, the development of the naval dimension of national strategy, we are to some extent talking about things that did not happen. In a period of moderately

1 Haul Down Report by Third Naval Member, 14 March 1967, Naval Historical Section (NHS), F324.

2 Haul Down Report, 8 February 1965, NHS, F302.

high military activity for the Australian services (especially considering their small size), the RAN was in general denied the opportunity to discharge any of its major functions as these had been identified in a 1962 Defence Committee minute:

- (a) to provide an effective and sustained Naval contribution to the allied forces maintaining command of the seas in our areas of strategic interest;
- (b) to contribute to and to defend military shipping en route to the areas of operations in Southeast Asia;
- (c) to protect within the Australian station shipping carrying essential imports and exports; and
- (d) to cooperate with sister services in general operations of war including the defence of the Australian mainland and Australian island territories.³

In practical terms, only (b) featured significantly amongst the tasks assigned to the navy during the postwar Southeast Asian conflicts, and even this was undertaken at a level or in circumstances which provided no adequate test of the RAN's capabilities or potential for operations in a wider or general war.

Samuel Huntington's notion that strategy is about ways of using force, not about the kind of force that is used, provides a useful context for the rest of this paper. In 1954 Huntington enunciated the three elements necessary to the creation of a purpose or role for an armed service in implementing national policy. First, there had to be a strategic concept; this was to be buttressed by public support; and finally the service had to develop an organisational structure tailored to support the strategic concept. Both the garnering of public support and the development of an organisational structure were made easier if the strategic concept was clearly defined and proclaimed.⁴ In assessing the RAN's contribution to Australian strategy in the Cold War, we might ask how the navy's designated functions and responsibilities, as set out above, arose? Into what larger contexts and

3 Defence Committee Minute 8/1962, 'Responsibilities of the Navy', AA: A2031.

4 Samuel P. Huntington, 'National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy', U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May 1954, cited in Michael A. Palmer, *Origins of the Maritime Strategy: American Naval Strategy in the First Postwar Decade* (Naval Historical Center, Washington DC, 1988), pp. xvii–xviii.

considerations did they fit? How well was the RAN fitted to discharge them in the eventuality that it was called on to do so? What implications did they hold for the subsequent development of the maritime dimensions of national strategy? And how might we assess the actual contribution which the RAN made to forward defence operations in the period concerned?

As indicated already, Australian naval planning fitted into two overlapping but distinct sets of strategic responsibilities within the Southeast Asian and Pacific regions: imperial, subsequently Commonwealth, ones with the British (and New Zealanders); and ANZUS ones with the Americans (and New Zealanders). Planning for postwar contingencies within Commonwealth councils had begun even before the Second World War had ended, during the 1944 Prime Ministers' Conference in London, and were renewed during the 1946 conference. In the years immediately after 1945 the British worked hard to maintain an Australian and New Zealand commitment to the Middle East, traditional focus of imperial strategy, in the event of a general war with the Soviet Union. By 1952 the Defence Committee, at least, had come to the conclusion that in Cold War or limited war conditions, the communist threat in Southeast Asia had a higher priority than did the Middle East, although in a general war the Middle East held greatest significance *for the allies*, while Malaya (specifically) remained 'of great importance'.⁵ Accordingly, the first priority of Australian policy should be the maintenance of sufficient forces to ensure the defence of Australia; the second was the capacity to make a major contribution to the defence of the ANZAM region; while the third was to make the maximum contribution possible to other vital theatres in accordance with overall allied strategy. But in view of the likely effect on Australia of the fall of Malaya, 'the aim of the allies should be to ensure the retention of Malaya'.⁶

Significant moves towards formalising regional defence cooperation came out of attempts at the 1948 Prime Ministers' Conference to build closer consultation on defence matters between Britain and the dominions, especially where these concerned the defence arrangements for a particular region of mutual defence

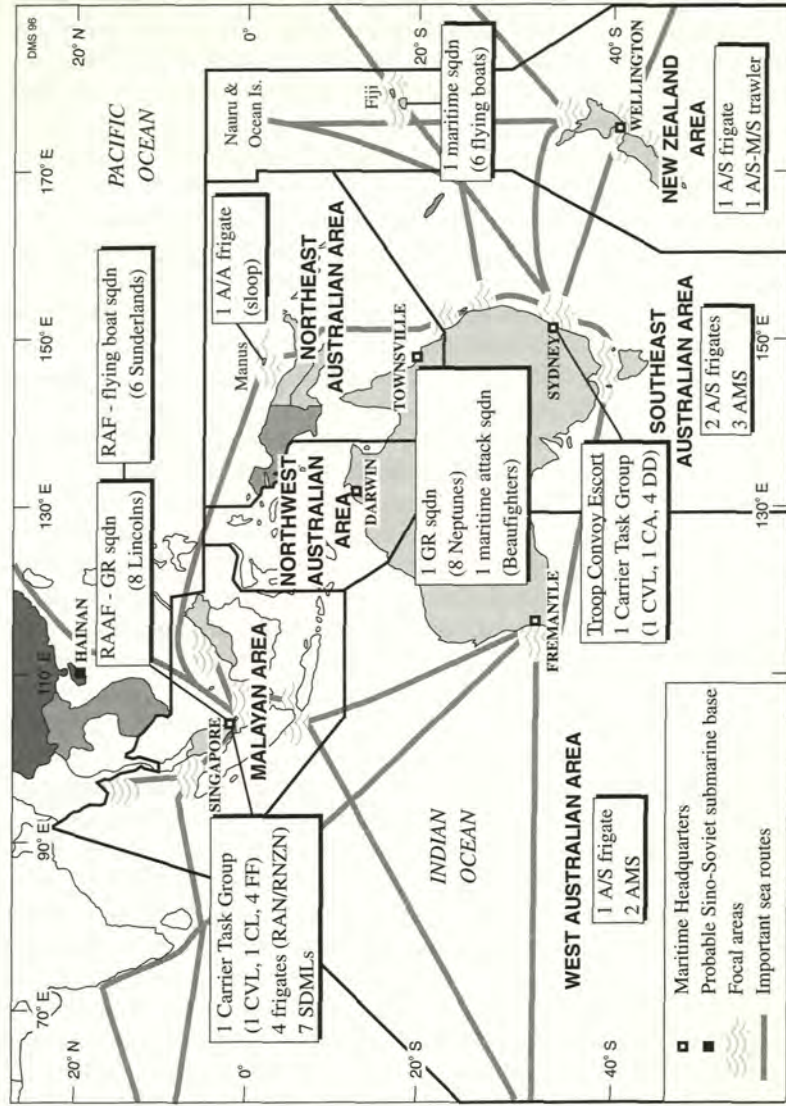
5 Defence Committee Minute 368/1952, 18 December 1952, AA: A2031.

6 *ibid.*, Appendix 2.

interest. The British were only too aware that the events of the war, especially in the Pacific, had loosened the defence ties with Australia and New Zealand, while Churchill's unenthusiastic response to Australian overtures in 1944 had not helped much either. The evolution of arrangements for the defence of the ANZAM area was perhaps the most tangible regional outcome of this move, although in its detail it delivered rather less initially than perhaps it promised. And indeed it was probably only the deteriorating situation after 1948, both in Europe and in Malaya itself, which led the British to conclude arrangements which had been under consideration at various levels for at least two years. Based around an ANZAM Chiefs of Staff organisation itself modelled on the JCOSA system evolved earlier to control the Commonwealth occupation forces in Japan, ANZAM was firstly a peacetime planning organisation which also allocated to Australia the wartime responsibility for the defence of Australia and its territories, together with the direction and control of operations other than those intended for home defence, in an area approximating the ANZAM region.⁷ Control of Malaya itself, still a colonial territory, as an operational area remained with the British, and the primary focus of peacetime planning for the area thus rapidly came to revolve around the defence of sea communications. In part the British hoped through this mechanism to devolve something of the burden of Commonwealth defence onto the Pacific dominions, but it might be argued that, ironically, this had the effect of reinforcing Australian attention, in particular, upon the strategic needs of its own region at the expense of wider imperial requirements; certainly by 1954, in any case, a future Australian commitment to the Middle East was effectively dead, never to be revived.

The evolution of the ANZAM area needs to be seen in the context of planning on a global scale for war with the Soviet Union, and of growing concern over the threat posed by the fast submarine. In a general war it was assumed that the US Navy would provide half the ships for the Atlantic and Mediterranean theatres, and all the forces deployed to the South Atlantic and the Pacific; the Royal Navy

7 For brief discussion of the evolution of ANZAM, see Eric Grove, 'British and Australian Naval Policy in the Korean War Era' in T.R. Frame, J.V.P. Goldrick and P.D. Jones (eds), *Reflections on the RAN* (Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1991), pp. 253-57; L.D. MacLean, *ANZIM to ANZUK: An Historical Outline of ANZAM*, Historical Monograph 96 (Department of Defence, Canberra, 1992), pp. 1-9.



Map 6.1: May 1952 - Plan for the A/S defence of sea communications in the ANZAM Region
(AA: MP1185/10, 5202/21/22)

would focus on the North Atlantic and Mediterranean, while the Indian Ocean and the ANZAM area would be left to the RAN and the RNZN. Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) tasks and the direct defence of shipping were to be the RAN's primary functions in a global war, and helped drive the development of the Australian carriers and naval aviation capability. Collins, the vigorously Anglophile CNS from 1948-55, hoped that the Australian Task Group detailed for the ANZAM area in the event of global war might yet be deployed to the Mediterranean,⁸ but the near-simultaneous development of naval arrangements with the Americans made that eventuality increasingly unlikely.

Indeed, in 1950 the British Chiefs of Staff do appear to have harboured some such hope, tied to a belief that the United States could be persuaded to accept responsibility for the defence of Australia and thus free Australian and New Zealand resources for deployment to the Middle East. The Pacific dominions, however, with a keen recollection of the events in the first half of 1942, were less sanguine about leaving the defence of Australia and New Zealand to chance, and sought security guarantees from the United States with, as we know, the ANZUS treaty as the outcome. As Thomas-Durell Young has shown, before this came to signature the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave a secret undertaking in 1950 that US forces would be used to protect Australia and New Zealand from invasion, while in February 1951 Collins and the US CinC Pacific (CINCPAC), Admiral Arthur Radford, signed the eponymous agreement which established the basis for naval contingency planning between the three navies in the region.⁹ As is well known, the Australian government was disappointed that the Radford-Collins Agreement limited itself to the coordination of naval operations between the ANZAM and CINCPAC areas, rather than giving the Australians a role in war planning within the theatres, but at this stage the Americans were still inclined to limit their liability, as the clauses of the ANZUS treaty itself demonstrated.¹⁰

8 Grove, 'British and Australian Naval Policy in the Korean War Era', p. 260.
 9 Thomas-Durell Young, *Australian, New Zealand and United States Security Relations, 1951-1986* (Westview, Boulder, 1992), pp. 60-1.
 10 The text of the Radford-Collins Agreement may be found in AWM: AWM121, DMO&P file 403/A/2, 'ANZAM Planning: Radford-Collins Agreement'.

Cold War tasks were further emphasised in the mid-1950s with the creation of the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (Far East), to which units of all three Australian services contributed, a move which gave practical expression to the doctrine of forward defence. The function of the Strategic Reserve was twofold, and although the wording was modified by changes to the status of the British territories in Southeast Asia over time, the intention remained unaltered. In 1956, these tasks were identified as being to provide 'a deterrent to further Communist aggression in South-East Asia' against which the Strategic Reserve would be employed 'in defensive operations in the event of aggression ... against the sea communications of the Malayan region'; secondarily, and 'without prejudice to its primary role', forces assigned to the Strategic Reserve were to participate in operations against the communist terrorist insurgent forces. By 1969 the directive governing Australian forces in the Strategic Reserve defined the roles thus:

The primary role of the Strategic Reserve in accordance with the purposes of the South East Asian Collective Defence Treaty is to provide a deterrent to Communist aggression in South East Asia. The Reserve also forms part of the forces available for the defence of Malaysia and Singapore, including the sea and air communications in the Malayan area, against external aggression from any source.

The secondary role of the Strategic Reserve is to assist in the maintenance of the security of Malaysia and Singapore by support of the Malaysian and Singaporean Armed Forces, in accordance with arrangements agreed between the Governments of Malaysia and Singapore and the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.¹¹

The interaction between the two security regimes, with the British and Americans respectively, was important here. The United States had made it clear that it did not intend to become closely involved in the defence of Malaya, and it signalled clearly by the mid-

1950s that it believed that the ANZAM countries should concern themselves more closely with the defence of Southeast Asia, and that US material aid to the RAN would be provided only in the context of Southeast Asian defence, and not for the defence of Malaya specifically.¹² Caught between the need to defend Malaya within a British context and the growing commitment to an American context for Australian defence more generally, the ANZAM planners declared in 1957 that 'the defence of Southeast Asia must be considered as a whole', and that the most appropriate vehicle for such planning and coordination of forces was SEATO. Accordingly, 'ANZAM planning should support SEATO strategy and fit in with SEATO planning'.¹³ Forces committed to the Strategic Reserve in the primary role were now likely to be called on in two sets of circumstances: limited-scale operations, in which the Strategic Reserve would be the total force committed by the three governments concerned, and large-scale operations, where it would constitute only a part of the total forces required.¹⁴

In fact, of course, the units of the Strategic Reserve were never deployed in either role under SEATO planning, and the primary role of the Strategic Reserve was never discharged. Although the primary role received most attention by the planners, it was the secondary role that was more important in actuality, and in this the navy had little to contribute. The communist insurgents of the Malayan Races Liberation Army were largely immune from the effects of sea power, even in localised form. Naval gun fire support, indulged in occasionally by Australian ships of the Strategic Reserve in the last years of the Malayan Emergency, contributed as little, and was militarily as pointless, as the earlier 'jungle bombing' efforts of the RAAF's No. 1 Squadron.¹⁵ During Confrontation with Indonesia between 1962 and 1966, effective naval activity was largely confined to small ships engaged in interdiction of Indonesian infiltrators between the coast of Sumatra, the Rhio Islands, and the western and

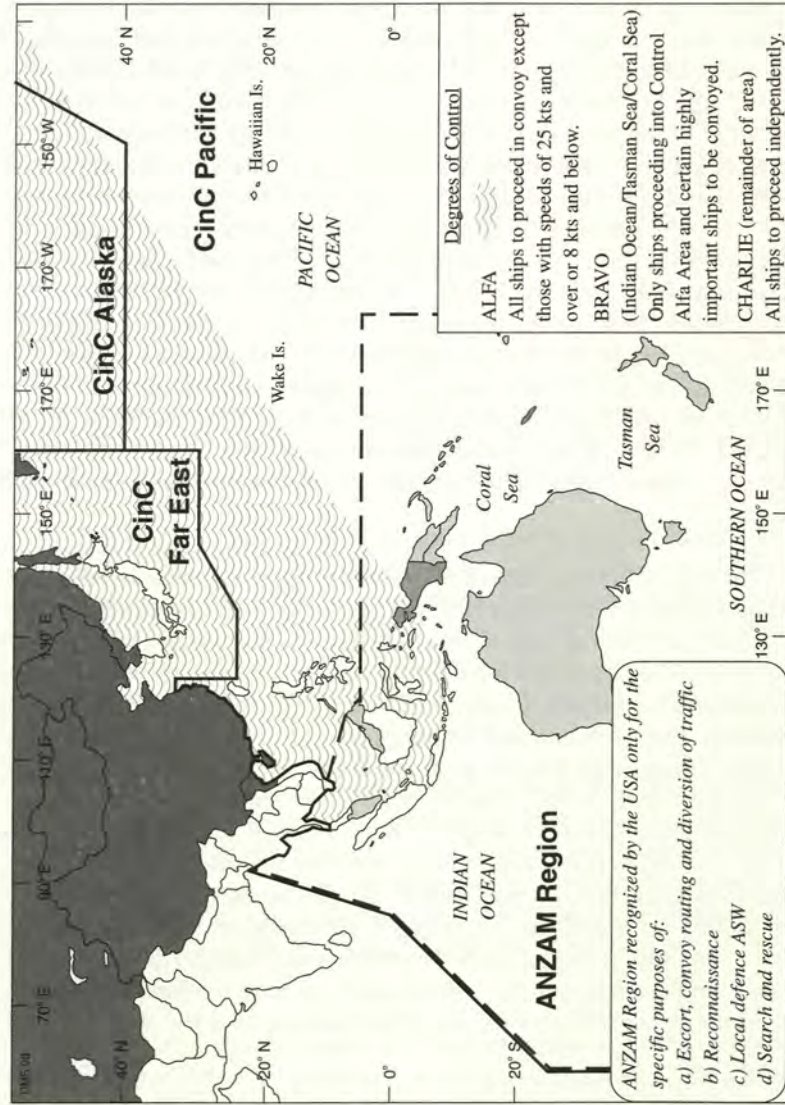
11 Defence Committee Agendum 3/1969, 7 February 1969, 'The Role of Australian Forces in South East Asia', AA: A5799.

12 Minute, Director of Plans, 'RAN Requirements from the United States', 14 September 1955, AA: MP1185/10, 5219/53/4.

13 ANZAM Defence Committee Minute 10/1957, 26 August 1957.

14 MacLean, p. 23.

15 For a brief discussion see Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo 1950-1966* (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1996), p. 69.



Map 6.2: 1957 - Degrees of control for protection of shipping in war (AA: MP1049/6, 5062/21/108)

southern coasts of the Malay peninsula and Singapore harbour, and resupply efforts in the coastal waters of Borneo. This was important work, especially in 1964–65 during Sukarno's 'year of living dangerously', in which Australian 'Ton' class coastal minesweepers played their part, but it was essentially an extension of the coastal anti-piracy work in which Royal Navy small ships had been engaged in support of the police before the outbreak of hostilities with Indonesia. Had the Indonesians raised the intensity of their operations further, as they seemed set to do in the second half of 1964, then the British and Malaysian governments might well have put plans 'Spilliken' and 'Hemley' into operation, intended to destroy Indonesia's air and maritime capabilities through concerted air and naval action, and which would have seen the Strategic Reserve deployed in its primary role.¹⁶ But it did not come to that and the Australian commitment alongside the Americans in South Vietnam from the mid-1960s, as we know, was made outside the context of SEATO in any case. On the other hand, the units of the RAN which deployed with the US Seventh Fleet slotted easily into their role as small constituent parts of a larger national force, a role to which the RAN was at least accustomed.

The fundamental problem for the RAN in this period was the tension over roles and missions, exacerbated by the tight restraints within which all the services worked, even during the height of the Vietnam commitment. The navy had to balance different operational emphases depending on whether consideration was being given to its Cold War or 'general war' functions, and this had obvious implications at every level. This was evident in devising force structure requirements and the closely related question of ship acquisition. As the Director of Plans noted in 1956, in foreshadowing the shape of the future fleet:

It should be borne in mind that for the next decade, say 1958 to 1968, the future fleet will include the three Daring class, and the four Type 12 frigates, as certainties, but that it will be a struggle for survival in commission between the two Battle class destroyers and the Q class frigates—a matter of

16 The evolution of contingency planning in the event of a widening of Confrontation is discussed in Dennis and Grey, *Emergence and Confrontation*, pp. 186–96.

resolution between the requirement for the 'Cold War' Gun or the 'Global War' Anti-submarine ship.¹⁷

Similar concerns underlay debate within the naval staff over the proper role of the carriers and the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) at about the same time. In global war the anti-submarine role, to which the carriers were already directed, would remain their paramount task and no change would be required to planning or training tasks. On the other hand, with an increasing emphasis on limited war tasks, the FAA might well find itself given over to army support and interdiction work as its primary task, and in this eventuality, for which it was not prepared, 'much replanning is necessary' as the 4th Naval Member noted:

[We] cannot chop and change from one role to another at short notice ... [and] from the intelligence available it would appear that the air support role would be the most useful employment for the RAN carrier.¹⁸

Collins, the CNS, would have none of it. 'This paper contains a lot of heresy', he began, and went on to observe that although the risk of global war, which had seemed imminent in 1950, had receded 'and we can expect a period of cold or limited war, our task remains to prepare for global war'. If, as the Director of Air Warfare, Organisation and Training, Captain V.A.T. Smith, had suggested, the RAAF could be relied on to provide the necessary anti-submarine air strength in the eventuality of global war, 'then we had better scrap the FAA forthwith and admit that we have been misled for years by our Naval Aviation advisers'. But, he concluded, 'it is not true'; in any case, 'excepting Monitors, the Queen's ships have never been relegated to the role ... of supporting the flank of the Army', and possible employment in limited war tasks 'must be adjusted so as not to interfere with' the requirements of global war tasks. The answer to such tensions between roles and missions must lie in greater flexibility in the use of FAA resources.¹⁹ The matter did not in fact end there. Collins' successor, Vice Admiral Roy Dowling, directed the naval staff

to re-examine the assumptions behind planning for the navy's primary roles since, as he noted to the Minister, 'with the type of war which is more likely to come, e.g. limited war in the Middle East or South-East Asia, there are great and important roles for the Fleet Air Arm'. His briefing paper did not entirely abandon the earlier position, but it did modify it in ways which his predecessor had found unpalatable and ultimately unacceptable.

The role of the Navy in a limited war in South East Asia is ... its traditional role of ensuring that we can use the sea as we wish and deny its use to the enemy, but with some changes of emphasis to meet the different threats.

The first requirement is to ensure the safe and timely arrival of troop and supply shipping. Against the air threat we require carriers ... [while] against the submarine threat we require aircraft and escort vessels ...

The second requirement is to cover and support the army during their initial operations until the air force can be fully established ashore. Again we require carriers ...

The third requirement is to provide flank support to the army. Again we require carriers ...

The RAN was planned to play a part in global war ... The role of the carrier in limited war can be of greater importance than in global war. The success or failure of military operations in SE Asia depends basically on the provision of naval air power. There is no alternative.²⁰

Welcome though Dowling's partial reversal of policy was for the future cooperation of the services, his conclusion proved overstated. In the limited campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, Australian ground forces operated successfully with support from land-based air forces or, occasionally as in Borneo, with rotary wing support from the Royal Navy. The RAN's role in support of the army,

17 Note for file, Director of Plans, 28 May 1955, AA: MP1587/1, 495.

18 Minute, 4th Naval Member to Chief of Naval Staff, 9 November 1954, AA: MP1185/10, 5170/1/31.

19 Minute, Chief of Naval Staff, 12 November 1954, *ibid.*

20 Brief, Chief of Naval Staff to Minister for the Navy, 7 August 1956, *ibid.*

important though it was, was largely confined to the secondary one of ferrying troops and their equipment to Singapore or South Vietnam.

As the period of forward defence reached its climax, and began to near its end, the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) produced a paper attempting to define the future roles of Australia's forces in the region. Australian strategy, they observed:

... is based on the concept of contributing towards the establishment of secure and stable independent nation states in the South-East Asia region with which Australia can develop cooperative relations and which might serve to prevent the extension of hostile influence and control over wide areas, particularly by militant communism. Such a course would preserve our status and influence in the region in respect of the factors shaping its long term environment and our own security, should sustain the confidence of our friends in South-East Asia in Australia's concern and support, and not merely sustain our capacity to influence United States policy in the region but preserve its confidence in us as a reliable ally.²¹

To a large extent, the JPC paper concluded, such objectives would be met by the successful development of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), while the continuing uncertainty over external threats to East Malaysia meant that Australian air and naval forces had a potential role to play there in concert with the Malaysians themselves. Training and other assistance to the armed forces of Malaysia and Singapore was also emphasised, something which the RAN, through its stewardship of the Royal Malaysian Navy after independence, was able to capitalise upon. Regional concerns remained paramount, but the primacy of global war considerations was now firmly consigned to the past.

The RAN's role in the era of forward defence was not unimportant, but it was often less than highly visible and it did not conform necessarily to the planning assumptions on which the navy

21 Report, Joint Planning Committee, 5/1969, 'The Role of Australian Forces in South East Asia', 8 February 1969.

had entered the postwar era and which, as we have seen, were retained for at least a decade afterwards. In the terms which Huntington laid down, the RAN did not possess a clearly thought-out strategic concept which matched the demands actually made on the armed forces, and as a result played a relatively minor role in those campaigns actually fought, as opposed to those planned as possible contingencies. Ironically, perhaps, given the much higher profile enjoyed by the army in this period, it was the RAN which was to be the major beneficiary of the move from 'forward defence' to the era of 'self-reliance' and 'regional engagement', with renewed emphasis upon the development of a maritime strategy and concern for the defence of the 'air-sea gap' again to the fore. The RAN, which in Gorshkov's well-known schema of navies had never in its history been other than a regional navy,²² had perhaps at last been given a mission and a place in national strategic considerations that both matched and suited its capabilities.

22 Gorshkov classified navies as global (able to operate in several theatres simultaneously), blue-water (able to operate in only one theatre at a time), regional (one operating in local seas) and coastal (able to defend home waters only).

CHAPTER 7

DEFENDING THE MOAT: MARITIME STRATEGY AND SELF-RELIANCE

Stewart Woodman

When defence planners begin to discuss the issue of strategy, there can be no certainty that they will all be talking about the same thing. While this may appear surprising for such a key planning concept, the reality is that strategy can be conceived in a number of different ways. Edward Luttwak, for example, identifies several levels of strategy—technical, tactical, operational, theatre and grand strategy—each of which impacts at different points in the defence decision-making process.¹ Some proponents seek to push the scope of strategy quite high, trying to draw together all the elements of national policy that relate to a particular defence environment. Others tend to drive the concept down to much more specific operational and tactical levels, thus providing more precise guidance for the conduct of military activities.

The aim of this chapter is not to enter into that definitional argument. Clearly, a great deal depends on the context to which the definition is being applied. Rather, its objective is to look at strategy as being the process of linking ends and means. As Rear Admiral Wylie has put it, a strategy is: 'A plan of action designed in order to achieve some end; a purpose together with a system of measures for its accomplishment'.² In short, what maritime strategy is all about is

1 E.N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987), pp. 69–189.

2 J.C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1967, reprinted Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1989), p. 13.

the ability to exploit the maritime environment, in all its dimensions, to one's strategic advantage.

At the same time, it is important not to conceive of the maritime environment in the narrow sense of that which exists between two pieces of land. Rather, it needs to be seen as a space with its own dynamics and characteristics, albeit taking land into account as an important marker of that space. That broader definition is important for three reasons.

First, recent legal, economic and technological developments do confer that individual identity. Not only has the Law of the Sea Convention significantly expanded the concept of sovereignty in maritime areas but growing economic interdependence and the demand for energy resources to underpin national development have highlighted both the importance of freedom of navigation and the potential wealth of seabed and marine resources. Technological advances have underscored the capacity of states to police their maritime jurisdictions and enhanced their capacity to exploit those resources.

Second, within a defence planning framework, the land-tied definition of the maritime environment has been developed in the context of concerns about invasion by large, conventional forces. It is, however, not necessarily as appropriate in all, and especially lower, levels of conflict, where the objectives of an adversary may be primarily political and very different to territorial aggrandisement. Furthermore, with the rising costs and changing nature of military technologies, the prospect that any except the largest nations will undertake large-scale, conventional power projection in the future is slight.

Finally, this broader definition recognises that the maritime environment is different because its very essence is mobility. Unlike the land environment, where the nature of the terrain and the possession of key infrastructure determine strategic advantage, there

are generally no fixed targets to any significant degree. There is considerable advantage to be gained from manoeuvring in, and exercising control over, that space. There will always be some 'tent pegs' at the corners—ports, vital assets and choke points—but, while they help to shape and scale the maritime environment, they are only part of its essence.

Around Us the Waves

If any country in the world has a reason for developing an effective maritime strategy, it is Australia. It is surrounded by extensive tracts of water which are large by all normal operational standards. Yet, as a developed nation, it is dependent on the trade, commerce and communications that cross those maritime areas for its continued development and well-being. The inhospitable nature of much of the inland places a premium on the movement of coastal shipping for the delivery of bulk cargoes, especially to the north and west of the continent. Significant energy supplies and some mineral resources lie offshore.

It is not surprising, in these circumstances, that the whole concept of defence self-reliance that began to emerge in the early 1970s has continued to be splashed by water. This was not just a question of geography. The combination of the withdrawal of British naval forces—long the linchpin of Australia's—security from Southeast Asia, together with the clear message from the Vietnam War that forward land deployments were a difficult and possibly fruitless exercise, reinforced the central place of maritime operations in any more self-reliant defence policy. As Kim Beazley later put it: '... it was very soon clear that the defence problem had a large maritime component and that the Navy faced a considerable challenge in meeting it'.³

³ K.C. Beazley, 'The Development of Australian Maritime Strategy' in *Selected Speeches 1985-1989 by the Hon. Kim C. Beazley, MP, Minister for Defence* (Department of Defence, Canberra, February 1989), p. 180.

The first comprehensive statement about self-reliance, the 1976 Defence White Paper, identified clearly the importance of the sea and air approaches to Australia. Key among the characteristics of the appropriate force structure which it outlined were:

- a good capability for external intelligence;
- the capacity for regular surveillance and patrol of Australia's ocean approaches and maritime resource zones;
- naval and air strike components to deter potential adversaries; and
- elements for the protection of shipping from attack or other interference in Australia's focal areas and port approaches.⁴

Apart from counter-terrorism and peace keeping, the specific operational tasks which the White Paper identified for the force-in-being were all maritime. They were: sea control in areas of Australia's maritime jurisdiction; quick detection of and response to any maritime or coastal harassment; and maritime surveillance and display in areas of Australian interest.⁵ To the extent that alliance considerations continued to compete for priority, they too had a significant maritime flavour. Concerns to support US deployments in the western Indian Ocean were reinforced by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the South Pacific, the threatening masts of Soviet fishing trawlers gave ample reminders of the vulnerability of those near neighbours to Soviet influence and of the potential to interdict supply lines to the United States in a conflict.

As self-reliance gradually elbowed its way to centre stage and defence planners began comparing the ADF's capabilities with those of its neighbours, the maritime flavour of Australia's strategic challenge was further emphasised. The slight prospect of invasion pushed the army's mechanised formations into the background as control in the maritime environment was seen as central to offsetting

4 *Australian Defence*, presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence the Hon. D.J. Killen, November 1976 (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976), p. 14.

5 *ibid.*, p. 13.

the numerical superiority of regional ground forces should a threat ever emerge, and as the key to managing a potentially wide area of operations in northern Australia. As Dobb put it succinctly: 'our most important defence planning concern is to ensure that an enemy would have substantial difficulty in crossing the sea and air gap'.⁶

The area of direct military interest which Dobb defined, extending 1000 to 1500 nautical miles from Australia and within which the ADF should be able to exercise independent military power, was maritime. It covered ten per cent of the earth's surface and was punctuated only by the islands of New Guinea and eastern Indonesia in the north and by New Zealand to the south-east.⁷ Not surprisingly, it was maritime capabilities that took up three-quarters of Dobb's force structure recommendations. The same emphasis was carried through into the 1987 White Paper, which asserted that: 'the fundamental importance of the sea and air gap to our security gives a high priority to maritime forces capable of preventing an adversary from substantial operations in that area'.⁸

Any chance that the maritime aspect might be taken for granted was quickly dispelled by the new regional dynamics that began to impinge on Australia's planning horizon in the later 1980s. First, the coups in Fiji, together with instability in Vanuatu and Bougainville, threw into prominence a range of possible new tasks for the ADF involving either the protection of Australian nationals or interests or support for the maintenance of domestic stability in the South Pacific. They were tasks which hinged on Australia's capacity to deploy and maintain a presence at considerable distance in a maritime environment and ones whose scale and nature did not fit comfortably

6 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence by Mr Paul Dobb, March 1986 (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986), p. 5.

7 *ibid.*, pp. 50-1.

8 *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Policy Information Paper presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence the Hon. Kim C. Beazley, MP, March 1987 (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987), p. 31.

with the existing force structure.⁹ Continued concern with Soviet and Libyan meddling in South Pacific affairs meant that they could not be ignored.

These events proved to be only a transitory blip on the radar screen, however, in comparison with the new strategic dynamics emerging to the north. Here too, the majority of the issues were maritime. India's swift action in suppressing a coup in the Maldives and its leasing of a nuclear-powered submarine from the Soviet Union thrust into prominence its emerging blue-water naval capabilities. The Andaman and Nicobar islands, long forgotten on the strategic map, suddenly assumed considerable importance (due to their relative proximity to Southeast Asia and the Straits of Malacca) as did India's long-cherished ambition to construct its own aircraft carrier.

Closer to Australia, the developing nations of Southeast Asia, now politically stable with growing economies and greater technological expertise, had begun to move towards more balanced and technologically advanced force structures with significant naval and air components. While the numbers remained small, their impact was heightened by the low base line from which most countries were starting and by the growing competition between Western, Soviet and Chinese arms manufacturers for a share of the market. With the decline of insurgencies and moves towards settlement of the Cambodian problem, actual or potential sources of friction were increasingly offshore. Apart from the competing claims to the Spratly Islands, tensions existed in the Gulf of Thailand, piracy and refugee movements from Indochina were of concern, and Indonesian moves to regulate passage through its archipelagic waters raised sensitive issues of freedom of navigation and trade.

⁹ S. Henningham and S. Woodman, 'An Achilles Heel? Australian and New Zealand Capabilities for Pacific Islands Contingencies', *The Pacific Review*, Vol.6, No.2, 1993, pp.127-43.

As the 1990s began, the withdrawal of US forces from the Philippines gave a much higher profile to the maritime capabilities of the large East Asian powers, notably China and Japan, and their growing potential to influence developments in the region. China's pursuit of its claims to the South China Sea and its growing capacity to project maritime power beyond its immediate coastal waters, together with Japan's concerns to protect its vital sea lines of communication, invested any regional tensions with much greater significance. Further afield, the Gulf War demonstrated the value of Australia being able to contribute effectively to combined operations with US or UN forces in areas of common strategic concern. It was not by chance that the *Strategic Review* 1993 gave a new emphasis to the stability of the archipelagic nations of Southeast Asia as being of the 'highest importance to Australia'. 'These nations', the Review stated, 'form a strategic triangle that provides stability across the most likely approaches to Australia's north'.¹⁰

Towards a Maritime Strategy?

There were certainly all the ripe ingredients for a comprehensive maritime strategy to emerge. What is revealing, however, is how much difficulty Australia's defence planners have had in coming to terms with this maritime environment since priority was first given to greater defence self-reliance in the early 1970s.

The initial problems arose from the marked tensions which existed between the old and new strategic postures and the inadequate institutional structures within the Department of Defence for resolving these. Australia's whole planning ethos had been so tied to concepts of forward defence in concert with its major Western allies that the switch to the defence of Australia did not happen overnight. In the maritime sphere, not only had the most recent capital acquisitions such as the *Oliver Hazard Perry*-class FFGs and the P-3C long-range maritime patrol (LRMP) aircraft configured for anti-submarine warfare (ASW) operations, been purchased with allied

¹⁰ *Strategic Review* 1993 (Department of Defence, Canberra, December 1993), p. 24.

interoperability high on the agenda, but service doctrine and training reflected the same alliance priorities. With the single services jockeying for position within the newly amalgamated Department of Defence and with little experience of joint planning and operations within the ADF, there were virtually no uniquely Australian concepts to act as alternative benchmarks.

Nor was the situation improved by assessments of the strategic environment which continued to be overwhelmed by the prospect of global nuclear confrontation and by apparent Soviet penetration of the region with the basing of its maritime forces at Cam Ranh Bay. To many in the services, these conflict scenarios appeared much more probable and important than the slight nature of the contingencies that could arise within Australia's immediate neighbourhood. There was a belief that regional conflicts were only likely to arise as a flow-on from a major confrontation involving the superpowers.¹¹ Hence the services clung firmly to the principle of maintaining capabilities appropriate to the conduct of higher level operations. They were also wary that even a limited regional conflict could escalate quite quickly should a neighbouring country be able to gain support from a major external power.¹² The protection of sea lines of communication at a distance from Australia and the ability to interdict an adversary's own resupply lines remained high on the agenda.

Increasingly, however, these views were out of step with the government's policy emphasis on the direct defence of Australia and with the analysis conducted by civilian policy officers within the Department of Defence. The latter, having assessed the considerable natural protection afforded by Australia's strategic geography and the

11 The Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Threats to Australia's Security - Their Nature and Probability* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981), p. 45, noted that: 'As with the case of a major invasion it is difficult to envisage intermediate level threats arising against Australia short of a situation where the existing world order was seriously disrupted'.

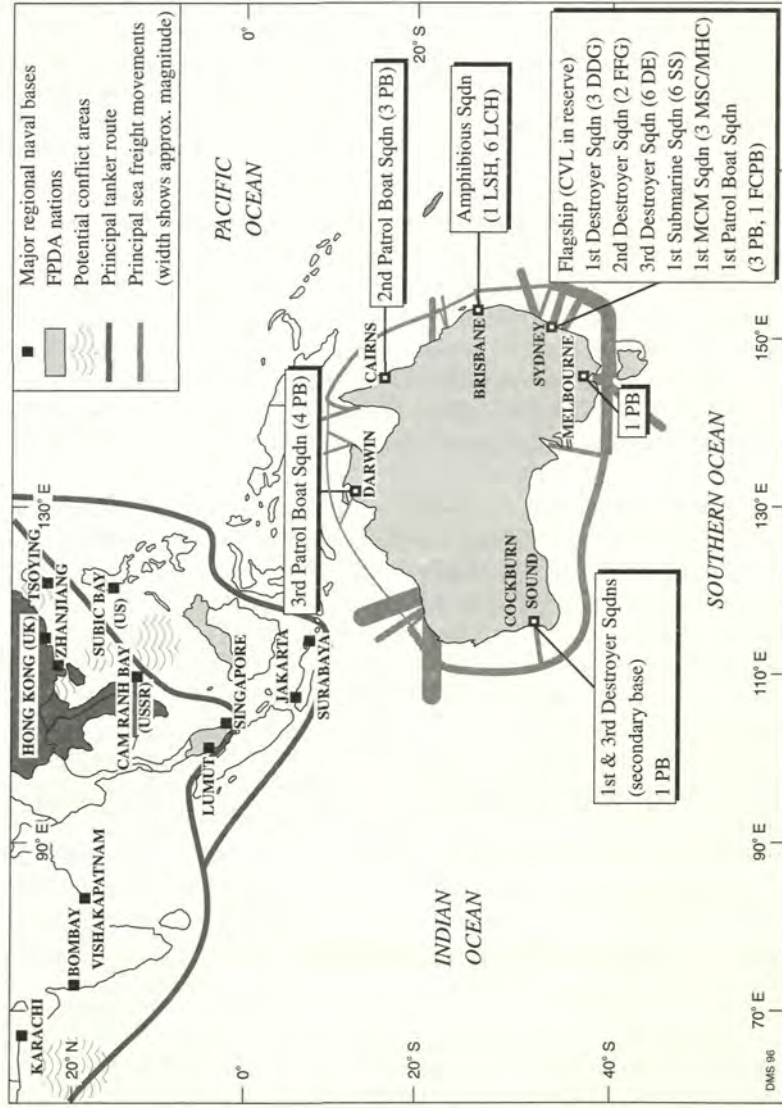
12 *ibid.*

limited assets within regional inventories, concluded that the priority should be given to those lower levels of threat that could arise within shorter time frames. They considered that there should be sufficient warning for Australia to expand its military capabilities should a more substantial threat emerge.

The military remained unconvinced. Not only did they distrust the ability of governments to recognise warning indicators and to react to them in a timely manner. They were also firmly of the view that capabilities developed for higher levels of conflict were appropriate for responding to lower level contingencies, but that the reverse was not the case. Without strong ministerial direction and with few major capability decisions to be made, the competing views about the likely level and location of hostilities in which the ADF might be involved saw defence planning stagnate.

The extent of this dilemma was to be well illustrated in the late 1970s by the protracted debate over whether or not to replace the aircraft carrier, HMAS *Melbourne*. The carrier force had been purchased shortly after the Second World War as a key element in Australia's contribution to maritime defence of Commonwealth interests in the Pacific and Indian oceans, including the protection of sea lines of communication and ASW operations.¹³ The carrier provided the ADF with the capacity to project independent maritime force, with its own organic air cover, within the region and to contribute to alliance operations in more distant theatres and in higher levels of conflict. Without the carrier, RAN operations would be much more closely tied to land-based air cover and could only be expected to operate independently in lower levels of conflict. On the other hand, replacement implied a very substantial commitment of resources to a single platform and a decision had to be made as to

13 J. Goldrick, 'Carriers for the Commonwealth' in T. Frame, J. Goldrick and P. Jones (eds), *Reflections on the Royal Australian Navy* (Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1991), pp. 220-44.



Map 7.1: 1980-81 - RAN combatants and dispositions

whether this was justified, in constrained financial circumstances, in the light of the other capabilities that would need to be foregone.

In the event, the decision proved to be a painful process and, once again, any prospect of developing a maritime strategy was effectively postponed. The government was reticent about taking that major step; the navy unwilling to relinquish such a combat capability; while the British offer of the HMS *Invincible* for a price tag of \$475 million kept it tantalisingly within the government's reach, even though at least two carriers were considered desirable for independent operations in the defence of Australia.¹⁴ It would be misleading to suggest that considered strategic judgment was the major factor in the final decision. Cost, politics and the Falklands War held at least equal weight. The loss of the capability did, however, open the door for planners to have to rethink the roles and structure of Australia's naval and wider maritime forces.

If the old strategic construct had run aground, the decision still fell well short of being a ringing endorsement of the emerging concepts for the defence of Australia. Civilian and military planners continued to clash over the relative priority to be given to lower level conflict and the requirements of the expansion base, while interoperability with allies continued to shape major force structure proposals. It was to take the commitment and enthusiasm of Kim Beazley as the new Minister for Defence to break the deadlock. Frustrated with the lack of agreement within his department, Beazley appointed defence academic and former intelligence analyst Paul Dibb to conduct an independent review of Australia's needs.

Dibb's *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* was, above all, a skilfully crafted compromise. Dibb brought together the key elements

14 The various factors in the aircraft carrier debate are set out in the Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *An Aircraft Carrier for the Australian Defence Force* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1982). See also Air Marshal D. Evans, *A Fatal Rivalry: Australia's Defence at Risk* (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1990), pp. 101-11.

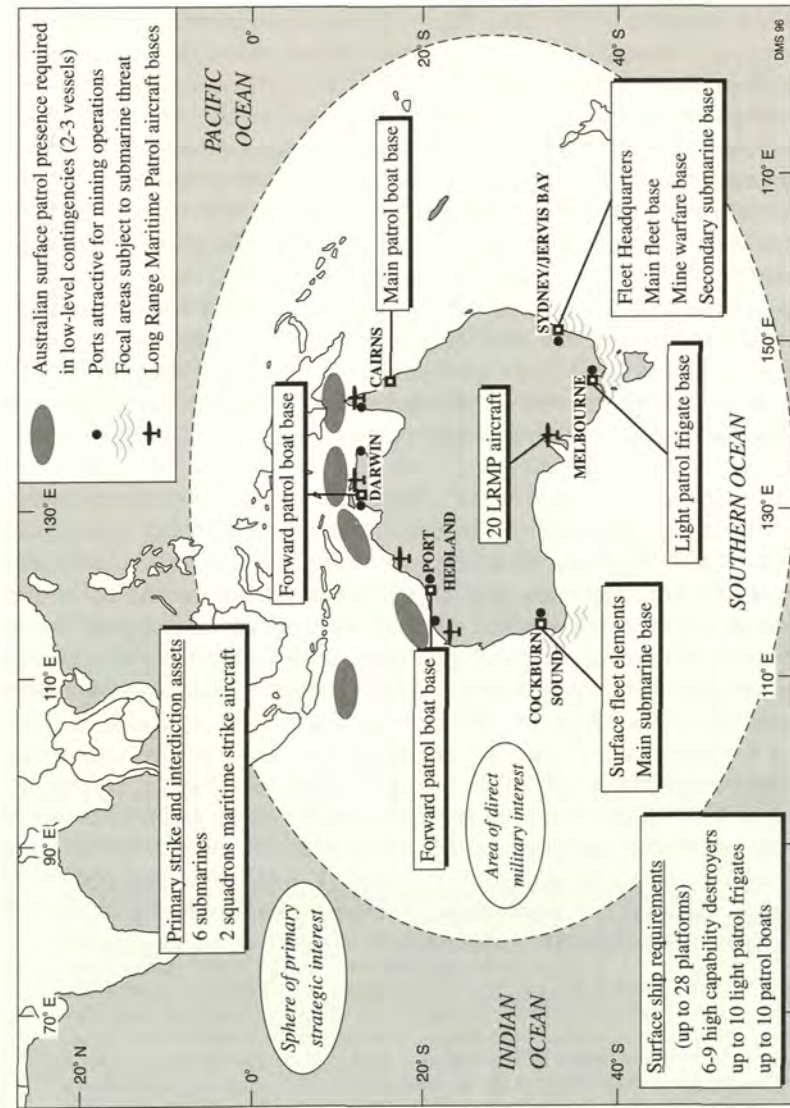
about planning for the defence of Australia that had been emerging over the previous decade and forged a consensus which balanced military and civilian concerns. He achieved this by proposing several key principles as the basis for future force structure planning. The first was that Australia should plan to be able to respond to hostilities up to the level of available regional capabilities. This was a level that could be measured objectively and went a long way to satisfying military concerns that they might be caught out by surprise developments. Dobb then combined this principle with the strengths and weaknesses of Australia's geostrategic circumstances to establish three levels of conflict—low-level, escalated low-level and more substantial conflict—as a basis for planning.¹⁵ As Australia could face escalated low-level conflict in the shorter term, irrespective of motive, intent or rationality, Dobb argued, the ADF should be able to handle this from within the force-in-being.¹⁶

Most importantly from a maritime viewpoint, Dobb proposed a strategy of 'denial' or layered defence which focused on denying an adversary freedom to operate effectively in the sea and air approaches to Australia's north. This strategy was to operate within the area of direct military interest. Options to conduct operations further afield, Dobb insisted, were available from within the forces being developed for the defence of Australia and those tasks should not be force structure determinants.¹⁷ While these proposals provided far less justification for alliance operations—the emphasis now being on interoperability within the ADF—the importance which Dobb attached to advanced technologies to help overcome Australia's vulnerabilities of limited manpower and large geographic size and his setting out of a blueprint for future force structure development within the ADF were well received.

15 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, pp. 52–5.

16 P. Dobb, *The Conceptual Basis for Australia's Defence Planning and Force Structure Development*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 88 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1992), pp. 9–15.

17 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 4.



Map 7.2: 1986 - Requirements for maritime defence within Australia's area of direct military interest (Dobb Report)

To a large extent, Dibb's recommendations were accepted by government in the 1987 White Paper. In response to concerns that the strategy of 'denial' may be too defensive, this was recast as 'defence-in-depth', with greater emphasis being given to the potential for offensive strike operations employing either the F-111 or submarine force.¹⁸ Otherwise, the primary force structure recommendations remained very much intact. In the maritime sphere, the government had already committed itself to the construction in Australia of six new submarines, claimed to be the most advanced, conventionally powered submarines in the world. These were to be complemented by three tiers of surface combatants with the introduction of a new class of light patrol frigates. Together with the FFGs and DDGs (and their replacements) and smaller patrol craft, these were to take the overall number of RAN surface combatants to 28 by the early twenty-first century.

In addition, upgrading of Australia's mine countermeasures capability was given a high priority and a second underway replenishment ship was to assist in supporting the two-ocean navy concept. Under that concept, the RAN's submarine force and a significant number of surface vessels were to be home ported in Western Australia, enhancing their deployment times to, and sustainability of operations in, the north and northwestern approaches to Australia.¹⁹

The Missing Link

The 1987 White Paper was widely welcomed as a comprehensive defence planning package. And compared to the confusion and acrimony that had preceded it, it certainly was. With the benefit of hindsight, however, it is possible to see that, as a policy construct, it has several fundamental weaknesses.

18 *The Defence of Australia 1987*, pp. 31–2.

19 K.C. Beazley, 'Two Ocean Navy' in *Selected Speeches 1985–1989*, pp. 207–14.

The first is that its interpretation of the significance of Australia's geography is quite narrow. While the area of direct military interest it describes is large, the maritime environment is always expressed as the 'approaches to Australia', hence tying its importance back to the nature of the shore it laps. Furthermore, the approaches are broken down into a number of manageable slices or focal areas spread around the continent. These are primarily in the vicinity of key ports or frequent concentrations of shipping. Each is undoubtedly important, but it gives the maritime environment a fixed quality much more typical of the judgements one might make in support of land operations. There is no hint of Bob O'Neill's advice that 'strategic planning must acknowledge the need for selectivity of response'.²⁰

The second limitation is in how the White Paper handles credible contingencies. These are undoubtedly a useful planning tool in circumstances where there is no clearly discernible threat. They certainly give a feel for the type and level of forces that could potentially be projected against Australia. The problem here is that the White Paper is content to describe the contingencies in a quite superficial way. While some illustrative examples of the type of possible hostilities were given by Dibb,²¹ there is no attempt to look in any depth at the various purposes for which those levels of force could be used. The emphasis is very much on establishing the levels of hostilities that might be expected and the anticipated warning for these to occur should circumstances change.²² The analysis is not taken any further to bring out the differences between maritime

20 R. O'Neill, 'The Development of Operational Doctrine for the Australian Defence Force' in R. O'Neill (ed.), *The Defence of Australia - Fundamental New Aspects* (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1977), p. 131.

21 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, pp. 53–4.

22 The subsequent shift in the *Strategic Review 1993* (p. 43) and the 1994 White Paper, *Defending Australia* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994), to the concept of 'short warning conflict' again reflected a concern with defining the boundaries of contingencies credible in the shorter term as the level of regional capabilities increased. The descriptions of short warning conflict are, however, even less explicit than in the 1987 White Paper.

operations and land operations and between widespread hostilities and those in specific areas in terms of either impact or probability.

Hence, those key concepts of geography and levels of conflict are being used simply to establish boundaries to planning. There was no further discrimination in the analysis of those concepts that would assist more detailed planning and prioritisation. That is not to say that the concepts are not useful. They do bring out some key lessons about the defence of Australia. They help to overcome the problem of doctrine geared only to larger conventional operations and a force structure distorted by the demands of alliance interoperability in some distant location. Neither concept, however, is sufficiently well developed to give any real guidance as to just how the ADF might conduct operations in these circumstances. That task is left to the so-called strategy of 'defence-in-depth'.

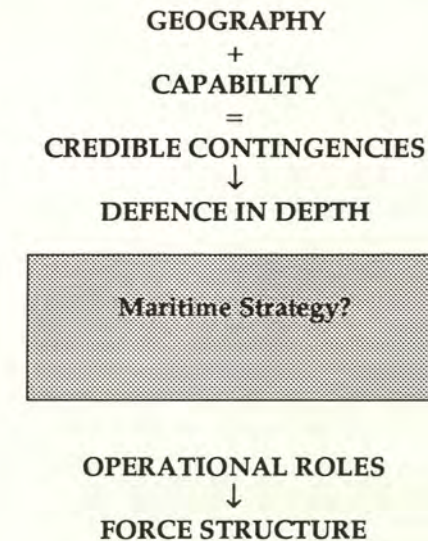
'Defence-in-depth' is based on the 'layered defence strategy' suggested by Dibb, albeit with the option to conduct more offensive strike operations if necessary. It provides a series of defensive layers which build on each other progressively as an enemy approaches Australia. These layers are:

- high-quality and comprehensive intelligence and surveillance;
- air and naval assets to destroy enemy forces in the sea and air approaches;
- closer to shore, defensive capabilities to prevent hostile operations in focal areas or shipping lanes or on Australian territory; and
- if a landing is made, ground forces to deny the enemy vital population centres and military infrastructure.

While defence-in-depth thus sounds very elegant and comprehensive, there are several things that need to be recognised. First, it is not an operational strategy, except in the most general sense. It grew out of a very confused debate on concepts like core force and forward defence and it ends up falling rather uncomfortably

in a no man's land between political and operational strategy.²³ Second, to the extent that it does inform operations, defence-in-depth tends to reinforce the idea that Australia must be able to cover the full breadth of its maritime approaches in a contingency (especially in the north) and that ADF capabilities could be expected to deploy and operate in a fairly structured way across that area of operations.

Figure 7.1: Policy development for defence self-reliance: elements in the planning continuum



These quite bland descriptions of credible contingencies and defence-in-depth would not, of course, be a concern provided official policy then went on to articulate just how the ADF could exploit Australia's strategic geography to its advantage. But if one looks for

23 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 49.

that guidance in either the Dibb Review or the 1987 White Paper, that is a search in vain. Both documents simply jump that essential element in the planning process and then proceed to define a capability blueprint for the ADF. The inevitable result is a force structure that is determined primarily by the breadth of Australia's geography and the number of focal areas that exist. (This 'leap of faith' in the current defence policy continuum in Australia is illustrated in Figure 7.1.)

The impact of those factors can be seen clearly in some of the key policy prescriptions that flow from this approach. These include:

- the two-ocean navy policy with additional forward bases at Darwin, Cairns and Port Hedland;
- the ring of northern airfields with new runways at Curtin in Western Australia and on Cape York;
- the emphasis on the broad area surveillance provide by over-the-horizon radar (OTHR), with lesser priority being given to airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft;
- a fleet of naval surface combatants in which the trade-offs between numbers and the level of capability are primarily determined by how many focal areas there are within the area of direct military interest and whose capabilities are tied to land-based air cover; and
- a high priority to mine countermeasures around major ports and shipping routes, including in southern waters.

The primary option for taking the initiative is seen to rest with Australia's F-111 and submarine-based strategic strike capabilities.²⁴

That is undoubtedly one way of planning for the defence of Australia. But, in essence, it is a quite static and reactive approach, heavily reliant on numbers and keeping the ADF spread fairly thin over a wide area of operations. Yet attrition through either combat

24 *The Defence of Australia 1987*, pp. 41-2.

losses or prolongation of large commitments is an Achilles' heel in Australia's defence. Rather than exploiting Australia's geostrategic circumstances to the ADF's advantage, it is an approach which seems to render Australia very much a prisoner of that geography.

If, however, one takes the time to look more carefully at the nature of both Australia's strategic geography and credible contingencies, there are some interesting alternative and more dynamic approaches that exist. Without attempting to be prescriptive, the types of options that are available are well illustrated by raising several key questions:

- How credible really is it in lower levels of conflict that Australia would face a concurrent threat to the majority of maritime focal areas identified by Dibb?
- What are the factors that would give rise to a campaign of carefully orchestrated low-level harassments across the breadth of northern Australia?
- Are they not very different in objective and anticipated warning to those that might spring up spontaneously in response to a dispute in a particular area?
- Is it not possible that an adversary might exploit a moving maritime theatre to put pressure on Australia with no specific linkage to the mainland or the priority focal areas to which Australian forces are tied?
- Might not many contingency situations, whether spontaneous or planned, be played out in the maritime environment alone? Indeed, is it not in Australia's interest that this occur?
- Given the political nature of credible contingencies, is there not scope for taking the operational initiative by setting thresholds which the adversary crosses at his own risk? Admiral Hills' concept of 'HMS Initial Casualty' could have some interesting resonances in the Australian context.²⁵

25 Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, *Maritime Strategy for Medium Powers* (Croom Helm, London, 1986), p. 128.

If these types of ideas were injected into the planning process, it would be possible to come up with a different capability mix to that currently within the force development programme. For example:

- a smaller number of better equipped surface combatants may be more effective than the absolute numbers dictated by geography alone;
- rather than just as a complement to OTHR, AEW&C aircraft may be seen as the key to managing the thresholds of 'shadow boxing' between maritime forces; and
- command and control and area air defence capabilities for selected naval units may have a different priority. In practice, the changes may not imply a dramatic change in the overall appearance of the force structure, although this would be possible depending on the strategy adopted, but they could substantially alter the number of platforms required, the priority for their acquisition and the systems and sensors to be fitted.

Making sure that an operational strategy is introduced into the planning process before capabilities are determined would have several important benefits for defence:

- Most importantly, it would provide a clear linkage between overall defence strategy and capability. It would do this by describing in the broad sense the 'how' as well as the 'where' and 'in what circumstances' the ADF would conduct operations, while stopping short of specific contingency planning.
- The approach would give greater flexibility in managing constrained resources. This is because planning would not be locked into a fixed geographic construct and it would be possible to determine priorities within that overall framework. There would even be scope for adjusting strategy to achieve the best operational output for the available resources.

- By introducing the more generic characteristics of maritime operations it would help to ensure that the environment would be looked at in all its possible dimensions, not just in the context of defending the approaches. These aspects should not, of course, be allowed to overwhelm the boundaries set by geography and credible contingencies.
- There would be in place principles which allowed alternative capability options and their impacts—for example, area air defence systems for surface combatants as against additional fighter aircraft—to be considered without frequent reviews of the overall force structure. This is because the relationships between the various maritime force elements would be better defined.
- It would be possible to get much finer grained definition of capability in terms of both joint force balances and the characteristics of the specific sensors and weapons systems needed by particular platforms. This is important not only to the refinement of procurement specifications (noting that weapons and sensor systems constitute a substantial proportion of the investment in many cases), but also to inform decisions on fitting 'for' but not 'with' some combat systems.

Seeking Better Guidance

Now it can be argued that these criticisms of the planning 'gap' in the Dibb Review and the 1987 White Paper are rather unfair. After all, those documents made a significant step forward in establishing agreed boundaries for planning. To go further at that time may have been more than the defence system was able to absorb. Furthermore, joint planning and operations were then still at an early stage. The environmental commands had then just been created and Headquarters Australian Defence Force was quite small and operationally focused. There was no sizeable body of joint planning expertise. Both the Dibb Review and the White Paper acknowledged

the need for early progress in the area of joint operational doctrine.²⁶ Indeed, in hindsight, the impetus they gave in that area may eventually be seen as their most significant contribution to the defence of Australia.

The critical question here is whether or not defence planners recognised that there was a gap in the planning chain that needed to be filled. The Dibb Review hints at some unease but its solution was simply to suggest that more comprehensive force structure reviews be conducted on a more regular basis, possibly in association with the triennial reviews of strategic policy.²⁷ Developments that have taken place since 1987 suggest, however, that while some were aware of the difficulty, the defence planning system as a whole was simply not capable of tackling in any systematic way the integration of the 'top down' guidance provided by strategic policy with the need for more specific guidance to inform operational and capability planning.

Considerable efforts have gone into attempts to develop a series of operational concept documents. This has proved a painstaking process. There has been a marked lack of clarity as to just where these concepts fitted into the defence planning process. Initially, there was even much discussion as to whether only maritime and land concepts were needed or a separate air operations concept as well. There were also competing pressures between the need, on the one hand, to re-interpret strategic guidance in order to provide sufficient leads to inform detailed operational planning and, on the other, the wish to produce very precise judgments on numbers and capability specifications.

A significant step forward did come in the new strategic review, *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, prepared in 1989.

26 Without this, Dibb noted (*Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 28), 'Too many planning documents represent the lowest common denominator and contain ambiguities and inconsistencies to accommodate entrenched institutional interests'.

27 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 30.

Not only did it draw the important distinction between low-level and escalated low-level conflict as involving respectively the indirect or direct use of force against Australia²⁸ but, for the first time, it established a set of genuine joint force operational roles for the ADF. These included, in addition to intelligence collection, surveillance in maritime areas of interest, maritime patrol and response, air defence in maritime areas and the northern approaches to Australia, and the protection of shipping, offshore territories and resources.²⁹ This was a major development because, until that time, the discussion of capabilities had been primarily in terms of fairly narrowly defined, essentially single-service tasks. These joint force roles were then adopted as the basis for the renamed strategic concept papers. What is puzzling is that while these strategic concept papers have subsequently sought to develop a set of likely defence force tasks that fall under the particular role, it is very clearly stated that they do not specify how the tasks are to be performed.

The real litmus test was to come, however, in the 1991 *Force Structure Review*.³⁰ Pressure on resources at that time, due to major purchases of the new submarines and the ANZAC frigates and no real increase in the defence budget for several years, necessitated a review of the capital equipment programme to ensure that the 1987 White Paper's objectives were still achievable.³¹ While the *Force Structure Review* introduced significant efficiency measures, what is interesting is the extent to which its recommendations continued to be driven by the overarching geographic imperative. There was strong emphasis on the move to the north and the use of the wider national infrastructure to support operations, but there was simply no

28 Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s* (endorsed by Government 27 November 1989) (Department of Defence Publications 113/92, Canberra, 1992), pp. 22-3.

29 *ibid.*, pp. 27-39.

30 Department of Defence, *Force Structure Review*, Report to the Minister for Defence, May 1991 (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1990).

31 'Defence into the Twenty First Century', Ministerial Statement by the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Robert Ray, *Hansard* (Senate), 30 May 1991 (Australian Parliament, Canberra, 1991), pp. 3956-7.

discussion of operational concepts or the operational impact of particular decisions.

This is well illustrated when one looks at the decision apparently to downgrade the replacements for the former Tier I surface combatants to be ANZAC frigate (Tier II) derivatives. While this clearly would be of value in ensuring continuity of production for the local shipbuilding industry and that the force structure programme remained achievable, there was simply no evidence that its potential impact on maritime operations had been taken into account.³² Certainly, during project development, the ANZAC frigate had been somewhat upgraded from the light patrol frigate originally envisaged by Dibb, but that is a rather different judgement to stepping back from the more formidable capabilities that might have been offered by a Tier I DDG/FFG replacement.³³

What defence planners have failed to do is to step back from the various maritime roles set out in *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s* and to draw these together into a comprehensive way of doing business in that environment; that is, to develop a maritime strategy tailored to Australia's circumstances. This concept of aggregating the roles to identify both their nature and the relationship between them was, in fact, an approach which the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre used in undertaking a major study for the Australian Army in 1991.³⁴ The similarities between the conclusion reached in that report and current moves to restructure the army in the context of the Army in the Twenty First Century (Army 21) study,

32 *Force Structure Review*, pp. 15–16.

33 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 72, stated that of the surface fleet, '... a minimum of six and a maximum of nine should be higher capability destroyers. These ships would provide a skill base for further development for more substantial conflict, should this be required in the areas of ASW, air defence, and the associated command and control. In low-level conflict, they would provide insurance against local escalation in the offshore focal areas listed earlier'.

34 S. Woodman and D. Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia' in D. Horner (ed.), *Reshaping the Australian Army*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 77 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1991), pp. 5–139.

which reflects a quite different concept of land force operations, are marked.

Having such a strategy is fundamental to cohesive and directed force structure planning. Not only are planners able to maximise the synergy and integration of capabilities, but they are far better placed to judge the impact of strategic changes on the effectiveness of their operational outputs. In addition, they have a new element of flexibility in both managing resource constraints and identifying options for contributing in other strategic environments. Where a nation is seeking to balance the demands of direct defence with potential commitments further afield, understanding and flexibility in the area of operational strategy will frequently be the key to ensuring that those different tasks are complementary, rather than competitive, in force structure terms.

Those qualities are particularly important in the 1990s when planning coherence is under siege from a whole raft of factors apart from strategic uncertainty and overall resource constraints. These factors include:

- tantalising options presented by the firesale of US military equipment, with cheaper costs being traded off against earlier acquisition and a relaxation of specifications;
- the pressure for maintaining the national shipbuilding industry which, while revitalised by the ANZAC frigate and submarine projects, remains vulnerable due to limited national demand and strong competition in potential export markets;
- the growing demands of regional security cooperation ranging from enhanced training and exercises through to proposals for collaborative development of an offshore patrol vessel (OPV) with Malaysia—with the potential to impact on both the capability of future RAN vessels and the priority for their acquisition; and
- the rapidly changing options in defence technologies and weapons systems, extending from the more sophisticated alternatives offered by the so-called revolution in military affairs

on the one hand to the wider use of advanced civil systems on the other.

Without a properly developed maritime strategy, how well placed will Australia really be to make decisions on such major issues as submarines 7 and 8 and the possible acquisition of Tomahawk or a similarly advanced land-attack missile system to go with them? What impact might that have on the structure of Australia's maritime defences and the use of other ADF assets and what other capabilities would need to be traded off in return? It would undoubtedly be easy to run out a list of particular tasks to which the submarines could contribute. But given the pressure that will come on the Australian defence budget by around 2010, when most of the ADF's major combat systems will be ready for either replacement or upgrading, a major decision in isolation now could really threaten the coherence of Australia's maritime operations.

Identifying the Hurdles

In several respects, the problems which Australia's defence planners have faced in developing an effective maritime strategy are understandable. Prior to 1987 there was insufficient consensus on key planning concepts to move far in that direction. Since that time the emphasis has been squarely on implementing the main force structure proposals set out in the White Paper and, more recently, on maintaining the momentum in the face of constrained resources. There has been little time and no incentive to revisit its basic policy prescriptions. No one has been keen to risk unravelling the consensus hammered out at that time. They have been content to muddle through the current break in the policy planning chain by accepting that 'professional military judgment and force structure analysis are still required to guide what, in the final outcome, will be policy decisions at the highest levels'.³⁵

35 P. Dibb, *Planning a Defence Force Without a Threat* (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1996), p.21.

The second obstacle is that the development of such a strategy falls on the boundary line between, in very broad terms, civil and military and policy and operational responsibilities. Those developing 'top down' strategic guidance are wary not to step too far into the realm of military and operational expertise, while being defensive of their own area of expertise. The military are similarly reluctant to open up their cherished independence in the area of operations to wider debate. Their objective is, as far as possible, to give the commander in the field the greatest degree of flexibility at the operational and tactical levels. Their natural inclination is to resist any attempts to predetermine his options. Each has thus been relatively comfortable with a planning framework that focused primarily on establishing the broad boundaries for planning but left each considerable independence within them.

What is increasingly clear, however, is that the current defence policy construct is not sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to the complex range of challenges that planners will face in the coming decade. They will need to establish a new balance between defence of Australia commitments and wider regional and collective security tasks. With each major equipment decision, the choice between quality and quantity will become more critical and more difficult as the costs of advanced technologies rise. The use of full military specifications will be traded off against leading-edge civilian technologies. The resource benefits to be gained from greater reliance on the wider national infrastructure will need to be weighed against the operational flexibility to be gained from maintaining deployable combat support capabilities. Constrained resources and the more complex strategic agenda will make it much more difficult to judge the appropriate break-up of expenditure between force structure development, operations and manpower.

Where the solutions to all these issues converge is on the question of just how the ADF intends to conduct its operations, and no more so than in the maritime environment. Unfortunately, it is the subject which defence planners appear least willing and least able to

address. Much of the current debate has again returned to focusing on the boundaries of the present policy. To what extent should broader regional and alliance commitments justify 'add ons' to the current force structure? How far will regional capability increases push the upper level of short warning conflict? What is missing is any real sense of how Australia itself can, and ought, to manage the impact of these challenges by its own actions. The problem is that it is not really in a position to do this without an effective operational strategy, but few seem apprised of the break in the policy development continuum which has been so neatly sidestepped since 1987. If Australia's defence planners are to provide effectively for the nation's security in the early twenty-first century, the omission of a maritime strategy from its planning base must be corrected and it must be done soon.

CHAPTER 8

IN SEARCH OF A MARITIME STRATEGY: THE MARITIME COMMANDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Rear Admiral C.J. Oxenbould, AO, RAN

The starting point for this volume was a seminar on Australia's search for an effective maritime strategy during the twentieth century. I would like to begin this final chapter by noting the usefulness and necessity for seminars of this type. The themes highlighted by the previous contributors are certainly not only of historical interest. In fact issues such as the maritime nature of Australia's unique geography, the shortage of forces for the defence task, and hence the importance of alliances and the need for close air/sea/land cooperation, still represent many of the contemporary problems with which current defence planners are struggling.

A background understanding of Australia's earlier security thinking is thus very relevant to the work now underway. The question of surface combatant numbers, for example, is very close to the mark and though as Maritime Commander I might like to darken the horizon with *Arleigh Burke* destroyers, the reality of economic and political constraints on defence policy can never be ignored. Moreover, as the range of weapon systems and sensors increase, so a commander must become more reliant on information and support from elements outside his direct control. In a small defence force duplication of capabilities is simply not affordable and so there must also be clear arrangements for delivery of this support across command and environmental boundaries. With this in mind and with the benefit of the historic and joint perspective already brought out, it is of value to briefly examine some of the work we are currently doing in planning for the self-reliant defence of Australia.

Background

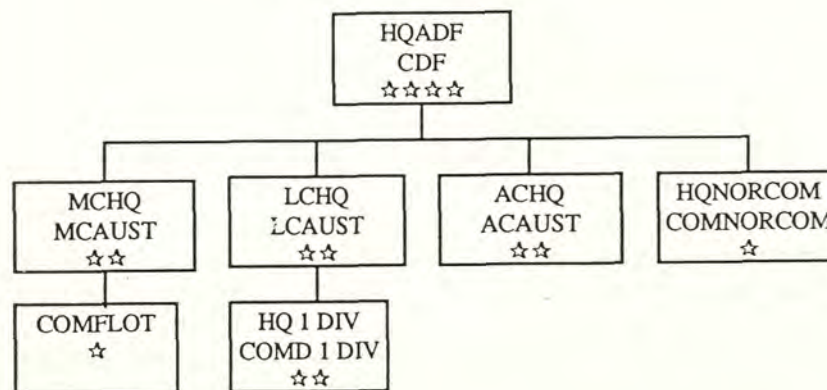
In its short history the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has never commanded or even operated at the operational level during war. The ADF has successfully functioned at the strategic level and fulfilled its role by advising government and coordinating activities with Australia's allies. It has also provided forces at the tactical level, and even though they have given Australians much to be proud of—indeed our forces have been renowned for their tactical excellence—arguably they have never been significant in influencing the outcome of a war or campaign. The benefits to the nation have thus come from the demonstration of political and military commitment, rather than the specific impact of a contingent.

However, it is our deficiencies at the operational level that have become increasingly apparent over the last ten years, particularly as the government and the ADF have pursued a policy of defence self-reliance. The failings in our planning for the conduct of operations have been confirmed by the *Kangaroo* series of exercises, which served to highlight the necessity for unity of command at the operational level and clearly demonstrate that our earlier ad hoc arrangements for establishing headquarters and command systems simply did not work. In response the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) is putting in place new ADF command arrangements and I have been appointed as the interim Commander Australian Theatre (COMAST).

The new arrangements are far-reaching and while continuing to acknowledge the enduring features of Australia's situation, including its geography, limited population base and finite resources, they will significantly effect all three levels of warfare. Their first purpose is to facilitate the joint command of operations in this age of computer networks or, in other words, to use the technology and command support systems that are now available. This recognises that as more and more information can be accessed by commanders at all levels, the ability to absorb that information and make decisions faster than an opponent will be the key to strategic and tactical success. Second, the new arrangements aim to place responsibility for operations and planning at the most appropriate level with a clear chain of command, thereby establishing stable command relationships

and removing ambiguity in the allocation of multi-role assets. Finally, the changes aim to fill the void which exists in our present structure at the operational level. In this context, Headquarters Australian Theatre (HQAST) and COMAST are the centrepieces of the new arrangements.

Figure 8.1: Current ADF command and control arrangements



Note: HQNORCOM structured for surveillance ops

Current Command and Control Organisation

The ADF is currently organised for operations as shown in Figure 8.1, with each of the environmental commanders (Maritime, Land and Air) as a designated joint commander. For the conduct of operations the environmental commanders are responsible to CDF, however they remain responsible to their respective service chiefs for operational standards and for maintaining the preparedness requirements of all operational forces assigned to them under full command. Moreover, the environmental headquarters are predominantly single-service, with only a few liaison officers. They therefore depend upon mutual support in the form of 'fly-away'

teams to assist with planning and the conduct of operations. In addition to the environmental headquarters though, Headquarters Northern Command (HQNORCOM) has been established in Darwin with a broad area of responsibility in northern and western Australia. HQNORCOM's role is orientated to surveillance, liaison with civilian authorities and planning for operations.

The Way Ahead

In December 1995, CDF issued a paper and advised the Minister for Defence of the new command arrangements he intended to implement in the ADF. Key aspects of the paper were:

- the incorporation of the service offices as components in HQADF, including retitling the service chiefs¹ and allowing them to become more involved in operations as principal advisers to CDF;
- the establishment of a collocated theatre-level headquarters—HQAST, and the intention to devolve responsibilities to it;
- the establishment of a new two-star position—COMAST;
- the further development of HQNORCOM to conduct defensive operations across the north of Australia, including air and maritime operations;
- the raising of two Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ) based on Headquarters 1st Division (HQ 1 DIV) and Commodore Flotillas (COMFLOT);
- the relocation of Headquarters Special Forces (HQSF) and Headquarters Joint Exercise Planning Staff (HQJEPS) to HQAST; and
- the placing of the ADF Warfare Centre (ADFWC) under the operational command of COMAST.

These changes are being introduced over the next few years and can be broadly grouped into three phases.

Phase One

Phase One includes preparations for the appointment of a permanent COMAST, to be capable of coordinating military tasks in the Australian Theatre by 31 January 1997 plus directed development

1 Chief of Navy, Chief of Army and Chief of Air Force.

work. At the time of writing a transitional HQAST has been established in an annex at Maritime Headquarters (MHQ) at Potts Point in Sydney with a core staff of about twelve personnel. I was appointed as the interim COMAST on 5 March 1996 and have already been assigned command of the Australian Theatre Joint Intelligence Centre (ASTJIC), 1JMOVGP and ADFWC.

Specific tasks assigned to the transitional staff have included recommending a functional structure for the new organisation and coordinating facilities works in the transitional headquarters. However, the major task has been to develop a campaign plan for the defence of Australia based on the planning assumptions provided by our existing strategic assessments. This last task has been very demanding, with most ambitious time frames. I would stress that it has not yet been endorsed by government, but it does provide a firm link with the central subject of this volume.

I would also reiterate that the immutables wrestled with by the previous contributors are the same ones now facing HQAST in developing plans for the defence of Australia. From all our work a recurring theme is the importance of the maritime aspect of any defence strategy for the nation and its vital interests. Furthermore, the importance of joint cooperation between all three services continues to emerge as a fundamental that cannot be ignored in achieving our ambitious task. This cooperation includes the combining and rationalisation of some vital services at the operational level, such as intelligence, into a joint agency—the ASTJIC. I believe we are making big strides in this area and are consequently producing a more effective and robust campaign plan. The task is ongoing and exciting, with all those involved finding it most rewarding.

Phase Two

Phase Two will extend from 1997–2000 and will involve the establishment of a permanent commander and staff of about 42, by 31 January 1997, in the transitional headquarters at the MHQ Annex. Some tasks currently performed at the strategic level will also be devolved to the HQAST. Such tasks are likely to include the preparation of the programme of major service activities (Exercise Programme) and the detailed planning for exercises such as *Kangaroo*

or its replacement, and *Tandem Thrust*. Other devolved tasks will cover search and rescue, Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) and the maintenance of directed preparedness levels.

Additionally, from 31 January 1997 the existing environmental commanders will become component commanders, while operational command of HQNORCOM, HQSF and JEPS will be assigned to HQAST from 1 July 1997. HQNORCOM will be building up during this period and competing with HQAST for similar resources. However, HQAST will be given priority.

Phase Three

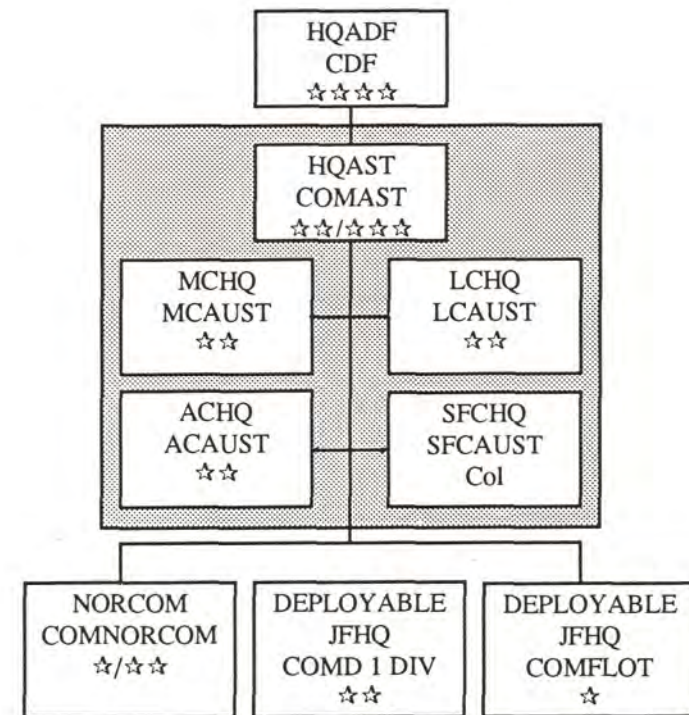
Phase Three is planned to be in place during the year 2000. It involves the move of the transitional headquarters and the three environmental headquarters into a purpose-built facility at a site which is expected to be selected shortly. The end state will be a fully operational theatre-level headquarters with all appropriate operational level tasks devolved. Specific operations will be conducted through COMNORCOM, DJFHQ or possibly the component commanders.

Conclusions

In summary, the future HQAST will incorporate the current Maritime, Land and Air operational headquarters and HQSF as components. HQNORCOM will be given a much expanded task and developed to be capable of commanding the full range of joint operations across northern Australia and the sea-air gap. Two deployable joint force headquarters will be developed, one based on HQ 1 DIV, and the second on COMFLOT. COMNORCOM and the two DJFCs will thus become the principal warfighters.

The key principles of these new arrangements revolve around the withdrawal of HQADF from the conduct of operations so that it may better focus on strategic-level matters. Component commanders will be responsible to their respective service chiefs for the training, sustaining and maintenance of operational standards. They will also be exercising full command of assigned units on behalf of their service chiefs—and in peacetime responsibilities to service chiefs should occupy most of their time. When required for operations or

Figure 8.2: Future ADF command and control



Note: HQNORCOM structured for full range of surveillance ops

designated activities, CDF will direct the service chiefs to provide forces to COMAST—the service chiefs will in turn direct the component commanders to provide the forces to COMAST. COMAST will provide unity of command at the operational level and assign forces to subordinate commanders to conduct operations or designated activities in accordance with his campaign plan.

It is obviously not practicable to predetermine every circumstance of the potential commitment of the ADF to operations. However, the end result of the new arrangements will be to provide a

command system which, though built around the clear priority given to the self-reliant defence of Australia, will still retain sufficient flexibility to be easily adapted to lesser circumstances.

PART II

DOCUMENTS ON AUSTRALIAN MARITIME STRATEGY

The extracts that follow are included to provide further background information. They are not intended to be comprehensive, but in addition to examples of Australian maritime strategic thinking, include others illustrating enemy perceptions of Australian vulnerabilities.¹ Punctuation and format has been left as in the original with minor exceptions. Where necessary, omissions of parts of sentences are indicated by an ellipsis (...) and of whole paragraphs within the extract by four asterisks (****). Editorial insertions are in square brackets. For those wishing to consult the complete text, a source, though not necessarily unique, is provided at the end of each entry.

1. Views of Sir J.C.R. Colomb, KCMG, MP, June 1901

The hope of British survival in the Pacific is not in mounted infantry and bushmen scouts—those admirable troops of proved excellence in modern war by land—it lies in means of local production and maintenance of battle power in that ocean.

In the face of such developments as are now in progress on both sides of the Pacific, our island resources in the north-east corner of one hemisphere cannot indefinitely compete on equal terms for maritime control of the other. The mere fact of having to drag across the globe almost every single thing necessary for the repair and equipment of British ships is a heavy handicap in war with a nation or nations having the necessary sustaining power, so to speak, on the spot.
(*Monthly Review*)

2. Editorial, 27 July 1901

We would go further, and say that the fostering of the idea in a colonial mind that their island continent can be protected by any other means than the navy is a positive danger, for it diverts consideration from the principles which must for ever govern the defence of our Empire. The day that Australians are called upon to resist the onslaught of some great invading force by massing troops for the defence of their coast will mark the close of our rule of the seas, and consequently the disintegration of our vast dominions.
(*United Service Gazette*)

1 Investigations of both perspectives have been very much neglected in Australian historiography. A notable exception is the recent work by Dr Peter Overlack. See, for example, 'German Commerce Warfare Planning for the Australia Station, 1900-1914', *War & Society*, Vol. 14, No. 1, May 1996.

3. Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee on defence forces and defences, 19 September 1901

Open communications for the transport of Australian products are of great importance, and can only be secured by the action of the Imperial navy, to the cost of which the Australasian Colonies have for the past thirteen years voluntarily contributed. The action of fast cruisers or armed merchant auxiliaries against Australian trade on the high seas constitutes a far greater danger than attacks upon Australian ports, as it involves much less risk to the enemy and can be made to return no less profit, while, except indirectly at mercantile strategic harbours near points of convergence of ocean routes, no protection can be afforded against it by expenditure on land defences.

The Admiralty have accepted the responsibility for protecting all British territory abroad against organized attack by sea. The distribution in time of peace of foreign navies is known, all the enemy's warships would be watched in time of war, and no expedition directed against Australia could be organized without the knowledge of the Admiralty, whose dispositions may be assumed to preclude the possibility of any such expedition reaching its destination. It is recognised, however, that while His Majesty's ships are engaged in destroying or disabling the enemy's squadrons they may not always be in a position to prevent raids by hostile cruisers on places of such importance as to justify, in the opinion of the enemy, the very considerable risks which an attack on them would involve. The strength of such raids would vary in different parts of the world according to the strength of possibly hostile navies, the proximity of their bases and the troops that are or could easily be brought there in time of war. On account of its insular character and its geographical position there is no British territory so little liable to aggression of this kind as that of Australasia, so long as British naval supremacy is maintained in Eastern waters. The nearest foreign defended ports which at present possess the qualifications of naval bases from which raiding cruisers could start are more than 4,000 miles distant from the chief centres of population in Australia. At such a distance from bases of refitting and depôts of ammunition and stores coast attacks, which involve risk of damage to the vessels and expenditure of ammunition, are obviously extremely hazardous operations. Moreover, as such attacks reveal the position of the raiding vessels to the British ships whose duty it is to bring them to action, they must necessarily be of a hasty and fugitive character.

(*Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (CPP)*, 1901, Vol. II, p. 107)

4. Report by Captain W.R. Creswell, Naval Commandant Queensland, on the best method of employing Australian seamen in the defence of commerce and ports, 7 February 1902

"For a maritime state unfurnished with a navy, the sea, so far from being a safe frontier, is rather a highway for her enemies; but with a navy, it surpasses all other frontiers in strength."

The above quotation, from the Edinburgh Review, is of close application to Australia. Our future must be that of a maritime state. It is a truism that the defence of the frontier of a state should be in the hands of its frontiersmen. In Australia our seamen are our frontiersmen.

Great and powerful as the British Fleet is, it will be taxed to the uttermost to cover and protect a world-wide commerce, which is the life of the nation, and at the same time carry on the heavy work of the major operations of war in Europe. The fleets of powers that have little or no commerce to defend, and manned for purely aggressive purposes, are rapidly increasing. Absolute and complete dependence upon the British Navy, situated as we are at the extremity of the Empire, will add to that strain.

Failures, defeats, inability to afford us complete, perhaps any, protection—it is only reasonably prudent to take into account—our condition in such a contingency would be absolute helplessness. However powerful and perfect our military organization, and well armed and garrisoned our forts, our sea traffic must cease, or be at the mercy of the merest privateer.

The spectacle of some 5,000,000 Anglo-Australians, with an Army splendidly equipped, unable to prevent the burning of a cargo of wool in sight of Sydney Heads, is only the ordinary consequence of a policy of naval impotence.

(*CPP*, 1901, Vol. II, p. 149)

5. Minute upon the defence of Australia by Major General Hutton, the Commandant of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth, Headquarters, Melbourne, 7 April 1902

Oversea aggression could only be attempted (1) by a raid of two or more cruisers with a small striking force for the purpose of landing; (2) by a large and well equipped force conveyed in numerous transports and escorted by an enemy's fleet.

The latter attempt may, under existing conditions, be considered difficult in the extreme, more especially in view of the military spirit which animates the inhabitants of Australia. No commander would venture to land small bodies of troops on the shores of this continent, knowing well that it would mean but to court disaster and consequent loss of prestige to the nation attempting it. Any force destined for aggression would have to be of sufficient strength to conquer and hold either an important strategical position or a considerable portion of territory under the certain condition of jeopardising, if not losing completely, its communications by sea. To enable an enemy to undertake, with any hope of success, such operations on Australian territory a large expeditionary force of all arms, fully equipped, would be required. The small landing force available even from a strong fleet of cruisers would find such a task impossible.

Efforts at oversea aggression upon Australian soil will in all probability, therefore, be reduced to raids by an enemy's cruisers based on his defended ports. Such raids might be undertaken to extort an indemnity under threat of bombardment, or to destroy commerce, or to obtain coal.

It must, however, be remembered that the present prosperity of Australia, and its future commercial development, will largely depend upon its immunity from attack, and the supremacy of the Navy must be insured at all costs as the primary element of success. Australia must be prepared not only to protect the naval base of Sydney and to make secure the important strategical positions at King George's Sound and Thursday Island, so as to enable the navy to have all that it needs for free action at sea, but the great trade centres also, such as Sydney, Melbourne, &c., must further be rendered secure. It is practically impossible to undertake the local defence of the numerous bays, rivers, harbours, and estuaries which an enemy might avail himself of as a harbour of refuge or a rendezvous in time of war. This must be left to the general protection afforded by the navy. It is, however, necessary to deny access to all cities, towns, and harbours of

commercial importance, and to make it impossible for a hostile expedition to establish itself upon Australian soil. To this end careful arrangements must be made to concentrate on any threatened point as many available field troops as circumstances may render necessary. It is hoped that the contemplated extension of railway communication between South Australia and West Australia may be accomplished at an early date, as without such extension West Australia is always liable to isolation in time of war. The Commonwealth has undertaken not only to protect each State against invasion, but on the application of Executive Government of the State, to protect it from domestic violence. Complete security for life and capital must therefore be insured not only for the population now existing in Australia ... but that security must be further assured in the eyes of the commercial world beyond its shores. It follows as a matter of vital importance that the security of Australia should be placed beyond doubt, and that the security to capital in this country should be assured in the event of any warlike complications.

The principles governing defence are not, however, limited to those of a purely passive kind. History has shown that the surest and best defence is by a vigorous offence. The successful defence of an island such as Great Britain has in the past been insured by means of warlike operations forced on the enemy, and fought out on other than English soil ... The same principle in a very large measure applies to the defence of Australia.

The defence of Australia cannot, moreover, be considered apart from the defence of Australian interests. Australia depends for its commercial success and its future development firstly upon its seaborne trade and secondly upon the existence, maintenance, and extension of fixed and certain markets for its produce outside Australian waters. It therefore follows that Australian interests cannot be assured by the defence alone of Australian soil. Defence is the primary duty of every State and of every citizen, yet the defence of Australian interests outside Australian waters is at the present time solely in the hands of the Imperial Government and of the Imperial Army and Navy. It is hardly consistent with the present development of Australia as a young and vigorous nation to neglect her responsibility for defence outside Australian waters, and in the robust period of her youth thus to rely entirely upon the strong arm of the Mother Country.

It must be remembered that the rapid and continuous improvements in steam and telegraph communications have now destroyed the former isolation of Australia, and modern developments in the East have brought the States of the Commonwealth upon the arena of the Old World strife. The last six years have witnessed a momentous change in the balance of power in the East. The rise of Japan into an armed Power of the first magnitude; the acquisition of Port Arthur by Russia; the occupation of the Philippines, and of Guam (Ladrone Islands) and Tutuila (Samoa) by the United States; and of the remaining Samoan Islands and part of New Guinea by Germany; and the annexation of Madagascar as a colony by France, are facts of the gravest significance to Australian interests. The transformation of the United States into an oversea Power by her acquisition of Porto Rico [*sic*] and the Philippines, the development of Japan, the evolution of China, the opening of a Panama Canal at an early date, and the movement of Russia towards a port in the Indian Ocean with her increasing interest in Persia, all point to the Indian Ocean, the Northern Pacific, and the China Sea as the probable scene of the future struggle for commercial supremacy. Australia cannot in such an eventuality remain unconcerned. It may be assumed, therefore, that Australia will determine not only to defend her own soil, but to take steps also to defend those vast interests beyond

her shores upon the maintenance of which her present existence and her future prosperity must so largely depend.

Two factors, therefore, may be considered as governing the future organisation and administration of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth, namely:-

(a) The defence of Australian soil.

(b) The defence of Australian interests wherever they may be threatened.

(a) "*For the defence of Australian soil*" there are two essentials, namely, Garrison Troops, hereafter styled the Garrison Force, for the protection of certain pre-determined strategical centres and places of commercial importance; and Field Troops, hereinafter styled the Field Force, for those active operations which are, as has been shown, an essential element, in conjunction with the Garrison Troops, for the defence of such an extended area as Australia. It is not necessary that the troops for garrison duty as a whole should be mobile, but it is absolutely essential that the Field Troops be not only well trained, carefully organised, and well equipped, but also ready for active operations in the field at the shortest notice.

(b) "*For the defence of Australian interests wherever they may be threatened*" it will be obvious that the first essential is the sea supremacy which is guaranteed by the Royal Navy, and that the second is the possession of a Field Force capable of undertaking military operations in whatever part of the world it may be desired by Australia to employ them.

(*CPP, 1901, Vol. II, p. 53*)

6. Views of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan USN, July 1902

The question of the Eastern seas introduces naturally the consideration of what the great self-governing colonies can do, not only for their immediate security and that of their trade but for the general fabric of Imperial naval action, in the coherence of which they will find far greater assurance than in merely local effort. The prime naval considerations for them are that the English Channel Fleet should adequately protect the commerce and shores of the British Islands, and that the Mediterranean Fleet should insure uninterrupted transit for trade and for reinforcements. These effected and maintained there will be no danger to their territory, and little to their trade, except from single cruisers, which will have a precarious subsistence compared with their own, based upon large self-supporting political communities. Australasia, however, can undoubtedly supply a very important factor that will go far to fortify the whole British position in the Far East. A continent in itself, with a thriving population, and willing apparently, to contribute to the general naval welfare, let it frame its schemes and base its estimates on sound lines, both naval and Imperial; naval, by allowing due weight to battle force; Imperial, by contemplating the whole, and recognising that local safety is not always best found in local precaution. There is a military sense, in which it is true that he who loses his life shall save it.

(*National Review*)

7. Statement on Australia's strategic situation by Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, 12 June 1905

The whole history of Australia has ... been peaceful, because no war in which the mother country was engaged has involved direct risks to ourselves ... But the march of events during the last few years has revealed the striking growth of three naval powers—the United States, Germany and Japan ... Under all the developments of the modern man-of-war, Australia, which used to depend largely on its isolation for security, is now within what is termed striking distance of no less than sixteen foreign naval stations ... so far as fleets are concerned, our best protection is the squadron to which we contribute ... the Australian Squadron may have to perform its duties at a great distance from the Commonwealth ... We have a coast-line of from 7,000 to 8,000 miles, and it is unreasonable to expect that any squadron while united can protect more than a portion of this. In the event, also, of its having to face a hostile fleet, perhaps at a considerable distance from Australia, our coastal shipping must be open to attack by any cruiser or cruisers operating independent of the hostile squadron.

(*Defence Force Journal*, Vol. 61, November/December 1986, p. 26)

8. Report by Captain W.R. Creswell, Naval Director of the Commonwealth, on the defence of Australia, Melbourne, 10 October 1905

What the Commonwealth should have in the way of a Navy?

Three cruiser-destroyers, sixteen torpedo boat destroyers, and fifteen torpedo boats first and second class.

This will provide a defence not designed as a force for action against hostile fleets or squadrons, which is the province of the Imperial fleet, but as a line necessary to us within the defence line of the Imperial fleet—a purely defensive line, that will give security to our naval bases, populous centres, principal ports, and commerce.

The following are the services rendered by destroyers, and lacking to our present defence:—

- I. Intelligence; and keep in touch with an enemy, reporting his position.
- II. Compel attack by day, enabling our fixed defences to meet attack at the greatest advantage.
- III. Make impossible any landing.
- IV. Make safe to our commerce the danger areas in the vicinity of our ports, enabling vessels to enter or leave and gain the open sea.
- V. Enable sea commerce to continue running, and to a great extent prevent the interruption to the general business of the community.

(*CPP*, 1905, No. 66)

9. Orders for the German Cruiser Squadron, HM Ships on the East Asian and Australian Stations, 6 March 1906

... In most War Cases it will be necessary not to leave the opponent in undisturbed possession of naval supremacy, by attacks on his trading routes and his colonial possessions ...

It is necessary that the Cruiser Squadron as quickly as possible inflicts some severe damage on British trade, which will be felt in the motherland. The Cruiser Squadron must take advantage of the weaknesses of the strategic position of the "Eastern Fleet". These lie in its enormous dispersal ... The divided forces necessary for patrolling duties and protecting mercantile trade convergence points provide the Cruiser Squadron with some prospects of success ...

Of particular interest is the Australian wool export trade with a value of £84,727,797 in 1902 ... Of importance is the fact that 85% of the ships are of British nationality, and in wartime a speedy replacement by neutrals will not be possible.

The Australian Squadron cannot sufficiently protect a trade dispersed over so wide an area. Thus a strike by the Cruiser Squadron against British trade with Australia is suggested ... [here follows the routes from the German base at Tsingtau in China to Matupi in New Britain]

From Matupi southwards. Interdiction of the Australian trade routes. Obtaining of coaling places. Disturbance of coastal ports as far as Tasmania ... Coaling at a West Australian site. Then commerce warfare on the route Fremantle-Ceylon. Coaling at a site near Sumatra Possibility of cutting cable on Cocos Island. Disturbance of trade on the route Colombo-Aden from bases in the Indian Ocean. Finally advance to East Africa ... Australia's poor land defences permit the entering of open harbours for the taking of coal and supplies (e.g. Gladstone) ...

If it comes to battle with the Australian Squadron alone, the superiority of SMS "Fürst Bismarck" permits [an assessment that] there will be equal damage on the enemy side ...² Merely the uncertainty of the Cruiser Squadron's whereabouts will cause general unrest. The shipping companies will retain their vessels in port. Trade will block up, insurance premiums will rise, neutral ships will have to be chartered. The great wool export trade will be particularly affected by this, and an extended block up will cause considerable economic difficulties.

(German Federal Military Archive, Freiburg (GFMAF): RM5/v 6256, p. 143f)

10. Report of the Committee of Imperial Defence on the question of a general scheme of defence for Australia, May 1906

4. The enormous advantages accruing to the belligerent who succeeds in establishing sea supremacy over his opponent are now well understood, and it is to be expected that any naval Power hoping to inflict serious injury upon us will, on the outbreak of war, attempt to neutralise our naval superiority and, if possible, to wrest from us the command of the sea. This object can only be attained as the result of great battles in which the main fleets of the contending Powers are concentrated for the

2 This situation did not change until the arrival of the battlecruiser HMAS *Australia* in 1913.

decisive encounters. Arrangements for this concentration must be made in time of peace, and the normal distribution of our battle fleets must be governed by the dispositions of the foreign fleets which for the time being are regarded as their most formidable rivals. With a view to impairing our measures of concentration in war, and inducing us to weaken our main fleets, the enemy may endeavour to create a widespread feeling of insecurity and alarm throughout the Empire by utilising such classes of vessels as are unfitted for taking part in the decisive actions in raiding our sea-borne trade and threatening distant portions of the Empire. Although in themselves such raiding operations will be only of secondary importance, as the ultimate issue of the war must depend on the result of the fleet actions, it will be necessary to take a vigorous offensive against all such outlying raiding vessels in order to prevent the disturbance of trade and demoralisation which might be caused by their depredations.

5. It is the constant policy of the Admiralty to keep our squadrons on distant stations sufficiently strong to protect our trade from attack by the foreign squadrons normally stationed in those seas. It is, of course, possible that in war time an enemy might send out additional cruisers to attack our Colonial trade, but in this case our superiority in vessels of this class and our greater facilities of ports would enable us to despatch a preponderating force in pursuit. The distribution at any moment of foreign navies, and of all merchant vessels likely to be employed as armed auxiliaries, is known in time of peace. During the period of strained relations every effort will be made to keep the ships of the prospective enemy under observation. The great increase in the rapidity and certainty of transmission of intelligence consequent on the development of submarine cables and wireless telegraphy, have combined to add enormously to the difficulties of raiding operations depending for their success on tactics of evasion. When the presence of a commerce raider in the Eastern seas is reported, it will be desirable to bring her to action without delay, and if possible before she can reach our own territorial waters. This points to the necessity of concerted action not only for direct pursuit, but also with a view to intercepting her at obligatory points of passage, and off hostile or even neutral ports at which she is likely to call. It is for this reason that under the Naval Agreement of 1903 the cruisers on the Australian Station are not necessarily confined in war to the waters of that station, while it is recognised that they will not be the only force used there should the necessity arise for a larger force. The object of making the naval Commander-in-Chief on the China Station responsible for the strategical distribution of the cruisers on the China, Australian, and East Indies Stations is simply to ensure that all the ships of the enemy in these seas may be dealt with at the earliest possible moment wherever they may be found. Closely concerted offensive action by powerful sea-going ships will afford the only effective protection to Australian floating trade, whether on the high seas or in local waters.

6. Having regard to our present naval strength and dispositions, it follows from the above considerations that attacks on floating trade in distant seas will offer to an enemy but slight prospect of any but very transitory successes. Similar considerations impose even greater restrictions on the possible forms of attack on the Australian littoral. In considering this subject it is necessary to draw a clear distinction between hasty raids, dependent for success on surprise and rapidity of execution rather than on the number of troops employed, and larger operations aiming at a prolonged or permanent occupation of Australian territory. The oversea conveyance from a distant base of operations of a military expedition strong enough for the latter purpose, and its continued supply with munitions of war when landed, would only be possible to a Power which was mistress of

the seas and was able to destroy or mask all the hostile ships that might at any time be in a position to interrupt the communications of the expeditionary force. No such expedition has ever been carried to a successful conclusion unless this condition has been fulfilled, and some of the greatest military disasters recorded in history have resulted from failure to secure or retain the assured sea command which is essential for the prosecution of an oversea campaign. It is evident that so long as British naval strength is calculated and maintained on the basis of securing command of the sea as against all probable enemies, and protecting the maritime communications of the Empire against disturbance, the attacks upon the Australian littoral against which land defence is required will be limited to raids hastily carried out by single vessels or small squadrons which have temporarily evaded our naval forces.

(Public Record Office (PRO): ADM 116/1100)

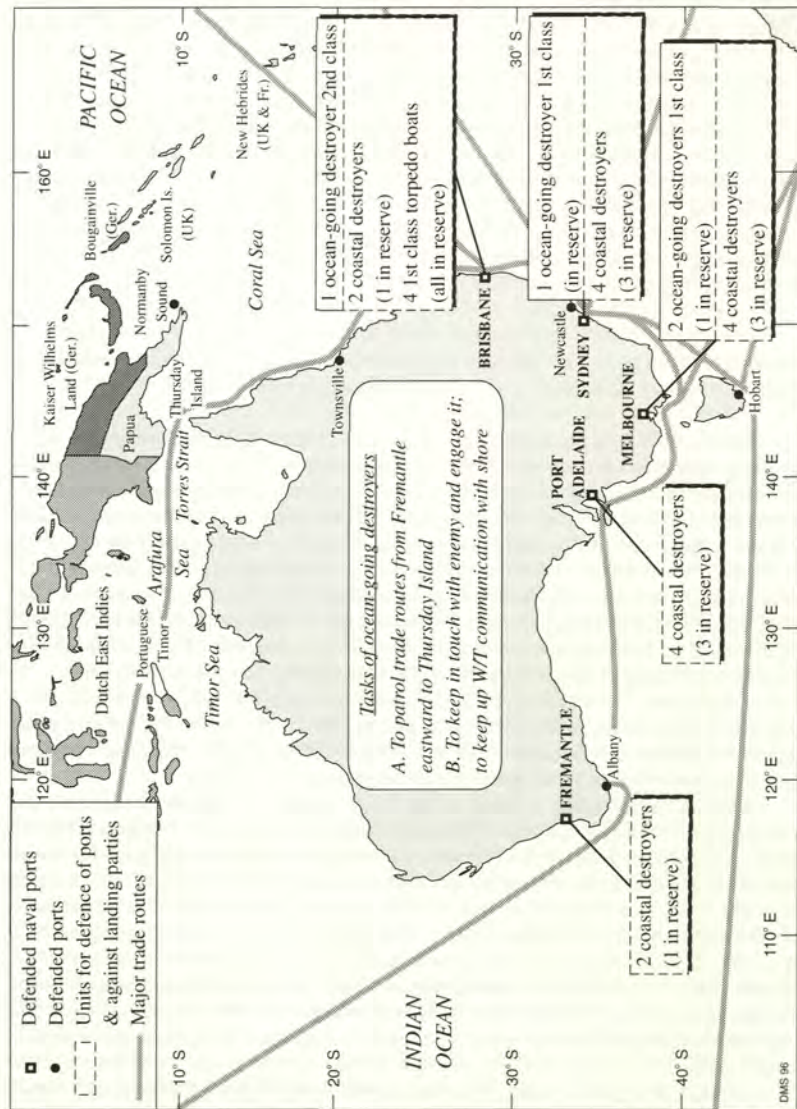
11. Recommendations for the defence of Australia submitted by the Committee of Naval Officers of the Commonwealth, Melbourne, 12 September 1906

28. Australia's geographical situation is that of an island continent, and of all British dominions she is the furthest from the main war base in the United Kingdom. The island condition of a continuous sea frontier is, if availed of, one of strength. The other—immense base distance—is a weakness, both to Australia and the United Kingdom. To avail of our insular position demands that we shall have sea forces. To make up for the weakness of a base distance extending half round the world demands self-dependence in everything that makes for defence, and should be the guiding principle in all our defence schemes. The weakness of a line of communication 12,000 miles long is evident. Ordinary foresight would provide against interruption ... It is just as imperatively necessary that the means of repelling, attack on our sea frontier should be produced in Australia.

29. Destroyers (it is the opinion of the Committee of Imperial Defence), if strategical conditions should alter, would be placed here by the Admiralty. In war, when strategical conditions usually alter most, it might be impossible to do so, and would in any case require some time to bring vessels of this class from England.

30. Australian defence, if attacked by raiding cruisers, will be met, under the scheme proposed by the Committee of Imperial Defence, by a preponderating force sent in pursuit. Without considering all that such raiders might effect during the time on our coast between their arrival and the arrival of the preponderating force, would it not be worth while to deal with such raiders at once, directly their presence was disclosed, saving the many thousands of tons of coal, and thousands of pounds sterling, and the many weeks at sea during which the force sent to Australia in pursuit would be out of touch and quite inoperative for other war service? There would seem to be some compensating advantage for departure from the orthodox line and the principle of naval strategy which directs that action shall be taken by a force sent in pursuit rather than by one on the spot.

31. From the Imperial point of view, surely the sea efficiency of the Empire could only be aided by a policy making for Australian advance in naval defence. It is not conceivable that Australia should grow in wealth, commerce, and population, and in all that goes to make a strong and prosperous State, and yet in the matter of defence remain a helpless and inert country (dependent for safety from the most insignificant of enemies by sea upon the mother country's help sent half round the globe), an element of weakness



Map II.1: 1906 - Recommendations submitted by Committee of Naval Officers of the Commonwealth

to the rest of the Empire ... From the Australian point of view it is clear that safety lies only in sea defence, and will depend on our ability to meet attack without awaiting the arrival of forces that it is conceivable might not too easily be spared.
 (PRO: ADM 116/1100)

12. German memorandum on the orders for the Cruiser Squadron and HM Ships on the East Asian and Australian Stations, 1908

The prime goal of English ships will be to destroy our Cruiser Squadron as quickly as possible, thus hindering any damage to British Merchant trade. The best course of action for the Cruiser Squadron to avoid any threat of destruction will be to depart Chinese waters. It is well known how much the Australian Government fears an attack on its coasts and on its trade and that it regards as insufficient the English naval forces now in Australian waters. It can be assumed that an operation by our Cruiser Squadron against Australian trade will affect a sensitive area of British interests, and cause unrest in both Australia and England. Thus a wide-reaching attack against Australian trade can be recommended.
 (GFMAF, RM5/v 5971, 'Operational Preparations of the Cruiser Squadron')

13. Views of Captain W.R. Creswell, Naval Officer Commanding Commonwealth Naval Forces, on result of 1909 Imperial Conference—Advantage gained by adoption of the proposals for a Fleet Unit, 16 November 1909

I. The Security of Trade.

In a Naval war, whether against a strong or a weak Naval power, commerce destruction will always be attempted. No Naval blockade can prevent the escape of commerce raiding cruisers, and their most profitable field will be at the greatest distance from the main fleets and operations of war. The recent decision at the Hague Conference legalising the commissioning of merchant steamers as ships of war, whether at sea or in their own home ports, facilitates this form of attack. It is easy to foresee that a power possessing a considerable mercantile steam fleet scattered over the globe could inflict great damage if, on a date secretly prearranged for the declaration of war, these vessels became commerce destroyers in whatever part of the world they might chance or had arranged to be. The Fleet Unit proposed for Australia will ensure safety to our commerce against any such attack.

II. Safety from Attack of a Squadron.

Further, in any war against any European power or possible combination of powers, no possible enemy could afford to detach to these seas a squadron superior in force to the units proposed.

III. Defence of Ocean Trade Routes.

Although the special conditions of Australian sea trade and the dependence of industrial life of the Commonwealth upon its security demand such special measures for its defence, we shall notwithstanding this be able to cover also the ocean trade routes between Australia and its nearest oversea ports. This duty we shall share with the other British Fleet units stationed in Eastern Seas and the Pacific.

(It is proper and in accord with the growing importance of Australia that we should take our part in the Naval security of the Pacific.)

The bombardment of our ports or the possibility of their being held to ransom, will with a Naval Defence of the strength proposed, be so remote as to be hardly worth considering.

IV. Attacks in Force—Expeditionary Attacks on Australia

An attack in force upon Australia for the seizure of territory may come within practical consideration by a Pacific power if Great Britain be held to Europe by war with any European powers, but before any such expedition could be launched against Australia the Pacific squadrons of three Fleet Units would have to be accounted for. The capture or rendering harmless of such a fleet would be an operation of some difficulty, requiring the constant operation of a considerable force for a considerable time. No attempt at a landing in force in Australia would be made while these vessels remained in existence—a formidable danger either to the transports of the main expedition or to those carrying the supplies upon which the expeditionary force must rely after landing.

The time gained by this delay would be of invaluable service in preparing our defence.

(G.L. Macandie, *The Genesis of the RAN* (Government Printer, Sydney, 1949), p. 251)

14. 'Wanted at once! An Aerial Defence Fleet for Australia', Sydney, 2 January 1911

1. The construction of a modern battleship takes two years, and costs nearly two millions sterling.
2. Australia has not yet the facilities for building battleships.
3. A modern battleship is obsolescent as soon as it is launched.
4. Even the Dreadnought threatens to be superseded by the Monitor or anti-Dreadnought.
5. Neither, in a year or so, may be able to venture into waters patrolled by powerful ocean going submarines.
6. In the race for naval supremacy Japan has a huge start in the Pacific.
7. But there is a new method of warfare in which all nations start level—aerial warfare.
8. An aeroplane can be built in a month (one has been built in America, and flown, in a fortnight): a dirigible in six months.
9. The cost of an aerial fleet, effective for the defence of Australia, is, compared with the cost of an effective navy, trifling.
10. Germany has a big fleet of dirigibles, and has just ordered forty aeroplanes.
11. Australia could have an aerial fleet in being within six months.
12. Australians have the inventive ingenuity, the courage and the skill necessary to provide and man that fleet.
13. Such a fleet would be capable of preventing any naval attack, or the disembarkation of a raiding force.
14. The Australian aerial fleet would, operating from its own base, have little difficulty in beating off the attack of the enemy's aerial fleet, operating at a distance from its base.
15. The mere presence of such a defence fleet, in the present doubt as to the possibilities of aerial warfare, would give pause to any enemy that contemplated attacking Australia.

16. An aerial fleet, for at least five years to come, is Australia's ONLY POSSIBLE defence, her one chance should she have to fight.

The new war is upon us—the war in the air. And please remember that this new warfare interests YOU ...

If Japan attacked Australia it would not be the Empty North that she would choose as a target for dropping bombs. The lone boundary-rider would be a difficult mark to hit and neither he nor the squatter's residence would repay the cost of a bomb. No: it would be Sydney and Melbourne, where the people, and the money, and the responsible officials are, that would afford the easiest marks and most expeditiously convince Australia. Sydney and Melbourne are big enough bull's eyes. In actual warfare probably the mere threat, and the presence of aeroplanes over Sydney, would be enough for our surrender.

We might have all our navy guarding our coasts, all our troops at our frontiers: but for the aeroplane there are no coasts, no frontiers. In such an attack the proportion of regular people killed would be but a small percentage of the deaths of peaceable citizens. (*The Lone Hand*)

15. Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee on the scale of attack on Australia under existing conditions, 24 February 1911

4. It is obvious that the course of events in war cannot be predicted with certainty; and in recording the following opinions as to the probable nature and scale of oversea attack on Australia, the Admiralty desire to point out that they must not be held to have given an absolute guarantee that any particular form of operation will not be undertaken in war ...
5. As regards naval attack ... The establishment of an Australian fleet unit based upon Sydney, will to a certain extent alter the situation. As a naval base the value of Sydney as a strategic objective to an enemy will be considerably increased. It is therefore considered that in determining the standard of fixed defences of Sydney, the contingency of attack by armoured cruisers must now be taken into consideration. As regards other Australian ports, the Admiralty adhere to the view that their strategic importance is too small to justify, in the opinion of a naval commander, the employment of armoured vessels in attacks upon them; for such operations, even if successful, would exercise no decisive effect on the result of a maritime war. The only form of naval attack that need be provided against at Australian ports, other than Sydney, is therefore raiding attack by unarmoured cruisers.
(Australian War Memorial (AWM): AWM124, 1/31)

16. Recommendations by Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson, Melbourne, 1 March 1911

Australia heretofore has trusted to the Mother Country for her protection, which has depended on the Command of the Sea, or, in other words, upon Sea Power, and this Sea Power has enabled Australians to remain undisturbed in their magnificent country and allowed them to arrive at their present condition of great prosperity. Australia has now determined to take her share of the defence of her own territory, and it is certain that it must still rest on the Sea Power of the Empire.

2. Once the Command of the Sea is lost by the Empire, no local system of defence, Naval or Military, could secure Australia's autonomy, and she would be the prey of the strongest Maritime Power.
3. Any Nation that threatens or attacks the Sea Power of the Empire must be an enemy of Australia and the whole Empire.
4. Unity of purpose in this matter with regard to all parts of the Empire will give great strength to the Sea Power of the Empire, and, too, unity of control in War of all the Naval Forces of the Empire is of paramount importance.
5. The primary object of an Australian Navy therefore, should be the immediate support of the rest of the Empire's Naval Forces in their determination to retain the Command of the Sea.
6. The geographical position of Australia, its immense coast-line, sparsely populated districts, large shipping and coasting trade, and over-sea communications, require that the secondary object should be the protection of ports and shipping from raids and incursions by hostile ships and cruisers.
7. Field Marshal Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum has well set forth the strategic position of Australia in his Memorandum on the Defence of Australia, in which he says—
"It is an axiom held by the British Government that the Empire's existence depends primarily upon the maintenance of adequate and efficient Naval Forces. As long as this condition is fulfilled, and as long as British superiority at Sea is assured, then it is an accepted principle that no British Dominion can be successfully and permanently conquered by an organized invasion from over-sea.
2. But, in applying this principle to Australia, considerations of time and space cannot be disregarded. The conduct of a great War depends upon the calculated and proper combination of Naval, Military and Diplomatic Forces, and it is quite conceivable that, in the future, as in the past, National considerations may require the concentration of British Naval Forces in one or other theatre of operations. It follows that, in seas remote from such a concentration, the British Naval Forces, may find themselves for the moment inferior in force to an actual, or potential, enemy. In such a situation, although our ultimate superiority at Sea might not be a matter of doubt, some time might elapse before our Command of the Sea was definitely assured in all waters. It therefore becomes the duty of all Self-governing Dominions to provide a Military Force adequate, not only to deal promptly with any attempt at invasion, but also to ensure local safety and public confidence until our superiority at Sea has been decisively and comprehensively asserted. For this reason it has been agreed that the Home Forces of the United Kingdom should be so organized as to compel an enemy contemplating an invasion to make the attempt on such a scale as to be unable to evade our Naval Forces. The same arguments apply to Australia, and its land forces should be calculated and organized on this basis."
8. The Military Policy of the Commonwealth is based on two assumptions—
(a) That the Sea supremacy of the Empire will be maintained, though some period may elapse after the outbreak of hostilities before the Command of the Sea becomes effective.

- (b) That the Naval Forces in Australian waters will be of sufficient strength to preclude an enemy who attempts invasion on a large scale from evading them during such a period.
9. The Commonwealth Naval Force will, therefore, be required to share in attaining (a), to fulfil (b), and also to render protection on the high seas to merchant shipping, upon which the commerce, and, therefore, the prosperity, of Australia depend ...
- ****
11. Being girt by sea and having no inland frontiers to protect, Australia is compelled to regard the sea itself as her first and natural line of defence. If Australia were an independent Nation the Sea Power required by her to render her immune from aggression would be determined by the Sea Power of her possible enemy or enemies; her existence in a state of independence could only be assured by the maintenance of an Australian Naval Force equal to, if not greater than, that of the possible enemy. The enormous cost of modern Navies, coupled with the present comparatively small population of the Commonwealth, place the contemplation of such an Australian Fleet beyond the bounds of practical politics, and outside the purview of my Report. (Australian Archives (AA): MP1587/1, 218V)

17. German Admiralty summary of various reports, April 1912- October 1913

In view of the weak position of Britain in East Asia, in a Report of 2 January 1912, the Cruiser Squadron requested immediately to go on the offensive. [The commander, Vice Admiral Günther von Krosigk, commented that] the fact that the Cruiser Squadron had withdrawn from the danger of enemy attack, and its whereabouts being unknown, would cause British mercantile shipping insurance rates rapidly to rise sky high. This would result in British shipping in East Asia being largely laid up. He agreed that the danger of the Australian cruisers leaving their own waters to join the British China Fleet would be small, the more so when the ships were paid for and manned by Australia. (GFMAF, RM5 2230, 'Operational Preparations of the Cruiser Squadron')

18. Strategic Report with some notes on the preparation for war by Captain C.H. Hughes-Onslow RAN, Second Naval Member, July 1913

3. The function of strategy consists of making adequate plans in time of peace for the operations of war, and may be divided generally into two domains, namely, (a) that which may be predicted with practical certainty and (b) that which appertains to divination of the plans of the enemy or to the partially inscrutable. These domains vary according to the circumstances and especially according to geographical situation, but within the first lies the determination of our possible enemies and the probable direction of the attack, which, in the case of Australia, is happily within the realm of practical certainty ... in the event of Great Britain being at war with any of her potential enemies it is certain that the only ones who would attack Australia ... are in order of war-power Japan, Germany and Holland, presuming the latter were forced into a hostile coalition against Great Britain as of course she could never stand alone.

5. ... Japan is selected, not only as being the most powerful of our potential enemies, but also because any preparations we make for war with that country hold good in regard to any other country whose forces may come from the North ... So far as these proposals go it will be observed that the Military situation is taken into consideration just as much as the Naval, for it is solely in view of both of these that a war strategy can be formulated ... Of course, there are such events as purely Naval operations or Military campaigns, but the idea that, in the event of a serious war, there could be any separated strategies for the sister services of the Commonwealth is a phantasm of suicidal tendency ... the further back that cooperation starts and the more heartily it is entered into the more likely are we to succeed in defeating our prospective enemy ...

8. ... In accordance with the principle previously stated of watching the enemy obviously our lines of observation should be thrown forward to the utmost extent possible, and these lines should be based upon our strategical harbours, [these] to be strongly fortified and held, and defended to the last: by this means we divert the enemy from his main objective as such harbours, containing even one or two powerful ships could never be left unguarded in the rear and upon the line of communication ... all our Naval Forces and thoughts have hitherto been confined to the extreme South of the Continent which appears strategically totally erroneous: all our Naval activities should be pushed to the North with the utmost vigour, so that our officers may in peace time become acquainted, as far as possible, with the amazing intricacies of the reefs and dangers that are so thickly strewn in the waters they would have to navigate in war time.

16. In time of war it appears more than probable that strategical plans might be upset by public clamour because if public opinion is not belied there is a sort of general idea that the Naval Forces are to be used ... for local defence purposes. If this is so it is necessary that the Government should deal with the subject by an inspired press campaign so that the general public might be educated up to the fact that the Government has comprehensive plans for the safe conduct of war, without in the least revealing them or our intentions. Further that the good citizens of Sydney and Melbourne need not expect to find our warships outside their back gardens or decorating their respective harbours, but rather searching for the enemy upon the high seas.

(AA: MP1587/1, 186AK)

19. Report on the naval defence of Australia by Commander W.H. Thring RAN, Assistant to First Naval Member, 5 July 1913

Geographically, the position of Australia with respect to Asia and the Pacific may be compared to that of England to the North of Europe. A strong power in Australia would hold the highroad to the Pacific. It can keep this road open, or close it, at will. It could control the sea borne commerce of Asia, the most densely populated portion of the Globe.

A strong sea power in Australia would hold India, the Malay Peninsula, the Islands and China largely in its power. It could make its power felt in any one of them. Imagine Australia in the hands of Japan and it is not difficult to foresee the greater part of Asia under Japanese control. It would entail the downfall not alone of British power in the East but that of every other European nation.

(AA: MP1587/1, 186AK)

20. Assessment by Vice Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee, Chief of the German East Asian Cruiser Squadron, on the strategic importance of the Pacific region, 9 October 1913

If one is freed from the requirement that the first and most successful attacks on enemy trade must occur immediately, the Pacific is highly suitable as a preparation point for our operations because of its central position and many sheltered anchorages. The large distances from the main trading routes are an advantage insofar as they draw a pursuing enemy far from his bases, and force him to have accompanying supply vessels ...

If we wish to be really effective in commerce warfare, we must work with large means. A brief incursion into the main trading routes will bring only minimal results ... We must appear in unison where mercantile traffic comes together, before important harbours or in unavoidable narrow passages. There we must reckon with a clash with the enemy ...

(GFMAF, RM5/v 5973)

21. Report by Vice Admiral G.E. Patey, Vice Admiral Commanding HM Australian Fleet, on the defence of the Commonwealth, HMAS *Australia* at sea, 14 January 1915

Any Power wishing to impose its will on Australia—Japanese included—could do best so by seizing Tasmania, and at present there is very little to prevent it.

The Enemy's heavy ships, transports, etc., would go to Hobart. Simultaneously the light cruisers and destroyers with a smaller landing party would seize Launceston and establish themselves there, and thus seize and hold both ends of the railway in Tasmania.

Tasmania would thus be in the enemy's power and from there he would command Bass Straits, hold up all the trade and dominate Australia.

Hobart should therefore be strongly fortified against attacks from the heaviest ships, and Launceston against light cruisers and torpedo craft.

The Australian Fleet to act from Torres Straits or the East Coast on the flank of the enemy to threaten his communications.

I am no believer that the Japanese wish to colonize Australia. They have more outlets already than they require in Manchuria, Corea [*sic*], and Formosa. But Japanese sentiment and amour propre might be so wounded by the continuance of the White Australia Policy with regard to them, that popular opinion might drive their Government to attack Australia in order to force her to give Japanese equal rights with other civilized nations, and the best way for them to do this would be to seize Tasmania.

I think the last place they would wish to attack would be the Northern Territory—they would simply fritter away their strength there and do no material harm to Australia.

The conditions are somewhat altered by the capture of German New Guinea and New Britain—but the main principle is not affected.

If it is decided to retain these possessions, Rabaul should be fortified strongly enough to resist an attack by at least armoured cruisers, and it should become a submarine base.

If held strongly by Australia it would be a constant menace and source of anxiety to an enemy attacking Australia from the north, being right on the flank of his

line of communications. If not held by Australia it would be an excellent advanced base for the enemy.

(AA: MP 1049/1 15/054)

22. Minute to the Minister by Brigadier-General Herbert Foster, CGS, on German possessions in the Pacific, 23 May 1917

The strategic value of island possessions lies mainly in their furnishing localities for Naval Bases and Coaling stations, Wireless stations or Cable landing places, but their retention in war is difficult in face of a superior naval Force, and they lay an additional responsibility on the Navy for protecting their communications with home ports.

The specific Military significance of the Caroline and New Guinea groups lies mainly in the fact that the direct route from Japan to Sydney passes near YAP in the Carolines and Rabaul.

If these German possessions were to pass into other hands a Naval Base at either of these places would no doubt facilitate the operations of the Navy of that power operating in adjacent waters. Again, if that Power desired to direct a Naval and Military expedition against Australia, such a base would provide a convenient half-way base and dépôt for it.

The distance of all these places from Australia precludes their possible usefulness for aviation.

On the whole it is decidedly desirable that the territory South of the line should remain in British hands so as to round off the British possessions of Papua, and the Solomons.

On the other hand I do not consider that the retention by Japan of the islands North of the equator—the Ladrones and Marshalls, or even the Carolines can be regarded as a Military danger to Australia. They do not add to the strength of Japan in the Pacific, which depends on the Naval Force she can use there, and not on land possessions.

In considering the foregoing however, it must be pointed out that the importance of defended Naval stations to a Fleet is generally exaggerated. They are of convenience, but by no means essential to its action. It is a mistake to suppose that Defended ports increase Naval power.

(AA: MP1049/1 15/054)

23. Report on naval defence by Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, HMS *New Zealand* at Sydney, 12 August 1919

Naval Requirements in the Far East

4. Australia, in common with the rest of the Empire, is dependent on the security of her sea communications, but Australia is also faced with the problem of invasion, due to the attractions offered by the great potential value of the land, and the very small population occupying it. The difficulty of guarding Australia against invasion is greatly increased by the fact that the population of the Commonwealth is so small, by the

absence of strategic railways, the immense length of coastline, and the great distance from the Mother Country with its naval and military support. Against these difficulties must be placed the advantage given by the distance of Australia from neighbouring countries.

5. The final decision in war must in any case depend on the result in the main theatre, wherever that may be; support to Australia would naturally be forthcoming if the international situation in other directions permitted. None the less it is undoubtedly the case that great damage could be done to Australia under certain circumstances before the Mother Country could intervene.

8. It is not possible to consider the naval requirements of Australia without taking account also of the naval requirements of the Pacific and Indian Oceans as a whole. The question is one of co-operation between the naval forces of the Empire stationed in far eastern waters. Sea communications in Indian and Chinese waters, as well as the remainder of the Pacific, are matters of concern to the people of Australian and New Zealand; and, conversely, the safety of sea communications in the South Pacific and in China are of interest to the people of India. Similarly the safety of the bases at Colombo and Singapore are vital to Australia and New Zealand; and the safety of Sydney and other naval bases in the South Pacific, and of Singapore and Colombo, is of the greatest importance to India. Even the prosperity of South Africa is associated, though to a lesser degree, with this question, whilst Canada is greatly concerned in the matter.

The Naval Situation in Far Eastern Waters

... Japan is the only nation in the Far East, except the United States, which would be in a position to inflict any permanent injury on the British Empire. I have (perhaps not quite justifiably) omitted the United States in considering the problem. The Dutch, it is true, possess in Eastern Waters a squadron of good armoured vessels, which would be more than a match for any light cruiser force, but, with the assistance of destroyers and submarines, these vessels could probably be dealt with effectively, even without the help of the battle cruisers "Australia" and "New Zealand".

22. Placing oneself in the position of a Japanese strategist, the first objective on the outbreak of hostilities with the British Empire would seem undoubtedly to be an attack on her naval bases if weakly held, since, if captured, or even rendered useless, the power of the British Navy would be largely strangled, and Japan could pursue any desired policy of invasion, or of trade destruction.

23. An examination of the defences of Singapore and Hong Kong, and the local knowledge which I possess of these two bases, make it plain to me that the operation is one which could, at the present time, be carried out with comparative ease. If at the same time, a successful attack were made on the Cockburn Sound base, if complete, Japan would have gone far to achieve success in the war, so far as the Pacific is concerned. The importance of safeguarding these vital strategic centres to such a degree as to make them practically impregnable is, therefore, obvious, and it is impossible to examine the naval situation in the Far East without drawing attention to the gravity of the present situation in this respect.

24. Under these conditions the proper strategy of the British Empire in the Pacific seems to be clear.

1st.—To provide an adequate fleet in the Far East.

2nd.—To defend Singapore and Hong Kong (in that order) against attack by capital ships supported by a strong landing force.

3rd.—To push on with the Cockburn Sound base on the lines recommended ... and to defend it adequately against the same scale of attack. In this case the probability of the hostile force landing to the northward or southward of the naval base must be borne in mind, and the base be capable of defence against land attack. Unless it is adequately defended it would be a source of anxiety to the Naval Commander-in-Chief, and this anxiety would exercise a cramping effect upon his strategy.

4th.—Sydney Harbour should be defended against the same scale of attack as Cockburn Sound, if it remains a naval base, but if Port Stephens is selected as the future naval base on the East Coast, the latter will require the stronger defences, whilst Sydney Harbour need only be defended against attack by light cruisers.

25. It is important to give protection against landing raids in the neighbourhood of the most important industrial centres of New South Wales. Seeing however, that the facilities for concentration of troops are far greater in New South Wales than in Western Australia, it does not appear to be necessary to depend to the same extent on fortifications in the former case.

26. It is obvious that Australia cannot afford to provide adequate defences for all her important commercial ports for some years to come, and the sound policy to adopt, therefore, is that of concentration on the vital strategic centres which are to be the future naval bases, and on the most important of the commercial ports.

(AA: MP1185/4, 121/1/38)

24. Report by a conference of senior officers³ of the Australian Military Forces on the military defence of Australia, Melbourne, 6 February 1920

11. It is clear, therefore, that our first effort should be devoted to contributing in full our share of an adequate Far Eastern Fleet. In calculating that contribution, it must be remembered that, as Australia cannot of herself supply the whole of the naval requirement, the part which she can provide is of itself insufficient, while the disposition of the remainder is subject to change according to wide Imperial requirements. Japan, accordingly, might even then enjoy as against Australia a period of sea command, and it is conceived that even the Navy will admit this.

12. The ultimate fate of Australia is dependent upon the security of the Empire's sea communications, but it must be conceded that Australia is exposed to the danger of invasion, and that it is possible for an enemy to inflict upon her great damage before the Empire's full power could be asserted. Australia must, therefore, also maintain an Army capable of preventing an enemy from obtaining a decision on shore. There are distinct limits to the capacity of 5,000,000 people adequately to defend on shore so great and undeveloped a country as Australia. There are also many other requirements than those of *personnel*. The provision of munitions for a modern war is in itself an enormous undertaking, and preparations to meet this requirement must proceed concurrently with

the organization of, and must precede the training of, troops, if the finances do not permit concurrent action. Because of the great extent of Australia's coast-line, the absence of sufficient railway facilities to move troops to meet requirements, and certain other disabilities, a considerable dispersion of troops is inevitable, *and it is essential that the Military Force, like the Naval Force, be the maximum obtainable.*

14. It may be assumed that, if we are possessed of an adequate Air Force and efficient intelligence system, a certain amount of time will be available in Australia for the mobilization and concentration of troops. A Citizen Army such as is provided under the Australian Defence Act has proved itself, after due training, and with a qualified Staff, to be an efficient instrument of war. But recent experience has also given abundant proof that it takes time to develop military strength so organized.

20. There is one other matter of great importance to which the Conference must draw attention. The Defence Act compels service in Australia for the defence of Australia, but it does not compel service abroad for that same purpose. Yet the advantages, moral and material of fighting in the enemy's country are so enormous that it is folly to await an enemy's attack on our own soil, if there is any possibility of going to meet him out of our own land ... The AIF had an opportunity to fight abroad and defend Australia so effectively that Australia hardly realized that it was defence, and not offence, her troops had undertaken ... The community must, therefore, make up its mind, however unwillingly, that all preparations for the defence of Australia, thorough and complete as they may otherwise be, may break down absolutely if, at a final and decisive moment, the weapon of defence cannot be transferred beyond our territorial waters ...

(AWM: AWM1, 20/7)

25. Minute from Rear Admiral Sir Edmund Grant, First Naval Member, to the Minister for the Navy—An appreciation of the present position of Australia with regard to defence, 21 April 1920

15. It is obvious that, if the British Fleet were beaten, the Army proposed by the Military could not hold out against the enormous force which the Japanese could bring to Australia. The sea-borne trade of the Country would cease to exist, no help could arrive by sea, and, no matter how valiant the Australian soldiers were, the end would only be a matter of time. Therefore, until Australia has a population of at least four or five times its present size, she cannot place any reliance on her military forces saving the Country, and even then, were she beaten at sea, she would lose all her external and coastal trade with the obvious consequences ... It must therefore be evident to all thinking people that it is essential not to lose command of the sea and that every endeavour should be made to keep the Australian Sea Forces in such a condition as to assist in retaining command of the sea and to hamper and harass the enemy until Great Britain can come to the assistance of the Commonwealth with her sea forces. To delay the enemy in any projected attack on Australia should be our object and the best means of doing this is to keep in being the largest efficient Naval force that is possible.

16. It would, therefore, appear that, if there is only a certain amount of money available for defence purposes, a reasonable proportion might be three-quarters to the Navy (including Naval Air defence) and one-quarter to the Army (including Army Air

Service), the Army being maintained principally for the defence of bases and capital Cities against raids by the enemy.

17. To divide the money voted between Navy and Army on a half-and-half basis does not accord with the relative value of Defence of the two arms ... The Naval Board consider such a policy would be most unsound.

18. Equally dangerous is a policy which has been spoken of in some influential quarters, that of relying on small craft (Destroyers and Submarines) working in conjunction with an Army to defend the Country ...

- (1) Small craft will not prevent a Country from being invaded ...
- (2) The whole import and export trade of the country would cease. Further, all overseas possessions would be lost.
- (3) The enemy being free to bring up and land large forces will in the end capture the bases from which the small craft operate.
- (4) ... Owing to the huge coast line of Australia, it would only be possible to defend a few of the main bases by small craft, and the rest of the Country would be open to invasion, so that the enemy could take the bases from the land side.

19. The Air Force must be primarily Naval. The long stretch of coast line must be patrolled by Aircraft trained to work in conjunction with the Navy. Air raids on Australia can only come from the sea, and counter measures can only be initiated and carried out by those who work in close co-operation with the Navy. Air patrols must be carried out in the Islands as an essential part of the scheme for delaying the enemy as long as possible with a view to his ultimate destruction, if possible, before he can reach Australia.

(AA: MP1049/1 20/0215)

26. Appreciation of strategical situation by Commodore J.S. Dumaresq RN, Commodore Commanding HMA Fleet, 11 February 1921

B. Geographical considerations

1. The United States are at such a distance as to make Naval, and still less joint Naval and Military assistance for Australia, even with intermediate bases, very difficult for purely geographical reasons.

2. Japan is approximately only half as far from New Guinea as the United States. Japan is well off for temporary bases on the route to New Guinea and Eastern Australia.

3. Hongkong and Singapore flank any direct route from Japan to West Australia, and Singapore is nearer any part of Australia than is Japan, and may be considered to "cover" Australia. Therefore Japan would probably take Singapore before or at the same time as any descent on Australia, and therefore to protect Singapore is to protect Australia and vice versa.

4. Hongkong covers Japan's attack on Singapore and therefore to protect Hongkong is to protect Australia and vice versa.

C1. British Empire Naval Forces and their condition

- (a) Great Britain

It is unlikely that new ships will be available for some years for various reasons and it is likely that JAPAN's best ships will, for a time, be superior to GREAT BRITAIN's best ships.

2. This can be discounted if the personnel is thoroughly trained and the materiel maintained and known to be in good order. This is the case with the primary British Fleets and the Squadrons on foreign stations (except the RAN on the Australia Station).

(b) Commonwealth and Dominions

HMA Fleet is strategically impotent and tactically inefficient owing to

- (i) absence of the necessary strategical supplies and reserves of fuel and ammunition etc.
- (ii) lack of opportunity for training ships when assembled for training, being continually taken away for extraneous services.
- (iii) the order against carrying out full speed trials, their being customary in the Royal Navy, and without them there being no guarantee of efficiency and no means of efficiently training the engine room personnel.
- (iv) Absence of a Deep Sea Naval Flying organisation and materiel, without which no naval force can be tactically efficient, particularly on a station of very large area, where intelligence of the whereabouts of an enemy force is more than usually important.

2. The ships of the Royal Australian Navy with the exception of the Light Craft [destroyers and submarines] ... are obsolescent ... it is therefore the more important to obtain maximum efficiency of personnel and of the material according to its kind. There seems however little expectation of this under the existing conditions, as time, money and fuel are not being concentrated on the primary objective of efficiency.

3. Modern efficiency is only obtainable and maintainable by two or more ships being together on a pre-arranged programme which is adhered to for the purpose of persistently recording and analysing all details of exercises. Records and analysis are the bed rock of modern efficiency and without them there is neither faith, understanding or progress.

4. No floating dock, even for a Light Cruiser, is available.

5. Ships are found to foul very quickly on this station ... and soon drop speed and increase fuel consumption.

D - Enemy forces and their condition.

... it may be taken for granted that any Japanese force will be thoroughly trained and that money fuel and other resources would be arranged for and utilised to the best advantage. They would not tolerate the state of affairs existing in the RAN.

2. Japan is rapidly and determinedly strengthening her Naval Forces ... Although this may not be directly aimed at Australia at this moment a Nation who piles up armament without an obvious reason sooner or later usually feels obliged to find some reason for justifying to the people their policy of expenditure.

E - Enemy's probable action

- (a) Attack on cities on Eastern and Southern Coasts.

- (b) Seizure of a base on the West Coast in order to interfere with communications to the Westward.
- (c) Occupation of territory on the North Coast.
2. It is presumed that the above means an attack with considerable Military forces and not merely a bombardment.

G. - Prospective action of British Empire Naval Forces

(a) Great Britain

2. Should ... Hong Kong and Singapore be the enemy's main objective, this will be the locality in which to deal with him effectively, and it cannot be expected that British Pacific Forces will be free for detachment to reinforce Australian Forces on the Australian Coast.
3. This would be the worst strategy and one which would lose any war, and it has already been noted that Hong Kong and Singapore protect Australia.

(b) Commonwealth and Dominions etc.

2. ... The initial operations of HMA Fleet depend generally on the prevailing combination of the following conditions:-
- i. British Naval Forces weak in the Pacific and awaiting reinforcements.
 - ii. British Naval Forces strong in the Pacific.
 - iii. Australian Naval Forces tactically inefficient and strategically impotent ...
 - iv. Australian Naval Forces tactically efficient ... but strategically impotent for lack of supplies.
 - v. Australian Naval Forces tactically and strategically efficient.
3. ii, iv, & v are not here being considered as from my observation of the conditions I see little prospect of their being achieved at present ...
4. Considering ... [attack on] South and East Coast Cities ... HMA Fleet should retire with any colliers and oilers, etc., that can be collected and taking a Battle Practice Target to the nearest suitable spot covered by the fully Commissioned and trained British forces and adjacent to the lines of communication from Great Britain so that the necessary ... ammunition could be received. Here the fleet would complete their training with the utmost despatch and receive ammunition from ENGLAND. It is probable that the real reason for their disappearance would not be realised by the enemy and it would in effect be regarded as an immediate threat on their communications affecting their dispositions accordingly. Should HMA Fleet go east, they would probably effect a juncture with the South American Squadron should the latter be re-inforcing the Pacific, if west with the Cape or China Squadrons. When ready to meet a trained enemy and pending the arrival in the Pacific of a British Force superior to the enemy the task of HMA Fleet would be to carry out what in effect would be an intensive guerilla warfare from a mobile base in the Pacific, adjacent to the lines of communication of the Enemy. Subject to the necessary auxiliary supply vessels having been found this would be the best naval assistance that could be given to the Australian Army so long as the latter was operating in Australia. No further stage can be usefully forecasted without consultation

with the military authorities. The next step might be junction with the Dominion Force (British Fleet) to crush the enemy's main fleet. The above is on the assumption that the enemy Naval Covering Force and escort consists of capital ships as well as Light Cruisers and Light Craft. Should the enemy Armament have moved with a weak escort an earlier offensive and attack on the escort and covering force would be justified.

6. Considering ... Seizing a West Coast Base, as for [4] except that our attacks on the enemy's lines of communication and on their raiders would probably be from a base to the westward.

7. Considering ... Occupation of Northern Coast, as for [4] except that our attacks would be from a base to the Northward.

8. Circumstances might even arise under which an Australian Armament (escorted by its Fleet) would leave Australia to co-operate with the British Pacific Forces by occupying Enemy territory while the enemy were actually occupying a part of Australia, because this would be the best way of beating the enemy and breaking up his communications to Australia and so obliging his army of occupation to evacuate or surrender. Unselfish co-operation and effort at the decisive point is the only strategy for the various forces of a scattered Empire such as ours.

9. The other task of HMA Fleet which would arrive at any time according to local or empire military conditions would be escorting or covering Australian Military Forces to any point in or out of Australian possessions either purely as an escort (as in the late war) or as an integral part of an 'Armament' i.e., joint Naval or Military mobile striking force, a type of force which history proves to have always been a disturbing factor to an enemy.

10. The operations of our submarines has not been dealt with as I am quite unaware how the fuel they require is to be obtained or provided. Protection of Trade and Convoying Work has not been here considered. Trade would probably have to take its chance and armed liners could be organised.

(AA: MP1049/1 21/099)

27. Memorandum by Vice Admiral Sir Allan Everett, First Naval Member, on future naval policy, July 1922

The prodigious impetus given to the development of aviation during the war has now died down to a comparatively slow rate but there are a number of thinking people who consider that it will only be a few years' further experiment before the air, as a medium of war, will supplant the land and sea. But that is not yet. In one respect Australia, on account of her far distant isolation has less to fear from the air than, say, England. Australia, therefore can afford to "wait and see" for a longer period. The economies recently affected out here have indefinitely delayed the creation of a seaplane-squadron for adjunctive Naval defence. This however need not be regarded as a matter of great moment at the present time. What Australia has to fear however, in the event of conflict with Japan, is the enormous devastation which could be effected with the agency of an Aircraft carrier by bombs dropped on the state capitals. Anti-aircraft guns are a feeble deterrent to this form of attack as compared with like against like.

(AWM: AWM124 3/58)

28. Telegram from the Governor-General to the Secretary of State for the Colonies regarding the British decision not to proceed with the Singapore naval base, 11 March 1924

We in Australia are essentially a peace-loving people, and we have shown that we desire a better understanding among the nations and a definite reduction of armaments on every possible occasion at the meetings of the League of Nations at the Washington Conference, and by our prompt compliance with all resolutions arising therefrom. We are attempting to develop a vast territory with a mere handful of people and our economic circumstances are those peculiar to every young community in such a position. This impels us to devote as much of our money and energy as possible to permanent re-productive works rather than to armaments, quite apart from our deep-rooted national conviction, intensified by experiences and sacrifices in the late war, that the time has come when mankind should substitute arbitration of reason for that of force.

We are in sympathy therefore with the great ideals expressed in your telegrams from every standpoint and we will continue to work for their realisation.

The methods suggested by you are, however, in the carefully considered view of my Government such as will have precisely the opposite effect, and we feel that the prospects of ultimately achieving that aim for which we are all assiduously working will in fact be seriously jeopardised.

We believe that the existence and prestige of the British Empire has been and is the greatest factor in the maintenance of the peace of the world.

Our strength relative to other great Powers has been the basis of the influence for peace which we have wielded in the councils of the nations and through the League of Nations.

That strength has depended mainly on the British Navy, its power and mobility. We are convinced a base in the Pacific is imperative for that mobility.

The existence and prestige of the Empire will be imperilled without it. We believe that such a result would be a menace to the peace of the world and a fatal blow to the League of Nations.

Your view that confidence must be established and that this can only be achieved by allaying the international anxieties and suspicions which exist to-day is one in which we also concur. We cannot agree, however, that the establishment of that confidence would be any more hampered by the prudent step of establishing Singapore base for the protection of the Empire's trade and possessions in the Pacific than by the other prudent step which your Government is undertaking to increase Britain's Air Forces as a protection against air attack.

The arrangement concluded at Washington for the reduction of armaments was reached notwithstanding the knowledge of Britain's intention to proceed with a prudent measure of self-protection, and my Government does not believe that a further reduction of armaments, which all of us so greatly desire, will be prevented by this prudent measure being taken at the present time.

We think on the contrary, that, if the proposal, which the highest naval authorities of the Empire support as a necessary defensive measure, is abandoned by your Government, incalculable harm will be done to the Empire's prestige, the confidence of smaller nations will be shattered, the ambitions of lesser powers will be

increased, and deep distrust will be caused throughout the Empire. Not by actions having such results can we hope to bring about further reductions in armaments.

Further unless we have a base in the Pacific, that quota of capital ships permitted by the Washington Conference cannot be maintained by Britain in these now important waters.

That Conference never contemplated this eventuality, the occurrence of which would necessarily destroy the influence and power of the British Empire in the Pacific to secure further reductions in naval armaments

(British Parliamentary Paper Cmd. 2083, March 1924)

29. Statement by Rear Admiral W. Munro Kerr, First Naval Member, on the defence of Australia, 6 March 1930

The defences of a country should be examined at frequent intervals in the light of the varying external political situations which arise and also, particularly in times of financial stringency, to ensure that such money as is available is laid out and apportioned amongst the three services to the best advantage. If a large reduction of expenditure has to be faced in order to stabilise the finances of the country, it does not necessarily follow that the country will get the best value out of the sum that remains available by having reduction made on an arbitrary basis by the three Services, more or less pro rata to the normal sums allotted to them in more prosperous times. It is necessary, therefore to review the whole basis on which the defence of the country depends.

2. The first principle of Imperial Defence is that the Navy must keep open the necessary sea communications in order that essential trade may be carried on, and military support conveyed to any threatened spot and to deny these advantages (which in our own case are necessities) to the enemy.

3. Another principle of Imperial Defence is that each component part of the Empire should be responsible for its own local defence until relief arrives at the threatened spot or in the strategic area where pressure can be applied to relieve that spot.

4. It is necessary, therefore for Australia first to consider who are the most probable enemies who can threaten her directly and locally, how force can be applied by them, and what are the best measures to be taken in peace to counteract this.

5. Of the principle foreign Naval Powers no argument appears necessary to show that, from the point of view of Local Defence, Japan only need be considered, the United States being entirely ruled out for political reasons alone, other countries for geographical reasons.

6. In the appreciation of the Chiefs of Staff dated 9th August 1928, the following conclusions were drawn:-

- (a) Extensive raiding of trade routes is certain and must be provided against.
- (b) Raids on important centres are to be expected and must be provided against.
- (c) Attack on Singapore, if British Fleet is delayed, is a possibility but not until after Hongkong has been effectively disposed of.
- (d) Invasion of Australia, but only on a limited scale, is within the bounds of possibility and not so improbable as to allow of it being definitely ruled out ...

(e) Japan would declare war when the Empire, and Great Britain, in particular, was already fully occupied by war in Europe and unable to reinforce the Far East; hostilities [would] begin without warning ...

(f) Japan might send an invasionary force to Australia of up to 3 Divisions.

7. With conclusions (a) and (b) I am in agreement. As regards (c), I propose to assume that war will not take place before the Singapore Base is completed and that attacks on it, if any, will therefore be unsuccessful. This important assumption is the basis of this paper and is made for the following reasons. Although the works at Singapore are now being slowed down, this is merely a temporary measure pending agreements which may be arrived at during the Five Power Conference. Any agreement to modify the sizes and types of ships may make it desirable to modify some of the works at Singapore accordingly to suit such ships. There is no reason to suppose that the Singapore Base will not be completed in due course, well before the 10 years' peace interval under which preparations are made at present. In my opinion, therefore, it is justifiable (under the 10 years' rule) to assume that the Base will be completed before war breaks out.

8. I do not entirely agree with conclusion (e) above and, in my opinion, (d) and (f) no longer hold good under the assumption that the Singapore Base is completed by the outbreak of war. My reasons are as follows:-

9. As regards (e), it is no doubt true that Japan would engage in war at the period most favourable to her. The statement, however, that Japan's traditional policy is to commence hostilities without warning appears unjustified. That she began hostilities against Russia without a formal declaration of war is true, but relations had long been strained and war imminent. It cannot be expected that future wars will arise more suddenly, particularly as modern political developments are a curb upon hasty action. A country contemplating a "bolt from the blue" will have to take into careful consideration the possible effects in neutral countries, particularly the United States of America. In any case Japan would wait to see how the war in Europe was developing. During that time Australia would naturally be developing and expanding her forces to the utmost.

10. The assumption that defensive reinforcements could not be sent to the Far East is not justified. Japan would be the principal Naval enemy and threatening most important British interests. This threat would have to be met. Provided Singapore base is held, a force very much less than that necessary to neutralise or defeat Japan would be sufficient to prevent her engaging in any major operation at a distance from her own country.

11. The conducting of an expeditionary force of three Divisions by Japan and their landing in Australia is an operation of the first magnitude. It could not be undertaken without the greatest risk (and on the whole the mentality of the Japanese is opposed to risk). The Japanese would require to be quite satisfied that they could control the sea communications between Japan and Australia, not only at the time of transit of the expedition but for many months afterwards; until in fact, peace was declared. Under no circumstances does it seem possible that they could be so satisfied. In respect of Japanese control, the British forces now maintained in the Far East, in conjunction with Australian Forces, would alone be a menace to the expedition until destroyed. Before proceeding further the Japanese would almost certainly find it necessary to establish an advanced operational base within a reasonable steaming distance of their final objective. These operations would take time.

12. If it is conceded that the Japanese will have freedom of operation and command the seas between Australia and Japan and the waters around Australia, there

is still no reason to suppose that they will embark on the difficult and risky enterprise of invasion when they have the opportunity of exerting the greatest pressure by economic means. Without entering into an economic survey of the effects of a powerful attack on Australia's sea borne trade, it is evident that interference with the overseas trade which totals about £300,000,000 per annum would be most serious. The coastal shipping also play an important part in the internal distribution of commodities including those in which Australia is nearly self-contained. During 1927, 6,796,156 tons of goods were loaded by Interstate vessels for discharge at the various Australian ports, most of this being actually carried interstate. Although the total tonnage of goods carried by all the Railways in Australia during the same period was very great, yet the average haul per ton was over a short distance of less than 100 miles and the total interstate portion of this traffic only amounted to 465,638 tons. Interstate railway facilities for goods traffic are hampered by differences in rolling stock and gauge. If the coastal shipping services were dislocated it would appear that the railways might be unable to cope with the great quantity of additional interstate traffic thrust upon them.

13. It will be seen that an adequate Navy insures against both forms of major attack, while the Army is a deterrent against one form only and that the less likely of the two. The Air Force also insures to a large extent against invasion since a landing opposed by air is a very serious matter unless the attacker has ample air superiority, and this he must bring with him by sea. The Air Force is also to some extent an assistance and insurance against attack on trade in coastal waters.

14. With regard to minor attacks, which nevertheless might have serious consequences if not provided against, the conclusion (paragraph 6(b) above) ... cannot be too strongly emphasised ... The Navy is unable to prevent a sporadic bombardment of say Sydney; the Air Force is unable to prevent such a bombardment from a ship appearing at dawn, and no Naval Officer ordering such an attack would be deterred by the knowledge that the ships would probably be subject to an air attack after the bombardment had taken place.

15. As regards defence against raids which are most likely, the bases of the Navy and other places of the greatest commercial and political importance (at Sydney all three are combined) are in the care of the Army and, in a lesser degree of the Air Force. At the present time the fixed defences are being sacrificed to the Field Army which is a defence against invasion.

16. It would appear, therefore, that Australia is-

- (a) Trebly insured against invasion which is in the highest degree hypothetical.
- (b) Partially insured against an attack on her sea borne trade which is most likely.
- (c) Very inadequately (and in some cases not at all) insured against coastal raids.

It seems necessary to adjust these forms of insurance accordingly—to increase (b) and (c) and to reduce (a), observing also that the whole of the defence against form of attack (b) is also a defence against (a) while the reverse does not hold good.

(AA: MP1185, Box 3, 1846/4/363)

30. Statement by Senator the Rt. Hon. Sir George F. Pearce, Minister for Defence, on the government's policy regarding the defence of Australia, Sydney, 25 September 1933

Naval Defence.

The history of the British race for a thousand years during its evolution from a savage tribe to the British Empire of today is a history always associated with the sea. Our very existence has always depended and still depends on the safety of our trade and hence on our sea communications. We are a great maritime power, and a maritime power can only be destroyed by internal dissension or by an attack by a greater maritime power. Hence a sufficient Navy is a deterrent against such attack and is the weapon most capable of winning a war thus caused. This is realised by the other great powers which since the war have increased their Naval Forces and the efficiency thereof to a strength hitherto unknown. Australia as an Island Continent is dependent on sea communications for her existence.

The Defence Policy of Australia is formed to protect the county from aggression.

To People who have not made a study of war, aggression signifies a direct attack upon the country—the bombardment of important centres of industry, either by ships or aircraft, the landing of raiding parties and even invasion;—to protect the country from these threats they suggest that Australia should concentrate on shore batteries, aircraft, destroyers, submarines and mines, while maintaining the organization for a large land force to fight the possible invader on Australian soil.

But there is a far greater and far more probable threat against the Australian people, and that is an attack on their trade.

Australia's primary productions are her source of wealth and for these foreign markets are vital. At the same time imports of phosphates for wheat farming and petrol for agricultural work and transport are equally vital to Australia's farmers ... We have seen the effect recently of low prices for our wool and other commodities, on our economic life. If Australia's markets were closed and her exports and imports stopped by enemy action she could be forced to sue for peace without a single enemy soldier coming within sight of her shores.

Against attack on her sea-borne trade we have only one defence,—an efficient and powerful Empire Navy—and it is clear that Australia must rely on the power of the Navy to defend her against aggression.

Australia, and similarly, New Zealand, are not in a position to defend themselves adequately on the sea for many years to come and their defence policy must therefore dovetail into the Imperial Defence Policy.

How then can we best assist in Empire Defence and thus make the most direct and most effective contribution to our own security?

The then Chief of the General Staff, Field Marshal Sir George Milne, *GCB*, speaking in London on November 3rd, 1932, said. "I would reiterate that the whole life of this Empire depends on our sea communications and on a strong Navy to defend them. The other two Services realise that they are auxiliary services to the Navy." Australia's Defence Policy must be to co-operate in the Imperial Defence Policy and to provide the maximum contribution she can afford to the Defence Forces of the Empire. To give effect to this policy, Australia's primary aim should be the provision of an efficient squadron of

ships, able to co-operate efficiently with the Royal Navy. In addition to providing ships, the necessary bases, equipment, fuel, stores and trained personnel must be provided to ensure the mobility and efficiency of the Squadron.

But a Navy, however strong, cannot provide immunity from sporadic sea-borne attack in the form of bombardments or raids, and it is clearly the duty of each Dominion to provide adequate local defence at her vital ports and centres of population in the shape of guns, aircraft and military forces.

(AA: MP1587/1, 218X)

31. Speech by the Hon. Archdale Parkhill, MP, Minister for Defence, on the defence of Australia, 15 June 1936

The opinions of certain critics also extend to the design of the Defence edifice. Speaking of the defence of Australia generally or taking only one of its several aspects, they suggest that the Government is proceeding on wrong lines, and if it would concentrate on the Navy, or the Army or the Air Force, all would be well in regard to our security. These criticisms are of a one-service nature and have to be accepted with considerable reserve. The nature of the Defence to be provided, and the relative strengths of the three Services, is a matter that can alone be determined by the Government, after consideration of the joint technical advice tendered to it by its Advisers.

Too great emphasis cannot be laid on the joint aspect of Defence. Policy must take into account naval, Military and Air Force views, and anyone who has had the opportunity of weighing judicially the Service opinions will not become an extreme advocate of any particular Arm. All of them have a part to play. The great essential for higher technical advice and direction of the Services is the joint-staff mind and all nations are aiming at its development, for it is only by this means that the fullest coordinated use can be made of the distinctive powers of each service, and the technical advice to the Government and resultant Policy become based on the unity rather than the diversity of the Services.

(AA: MP1587/1 218AO)

32. Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. J.A. Lyons, MP, on the Commonwealth Government's defence policy in the light of the Imperial Conference, 24 August 1937

NAVAL DEFENCE

The safety of Empire interests in the Eastern Hemisphere depends upon the presence at Singapore of a fleet adequate to give security to our sea communications. This fleet would provide a threat to the communications of an enemy from any part of the world bent upon the invasion of Australia. and either deter him from aggression, or be able to defeat him should he undertake such an operation.

There are, however, important aspects of this question on which it is necessary to clarify the mind of the public:—

Firstly:—

The Empire Naval Forces should be maintained at an adequate strength for securing the communications of the Empire. This is one of the

Empire Defence principles adopted as far back as 1923. A comparison of the capital ship strength of the world's fleets will show that we are not inferior in strength, and the new construction programme of five capital ships will consolidate the position. As indicated by public statements of the United Kingdom Government there are weaknesses in cruisers and certain other vessels, which are rapidly being overcome, but the burden is a heavy one for Britain, and the Dominions have their part to play in providing squadrons for their own waters.

Secondly:-

An adequate Fleet would proceed to Singapore in emergency. The necessary strength exists for this purpose, and it is obvious that the United Kingdom would not spend a huge sum on a fleet and a base at Singapore for the protection of its own vast interests if it did not intend to safeguard them should the need arise. The same fleet and base which are a shield to the interests of the United Kingdom also safeguard Australia and other parts of the Empire. A condition essential for an aggressor to invade Australia is an assurance of command of the sea line of communication for a sufficient period to enable his object to be achieved. With the British Fleet in existence, even on the other side of the world, he cannot be certain of being allowed time to complete his operations, or of not being confronted with a superior naval force. Should he accept the time risks involved, our Army and Air Force furnish us with the means to resist him until help is forthcoming.

Thirdly:-

It may be suggested that Singapore might be captured or neutralised before the fleet arrived. This cannot be dealt with in public beyond stating that the base is now a very powerful fortress and its defences are being further strengthened. As it is the keystone of Empire Defence in the Eastern Hemisphere, it will be apparent that its capacity to fulfil its function should be undoubted.

It will be evident from the foregoing that Australia has a real and vital interest in Empire Naval Defence, as the first line of defence against invasion. It is important therefore that we should continue to maintain the Royal Australian Navy at a strength which is an effective and fair contribution to Empire Naval Defence, and as already indicated increased provision will be made in the New Programme to this end.
(AA: MP1587/1 218AO)

33. Minute from Captain J. Burnett RAN, ACNS, to Admiral Sir Ragnar Colvin, CNS, on the wartime programme for A/S and M/S vessels, 18 July 1940

The situation which would develop with Japan intervening as an enemy in this war would be most serious from a Naval aspect. In the past, all our plans have been based on Naval operations in Far Eastern waters taking place (after an initial period) under cover of a main fleet at Singapore. This is not now the case, and Australia's sea communications are therefore open to attack from major units of the Japanese fleet, including large numbers of submarines and minelayers. This must alter the nature of the Naval war in these waters from an offensive one to a defensive one, at least for a long period. We must maintain our sea communications as far as possible, and a considerable

part will be played in this connection by maintenance of security from mining and submarines off all defended ports and in focal areas. The accomplishment of this task may well play a decisive part in Australia's ability to win through.

(AA: MP1049/5 2026/11/320)

34. Appreciation by Rear Admiral J.G. Crace, RACAS, on 'War with Japan', HMAS Perth, 12 October 1940

II. OUR OBJECT

15. The primary object of the Navy as a whole is to maintain the lines of sea communication.

16. Our object must therefore be, in co-operation with adjacent naval forces to maintain the lines of sea communication on the Australia and New Zealand Stations.

17. This object, in other words is, The Protection of Our Shipping in Australasian Waters.

NOTE—Since it is clearly beyond the power of our present Naval Forces to contribute materially towards preventing an invasion, or to act as a deterrent against coastal raids, these aspects have been omitted.

III. COURSE OF ACTION OPEN TO THE ENEMY WHICH MAY AFFECT THE ATTAINMENT OF OUR OBJECT

18. The enemy may:-

'A' Disperse all his forces and attack our Trade simultaneously at several points. This would result in loss of our trade but should ensure some measure of control by us at some points.

'B' Concentrate a force superior to our forces and attack trade. We should suffer some shipping losses and would be forced to "ground" our shipping in the locality of the attack.

'C' Concentrate a superior force to attack our surface forces simultaneously with a widely dispersed attack on our trade by Disguised Raiders and cruisers. This course would constitute the most serious menace to the attainment of our object.

V. OUR POSSIBLE COURSE OF ACTION IN ORDER TO ATTAIN OUR OBJECT

24. In consideration of our possible course of action in order to attain our object, the following two principles are applicable.

The Principle of Cover

24. It is the cover of the Main Fleet however distant this may be, which alone enables cruisers to operate on the Trade Routes in the protection of shipping.

25. While the Home and Mediterranean Fleets are employed containing the heavy forces of Germany and Italy, cover (as far as European powers are concerned) is such as to enable our cruisers to operate successfully in any part of the world. With the entry of

Japan into the war and no British or Allied force available to contain the Japanese heavy forces, it is inconsistent and in contradiction of this principle to assume that we can still maintain a Defence of Trade policy in waters in which the enemy is able to provide not only cover, but close support of his raiding forces.

The Principle of Concentration in the Focal Areas

26. History has proved that Trade Defence strategy relies for its success on a concentration in the trade focal areas, superior to the scale of attack expected.

27. With our limited and mixed forces, it is impracticable for us to provide a concentration in Australian waters superior to the force the enemy will employ.

28. It is clear that we can not hope to attain our object in defiance of two principles of maritime strategy. We must therefore either show that the advent of air power has changed these principles, or else we select a different object.

29. War experience has confirmed the comparative invulnerability of capital ships to aircraft bombing, and the small percentage of hits to be expected on cruisers and other surface craft equipped with adequate anti-aircraft armaments. Moreover, reduced mobility, weather conditions and darkness impose limitations on aircraft operations.

30. In the case of the RAAF even further limitations are imposed as a result of its comparatively small size, standard of training and equipment.

31. In spite of these factors it may so happen that our limited surface forces co-operating with the RAAF may achieve some initial success, but to rely on such forces is irrational and will inevitably lead to the destruction of our surface forces and relegate such trade defence as can be given to the RAAF alone.

32. Deplorable and inadequate as this state of affairs is, it seems illogical to sacrifice naval units which cannot maintain their object, and which might otherwise prove their worth as valuable fighting units elsewhere ...

33. It follows from paragraph 29 that an air force cannot materially affect the two principles enunciated. It is clear therefore that with the forces at our disposal or even with cruiser reinforcements and without cover in the Far East, the protection of Trade in Australasian waters is impracticable. In these circumstances our object as selected must regretfully be discarded.

ALTERNATIVE MEASURES AND EMPLOYMENT OF HMA NAVAL FORCES

... We must look to some other object capable of attainment which may have wider implications on the issue of the war and it is suggested that an offensive rather than a defensive policy should be pursued such a policy might consist of:-

- (a) Raiding enemy commerce in Eastern waters.
- (b) Supplementing one of our Main Fleets.

2. The data available in "PERTH" regarding Japanese trade generally in the event of her being at war, is insufficient to make any definite statements in this respect, but it appears that her trade will be confined to Eastern Waters with the exception of a limited trade to South American ports.

3. Again, in the absence of definite knowledge regarding the importance of trade to a Japan established in the Netherlands East Indies, it is impracticable to decide

whether raiding by our forces is more important than supplementing our Trade Defence forces operating in areas still afforded cover.

4. Further, if raiding is to be our role, it may be wise to select as our object "To cause maximum dispersion of the enemy's forces" rather than "To cause maximum damage and dislocation to his trade". The former may result in affording our Trade (with air reconnaissance) in Australia, a small measure of security which otherwise it could not obtain.

5. If either of the objects in the foregoing paragraph is selected, it seems that we should be able to operate from advanced bases at Port Moresby, and, depending on the extent of Japanese expansion, from a number of harbours in the islands to the North East of Australia.

(AA: MP1049/5 2026/2/382)*

35. Australian naval plans as presented at the Singapore Conference, October 1940

OBJECT:

6. The object of Australian Naval forces will be the maintenance of vital sea communications.

GENERAL INTENTIONS:

7. The vital sea communications referred to above are considered to be:-

- (1) From Australia to the Middle East and the United Kingdom via the Indian Ocean.
- (2) Communications to UK and USA via Pacific.

These routes take Australian contributions in troops, airmen, equipment, food and supplies to war theatres, and are important for local internal economy.

8. Included in the above is, of course, the security of the terminal ports in the east and west of Australia, and of Darwin and Port Moresby in the north.

9. Regarding the security of Singapore, it is not considered that the Naval forces immediately available in Australia can contribute to any appreciable extent to Singapore security, but they can materially assist in the requirements set out above on the Australia Station.

INITIAL DISPOSITIONS:

11. It is intended to base one cruiser in the South-Eastern area and another in the South-Western area. When "CANBERRA" becomes available, she would probably remain in the South-Western area, leaving "PERTH" and "ADELAIDE" in the South-Eastern area. "MANOORA" would probably be employed assisting convoy escort. The possibility of a concentration of "PERTH" and "ACHILLES" for offensive operations in the area to the North-East of Australia will be borne in mind should suitable opportunities occur.

TRADE PROTECTION:

12. The intention is that trade in the seas to the North of Australia should be restricted to a minimum. Overseas shipping across the Indian and Pacific Oceans would

4 The Chief of Naval Staff noted that he did not agree with this appreciation.

be given as much cover as possible in the focal areas with the assistance of Air, and would depend for safety largely on evasive and largely dispersed routes. Coastal shipping on the Northern half of Australia would be reduced to a minimum; the remainder would obtain some cover [as above] and would depend considerably on Air support. Shipping to the Dutch East Indies might be possible if the NEI were fighting with us.

DEFENSIVE NAVAL BASES IN THE NORTH OF AUSTRALIA:

16. The naval bases at Darwin and Port Moresby will rely largely on their Military and Air garrisons for their defence, and it is hoped that they will be steadily built up. In addition, it is proposed to carry out certain defensive minelaying operations in these areas to assist in their defence, but mines will not be available before the beginning of 1941 ...

17. The need for plans and operations to strengthen the defences of these bases is emphasized if possible USA co-operation is envisaged. It is noted that plans to increase the air strength of Darwin are in being, and Army reinforcements of this base will be facilitated when the overland route is completed.

PROPOSED DISPOSITIONS WHEN AUSTRALIAN SHIPS ABROAD RETURN TO THE AUSTRALIA STATION:

18. The ships concerned are:-

HMAS "AUSTRALIA"
HMAS "SYDNEY"
HMAS "HOBART"
5 Destroyers
2 Escort Vessels
1 AMC

In considering the disposition of these ships, the situation as it has developed will have to be taken into account.

19. If Japanese attack has been launched on Singapore and the Dutch East Indies, it may be advisable to concentrate a force in the North of Australia at Darwin to operate against Japanese forces in the Java Sea. It may again be possible for these forces to operate direct from Singapore. If, however, they cannot operate adequately and with effect in this area, they would be used to strengthen security of lines of communications on the East, West and South of Australia to ensure Australia's war effort proceeding with minimum dislocation

20. It is considered that no present decision can be made on these points, as so many factors regarding time, point of attack, and relative strengths are unknown. Trincomalee [in Ceylon] as a first move appears to be indicated.
(Naval Historical Section (NHS), JSF)

36. Japanese Combined Fleet Ultrasecret Operation Order No. 1, Flagship *Nagato*, 5 November 1941

2. Operations to destroy sea traffic

a. Policy

The immediate destruction of vital points in the sea traffic of the UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN and the NETHERLANDS, combined with a checking of enemy forces, will aid our principal operations. We will endeavour to crush the enemy will to fight by gradually strengthening our efforts and by realizing our aims over a long period of time.

b. Outline of execution

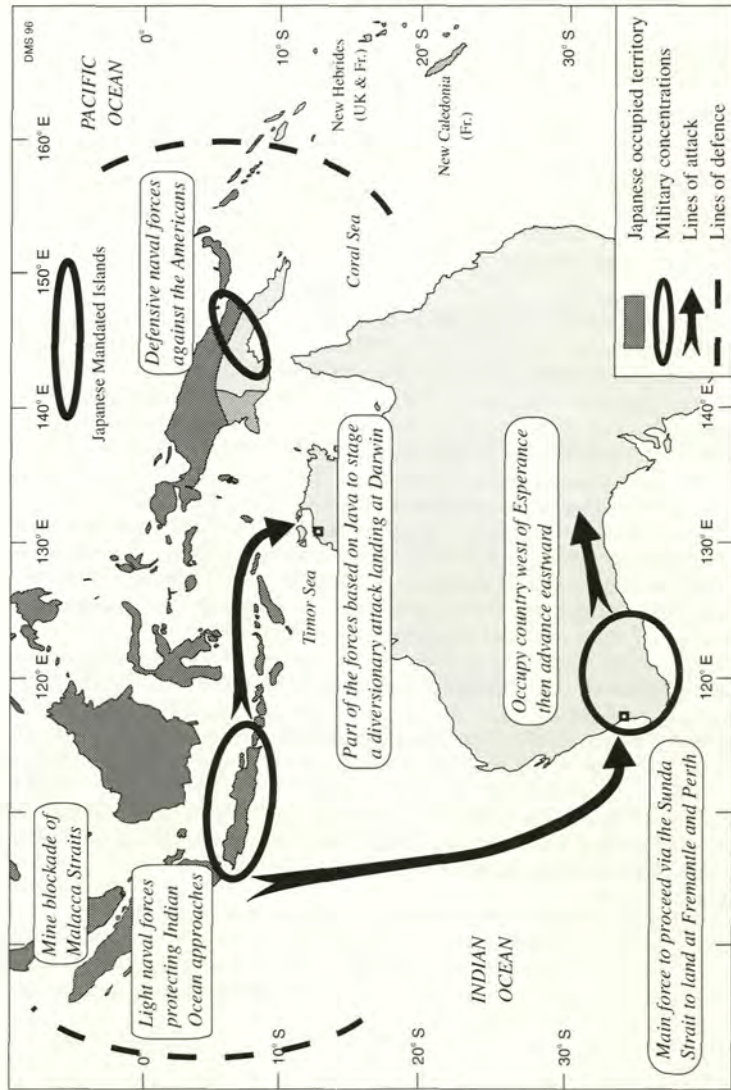
(1). Seizure of enemy ships at the outbreak of war: Enemy ships will be seized provided that our principal operations are not thereby impaired. Close liaison will be maintained with Imperial General Headquarters and with homeland combat forces ...

(2). The Commerce Destruction Unit, as prescribed by its commanding officer and as opportunities arise in the South Sea Area after the outbreak of war, will operate between CENTRAL and SOUTH AMERICA and AUSTRALIA. Depending on the situation on the west coast of SOUTH AMERICA, one element will proceed to the INDIAN Ocean Area and will operate between AUSTRALIA and AFRICA.

(3). According to the progress of operations and to what is prescribed by the Advanced Expeditionary Force commander, expeditionary forces not exceeding one submarine division will operate off the coasts of CENTRAL and NORTH AMERICA to the extent that the principal operations are not thereby hindered. The Hawaiian Area Force will endeavour to cut rear lines of supply at every opportunity.

(4). One element of DesRons 4,5,6, and 7 at the end of First Period Operations of First Phase Operations,⁵ will be assigned as directed by Southern Force Commander to destruction of sea traffic off the south coast of JAVA and at the western entrance to the MALACCA Straits. When southern First Phase Operations are completed, they will carry out a vigorous campaign of sea destruction of sea traffic in the INDIAN Ocean and AUSTRALIA Areas.

(5). In the pause after First Phase Operations or when opportunities arise during operations, forces for destroying sea traffic will be strengthened and will operate vigorously with surface ships and airplanes.
(AWM55, 4/4/12, part 8)



Map II.2: May 1942 - Captured Japanese Military Headquarters plan for invasion of Australia [reliability not established] (AA: MP1185/8, 1945/2/9)

37. Paper by Captain R. Dowling, DCNS, on the postwar defence of Australia,* 27 October 1943

PART I:

It is generally agreed that if, after the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese had struck swiftly southwards and cut the lines of communication between America and Australia, this country could not have been saved from invasion. Much of the enemy strength was used against Burma, Malaya, Philippines and Dutch East Indies. Early in May, 1942, the Japanese were defeated in the Coral Sea Battle. This defeat was the turning point in so far as the safety of Australia was concerned.

2. Japan has a well-trained army and a powerful air force, both many times larger than the Allied forces in the Pacific. Yet, she is not only unable now to launch an attack in force against Australia, but appears to be withdrawing her forces to the Northward. The reason for this is not far to seek. We in this country are safe from invasion only because Japan can neither extend nor maintain her sea lines of communication. She cannot extend them because both her flanks are threatened—on the East by the "Pacific" Fleet and on the West by the "Eastern Fleet". She cannot maintain them against the successful and continuous attacks by Allied submarines operating within the "Japanese sphere of influence".

4. The war in the Pacific as a whole is primarily Naval. Both sides are fighting for bases; both sides must carry large numbers of men and great weights of stores and material over the water; both must protect their own merchant shipping and attack the enemy's shipping.

5. It is not now possible to predict what International Agreement will be reached for the Post-War Collective Security of the Pacific, including Australia. Whatever is decided upon, however, Australia must surely be prepared to play her part in her own defence. It is obvious that we are not strong enough now, and cannot be strong enough for some years, to defend our territory from heavy sustained attack without substantial help from the Empire and our Allies.

6. A reconstruction and development programme for Post-War Australia has recently been outlined ... it is intended to develop secondary industries and encourage European and other immigration on a large scale and to develop secondary industries, with the primary object of increasing a population of seven millions to a figure 3 or 4 times as large in the next 20 years. It seems logical that Australia's plans for defence should be on a far greater scale than hitherto.

7. The Maginot Line conception of defence, wherever applied, has proved a failure. It is clear, therefore, that the plan of defence of this island continent must pivot on strong bases between it and the potential enemy. Such bases cannot be maintained unless

6 By September 1943, the lack of maritime understanding displayed in General MacArthur's publicity bulletins and the success of RAAF 'propagandists' had raised the fear within Navy Office that the post-war RAN might end up as only a 'token' force. DNI was asked to produce a paper for DCNS that 'CNS can flourish under the noses of the Chiefs of Staff and make the opponents to Sea Power read'. Minute, DCNS to DNI, 22 September 1943, AA: MP1587/1, 218B.

the sea lanes leading to them are kept open. It is equally clear that the integrity of the long ocean lanes between Australia and her Allies must somehow be assured.

8. In the Post-war years, Australia must maintain a Navy, and Army and an Air Force. The ideal of one fighting service divided into three "arms" is unlikely to be achieved. The object of this paper is not to weigh the relative merits of each arm, but to show beyond all doubt that the scheme for defence of Australia must be based, of necessity, on a strong Naval arm.

Part II:

AUSTRALIA'S NAVAL NEEDS.

The functions of Sea Power are—

- (i) Maintenance of our lines of sea communications,
- (ii) Destruction of the enemy's lines of sea communications,
- (iii) Attack on the enemy's strategic positions in combined operations with Army and Air Forces,
- (iv) Defence of our bases.

(i) MAINTENANCE OF OUR LINES OF SEA COMMUNICATIONS:

Oceanic:

1. Australia is so placed geographically that she lies further than any other of the great land masses from her markets in time of peace and from her Allies in time of war.
2. For her existence in peace and war she is entirely dependent on the integrity of her sea lanes, across which in normal times she exports 6,000,000 tons, and imports 5,700,000 tons of cargo.
3. The only physically or economically sound means of transporting large cargoes across the oceans is by surface ship ...
4. Only a fractional length of the trans-ocean lines of communication lies under the cover of Australian land-based aircraft. The lines could be severed anywhere in the Indian or Pacific Oceans, thousands of miles from our Coasts.

6. Australia might well have been in a desperate position had Japan used her submarines, surface raiders, carrier and land-based aircraft against Allied shipping in the two oceans—particularly if Japan had thoroughly exploited her initial success and taken Hawaii, Fiji, New Caledonia and New Zealand, instead of consolidating in the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies and Burma.
7. At the outbreak of war, Japan possessed over 80 submarines which, fortunately for us, she chose to use chiefly as fleet units and not, as did the Germans, principally against our communications. It is too much to hope that a future aggressor in the Pacific will make this mistake.
8. The safety of these vital lines is now secured, in the Pacific, by the Allied Pacific Fleet operating chiefly from Island bases, and in the Indian Ocean by the British Eastern Fleet. These fleets must be powerful enough to counter powerful units of the Japanese fleet and, therefore, include battleships, aircraft-carriers, and cruisers. Aircraft-carriers have played an all-important part in major naval battles in the Pacific. It may truly be claimed that the core of a modern battle fleet is its aircraft-carriers. Battleships

and cruisers are required to support and defend the carriers. Destroyers are necessary to screen the larger ships.

9. Experience has shown that the best means of defence of merchant shipping under any form of attack, lies in the suitably escorted convoy. On ocean lanes, where surface raiders may be operating, the escort may include battleships, heavy cruisers and aircraft-carriers, in addition to anti-submarine vessels such as destroyers and frigates. It is of interest to note that in spite of all forms of concentrated attack, the losses in British commercial convoys from the outbreak of the war in September 1939, to mid-June, 1943, were only 0.12% of the number of ships involved.

10. Australia is conducting a war against the Japanese in territory to the Northward of Australia. The island bases in New Guinea and Mandated territory are supplied almost entirely by sea. As we press forward, our sea lanes lengthen. This calls for more and more naval escort craft to defend merchant shipping, chiefly against underwater and air attack. Our own land-based aircraft can afford a measure of continuous defence over comparatively short distances. Naval Task Forces are found to be essential to ward off the attacks of enemy surface ships.

Coastal:

11. The length of Australia's coastline is 12,000 miles—equal to the sea route between Australia and Britain.
12. In a normal peace-time year, the coastal routes are used by 1,000 overseas ships and 170 coastal vessels.
13. In peace-time the bulk of this coastal traffic lies within the limits of Spencer Gulf to Brisbane. In war-time, as at present, it extends as far as the New Guinea Area. Our heavy industries depend to a very large extent on purely coastal trade. The Japanese are well aware of this fact and have, therefore, concentrated the majority of their attacks between Gabo Island and Sandy Cape.
14. These attacks have been made by submarines, as the enemy has not been able to operate surface forces close to our coasts. Experience has shown here, as elsewhere, that escorted convoys have afforded the greatest protection. Of the 30 ships sunk or damaged by Japanese submarines in Australian waters up to June, 1943, only eight were in escorted convoy. There can be no doubt that, had there been an adequate number of escort ships available, the number of merchant ships lost or damaged would have been less. We must consider ourselves extremely fortunate that the enemy has not employed more submarines off our coastline.
15. For the maintenance of our lines of sea communication, it has thus been shown that we need:

Against submarines:

Destroyers, Frigates, Corvettes and other escort vessels and Escort carriers.

Against Surface Raiders:

Battleships, Aircraft-Carriers, Cruisers and Destroyers.

Against Aircraft: (where land-based fighters not available) Aircraft-carriers.

(ii) DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY'S LINES OF SEA COMMUNICATIONS:

16. Japan has not only failed to attack our communications consistently, but has extended her own sea lanes so far that she is now being reduced by the very means which she could have used against us. Her merchant shipping is suffering a NET monthly loss

of 50,000 tons which, by the effluxion of time alone, means her complete defeat. Indeed her present inability to mount further offensives is largely governed by the very severe losses her mercantile marine has suffered.

17. Through spectacular successes such as that of the annihilation by aircraft of the Lae convoy in March, 1943,⁷ may overshadow the enormous and continuous drain on enemy shipping made by US and Dutch submarines operating far from our shores, it is nevertheless true that two-thirds of Japanese merchant shipping losses have been inflicted by undersea naval action.

18. The submarine is clearly the most effective weapon for the destruction of the enemy's lines of sea communications.

(iii) ATTACK ON THE ENEMY'S STRATEGIC POSITIONS IN COMBINED OPERATIONS WITH ARMY AND AIR FORCES:

19. The whole trend of modern attack warfare in the Pacific is toward combined operations. By definition this involves the participation of naval units.

20. It is relevant to note that, on the first day of the successful landing of Australian troops at Hopoi on 4th September 1943 8,500 troops and 2,500 tons of bulk stores were put ashore from four destroyer transports, 18 LCI, 12 LST and 18 LCT, covered by ten destroyers, five of which acted as defence from aircraft while five carried out bombardments.

21. Thus any plan for a post-war naval force must include landing craft for amphibious training.

22. For the same reason an amphibious force, patterned on the United States Marine Corps, is a most desirable naval contribution to combined operations.

(iv) DEFENCE OF OWN BASES:

23. Our immediate need in a future war will be to check the advance of the enemy. There is little doubt that when the present war is won the United States and the Dutch will strengthen the defences of island bases in their respective territories. The need for bases to the Northward of Australia has already been stressed. Such bases must be constructed in peace, in readiness for full occupation when attack threatens. Strongly defended harbours are necessary in order that our Army garrisons and Air Forces may be supplied with men and materials.

25. Naval bases on the mainland are necessary to protect and maintain our Naval and commercial shipping.

26. For all these purposes Harbour Defence Craft in sufficient numbers and of suitable type are required.

Part III:

PROPOSED COMPOSITION OF THE POST-WAR AUSTRALIAN NAVY

The question arises as to what extent the Commonwealth of Australia is prepared to defend herself from aggression. It is not conceivable that the Commonwealth

should depend more than necessary on either Empire or Allied forces, which may, when danger threatens, be employed in other parts of the world.

2. The size and composition of Australia's Post-war Navy will doubtless depend upon:-

- (i) Allied agreement for the defence of the Pacific;
- (ii) Our political defence policy;
- (iii) Availability of funds and manpower;
- (iv) Availability of warships from overseas;
- (v) Our capacity to build in this country.

3. The population of Australia is more than one-seventh that of Britain. The national income is about one-sixth, and the national revenue about one-tenth. It would not seem an unreasonable contribution to her defence if Australia's Navy were about one-tenth the size of the Post-war Royal Navy.

4. Cruisers, Destroyers and other smaller vessels could be built in Australia. Battleships, aircraft-carriers and submarines should be acquired by Australia on an exchange plan. Australia could produce the smaller surface ships and exchange them on an agreed basis for battleships aircraft-carriers and submarines produced by Britain. It is believed that when the present war is won there will be Royal Naval ships of these types available for allocation to Australia.

5. It is considered that the RAN should be a balanced force of sufficient strength to:-

- (a) Maintain ocean and coastal lines of sea communication;
- (b) Check (possibly unaided by Allied navies) the enemy's invasion before they can reach the Australian mainland;
- (c) Attack and weaken his lines of communications;
- (d) Contribute suitably towards the destruction of the enemy fleet;
- (e) Protect our mainland and forward bases from sea attack;
- (f) Carry out combined operations from forward bases against enemy possessions, in conjunction with Army and Air Forces.

6. It is proposed then that the Post-War Australian Navy should be:-

- (a) 1 large aircraft-carrier
or
3 light fleet aircraft-carriers
- (b) 1 battleship
- (c) 6 cruisers
- (d) 27 fleet destroyers
- (e) 40 frigates and escort destroyers
- (f) 12 submarines
- (g) 1 submarine tender
- (h) 1 destroyer tender
- (i) landing craft for amphibious training and operations, (number to be specified later)
- (j) 4 surveying ships
- (k) Harbour Defence Craft (number to be specified later).

7. The light fleet aircraft-carrier has been designed recently. Ships of this class can, perhaps, be built in Australia when our cruiser and destroyer building programmes have advanced. It is believed that the conversion of new types of Australian aircraft for Carrier use is a practical proposition and could well be undertaken in our own factories.

8. The introduction of an Australian Fleet Air Arm along the same lines as that developed so successfully in the RN or the USN would be a great asset—indeed such an arm is essential for the manning of aircraft-carriers.
(AA: MP1185/8, 1855/2/549)

38. Observations by Vice Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton, CNS, on the importance of Manus from the strategic aspect, undated

I found on really getting down to the strategical question with the map, that Manus bears a remarkable resemblance in this area to Scapa Flow in the North Atlantic. Scapa Flow did the United Kingdom remarkably well for two wars, and I am convinced Manus is of even more importance strategically in the future to Australia. With Manus in possession of an Empire Fleet, both Australia and New Zealand are safe from sea-borne attack from the North, which I suggest is the only direction worth considering. No Power could even contemplate attacking Australia or New Zealand with a fleet in Manus sitting athwart its lines of communication—a Fleet in being cannot be by-passed like Japanese Army garrisons were in the last war.

Another important point is the fact that Manus is the essential complement to Singapore. In order to secure the communications against a North Pacific Power, it is essential to have an adequate base to the Eastward of Singapore and to the northward of Sydney.

(AA: MP1185/10, 5079/2/24)

39. Appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff of the strategical position of Australia, 1947

Australia's geographic and strategic position is very different from that of the United Kingdom. Australia is remote from Asia, hence no major hostile Power could launch a sustained and effective air attack against her, even with the use of new long range weapons, until that Power has first established bases within range of vital objectives in Australia. At present no potentially hostile Power possesses such bases. Australia could not be successfully invaded except by a strong naval power which had established command of the sea and air, but the possibility of sporadic raids on communications and vital areas exists.

(AA: MP1185/10, 5079/2/24)

40. Statement to Parliament by the Hon. J. Dedman, MP, Minister for Defence, on postwar defence policy, 4 June 1947

This statement ... will outline the steps which the Government has decided to take to give effect to the following basis of Defence Policy included in the Governor-General's speech of 6th November last:-

The Forces to be placed at the disposal of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, including regional arrangements in the Pacific;

The Forces to be maintained under arrangements for co-operation in British Commonwealth Defence; and

The Forces to be maintained to provide for the inherent right of individual self-defence.

The security of Australia will therefore rest on a blending of these three safeguards which are complementary to each other, and none of which is exclusive to the others.

4. NAVAL DEFENCE

Notwithstanding all the changes and developments in weapons, the British Commonwealth still remains a maritime Empire dependent on sea power for its existence. To make it clear that I am not using sea power in any narrow sense and excluding the part played by land and air forces, I would like to quote the greatest modern writer on Imperial Strategy and History, who claims that the principles of British Commonwealth Defence which have safeguarded us in the past, are equally valid today and in the future:-

Admiral Richmond in "Statesmen and Sea Power", says sea power is composed of three elements:-

"(i) Fighting instruments capable of overcoming whatever resistance an opponent can offer to the desired movements of troops or trade across the sea, and of closing the sea to an enemy;

(ii) Positions in which those fighting instruments can be continuously maintained, and from which they can, readily, and without undue expenditure of their powers of endurance, reach the scene of their operations and there remain as long as is needed for the fulfilment of their purposes; and

(iii) Vehicles of transport in which troops and trade can be carried.

Those fighting instruments and those vehicles operate today on the surface of the sea, under the surface and above the surface; they extend from the largest battleship to the submarine, the motor-boat, and the aeroplane. All are instruments of sea power.

It is the duty of the statesman to make provision for the fulfilment of all these needs. Ships and aircraft cannot be built without raw materials for their construction, nor moved without the means of their propulsion. If either of these do not exist in sufficient quantity within the country, access to their sources must be assured in peace and war. And as ships cannot be built unless a shipbuilding industry exists with its yards, slips and machinery, and a skilled body of workers in that industry, so the fostering of that industry is an essential duty of the statesman in regard to sea power. The positions needed by the ships of all natures—bases—cannot be held without garrisons, nor can additional bases be obtained, or the enemy deprived of bases, without field armies."

Australia's experience in the recent war fully demonstrated the fundamental importance of sea power to our Defence. Owing to commitments in other theatres, the United Kingdom was unable to assign adequate naval forces to the Pacific on the outbreak of war with Japan, and the Pacific theatre, by arrangement between Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt, was made a sphere of American strategic responsibility. Accordingly, American sea power undertook the role which the Royal Navy similarly carried out in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Thus, Allied sea power enabled "its possessors to exploit all their own resources of the world for the raw materials and finished goods of their needs in war, to carry those goods whither they are needed, and to transport the fighting forces of the other arms to where they can be most

effectively used. Sea power did not win the war itself; it enabled the war to be won. It was, as the British Prime Minister has said, the "foundation" essential to victory."

The largest quota in the programme has been allotted to Naval Defence for the reasons I have mentioned and because it is essential that a Navy must be ready to fight as soon as war occurs. The main Naval vessels which take a long time to build must be in existence before war occurs. Also, with our limited resources, it is impossible to replace larger ships which may be lost in war.

The naval programme aims at building up a balanced force over a period of years which will be capable of operating as an independent force, backed by shore establishments for its maintenance. It also includes escort vessels for the protection of our shipping and survey vessels to continue the surveys necessary in Australian waters.

Aircraft having become integral elements of a naval force, and, as the modern fleet is built around aircraft carriers, the main feature of the naval programme is the provision of two Light Fleet Carriers, each with a war-time complement of 36 aircraft. The status of Naval Aviation in relation to the Air Force is still under consideration.

Careful consideration has been given to the implications of new weapons, and the decisions in regard to the Navy are based on the broad conclusions of the Great Naval Powers that these weapons should be introduced by the normal process of evolution, first into existing ships, and later perhaps into an entirely new form of fighting ship. The same authoritative opinion is of the view that there will be no rapid development which will render vessels, such as carriers, cruisers and destroyers, obsolete within the near future.

Before leaving the Naval Programme, I would state that it is proposed to establish an RAN Base at Manus where, as stated some time ago, the Australian Government would welcome an arrangement for its joint use by the United States on the principle of reciprocity. Manus will be maintained in place of the present New Guinea Base at Dreger Harbour.

(AA: MP1587/1 218B)

41. Minute, from Commodore H.A. Showers, DCNS, to Vice Admiral Sir John Collins, CNS, on the requirements of a balanced RAN, 5 April 1949

Probable enemy

2. The only foreseeable threat to world peace and/or to the security of the British Commonwealth, including Australia, is the Russian pursuit of a policy of ideological and territorial expansion designed to extend throughout the world, a Communist regime directed from MOSCOW. Whilst Russia will endeavour to achieve her aims without resort to war, it seems likely that the Communist leaders in MOSCOW will be prepared to wage war if those claims cannot be achieved otherwise.

Foundation of Australia's Security

3. In the event of war with Russia:-
 (a) The security of Australia will depend ultimately on Allied victory.
 (b) Russia's strength and potential is such that Allied victory will only be achieved if all the Allies make the maximum possible contribution towards meeting Russian threats as soon as they develop and wherever they develop.

Allied Strategy in War

4. The general strategy of the Allies will be to wage a general air offensive from bases in UK, Middle East and Japan, and hence the main pillars of Allied strategy will be:-

- (i) Security of air bases in UK, Middle East and Japan;
- (ii) Security of main support areas; and
- (iii) Security of sea communications linking main support areas with combat theatres.

War Strategy of Probable Enemy

5. Russian major strategy in the event of war is expected to include campaigns to overrun Europe and the Middle East, a sea and air offensive against Japan, an air offensive against the British Isles, together with an offensive against Allied sea communications aimed at isolating the combat areas.

Australian War Effort

6. No Russian threat to the security of Australia can be foreseen unless and until the main conflicts in Europe and the Middle East have been lost by the Allies. Accordingly, Australia's war effort is likely to be aimed at:-

- (a) The despatch overseas of military forces; and
- (b) The uninterrupted, outward flow of the products of our main support area.

Security of Sea Communications - the role of the RAN

7. The expeditionary forces and the products of our support area will have to be carried in Ships. The Ships must be protected at their loading and unloading terminals and when they are on passage. Thus the security of sea communications is essential to the discharge of Australia's war effort and to ensure this security is largely the task of Naval forces.

Probable Form and Scale of Attack on our Sea Communications

9. At present it seems likely that our expeditionary forces would be employed in the Middle East. However, the possibility of Communist control (already effective in north China) being extended to South East Asia makes it impossible to discount the possibility of our overseas forces being deployed to that area.

12. ... the sea communications whose security will become the operational task of Australian forces can be set down as:-

- (a) Australia - Middle East) Primarily within our allotted area of strategic
- (b) Australia - South East Asia) responsibility, and secondarily beyond, in
- (c) Australia - UK, via Cape) agreement with Admiralty, as a contribution
- via Panama) to C'wealth defence.
- (d) Local sea communications coastwise around the Australian continent and extending to NEW GUINEA and MANUS. The defence of these sea communications includes the defence of local and overseas shipping terminals in Australia.
- 13. Assuming then that the Australian (and New Zealand) area of strategic responsibility will conform generally to the limits of the "Zone in which Australia

accepts the initiative for defence planning in peace-time", the form and scale of attack against the sea communications listed in paragraph 12 above is expected to be:-

(a) Submarine operations.

In view of -

- (i) distances from likely enemy bases, and
- (ii) the nearness and greater importance of the supply line from US to Japan,

it is unlikely that enemy submarine operations against our sea communications will exceed a generally moderate scale. It can be expected, however, that there will be periods when enemy effort is greatly intensified. These peaks of enemy S/M effort against our sea communications are expected to occur on outbreak of war and, subsequently, at such times as when important troop or supply convoys are forming.

(b) Mining of ports and focal areas.

The Russians favour the mine as a weapon of sea warfare. Unless Russian bases are acquired in southern CHINA, the main ports and focal points of shipping in our Zone will lie outside the operational radius of Russian submarines INTENDING TO REMAIN ON PATROL. For these two reasons, it is unlikely that minelaying (by submarine) off our principal ports and in the BASS STRAIT, will be undertaken by the Russians with the object of interrupting our sea communications at departure end.

(c) Sporadic Air Attack.

At terminals in the north of the "Zone". (e.g. at SINGAPORE and at MANUS; also DARWIN if bases in South CHINA are held by Russia and our use of the port is such as to warrant attack).

(d) Commerce raid by surface ship.

Though it cannot be dismissed as a threat, it is unlikely that Russia would employ surface commerce raiders on the trade routes in our "Zone".

Naval Defence Requirements.

14. ... the security of our sea communications demands two principal Naval defence provisions:-

- (a) Anti-submarine forces,
- (b) minesweeping forces,

15. Whilst the view may be held that wars are not won by defensive measures, it is as well to remember that defensive measures may have an important offensive aspect. In the case of the defence measures referred to above, their success is essential for the overseas movement and the support of Australian expeditionary forces as well as for the delivery of the products of the Australia-New Zealand support area and, thus, they contribute to the general Allied offensive.

16. The only purely offensive tasks which can be foreseen for the RAN are-

- (a) Participation in a minor combined operations, e.g. landing a military force in, say, Borneo (to secure the oil wells) where opposition may be offered by local Communist forces. However, even in such a case, entry would be at the invitation of another Government and it is highly unlikely that an opposed landing would have to be effected. and/or
- (b) Joining our CVL(-s) with RN or US task forces undertaking offensive operations. In this regard, however, it is important to remember that our CVLs

are primarily A/S and A/A. Accordingly, they would have a defensive role in offensive operations.

(AA: MP1185/8, 1937/2/404)

42. Plan for the defence of sea communications in the ANZAM region, 8 May 1952

ASSUMPTIONS

1. For the purpose of this Plan assumptions have been made as follows:-
 - a) that the war is global, involving the employment of Allied Forces in a number of theatres as provided for in current plans and thus denuding the ANZAM Region of almost all United Kingdom maritime forces shortly after the outbreak of war,
 - b) that in this global war Russia is the main enemy and that the countries in and around the ANZAM Region, including those with possessions or treaty commitments in the Region, will in the short term align themselves as follows:

<u>Allies</u>	<u>Enemy</u>
United State of America	Russia
United Kingdom	China
Australia	
New Zealand	
France	
Holland	
The Philippines	
Portugal	
Ceylon	

Uncertain but assumed to be Neutral
at any rate, in the Near Future
(See paragraph 2(b) below)

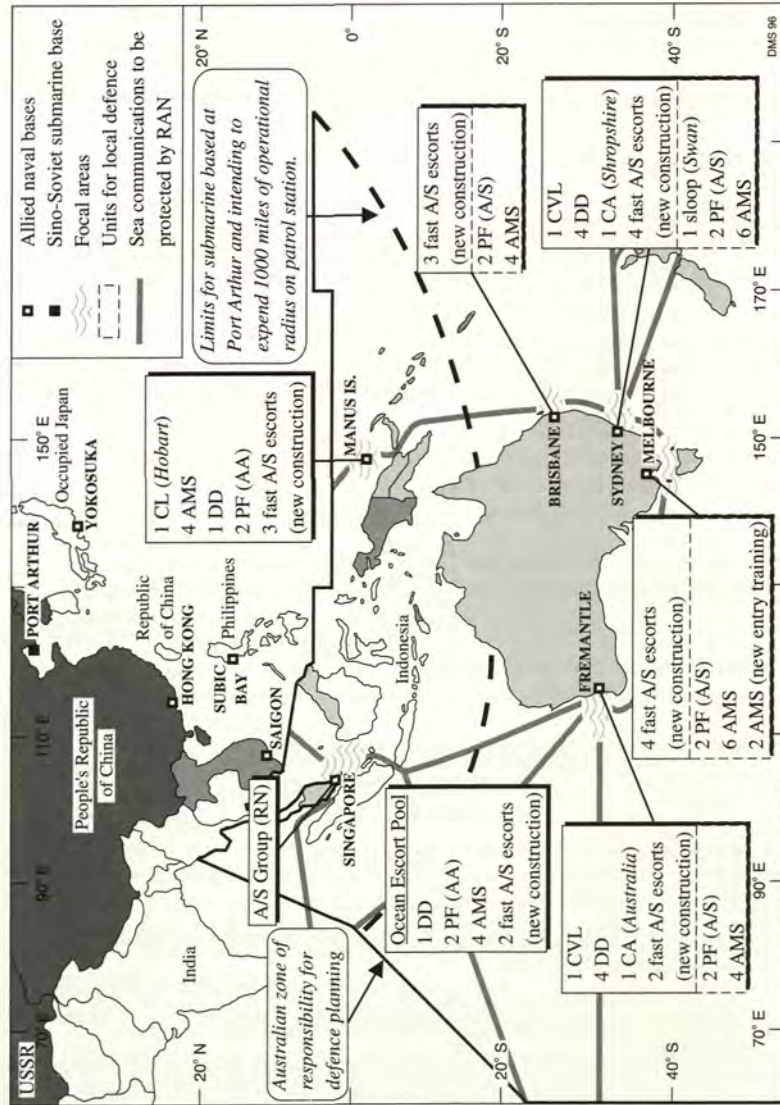
Indonesia
Siam

Notes: (i) India and Pakistan - will favour the Allied cause but may prefer to remain non-belligerent.

(ii) Burma - Up to mid-1953 conflict between Government and Communist forces will continue, but no effective facilities will be available to an enemy.

(iii) Indo-China - Up to mid-1953 conflict between Government and Communist forces will continue, but no effective facilities will be available for an enemy; strategically useful French held territory will be available to the Allies.

(c) that the United States of America will control the waters in her Region to the north of the ANZAM Region;



Map II.3: 1949 - RAN's assessment of forces required to counter the Soviet submarine threat (AA: MP1185/8, 1937/2/404)

- (d) that it is the intention to hold Australia and New Zealand as a Main Support Area and Malaya (including British Borneo) both as Minor Support Area and also to give defence in depth to the Main Support Area. (In the period covered by the Plan, it is considered Malaya can be held);
- (e) that weapons of mass destruction are unlikely to be used in the region;
- (f) that the provision of any forces which may be required for operations in connection with Hong Kong will be made from sources other than those considered in this plan.

FACTORS AFFECTING SELECTION OF THE AIM

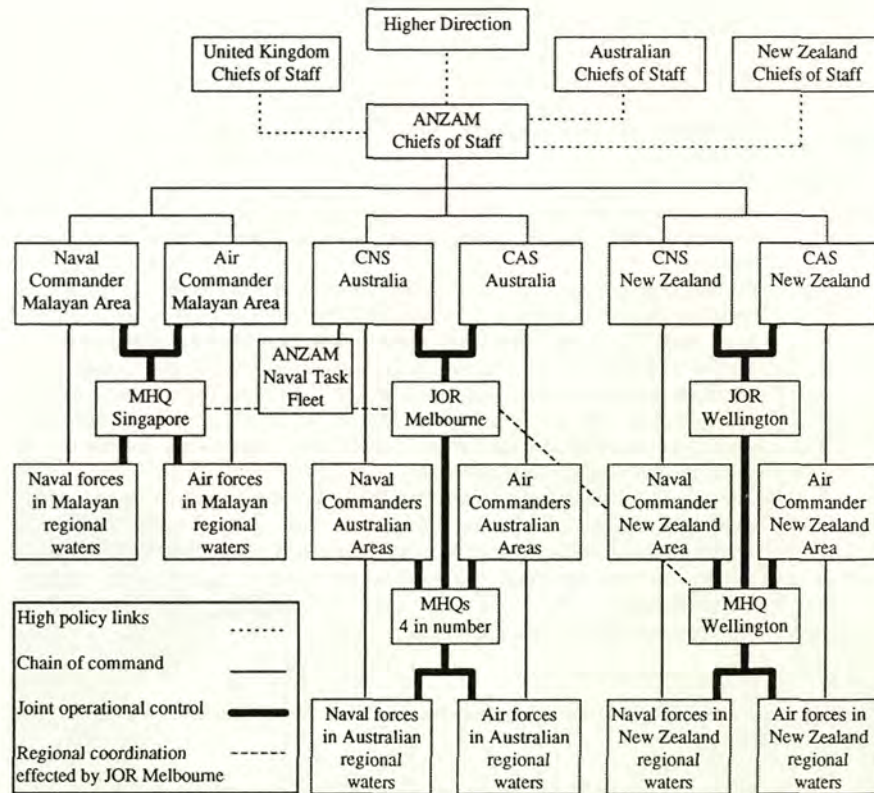
2. The Factors affecting the selection of the aim are as follows:-
 - (a) that the security of Sea Communications in the ANZAM Region is a first priority within the Region, observing that the Sea Communications of the Region are an integral part of the Allied World Sea Communications, the security of which has been accepted as one of the three main pillars of Allied Strategy;
 - (b) that it is not possible to predict beyond June, 1953, with any degree of certainty the political complexion of the governments of many of the countries in SE Asia. This makes planning beyond that period somewhat unrealistic;
 - (c) that with the passage of time there is unlikely to be any large increase in the maritime forces available within the ANZAM Region. Thus, apart from the consideration referred to in sub-paragraph (b) above, any long term plan would, of necessity, be similar to a short term plan insofar as the use of conventional weapons is concerned;
 - (d) in addition to the factors stated in sub-paragraphs (b) and (c) above, a short term plan has the obvious advantage that it is capable of direct implementation in the event of an early outbreak of war. Should war not break out in the near future it can readily, be adjusted to meet the changed circumstances.

(AA: MP1185/10 5202/21/22)

43. An assessment by the Defence Committee on the strategic importance of Manus, 29 October 1953

... Australia's safety is now dependent upon her ability to prevent a potentially hostile Power from establishing bases within range of vital objectives in Australia. Added to this problem is the necessity of preventing raids on communications and vital areas of Australia. Although the potential aggressor in the Pacific is, at present weak in surface craft, she is known to be increasing her numbers of the latest types of submarine, and these could be operated from bases distant from Australia. Consequently, it is clear that operations against submarines and surface raiders in northern New Guinea waters necessitate a naval and air base in the northern approaches to Australia, and the strategic value of such a base will depend upon the availability of Australian forces to operate from it. Additionally, from the long term aspect, Australia will require a chain of bases from which to conduct offensive operations, should the necessity arise, against any enemy who may have crossed our "danger line for hostile penetration".

Figure II.1: 1952 - Command and control in the ANZAM region



4. In expressing this view, the Committee felt that the present international situation does not appear as favourable as when the Chiefs of Staff Appreciation was completed in 1947. Consequently, the early provision of a naval and air base in the northern approaches to Australia may become an urgent requirement for protection of our sea communications with the North Pacific, particularly Japan.

5. To destroy Australia's will and capacity to wage war an aggressor must seize or neutralize the vital areas in the south-eastern portion of the Australian continent. To do this, five avenues of approach by sea exist -

- (i) west and south of the continent,
- (ii) to the west coast, then overland,
- (iii) to the north coast then overland,
- (iv) from the west of New Guinea, through Torres Strait, then south,
- (v) from the north or north-west round the east of New Guinea, then south.

The great length of sea communications would make (i) extremely hazardous. The poor overland communications west-east and north-south, and the great distances involved exclude (ii) and (iii). The narrow and easily mined waters in the Arafura Sea and Torres Strait minimise the possibility of (iv). The remaining choice is (v) and this was, in fact, the course adopted by the Japanese in the recent war. It appears, therefore, that the most likely approach for an aggressor would be from the north or north-west round the east of New Guinea. A base well placed geographically to defend this approach, would be complementary to Singapore which is the main bastion to the north-west of Australia. It might be argued that while the United States holds the line Philippines-Guam-Wake-Midway, Australia is secure from attack from the North. This will only be true if an intermediate base is available to the north of New Guinea as a supporting link between the American line and the Australian defences. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the United States of America will become involved in the early stages of a war. Should America be neutral, such a link would be our most forward base in Australian territory against attack from the north.

(AA: MP1185/10, 5079/2/24)

44. Letter from Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roderick McGrigor, British First Sea Lord, to Sir Frederick Shedden, Defence Secretary, 3 November 1954

(a) The primary role of the Australian Navy in War is the defence of sea communications in the ANZAM area, the most important of which are those between Australia and that part of Asia where Australian forces will be engaged in the battle against Communism. The forward strategy of defence in South East Asia is not possible unless this can be done.

(b) As the major power in this area it is an Australian responsibility to provide the most important elements in the defence of these essential Sea Communications. This responsibility cannot be passed to any other nation. Although the United States can be expected to contribute on a large scale in any future war against Communism in the Far East even their resources are not unlimited and we must expect that they will therefore concentrate upon offensive action against the Asiatic mainland and the defence of their forward bases in the immediate proximity to it.

(c) The Russian Navy is today the second most powerful Navy in the world. The main threat to sea communications will be from Russian submarines and raiders. An air threat also exists in the Northern part of the area. This is likely to increase as China becomes a major air power.

(d) The most effective method of providing the air component of convoy defence in the wide spaces of the ANZAM area is by carrier borne aircraft since—

(i) it will be difficult to forecast where the threat is likely to materialise. The building of sufficient airfields to cover the area by shore-based aircraft would be prohibitively expensive and would almost certainly be physically impossible in an important part of the area because of the attitude likely to be adopted by Indonesia.

(ii) a carrier on the other hand can take her air power to the point of danger. Every hour flown by carrier based aircraft is operationally useful. Shore-based aircraft which have to fly great distances to and from the operational area are only effective for a small proportion of their flying hours. This factor is important when assessing the relative costs of shore and carrier based air support.

(iii) the Air Defence of the long lines of sea communication from Australia to Asia against all forms of attack can only be achieved from a carrier except at the extreme ends. The aircraft planned to go into the Australian carriers in the near future are suitable for defence against air and submarine attack but it will undoubtedly be necessary before long to modernise the carriers so that they can handle aircraft more suitable for attacks on enemy surface ships and also the next generation of fighters.

I am sure that your present policy of having a Fleet Air Arm and maintaining close operational cooperation between Navy and Air Force, as stated by the Minister for Defence, is the correct one.

(AA: A5954, 46/3)

45. Paper by Naval Board on Australian defence policy, 1956

4. A basic and important difference ever present between the Defence Policy of Australia and that of the UK results directly from geographical considerations, in that the UK is within easy reach of direct air attack from USSR and some satellite countries. This automatically affects not only the size and nature of UK defence forces, but such policies as defence of major ports and harbours against nuclear and mining attack. Another important consideration is that whereas the UK forces are a major deterrent to global war, Australian forces for many years to come can have no real significance in this respect. Although it is now realised that the Australian Defence policy is under review, and that besides the difference mentioned above, the main UK strategic considerations are based on much wider global aspects than those which directly affect Australia, there is a considerable similarity between the four broad roles stated for the UK Services and those which might apply to the Australian Services. Australian Defence policy is based on the fact that "Australia's role in global war should be in the general area of South East Asia and plans should be developed towards that end". While accepting this concept for

global war, the policy for limited and cold war has yet to be finally evolved. Australian participation in the Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve is, however, an important part in this later aspect.

5. The four roles stated for the UK Services could therefore be reworded on the following lines which would make them applicable to Australia:—

(i) To play a full part in Cold war. By their presence, Australian forces in South East Asia can contribute to the stability of the free world.

(ii) To play an effective part should Limited war occur in the Far East.

(iii) To play an effective part in global war should it break out. It should be noted that the UK forces in the Far East will, in the main, be redeployed in other theatres in global war, leaving with Australia a greater degree of responsibility for the provision of forces.

(iv) To support the policy of Allied deterrent commensurate with Australia's economic ability ... While Australian Defence policy should support this concept as a possible and hopeful means to prevent global war, the most effective contribution Australia can make towards keeping world peace lies in helping to maintain stability in South East Asia. A maximum Australian contribution to the SEATO defensive effort by Australian land, sea and air forces is a logical requirement to do this.

11. For the reasons given in the above paragraphs, and the availability of manpower and money, the long-term plans for the Australian Navy must be based on the deployment of fewer ships than were sometimes planned in the past. It is therefore more than ever important that the Fleet should consist of ships of modern design and that their equipment should keep pace with developments.

12. The Cold war is the immediate problem. The Navy is able to play an important part in upholding our interests and influence in peacetime in distant parts of the world, particularly in the SEATO area. By its presence in this area, by its close ties with the Navies of other nations, and by the goodwill that it engenders in foreign countries, the Navy is a valuable weapon in the Cold War against Communism.

13. The RAN will continue to make a substantial contribution to the Naval strength of the Commonwealth and SEATO.

14. In Limited war in the East, it is planned to make immediately available a force consisting of an aircraft carrier, equipped with modern aircraft, supplemented by destroyers and anti-submarine frigates which would cooperate with Allied Naval forces deployed in the area.

15. In the event of Global war, it is expected that the UK Naval forces in the Far East will in the main, be redeployed in other theatres and Australian forces will necessarily be called upon to undertake as great a proportion of the British Naval effort in the Far East as possible.

(AA: MP1049/6, 5201/11/6)

46. Letter from Rear Admiral A.W.R. McNicoll, FOCAF, to Vice Admiral Sir Hastings Harrington, CNS, HMAS *Melbourne* at Sydney, 8 July 1963

In any discussion of Naval Programmes I believe we would be unwise to depart from our innate belief that our primary role is to keep the sea lanes open. The safe convoy of the Army to an overseas theatre is merely an extension of this role, but one which it would be injudicious to over emphasise, for two reasons. First, with the Army's warm concurrence, we would find ourselves the mere hand-maid of their overseas adventures. Second, a change in Government Policy or in the international situation might remove the requirement to convoy the Army overseas and leave us without much of our purpose. In order of priority, therefore, we should

- 1 Keep the sea lanes open, including
Convoy the Army overseas, if ever it goes, and
- 2 Retain some offensive capability towards a private enemy. ("The independent capability")

I understand that a Government decision, still extant, describes our role as primarily anti-submarine. This is true in large part, but has been very considerably modified by the emergence of new weapons which as well as submarines can menace both the convoy and its protectors. These of course, are the surface-to-surface guided missile (KRUPNY⁸ and the like) and the stand off air to surface guided missile (BADGER-KENNEL⁹ combination).

There is no more salutary exercise than to fill in the potential zones of BADGER operations, from, say, Biak—and they need not necessarily be Indonesian Badgers—and the possible areas of operation in our defence by shore-based fighters from existing or projected airfields. Where these do not overlap we would inevitably be on our own ...

Lastly we must think of the Indian Ocean. A SVERDLOV¹⁰ Cruiser operating south west of Sumatra against the Persian Gulf tankers would disrupt our economy very readily, and I can see no counter which we could offer except a carrier-borne air strike.

The observations which follow summarise the operational experiences of three major exercises in the past 18 months in so far as they relate to the role of fixed wing aircraft in MELBOURNE, and her replacement by a larger and faster carrier.

The sum of this experience points to the requirement for a larger and faster replacement carrier for MELBOURNE. I deliberately avoid the use of the word 'Strike Carrier' because of the Government's decision that the main task of the Navy is in the anti-submarine role ... which can be equipped with a suite of aircraft, be they fighters, fixed-wing anti submarine or helicopters, appropriate to her immediate task. I understand that the Americans have already recognised the requirement to carry fighter aircraft in their HUNTER KILLER Carriers for the purpose of shooting shadowers. It would also appear that the advent of such new weapons as those in the KRUPNY Class Destroyer and the BADGER-KENNEL Combination dictates that the initial defence of a

8 Krupny-class DDGs mounted SS-N-1 (range 30-150 nm), the first Soviet shipborne anti-ship missile.

9 The 'Badger' bomber could carry two underwing AS-1, 'Kennel' anti-ship missiles (range 50 nm).

10 Indonesia acquired the *Sverdlov*-class CA, *Irian* from the USSR in October 1962.

convoy must now be in greater depth than that afforded by the TARTAR¹¹ Missile, and that fighter aircraft, apart from their role in a strike against enemy surface ships and shadowers, will be need in the future for the defence of a convoy against air attack using stand off weapons.

P.S. I know it is assumed in some quarters that our powerful friends would supply air cover in the South China Sea. They might, but I feel it would be prudent to assume that in a hot war situation their carriers would be in their own offensive postures. So far as I know the USN has never been able to spare a strike carrier for a Seato Exercise.

(NHS, JSF)

47. The Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, 15 October 1964

65. From the foregoing we assess that continued participation with our allies in the maintenance of a forward defence policy of holding mainland South East Asia against communist expansion is the best course of action to be followed by appropriate military political and economic measures. In addition from now on Australia must be prepared to respond immediately to situations which might arise at any time from Indonesia's expanding military capability and aggressive policy which also threaten our forward defence posture.

66. Developments in South East Asia, such as the possible loss of South Vietnam and of bases in Malaysia, could threaten the allied forward defence posture but it will be in our national interests to preserve this position in South East Asia for as long as possible in Thailand or elsewhere. For this purpose contributions to our treaty and defence arrangements must be seen to be commensurate with our national interests and resources.

67. It will be no doubt be Australia's policy to endeavour to preserve friendly relations with Indonesia but this aim is not likely to be achieved unless we speak or negotiate from a position of strength in our own right. This requires in being demonstrably strong Australian forces with an offensive capacity sufficient to deter Indonesia from actions inimical to our interests. This would also provide an earnest of our endeavours to our allies.

68. If, in the longer term our forward defence posture in South East Asia is lost and an unfriendly or communist Indonesia linked with a communist South East Asia or armed by the USSR confronts Australia, there would be a need primarily for sea and air power to defend our shores and lines of communication supported by land forces able to counter any enemy forces which succeeded in making a landing on the mainland or crossing the border in Papua/New Guinea. Such a serious situation would not develop quickly. Time would be available in which to determine in concert with our United States and other allies an alternative military strategy but we would need to adapt and expand our forces rapidly to meet the changing circumstances.

(NHS, F302)

11 Tartar (range 10 nm) was the SAM originally fitted to the RAN's DDGs.

48. Haul Down Report by Vice Admiral Sir Hastings Harrington, CNS, 8 February 1965

2. I suggest that [the absence of a national comprehension of the requirement for sea power and in particular the naval component of sea power] is the most urgent of all our problems. From the operational aspect it has pre-eminent importance because the sea between Australia and Asia remains a physical barrier however the political situation in South East Asia develops. Because of our infinite inferiority in manpower we need such a barrier which gives us time for manoeuvre. Also our national income is earned by our exports and without our imports, particularly of oil, Australia comes to a standstill within a matter of a very few months. Without control of the sea our economy stops. Maritime warfare is my profession and it is my professional advice that the control of the sea needs a combination of effort by aeroplanes and ships—neither instrument can alone achieve it. Confused thinking on the most efficient way of providing the aircraft still persists in this country but the discussion of this matter is not pertinent here. It is my opinion that the concept of defending Australia by the establishment in South East Asia of indigenous armies, possibly strengthened by white soldiers, and provided with air and naval support from non-Asian sources has been shewn by events to be unsuccessful in the present context of South East Asian events. It is therefore necessary to select an alternative course of action, and maritime pre-eminence of the non-communist countries provides this alternative. Our defence must rest upon the seas between ourselves and Asia. It is still forward defence. The provision of naval and air strength is a long term business and events are moving ahead not only of public thinking but also ahead of the thinking of the defence agencies which should be advising the Government on the direction in which to formulate and to lead public opinion. Current events make it unlikely that the SEATO operational plans evolved during the past decade, and on which the composition of our forces is based, will bear any relevance to the situation which is likely to emerge over the next decade. However our Defence thinking since the constitution of SEATO could well be described as having “forgotten nothing and learnt nothing”. Our forces which a few years ago were so small that any increase in almost any form was acceptable are beginning to assume some practical size and shape and it is now that planning should proceed so as to ensure that the post 1968 plans are correctly orientated. Australian public opinion seems to remain quite uniformed [*sic*] on the urgency of the overall situation and erroneously informed on the need for naval strength. (NHS, F302)

49. Views of Vice Admiral A.W.R. McNicoll, CNS, on the RAN's role in possible future conflicts, 1965

(i) Let us suppose that we are shortly to send combat troops to South Vietnam. The troops would go by air, and the Navy's task would be to protect their material and support units against submarine attack. Enemy submarines if any would be Chinese, for if the war had “escalated” to the point where Australia were sending combat troops, Chinese “volunteer” submarines, anonymous and hard to identify, might well be on the lookout for Australian reinforcements. These reinforcements would be travelling in HMAS SYDNEY (which is virtually unarmed) and in certain merchant ships. There would be a succession of separate convoys.

For this task the RAN has at present six escorts ... Of these two will normally be refitting at any one time. Four escorts thus remain available for the convoy.

These four, together with HMAS MELBOURNE and her anti-submarine aircraft, would be adequate to screen the first and fastest convoy, consisting of HMAS SYDNEY, against submarine attack. There would be no provision against air attack other than the guns of the escorts. No ships of the RAN would then be available to escort the second convoy, consisting of a merchant ship or ships. It could be escorted however by Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft of the RAAF for part of the way. In the later stages of the voyage, RAF aircraft from Singapore could take over. The third convoy could again be escorted by the RAN, whose ships would be back by that time.

It perhaps would not matter in this situation that we could give almost no protection against air attack. Air attack on a convoy to Vietnam would be unlikely without considerable escalation of the war.

It does matter, however, that the present strength of our escorts is enough for only one convoy at a time, and we could afford no losses whatever. We cannot afford to be without HMAS MELBOURNE, which on present plans is due to go into dock for a “half-life” refit that will last for no less than two years from the middle of 1967.

(ii) In the event of our sending more troops to Malaya or Borneo, the same conditions would apply to our escorts. They would have to pass through Indonesian waters in the approaches to Singapore, but the risk of submarine attack there, in the “confrontation phase” would be slight, since hunting and identification would be easy.

Our lack of Naval fighter aircraft, however, leaves a serious deficiency in our capacity to give anti-submarine protection. Enemy reconnaissance aircraft whose job is to find the convoy and report its movements to their submarines (or bombers) would be safe from us, for we would have nothing to send in pursuit. Nor is this a deficiency with which the RAAF can help us, either now or in the future, as their fighters do not have the range to cover the critical areas. Even the DDG's when they arrive, will not fill this dangerous gap. Reconnaissance planes work beyond the range of their Tartar missiles, which are designed against the bombers themselves.

(iii) The spread of “confrontation” to east New Guinea would be a possible form of Indonesian retaliation for our help to Malaysia, especially if our land forces were heavily committed elsewhere. In this event the Navy's role would be to escort the soldiers to New Guinea; secondly we would patrol both ends of the north-south border in order to intercept small craft attempting landings by Indonesians or Indonesian-trained Papuans.

For this patrol work we have at present only our six minesweepers (four of them already in Malaysian waters) which are not really suitable, as they are extremely expensive and their engines were not designed to run slowly. We have, however, fourteen patrol craft and two more minesweepers approved in the three year programme (though not yet ordered). These should be delivered between 1966 and 1968, and will probably be manned by putting some of the minesweepers in reserve.

Even when we have them all, they will be few in relation to the need. This could be serious because as far as New Guinea is concerned I agree with Admiral Harrington that “we may be expected first to do what we can on our own”.

Indeed I would go further. It seems all too likely to me that the Americans would be slow to consider such “confrontation” as coming within the scope of ANZUS, whatever private assurance they may have given in the past. South Vietnam will have given them a great revulsion against unprofitable ventures in the jungle. Indonesia for her part would no doubt be careful to avoid an aggression so big and blatant that the

Americans could not ignore it. By the same token it might be difficult for us, without forfeiting the hope of support through ANZUS, to make any retaliatory attacks on Indonesian naval bases or territory. Perhaps therefore in this context it does not matter very much that neither the Navy nor the RAAF (until the F.111 is delivered) have the offensive capacity to make such attacks anyway.

(iv) An all-out war with Indonesia might escalate from confrontation in Malaysia and New Guinea. This I would think would only happen if our allies were so pre-occupied with a major war elsewhere that the Indonesians had no fear of retaliation. Nevertheless the possibility of our having to take on Indonesia alone cannot be discounted.

Since on present rates of stocks and consumption we have enough oil for only six weeks, Indonesia could achieve the fastest results by attacking our tanker traffic in the Indian Ocean. This would be out of range even of the F.111 and far beyond the reach of Canberra bombers. As for the RAN, it has nothing that could destroy the IRIAN. Enemy submarines could also bring our heavy industry to a halt by interfering with the shipment of iron ore around the coast. We have no escorts to convoy this traffic.

As time passes, we must expect that Indonesia, whose twelve submarines are strictly conventional, will be armed with cruise-type missiles (ie radar-controlled, not ballistic and with a range of 300 miles or so). These the Russians, having moved into the "Polaris" field, no longer require.

It would be pessimistic to assume that Indonesia would be given nuclear warheads for these missiles since the Russians have given none away to their friends as yet. If that happened, however, half a dozen such missiles could, if the submarines achieved a firing position, take out the heart of our capital cities. With conventional warheads they would be destructive enough, though there would perhaps be only one missile per submarine.

The first line of defence against submarine attack on our cities would be to bomb the submarine bases—a task for the F.111—if only one knew when D Day was. With enough submarines we could also lie in wait for enemy submarines outside their ports and catch them in the narrow straits debouching into open seas.

There could be no invasion without warning, as intelligence and aerial reconnaissance by the F.111 should keep us informed of any concentration of forces. The task of preventing an invasion fleet from reaching these shores would be one for RAN submarines and RAAF fighters and fighter bombers. Any attempt at invasion would of course be supported by its own air cover.

Before finishing this gloomy picture, let me stress again that it pre-supposes that our allies would be occupied elsewhere in a major war, thus presenting Indonesia with the opportunity.

(v) An all-out war between USA and China could conceivably develop from the war in Vietnam. In this case Australia would be involved not only through ANZUS commitments, but because China would treat us as an enemy for our participation with the Americans in South Vietnam. The greatest threat would then be from China's submarines, of which she has 25 or so, of the conventional type.

We must assume that within a few years China will have nuclear missiles. Whether she would be prepared to use them would depend on how far the war had escalated. American nuclear strikes on Peking would not prevent Chinese missile carrying submarines from slipping out of bases in any nearby countries which by that

time had fallen under communist domination, in order to attack Australian cities. Against these there could be no certain defence.
(NHS, F302)

50. Defence Report presented to Parliament by the Hon. Allen Fairhall, MP, Minister for Defence, 1968

Since the Defence Report of September 1967 there have been a series of developments having a major bearing on the premises on which our defence planning and preparations have been based. They made more urgent the wide ranging review of Australia's defence role, the shape of its planning and the capacity of its forces relative to the situations likely to confront them.

Of first importance was the sudden decision of the British Government, in January this year, to withdraw completely by December 1971 its military forces from Malaysia/Singapore. That the British would phase out their forces from their bases in the area by the mid-1970's was assumed, but on the basis of British announcements there was still to be maintained a limited military presence in the form of naval and amphibious forces. While the January decision contemplated a continuing British interest in the stability of South East Asia, the Anglo/Malaysian Defence Agreement and SEATO, it was plain that the accelerated rundown of British forces presented a new defence and security situation in the region and as well political and economic problems for the Malaysian and Singapore Governments.

The Five Power Talks held in Kuala Lumpur last June served the most valuable purpose in clarifying some of the issues raised by the British withdrawal. Australia and the other four countries concerned reaffirmed a continuing interest in the peace and stability of the Malaysia/Singapore area and their intention to maintain close co-operation with each other. The representatives of Malaysia and Singapore indicated that their governments were resolved, working together, to do their utmost for their own defence, and that they would welcome the assistance of the other three Governments. No one imagined that Australia would take up the role which Britain had played in the area. The Conference saw the meeting as a forerunner of regular meetings and agreed on further studies of Naval, Army and Air Force matters. The proceedings of this conference and the continuing work which has been set in hand will be of considerable help to us in determining our own long term defence policies.

The announcement by President Johnson on 31 March of his decision to restrict the bombing of North Vietnam, opening the way to the talks in Paris that began on 13 May carried implications of direct significance to our long term defence thinking as well as to our continuing military presence in Vietnam.

Within the South East Asia region important qualitative changes have been occurring which have a direct bearing on our defence planning. On the positive side, these include greatly improved economic and political conditions in a number of countries. These have developed their own strength and cohesion, and therefore capacity to contribute to the security of the region through their own cooperative efforts and the expansion of their Defence Forces. In Indonesia President Suharto's regime provided further confirmation of its attention to the solving of his country's more pressing problems and concerns to live in harmony with its neighbours. On the negative side, communist pressure backed by strong military forces continues in various countries.

While the character of the threat earlier posed has changed, there remains no evidence that Chinese communist objectives have been modified. The capability of the Chinese communist armed forces continued to increase steadily with the coming into service of more modern conventional weapons and equipment, and progress was made to a nuclear capability. Apart from Vietnam, where China aids the North's military effort on a large scale, support of subversion and insurgency are the principal means used by China to expand her influence in neighbouring regions.

Strategy embraces far more than matters of purely military significance or even of military importance in Asia. Strategy extends to political, economic and social aims and objectives. The security and stability that our strategic interests require cannot be solely achieved by military measures. There must be the closest inter-relationship between Defence policy and political and economic policies. These considerations have particular force in the current and evolving circumstances of South East Asia.

Despite their differences, the USSR shared with China support for North Vietnam and there were no indications that the USSR would, in Asia or elsewhere, lose any opportunity to advance her own interests. One manifestation was greater naval interest in the Indian Ocean.

As well any strategic appraisal such as Australia is now conducting must be seen in a global background. Relations between the United States and the USSR, the outlook of those countries on global problems, movements within the communist world, all have a profound influence on events in South-East Asia.

The Royal Australian Navy is responsible in time of war for the following tasks, which it may undertake, when appropriate, with sister services:

- The detection and destruction of enemy forces which threaten our control of the sea areas or which are making use of the sea for purposes inimical to our interests.
- The provision of offensive and defensive support to friendly forces.
- The protection of military shipping and merchant shipping which is vital to the national economy.
- The provision of seaward security of ports and anchorages supporting our own and allied operations.
- The provision of support facilities and ancillary services as required.

Australia is an island continent situated on the periphery of Asia between two great oceans, and is relatively isolated from the rest of the world. The mobility, flexibility and state of preparedness of the RAN makes it capable of quick reaction to any threat which might develop in Australia's area of strategic interest.

The RAN's continued modernisation programme, with significant progress in anti-submarine and anti-aircraft missiles, will give the RAN more firepower and flexibility than ever before.

(Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1968)

51. Strategic Basis Paper, 1971

The increased emphasis on the defence of Australia itself in the long term will almost certainly call for a blend of offensive and defensive naval and air forces supported by

and supporting highly mobile and hard hitting army forces; in most instances we see our forces operating as a joint force complementary to each other. Static defence of numerous fixed positions will play only a limited part in the relevant concept and the mobility of all the forces concerned will be a key factor in its development. The provision of improved mobility for all Services, not only beyond but also within Australia, co-ordinated where practicable with civil resources and including building infrastructure, should therefore undoubtedly assume a high priority in our planning.

(*Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* (Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS), Canberra, 1986), p. 24)

52. Strategic Basis Paper, 1973

Australia is remote from the principal centres of strategic interest of the major Powers, namely Western Europe and East Asia, and even those of secondary interest, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the North West Pacific. Having ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty we are not a factor in the Powers' nuclear calculations and dealings. We are not a principal party in the shaping of any regional affairs relevant to their interests, nor are we under present threat from our immediate neighbours. Because of its location and size Australia is a difficult country to invade, conquer and occupy. Moreover we are a Power of sufficient substance to discourage any thought that we may be susceptible to low-level pressure ... it can be said that Australia is at present one of the most secure countries in the world.

(*Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 25)

53. Strategic Basis Paper, 1975

... conventional forces can only attack Australia by using sea and air approaches, and Australian strategy should look to having adequate naval and air power for interdiction, including forward operations, while at the same time having in being those ground and other forces capable of dealing quickly with any lodgements which might nevertheless be made.

(*Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, p. 25)

54. *Australian Defence*, presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence the Hon. D.J. Killen, MP, November 1976

In our contemporary circumstances we no longer base our policy on the expectation that Australia's Navy, Army or Air Force will be sent abroad to fight as part of some other nation's force, supported by it. We do not rule out an Australian contribution to operations elsewhere if the requirement arose and we felt that our presence would be effective, and if our forces could be spared from their national tasks. But we believe that any operations are much more likely to be in our own neighbourhood than in some distant or forward theatre, and that our Armed Services would be conducting joint operations together as the Australian Defence Force.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1976)

55. *Defence Report*, presented to the Minister by Admiral A.M. Synnot, CDFS, and W.B. Pritchett, Secretary Department of Defence, 19 August 1980

The latest of a series of major intelligence assessments and reviews of Australia's strategic policy were considered by Government, initially in late 1979 and again early in 1980. Attention was given on the latter occasion specifically to the implications of the Soviet military action in Afghanistan.

In his address to Parliament on 19 February 1980, the Prime Minister pointed to the consequences of the Soviet move:

"Russian military power is now 250 miles closer to the Gulf than it was two months ago. It is now within 300 miles of the Straits of Hormuz, the choke-point through which the bulk of the world's oil supply must move. The Soviet Union has acquired a border of over 1300 miles with Pakistan. It is a maxim of strategy that a line of advance which offers alternative objectives should always be sought. In invading Afghanistan the Soviet Union has followed this maxim; it is now so placed that if and when it wishes it can exert pressure on the Gulf oil states to the West, on the Indian sub-continent to the East or towards the Indian Ocean to the South. Whatever its original motives, the consequences go far beyond the stabilization of a local situation and have global significance. They can themselves create new motives for action."

In his statement ... the Prime Minister announced that the Defence Department was discussing with United States authorities ways in which Australia could assist United States forces operating in the Indian Ocean. Measures under discussion included the use by those forces of staging facilities, exercise areas and repair and maintenance facilities in Australia, and use of the Australian naval base at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia.

The Government also announced its decision to increase operations by Australian forces in the Indian Ocean and measures to expand support facilities in Western Australia. The latter included improvement of the facilities at Cockburn Sound. Australia's involvement in operations in the Indian Ocean was to be coordinated with the United States so as to support United States operations in the area. However, the Australian operations would remain an independent national effort. The Government decided in March 1980 not to accede to a United States Government request for Australia to commit forces to the United States rapid deployment force.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1980)

56. *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence by Mr Paul Dibb, March 1986

The maritime environment is peculiarly suited to the use of military force. Military actions in a maritime context are less confrontational and threatening than direct operations, however limited, on an opponent's territory. A military challenge in the maritime environment can be employed more flexibly, involving shadowing, feinting, harassment, advance into a (contested) resource zone and withdrawal, as well as the ultimate use of force by naval and air assets. Risks inherent in our maritime environment, where Australia claims an extensive resource and fishing zone and has important

offshore installations and territories, could pose formidable problems for the nation's defence.

The focus on maritime contingencies is strengthened by the realisation that, except where they are aimed at some sort of clear public impact, the scope for inserting raids on Australian territory will be limited. The waters to be crossed are wide, the areas most susceptible to landing are generally inhospitable, and the population will be alien and hostile. These considerations reinforce the judgement favouring the maritime environment.

The waters to our north offer different kinds of potential for harassment. Our vast coastline, the proximity to it of the island chain, the location of our resource zones, the remoteness of our island territories, the patterns of our coastal and international shipping, and the distances to be covered in the defence of these interests, present formidable surveillance and operational response problems. These could be exploited by an adversary possessing only modest maritime capabilities.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1986)

57. *The Defence of Australia 1987*, presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence the Hon. K.C. Beazley, MP, March 1987

Australia's defence policy

1.1 The Government's policy of defence self-reliance gives priority to the ability to defend ourselves with our own resources. Australia must have the military capability to prevent an enemy from attacking us successfully in our sea and air approaches, gaining a foothold on our territory, or extracting political concessions from us through the use of military force. These are uniquely Australian interests and Australia must have the independent military capability to defend them.

1.2 This policy of defence self-reliance is pursued within a framework of alliances and agreements. The most significant of these is with the United States. We share a defence relationship with New Zealand which is of basic importance. We have other important arrangements with Papua New Guinea and with the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore in the Five Power Defence Arrangements. While not a subject of any specific security undertakings, important defence activities take place with other nations in the South-West Pacific and South-East Asia.

1.3 These arrangements, particularly those with the United States, enhance self-reliance by improving our technological capabilities, by providing training opportunities for our armed services, and by giving Australia access to vital military and political intelligence. The security provisions of our alliance agreements also oblige a potential enemy to contemplate the prospect of an allied effort against it should it choose to attack Australia. These arrangements emphasise Australia's membership of the Western strategic community, and they enhance regional stability. The interests of Australia's allies and regional associates are advanced by Australia's ability to provide for its own defence.

Australia's physical environment

2.63 Australia's national strategic setting is shaped in a unique and enduring way by basic facts of geography and location, population size and distribution, and our national economic resources and infrastructure. Australia is distant from the main centres of superpower rivalry and the major areas of instability in the world. The great majority of our population and industrial centres are in the south-east and south of the continent, naturally protected by vast ocean surrounds and the inhospitable tracts of our own country to the north and north-west. While our manpower base is small, we have a relatively large and sophisticated economic, scientific, technological and industrial expansion base. By regional standards, this gives us a substantial capacity, to repair, support and develop our own defence equipment. Our research base and industrial infrastructure, however, cannot develop and manufacture at an economic cost the full range of high technology equipment which characterise contemporary defence forces.

2.64 More fundamentally, our geographic location and the lack of land borders, combine to provide us with natural defences against conventional attack. To minimise the problems involved in conducting combat operations at great distance from main support areas, it is most likely that any adversary would first seek to secure bases in the archipelago to our north. Even so, the mainland of our nearest neighbour, Papua New Guinea, is 160 kilometres from the Australian mainland, and Indonesia is some 250 kilometres away at its nearest point. The Asian mainland is almost 3,000 kilometres away.

2.65 These basic facts of our geographic location indicate that conventional military attack against Australia would most likely be directed against the northern part of the mainland, its maritime approaches or off-shore territories. The corollary is that those basic facts of geography highlight the fundamental importance for Australia of maritime forces¹² capable of preventing an enemy from substantial success or control in those areas.

2.66 The military capabilities required for a large-scale conventional attack on Australia, in particular the naval and air power to project and sustain substantial operations against Australian forces, are beyond those currently possessed by any regional power. Given the long lead times and large costs involved in establishing the kind of major military capabilities which would be required, this is likely to remain so for many years. And if a regional country were to develop the motivation and capability, the features of our northern environment would complicate large scale conventional military operations. Shallow waters and large tidal variations make navigation difficult and generally hinder maritime operations. Any land forces that were to elude Australian opposition and overcome maritime obstacles would find themselves in a harsh and inhospitable environment.

2.67 The paucity of population and transport and other infrastructure in northern Australia, and the nature of the land, would tend to focus military operations of substance on a few areas, for example, airfields, off-shore resource projects, shipping in coastal waters, port facilities, and communication and transport links. Australia would be dependent on many of these facilities for logistic support of forces deployed along the northern coast, and an attacker would want to take them if he were to sustain a lodgement or make progress.

12 The term 'maritime forces' here means naval and air forces.

2.68 While all of these factors limit the potential for major military operations against Australia, many of the same factors introduce potential vulnerabilities which could be exploited by alternative, and less costly, military operations. The use of limited military force to harass, for example, remote settlements and other targets around northern Australia, our off-shore territories, or shipping in proximate areas, would pose significant problems for us. The physical characteristics of northern Australia and its distance from the major support bases in the south and south-east would also complicate our operations. In those circumstances, our vast coastline, the rugged terrain, the distances between our population centres or settlements, the remoteness of our island territories, the location of our northern resource zones, and the requirement to protect focal areas and the approaches to our major ports, could be exploited to our disadvantage.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1987)

58. Post-Budget Statement by the Minister for Defence the Hon. K.C. Beazley, MP, 8 October 1987

Our Navy and maritime warfare capabilities are undergoing a massive restructuring and improvement of capability. Individual programs generate excitement in Australian industry with the attractiveness of their new technologies but their importance to the new strategy is sometimes missed. Our Navy is developing the ability to protect vital choke points, patrol considerable distances, sweep our ports clean of mines and strike an enemy's forces at source. In the debate that surrounded the decision by the previous Government not to proceed with the aircraft carrier, endorsed by ourselves, the considerable potential of our maritime forces was obscured.

A navy with these tasks is going to look different from a navy focussed on force projection. However its role in the contemporary era will be more vital.

The great significance of our submarine fleet runs in tandem with the major upgrading of the maritime warfare capability of our surface fleet. It leaves us with a major increase in the number of platforms. The increased numbers are no accident. They are a result of addressing the enormously difficult problems of simultaneously confronting our need to defend choke points to our north and south and develop a capacity to patrol further afield in areas such as the South Pacific.

The size of the surface combatant fleet when this government was elected was related to keeping one aircraft carrier battle group operational. Not only was this concept inadequate for the strategy of forward defence and power projection applied in the 1950s and 1960s, but that size force—12 destroyers and 20 patrol boats—was clearly insufficient for the defence of Australia itself. This position is being rectified now with the creation of the rational structure of three levels with the numbers in each related to the tasks and capabilities required for maritime warfare within the strategy of defence in depth. This will be a substantial improvement in defence planning over the largely 'rule of thumb' approach of the past.

(DEFNAV CANBERRA 080851Z OCT 87)

59. *Defence Report 1987-88*, presented to the Minister by A.J. Ayers, Secretary Department of Defence and General P.C. Gration, CDF, 14 September 1988

The objective of the RAN is to raise, train and maintain seaborne forces structured to be able to:

- deal with credible maritime contingencies in Australia's area of direct military interest, generally as part of a joint force; and,
 - provide a base for longer term expansion should this be required.
- Implicit in this objective is the requirement for naval forces to:
- sustain a capacity for independent operations within Australia's of direct strategic interest, but distant from main bases and logistic support areas, and particularly in northern waters. The RAN is to be capable of:
 - contributing to maritime operations to prevent an adversary from substantial use of or exploitation of our maritime approaches;
 - coastal operations, particularly mine countermeasures and to counter harassment and infiltration;
 - ocean operations requiring higher levels of offensive and defensive capability; and
 - deployment in the region in support of Australia's interests;
 - undertake national peacetime tasks as directed by the Government including hydrography, oceanography, marine science, coastal surveillance and assistance to the civil community in the form of search and rescue and disaster relief operations;
 - maintain an effective capability to contribute to the ANZUS Treaty, support international peacekeeping, and, having regard to national priorities, practice interoperability with the USN, RNZN and other allied forces; and
 - maintain the Reserve Force as a basis for expansion.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1988)

60. Response by Kim Beazley, Minister for Defence, on Australia's defensive posture, 1990

Two types of capability in particular have been phased out or scaled down because we have concluded that their essentially offensive nature makes them inappropriate for our force structure.

The first of these is an aircraft carrier. The government agreed with its predecessor in deciding not to replace the Melbourne because we concluded that the needs for maritime airpower in an essentially defensive strategy could be met by long-range land-based aircraft. A carrier would add only the ability to carry the war to very distant targets which could not directly threaten our territory.

What we developed instead is a naval strategy which is orientated in the first instance toward the very important task of guarding the choke-points around Australia's shores. These choke points are a large responsibility. They can extend up to a thousand miles from our shores. They require the deployment of large numbers of capable ships. This is the rationale for the ANZAC frigate program and for our broader goal to increase the numbers of major combatants in the RAN, and it underlies the development of a two-ocean navy. Strategically this posture is defensive, even if its prosecution can involve seizing the tactical initiative under some circumstances.

The second capability we have downgraded somewhat in the ADF is amphibious troop lift—the ability to put troops ashore. We have not abandoned this capability, because we can see circumstances in which it could be important in sustaining a defensive posture. But we have not sought to expand our ability to seize and hold other nations' territory by expanding our amphibious lift capability as some have suggested. (G. Cheeseman, *The New Australian Militarism* (Pluto Press, Leichhardt, 1990), p. 212)

61. *Force Structure Review*, Report to the Minister for Defence, May 1991

MARITIME PATROL AND RESPONSE

2.25 The possibly unpredictable nature of operations in Australia's northern and north-western approaches demands flexible forces able to locate, identify, track and engage surface and sub-surface targets.

2.26 The submarine force would normally be tasked with patrol operations in focal areas. Its torpedoes and missiles provide a tactical response capability. P3C, F-111C and FA/18 aircraft can also use missiles in maritime response operations. Aircraft can patrol larger areas and respond more quickly over greater distances than can surface ships and submarines, but naval vessels can remain on station for extended periods. A balance between aircraft, surface ships and submarines is needed to provide flexibility.

2.27 The surface combatant force can be developed under two broad classifications: destroyers/frigates and offshore patrol vessels. The planned force should consist of a balance of destroyers and frigates equipped with helicopters and air defence systems, and offshore patrol vessels for operations in the Australian fishing zone and offshore territories.

2.28 The number of surface combatants and the levels of capability that they should possess depend on the number of tasks that could be expected to be undertaken, the nature of those tasks, and the tactical environment in which they will be conducted.

2.29 The use of pairs of surface combatants to patrol the approaches to Australia between, say, Derby and Torres Strait, could require eight ships. Simultaneous patrol tasks off the north-east coast and North West Cape could involve a further two. With allowance for refit and maintenance, a force of 16 surface combatants, with afloat support, would be required to maintain ten on station.

2.30 The protection of Cocos and Christmas Islands, and offshore resource platforms, could require a further four surface combatants, and if required, convoy operations could absorb a further four. A force of twelve surface combatants would be required to maintain these eight on task. Realistic tasking levels indicate that 16 of the 28 surface combatants should be destroyers or frigates.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1991)

62. *Strategic Review 1993*, December 1993

AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

1.1 With the end of the Cold War, fundamental changes have occurred in the international security order. The most dramatic change has been the demise of the Soviet

Union and the end of global East/West confrontation. Australia and the world are now relatively free from the fear of global nuclear war or major conventional war between superpowers. International alignments and the centres of power competition have become diffused as superpower military competition has been replaced by a more complex, fluid, and less certain structure. Regional powers have assumed greater importance—including in the Asia-Pacific, where Japan and China in particular have increasing power and influence.

PLANNING FOR THE DEFENCE OF AUSTRALIA

Key Factors

5.13 Uncertainties in the international environment have reinforced the strategic foundations that guide planning for the defence of Australia. Australia should be able to carry out itself the essential combat and combat-related tasks that are judged necessary for our defence. These are the tasks we can least rely on other countries to perform, and which are vital for national independence. An ability to handle these tasks ourselves in part of our fundamental contribution to the security and stability of our region. It meets our responsibility to our regional defence partners and to our allies to carry our share of the security burden.

5.14 In circumstances where Australia faces no identifiable military threat, priorities for the development of our defence capabilities are driven principally by Australia's geography, the different forms of conflict to which we would be required to respond, and the timescales in which various levels of pressure could arise.

Defence of Australia Roles

5.32 Our key defence roles are derived from our strategy of defence-in-depth for the defence of Australia. The capabilities for these roles determine the ADF's overall force structure. The roles are:

- intelligence collection and evaluation;
- surveillance of maritime areas and northern Australia;
- maritime patrol and response;
- protection of shipping, offshore territories and resources;
- air defence in maritime areas and northern approaches;
- defeat of incursions on Australian territory;
- protection of important civil and defence assets, including infrastructure and population centres; and
- strategic strike.

(Defence Publications, Canberra, 1993)

63. *Defending Australia*, Defence White Paper 1994, December 1994

NEW CHALLENGES TO OUR DEFENCE POLICY

2.18 The long-term trends in regional security affairs we have identified will develop slowly, but are likely over the next fifteen years to affect our strategic circumstances significantly. They will have important and direct consequences for the development of Australia's defence policy.

2.19 First, the end of the Cold War means the passing of the structures which have shaped the regional strategic environment. Previously, our defence planning had been able to assume a degree of predictability in our strategic circumstances. Now we need to take account of a more complex and changeable strategic environment. Australia's ability to help shape that environment will become more important to our security, and our policies will need to encompass a wider range of possible outcomes than in the predictable decades of the Cold War.

2.20 Second, economic growth and expanding military capabilities throughout Asia mean that the nature and scale of forces that could be brought to bear against Australia, and to which the Australian Defence Force needs to be able to respond, will increase steadily over the next fifteen years.

(AGPS, Canberra, 1994)

64. Statement by Vice Admiral R.G. Taylor, CNS, on what makes our navy relevant today, March 1995

Australia is an island nation and our economic prosperity is directly linked to seaborne trade. Of our trade (by volume) 90% is carried by sea—the bulk of our exports go to countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations rather than to the United States or the European Community—and our marine and estuarine areas contain significant natural resources. The strategic implications of these constants are obvious, and our defence policy places high priority on the direct defence of Australia and its key interests.

Fundamental to our wider security considerations are the importance of the defence-in-depth concept and our policy of defence self-reliance. Our Navy continues to focus on *credible* threats to Australian security, how we should respond to them, and the means by which we can promote the security of our strategic environment. Our low force-to-space ratio also has made it imperative that in both naval and joint operations we concentrate on quality, professionalism and technology.

In addition to our traditional warfighting roles, the Royal Australian Navy contributes significantly to the nation's security by conducting other tasks including maritime surveillance, fisheries protection, hydrography, and search-and-rescue.

There is a significant economic dimension to maritime security in our region, and the critical strategic importance of the major sea routes throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific are recognised by many countries. Through joint training, port visits, and increased interoperability with our regional neighbours, Australia and its Navy are well placed to promote and support a stable maritime environment in the region that will benefit all involved.

(United States Naval Institute *Proceedings*, Vol. 121/3/1,105)

65. Address by the Hon. Ian McLachlan, AO, MP, Minister for Defence on Australian defence policy after the year 2000, Parliament House, Canberra, 3 May 1996

Key Defence Objectives

Our key defence policy aim is to develop military forces able to defeat any attack against Australia. No country has the interest or capacity to launch a full-scale invasion against Australia, so our focus is on countering more realistic levels of threat. Our purpose is to deter any potential aggressor and, if deterrence fails, to defeat the enemy in our sea and air approaches and on land.

That objective is, and must be, the core business of the ADF. Additionally, the government will make an effective contribution to regional security. Australia's defence does not begin at its coast-line. On the contrary, Australia cannot be secure if the region is unstable. Defence is making a growing contribution to our wider regional security aims. One of the issues we need to examine is how far that particular role can and should be taken.

Australia cannot be adequately defended only by guarding our territory and by merely looking on at the changes sweeping through Asia. The stability and prosperity of Australia's neighbours; their willingness to resolve issues peacefully; their own perceptions of threats and dangers—these issues will determine whether Australia remains at peace.

There are many potential flash-points in the Asia-Pacific. China-Taiwan, the Korean peninsula and sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea are the most frequently mentioned areas where there is potential for military conflict. In addition to these, however, there are many disputed border areas, competing claims over patches of land and sea, piracy, internal insurgency conflicts and historical enmities and suspicions often arising out of religious or ethnic differences. All of these remain potential threats to peace and stability.

Our approach to Australia's defence and security, therefore, needs to use a wide definition of national interests. Trade access, freedom of navigation over air and sea routes and the security of Australia's neighbours are all crucial interests.

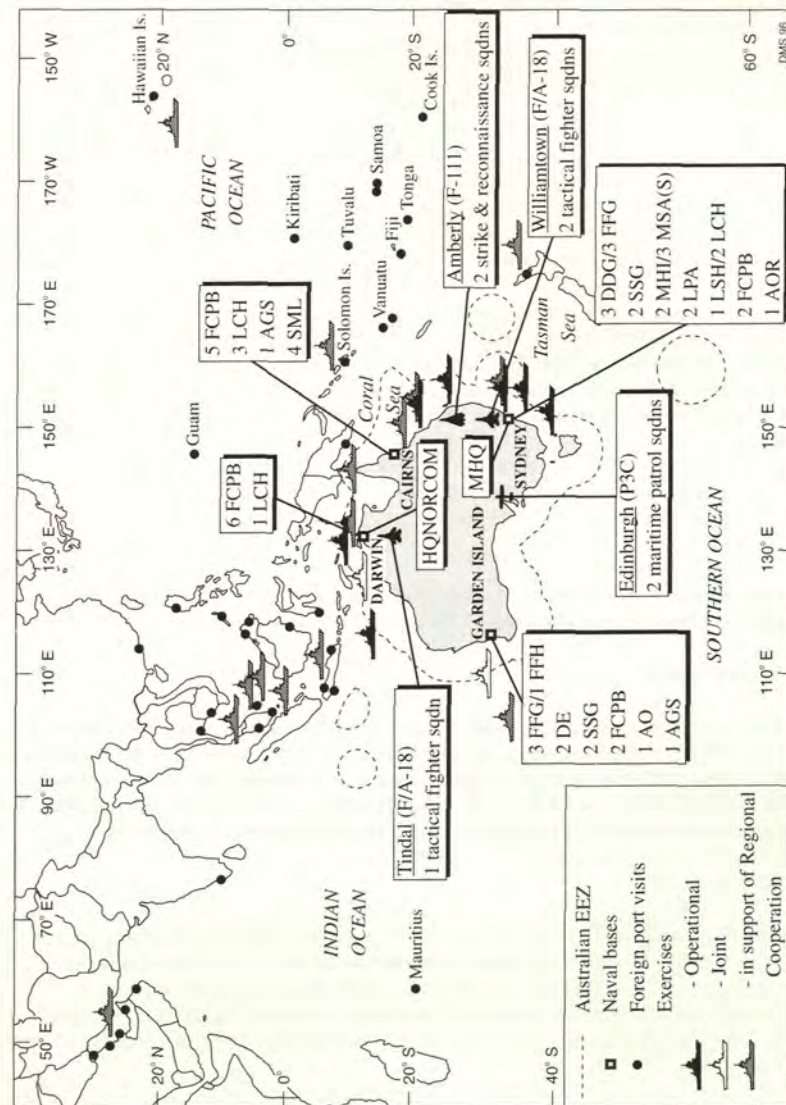
We also need to continue to strengthen the crucial alliance relationship with the United States. The alliance remains a central pillar of Australian defence policy. Australia's defence relationship with the United States has developed and will continue to develop out of shared security interests and a mutual respect for the capabilities and contribution which our forces can make to regional stability.

Increasing Combat Capability

Our first priority is to increase the ADF's combat capabilities. The purpose of military forces is to deliver effective combat-power on the battlefield, wherever that might be.

Granted, the ADF does have other roles to play; for example, in regional engagement and peacekeeping. But the bottom line is that Australia has a military to provide highly capable combat forces to protect its national interests.

We will increase combat elements and combat capability in the ADF through carefully redirecting resources ... But clearly they must increase to maintain Australia's



Map II.4: 1995-96 - Activities and dispositions of ADF maritime elements

relative military position in the Asia-Pacific at a time when many countries in Asia are modernising their forces.

No country in the region currently presents a threat to Australia. Indeed Australia maintains good security relations with all its neighbours and defence cooperation is an important part of its ties. However, it is a fact that military forces are generally growing in the Asia-Pacific. This is a development Australia cannot ignore. Therefore our aim is that the ADF of 2000 should be able to deliver a greater combat punch across a range of key military capabilities.

As an island country, Australia needs to give special emphasis to sea and air forces. We will work to improve Australia's capacity to locate and respond to potential aggressors in the maritime surrounds.

As a final point about increasing combat capabilities, I should add that the ADF of the twenty-first century must be a truly joint organisation. We have some distance to go to get to that point. But the way forward is clear. There will be more joint-service cooperation in non-combat support areas, in command and control and between combat forces. We need to structure our forces in the manner in which we plan for them to fight.

(Delivered at SDSC and IISS conference on The New Security Agenda in the Asia-Pacific Region, as published in H. Hookey and D. Roy (eds), *Australian Defence Planning: Five Views from Policy Makers* (SDSC, Canberra, 1997))

66. *Defence Annual Report 1995-1996*, submitted to the Minister by A.J. Ayers, Secretary Department of Defence and General J.S. Baker, CDF, 15 October 1996

PROGRAM 2: NAVY

Australia's geographic location, extensive coastline and island territories emphasise the significance of maritime operations in the defence of Australia. The RAN places an emphasis on surveillance and patrol operations in our immediate sea approaches in concert with the RAAF, as well as developing, through exercises, the capability to undertake effective maritime operations in our area of primary strategic interest.

PROGRAM 3: ARMY

The nature of Australia's territory and environment dictates the need for highly mobile land forces, capable of rapid deployment across considerable distances and able to conduct protracted and dispersed operations in harsh terrain where the existing infrastructure and resources are sparse. Army is structured as a total force comprising Regular, Reserve and civilian employees, with all contributing to the achievement of the Army's objectives.

PROGRAM 4: AIR FORCE

Australia's Air Force is tasked with providing effective air power for Australia's security. Air power plays a major role in surveillance and intelligence gathering in sea and air approaches, denying these to an adversary and defeating incursions into Australian territory.

(Directorate of Publishing, Canberra, 1996)

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The maritime element in Australian defence planning since 1901

Australia is and always has been a maritime nation. From the earliest days of European settlement, the people of Australia have looked to the sea for their security. Protection was first provided under the umbrella of Imperial Defence and the Royal Navy. Later as our nation matured, the need was identified to establish a local navy, manned and commanded by Australians.

However security is not found in one environment alone and in the years since Federation there has been a continuing struggle to reconcile differing perceptions of threat, competing defence strategies, conflicting force structure priorities and economic and political constraints. Australia's unique geographical situation provides both security and vulnerability, and in seeking either to exploit or protect these features defence planners have had to continually adjust to the realities of the day.

This book brings together leading authorities from Australia and overseas and for the first time comprehensively examines our nation's search for an effective maritime strategy in the twentieth century. Illuminating both the similarities and differences between eras, the volume provides a succinct overview of Australia's changing maritime priorities and the evolution of broader strategic planning. The insights gained will be of benefit not only to those interested in defence history but also to all those concerned with current issues in Australian security strategy.