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**MARITIME STRATEGY AND  
DEFENCE OF THE ARCHIPELAGIC INNER ARC**

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# MARITIME STRATEGY AND DEFENCE OF THE ARCHIPELAGIC INNER ARC<sup>1</sup>

John Reeve

## **The inner arc, Australian strategic policy, and the value of history**

Conventional wisdom today amongst Australian strategic planners is that defence of the archipelagic ‘inner arc’ to our north—as a zone of influence and a barrier against attack—is an essential concern. The arc is officially defined as the chain of islands from Indonesia in the west through Papua New Guinea to the Solomons and the Southwest Pacific.<sup>2</sup> It is that area from which land-based air attack can conceivably be launched against us. There is no doubt that the area of the arc is of critical strategic importance for Australia in virtually every sense. Certainly it must figure in the formulation of our defensive military strategy. Within the wider maritime environment of the Asia–Pacific in which the arc is situated, there is clearly a role for Australian joint force strategy and operations when and where required. As the recent deployment to Timor has indicated, this is probably the most likely area for future ADF operations. In this context the Army, Navy, and Air Force have intimately related roles within a maritime concept of strategy.<sup>3</sup> ‘Maritime’ is an environmental, not a service-related definition and an operative word here.<sup>4</sup> This paper does not argue a navalist position, implying that sea power alone will do the job. Nor is it directly concerned with procurement or budgetary issues. It does however argue that the concept of defending the inner arc is (as it stands) strategically flawed, potentially dangerous, and in need of further development. It is flawed because it does not relate concepts such as manoeuvre in the littorals (coastal areas) to relevant principles of maritime strategy, especially sea control (the ability to use an area of the sea and deny it to others), which are based upon long historical experience and have been proven correct in every major conflict from the Anglo–French wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the end of the Cold War, as well as in the Falklands in 1982 and the Gulf in 1990–91.<sup>5</sup> At the same time the concept of defending the arc is linked to an assumption of using sea denial (‘guerilla war at sea’) which can only operate as a function of sea control.<sup>6</sup> The aim in arguing this is not to score political points but to

stimulate constructive debate on an issue of vital concern for Australian security.

The concept of defence of the inner arc is inadequate not only in strategic terms but in the broader policy sense as well. This paper concentrates on the former issue, but we should also be aware of the latter. Overemphasis upon the arc involves a narrow conception of Australia's national interests. Those interests should of course be conceived of not simply in geographical terms (especially in the very limited ones implied by the inner arc), but also in the economic, cultural or philosophical, international legal, environmental, and political-diplomatic senses.<sup>7</sup> All these dimensions imply, for one thing, a more geographically flexible strategic outlook. The Australian naval task force sent to the Gulf War in 1990–91, for example, was far from the arc but an essential contribution in terms of Australian commitment to the United Nations and the world community.

To return to strategy, history provides the only real evidence against which we can test strategic concepts. History has advantages in strategic discussion: it is real, it is unclassified, and we know who won. The concept of defending the inner arc can be tested against the Japanese war in the Pacific during the 1940s. Just as in Europe, where an illuminating first question is often how and why did the Nazis succeed in taking a particular country and fail to hold it, Japan's war in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific gives us an actual case study fought over the same area conceived of as the inner arc at the level of high intensity conventional warfare. It involved two phases: that of Japanese victory/Allied defeat (1941–42) and of Allied victory/Japanese defeat (from 1942 onwards). There are, as in all historical comparisons, variable factors for and against such a comparison between past and present. But the similarities in this case argue for its intellectual credibility and strategic utility.

Admittedly during the second phase, that of Allied victory, Japan was ultimately overwhelmed by greater force.<sup>8</sup> But it is the very effective way in which greater Allied force was applied, especially in turning the tide, and the strategic inadequacy of the Japanese response which are instructive for our purposes. In short, the Japanese concept of perimeter

defence was the product of inadequate pre-war planning, inter-service rivalry, lack of strategic imagination, an attempt to translate assumptions of continental defence to the maritime sphere, and lack of understanding of the regional maritime-littoral environment. Together these mistakes constituted one of the most dramatic and fatal examples of contradicting Clausewitzian principle in the history of warfare.<sup>9</sup> The Allied advance through the region, by contrast, was built upon the establishment and mobile exploitation of sea control. This progressively left the Japanese defence floundering in a manner which has critical lessons for any Australian defensive concept based on comparable ideas. This is not to suggest that current Australian planning necessarily makes the mistakes made by the Japanese. It is, however, to suggest that a concept for defending the inner arc must pay attention to controlling the sea or risk failure. To think for a moment of Australia's intervention in Timor in 1999 (a case of peace establishment within the inner arc), sea control and naval cover there were a given, and Lieutenant-General Peter Cosgrove, Commander of INTERFET, has gone on record as to how essential they were, calling this a blindingly obvious lesson in the value of sea power.<sup>10</sup> As the Japanese learnt to their cost, and as we should take note, how much more applicable is this lesson to high intensity operations, in which sea control may be contested, and in which our national interests may be threatened more seriously?

### **The Japanese strategic outlook and the fallacies of the perimeter**

Where did the defensive perimeter concept come from? The Japanese Pacific War was a classic case of the worst mistake any nation can make: starting a war without knowing how to end it. Japanese strategy was short-term, and plagued by lack of inter-service cooperation and understanding.<sup>11</sup> In 1941 the Imperial Japanese Army was preoccupied with the Asian mainland and its continuing war in China, where forty-four of its fifty-five divisions were deployed. Insofar as it gave thought to Southeast Asia it was in terms of a territorial resource basket to be seized and held.<sup>12</sup> The Army's broad assumption was that the Navy would conduct a defensive war in the Pacific.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately the Army saw itself as fighting the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> There was thus a lack of forward planning for the Pacific, especially on the part of the politically

dominant Imperial Army.<sup>15</sup> How were the conquests to be defended, and how would the conflict be resolved? There was a general working assumption (worked to pessimistically by Admiral Yamamoto, Commander of the Combined Fleet) that Japan should arrive at a negotiated settlement in which the Allies would respect the Pacific conquests.<sup>16</sup> This fallacious assumption undermined efforts to analyse the problem of defence. The concept of an outer perimeter—which represented a failure to create a general maritime strategy—emerged during 1942, with the Army's dominance at Imperial General HQ, its winning of the political battle against the Navy's view of a wider Pacific War, the defeats at Coral Sea and Midway which led to loss of sea control, and that at Guadalcanal which led to progressive rolling back of the defensive perimeter. The death of Yamamoto in 1943 ended the likelihood of wider strategic use of the maritime environment by the Navy.<sup>17</sup> The reactive concept of the defence of a territorial perimeter was thus established, creating the opportunity for Allied exploitation.<sup>18</sup>

How did this exploitation take place, causing the perimeter to crumble? The Japanese came to see the archipelagic and atoll environment in terms of static defence linked to land-based air power.<sup>19</sup> (Such air power gave cover and strike capability for both sides in the Pacific War,<sup>20</sup> but Allied victory rested also on more mobile carrier air which co-operated with land-based air as well as operating where it could not.)<sup>21</sup> Without sea control such a reactive Japanese concept of defence meant lack of manoeuvre and hence vulnerability and lack of strategic options. The perimeter was potentially liable to penetration and outflanking like any defensive line. But situated in the maritime-littoral environment and without use of sea control it was a particularly dangerous position. The withdrawal from Guadalcanal in 1943 thus precipitated the collapse of the outer perimeter.<sup>22</sup> The Japanese strategic problem became not knowing when and where the Allies would use sea control to strike next.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, seeing their defensive posture in territorial as opposed to maritime terms led to the Japanese taking their sea communications—and hence logistics and reinforcements—for granted. The Allied submarine campaign inside and beyond the defensive perimeter devastated Japan's sea transport in the most successful blockade in naval history.<sup>24</sup> This blockade, like the amphibious power projection which defeated the perimeter, depended upon sea control, and like that power



projection it was a war-winning weapon. George Baer, one of the world's most distinguished naval historical-strategic writers, has written of the Japanese defeat:

There was no systematic effort until too late to protect within these zones the sea lanes over which the vital cargo ships passed, to meet and match the American submarines, to mount a *guerre de course*, or, after Midway, to make another try for offensive sea control. Each of these omissions was an astonishing strategic lapse...Pinning all their hopes on the battles expected under their strategy of zone defence, Japan's leaders left exposed all other dimensions of the country's maritime position, failing in every other way to protect the empire's vital access to the sea...The offensive strategy of the United States exposed the weakness of Japan's perimeter defence. Static island fortresses, even with air bases, did not constitute an impenetrable palisade unless a navy held local command of the sea. That command Japan never attained. Its navy simply lacked the force and range...The United States, with its dual advance and very flexible naval strategy, kept the initiative. It dispersed its fleet into task forces that kept the enemy off balance. The Americans could assault, or simply bypass and isolate, the Japanese barrier's strongpoints, attacking as they chose and wearing the empire down...The Americans used time and space as the Japanese could not.<sup>25</sup>

Unimaginative and arrived at by default, the Japanese perimeter concept was flawed in the limitation of strategic options it imposed. It tended, moreover, to compound defeat with defeat, as withdrawal was the only option in the face of penetration and outmanoeuvre given the absence of sea control. The withdrawal in late 1943 to an 'absolute national defence sphere' was thus in turn a failure.<sup>26</sup> In war it is the winners who usually fail to learn the lessons and to think outside the established frame. We should listen to the losers in the last major war to be fought in the maritime environment of the Asia-Pacific. Tojo told MacArthur that the Allies defeated Japan by a combination of three factors: the leapfrogging strategy, the submarine war on shipping, and US carrier air power.<sup>27</sup> In

maritime strategic terms, he was concluding that Japan lost its perimeter and the war because it lost control and use of the sea. Yamamoto had never wanted the war, but as a brilliant—if flawed—naval strategist he knew that the sea must be utilised fully if Japan were ever to establish a credible defensive posture or a negotiable position.<sup>28</sup> He knew that the region is oceanic in scale and that the sea makes it indivisible; that within this environment naval strategy is necessarily offensive (at least in the sense of achieving initiative, mobility, and reach), otherwise sea control will be lost; that the land-sea interface of Southeast Asia cannot be defended without that control;<sup>29</sup> that Australia is a natural springboard into this interface (hence his interest in attacking it before MacArthur and the Australian command—similarly aware—seized the strategic opportunity to use it to go forward); and that Australia is naturally dependent upon its sea communications (hence his interest in cutting them off).<sup>30</sup> Yamamoto's naval defeats and his death left Japanese Pacific strategy in the hands of the continentally-minded Imperial Army, who essentially saw the perimeter as a fortified extension of their land war on the Asian mainland. This is surely a lesson against superimposing Australian assumptions of continental defence upon the different circumstances of the maritime environment.

### **Sea Control and the inner arc: sea use, power projection, and blockade**

As the Japanese Pacific War demonstrates, all military operations in the area of the inner arc must be conceived of within the context of true maritime strategy. This is necessarily the case whatever the extent of a wider conventional war. There can be no battlespace dominance involving the arc without sea control. During the Pacific War the fighting revolving around Guadalcanal, New Guinea, the Philippines, and the Central Pacific was inextricably linked to the issue of who controlled the local seas and used them. Defence of the inner arc against Japan did not succeed until the Coral Sea and Midway battles afforded the Allies sea control.<sup>31</sup> The Coral Sea prevented advanced Japanese lodgement at Port Moresby (the Japanese expedition being covered by four cruisers and three carriers—Japanese land-based air at Rabaul playing no part in the episode).<sup>32</sup> Midway was the turning point for the

whole Pacific theatre.<sup>33</sup> With these victories, King, Nimitz, and MacArthur could take the whole regional war effort on to the offensive. Operations within the area of the arc were very much influenced by its landward geography. Characterised by isolated locations and rugged terrain, it created difficulties for land transport and air basing, as was recently the case in Timor. And as again in Timor, operational mobility and logistics were greatly facilitated by use of the sea in littoral areas. Having lost sea control the Japanese were vulnerable in this situation. The Allied advance to Milne Bay to attack Buna in 1942 is a case in point.<sup>34</sup> Likewise the Allied advance to Hollandia in 1943 was covered by air power and the US Seventh Fleet.<sup>35</sup> Sea power was a requirement to drive an invader out of his lodgement in the inner arc, clearly evident at Guadalcanal in 1942–43.<sup>36</sup> Japanese evacuation of Guadalcanal was precipitated by the Imperial Navy's belief that it was defeated there.<sup>37</sup> Air cover, including carrier-based air, was necessary for successful operations within the arc and for power projection beyond it. The Japanese used carrier air in conquering the East Indies and in taking Rabaul.<sup>38</sup> Darwin was bombed partly by aircraft based on Nagumo's four carriers.<sup>39</sup> US carrier attacks on Japanese shipping in early 1942 inflicted such losses that Japanese operations in eastern New Guinea and the Solomons were curtailed.<sup>40</sup> US carrier raids on Rabaul in late 1943, which mauled Japanese cruisers and air groups, meant that Allied landings at Aitape and Hollandia were overwhelming.<sup>41</sup> Whether or not this is taken as an argument for Australian carrier procurement today, it is certainly part of a case for control of the maritime environment and for an air warfare capability within it. Naval power, moreover, will be needed to establish forward air bases in the region if this is contested—just as MacArthur and Nimitz needed it for this reason<sup>42</sup>—and otherwise certainly for sea lift capability even if not.

It was sea control which allowed power projection in the inner arc in the Pacific War. This is doubly demonstrated by the fact that MacArthur's reconquest of New Guinea was a virtual strategic mirror image of the Japanese taking of Southeast Asia—employing amphibious landings supplied by merchant shipping while covered by naval and air forces.<sup>43</sup> MacArthur, a remarkably maritime-minded general (and largely as a consequence a highly successful commander in the region), had as a major grievance the fact that he was short of shipping. He was

disadvantaged at Milne Bay because his cruisers and destroyers were borrowed for Guadalcanal. Lack of his own carrier air power greatly complicated operational planning given the limited range of land-based air.<sup>44</sup> MacArthur was right to value sea power in the archipelagic environment. In this kind of littoral and Pacific island warfare, sea control both covered against enemy naval forces and enabled gunfire support for landings.<sup>45</sup> Above all it gave the initiative, and the choice of when and where to strike.<sup>46</sup> This was triply advantageous, distracting the enemy, enhancing the element of surprise in attack, and allowing strongpoints to be bypassed and Allied lives to be saved. The Allies chose to bypass Truk and Rabaul, for example, and did.<sup>47</sup> A Japanese intelligence officer stated after the war:

This was the type of strategy we hated most. The Americans, with minimum losses, attacked and seized a relatively weak area, constructed airfields and then proceeded to cut the supply lines to troops in that area. Without engaging in a large-scale operation, our strongpoints were gradually starved out...The Americans flowed into our weaker points and submerged us...<sup>48</sup>

Sea control, in short, allowed the application of Liddell Hart's fundamental principle: that the essence of strategy is the concentration of strength against weakness.<sup>49</sup> The initiative granted by sea control also gave options at the wider strategic level. The central Pacific advance was coordinated to cover the flank of the Allied front moving up through the land-sea interface of Southeast Asia. Later the US high command could compare the options of taking the Philippines and Formosa.<sup>50</sup>

Sea communications, and the ability to interdict them by blockade, were and are critical in the area of the inner arc as in the entire Asia-Pacific region. Without sea control, which enables their protection or attack, operations to take or defend the arc are not strategically feasible. In the first instance, no army can reach the arc in force to occupy or defend it, or be sustained and reinforced, save by sea. This was as true during the Pacific War as recently in the case of Timor.<sup>51</sup> As an example of what could be done, in January 1942 four US destroyers successfully attacked a Japanese convoy off Balikpapan.<sup>52</sup> But Japanese sea control at that

time meant such action was rare and could not prevent the southward advance. Once the Japanese were lodged in the arc, the Allies required a build-up and deployment of resources to take it, both of which occurred by sea.<sup>53</sup> Above all, the future sea denial operation which could be required to defend Australia would only succeed as a dimension of sea control. This is one of the most salutary deductions from the Pacific War for Australian strategic thinking. In fact it was proven twice, once by the Japanese in 1941–42, and once by the Allies from 1942 onwards. The US naval commentator Frank Uhlig writes of the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia in terms which should sound alarm bells for Australian strategic policy:

The defenses: American, British and Dutch, were...carried out by soldiers and shore-based aviation (but belonging to independent or semi-independent air forces) and by submarines. Theirs was a dismal record of failure.<sup>54</sup>

The failure of US submarines to halt the Japanese advance was remarkable. Twenty-nine submarines in Philippine waters (twenty-three of which were new) made virtually no impression on Japanese amphibious assaults. Retreating to Java, the submarines failed again, and retreated further to Western Australia.<sup>55</sup> This failure of sea denial without sea control was largely, but not exclusively, due to faulty torpedoes. Friction in some form, however, is a constant in war, and submarine operations are no exception. One can compare with this the powerful deterrent effect of the Royal Navy's surface warship capability against invasion in 1940—the real reason for the *Luftwaffe's* strategic mission to achieve command of the air. A handful of destroyers in the Channel able to fight meant that Sea Lion was not feasible, as the German high command knew.<sup>56</sup> To return to the Pacific, during the Allied counter-offensive against the perimeter, the US submarine campaign—aided by sea control and Japanese neglect of anti-submarine warfare—was a powerful factor in the erosion of Japanese defences and ultimately in winning the war.<sup>57</sup> This should not surprise us. The classical maritime strategists Mahan and Corbett analysed centuries of naval history, which led them to conclude that commerce war is not viable in strategic terms without control of the sea.<sup>58</sup>

### **The inner arc and the wider strategic context**

When we turn the wide-angled lens towards the strategy of defending the inner arc certain things are apparent. The arc is ultimately a victim of the fortress fallacy, even the Maginot mentality: the assumption that the strategic context can be safely surrendered by default because one guards against the one way the enemy will come. History, of course, is full of the victims of this approach, for it is a rare luxury to get (like Yamamoto) the war one expects. Such victims, in addition to the Japanese in the Pacific, include the British defenders of Singapore in 1942, the Soviet Union in the 1980s (outflanked and extended by the US Maritime Strategy),<sup>59</sup> and the Argentinians in the Falklands (expecting direct assault on Port Stanley rather than the traditional British indirect approach which was employed).<sup>60</sup> There may also be a conceptual problem in planning to use manoeuvre in the littorals as a tool of barrier defence, however geographically deep one sees the inner arc as being. The essential strategic point about amphibious power projection is of course that it is offensive, combining the mobility of navies with the striking power of armies (and in more modern times of air power). This has been true from the fall of Quebec in 1759 to the Falklands in 1982. Such modern amphibious power projection was first developed by the English, an empire-building island people, and elucidated by Corbett, an Englishman.<sup>61</sup> Today US Marine Corps expeditionary forces are essentially forward power projection forces.<sup>62</sup> In defence, amphibious operations usually follow defeat, as at Gallipoli, Dunkirk, Crete, and Guadalcanal. Manoeuvre is not seen today in terms of traditional amphibious warfare, but it has strong elements of amphibious operations after the coming of air power. In a maritime environment one must of course view such power projection in highly flexible fashion, rather than run any risk of having a garrison outlook.

Defence of the inner arc, unless conceived of with sufficient flexibility, is potentially vulnerable to other distractions and commitments. This was the case in varying degrees during the Pacific War, when Australia was committed initially in the Middle East, Britain enduringly in the Mediterranean, the US to 'Europe first', and Japan to the Asian mainland. A threat to the arc may well be part of a regional (perhaps a global) emergency in which for a variety of political, economic and

strategic reasons the focus could not be confined to local Australian defence. Simultaneous emergencies are frequently the work of an enemy strategy, such as the Japanese desire to strike once a European war had broken out. Certainly Australia's national interests, especially economic and political ones, imply possible future deployments further afield, as was the case in the Persian Gulf in 1990–91 and afterwards. There are also the dictates of alliance diplomacy. Australia's stake in sea control activities is intimately linked to the maintenance of its alliances, especially with US assistance with such capabilities as carrier air, Aegis defence, and marine expeditionary forces which cannot be expected in an emergency without wider reciprocal and meaningful maritime (and other) commitments by Australia. Diplomacy, too, therefore extends the strategic framework.

We should also realise that if Australia's local security is threatened it will be by a power possessing or contesting sea control as in 1941–42. (Contrast the German East Asia Squadron in 1914 which was not such a threat, being deterred by the battlecruiser *Australia* —a vessel built and deployed for oceanic operations.)<sup>63</sup> The primary threat to Australia is not, therefore, to its landward (as opposed to its more extensive maritime) territoriality, however far that is seen to extend strategically, but to its maritime communications. Yamamoto, who did most to threaten Australia after 1788, understood its dependence upon those communications and the strategic value of threatening them, as did the German war planners against the British Empire before 1914.<sup>64</sup> The inner arc as a concept tends to neglect the extent of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and their intrinsic relevance to our national security. Thus the very nature of a credible threat implies a wide strategic context. Within this context, the major strategic significance of the inner arc may well be that it straddles the sea lanes transmitted by half the world's commercial shipping, including 40 per cent of Australia's exports and 50 per cent of its imports.<sup>65</sup> This, rather than any putative use of the archipelago for power projection against us, may be the best reason for understanding its maritime nature and context.

Mahan did not live to observe the Japanese defeat in the Pacific War. He did, however, write specifically of the need for Australia to conceive of its defence in wide and maritime terms: 'by contemplating the whole,

and recognising that local safety is not always best found in local precaution'.<sup>66</sup> The current concept of defending the inner arc can be compared with the Japanese view of the same geography as a Pacific perimeter. That view was shown to be defective in terms of strategic viability and scope, and we should take care to absorb the lesson. It should not, moreover, be surprising. Continentalist and denial approaches, insufficiently aware of the indivisibility of the maritime environment, have lost to maritime strategies for centuries. Defensive strategy involving a form of the arc concept may well be viable, but it must be formulated within the context of a fully maritime strategy into which sea control is built. The intellectual and strategic challenge is to link pathfinding concepts such as littoral manoeuvre to an equally important and necessarily oceanic approach. Blue water need not be a tool of naval chauvinism, but it is always a geographical reality. This paper is written in a co-operative spirit, and with respect for the qualities and complementary expertise of the various elements of the Australian Defence Force. The fundamental point about the Japanese defeat in the Pacific (beyond the question of whether the war could ever have been considered feasible) is the fatal nature of lack of inter-service understanding.

Bad strategy kills, and bad strategy brings defeat. The islands and waters of our region are haunted by the ghosts of fallen empires and defeated forces—some of them our own, and all of them were initially (but not of course fully) defeated at sea. The conventional strategic wisdom which sees the inner arc as a defensive barrier should pay more attention to its maritime setting. Otherwise that conventional wisdom risks leaving a significant gap in Australia's defences and being a danger to national security. We should ponder the expensive lessons of the past and their continuing relevance, for our geography has not changed.



## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Australia's Strategic Policy* (Canberra, 1997), p. 10; Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence Review 2000—Our Future Defence Force: A Public Discussion Paper*, Department of Defence (Canberra, 2000), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> See for example M. Evans, *The Role of the Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Working Paper 101 (Canberra, 1998). I am indebted to Dr Evans' excellent work, especially his advocacy of joint and amphibious concepts of operations. It is important however not to see sea control and power projection in this form as distinct issues. Sea control is the pre-requisite for joint operations and amphibious power projection ashore in a maritime environment. See also M. Evans, *Developing Australia's Maritime Concept of Strategy. Lessons from the Ambon Disaster of 1942*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Study Paper 303 (Canberra, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> The classic text is J.S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911, repr. ed. E. Grove, London, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Maritime powers controlling the sea have never lost since the beginnings of modern naval strategy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An accessible study is C.S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War* (New York, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Such concepts are clearly explained in *Australian Maritime Doctrine (RAN Doctrine 1, 2000)*, (Canberra, 2000). Note that sea control includes the air space above and the water mass and seabed below the surface. *ibid.*, p. 39. The guerilla analogy is Admiral Stansfield Turner's, quoted in G. Till, *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age*, second edn (New York, 1984), p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> Admiral T.B. Fargo USN (Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet) has discussed such points of reference in his remarks: 'Evolving Roles of the Military in the Pacific', address in Honolulu, 29 March 2000.

<sup>8</sup> The Japanese grand strategic mistake was of course to embark on a war involving a great disjunction between strategic objectives and national logistical infrastructure. It also involved two competing expansionist agendas—north and south (essentially those of the Army and Navy)—which developed from the 1930s onwards. A.D. Coox, 'The Effectiveness of the Japanese Military Establishment in the Second World War' in A.R. Millett and W. Murray (eds), *Military Effectiveness, vol. III, The Second World War* (London, 1988), pp. 19ff, 39; R.H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York, 1985), pp. 42-3.

<sup>9</sup> Insofar as they did not recognise the essentially maritime nature of the war they embarked upon, Japanese strategists transgressed the principle that the nature of a war must be recognised: 'The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.' Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and transl. M. Howard and P. Paret (Princeton, 1976, repr. 1989), pp. 88-9.

<sup>10</sup> Lieutenant-General P. Cosgrove AM, MC, 'The Anzac lecture at Georgetown University, Tuesday, 4 April 2000', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, vol. 26, 2, April/June 2000, p. 9. See also the articles dealing with maritime lessons of the INTERFET operation by Commodore B.D. Robertson AM, RAN, and Captain J. Goldrick RAN, in the same issue.

<sup>11</sup> A.D. Coox, 'The Pacific War' in *The Cambridge History of Japan, vol. 6, The Twentieth Century*, ed. P. Duus (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 350, 357

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Drea, 'Imperial Japanese Army Strategy and the Pacific War (1941–1945)' in Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor: Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 76-7.

<sup>14</sup> Coox, 'The Pacific War', p. 325,; Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, p. 151.

<sup>15</sup> P.M. Kennedy, 'Japanese Strategic Decisions, 1939-45' in Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870–1945* (London, 1983), pp. 185, 188-9.

<sup>16</sup> G.W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The US Navy 1890–1990* (Stanford, 1994), p. 231 The standard biography of Yamamoto is H. Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*, transl. J. Bester (Tokyo, 1979). See also E.P. Hoyt, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Planned Pearl Harbor* (New York, 1990). Yamamoto was ambitious for Japan as a great power, but deeply opposed to war with the United States and rightly

pessimistic about Japanese prospects in an attritional conflict with the US. His hope was always to deal America a serious blow to force its agreement to an early peace. Pearl Harbor and Midway were each intended in turn to constitute such a blow. Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral*, pp. 220, 223, 231, 243, 291-2, 321; Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 40, 177-8.

<sup>17</sup> For informed Japanese opinion on the loss to the Imperial war effort represented by Yamamoto's death see Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral*, pp. 388-9. On the Allied side in the Pacific, Nimitz often remarked that Yamamoto constituted the greatest danger he faced. Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, p. 249

<sup>18</sup> The perimeter concept was also linked, at least indirectly, to the racial assumptions of a 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' under Japanese rule. J. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (London, 1986), pp. 272ff, 293.

<sup>19</sup> Coox, 'The Pacific War', p. 350.

<sup>20</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, p. 214.

<sup>21</sup> Allied land and carrier-based air power complemented each other in operations in the Southwest Pacific area in 1943-44. M.S. Maher, *The Role of Australian Land-Based Air Power in a Maritime Strategy*, Aerospace Centre, Working Paper 75 (Canberra, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Coox, 'The Pacific War', p. 359.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>24</sup> In the two years to the end of 1944, Japanese merchant shipping was reduced from 6 million to 2.9 million tons. F. Uhlig, Jr., *How Navies Fight: The US Navy and its Allies* (Annapolis, 1994), pp. 233-4. The standard work on the US submarine campaign is C. Blair, *Silent Victory: The US Submarine War Against Japan* (New York, 1976). Much data is accessibly reproduced in H.P. Willmott, *The Second World War in the East* (London, 1999). The geographical pattern of Japanese merchant losses was concentrated in the South China Sea during 1944 as Japan was cut off from its southern resources. *ibid.*, pp. 198-9. 'In July 1945 nothing moved outside Japanese home waters, and between a third and a half of what did move in home waters was sunk'. *ibid.*, p.174. See also Coox, 'The Pacific War', p.378.

<sup>25</sup> Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, pp. 231-2.

<sup>26</sup> Coox, 'The Pacific War', p. 358.

<sup>27</sup> S.E. Morison, 'Thoughts on Naval Strategy, World War II' (March, 1968), repr. in *Naval War College Review*, Winter, 1998, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> Yamamoto's abilities can be debated, and it is important in assessing his performance at Midway, for example, to recognise the US superiority in intelligence capability. Yet he arguably never paid sufficient attention to himself, and the Midway operation was ill-conceived and badly

executed. It involved divided forces, an unduly complex and inflexible plan, lack of surprise, and doctored preparatory wargames. There was dissent within the Naval General Staff on its wisdom and feasibility. Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral*, pp. 295-6, 339; Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, p. 158; Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 167, 176-8.

<sup>29</sup> Part of the intention of the attack on Pearl Harbor was to prevent US interference with the Japanese conquest of the East Indies. Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, p. 194.

<sup>30</sup> Yamamoto's strategic thinking here must be reconstructed partly from circumstantial evidence. He did conceive of an attack on Australia (if his staff officer's statement of 5 January, 1942—ordering the Combined Fleet Staff to plan the second phase of the war—is taken to reflect his view). The Naval General Staff responded positively to this idea, seeking to eliminate Australia as the logical base for an Allied counter-offensive. The Imperial Army rejected the plan as strategically impractical and beyond Japanese resources, proposing instead the establishment of a regional operational base at Port Moresby. A compromise plan to isolate Australia was discussed and largely pursued in the Solomons. Yamamoto was certainly aware of the value of Guadalcanal in obstructing US-Australian sea communications. The Southwest Pacific strategy was upstaged by the planning for Midway, although Yamamoto had hopes that the submarine attack on Sydney Harbour (a diversionary aspect of the Midway campaign) would eliminate significant Allied warships. Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral*, pp. 293-5; Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, pp. 161-2; Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 151-2; 185, 255; Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, p. 277; D. Horner, *High Command. Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy, 1939-45*, second edn (St Leonards, 1992), pp. 178ff.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 194-5. That the highest circles of Australian command were aware of this at the time is indicated by Shedden's memorandum for Prime Minister Curtin written five days after the fall of Singapore: 'Australia, which is the main base for operations against Japan, is in jeopardy until superior sea power is regained. Even then it can be imperilled by the loss of a fleet action.' Notes for the Prime Minister for use in secret session of Parliament, 20 February, 1942, National Archives of Australia, NAA/A5954, 611/11.

<sup>32</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, pp. 207ff.

<sup>33</sup> By 'turning point' here is meant essentially the moment of American seizure of the strategic initiative. The naval supremacy progressively exercised by the US was also afforded by its industrial power. Of one hundred and eleven naval units in the task groups which raided the Tokyo area in February 1945 only four were in commission prior to 7 December 1941. A particular victory and its immediate benefits should not be confused

with the general supremacy which enables ultimate victory. On these issues see Willmott, *Second World War in the East*, p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, p. 223.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 277 et passim.

<sup>37</sup> Coox, 'The Pacific War', p. 357.

<sup>38</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, pp. 195, 197, 204.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>40</sup> Willmott, *Second World War in the East*, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 134, 139.

<sup>42</sup> The aerial siege of Rabaul for example, depended on such bases acquired by amphibious operations. Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, pp. 232-3. On the acquisition of air bases by the naval advance through the central Pacific, which bases in turn facilitated that advance, see *ibid.*, pp. 236ff.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 241. In assessing MacArthur as a commander in the Pacific War one should bear in mind his publicity machine, his advantages in the area of intelligence, Japanese strategic errors, and the advantages of sea control provided by the Allied navies. He has traditionally been seen as a member of the generation which included Liddell Hart and which reacted against the First World War by eschewing attritional in favour of manoeuvre warfare. This is, however, debatable (e.g. given his initial plan for Rabaul, see below). He was nonetheless a great amphibious commander. The standard work on MacArthur is D. Clayton James' three volume biography: on the Pacific War see D.C. James, *The Years of MacArthur 1941-1945* (Boston, 1975). A perceptive work (largely derived from James) is W. Manchester, *American Caesar. Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964* (Boston, 1978). For the case against MacArthur which nevertheless recognises his successes as a commander in 1943, see M. Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur, The Far Eastern General* (Oxford, 1989). See also G. Long, *MacArthur as Military Commander* (Sydney, 1969) and S.R. Taafe, *MacArthur's Jungle War. The 1944 New Guinea Campaign* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, p. 223; Taafe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, pp. 120ff, 141-2. On MacArthur's maritime awareness see Manchester, *American Caesar*, pp. 254-5. He was short of shipping during the New Guinea campaign, despite his complaints, largely owing to inter-service rivalry and the attitude of Admiral King, US Chief of Naval Operations. In particular, he was not allotted an aircraft carrier. Within the broader strategic picture, his operations in northern New Guinea were enabled by US carrier forces operating in the central Pacific. MacArthur was significantly supported by the Allied navies in his attack on the Philippines. Nimitz's Third Fleet covered

the invasion. James, *Years of MacArthur 1941–45*, pp. 202-3, 206; Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 240, 420, 422; Taafe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, pp. 19, 47-8, 228; Willmott, *Second World War in the East*, p. 132.

<sup>45</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, p.281. The heavy US casualties at Tarawa in 1943 were partly the result of a lack of adequate fire support, largely remedied in later Pacific landings by escort carriers. Willmott, *Second World War in the East*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>46</sup> Kennedy, 'Japanese Strategic Decisions', p. 189.

<sup>47</sup> Coox, 'The Pacific War', p. 359. It should be noted that MacArthur, despite his post-facto statements, sought to attack Rabaul directly but was prevented by the US Joint Chiefs. It was encircled and neutralised by early 1944. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, p. 276; Long, *MacArthur*, pp. 132, 136, 141; Willmott, *Second World War in the East*, p. 134.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Taafe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (second rev. edn, New York, 1967, repr. 1991), p. 334.

<sup>50</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, pp. 418-20.

<sup>51</sup> Over 90 per cent of military cargo entered or left East Timor by sea during the INTERFET operation of 1999–2000. J. Goldrick, 'East Timor: Maritime Lessons', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, vol. 26, 2, April/June 2000, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, p. 199.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 273-4.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

<sup>56</sup> D. Grinnell-Milne, *The Silent Victory: September 1940* (London, 1958), Appendix B: 'Summary of opinion on the ability of the *Luftwaffe* to hold off British naval forces operating against *Sealion*, September 1940'.

<sup>57</sup> Uhlig, *How Navies Fight*, pp. 233-4. It should be noted that the great bulk of Japanese merchant losses occurred *within* the Japanese perimeter as it contracted, demonstrating clearly the fallacy of such a strategy without sea control. Willmott, *Second World War in the East*, pp. 198-9.

<sup>58</sup> The great modern demonstration that sea denial and commerce war fail without sea control is the German U-boat campaign in the Atlantic in the 1940s, which contrasts dramatically with the successful US submarine campaign in the Pacific. A recent comparative analysis is M.D. Hoffman, 'The American and German Submarine Campaigns of the Second World War: a Comparative Analysis', BA Honours thesis, School of History, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1998. Hoffman's conclusion (p. 65) incorporates the confirmation of Mahanian and Corbettian thought in this respect by his analysis.

<sup>59</sup> See in general N. Friedman, *The US Maritime Strategy* (London, 1988).

<sup>60</sup> M. Clapp and E. Southby-Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands: The Battle for San Carlos Water* (London, 1997), pp. 80, 101-2. This approach was of course a function of sea control exercised by maritime forces which prevailed decisively against a denial strategy, even one including land-based air power.

<sup>61</sup> See in particular Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*.

<sup>62</sup> The US Marine Corps having re-established its amphibious role since the unusual circumstances of Vietnam. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, pp. 387, 391.

<sup>63</sup> G. McGinley, 'Divergent Paths: Problems of Command and Strategy in Anglo-Australasian Naval Operations in the Pacific: August–November 1914', BA Honours thesis, School of History, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1999, pp. 93-4.

<sup>64</sup> P. Overlack, 'Asia in German Naval Planning Before the First World War. The Strategic Imperative', *War and Society*, 17, 1, May, 1999.

<sup>65</sup> J.H. Noer with D. Gregory, *Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia* (Washington DC, 1996), pp. 2-3, 23-4. On the fundamental nature of sea communications in Asia–Pacific strategic affairs see J. Reeve, 'The Development of Naval Strategy in the Asia–Pacific Region 1500-2000' in G. Till (ed.), *Seapower at the Millennium* (Sutton/Royal Naval Museum, forthcoming 2001). A version of this paper appeared previously in the RAN Sea Power Centre Working Paper series (No. 4). On picturing the arc in wider context see: A. Dupont, 'Australia and the Security of Southeast Asia', *AUSCSCAP Newsletter*, no. 9, February 2000, pp. 3-4; T.E. Ricks, 'Asia Moves to Forefront of Pentagon Planning', *Guardian Weekly*, 1-7 June 2000, p. 34; and J.E. Auer and R. Lim, 'The Maritime Basis of American Security in East Asia', *Naval War College Review* (forthcoming).

<sup>66</sup> Written in July 1902, quoted in D. Stevens (ed.), *In Search of a Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning Since 1901* (Canberra, 1997), p. 155.