Australian Security in the Asian Century

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Author: Kainikara, Sanu.
Title: Australian Security in the Asian Century/ Sanu Kainikara.
Publisher: Tuggeranong, A.C.T. : Air Power Development Centre, 2008.
ISBN: 9781920800284 (pbk.)
Notes: Bibliography.
Subjects: National security--Australia.
Air power. International relations.
Australia--Military relations--Asia--Forecasting.
Asia--Military relations--Australia--Forecasting.
Australia--Foreign relations--Asia--Forecasting.
Asia--Foreign relations--Australia--Forecasting.
Australia--Military policy.

Dewey Number: 355.030994

Published and distributed by:
Air Power Development Centre
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TUGGERANONG ACT 2900
AUSTRALIA

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Facsimile: + 61 2 6266 1041
E-mail: airpower@defence.gov.au
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Acknowledgments

No book can be written as a stand-alone undertaking and this one is no exception. The ideas that are germinated in the mind of the author are at times planted during conversations with friends and peers as innocuous little pieces of information. It becomes difficult under these circumstances to thank everyone who would have directly or indirectly contributed to the birth and development of the ideas put forward. A number of people have influenced the development of the ideas, abstractions and hypothesis put forward in this book. It is not possible for me to name all of them but I am sure that each one would understand when I bow in appreciation to the collective whole. Thank you is an easy term to say, but I am obliged, and this one comes from the bottom of my heart.

Writing a book can become a lonely process. I have unashamedly made use of my colleagues as sounding boards (and at times as captive audiences) to unscramble my rambling thought process and make understandable sense of what would otherwise have been just a collection of disjointed ideas.

I would be remiss in my duty if I do not specifically accept a debt of gratitude to Wing Commander Bob Richardson. Bob has been an astute and articulate critic of my more 'tangential' ideas, and has in his own time read, critiqued and generously corrected the first cut of every chapter of the book. More than in discussions, I have used Bob as a 'first test' for some of the ideas that I was trying to explain in writing. If some of my ideas come through very clearly to the reader, Bob shares the achievement and if some of the more imperceptive and abstract thoughts remain ill-defined, the fault rests entirely with me.

My heartfelt thanks are due to Wing Commander Keith Brent for diligently editing the entire manuscript in his usual critical style and bringing it to publishable standard.

I would also like to acknowledge Group Captains Tony Forestier and Phil Edwards, both of whom have not only read through the

finished manuscript but also encouraged me, through the process of its writing, to attain higher levels of clarity in my thinking.

I could never have asked for a more loving family than my wife, Manju, my two daughters to whom this book is dedicated, my two sons-in-law, Tanmai and Aninda, and my grandson, Ishaan. All of them, collectively and in their own individual ways, have been pillars of support for me at all times. It is impossible to say thank you adequately.

No man is an island, entire of itself; Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

—John Donne, Meditation XVII
Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions

For my daughters

Priya Kainikara-Sharma
and
Priyanka Kainikara-Sen

Who are the greatest Blessings
God Above bestowed on me

About the Author

Sanu Kainikara is a fighter pilot from the Indian Air Force (IAF) who retired as a Wing Commander after 21 years of commissioned service. During his service career, he has flown over 4,500 hours on a number of modern fighter aircraft. He has also held various command and staff appointments. He is a qualified Flying Instructor (A2) and a graduate of the IAF Fighter Weapons School, the Defence Services Staff College, as well as the College of Air Warfare. He is the recipient of the Indian Air Force equivalent of the Air Force Cross. He has Bachelors degrees in Economics and Human Resources and a Masters degree in Defence and Strategic Studies from the University of Madras. His doctorate (PhD) in International Politics was awarded by the University of Adelaide.

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Books by the Same Author

Papers on Air Power
Pathways to Victory
Red Air: Politics in Russian Air Power (Universal Publishers, USA)

Preface

The concept of this book was born during a fairly heated discussion that took place while I was visiting my extended family and some very good friends from my Air Force days, in September 2006. The discussion centred on India's emergence as an economic powerhouse and the allied strategic changes that are taking place in the nation and its increasing global influence. Even during previous visits, infrequent as they were, similar discussions used to be the norm. The difference this time was the new-found confidence I saw in the younger generation, in their willingness to contradict the traditional Indian concept of a soft and defensive strategic outlook. They wore their hearts on their sleeves in displaying the unabashed pride they felt in the rise of their country. A very short visit a year later further confirmed this trend in the youth of the country.

Being a first-generation immigrant to Australia, and dabbling in strategy, security and politics both as a profession and as an abiding interest made me think and take notice of the gradual, but very perceptible changes that are taking place in the strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific. One has to be blind not to notice the economic realities of the rise of China and India, and I felt that the possible dynamics of the future security environment should be studied in greater detail, from an Australian perspective, so that some educated guesses could be made regarding how the dice would fall as the dynamics of the region change. This book has been the result.

The recent change of government has altered the national power equation and Australia's view of its security environment. One example is Australia's withdrawal from the US-Japan-Australia-India quadrilateral initiative, demonstrating a conflict of interest and a decision-making dilemma in dealing with rising powers like China and India. In an obtuse manner it also indicates a certain amount of diplomatic immaturity and under confidence in dealing with China effectively. While the quadrilateral initiative

was never an exercise in 'containing' China, Australia's withdrawal has given it a balance of power bias, which China would leverage into the future. From another viewpoint the decision to withdraw from the initiative could be seen as Australia's attempt to improve its geopolitical stature while also keeping both the US and China onside. Since Australia already has a robust alliance with the United States and is strategically aligned with Japan, this withdrawal will only impact its bilateral relationship with India. However, India's reaction to this does not seem to have been factored in by the Australian Government. To play a part of any significance in the Asia-Pacific, it is not prudent to antagonise either of the emerging giants—China or India. India's future manoeuvrings will be worth watching.

The wheel of strategic power does not stop rotating, and it will be interesting to watch and analyse the ongoing diplomatic and economic manipulations. Therefore, this book cannot be considered an end in itself, but must be thought of as a beginning for an analysis of the Asian stance of Australia.

At the cost of repetition, I must state here that the opinions, deductions, statements and suggestions made are completely attributable to me and no-one else. In some areas I may have stretched a point a bit more than others may have done, but I assure the reader that it was done on purpose, to increase the awareness and understanding of what the future would bring if a far-fetched situation actually happened. Having said that, even those far-fetched scenarios are not impossible; it is better to have thought them through rather than being caught happily unaware.

I sincerely hope that this book adds to the debate regarding national security as a whole and the peculiar (and mostly unenviable) position that Australia holds in the Asia-Pacific regional power balance.

Writing a book is a unique adventure. It can bring elation and despondency in equal measure and the will to persevere can reach its nadir. The quote below from Sir Winston Churchill, that

master of ideas as well as the spoken and written word, sums up the feelings at the end of a long and mostly lonely struggle:

> *Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy and an amusement; then it becomes a mistress, and then it becomes a master, and then a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster, and fling him out to the public.*
>
> —Winston Churchill, Speech in London, 2 November 1949

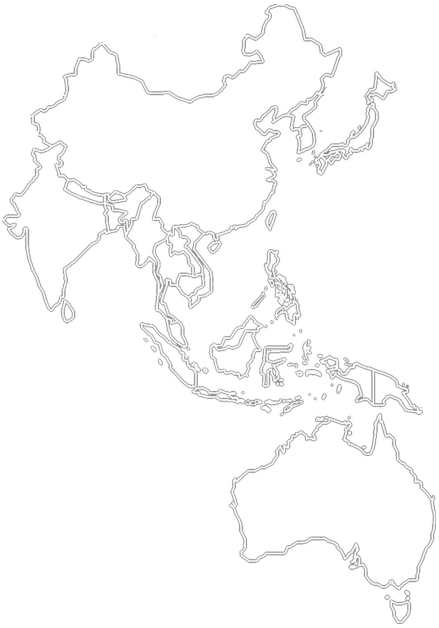
Sanu Kainikara
Canberra
April 2008

Contents

Abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
C2	Command and Control
CPC	Communist Party of China
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Force
NEBA	National Effects-Based Approach
PLA	Peoples Liberation Army
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
UN	United Nations
US	United States

Chapter 1
Introduction



Introduction

In the 14th century, Europe started a series of global exploration and conquest expeditions that spread European influence to nearly every part of the world and culminated in a protracted 'European Age' that declined only in the later part of the 20th century. The initial expeditions that enabled the creation of global European empires were driven by the quest for raw materials and resources required to fuel their expanding industrial capacity. Before the advent of technologies—shipbuilding, navigation, naval firepower—that facilitated the projection of power far from home base, even large powers were constrained to operate within their region.[1] It was the European exploration, and conquest, that created the first truly international system of trade and commerce, however lopsided and exploitative it may look when viewed in hindsight.

The end of World War II saw the crumbling of European empires and the rise of the United States of America and the Soviet Union in global competition to spread their respective influences. This resulted in the Cold War where the United States (US) and Soviet Union became the world's only two 'superpowers' and faced off globally to further their interests in an attempt to increase their strategic and economic power base. The Cold War and its main protagonists replaced the European Age fairly rapidly, relegating the old European powers, now primarily inward looking, to a much reduced global status. Even though the strategic rivalry between the two superpowers throughout the Cold War was played out at very high stakes, and at times with irresponsible brinksmanship, a certain sense of global order still prevailed.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992 paved the way for the US to become the unchallenged paramount global power and marked the beginning of the unipolar world. The US's military power is such that it has the capacity to assert its will rapidly, anywhere in the world. The technological dominance of the United States, especially in space technology and others that support warfighting

capabilities enables it to dominate globally at will. During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a tangible shift in global trade patterns with trans-Pacific trade initially equalling and then overtaking the traditional trans-Atlantic trade.

When the Cold War ended with the break-up of the Soviet Union, it was expected that six great powers—US, Russia, China, Europe, Japan and India—would emerge to make the world truly multipolar. Fifteen years hence none of the other five are in any position to challenge US hegemony, either in military capability, diplomatic influence or economic strength. However, global trade is now firmly focused on the Asia-Pacific region.[2] The Asian economic powers (i.e. China, Japan, India and South Korea) are dependent to different degrees on import of resources, especially energy, and to overseas exports for their continued prosperity. These nations' economic interests have stretched far beyond their strategic power projection capabilities. While this situation was not really worrisome during the largely stable global security environment of the Cold War, the current volatility of the security environment makes it a vulnerability.

The United States is still the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region and has long-standing alliances with Japan, South Korea and Australia in the region. However, both Japan and South Korea have different views to the US on some aspects of their bilateral relationships with other nations and are also conscious of the necessity to increase their security and political reach to safeguard their interests. The major powers of Asia all face the problem—their economic interests are spread across the globe and they lack the military ability and experience to protect their interests. These nations are slowly moving from their traditional soft power influence role to active political and military options that match their international economic involvement. The larger Asian economies are realising the need to be more active within the international system and this will bring about the next change in global order. The strategic power manipulations and manoeuvres of the 21st century will be played out in Asia.

An Asian Australia?

Although Australia is in the inner circle of the US umbrella of strategic friends and partners, the context within which it has to make its security policies is primarily rooted in Asia, which is rapidly transforming into a region with a thriving society of giants. The most obvious factor in this transformation is that of demographics. The United Nations population projections predict that in a few decades 19 polities will be moving towards the demographic range of over 100 million. Of these, 10 will be in Australia's area of strategic interest.[3]

Managing such an increase in population in a democratic manner is an extremely difficult task—one that has been managed only by the United States and India so far. However, a worldwide increase of viable democratic nations is a cardinal requirement for the progress of international stability. Democracy cannot be imposed on a nation, particularly through military interventions, as has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout history—past and recent. Combined with the US preoccupation with Iraq and the broader 'war on terror', the prospect of the world becoming multipolar is distinctly high. Predicting the end of the unipolar world at this noontide of US power may seem a bit premature, but the imperial overstretch of both its economic and military power is obvious to any observer. Even so, the process will be gradual and its culmination still distant. For the next two or three decades the US will retain its global hegemonial power.

Australia is a nation of immigrants and integration of post-immigrant sections of the population has therefore been a very important nation-building activity. Social cohesion is the key to stability in governance and cultural changes in the long term will affect the governance structure. Australia is undergoing demographic changes because of alterations in its immigration pattern and also because of the comparatively larger number of older population outside the work force. These changes have far-reaching consequences for its national economy and security and there is an immediate need, within Australia, for a national strategy

on demography to ameliorate their impact. This also highlights the increasingly close relationship between security policies and economic and social policies.

Australian society has been traditionally outward looking. As a consequence, throughout its modern history Australia has been actively involved in international affairs, both within and beyond the Asia-Pacific region. While most of Australia's efforts in contributing to international stability in the past century have been biased towards its alliances with the United Kingdom and the United States, there is an increased awareness within the security strategists in the nation that its security is undeniably entwined with that of the larger Asia-Pacific region. The emergence of China and India as regional powers has further emphasised the need for Australia to factor this reality into its security strategy.

Even as the Australian Defence Force (ADF) battles Islamist extremists in Iraq and Afghanistan, it also needs to be cognisant of crucial strategic developments in the Asia-Pacific region. A number of smaller nations in its near vicinity are rapidly reaching critical points in their economic viability and governance stability. If actions of the past are any indication, it will fall to the ADF to respond to any such backward slide to lawlessness and quickly establish stability. That Australia responds to threats to regional stability is a positive factor, but the inexorable power changes taking place in the region add an edge to this role. The imperative for it to intervene militarily for law enforcement binds it closer than ever before to the Asian entity and brings it within the comity of nations in the Asia-Pacific. Of necessity, the Asianisation of Australia is underway.

The Complex Strategic Environment

At the end of World War II or even in the 1970s nobody would have predicted the extremely complicated and messy strategic environment that the world has inherited in the beginning of the 21st century. The clean division of the world into zones of peace and zones of conflict, almost completely geographic, which characterised the international system during the Cold War, looks

benign in contemporary analysis. Threats to national security have become an all-encompassing entity that seems to defy any attempt at being defined, with new factors being identified and added at regular intervals. Global institutions, like the United Nations, that contributed to maintaining the established order in the 1900s are jaded and do not seem to have the will or support to be rejuvenated. At least for the immediate future, they will not be able to solve, even partially, the problems of the 21st century.

An even more catastrophic threat looms large on the horizon. The Westphalian system, established in 1648 as the basis on which the international system is built, is itself under siege. Westphalian peace is based on the primary assumption that only sovereign nation-states would employ military forces in the pursuit of national security. Although there is vested interest within sovereign nations to maintain the status quo, the basic principle has been undermined in the past few decades by the entry of a large number of non-state organisations into the security arena. Recent conflicts have shown a willingness on the part of nation-states to cooperate or even partner with non-state actors to employ military power to achieve a desired objective. While this may be of immediate tactical advantage, it does gradual but irredeemable long-term damage to the international system based on the Westphalian model.

The diffusion of the threat, the vastness of national security imperatives, the constrained use of military forces, the overlap and unholy mix of combatants and civilians, and the uncertainty of the geographic limit of the battlefield make any action to further national security the most complex activity a government undertakes.

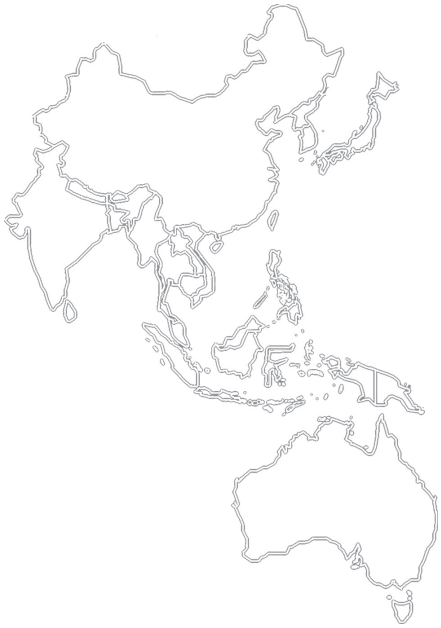
This book is an attempt at viewing the global trends in security through the prism of the Asia-Pacific scenario, based on the belief that the strategic power games of the 21st century will be played out in Asia. The emergence of Asian economic superpowers and their willingness to translate their economic capacities to strategic and military power will have the same effect that a stone will create when thrown into a tranquil pool. The ripples will buffet everything

within their influence. The larger the stone, the larger will be the rippling effect and the longer will it last. Australia, at the extreme of the Asia-Pacific region, will not be spared the buffeting. It is imperative that Australia looks at these trends and prepares to position itself in a manner that allows it the maximum flexibility in dealing with an extremely dynamic security environment. For Australia, which has often taken security solace from its geographic isolation, only the most vigorous analysis and action in this matter will negate any impact on its national security that will very rapidly metamorphose into a catastrophe. All nations need to be cognisant of the ever-changing global order and act carefully to preserve their sovereign independence and ensure their future place in the sun.

Notes

1 Rodger Baker, *Asia's Security Role Goes Global,* StratFor Analysis, Washington, 12 March 2008.
2 The Asia-Pacific region encompasses the areas that are varyingly called South Asia (the nations of the Indian subcontinent), South-East Asia, other nations with Pacific connections (China, Japan, South Korea), Melanesia and Australia and New Zealand.
3 Coral Bell, *Living with Giants: Finding Australia's Place in a More Complex World,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, April 2005, p. 14.

Chapter 2
Global Strategic Environment



Global Strategic Environment

Today's world is without precedent. It is as different from the Cold War as it is from the Middle Ages so the past offers no basis for comparison.

—Phillippe Delmas, The Rosy Future of War

The international context within which nations have to formulate their security policies is rapidly changing.[1] While the capability of smaller regional powers to secure their interests has gone up markedly as compared to the 19th century, the broader international security scenario is still dominated by nations that have great power status. During the Cold War, that could be defined as having lasted from the end of World War II to 1997, there were demonstrably two great powers—the United States and Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1997 and the subsequent declaration of independence by its constituent states led most of the world to believe that an era of unipolarism was unfolding with only the United States claiming great power status. It was also surmised that a unipolar world would be devoid of armed conflicts that had plagued international peace during the Cold War.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. In the decade that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union, there were more armed conflicts than in any of the previous decades. The main reason for this increase in the incidence of armed conflict is that smaller nations are now reluctant to respond to coercion from a great power and have become increasingly vociferous regarding their sovereign right to employ force if necessary, in the pursuit of their own versions of national security. Under these conditions, the world is today moving in the direction of becoming truly multipolar as opposed to being unipolar. A related development is the quest by a number of nations to attain great power status and increase their spheres of influence.

The concept of power is fundamental to global interaction and international relations. The struggle for power between nation-states is the cause of all war and peace and, therefore, it is the core theme behind international diplomacy and politics.[2] It is comparatively simple to understand and accept the centrality of power in international relations, but defining the characteristics of power by itself is a more complex endeavour. This is because a number of factors go into analysing the basis of a nation's power and further define great power status. The complexity of such an analysis is increased since a majority of these factors are non-quantifiable and even difficult to define accurately.[3]

There are a number of theoreticians[4] who have defined the concept of power and also laid down the national capabilities that should be considered when assessing a nation's power base. However, the capabilities listed by this group are limited to mathematically measurable and comparable ones, and completely exclude the non-quantifiable ones, which are becoming more important in a rapidly globalising world.[5] An analysis of all the tangible and intangible characteristics of a nation-state that contribute to its power, and the absence of which will always detract from that power, brings out a number of them as being comparatively more important. This prioritisation is based on the amount of influence one characteristic has on the formulation of other characteristics, as well as the number of other characteristics that it influences.

It is also seen that each of the fundamental characteristics of national power base evolve from the combination of a number of identifiable and independent, but interconnected factors. These factors themselves are the contributory total of some basic elements of national power. The elements of national power could contribute to the fulfilment of one or more factors, which could themselves be supporting different characteristics. In essence the characteristics of power are complex, but are identifiable clearly as independently contributing to overall national power. However, they cannot be fully evaluated separately because of the overlap of some of the factors and elements that make up each characteristic.

Great Power Status

> *The good want power, but to weep barren tears. The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.*
>
> —Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

For a contemporary analysis, four fundamental characteristics can be identified as being the critical ones which a nation must possess in abundance to be elevated to great power status. Other less important ones, even though independently identifiable, can be clubbed under these four because they would be directly influenced by one or more of the fundamental characteristics. The critical characteristics are political stability, power projection capability, domestic growth potential and long-term security imperatives. These must be carefully assessed to determine a nation's power base at the grand strategic level from which the true status of a nation in the international arena can be derived.

Great power status can only be bestowed on nation-states, at least for the foreseeable future. Although there are a number of non-state entities that could exercise a few of the characteristics, none other than a nation-state could aspire to possess all of them in the measure necessary to be elevated to great power status. For example, the amorphous terrorist organisation, al-Qaeda, does have the capability to project power by a variety of methods and may even be thought to have adequate economic staying power to operate in the long term. However, they do not have the political stability required to evolve into a global power that can influence and shape the international system. Similarly, large multinational companies have the economic wherewithal to exert tremendous influence in the global market, with some of them exceeding the combined budgets of a number of small independent nations of the world. However their lack of hard power projection capability and political identity negates the establishment of these companies as

global great powers. Only established and viable nation-states can aspire to great power status.

Political Stability

Political stability is perhaps the most important as well as the most complex to assess. The definition of political stability is itself a vexed metaphor because it is a comparative state with no clear baseline of assessment. A benign autocratic rule could be termed to be politically stable but may not be capable of moving the nation towards great power status. As a corollary, a democracy which cannot function cohesively because of internally conflicting ideologies does not create a stable political environment and therefore will be incapable of lifting the nation's power status. Political stability is the base from which national power can be developed. Historically it is seen that national power brought about by autocratic dictators is normally short lived. In recent times a classic example of the ultimate failure of autocratic governance is the rise, decline and break-up of the Soviet Union. The great power status that the Soviet Union assumed at the end of World War II was not sustainable because it was conceived and pursued around state control of not only the strategic aspects of defence and economy, but also the industry, trade and all other aspects that strengthen and increase national power. This draconian control encompassed even the daily life of the people and often used state coercion of political dissidents, thereby completely denying the people any sense of ownership of the nation's greatness. The break-up of the Soviet Union was anticipated by a large number of astute observers and it was only the rapidity of its failure that surprised the international community.

Participation of the general population in the process of nation-building, which inculcates a sense of ownership, is essential for long-term development of national power. This can only be achieved by establishing democratic practices and nurturing them to maturity in a stable manner. Therefore, political stability built around democratic practices forms the first step towards developing

sustainable national power. On a contrary note it can also be said that democracy at times is an obstacle to a nation becoming a truly great power. This is more so in cases where a large proportion of the population is either uneducated or disenfranchised for a variety of reasons. Under these circumstances, it is likely that the national power resources would be turned inwards for domestic reasons, limiting the effort that could be brought to bear in achieving great power status. Democracy furthering a nation's move towards great power status is not always a straight and clear path. It needs a great deal of implicit understanding on the part of a majority of the population and certain explicit controls at different levels.

At the implementation level of democratic governance there will have to be certain explicit controls exercised to ensure that the democratic process does not skew the direction of growth in such a way as to detract from the long-term goals of the nation. It could be argued that the impact of such controls would be an anathema to the basic concept of democracy. However, the possibility of the process itself becoming the cause for concern from a grand strategic viewpoint is the major flaw in democratic institutions. This flaw has to be contained at all times if democratic process is to assure political stability which is vital to a nation husbanding its resources in a move towards great power status.

Power Projection Capability

The second characteristic that a nation must have to claim the mantle of great power is recognised power projection capability. Today, power projection is not merely dependent on military capabilities but includes the concept of 'soft power' embedded in economic, diplomatic, political and cultural influences that a nation can bring to bear. This capability encompasses a very wide spectrum of elements that complement each other but are also of considerable individual influence. The complementary elements easily fit together as factors, which in a very broad manner, can be clubbed under two sub-characteristics—military capabilities and soft power. Although this separation is being done for ease of analysis,

it must be understood that these two broad sub-characteristics are not exclusive of each other and that one cannot exist in any reasonable semblance of capacity without the support of the other. The relationship between the factors that constitute the two sub-characteristics is even more complex and intertwined. These factors and the constituting elements can be listed and explained, but always with the caveat that they should not be evaluated in isolation.

Military power projection capability can be deduced from two fundamental factors—the demonstrated military capability of a nation and the national will to employ this capability in the pursuit of its security imperatives. With the changing nature of threats to security that has become clearly apparent in the past few decades, it is seen that military capability alone cannot assure national security. Therefore, it is necessary for the military might of a nation to be able to act in concert with all other elements of national power at all times.

These two factors—military capability and national will—are complex and made up of further lower level, but very important elements. The failure to be adequate in even one of the factors would inevitably lead to the failure of the broader military power projection capability. For example, demonstrated military capability can only be sustained in the long term if the nation has an independent capacity to manufacture and maintain the necessary hardware and support systems, one of the many elements that contribute to military capabilities. Manufacturing and maintenance capacity as well as the necessary research and development capability to sustain a credible force are further influenced by the basic technological ethos of the nation, derived from the general education system.[6]

Another critical element in husbanding military capability is the support that national military build-up needs from the public. This is vitally important in a democracy where the military is normally a volunteer force dependent on the public goodwill for its existence. Public support for military forces waxes and wanes with context, the support being at its least during extended periods of comparative peace and rising to a crescendo when the nation is under threat of

external aggression. The unavoidable fluctuation of this element, especially in democratic nations, impinges on the overall military capability of a nation. Its effect can be mitigated by ensuring that the professional standards expected of the military force are maintained and the allocation of sufficient resources is assured at all times.

There are a number of other elements that also have decisive impact on the building and maintaining of national military capability. The ability to build and employ effectively a military force of adequate calibre is a very exacting task, which a large number of nations are incapable of undertaking. This is one of the reasons that great power status is not easily achieved, even when a nation is politically stable within a democratic mould.

The second sub-characteristic in determining national power projection capability is its 'soft power'. In a realistic view this would encompass mainly four factors—economic depth, diplomatic stature, information technology and cultural ethos. Economic depth is not only economic capability at any given time or period, but the nation's long-term prospects vis-à-vis its economic sustainability. In assessing this category it is of cardinal importance to have a broad and far-reaching view of the economic ability and processes of a nation.

Economy and diplomacy cannot be segregated as independent factors because the two are almost inseparably intertwined in today's globalised world. The diplomatic stature of a nation is in direct proportion to its economic power. Inevitably it is the diplomatic capabilities of a nation that will help to further its economic aspirations and sustain its economy in a viable manner. Interdependence of nations for their mutual economic prosperity can no longer be denied and diplomatic initiatives help to untangle problems that could otherwise lead to slowing down of economic progress with its own ripple effects on other factors.

Information has always been a critical factor in all aspects of nation building and power projection. Throughout history information has been used to impose power, mostly military in earlier days, and win wars. The importance of information warfare

is vividly described in Homer's famous epics of the Iliad and Odyssey[7] and nine centuries later it is given the same importance in the accounts of Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire. Information has also been used as a force multiplier through history, one obvious example being the reliance the founder of the Mongol Empire, Genghis Khan, placed on the fast dissemination of information to his field commanders.[8] Use of information in almost all its different facets is apparent in any study of World War II; perhaps the most intensely studied conflict in history. It has been agreed, by almost all historians of note, that information superiority was the foundation on which the air and naval superiority of the Allies were based during this war. Therefore, the importance of information and its application through its entire spectrum as a crucial factor in the power projection capabilities of a nation cannot be over emphasised.

In the last three decades technological improvements have revolutionised the collection and dissemination of information. Other than for its utility as a war-winning factor, it has now become imperative for any nation aspiring to economic stability and growth to improve its internal and external information dissemination systems and be at least at par with other developed nations. Global interoperability in the information technology area has become a baseline requirement for the progress of trade and economy. When the application of 'soft power' as a power projection capability is being conceived, adequacy of resident information technology assumes paramount importance. Attaining great power status will be impossible without first achieving the highest level of information technology.

Information manipulation has every potential to become an extremely common practice both in times of conflict as well as during periods of comparative peace. Referred to commonly as 'cyberwarfare', it is becoming one of the most important capabilities to be nurtured in a nation. The advancements in information technology, particularly the advent of computer networking, provides decision-makers the ability to make more efficient decisions than

even before in history. It has also provided the wherewithal to the military forces of a nation to be more accurate and lethal in the application of force.[9] This availability of information in abundance helps to minimise collateral damage not only in armed conflicts, but also during grand strategic diplomatic manoeuvrings. There is also a downside to this situation stemming from the open and cheap availability of the relevant technology. Its commercial availability combined with the reliance of nation-states on information superiority for their security makes it a tool that would-be aggressors, both state-sponsored and non-state, are likely to use with great effectiveness.[10]

Another major factor that constitutes 'soft power' is the cultural underpinnings of a nation that are acceptable to other nations and therefore can be used as a tool to influence the broader thinking. Needless to say, cultural influence of a nation is a combination of a number of elements that straddle its historic roots and is bolstered by both economic and diplomatic strength. A vibrant cultural ambience that can be effectively showcased has the potential to bring a much larger return compared to the initial investment. This is more so in cases when nations' populations share a similar or same ethnicity. While cultural power projection would be a very difficult state to achieve, cultural exchanges can influence other factors and characteristics that contribute to great power status. Even when it is not directly influencing the status of a nation, great power status can only be bestowed on a nation that possesses identifiable cultural capabilities that are historically backed and amiable to the ethos of other nations.

Domestic Growth Potential

The third characteristic for a nation to attain great power status is domestic growth potential built on political stability. In this instance, political stability paves the way for the economic stability essential for continuous domestic growth. While economic stability is essential to ensure growth potential, there are two other crucial factors that will determine the capacity of a nation to harness and

husband it. These are the cohesiveness of the national ethos in subsuming ethnic and cultural divisions, and the nation's political ability to adhere to its long-term strategic goals.

Domestic growth potential cannot be easily measured because far too many factors affect it, some with almost immediate and palpable effects and others with very gradual and at times almost imperceptible effects. Therefore, a nation must be watched closely over a period of time to fathom the effect of some of the factors and to identify predictable trends in terms of its capability to deal with both advantageous and disadvantageous situations. Resilient growth potential springs from political and economic stability. Resilience in the wake of opposing forces is essential for a nation to ensure adequate growth potential, which is fundamental to the development of national power.

Assuming a situation wherein a nation possesses adequate stability—both political and economic—as well as demonstrated resilience, the cohesiveness of the national character will be the deciding factor in assuring domestic growth. A nation needs to have an identity which is acceptable to the entire population for its effective functioning. Ethnic and cultural divisions tend to detract from the core growth of a nation. Differences of culture and ethnicity have to be dealt with in a manner that satisfies the emotional needs of the people while not letting the national identity get distorted. In the post-colonial nations of the developing world ethnic diversity is becoming a contentious issue, at times becoming the root cause for destructive civil wars. The more established developed nations have managed to contain such divisions, but religious, ethnic and cultural differences have started to divide what have so far been cohesive national institutions even in some of these nations. Under these conditions, despite economic stability, domestic growth potential will not be sustainable for any length of time and national power will accordingly diminish. Although economic stability is a prerequisite for domestic growth, the corollary that such stability will always ensure domestic growth, irrespective of national cohesion, does not hold true.

The political ability of a nation to adhere to its long-term goals is essential to ensure unimpeded domestic growth in the right direction. This will be a product of political stability and the amount of freedom that is given to the strategic planning processes. The amount of freedom given to strategic planning is in fact a direct function of a nation's inherent confidence in the correctness of the political process. This factor does not contribute directly to a nation's growth potential, but ensures that whatever potential a nation possesses is guided appropriately to be optimised for building national power. If there are no nationally accepted long-term goals it will be easy to fritter away the available growth potential by meandering along in the pursuit of goals that are not of consequence in the long term. Therefore, the need not only to have a visionary long-term perspective for the nation, but also to have the political maturity to adhere to them is indirect, but crucial. National power can never be built without long-term commitments to clear and transparent goals which are in consonance with the nation's political, cultural, historic and social ethos. Any goal that is not clearly aligned along these lines is unlikely to be considered worth pursuing in the long term and therefore, will be of limited importance to the nation.

The strategic planning process of a nation must be such that there is a clear path demarcated to reach the accepted long-term goals. This path by itself would need indicative markers in terms of short-term goals that demonstrate a nation's progress towards its laid down long-term ambitions. While these short-term goals are important as indicators of progress, care must be taken to ensure that they do not gradually overshadow the long-term goals, especially when a nation is faced with extraordinary situations that may require the sustained application of national power.

Long-term Security Imperatives

Security of a nation is indelibly interwoven with its economic, social and political stability. The term security has been defined in different ways through the history of nation-states. What could

have been considered a robust definition of national security about 50 years ago no longer holds true. Some historic ideas of security have become completely redundant while some others still find a certain amount of relevance even today. In the contemporary world, security is a combination of a number of definable and also amorphous factors and conditions. It encompasses not only the security of defined land/maritime borders, but also the politico-economic as well as societal interests of the nation as a whole.

The other interesting change that has come about in the security environment is that, in the current international scenario, it is not the military forces of a nation alone that ensure the security of a nation. The advent of air power in the mid to late 1900s indicated the changes that needed to be enacted to secure a nation because the entire nation—geographically and, therefore, in terms of population and resources—became susceptible to attack as opposed to only the fielded forces being targeted by the enemy. This change was only a precursor of things to come, and today the concept of securing a nation by the military forces alone is almost a laughable concept. National security is now assured by a combination of economic, diplomatic, information and military capabilities, employed judiciously in concert at the appropriate rate and time, with the lead agency being determined according to the arising contingency. The concept of national security and the process of ensuring the adequacy of national power to establish a viable secure environment are at their most complex today.

Given the complexity of security requirements it is, more than ever before, necessary to lay down unwavering national security imperatives at the grand strategic level. Only from this solid foundation can national security requirements be derived and adequate capabilities developed. It is the responsibility of the highest decision-making body in the nation to ensure that not only are the security imperatives clearly enunciated, but also that the agencies involved are provided the correct inputs and resources to support the long-term requirements. The whole process is complex and unless conducted in conjunction with the other characteristics

it is likely to fail. Political stability, power projection capability and domestic growth potential combine to ensure that the security imperatives of a nation are met. This can only be achieved if these imperatives are pursued consciously without any deviation, with single-minded purpose, in the long term. The rise to great power status of a nation is almost completely dependent on it placing its security goal irrevocably as far into the future as it possibly can and then having the character and national ethos to pursue it at all costs. Anything short of complete commitment to these requirements will not permit the nation to achieve great power status, irrespective of its other attributes.

Changing Global Environment

> *However messy the world may have been in the waning epoch, at least we felt we had incisive tools to analyse it. But today we still do not have ways of talking about the diminished role of states without at the same time privileging them as superior to all the other actors in the global arena. We lack a means for treating the various contradictions as part and parcel of a more coherent order.*
>
> —James N. Rosenau[11]

Currently, only the United States could be termed as a great power, although there are a number of other nations that aspire to this status. While other nations may achieve great power status in the future, it is a certainty that only the United States will be a great power at least for the next three decades. Logically such a situation should make the world unipolar in its security outlook. However, the characteristics that are prominent in the contemporary evaluation of national power and the changing international circumstances are bound to

erode gradually the current unipolarity of the global security environment and mould it into a multilateral concert of powers. This trend will only gather pace with the sole great power, the United States, becoming further overstretched in its power projection attempts around the globe. In letting the United States bring together 'coalitions of the willing' to counter threats emanating in different parts of the world, a certain calculated cynicism is discernible in the attitude of the middle powers. By staying away from committing to these US-led interventions, they are strengthening the global move towards a multipolar world not dominated by any single entity and one that will be more receptive to a leadership provided by a concert of powers.

Since the end of the Cold War, two developments have primarily influenced and shaped the global strategic environment—the increased diffusion in the definition of national security associated with the emergence to prominence of non-state issues and the unprecedented global economic growth, especially in Asia.[12] The first has been very visible in a high profile manner and has directly affected the security paradigms across the world. Over the past decade, non-state issues have been raised to a level wherein nation-states have been confronted with them in a borderless manner leading to an almost complete breakdown of traditional national security norms. This has also led to national geographic borders becoming almost irrelevant in the security equation.

The second development, while being more obtuse and indirect, has also critically impacted the broader and evolving international security agenda. There is growing concern that the economic and financial supremacy of the United States, once considered unassailable, is now being threatened.[13] Despite the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s that set some of the economies back, the economic growth and future potential in the Asian markets seem to be completely under control and on track to achieve predicted growth figures.

Prominence of Non-State Issues

In the past few decades non-state and transnational issues have become the major issues that have resulted in the proliferation of conflicts. These issues and resulting conflicts are far removed in their characteristics from conventional interstate wars. Insurgencies, ethnic cleansing and rogue state instigated terrorism are not entirely new phenomena, but in their current reiteration and increased global impact they constitute a new security conundrum. Globalisation has amplified the effects of these problems and the demand on military forces to be able to contain them has sharply increased from the 1990s. Terrorism and transnational crime need a fertile environment of instability to take hold and thrive. Perpetrators of these activities are constantly on the look out for possible safe havens to base their operations. Deep-rooted problems of weaknesses in governance—both political and economic—undermine the stability and threaten the viability of the smaller nations in most parts of the world. Even the beginnings of such unstable conditions, far from full-blown instability and the attendant chaos, make these nations vulnerable to the attention of non-state actors seeking to establish their presence in them. Such a situation would make these nations 'failing states'.

Even a stable nation's vulnerability to non-state and transnational threats is markedly increased by the failure of its neighbouring sovereign states to enforce law and order. As stable and democratic powers it is incumbent on the developed world to restore a failing state to stability both in terms of political governance and economic management. However, unilateral action by a developed nation to stabilise a failing state in its neighbourhood is wrought with the possibility of further alienating the recipient nation. Even so, the stark reality is that the developed world has to be willing to play a more active role in stabilising the more volatile regions of the world to ensure global security and to stem the spread of instability.

Natural calamities that debilitate a nation's capability to maintain its stability also invite the attention of non-state actors. These situations are further aggravated by the fact that natural disasters are not geographically constrained and therefore offer these subversive elements a greater opportunity to carry out their activities. Containment of the possible fallouts from such disasters, especially in states that have already reached marginal failing status, require concerted efforts from economically stable states. Accordingly, military forces being deployed for 'military operations other than war'—famine and disaster relief, peacekeeping, stabilisation and nation-building operations—have become commonplace.

Asian Economic Growth

The strategic rise of Asia—the single most important event of the late 20th and early 21st centuries—will have profound global implications. The basic factor underpinning this rise to prominence is the economic growth so obvious in the region. Almost all nations in the region have overcome the economic slowdown that inhibited growth in the early 1990s and are now undergoing stable growth. There do not seem to be any major issues that could alter this pattern. Inevitably, economic growth, and more so stability, demands the redistribution of strategic power in a world reliant on trade and commerce for national prosperity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Asian economic growth has brought with it a certain amount of strategic power to the region on the whole. From being considered strategic backwaters only a few decades ago, the region has now emerged as the one in which the next century will be played out.

Accommodating this increased amount of power within an international system that itself is undergoing convulsions because of other extraneous reasons will be problematic. Even a gradual redistribution of power will in turn force changes to the system, leading to tensions in the political and strategic underpinnings that ensure global stability. While rational thinking should ensure

that changes should be instituted in such a way as to ensure that a peaceful and stable international system is sustained, it cannot be assumed that rationality will always prevail. Within the Asian context, although all nations are showing steady economic improvement, it is China and India that are rising spectacularly as major new centres of economic and strategic power. It is clearly possible over the next few decades for both of them to become major global powers capable of substantially influencing the international system.

The rise of China and India indicates a definitive shift in the global strategic order. In order to maintain global stability, the influence that they bring to the international system would have to be benign in nature. There are two factors that might impinge on the peaceful transformation of strategic balance in the world. First, both the nations involved are only emerging as strategic powers and therefore could be prone to intemperate decisions in the short term, while the domestic polity is coming to terms with their new-found global status. Second, the fundamental national aspirations of both these nations could be in conflict with each other and the necessary adjustments required to avoid conflict into the future may not be easily achieved. Having voiced such doubts it must also be said that it is not inevitable that China and India will eventually clash in their search for places in the sun, but neither is it far from impossible.[14]

Conclusion

The two developments—non-state issues and the Asian growth—are not complementary because neither do they impact on the international system in the same manner nor do they operate in the same time frame. The non-state issues have come to prominence almost completely based on the assumption that state-on-state conflict is an anachronism of the past. Further, in practicality they deal more in the short-term future, although the consequences

could definitely be long-term and need further amelioration. From the early 1990s, liberal democratic ideals have spread around the world at a very fast rate which has brought in its wake an increased incidence of insurgent activities. These changes bring non-state issues to the fore and seem to confirm that the world is undergoing a 'Revolution in Strategic Affairs'.[15]

On the other hand, the Asian economic growth—in particular the emergence of China and India as powerful entities—and its repercussions on the global strategic and security environment have long-term implications for emerging international trends. In a strange kind of a time warp, it can be noticed that the two Asian giants are re-enacting the old-fashioned strategic rivalry that was prevalent in the Europe of the early 20th century. And as was the case in Europe, this development also contains all the ingredients for a state-on-state conflict, however remote that may seem because of the stringent international pressures that will be brought to bear on nation-states who have a proclivity towards the use of force.[16]

There is an undeniable immediacy to non-state issues and the consequences of not effectively containing them are very visible in a number of places around the globe. Therefore, they predominate the contemporary security environment and developed nations are bound to view them as a higher priority while initiating stabilising actions. The rise of belligerent Asian powers and its longer term implications are not readily observable and therefore tend to be put aside as of indeterminate consequences that could be evaluated at leisure. It is indeed true that the implications are long-term, but it is also true that these implications would manifest themselves in a gradual but incremental manner leading to unpleasant surprises at their maturation. It is doubtful whether an already fragile global security environment would be able to withstand such an onslaught for which it is not prepared.

Notes

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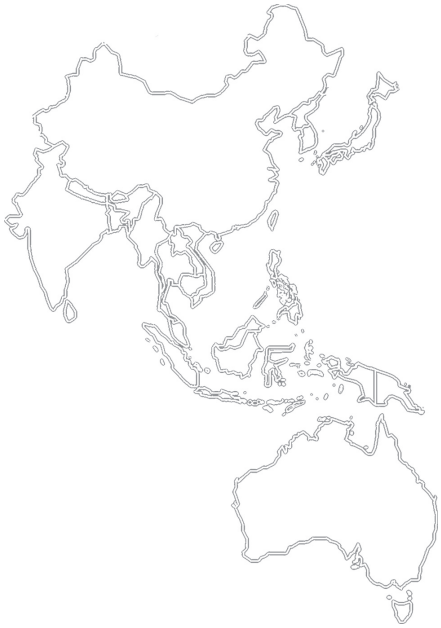
Chapter 3
The Emergence of Asian Giants



THE EMERGENCE OF ASIAN GIANTS

Asia is not going to be civilized after the methods of the West. There is too much Asia and she is too old.

—Rudyard Kipling
'The Man Who Was', in Life's Handicap, 1891

Historically, the European nations and the United States viewed the newly decolonised nation-states of Asia through a prism of political turmoil, economic mismanagement and endemic poverty and corruption. From the late 1980s the perception started to change until it was accepted that Asia was transforming into an economic powerhouse slowly but surely equalling the financial status of Europe and that there were emerging giants in Asia. This brought into question the continued status of international Western financial dominance that had so far been almost taken for granted. Along with this gradual economic shift there has emerged the unasked question whether the Asian nations are willing or up to the task of assuming a determining role in international relations. There has been intense curiosity regarding this development and it has been a major discussion topic over the past few years.

A study done by Goldman Sachs concludes that, by 2050, the four largest economies in the world will be China, the United States, India and Japan in that order. However, there is a distinct reluctance in the developed world of today to accept this reality, giving a perception of the Western world not being able to visualise clearly the future and the power shift that is bound to occur. Similarly, neither do the Western nations seem to have adequate understanding or acceptance of the global strategic environment that will prevail in the 21st century, built around the Asian powers. Asia in the 21st century is not going to repeat 19th or even 20th century European history. In contrast, Asian nations have recognised the need to grasp the opportunity for growth and development that is

currently available and all efforts are being made to ensure that this opportunity is not lost.[1]

Within the Asian context, the rise of China and India stand out as exemplary cases of economic growth. Applying the term 'Asian Giants' to China and India is meant to stress the enormity of size—demographic and economic—and the 'soft influence' these two nations derive from it. Their sheer size has already impacted on the way in which the global strategic environment is unfolding. As this century develops, these economies will have an insatiable demand for natural resources like water, oil, and land, which will in the long term bring the world to the edge of a global struggle for predominance. For example, the electrification program of China has placed enormous demand for copper globally.

China and India are usually discussed in tandem whenever the Asian strategic emergence is discussed. From an economic perspective both the countries are normally viewed within the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and the challenge that they pose to the domination of Western powers.[2] The focus is on the rapid economic growth of the nations in GDP terms and the fact that China is the second largest and India the fifth largest economy in the world. There is a certain exotic aura in the Western depiction of China as a dragon and India as an elephant, creatures that are mythical and not native to the Western nations. The implication is that the awakening of these creatures has resulted in perceivable changes in the world.

The West views the growth of China and India and their economic dynamism as something of an anomaly. There are two basic reasons for this. First, until a few years ago a large population was considered a liability to economic progress. Therefore China with its large population, albeit with controlled population growth, and India with its unchecked population growth were not expected to achieve the economic growth rate that both the nations have registered and maintained over a number of years. The second reason is obtuse and steeped in historic perceptions, almost intangible in its nuance. The question within the Western world

is one of how could 'they' rise so rapidly and steadily, which is a throwback to the thinking in colonial days of Western economic domination.[3] It is almost certain that had such meteoric rise been achieved by a Western nation, such a response would not have occurred. In many quarters in the Western world there is difficulty in coming to terms with this harsh reality.

Since the end of World War II and the withdrawal of the British forces from the region, the United States has strategically dominated the Asia-Pacific. There is mixed reaction to this situation within the nations in Asia, with some nations being openly hostile to American domination. However the primacy of US strategic politico-economic and military power has assured that the situation is a *fait accompli*. It is unlikely that the situation will change in the near term. The South-East Asian nations, while becoming economically more vibrant, still have a long way to go in terms of regional cooperation and domestic development before they can hope to achieve any semblance of combined strategic power. When examining Asia as a whole, the nations that stand out as being the major influences in the region are Japan, China and India. North Korea and Taiwan are influential in a different way, as nations that have the capacity to trigger conflict and could be potential flashpoints. This is not to overlook the importance of South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia as regionally important nations and emerging powers. It is felt that at least for the next two or three decades these nations will not be able to bring to bear the kind of strategic power necessary to make a credible impact on the strategic environment in an international system.

The Asian politico-economic scenario and interstate relationships are both complex and confusing to analyse clearly. Even though it has been nearly 50 years since most of the nations in the region gained independence from colonial rulers in the aftermath of World War II, there is still a very discernible nationalistic jingoism that comes to the fore when dealing with Western powers and the established international system. This animosity percolates into interstate relationships as palpable wariness and mistrust which is

not conducive to cultivating amicable relationships between nations in a generic manner. Such friction, however covert, tends to hold back the progress in power sharing that is vital for strategic stability. In the Asian context this schism is further deepened by the three major powers—China, Japan, and India—competing for influence within the same region.

For the foreseeable future, this competition for prominence will be influenced by the United States. Although the US-Japan alliance is very strong, the US has been making very clear efforts to bring India into its strategic circle. Its relationship with China is more ambivalent and China also harbours a feeling that it is being strategically surrounded by US influence. The favourable alignment of the US is critical for any nation to emerge as the dominant and most influential of the three.

Clearly, the introduction of a power sharing arrangement acceptable to the major players in the region would be the best way forward. This would ensure relative stability and economic progress to much of the region. Such a scenario is not difficult to imagine. The past 30 years have been relatively peaceful within Asia, and this absence of conflict has underpinned the dynamic growth so visible in the region. The other aspect is that these 30 peaceful years have been unprecedented in Asian history. The downside of this peaceful situation is that the attendant economic prosperity of the region is likely to increase the inherent ethnic, cultural and political frictions and bring them to the surface. In a sense this is an unenviably vicious cycle of peace bringing economic prosperity that in turn undermines strategic stability, bringing nations closer to belligerence and conflict.

From an Asian perspective, the rise of China and India and the pre-planned manoeuvrings of Japan have the greatest importance in determining its strategic future. By virtue of the economic and military clout of the three nations involved, any changes in the Asian environment would have a salutary effect on the international security environment as well. The growing influence of China and India within the region and their determined outward looking

policies will have security implications that transcend the region and may even be internationally polarising.

Even with the emergence of China and India as major economic powers that are actively pursuing strategic domination of the larger Asian region, the US domination of the Asia-Pacific is unlikely to change in the next two or even three decades. However, the waning of US strategic power in the region is also not a totally improbable scenario. For a number of reasons, the US could elect to draw down their involvement in Asia in a gradual manner, which could exacerbate the strategic rivalry between China and India, China and Japan or both.

The Japanese Equation

> *To survive, Japan today needs secure supply lines of essential natural resources and industrial goods. Eighty-five per cent of Japan's imported oil comes from the Middle East, and around 25% of its trade is with Europe.*
>
> —Masashi Nishihara[4]

Japan is already an economic giant and is in the process of coming out of its cocoon to assert itself in the Asian and international strategic scenario. The post–World War II generation of Japanese leaders, and the population at large, had accepted and 'embraced' defeat in order to rebuild the nation. The new generation resent that acceptance and have more nationalistic feelings regarding Japan's strategic situation, which is seen as extraordinarily dependent on the United States. However, the ground reality is that, even though the constitution permits the use of its armed forces only in self-defence, the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) is extremely capable. In view of recent events and the subsequent changes in the global security environment, the Japanese constitution has been

slightly amended to permit the deployment of the JSDF outside the nation. This is a move to take Japan outside the influence of the US and has far-reaching strategic effects. Japan is a regional power and the second largest economy in the world and all its strategic initiatives cause ripples in the global security environment, whether intended or otherwise.[5]

The US-Japan alliance is on firm grounds and is not likely to change for the worse. However, there is a growing and vociferous section of influential policy-makers who question the apparent failure of Japan to integrate its economic, diplomatic and military power to become a strategically influential global citizen. There is also unease at the administrative limits placed on the JSDF which prevents it from being a real security apparatus.[6] The recent formation of a Defence Ministry might partly redress this anomaly, but a complete revision of the constitution to incorporate a military with the accepted role of ensuring national security without any caveats on its employment may not be an immediate possibility. Ogura Kazuo, a former diplomat and President of the Japan Foundation, points out that before Japan succumbs to intense US pressure to 'shoulder its global responsibilities' against China and also in the 'global war on terror' it must be realised by the policy-makers that 'the global order Japan envisions may not be the same as the international order the United States is trying to build'.[7]

However, the reality is that the Japan-US relationship has been and will continue to be the bedrock of Japanese foreign policy. Post–Cold War, Japan was able to recover almost complete independence in both national and international areas, and the latest changes indicate that the nation is now ready to emerge as an influential politico-economic power, backed by adequate military capabilities. The deployment of the JSDF to participate in UN peacekeeping operations and the proposal to reform the UN Security Council are both indicative of Japan's efforts to come to terms with its need to be independently involved in the immense task of rebuilding a viable global order within the new security environment.

In the changing international environment, Japan is looking to articulate a national security policy that will be inclusive of a new defence strategy. This has to be achieved within the Japan-US alliance in which the US is the predominant partner. Japan is evolving an integrated security strategy based on a multifunctional defence force with two aims: defence of the nation and stability of the immediate region as well as distant areas that are critical to Japanese economy and security. These goals are meant to be achieved by Japan's own efforts, cooperation with alliance partner United States and wider cooperation with the international community.[8] Cooperation with the wider international community being endorsed as a means to achieve greater national security is a clear indication of the direction that Japan's security agenda will take in the future.

There are three main issues that Japan has to address constantly to keep abreast of the evolving security environment. First is the need to keep the US alliance as strong and pliable as possible through joint efforts with military-to-military contacts being the key. As an offshoot of this, there is also a perceived need to make sure that the larger civilian population has a better understanding of the importance of this alliance in the wider security agenda of the nation. Second is the need to monitor and deal with Chinese future actions. This needs careful attention to be paid to China's interaction with the international community, especially since the outside world has very little knowledge of Chinese motivation and decision-making at the moment. Japan and China, although trading partners, have unresolved political disputes. China still holds the moral high ground because of historical factors like the Japanese subjugation of Nanking in 1937–38. Interaction with China as it engages the world will become increasingly important in the formulation of Japanese national security strategy.[9] Third is the need to match established strategy with adequate force structure development bolstered by allocation of resources at the highest level.

Japan is slowly emerging from the security shadow of the United States while continuing to be guided by their alliance. There

is no doubt that it is now well on the way to becoming an important and extremely influential nation not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also within the global environment. Although there is lingering mistrust of Japan in Asia, the reluctance of the nation to be seen as a powerful entity has been set aside. The passing of a controversial bill on 11 January 2008 by the lower house of parliament, the House of Representatives, permitting its armed forces to continue refuelling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of US and coalition operations in Afghanistan is a sign of the times to come.[10] This may also be because of the pressure form Western nations who want commitment in terms of security forces to deal with the international situation. So far, Japan has dealt with international situations purely through economic means, which is becoming an irksome point for its Western partners.

It is also significant that there is bipartisan support for a stronger and more active role for the JSDF and there is silent consent that Japan's constitution needs to be amended to permit a more active role for its armed forces. Japan is now a nation that can bring together its large economic clout, military power and sophisticated diplomacy comprehensively in the pursuit of national security, if it has the international political maturity to do so.

The Ascendancy of China

… O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength!
But it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.

—William Shakespeare
Measure for Measure, Act 2, Scene 2

The emergence of a new great power is always highly destabilising. In the case of China, the sheer size of the country could make its emergence onto the world stage as a great power of its own volition the single most important event in the early 21st century.[11] If China's growth continues in the same manner for another decade, then there will be a shift in the balance of power towards the Asia-Pacific and the international system will have to realign to adapt to this reality. If this prognosis does indeed come to pass, which is a distinct possibility, then the world today would have to be seen as the pre-Sinocentric world rather than the post–Cold War world. However, by current estimates, even if it emerges as a great power, China will not be able to effectively challenge global or even regional US hegemony for at least the next 30 years. This assessment is based on a number of factors that take into account the protracted political rule that does not allow a move, however gradual, towards genuine democratic constitutionalism.

The Question of Democracy

It was hoped that the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing from 15 to 21 October 2007, would at least debate some reforms to further the prospects of democracy. However democracy was not even on the agenda and it can be surmised that a democratic transition in the nation will not take place in the near future. It is a paradox that, while the Chinese economy and developmental models are the envy of the rest of the

world, its people are denied even the barest modicum of democratic rights. Since these Party Congresses are held only once in five years, democratic expectations of the people have been effectively put on hold for another five years.[12] Further, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has a stranglehold on the governance of the nation and of itself is not democratic, thereby reinforcing the reluctance even to consider instituting minor democratic processes.

An authoritarian regime in China is a cause for constant worry in international relations because it tends to be aggressive and overtly nationalistic to bolster its domestic standing. A China devoid of the concept of democracy will continue to support autocratic regimes that destabilise their respective regions and thereby create new sources of instability leading to global convulsions. This seems to be the path that the current Chinese leadership has adopted. The international community will have to wait another five years to see whether even the slightest of democratic aspirations of the people would be accommodated by the leadership of the CPC.

Economy, Military Power and Regional Dominance

From a more pragmatic viewpoint, in the international hierarchy of power there is already a discernible tendency to place China second, rather than the more traditional listing of the European Union (EU), immediately below the United States. This is largely based on its rapid economic growth, which is far greater than that of the EU, and increasing integration into the world economy. In the past two decades China's economy has almost tripled and if the current growth rate of approximately 8 per cent is sustained, it will be larger than the US economy around 2020.[13] This economic strength is the base from which China is reaching out to claim its position as a regional power and will form the mainstay of its future claim to global power status.

China is the world's largest consumer of iron ore, steel, copper, coal and cement, and is behind only the US in the consumption of oil. The consumption of these resources is a direct indicator of the industrial development and might of a nation. China's economic

success has been spectacular by any standards, and the leadership views its pursuit of regional power status as a precursor to eventual global dominance. Purely by its geographical position in the Asia-Pacific, China is a constant and permanent presence as opposed to the power projection presence that is the mainstay of current US domination of the region.

Chinese military capabilities are growing faster than those of any other nation in the region and it is expending a far larger share of its resources to building a modern military than any nation other than the United States. Its defence budget is estimated to be US$65 billion, placing it second in the world in overall military spending.[14] It is expected that China will comprehensively have a larger military and wield greater 'hard power' than the EU by 2025. There is also a subtle change in the manner in which China is building up its military power projection capabilities. Following the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, a number of Western nations placed an embargo on military sales to China forcing the Chinese Government to intensify its already focused policy of self reliance. However, in the mid-1990s the emphasis was shifted to acquiring technology and equipment, mainly from Russia, to improve military capabilities at a faster rate.[15]

It is difficult to understand the Chinese resource allocation to military development because like the erstwhile Soviet Union China also resorts to multiple layers of bureaucratic obfuscation to hide the real military budget from international scrutiny. However, even the officially released figures have shown an uninterrupted double-digit figure increase in the military budget.[16] Irrespective of the actual figure, the Chinese military modernisation program is accelerating, clearly indicated by reports of the Chinese Navy's announcement to build its first aircraft carrier by 2010.

China is also consciously increasing the quantity and sophistication of its nuclear arsenal at a time when both the United States and Russia are reducing their stockpiles. Its proliferation of technology related to weapons of mass destruction to Pakistan, Iran and North Korea is viewed as indiscriminate and is a major source

of international tension, although it has made some effort at drawing down proliferation recently.[17] The continuous build-up of Chinese air and maritime capabilities, including the building of an aircraft carrier, will require an increasing US power projection presence in the region to offset any real advantage that China could derive from leveraging it against US and allied interests in the Asia-Pacific.

Regional reaction to China's open attempts at attaining regional power status has been one of wariness at a giant flexing its muscles. Japan and India are concerned with some of the developments and intractable Chinese diplomatic moves, keeping the lines for dialogue open while also not completely negating competitive diplomacy to contain the spread of Chinese influence. The nations of South-East Asia are conscious that smaller nations are more prone to be damaged in any confrontation of giants and keep a low-key approach in order to avoid antagonising China whose dynamic economic growth benefits their own economies as well. There is almost unanimous agreement that US presence in the region is the only balancing factor that would maintain stability.[18]

China is cognisant of the regional wariness towards its progress to becoming a global power, which would automatically make it the predominant regional power. The large disparity between its own economy and those of the smaller Asian nations, which fear Chinese economic domination, is also not lost on China. It has tried to reassure its regional neighbours by increased engagement and greater transparency through diplomatic, economic and military exchanges. However, all its actions are based on furthering two undeniable national aims—first, to advance and protect Chinese interests and assure its greater security and second, to curtail US influence in the region as much as possible. China has increased its participation in Asian regional forums like ASEAN and is quietly making inroads into the region in a bid to undermine US economic and security interests. It is also working towards creating an East Asian Economic Community that would exclude the United States. Such a development could mark a significant setback for the US

standing in Asia and the beginning of the development of a regional infrastructure with China as the nucleus.[19]

China has embarked on a diplomatic offensive through establishment of military-to-military relationships buttressed by the sale and gift of military hardware to nations beyond Asia, in Africa, Europe and South America. Realistically this can be interpreted as the normal progression of an emerging global power securing its far-flung national interests.[20] However, the timing of these overtures, which coincide with the US preoccupation in Afghanistan and the Middle East, gives the confidence-building measures a sinister twist, especially when looked at in combination with other moves that China is instituting to reduce the US regional influence. Irrespective of the view taken regarding China promoting its influence, there can be no doubts that it wants to be the predominant power in Asia. The political, diplomatic, and military initiatives are meant to raise China to a position where it can direct the course of events in the region, without much extra effort, so that it can concentrate on containing the increasing domestic dissonance.

The rise of China and its ongoing economic growth is not trouble free. Its continuing economic wellbeing is also fraught with the potential to become a domestic vulnerability. Within China, there is a growing regional economic disparity made even worse by rampant unemployment. The communication revolution sweeping the world has exposed the Chinese population to global political ideas that in time could become a challenge to the authoritarian Communist regime.[21] China's national growth is totally dependent on its alignment with global economy which also brings powerful sources of economic vulnerability that could thwart its ambitious quest for regional and global power.[22] China is aware of these obstacles and is treading very cautiously in its forward movement, especially in trying to calm the gradual rise of domestic disquiet.

The Taiwan Issue

> *Certainly, China never makes the mistake of mentioning the possibility of direct confrontation at sea with U.S. military power. There is no need, for it has an appropriate and convenient excuse called Taiwan.*
>
> —Hideaki Kaneda[23]

The future path that China will adopt can be readily understood from the attitude it takes towards Taiwan. International geopolitical concerns regarding China are centred on the crucial question of whether it would use force to establish its control over Taiwan.[24] Taiwan is the undisputed centre-stage on which China's 21st century strategic ambitions will be played out. China's position regarding Taiwan has been inflexible from the beginning, very clearly demonstrated by the 'anti-secession law' that was passed in the legislature in March 2005. This law makes it imperative for the Chinese Government to launch military action should Taiwan declare independence or decline unification within a certain time frame. It leaves China with very limited options and flexibility. Such rigidity can be dangerous and incompatible with international relation-building.

There are two competing views regarding the China-Taiwan relationship. The first is that the relationship is tense but stable and balanced for three reasons—restraint from China, robust economic relationship between the two nations and the clear indication from the US as to what is acceptable behaviour. China has also embarked on a policy of long-term appraisal of the reunification issue and is softening its image to make mainland China more attractive to the Taiwanese.[25] Stability and status quo is also ensured by the United States refusal to support Taiwan's independence movement. The second viewpoint is that under all circumstances China will in the long term want reunification to take place at any cost. Despite a 'soft' approach to Taiwan, reunification is a strategic objective for China in its march towards great power status and global influence.

This points to a military confrontation between the US and China as an inevitable conclusion to the current stand-off, sparked off by some slight provocation.[26]

The greatest risk in the years ahead is of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait through miscalculation rather than deliberate aggression.[27] The Chinese White Paper on Taiwan, published in February 2000, elaborated Chinese determination to impose its sovereignty over Taiwan and brought a sharp rebuke from the United States that any use of force against Taiwan would bring 'incalculable consequences' on China.[28] The rhetoric of the 1950s when the problem emanated with the Nationalist withdrawal to Taiwan and the defeat of the Communist forces at Kinmen is still very apparent.

Historically there are two fundamental lessons that can be drawn regarding Chinese foreign policy and its reaction in a crisis, especially when it involves the United States. First, even when faced with the might of the United States military power, China does not back down, which translates to it not being amenable to coercion. Second, its political leaders turn relatively minor confrontations into national actions that stir up ideological fervour and justify unpopular domestic policies. Of the two it is important to note the first as being a clear indicator of the steadfastness of purpose that Chinese policy-makers have always displayed in moving the nation towards global status. However, it is the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy that could have a sharper and more visible impact on the international security environment.

Modern wars are not inevitable, nor do large powers have a predestined fate to be at war with each other at some point in time.[29] More often than not great powers blunder into conflict because of mutual misperceptions, and the compelling complexity of domestic political imperatives.

Domestic compulsions that could force the Chinese Government to initiate military action in an effort at reunification could stem from three fundamental sources. These are hardline politicians of the so-called Third Generation within the CPC, the leadership of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and the

uncompromising nationalist section of China. The increasing capability of the PLA gives the political hardliners a belief that military intervention by the US would be prohibitively expensive and therefore would not be attempted in case of the Chinese opting to militarily force a reunification. It is believed that there are even some extreme voices that advocate the use of China's growing nuclear capabilities as a deterrent to escalation in case of a direct confrontation with the United States as a result of a crisis with Taiwan.[30]

Growing nationalistic pressure could force the hand of the Chinese Government to a demonstration of force in the Taiwan Strait in the near term. However, there are also compelling reasons for the Chinese to avoid military action, the main being the adverse economic fallout of such an action and the threat of a possible nuclear escalation. Even if the losses to the United States and its allies would be unacceptable, the same would be the case with the Chinese forces. This is all the more reason for both China and the US to continue to explore options that would perpetuate the stable status quo.[31]

The Chinese nationalist view that the US is attempting to contain China's emerging power and is working against its interests is deep-seated. Regardless of the official engagement strategies and confidence-building measures, such as joint military exercises and invitations to be observers in other military activities, the mistrust regarding US intentions will always remain. This mistrust is amplified by China feeling surrounded, with the US active in Afghanistan, Russia to the north and a strategically active India to the south. On the other hand, the United States will also not go the extra diplomatic mile to assuage Chinese concerns and is more than likely to play a game of brinkmanship. Under these conditions, even transparent joint military exercises could be viewed as demonstrations of US military supremacy over the PLA.[32] This atmosphere of mutual mistrust will fester along and has the capacity to deteriorate into unwanted confrontations without the release

valve of a face-saving withdrawal for either side—a catastrophe waiting to happen.

India: Charging Ahead

The first Prime Minister of independent India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his now famous speech on 14–15 August 1947, referred to India's 'unending quest' from the 'dawn of history' but also asked a rhetorical question: 'Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?'[33] More than half a century later even the most ardent admirer of India would admit that the journey has not always been ideal and that some of the hope and aspiration that was nakedly apparent on the eve of independence has not really borne out.

During the election campaign of the late 1980s, Rajiv Gandhi used to say *Mera Bharat Mahan* (My India is Great) , although it seemed a bit premature at that time. However, 60 years after independence, India is starting to deliver on its promise and the slogan makes more sense now. The far-reaching economic liberalisation program that opened up trade and foreign investment in the early 1990s, brought about by the need to salvage the mess caused by the centrally controlled economy, has unleashed an astounding growth rate in the country, leading to a current growth rate of more than 8 per cent. India's economic clout is very visible in the international arena and the nation has effectively reclaimed the global status as a trading nation that it enjoyed long before the arrival of the colonial powers.

However, the picture is not all rosy. The challenges facing the country are enormous and some of them seem to be endemic with no solution in sight.[34] The problems include infant malnutrition of a scale bigger than in Africa, breakdown of strained civic infrastructure that has not been able to keep pace with the economic boom, racial and ethnic discrimination, sporadic religious

violence, unchecked corruption and pollution. The list is long and dreary. Yet, in spite of these seemingly insurmountable hurdles, India is undergoing a remarkable and massive shift and the nation is continuing to make enviable progress. The improving quality of life of a nation can be measured by monitoring its life expectancy and literacy rate. The average Indian remains poor, but agricultural reform has eliminated famine and there has been a steady progress in education.[35]

In a span of just 20 years, India has transformed itself from a poor agrarian nation to a booming economic giant able to compete in the international field in almost all aspects of trade and commerce. The transformation, if anything, is more than remarkable. Maintaining stability in the next decade will be critical to India's ongoing development. To ensure adequate politico-economic stability, the fruits of the economic boom need to be spread across to the two-thirds of the population who are still the rural poor. The Government has to find a foolproof way to achieve this in the near term or face an ever-increasing and real threat of a blow-out from the currently smouldering insurgencies around the country. On the other hand, if this transition is also managed with adequate transparency, India could well be on its way to becoming an unassailable global power.[36]

The Resilience of Indian Democracy

> *What is unique about Indian democracy is that it has succeeded despite consistent predictions of its demise.*
>
> —Jay Panda, Member of Parliament from Orissa, India

It has become cliché to speak of India as a land of paradoxes. Starting with India's sophisticated independence movement, that brought together rich Oxford-educated aristocrats and the poorest of the poor farmers in the country, this opinion has been constantly reinforced. Indian economy is booming and there are visible signs in all cities of this, but in the rural areas farmers are

still struggling with abject poverty and share nothing of the great economic progress of the country. Within this palpable dichotomy, the one thing that binds all Indians together is their single-minded commitment to democracy.

Although India is a riotous mix of cultures, ethnicities and religion, which is linguistically more diverse than Europe with a sixth of humanity living in it, it is one of the most stable and unified societies in Asia. It has proven once and for all that even a country that is poor and embraces very diverse peoples can be democratic.[37] The manifestation of democratic principles within the freewheeling political process of the country is unique in the Asian context and perhaps internationally. Successful and prosperous democratic nations have, more often than not, achieved their economic progress and stability by curtailing the political process sufficiently to make them 'directed democracies' or sternly run societies nowhere as free and rumbustious as the democratic process embedded in the Indian polity. China, in its ambitious progress towards becoming a world power, has a development-first policy and quashes dissent while vaunting harmony within the nation.

Indian democracy is built on the all-inclusive base that was laid during the independence struggle and welcomes everyone. One of the most important legacies that the years of independence struggle gave to India is the inseparability of nationalism and democracy, which automatically stifles any attempt at autocratic rule of any sort. The leaders of the independence movement, who became the first rulers of independent India, nurtured and built democratic institutions and a system of checks and balances that are entrenched even today, forging a robust democratic tradition unparalleled anywhere in the world. In fact the resilience of Indian democracy is the proof that completely disputes some Asian claims that liberal democracy is a Western concept and therefore alien and unlikely to succeed in the 'Asian values and culture'.[38] The well-established democratic process in the country provides a stable base for it to address developmental issues in its determined economic and societal march forward.

Endemic Problems

India's rise to power is still restrained by the regional milieu and the need to lift the living standards of over a billion people. Further, India is beset by negative reactions from its immediate neighbours in South Asia that inhibit its steady strategic progress towards what the majority of Indians believe is their rightful place in the international order. The power of any nation is the product of its economic capability and its ability to shape the geopolitical circumstances to its advantage. In the case of India, its geopolitical environment is both a bane and a boon. Of India's South Asian neighbours, only Pakistan has the potential to mount a credible strategic challenge to India's ambitions. Theoretically, the combination of democracy and the lack of geopolitical challenges should provide India the opportunity to shape the region to suit its needs. In reality however, other factors, both internal and external, make this a difficult task.

The neighbourhood is troubled and this impacts and inhibits every one of India's strategic initiatives. Cross-border illegal migration of impoverished people from Bangladesh has upset the religious and ethnic balance in India's restive north-eastern states. Resentment against the central government in Kashmir has provided the necessary background for Pakistan to intervene covertly to conduct a proxy war. Pakistan, although not strategically or economically strong enough to threaten India directly, has kept India tied down in an endless cycle of disparate competition and proxy war. This situation is further exacerbated by the new Islamic assertiveness in the Muslim states of the region, which finds an ugly echo in some extreme elements of India's religious majority Hindus.[39]

India is also beset with corruption in all strata of society, mainly as a result of a bloated, inefficient and largely self-serving bureaucracy. The brunt of this problem is borne by the poor increasing not only economic but the virtual disparity between the rich and the poor to an extent where the social fabric is stretched to breaking point. A number of factors, most stemming from economic

mismanagement that has excluded certain areas and people from accessing the benefits of the nation's progress, have resulted in simmering insurgencies in Kashmir, the north-eastern states and in a wide swath of land flowing all the way down from the foothills of the Himalayas at the Nepal border to the Telengana region of the state of Andhra Pradesh in the south. This is bitter medicine for a nation that prides itself on being the largest democracy in the world, wedded to self-determination.

Another major problem that detracts from the forward momentum of the nation is the proclivity of the political class not only to accept, but also to perpetuate poor governance. Corruption and criminality in politics combine to whittle nation-building activities, such as public health and education, to an extent wherein they are nonexistent in some parts of the country. This creates significant developmental and humanitarian challenges which need institutional response and entrenched organisational skills to overcome. Unfortunately, both these commodities are sorely lacking in the Indian context.[40]

Strategic viability of a nation, a prerequisite for a nation to aspire to great power status, is the product of four major factors—a complementary link between 'soft' and 'hard' power, a stable and growing economy, availability of advanced technology and the capacity to integrate it, and a robust research and development sector functioning in a benign environment. India has these four factors in the necessary quantities and can therefore be termed an emerging international power. However, the reforms to ensure continued economic growth have not been completely successful in eliminating some of the historic problems that have plagued the country. Three major areas that still need a great deal of improvement are infrastructure development, governance and the labour market.[41] Failure to find remedies to these endemic problems would eventually slow the economic growth and make India's quest for great power status unrealistic.

Realities of Power

One cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.

—Indira Gandhi,
Former Prime Minister of India

India has been meandering along for half a century without the world giving it much of a thought till the United States categorically stated in 2005 that one of America's major priorities was to help India become a major world power in the 21st century. The global status of the US is such that even if the host country does not want any assistance, it has to factor in the US attitude at all times when strategic decisions are being made. So is the case with India.

India has strengths and weaknesses in its strategic means to achieving power. The first and foremost strength would be its powerful military, which is the fourth largest in the world with a historic warfighting tradition and martial culture.[42] It is a paradox that with such a long military tradition the society is non-militaristic with the military affairs being far removed from it, but supports this large and powerful establishment. This is a unique situation, especially when the military is also well on its way to acquiring expeditionary capabilities to support greater national ambitions.

Throughout its independent history India has taken a soft, defensive strategic approach to its security. The Indian military establishment has in the past few years started to articulate the inappropriateness of this approach for a country of its size and economic stature. Although there is no confirmation regarding a conscious shift to an offensive role, the acquisition process is clearly aligned to protecting national interests away from home base. India's force projection capabilities and an outward looking strategy have started to influence its foreign policy initiatives.[43] India is transitioning to a more offensive stance and its military forces are beginning to synchronise their strategy to bring in a force projection capability. These moves have been underpinned by a political willingness to support them and a national vision of

an India capable of projecting both hard and soft power to support national security initiatives.

A further attribute is India's growing maturity and self-confidence, clearly demonstrated recently in its adoption of a more pragmatic approach to the issues of defence research and development. On 8 January 2008 India announced the closure of the country's strategic Integrated Guided Missile Development Program. This was a clear indication of a shift in the means to acquire capabilities. It has been recognised that the benefits of foreign cooperation in advanced military technology transfer is far more cost-effective than insisting on complete self reliance for the tools of national defence. The new way forward is seen as one of 'foreign collaboration' as opposed to 'foreign purchase' with adequate technology transfer clauses built into ensure that the Indian technology base is constantly updated. This has not changed India's military modernisation efforts or its strategic direction—it has only recognised the merit of not reinventing the wheel at enormous cost.

The next important attribute is its global importance as a market economy, being the fourth largest in purchasing power parity—what a nation's currency actually buys—rather than its official exchange rate with the US dollar. When this is combined with a real growth in GDP between 6 per cent and 8 per cent in the past seven years, the growth of the economy is actually phenomenal. An increase of 7 per cent a year means that India is annually becoming richer by US$200 billion, an increase in one year that exceeds the total GDP of Portugal or Norway. McKinsey and Company has reported that India's foreign reserves have exceeded US$140 billion, whereas only 15 years back the nation had to mortgage its gold in London because its foreign exchange reserves ran dry.[44]

The enormous growth of the Indian economy and strategic security pressures in its quest for regional power have resulted in a rising military budget, although not at the same rate as the GDP. The budget for 2008–09 has increased by about 10 per cent to US$26.6 billion from US$24 billion in 2007–08.[45] Roughly half the

amount has been earmarked for military hardware purchase, but India's notoriously slow bureaucratic system may not be able to take advantage of the Government's largesse and procure the systems that the military desperately needs to maintain its operational readiness. While the slow decision-making regarding purchases is frustrating to the military, the unfaltering support of the Government to the military's hardware needs is a positive change form earlier times.

Perhaps the biggest strength that India has in pushing forward towards world power status is its population. It is estimated that by 2025 India will have over 900 million people of working age, which will be even larger than the working age population of China. This large number will also be increasingly at ease with English language, which will be an added advantage when dealing with the already globalised economic environment. Based on a liberal democracy that has been tested time and again, these advantages have the hallmark of leading the nation to greater power status regionally and internationally. The corollary is that a large proportion of the world's poorest people live in India with the poverty line itself drawn at an impossibly low level. There are however positive developments as well in this dismal situation. In 1991, when the population of India was 846 million, 36 per cent, amounting to 305 million people, lived on less than one dollar a day which is the World Bank's measure of absolute poverty. In 2001, the population had gone up to 1.02 billion but the percentage of those living on less than one dollar day had reduced to 26 per cent, around 267 million people.[46] The success story is that even though the total population had increased by 156 million, the number of Indians living in abject poverty had reduced by 38 million. Today, the estimate of people below the poverty line is only 22 per cent. Economic liberalisation is slowly making its effect felt even against poverty, much more so than in the first four decades of independence.

Like everything else in India, even the quest for power has its weak spots. While India is technologically very advanced in areas like biotechnology and nanotechnology and leads their development

internationally, there is also a glaring external dependence on a number of critical technologies, mainly related to power projection capabilities. The growing economy and large population has a voracious demand for energy, being the sixth largest consumer of energy in the world. Paradoxically, the electricity generation capacity, for example, is nowhere near adequate and the distribution system is pathetically biased against the rural poor. There is also deep-rooted socioeconomic deprivation, manifest more in the rural areas that eat into the nation's cohesiveness like a rotten core. The weaknesses are many and easy to spot, and must be comprehensively addressed before India can become a state of influence globally or even regionally.

Future Manifestations

The rise of a nation to great power status does not have an exact start point, nor does it have an exact point at which its power is diminished to move it away from that status. However, undeniably other nations have to accept this status, manifest in numerous ways, for a nation to be conferred this mantle. In the absence of war, which the international system does not permit any more, the means to signalling great power status has become even more subtle. In India's case the situation is the same in that the achievement of great power status is almost completely dependent on whether it is accepted by other nations as a great power or not.[47] India's behind the scenes manipulations regarding the reorganisation of the United Nations and the expansion of the Security Council is one of the manifestations of these convulsions.

At least in the near future, India's great power role will be within the Asia-Pacific region in formulating a continent-wide security architecture. In the post-colonial period, this is the first time that the nations of Asia have moved forward with the idea of security interdependence, the catalyst most probably being the rise of Chinese power. Every nation in the region will have to assimilate the rise of China in all its different embodiments.[48] Asia is currently at a historic moment, clearly progressing to political maturity as

states gradually come to terms with each others' sovereignty and territoriality. Such maturation has a positive effect of limiting the possible futures within the region and the peaceful acceptance of national sovereignty, pointing towards cooperative security arrangement some time in the future.

The political turmoil in Pakistan and the struggle against fundamental Islam in that nation will be closely watched in India, but the instability has not reached a critical point that would warrant direct Indian intervention. The growing instability does however provide an incentive for India to maintain closer relations with the United States. If the US-Indian nuclear deal is cancelled because of domestic political opposition, the bilateral relationship in the short term would be affected. India will however inevitably reorient itself towards the United States—even if such a move is clumsily executed—in the long term because of its own compelling geo-strategic imperatives. These are manyfold: India's dire energy needs that would only be satiated by diversifying into atomic energy; the strategic and military advantage that could be derived over Pakistan from a changed US alliance posture; gaining global recognition as a legitimate nuclear state and the advantages of trade with the largest economy in the world.

The US is openly courting India, not only because of the economic opportunities that would become available, but because it could serve as a strategic ally in the Indian Ocean against Chinese military expansion and could safeguard US interests in the Persian Gulf. Russia has clearly shown its discomfort with the development of this new friendship, but there is very little of consequence that it can do to prevent it. Even considering the longstanding defence relationship between India and Russia, it is more than likely that India will be far more interested in working with the West in the long term to meet its security goals than with Russia.

Sixty years is like a 'blink of an eye' in the history of a nation. Post-colonial India is coming to terms with its paradoxes as best as it can and is very aware of its growing international clout. It seeks to be a world power and wants to be recognised as one, but currently

it is not and historically it has never been a militarily expansionist power. Although the Indian 5th century BC text, Kautilya's *Arthasastra*, elaborates on 'world conquest' it must be understood in the context of the time, where the known world encompassed only South Asia. From its point of view, India has never been the aggressor in any conflict in which it has participated and continues to maintain a foreign policy of qualified non-alignment. This attitude has been criticised in international forums, but fence-sitting is something that India has developed into an art form. Even as a regional or international power, India can be expected to continue pursuing its current foreign policy with minor pragmatic changes to suit its economic and political growth to embed it as a nation of international consequence.

Russian Opportunism: Movements in Asia

> *Russia will not soon become, if it ever becomes, a second copy of the United States or England—where liberal views have deep historic roots.*
>
> —Vladimir Putin, President of Russia

The strategic environment in Asia has never been tranquil. There have always been incidents at very regular intervals that create ripple effects which tend to destabilise the economic, diplomatic and military balance of the region. The current global strategic circumstances and the re-emergence of a determined Russia, uncharacteristically active in Asia, indicate the beginning of what could be yet another period of instability at least for the medium term in the region. Russia is a northern Pacific nation with great potential to influence the balance of power in the region that encompasses Japan, China, the Koreas and Taiwan.

The United States is preoccupied with its commitments in the Middle East and Afghanistan and is also getting increasingly mired down in domestic politics leading up to the 2008 Presidential election. However, a new presidency could see the US divesting itself of unwanted baggage and returning to its accustomed position of global political dominance. Russia is keenly aware that the window of opportunity vis-à-vis American preoccupation elsewhere is limited and has taken this opportunity to gather momentum to return to the world stage as a nation of consequence. This has manifested in a focus on the Central Asian republics and West Asian politics while also being proactive with respect to developments in Europe. It has also envisaged interest in South and South-East Asian geopolitical and economic issues. Even in Soviet times Russia was never an Asian power and therefore, its new-found focus on Asia with the emphasis on increased contact with the nations of the region brings with it a feeling of uncertainty and innate unease.

Russia's motives for such a move are still not clear and the nations of the region are still evaluating the impact and formulating their responses to the evolving situation. Reactions to Russian overtures in the region vary from one of covet antagonism to opportunistic welcome. If initial reactions are any indications, then Japan is plainly uncomfortable with this intrusion because it views Russia as a direct competitor for economic, political and military influence in the region. On the other hand, Indonesia, building up a broken economy and political process, considers Russia a potential ally and investor but is pragmatic about the political concessions—short and long-term—that such investments and strategic cooperation will demand. Taiwan on the other hand would opportunistically use the increased Russian strategic presence in the region and the changes that it would bring about in the security environment to increase the United States engagement in the region. This would ensure that a greater balance is created against China in Taiwan's favour.

More than its tentative incursion into East and South Asia, the strategic importance of Russia in the Asian context is in its bilateral

relationship with China and how that indirectly affects the US-China interaction. After more than two decades of pretending that their bilateral relations are on a sound footing, both China and Russia have realised that their larger national interests are not actually in harmony. The main driving force behind all of China's economic and diplomatic interactions, both regionally and globally, is its voracious need for energy assets. In a well-crafted strategic move it has focused on Central Asia in its efforts to gain sufficient energy resources, basically because of the continued and unquestioned US domination of sea lanes that could disrupt its other sources of energy supply at will. The region that China is now attempting to bring within its sphere of influence has traditionally been Russia's backyard. Therefore, there is an obvious and natural resentment of such moves. Russia does not appreciate Chinese actions because any new economic alignment will automatically reorient the strategic environment away from Russian dominance. However, it cannot afford a direct confrontation with China and is therefore employing other coercive means directed at the Central Asian states themselves in an attempt to hold Chinese influence at bay.

Russia is assiduously trying to expunge the growing Western influence in the erstwhile Soviet states, which in their turn resist Russia's attempts at returning them to at least satellite status. Russia is particularly concerned regarding the states at its western and south-western peripheries but the chances of Russia regaining even part of its lost influence currently seem remote. This is because the process of re-influencing these Central Asian states is almost completely dependent on the individual personalities of the current crop of their leaders who seem to be uncomfortable with Russian overtures at this moment. Russia however is determined to return to an influential status and is not averse to using overt coercive actions irrespective of unfavourable international opinion by leveraging its growing power as an energy supplier. By cutting gas supply to Georgia during a particularly severe winter in 2006, Russia has indicated its single-minded intend to pursue its former great power status.

Unwittingly, by manoeuvring for greater influence in Asia, Russia is providing China with a bargaining tool that it could use effectively in its rocky relationship with the United States. Almost completely tied down in Iraq, the US would welcome any Chinese offer to counter Russian ambitions in Central Asia, as Russia aggressively pursues its objective of returning to the global stage with the old Soviet power projection capabilities and intent. However, China will also be very diplomatic in its actions because it does not have the economic, geopolitical power backed by sufficiently robust military capabilities to confront Russia without harming its own domestic growth and international influence.

China and India: A Strategic Comparison

The world today recognises, however reluctantly, an Asian renaissance built around the re-emergence of China and India. Together they account for 40 per cent of the world population and the leaderships of both nations have cautiously engaged each other to ensure that border tensions that emerged 50 years ago do not boil over into even covert conflict. There is a conscious attempt to ensure that the growth and aspirations of both the nations are not compromised while existing disputes are sorted out.[49] Such endeavours, initiated at the highest level of diplomacy, are not always successful and deter from the smooth progress of bilateral relations.

In an analysis of the two major factors that contribute to national power—economy and geographic location—it becomes very clear that China is economically well ahead of India. However, China is geographically constrained to operate in an area of the world where three important and large powers of the world, the US, Japan and Russia, coexist. It, therefore, does not have the luxury to shape the geopolitical agenda to its convenience, making it necessary to react to big power manipulations rather than being

the central player. On the other hand, if India is able to break out of its regional imbroglios, it would be better placed than China to exercise its clout and could easily become the primary power in the Indian Ocean region.

Both the nations have a very different view regarding the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan. This comes to the fore in almost all bilateral discussions and could in the future become a real point of contention and acrimony. India has concerns regarding the building of the Gwadar deep sea port in its Baluchistan coast almost entirely financed by China. This port is only 180 nautical miles from the exit of the Strait of Hormuz and would enable Pakistan, or Chinese ships based there, to interdict vessels and thus control energy distribution at will.[50] Further, India perceives China's funding 85 per cent of the $307 million Hambanthola Port Development as an attempt to influence Sri Lankan diplomatic relationships with other nation's in the subcontinent. China's diplomatic manoeuvres and military overtures to become an effective element in the overall Indian Ocean equation is not lost on India.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has not only analysed the reasons for the fall of the Soviet Union, but also studied how parties in other political systems stay in power. Although democracy in the form of universal franchise remains well outside the Chinese system, there are incremental changes taking place within the CPC to allow for greater participation by other recognised political parties. This indicates a move by the CPC towards controlled coalition building by retaining central control but providing more visibility to other political entities. In India coalition politics have become a reality both at the central and state governments. Most of the major political parties in India have pragmatically overcome ideological rigidity and moved with the times to ensure economic reform and growth.[51] Both China and India are embarked on economic growth. The difference is that the CPC is more focused on people-centric reforms focusing on reducing regional inequalities and the urban-rural divide, and improving the social welfare system. The Indian

Government has continued to pursue an institutional economic reform model.

There is also a distinct difference between the selection processes of political leadership of the two nations. The one-strongman leadership style of the CPC is a system of the past. Currently the CPC has a set age limit for people in leadership positions with institutionalised retirement norms. There is also an organised system of training and grooming with a merit based promotion of its leading cadres. In China the fifth generation leaders are already visible, whereas in India, other than for a few with the right family connection, there are hardly any young leaders visible and more importantly no indication of when a change is leadership would take place.[52] Commitment to long-term aspirations is clearly apparent in China, demonstrated by the leadership succession plan that has been instituted. In India the lack of long-term goals is all too brightly visible by the absence of a clearly indicated group of young leaders-in-waiting.

While China is poised to become the largest global economy by around 2040, India is set to become the most populous nation by 2030. India has recognised its 'soft' power in the world and uses it judiciously when required. China on the other hand is not averse to using heavy-handed methods to bring recalcitrant friends in line. A broad overview of the bilateral relationship of these two emerging economic giants is similar to watching a carefully choreographed ballet, with moves and countermoves, proxy machinations and covert but unmistakable threats. The unresolved border dispute between the two nations has also become a pawn, played at will in the growing tests of diplomatic nerve between these two countries.

The US Factor

In 2007 India has emerged as a nation willing to assert its power, with the full knowledge that its stature has been greatly enhanced by its improving relationship with the United States. This has also prompted India to embark on an ambitious foreign policy initiative, contrary to its characteristic low profile, by assuming the lead in establishing guiding principles to create an economic,

defence and security understanding with its neighbours. China is also attempting something similar, but is less effective than the Indian initiative basically because of the US factor that falls heavily in India's favour.[53] India's relationship with the United States has the potential to become one of the deciding factors in the formulation of its foreign policy and its strategic role, both regionally and as a nation of influence internationally.

India staged a naval exercise off its east coast in September 2007 with the US, Singapore, Australia and Japan, with all nations declaring that it was meant to improve 'shared security interests'. China views this as an attempt to contain it and noted its concern at the strategic grouping of these countries. It is also uncomfortable with the US-India civilian nuclear deal that is being completed. The optimism in the US as well as in India regarding military equipment deals that could rise to about US$35 billion over the next 25 years is seen as yet another fractious development.

On its part, the United States views the anti-satellite test conducted by China in January 2007 as a direct threat and challenge to its domination of space. In addition, the Chinese military industrial complex has reached a stage of maturity to embark on an ambitious modernisation program for all three arms of the Peoples' Liberation Army[54] The US is monitoring these gradual changes warily while continuing to reassure an increasingly worried Taiwan. In the end it will be the Taiwan question that brings to the fore the strategic imperatives of the US and China. The diplomatic maturity of the leaderships of both these nations to diffuse any emerging crisis will determine the outcome and perhaps the future of world peace. Realistically, India, Japan, Australia and other nations of the Asia-Pacific would only be of peripheral influence in such a situation.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The collapse of the Soviet Union produced an informal group of five nations that pursued a policy of stability over confrontation by putting in place confidence-building measures and border

demarcation. The five participants, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia formalised the group as The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in June 2001 with Uzbekistan also becoming a member. The SCO's goals are to strengthen mutual trust, to combat 'terrorism, separatism and extremism' and to promote a 'fair and rational' international order based on respect for state sovereignty[55] SCO's international strategic potential is still uncertain, but it has started to flex its muscles, first by asking for the closure of all NATO and US bases in its member nations territory and second, by holding regular Sino-Russian military exercises since 2006.

The organisation has also initiated steps to enlarge its influence by granting Afghanistan, India and Turkey observer status, while carefully considering both Iran and Pakistan's applications for membership. Strategists also note that the US has been very carefully kept out of the group and not even been granted observer status at its summit, despite US requests. With its advocacy of a multipolar international system, the SCO is being viewed in some Western quarters as a growing threat to world peace because of its polarisation capabilities. It is seen as a Sino-Russian grand design to align Central and South Asia against the United States. This does not seem a possibility in the near to mid-term because of economic realities that tie China to the export market and its requirement to avoid external confrontation at all costs for the next two or three decades in order to deal with its burgeoning internal problems. Even in the long term, the likelihood of the SCO transforming into a power projection tool and changing the international system back to the confrontational Cold War type is almost negligible. However, in the energy sector (SCO accounts for 8 per cent of world oil reserves and 30 per cent of natural gas reserves, without taking into account reserves in observer states) this grouping has the potential to wield great influence, if the political differences of the member nations can be equitably sorted out.

Conclusion

Between China and India the patterns of economic growth imperatives are perhaps the only major commonality other than their long histories and ancient cultures. Both the nations also have large regional disparities in the levels of economic growth that translate to civil unrest and entrenched poverty. The critical difference between the nations is the way of governance. India is a vibrant democracy with an internationally comparable rule of law and justice and accepted political stability based on democratic traditions. China on the other hand suffers from a lack of synchronisation between economic and political liberalisation built on a system of centralised political power, restrained civil liberties and an internationally questioned human rights record.

In the age-old *Mandala* tradition, both the countries are busy influencing smaller nations in the region to ensure that the other does not obtain preferential treatment, whether it is in the granting of resource exploration licences or basing rights for military and paramilitary purposes. Both the nations understand that they cannot confront each other and still hope to make progress in their quest for international acclaim, at least for the immediate future. However, there is considerable unease, despite bilateral confidence-building measures, within the Indian establishment regarding China's open support of Pakistan regarding the disputed areas in Kashmir.

There is, however, no doubt that both China and India are well on their way to becoming global economic powers and significant regional nations in the first half of the 21st century. Only an unforeseen and abrupt disruption and reversal of the globalisation process or a major upheaval involving both China and India—like an open armed conflict—will prevent their rise to great power status. The achievement of such status will also increase the leverage that these nations have in international security matters.

Considering the inevitability of the rise of these nations, it would seem an ideal situation for them to become strategic allies

that would not only improve their own political, economic, security and social conditions but would also ensure regional and global prosperity and durable peace. Economic competition in the global market would also be inevitable but again the ideal way forward would be to maximise the complementary areas and actively pursue a regional economic cooperation initiative.

Currently, it is difficult to predict how both China and India would exercise their growing power and whether they would relate to each other in a spirit of cooperation or be competitive in the international system. Whatever the long-term outcome, it is certain that for the foreseeable future, these two emerging 'Asian Giants' will continue to spar with each other for regional hegemony and to increase their influence in international affairs.

Clearly, both China and India have chosen their strategic intent and, in keeping with their ancient traditions, are patiently pursuing pathways to their manifest destinies. Their competitiveness would create large and small-scale politico-economic turmoil. When they manoeuvre, like whales thrashing in the ocean of global influence, it is more important for the smaller nations, like smaller fish, to keep well out of the way or risk being subsumed into irrelevance in the international system.

By its unique situation due to its geographic and political positioning, Australia has an enviable ringside seat at this evolution that could be transformed to its advantage as an insider's track of influence. The question for Australia is how well it can understand and leverage these independent yet interlinked journeys and how well it can shape its environment and future to be able to continue to be a secure and prosperous nation in their wake.

> *More profoundly, since 2000 the fundamental transformation of Australia's strategic environment has quickened as power and influence shift to China and India.*
>
> —Professor Hugh White[56]

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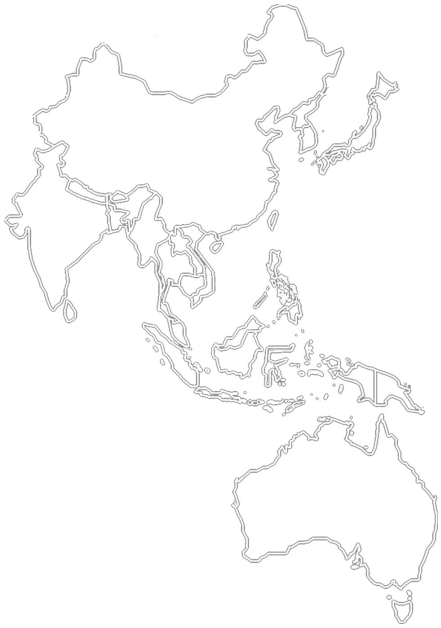
Chapter 4
Australian Security Perceptions



AUSTRALIAN SECURITY PERCEPTIONS

The late twentieth century is marked by a significant series of new types of 'boundary problem'. We live in a world of 'overlapping communities of fate', where the trajectories of each and every country are more tightly entwined than ever before.[1]

Strategically, Australia seeks a stable and peaceful international environment where it can assure its security and compete fairly as a trading nation to improve its prosperity. It firmly believes that its own liberal democratic values will provide the best structure to progress towards global stability. Australia also feels that only stable democracies can ensure basic human rights and accommodate the growing challenges of globalisation.[2] The population of the world is growing rapidly and it is estimated that in the next two decades 19 nations will have populations in excess of 100 million with 10 of these being in Australia's area of strategic interest. Not surprisingly, the same area will host the majority of the word's trade. Successful management of such large populations as democracies needs extreme flexibility, which very few nations have so far been able to achieve. However, it is to be hoped that there would be a worldwide increase in the number and acceptance of democratic systems.[3] This trend would increase the chances of international stability and improve trade and development.

The 2007 Defence Update states that Australia's security interests are global in nature and completely transcend national borders and even regional spheres of interest.[4] Even a cursory analysis will throw up the conclusion that the world at the beginning of the 21st century is troubled by dangers that were not even thought about just 50 years back, like religious violence, failing or failed states, transnational crime, nuclear weapons proliferation and

asymmetric warfighting trends. The list could be endless. Therefore, Australia by virtue of its international economic and diplomatic alliances and partnerships will also face these global threats. It is within this uncertain strategic environment that the nations of the world have to ensure their citizens' security and prosperity. Democratic nations particularly are hard pressed to ensure their security while not curtailing the individual and collective freedom of their populations, which is the basis of the trust between the elected leaders and the electorate. This is a covenant that cannot be dismantled without catastrophic effects for the wellbeing of the fundamental nation-state concept itself.

Australia's Strategic Fundamentals

> *A country's strategy is always based on a fundamental philosophical outlook.*
>
> —Marc Forne Molne

Australia is a Western democracy that geographically straddles the South-West Pacific and the Indian Ocean but retains very close ties to the nations of North America and Europe. It has no land borders and does not have current conflicts with any of its neighbours. This provides a big boost to Australia's security since, historically, most interstate conflict occurs between neighbours that share a land border. The downside of this geographic separation is that its neighbours are also not major economic or security partners of Australia. In fact Australia lacks the security and stability that comes with being embedded within a group of affluent, thriving democracies like a typical western European nation. Further, Australia's geographical positioning does not match its strategic and trade interests, and its national security is directly affected as much by the larger security environment prevailing in the region as

by global events. This dichotomy places it in a unique and at times confrontational posture within the region.

Australia's strategic interests have been shaped by its history, much more than in the case of a number of other nations. Ever since Asia settled down into a somewhat peaceful cycle of events in the post–World War II and post-colonial era, Australian security policy has been based on the continued growth of stability in its immediate region and in the larger Asia. In the 1970s and 1980s, the stable Asian order that underpinned Australian security and defence policies was taken for granted and even the chance of this unnatural stability breaking down, other than in the case of a global war, was not considered.[5] This is not to suggest that there was lethargy in strategic thinking within the establishment, but it points to a somewhat benign neglect of the need for futuristic analysis. Australian strategic thinking is agile if anything and, although the demise of the Soviet Union happened much faster than even the most optimistic Western estimate, it was quick to acknowledge that the end of the Cold War and the rise of China and India had started to reshape the Asian geopolitical environment. There was also clarity in the understanding that these changes, however gradual, would have direct implications for Asia's strategic balance. Any change to the status quo of Asian strategic balance has a ripple effect on Australia's security imperatives.

Currently, Australia's national security perception is hinged on one fundamental factor—that the threat of a direct attack on Australia is very low, almost negligible at present. This assumption is based on the analysis of the contemporary international geopolitical, economic and military circumstances with special reference to the Asian nations. In such an analysis three basic reasons to arrive at the above conclusion stand out.[6] First, even if there was intent, none of Australia's neighbours have the capacity to neutralise its current military capability sufficiently to be able to project force across the air and sea approaches to the nation. Second, in the immediate future no major power will have ready access to bases that could be used to project their superior military power over Australian

territory or maritime approaches. Third, even in the unlikely event of a major power trying to project power into this region it is bound to meet effective opposition from other major powers equally bent on stopping such a move.

However, there is also tacit understanding that Australia also needs to be cognisant of the fact that this benign atmosphere can change with the evolution of a different strategic atmosphere in Asia, especially in the long term. There is ample evidence of such changes now being brought about by the economic prosperity and improving military capabilities of the Asian states. Strategic uncertainty in Asia alters the balance around which Australia's security is conceived and lowers the minimum threshold that ensures Australia's security in direct proportion to the instability.

Australia's security strategy has been fairly consistent since the end of World War II, driven by a strategic culture that has taken into account political and economic realities and influenced by its culture, history and geography. The enduring effect of its geographic isolation and comparatively small population has dominated its security paradigms. As a maritime nation dependent on trade for its prosperity, Australia needs adequate access to its trading partners and markets which cannot be guaranteed in an insecure world. Its geographical location makes it susceptible to influence by the volatile internal security situation prevalent in a number of South-East Asian nations. Australia's major trading partners, Japan and China, are geographically beyond this region. Any deterioration in the security environment of South-East Asia would directly affect Australia's market accessibility. Stability of these states is vital to Australia's economic wellbeing. Australia's principle trading markets are in North Asia, America and Europe.[7] Therefore sea communications have paramount importance for its own peaceful and economically prosperous continuation as a nation-state. Australia's interests are fundamentally dependent on the security and stability of not only its own region of interest but also a number of nations around the world.

Australia's Enduring Interests[8]

The 2000 Defence White Paper identified two basic trends that would have an overbearing impact on Australia's strategic environment—the politico-economic and strategic primacy of the United States and globalisation. Based on these two almost immutable factors, the White Paper identified five enduring strategic interests. These, although formulated before the events of 11 September 2001 that changed global security perspectives, still have overarching validity for Australia's security.

First is to ensure the defence of mainland Australia and its direct approaches, achieved mainly by denying the air and sea gap that separates the country from its neighbours to hostile forces. This denial is meant to be proactive rather than reactive and has to be conducted as far away from Australia's borders as possible. Interestingly, the concept does not rule out attacks against identified hostile forces in their home bases if required.[9] This is fundamentally a maritime strategy, although based on fighting both in the air and at sea, and is greatly facilitated by Australia's strategic geography and the comparative military-technological edge that it enjoys in the immediate region.

Australia's second strategic interest is to help maintain the stability, integrity and cohesion of its immediate neighbourhood. This is important for two reasons. The first is historical in that as far back as the late 19th century Australia was concerned about the French and German colonies in the Asia-Pacific Islands and viewed them as potentially hostile bases from which an attack on its mainland could be mounted. This perception was confirmed during World War II in 1942 when the defence of the nation itself revolved around the denial of bases to Japanese forces. The second is more contemporary and is more concerned with failing or failed states in the region becoming havens for terrorist and other international criminal activities that would endanger the security of the nation both directly and indirectly. Without access to the islands closer to the Australian continent for use as mounting bases, even major

powers will not be able to sustain operations in the approaches to the mainland. Denial of such bases therefore is integral to the defence of Australia.

The third identified interest is the preservation of regional stability and improvement of state-on-state cooperation in South-East Asia. This is the region from or through which any major threat to Australia's national security would emanate. Australian focus here is the territorial integrity of the nations of the region and the need to ensure that they are not threatened either from within the region or externally. In the short or medium term there does not seem to be any indication of the emergence of an overarching South-East Asian power that could upset the current regional strategic balance. However, it would be naive to presume and believe automatically the benign nature of the emerging Asian powers. While there is almost no probability of a direct attack on Australia in the foreseeable future, strategic manoeuvring by any major power in South-East Asia will be detrimental to the greater stability of the region because it will invariably invite counter-manoeuvres by other great powers. By implication this will have an equally destabilising effect on Australia's strategic balance. Therefore, it is in Australia's core long-term interest in the South-East Asian region to prevent any such strategic intrusion that in turn can degenerate into a destabilising security threat.[11] The White Paper identifies the fourth interest as the need to maintain a stable strategic balance between Asia's major powers as a prerequisite to the stability of the larger Asia-Pacific region. Since the end of World War II Australia's security has been intrinsically woven into the United States' Asian policies and is founded around the central tenet of US strategic primacy in the Pacific Ocean. The emergence of major powers—China, Japan and India—in covert strategic competition in the region and the distinct possibility of a challenge to the primacy of the United States in the mid-term will have cascading effects on Australian security presumptions. The stark truth is that great power stability in the Asia-Pacific is cardinal to

Australia's economy and prosperity, but its capacity to ensure such a balance is very minimal.

The fifth strategic interest is to contribute to the international effort to ensure global security, normally under the aegis of the United Nations (UN). Ensuring the success of the UN in responding in an appropriate manner to the breakdown of international law is clearly in Australia's strategic interest, even though the UN's legacy of action is not very good. This would enhance the credibility of the UN as a world body and it is in this forum that Australia will be able to leverage off its standing as a liberal and stable democracy supporting the development of a just and peaceful international system. Further, being seen as a responsible global citizen is important for Australia to ensure that it has an even say in international diplomacy. This is particularly important when security is viewed through a larger lens in the global context.

These five strategic interests actually cover the entire gamut of possible security scenarios that Australia would have to consider and prepare to operate within if required.[12] They are virtual concentric circles of varying priority, immediacy and interest, starting from the innermost, and most improbable, defence against an attack on the mainland to the outermost of being a responsible global citizen. The three interests of maintaining stability in the neighbourhood, ensuring territorial integrity and cooperation in South-East Asia, and achieving strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific are complementary to each other. There cannot be a clear division as to where one stops and the other starts and therein lies the complexity of shaping and influencing the security environment from an Australian perspective.

Failure to ensure that these three strategic interests are well protected has the added possibility of non-traditional security threats adversely affecting Australia's national security. Non-traditional threats include mass migration that could culminate in demographic invasion, ethnic conflicts that may find an echo within the nation, organised transnational crime, infectious diseases leading to epidemics or even pandemics and state-ignored or even

sponsored maritime piracy. These threats could emerge from or be unwittingly nurtured by failing states or states that are prone to coups and civil wars, that undergo rapid resource depletion leading to famine and insecurity, that are critically affected by natural calamities, where medical facilities are nonexistent and where the general failure of adequate governance results in even the minimum modicum of human rights and rule of law being denied to the general population. For example, it is estimated that an influenza epidemic of the magnitude of the one that took place in 1918–19 could today result in more than 40 000 fatalities in the country. Non-traditional security threats, if not countered at their infancy, can lead to a national calamity of huge proportion that might debilitate the security apparatus of a nation.

All these changes indicate an acceptance of the new and broader definition of national security that includes the impact of natural disasters, economic upheavals and climate change on the wellbeing of a nation. Within Australia there is also greater consensus that threat to the nation can as easily be home-grown as emanating from outside. This has brought to the forefront of the national security policy-making debate governmental agencies like Treasury and AusAID, which were never previously involved. In addition, challenges posed to national security because of global economic growth will also have to be taken into consideration when formulating security policies.[13] The emphasis is on shaping and influencing the national security environment through proactive interaction rather than on measured responses to emergent and identified threats, a move towards prevention rather than cure.

There are any number of strategic concepts that could be adopted for creating a national security system. The concept of virtual concentric circles, centred on the defence of the mainland, has long been the preferred strategic security concept for Australia. It is the chosen framework around which the nation has opted to build its security bastions, mainly because of its geo-strategy and the underpinnings of its cultural ethos. Having no common land border with any of its neighbours lends itself to such a concept. Further,

being a predominantly 'Western' nation in its cultural, religious and social fabric, while geographically situated in an Asian context, increases the subconscious need for the nation to emphasise that it is to be considered part of the 'developed' world. The concept has also been enduring—its basic structural veracity being borne out by the fact that it has been the basis for ensuring national security through the years—albeit in different guises.

Factors Affecting The Strategic Framework

The dual factors of the impact of globalisation and predominance of the United States in the Asia-Pacific will continue to be the major factors that will shape Australia's security outlook into the foreseeable future. However, both these factors are dynamic in nature and therefore need constant monitoring so that Australia's own security imperatives are aligned correctly to ensure maximum potential. In addition to these two overarching factors, the threats to global stability that emanate from the Middle East and West Asia, and the shifting strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific also have significant impact on Australia's security. In the Asia-Pacific region the relationship between the major Asian powers—Japan, China and India—and the United States, both bilateral and in consort, is of particular importance. To a lesser degree Australia's immediate region is also volatile and cause for concern, especially the island nations that are relatively new nation-states and economically and politically still finding their feet as emerging democracies. The spread of democracy across the world, albeit in fits and starts and also with accompanying violence that is at times completely irrational and always abhorrent, will also become a factor to be considered for its long-term implications to regional and global security.

Globalisation

While the benefits of globalisation are undeniable, the very same connectivity brings potential threats closer, even to a geographically isolated nation like Australia. In fact it could be debated that extremist terrorism has been able to reap the advantages that come with the ease of international communications as much as regular commerce and trade. International trade has benefited a number of developing nations by stemming the decline into poverty and brought economic stability. However, it has encouraged the emerging trend of people movement, both legitimate and otherwise, which coupled with the declining birthrate in most of the developed Western world, has already started to exert pressures on the socioeconomic cohesion of some of the major global powers.

There are far-reaching demographic changes taking place, even within the developing world, that could have global consequences. There is a discernible trend, especially in the poorer nations of the world, of a massive movement of population towards cities in an effort to benefit from the fringe of economic prosperity that global trade has brought. The inadequate infrastructure of the cities to cater for this large influx and the reality that the economic prosperity is actually less than what it seems creates a large segment of the disempowered. These are ideal conditions for the rise of extremist ideologies, both religious and otherwise. Such demographic convulsions combined with the deep-seated umbrage of the post-colonial nations against the Western world makes globalisation a double-edged sword.

Australia's immediate neighbours, while less prone to this trend in comparison, are also negatively affected because of the proclivity of a vociferous part of the population to identify with cultural, religious and ethnic confrontations taking place in other places in the globe. The region as a whole is still disinclined to accept Australia in any form other than as a purely geographic part of it, even though time and again it has demonstrated its willingness to act as a good neighbour. In this case greater globalisation might work in Australia's favour with the nations of the region gradually

accepting it as an integral part of the larger economic structure of the region.

The status that Australia enjoys in the region, however reluctantly accepted by some of the nations, will be directly affected by the improved sociopolitical situation and economic upswing in the region. This has manifested in increased importance being given in most of the nations to modernisation of their military forces. The so-called 'capability edge' that Australia has so far enjoyed in the region is slowly but surely being eroded. It will only be a matter of time before the more stable nations of the region start to question Australia's predominance in most of the regional security debates. A growing regional state demonstrating its newly acquired power projection capabilities in a subtle bid to test Australia's national will and power projection capacity cannot now be considered a far-fetched option.

Globalisation will continue its inexorable movement to encompass more areas of the world irrespective of strategic changes that it might bring in its wake. This would irrefutably alter the security balance in a region, not always for the better.

Predominance of the United States

The US-Australia security alliance is the foundation on which Australia bases its entire security agenda. There is a historical precedence to this. Australia has always considered itself a part of the developed Western world, ethnically, culturally and emotionally, constrained by geography to exist in the Asia-Pacific. Therefore, it was logical to be part of the Western security paradigm that manifested in Australian forces participating in every conflict in which Great Britain or the United States were involved. There is also a pragmatic reason for this support for the democratic Western world view. From the very beginning of its independent statehood, Australia has accepted its fragility in terms of its stand-alone capability to defend itself comprehensively. Hence, it is not surprising that Australia has looked towards the great powers of the world, Great Britain until World War II and the US

thereafter, for their continued commitment to its security in return for Australia's unquestioned support to the great powers' global endeavours.

For the past five years, there has been an imbalance in the global power projection capability of the United States because of its preoccupation with the Middle East, especially the conflict in Iraq. However, the pre-eminence of the US as the predominant global power will continue for at least the first half of this century.[14] There are three major reasons for this. First, there are clear indications that the jihadist war is entering its final phase, which would free US to refocus on other regions of importance sooner rather than later. This means that the strategic dimension of the war to defeat the fundamentalist ideology represented by al-Qaeda, which sought the creation of a pan-Islamic caliphate, is nearing successful completion.[15] This does not mean that the threat from myriad local extremists and insurgents to domestic security across the world has reduced or been defeated. In fact, this threat is likely to remain as strong as before for a considerable length of time.

Second, even though some analysts perceive that the US has lost the war in Iraq, it has emerged once again as the most powerful and dominant power in Middle Eastern geopolitics. It is in a position to seek and ensure regional realignment to suit its policy requirements. The third reason is that, even though there is currently an economic slowdown in the United States and a drop in dollar value, the global economy is producing surplus cash that only the US has the capacity to manage. This means that, despite the falling US dollar value, it will continue to be the foundation of the global economic system.

Under these conditions there are no doubts that the US will continue to be the predominant power in the Asia-Pacific without any significant challenge. The US strategy clearly is still one of forward presence in the Asia-Pacific while it moves to build strategic relationships, within the politico-military context, with the democratic nations of the region. Australia would be a key ally for the United States in cementing such relationships. It is particularly

noteworthy that even with a change of government the ANZUS alliance continues to be the cornerstone of Australia-US relations. This was affirmed just days after the elections in November 2007 when US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns had talks with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.[16] There is a fundamental continuity in the Australia-US relationship, priced by both nations.

The Middle East Imbroglio

The Middle East has been in an incoherent state of confusion, sometimes violently so, for almost the whole of the 20th century and continues to be the most conflict-prone region of the world. Successive great powers have tried the use of both hard and soft power to bring peace to this volatile region because of its centrality in terms of global energy requirements. The intangible political, religious, cultural, ethnic and tribal diversity of the region, combined with the artificiality of the post-colonial borders between the states have bred countless minor and major issues. No peaceful settlement of the endless problems that continue to fester in the region is on the horizon, at least for the foreseeable future.

Australian involvement in Middle Eastern affairs goes back more than a century, and continues today with a continuous ADF deployment in place for the past six years. While the actual events taking place in the Middle East will be of military interest only in most cases, their repercussions are likely to impinge indirectly on the global environment. This is particularly the case for Australia because the militant groups at the periphery of some of the more fundamentalist organisations in the immediate region tend to identify themselves with the events of the Middle East and react in ways that could threaten Australian interests. Currently, the situation is nowhere near to being problematic, but it would be unwise to ignore the symptoms that have surfaced periodically within the region and the agitated animosity that has been directed against Australian—seen as representative of Western—interests.

Turmoil in the Near Region

The larger nations of South-East Asia are, by and large, in peaceful coexistence focused on economic development. There are a number of religious and ethnic dissentions in some of the nations and a clear trend of them becoming violent local conflicts. However, the likelihood of these conflicts assuming a greater dimension and spreading to other parts of the region is minimal. It can be safely assumed that no long-term strategic changes to regional stability would ensue from any of these internally contained domestic problems. The situation in Australia's nearer region, Melanesia, is somewhat at variance to this benign state. Nearly all the small island nations in this area are newly independent and prone to systemic failure of nation-building institutions. With limited resource availability, their economic viability is at best precarious, which makes them prime targets for use as mounting bases for organisations that are pursuing agendas to create disruption to the accepted rule of law.

Australia will have to take the initiative to ensure that these nations do not become failed states and descend into anarchy—conditions in which disruptive organisations like terrorist groups will be able to thrive unchecked. The difficulty here is to intervene in order to stabilise the situation—and prevent lawlessness and economic failure—in a timely manner without creating a diplomatic stand-off and avoiding infringing the sovereignty of the recipient nation. Such interventions could be merely economic aid or a much larger and invasive assistance package involving administrative and security advisers and stabilising forces. Australia also has to be cognisant of the post-colonial mistrust that most of these nations harbour as well as nationalistic feelings that make the leadership oblivious of the threats that are facing these fragile nations. Ensuring stability of these nations at best is an uneasy task, but when there are vested interests trying to undermine all stabilising efforts it becomes close to impossible. Unenviable as the task may be, it falls on Australia to undertake it for no other reason than to ensure stability of its own long-term security environment.

However, such unilateral action may require far more involvement in regional affairs, backed by a much stronger and dominating foreign policy than that which Australia has so far demonstrated.

Security Planning Imperatives

> *Beware lest in your anxiety to avoid war you obtain a master.*
>
> —Demosthenes,
> Greek statesman 382-322 B.C.

Security planning, even for the short term, is an exacting activity. There are two major obstacles to accurate planning. The first is that all the factors to be considered are extremely variable and the freedom to manipulate any one of them is very limited. The other major difficulty is that security planning by its very nature is normally long-term and dependent on the veracity of predictions regarding the shape of the future strategic environment within the context of which the plans would need to be enacted. These obstacles are difficult to overcome. However, the price of failure in this endeavour is far too serious for contemplation. Therefore, the impetus to overcome the challenges to and understand the imperatives of security planning takes on an added immediacy and importance.

Imperatives that influence the planning process are many. For Australia, there are five major ones, which unless clearly addressed and ameliorated, would skew the efforts to achieve and maintain national security to the obvious and larger detriment of the nation. These are, adapting to the dynamic international security environment, building and managing alliances, laying down strategic priorities, reacting to demographic changes and enabling a whole-of-government approach to security.

Adapting to the Dynamic International Security Environment

The security environment of the future is going to be governed by the effects of globalisation, the emergence of new major powers in Asia, the Asian economic resurgence, and the fluctuations between the United State's interests and its ability to influence global issues. Changes to the regional nations' attitude and acceptance of Australia's position and status, individually and collectively, are likely and will change the security environment rapidly. Australia also has to accept that some of its immediate neighbours will remain troubled and insecure, both economically and in governance, needing continuous assistance that itself might become a bone of contention. All such interventions and stabilisation operations will need to be conducted within a coalition of disparate capabilities in order to shape the collective environment to Australia's requirement. This might also need the adaptation of these operations to cater for non-state actors and international agencies. All these factors will constantly change the security environment within which planning must be done. Adapting to these changes, while not an easy task, is of primary importance and needs to be done effectively.

Further, the security environment can be radically and rapidly changed by acts of terrorism. Such acts, if carried out by 'home-grown' terrorists, bring with them added difficulties in securing the nation. An internal act of terrorism would redefine the security perceptions, especially in an open and democratic society like Australia, and can have very far-reaching consequences. Adapting to the changed circumstances after the event would be comparatively easy, but the dramatic societal changes this would bring about will be an exorbitant price to pay. To conserve the socioeconomic fabric of the nation it is necessary to identify the threat and pre-empt any possibility of such an attack. This is perhaps the most difficult adaptation that the security apparatus has to undergo to ensure national security. These circumstances can sorely test the flexibility and depth of the national security planning and implementing apparatus.

Building and Managing Alliances

International relationships are mirrored in alliances that are forged between two or more nation-states to further their mutual interest. However, managing any alliance in a manner that is acceptable to all parties is a challenging task since the primary national interests of the nations involved can never be completely aligned. This is particularly so when global events tend to affect the parties in dissimilar ways thereby creating further tensions in the cohesiveness of the alliance. There are a number of alliances within the Asia-Pacific region that have varied aims, some of them not always openly visible, and some with hidden agendas that would not be acceptable to non-participating nations.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, two major international developments have made the management of alliances more intricate and brought in a global flavour to even very parochially regional alliances. First is the focus of the United States, the world's only superpower, on the Middle East and South Asia to the detriment of its interest and capability to influence events in other parts of the world. It has not been able to invest the kind of time and effort required to contain traditional flashpoints in the Asia-Pacific—the Taiwan issue and the North Korean problem. This brings the longstanding US-Australia alliance into focus in terms of changed priorities and responsibilities for both nations. The virtual withdrawal of the United States from active participation in the region has also necessitated the realignment of other regional alliances and shifted their focus to a broader geographic area and widened the scope beyond what was traditionally intended.[17] The changing security environment and the rise of international terrorism warrant such a move.

The second development is the rise of Asian powers—Japan, China and India—that brings with it a noticeable shift in global wealth and power. Japan has started to articulate the need to have a military for national defence, discernibly moving away from the self-imposed inward looking security policy that has been in vogue for half a century. Since independence in 1947, India has been a major

power in South Asia, and has emerged with an influential global role in the past decade as a determined and stable state. China is openly demonstrating its intent to be a global power by influencing not only South-East and Central Asia but also involving itself in Africa and even in Europe and the Americas.[18] These developments will impact on existing alliances by increasing the tensions between partner nations because of differences in their alignment with each of these major emerging powers. These emerging powers may seek to undermine the alliances as a whole and, where alliances prove more resilient to external influence, to whittle down the cohesion of the alliance by separating the constituents.

These two developments have made building and managing alliances extremely difficult in the past few years. This has in turn diminished the flexibility of already rigid alliance structures, at a time when the emerging threats to security demand an ever more agile response from nation-states. This mismatch is one of the reasons for the United States to have made a determined move away from fixed formal alliances to temporary and, therefore, flexible 'coalitions of the willing'. This move has undermined the importance of conservative alliances globally.

The relationships within alliances can never remain completely fixed for eternity. The strength of an alliance varies with the changes in threat perceptions and also the political inclinations of the nations concerned. Faced with a visible threat, the alliance will form very strong ties and when immediate and direct threats are diffused, the alliance will tend to also fray. The US-Australia alliance has weathered the ups and downs of both domestic political compulsions and international diplomatic manoeuvres, and in the past decade has moved even closer, with the core of military collaboration translating to genuine operational effectiveness. Although this has placed the alliance on a strong footing, its resilience will be put to test in the case of a regional stand-off with the US and China on opposing sides.

Even though the US-Australia relationship, cemented by the ANZUS Treaty, has proven to be strong and enduring, both

the nations have underlying tensions with the third partner of the treaty—New Zealand. The US is chagrined that New Zealand enshrined their anti-nuclear stand in legislation rather than as 'policy', which would have provided succeeding governments the flexibility to alter it in order to cater for changed security circumstances. The longer this legislation is allowed to continue unchallenged, the less inclined the public would be to return to status quo ante. The US wants Australia, as the larger partner with close cultural and emotional ties to New Zealand, to bring this 'errant and recalcitrant child' into line. New Zealand's attitude to security issues has not been helpful to Australia. It has demonstrated an opportunistic streak vis-à-vis Australia by assuming a laissez faire attitude to mutually important security issues. For example, its refusal to purchase F-16 fighter aircraft offered at rock bottom prices and its blind belief in the UN's ability to settle international security issues have not gone down well in Australian strategic thinking.[19] To make matters worse, New Zealand military forces are steadily losing compatibility and interoperability with Australian forces. New Zealand is treading a very thin line between its capability to ensure its own security unilaterally and the contribution to alliances that would automatically assure its security. Although currently the situation is not deteriorating dramatically, any volatility in the region would start a downward spiral. In such a situation Australia will be expected to stem the rot—a tall order under all circumstances.

Laying Down Strategic Priorities

Australia's strategic priorities revolve around its enduring interests. Along with the assured capability to provide direct defence of the mainland, the security apparatus should also be able to deploy further afield to influence and shape the areas where its national interests are engaged. The priority for such moves should be laid down on the basis of a long-term assessment of the emerging situations and should avoid commitments based on short-term objectives. Flexibility in adapting the assessment to changes in the security environment in a timely manner is an important

necessity. Strategic regional engagement and building close alliances should form the core of the proper employment of the nation's soft power capabilities. This will prove to be challenging in the current environment wherein the nations of the immediate region of interest do not always welcome Australian overtures. However, this is a priority that can only be ignored at great cost in the long term.

Effective defence against attacks on the nation by cyber threats and countering the possibility of debilitating pandemics paralysing security operations should be strategic priorities. New-age threats and the possibility of macro-terrorism will have to form an integral part of a clearly enunciated homeland defence strategy, especially when there is comparative peace and stability within the nation. This demanding task rates as one of the most difficult within security measures. Such threats are constantly evolving, often invisibly, and so the defences have no precedents to counter them. This makes them extremely difficult to neutralise before they cause great damage. The ability to adapt the security mechanisms to counter these threats becomes a very high priority for any nation.

From a purely military perspective of security operations, the force needs to be able to operate independently, jointly with alliance and coalition partners, and as an integral part of international multi-agency operations. This is a very wide spread of capabilities and hinges on the force's ability to operate for a considerable length of time from theatres far from home base. Force structure development must cater for this requirement as a strategic priority that would help the nation leverage security options from its allies and partners.

Reacting to Demographic Changes

The demography of Australia is changing at a faster rate than it has in the past. The changes are in line with trends in the other Western nations and include increased longevity leading to an ageing population, shortages of skilled workers in the age group 25 to 40, larger numbers dependent on state welfare for their daily needs and diminishing birthrates. However, there is a significant

difference in that Australia is trying to bridge the gap between work force numbers and the ageing population by increasing the number of immigrants that it brings in annually. Resorting to immigration is indeed a solution, but it also has the potential to bring in unforeseen changes.

Australia is a predominantly Western nation in its sociocultural ethos. This is because the majority of the population is descended from immigrants from European nations, predominantly from Great Britain since it was originally a British colony. The immigration pattern until the 1970s was also based on a policy which facilitated European migration rather than migration from the Asian region. This trend has now been altered, with a majority of immigrants coming to Australian shores being from Asia. The manifestation of this change into the national ethos will still take more than a generation, but cannot be denied. Any change in the sociocultural ethos of a nation has the potential to affect its national security perceptions, even though the basics would remain the same. Security planners working on the long-term strategy of the nation will have to take this possible change into account while formulating security policies that will have to remain effective during generational changes.

The other demographic factor that must be analysed is more direct and easier to understand, even though it is equally difficult to address. With the numbers of people at the military service age reducing and the wider demand for their services increasing, it will become more difficult to attract the appropriate quantities of people of the right calibre to the military forces. It will be necessary for the military forces of the future to divest themselves of all but front-line functions so that the available personnel would be able to produce the surplus required to retain operational surge capabilities, rather than employ them in home base support functions. Commercial enterprise support to the military forces with its attendant repercussions on the state economy, especially during times of protracted combat deployments, would become an important planning consideration.

The small size of the Australian population, which will not change dramatically in the near future, makes it impossible for the nation to maintain defence forces of a size and capability to be effective in protracted operations simultaneously. In fact, the situation is on the other end of the spectrum, wherein if the ADF is engaged in operations, it may not have the critical mass and strategic depth required to complete the campaign without it having a detrimental effect on other activities. The nation is naturally inclined to assist in international peacekeeping and stabilising operations, but it does not always have the capacity to do so, sometimes even in dire circumstances.[20] This lack of strategic depth is sharply outlined in contemporary conflicts where victory is never rapid and most of the time elusive. For Australia, sustainment of operations in long-drawn conflicts at the required level may not always be possible. This will inevitably challenge and shape strategic planning.

Enabling Whole-of-Government Approach

It is openly accepted that national security is not purely the defence forces' remit, considering that the definition and understanding of what constitutes national security has undergone radical changes. Therefore it is necessary to evolve a consensus regarding how the nation should ensure its security and the agencies that should be involved in employing national power to secure its interests. Such a consensus would include a process by which the larger population feels part of the defence system of the nation and thereby automatically make key civilian enterprises assume at least partial responsibility for national security. Some of the developed nations in Europe as well as the United States have progressed along this line much more than is the case in Australia. The lessons learned from their initial move in this field can prove to be pointers when such a task is being addressed.

A whole-of-government approach to security requires an unambiguous line of responsibility to be drawn at the highest level on a contextual basis so that the lead agency for a particular contingency is clearly nominated. This would also ensure that other

agencies understand their support role and provide their share of the commitment without which the entire enterprise might fail. This needs a professional national security planning and coordinating machinery at the highest level with a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the disparate agencies involved. It must also have the incisiveness to be able to make the strengths of one overlap the weaknesses of another so that an outside observer is not able to identify and attack the vulnerabilities of national power when it is projected. The national security planning machinery will be the nerve centre for a whole-of-government approach to security, which will only be as robust as the weakest link in the planning mechanism.

Australia is in a peculiar situation of facing a demographic downturn while the threats to national security are increasing and becoming more diverse, requiring an upsurge in the activities necessary to ensure security. Under these conditions the only way to assure adequacy of security response is to combine the capabilities resident in different agencies and coordinate their actions to focus on the outcome. This requires understanding of how different capabilities can be tailored to meet the contextual requirements and, importantly, constant practice in exercising this combined approach. While the concept of a whole-of-government approach to national security is easy to understand and eminently suited to the contemporary security environment, its effective execution is extremely complex and needs masterful, articulate leadership to achieve the desired ends. However, this is the only way forward for nation-states to assure stability and focused response to evolving threats.

Conclusion

Australia's security perceptions have some constants and many variables. Its view of the international system and its own rightful place within that system also varies with changes in the attitude and perceptions of its closest ally, the United States. The situation is far from ideal and the domestic political scenario at present does not permit any sustained debate regarding the nation's security priorities.[21] However, such a debate is a primary requirement to establish a clear security strategy for the 21st century.

At one end of the complex strategic environment there is the question of the relevance of defence forces vis-à-vis the nation's security in these changed times and at the other there is the finality of using the defence force for conquest and victory. However, the debate regarding whether or not battlefield victory will culminate in peace is very valid and perhaps unanswerable in today's context. Irrespective of the difficulties in achieving total victory, there is a requirement for Australia to maintain a capable force if only to ensure that its status as a capable and stable entity in the community of nations is assured. Australia's self-regard as a regional power can only be bolstered by it shouldering its defence and regional security obligations, which warrants the maintenance of a credible military force. Whatever the future force structure of the ADF will be, it is more than certain that Australia's security can only be assured by adopting a whole-of-government approach.

Currently Australia is in a very delicate security situation. Its near region is not as stable as Australia would like, and needs to be stabilised, but it lacks the capability—hard and soft power influences—to enforce stability. In combination with the very open advances that India, China and Japan are making in the region, the discomfort within the Australian security planning forums is only increasing. While the enduring interests of Australia will remain, it needs to define national interest and national security in a regionally acceptable manner. Further, Australia has to find innovative ways to ensure national security while being pragmatic about the changing

regional calculations. Australia faces a real threat of gradually becoming a spent force if sufficiently far-sighted policies to ensure its wellbeing are not instituted now. Failure to leverage off the nation's strengths and manage alliances to ensure its status can have catastrophic consequences for the future stability and wellbeing of the nation. Strategic irrelevance because of a lack of in-depth understanding of the changing realities, both regionally and globally, would be a hard pill to swallow for a nation that prides itself on its agility in grand strategic thinking.

Notes

1 David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1999, p. 80.
2 Robert Hill, 'Australia's Defence and Security: Challenges and Opportunities at the Start of the 21st Century', Opening keynote address, *Global Forces 2005: Proceedings of the ASPI Conference – Day 1 – Global Strategy,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, April 2006, pp. 7–8.
3 Coral Bell, *Living with Giants: Finding Australia's Place in a More Complex World,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, April 2005, p. 14.
4 Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: A Defence Update 2007*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2007, p. 13.
5 Hugh White, *Beyond the Defence of Australia: Finding a New Balance in Australian Strategic Policy*, Lowy Institute Paper 16, Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 2006, p. 34.
6 ibid.
7 David J. Kilcullen, 'Australian Statecraft: The Challenge of Aligning Policy with Strategic Culture', *Security Challenges,* November 2007 (Vol. 3 No. 4), The Kokoda Foundation, Canberra, 2007, pp. 49–50.
8 Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force,* Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000, pp. 29–32.
9 ibid, p. 48.
10 White, *Beyond the Defence of Australia*, p. 39.
11 A new Defence White Paper is being prepared for release by the year-end as per the election manifesto of the new Labor Government. However, the enduring pervasiveness of the five interests identified in the 2000 Defence White Paper is such that there can only be very minor changes that are possible to be incorporated in the new assessment. The author believes that there would not be any fundamental changes to these strategic interests.
12 Although few analysts have identified slightly different overarching strategic interests, all the factors identified are sufficiently broad to encompass the basics of other factors within them. For example, William Maley ('Strategic Challenges and Power Options', *ASPI Special Report Issue 3 – Australia and the Middle East*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, March 2007, pp. 12–19) espouses the necessity for Australia to pursue five strategic interests that are fundamental requirements to ensure its national security, defined in the broadest possible manner. First, is the necessity to ensure stability of the Asia-Pacific region. This is critical to Australia's security because even though the chances of a major armed conflict are low, there are enough indicators of some of the regional states becoming failing states, thereby increasing the risk of insurgency and transnational crime. Second, being a trading nation, the effective pursuit of economic interests in fostering good relationships with prospective export markets. Third, is to contribute effectively to the neutralisation of global terrorism and its international ideological spread. This

is particularly important because South-East Asian terrorism is intimately linked and can even be thought to echo the perceptions and events in the larger Arab and Islamic world. Fourth, Australia is compelled to ensure that it maintains an effective alliance relationship with the United States to achieve its broader security objectives. Fifth is the requirement to contribute to control proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, both globally and within the region. Although the defence of mainland Australia is not mentioned, it is implicit in its omission. These five factors are sufficiently broad to encompass all elements of the five points of enduring interest and vice versa.

13 Cynthia Banham, 'Rudd to shake up national security', *Sydney Morning Herald,* Sydney, 19 January 2008, p. 1.

14 Greg Sheridan, 'The Strategic Challenges Facing Australia', Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Conference 2008, Sydney, 29 January 2008. (From author's notes; proceedings yet to be published.)

15 StratFor Annual Forecast 2008: *Beyond the Jihadist War*, Washington, 8 January 2008.

16 Glen Milne, 'Smith redefines rules', *The Australian,* Sydney, 28 January 2008, p. 8.

17 Patrick M. Cronin, 'Challenges for US Alliance Management in the Western Pacific', *Security Challenges,* October 2006 (Vol. 2, No. 3), The Kokoda Foundation, Canberra, 2006, p. 9.

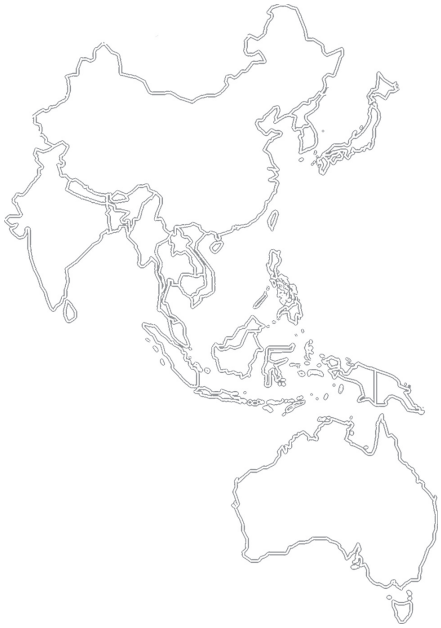
18 ibid, p. 10.

19 Group Captain Phil Edwards, 'Beyond Military Service', Thesis submitted to School of Sociology, Politics and Anthropology, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, 2001, p. 44. This reliance on the UN is something akin to the attitude that Canada had at the end of World War II, when the mood of the Canadian people was for Canada to align itself with the efforts of the United Nations, which many Canadians felt was the international institution which would prevent further aggression from leading to general war. This was an indication that the Canadians were prepared to have an armed force, 'but not too many' (Douglas Bland, *Canada's National Defence,* Vol. 1, School of Politics, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, 1997, p. 23). This also indicated a Canadian reluctance to follow automatically any form of British imperial defence in the future. In a similar manner, by these actions New Zealand is also implicitly indicating its belief that its armed forces need not be 'very large' in quantity and more importantly in quality, and also its reluctance to side blindly with the US and Australia, despite the ANZUS Treaty.

20 Rod Lyon, *The Next Defence White Paper: The Strategic Environment,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 29 January 2008, p. 4.

21 Robert Ayson, 'Understanding Australia's Defence Dilemmas', *Security Challenges,* July 2006 (Vol. 2, No. 2), The Kokoda Foundation, Canberra, 2006, p. 25.

Chapter 5
Australia's Strategic Security Contingencies



AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC SECURITY CONTINGENCIES

The 20th century was one of global largeness—of big world wars, all-encompassing ideologies, global superpowers, life changing scientific inventions, large international institutions—of mankind moving forward, mostly in stable world order, at least in the later half. The 21st century, still in its infancy, is already well on the way to transforming the world order. Security issues that transcend traditional boundaries of the nation-state have emphatically brought to focus the slow unravelling of the stability and security of the world built according to the Treaty of Westphalia. Questions regarding the contemporary relevance of geographically divided nation-states in the prevailing security environment are surfacing and have no clear answers. This is more so in the developing post-colonial world where geographic national borders, at times drawn arbitrarily, have no meaning for the people because of commonality of ethnicity, religion and culture that prevail across such borders. Further, this century has already witnessed the fracturing and distortion of grand ideologies and the alarming rise of sectarian interests that now rival national interests. The last decade has also witnessed the dichotomy of virtual globalisation; economy, trade and information exchange are growing in a world that is Balkanising violently. By all counts, the 21st century is already well on its way to becoming one of deepening divisions because the disparity between the haves and have-nots will become even more pronounced; of instability in a particular region affecting the tranquillity of a far-removed nation almost immediately; of incessant conflicts that erupt occasionally into full-blown wars; of diplomatic, economic and military power projection and manoeuvring bringing the major powers of the world into competitive confrontation; of smaller nation-states struggling for relevance; and of global struggle to maintain a modicum of stability and peaceful coexistence.

The future is hard or even impossible to predict. The greatest impact of this uncertainty is that, if not carefully understood, it

breeds chaos and confusion in the analysis of national security imperatives. Such a state of affairs will lead to a nation facing situations whose full impact on security is not fully perceived, with consequent acceptance of less than optimum response options that are not clearly conceived. However, one method of catering to such uncertainty is to look at the broadest spectrum of possible scenarios that could emerge, analyse the options available in each and prepare possible responses. In this way it becomes possible to create pre-planned contingency responses to emerging situations, at least at their most basic level. This will ensure that national power elements can be quickly arrayed together to cater to security issues that could become important to a nation in the short, mid or even long term. It is a paradigm of contemporary security strategy that the response needed to counter emerging threats has to be capable of creating an immediate effect while contributing to a long-term goal that is aligned to the grand strategy. For this entire structure to be robust it is also necessary that the grand strategy of a nation must at all times remain connected to the nation at large.

The global effort to contain terrorism, in all its guises, has been termed the 'long struggle' by the Western nations. These threats are very real and have changed the dynamics of the security equation in Australia, but they are not the only threats that need to be contained. Globalisation of the long struggle has made the strategic security environment volatile for the long term because an ongoing uprising anywhere in the world creates a ripple effect. Moreover, the long struggle is not amenable to a military solution because it derives its strength from ideological and not political roots. The military will be a component part of the response mechanism, but its employment could rapidly become counterproductive in some instances if not used with sufficient discrimination. Effective solutions in this case require that Australia adopt a whole-of-nation approach to security, bringing all the elements of national power to bear in concert while also aligning with other like-minded nations' efforts to neutralise the threat.

Australia's Unenviable Position

Australia is a maritime trading nation and an integral part of the globalised world. It shares security concerns regarding maritime shipping and trade, and is strategically vulnerable to any attempts to disrupt the sea lines of communication. The Asia-Pacific region is rapidly becoming the centre of international economic activity and most of the nations of the region are dependent on maritime trade and transfer of energy for their further economic development. Maritime security therefore becomes a major preoccupation for the region as a whole. In order to ensure its own security and safeguard its tranquil prosperity, Australia has to be actively involved in securing maritime commercial activity in the region, if necessary as a lead in multinational and multi-agency operations. Considering the current and near-future political and diplomatic environment in the region that is clearly suspicious of Australia as an outsider, this would be a difficult task to achieve.

Australia, the Region, United States and Russia

Australia also has to come to terms with the stark reality that the absolute power of the United States is no longer unquestioned in the region. Its is too early to predict a complete decline in the US power, but there are signs of weariness in the giant, an appreciable preoccupation with domestic matters and a temporary lack of capacity to deal with more than one major global issue simultaneously. From a global and regional stability perspective this is an alarming situation, especially when other nations in the region are leveraging their rising economic clout to develop power projection capabilities and manoeuvring to improve their global strategic position. Since Australian security is based on the US-Australia alliance, this looming shadow of strategic uncertainty becomes a national security issue that will continue to be critical for the foreseeable future. However, the difficulty in managing it will be directly proportional to its growing importance. In contemplating the possible decline of US influence internationally, Australia must

act to pre-empt security challenges. Part of determining priorities for this planning is to analyse and determine the rate at which the US can recuperate from its current vulnerable position and factor it in as a fundamental input into its own security calculations.

The status of the US-Australia alliance will also be affected by the results of the forthcoming US Presidential elections. The level of access and the emotional closeness of the relationship will not remain at the current high level, irrespective of the new incumbent's political affiliations.[1] That is not to say that the alliance will flounder; quite the contrary, it will continue to bind the two nations together in more ways than purely defence and security issues. However, Australia will have to rethink the balance of approaches to securing its interests in the region and globally. This begs the question whether Australia has the sophistication and maturity in international diplomacy to create and nurture other bilateral or multilateral relationships independent of the United States to secure its strategic interests. This option needs careful consideration at the highest decision-making level, although cooperation with the US seems to be the option of choice even in the long term.

The politico-economic stability in the Asia-Pacific region bodes well for peaceful coexistence, but any unforeseen volatile changes in the domestic situation in China will have far-reaching rippling effects on this carefully balanced tranquillity. Economically, China is on a fast track to be a peer competitor to the US. It is Australia's second largest trading partner, while the US is Australia's principal ally. From an Australian perspective, such disparate national security interests have great ramifications and need very careful management and a great deal of diplomatic tightrope walking. The future will be one of dealing in shades of grey rather than in the absolute of black and white in fostering sustainable relationships.

Russia is going through a catharsis and emerging as a presentable replica of its Cold War predecessor, the USSR. It is increasingly confident in its dealings and is engaged in open coercion of recalcitrant neighbours. Russia has also emerged as a competitive arms supplier to countries of strategic significance in the region.

It is the main military hardware supplier to both China and India, and is providing advanced weapons to Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.[2] Russia is keen to don the mantle of the erstwhile USSR and revive its great power status to become a strategic balancing power against the United States. Although historically USSR/Russia has never been a Pacific power, it has in recent times ventured into this area. This has set in motion slow but conspicuous changes in politico-economic dealings in the region. Australia has to deal with this ongoing major realignment of geopolitical power base, both globally and regionally, to retain its position as a prosperous and stable nation with an international status.

Russia is also keen to reduce the preponderance of power that the Unites States enjoys and uses different methods to test the US resilience and to try and chip away at its advantages. To achieve this it joins hands with any nation that also has an axe to grind with the US. A case in point is the draft treaty for banning the weaponisation of space that Russia and China jointly proposed at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 12 February 2008. There are two important implicit dimensions to this treaty. First, it demonstrates the tenuous position both Russia and China have in terms of space power vis-à-vis the US and second, it is tacit agreement of the United States being the predominant space power. This dominance is part of the US long-term vision of space, similar to its view of the world's oceans, where it acts as the strategic guardian of the domain to ensure global free trade and protect US interests. The treaty will be rejected, but Russia is attempting to highlight the US policy of space dominance to garner opposition to the US position even if it does not bring any support for Russia itself.

Russia is also manoeuvring in the economic environment to challenge the US hegemony by cultivating links to China and a number of central Asian republics that have an energy surplus. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which has India and Iran as observers, and specifically excludes the United States, encapsulates about 20 per cent of the world's known oil reserves, 50 per cent of natural gases and accounts for 45 per cent of the world's population.[3]

Australian security thinking must take these statistics into account whenever the regional stability situation is being considered.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the unipolar international system led by the US are things of the past. There are nations, resurgent in their power—competitive and confident—who are openly challenging US economic and military dominance, at least in their spheres of influence. Russia and China are the major powers that have embarked on this path and the Russian administration has shown a preparedness to confront the US if necessary.[4] Australia has so far been an uncritical supporter of the US global security policy. However, the reality of trade and economy is that it has to deal with nations in direct competition to the US. Ignoring this, or blatantly siding with one or the other, could lead to dramatic convulsions to the domestic economy. Further, Australia is a major exporter of uranium to both Russia and China, a trade that the nation cannot afford to jeopardise. Dealing with this conflict of interest and maintaining a viable equilibrium will be a hard task.

The consequences of a weakened US could be traumatic to the fragile stability of the region. This could manifest itself in the lowering of confidence within the US alliance partners in the Asia-Pacific of the capability of the superpower to assure peace and stability, leading to base level anarchy in the international geopolitical and security environment. Such a situation would confront Australia with a strategic dilemma offering no succinct solution.

Questions of Regional Stability

Since World War II, Australia has built its security around two pillars—the concept of deterrence in the region and reliance on the US alliance in a broader context. Deterrence is primarily built on demonstrated capabilities and a robust national will to exercise power when needed. In an indirect manner such deterrence is also based on the assumption that potential adversaries would adhere to rational thinking and behaviour patterns. The lacuna in this process is that the understanding of what is rational and what is not is clearly

based on one's own ideas regarding rationality which may not hold true in the thinking of a potential adversary. At the same time it is difficult to find a clear definition of rational behaviour from the perspective of the adversary to mould one's own concepts, thereby degrading its power. The basic change taking place in the security environment is this degradation of the power of deterrence as a foundation for national security. In addition, Western ideas, ideals, values, hopes and aspirations may not be shared in other parts of the world with different cultures, beliefs and fundamental values. For example, in medical research, China permits investigation of cloning since there is a market for this and ethics and religious beliefs that present barriers to such research in the West are not considered of importance. Even notions of the sanctity of the nation-state could be very different in some of these nations and, therefore, the concept of maintaining stability through coercive deterrence has gone past the point of no return and will not be a viable solution in the evolving international system.

Australia's immediate neighbourhood is prone to periodic, violent domestic outbursts that require external intervention to subdue. This is mainly because these nations are economically marginalised and politically unstable.[5] While such outbursts do not in any way directly affect Australian sovereignty or domestic stability, they constitute a clear threat to Australia's broader interests in the region. As the region's leading power it is incumbent on Australia to stabilise the region, which will be a constant drain on its resources, especially in terms of deployment of military forces.

The political and economic decline of the smaller Pacific island nations in Australia's neighbourhood seems to be non-reversible. Allied to this regional malaise is the slow breakdown of the social fabric of these nations that brings with it a humanitarian aspect to their disintegration from nation-state status. This has security implications for Australia in the demands that will be placed on it, first to ensure their viable existence as sovereign states by providing stabilising forces and economic assistance, and second to ensure that they do not succumb to the financial favours offered by extra-

regional states and non-state entities.[6] However, this is becoming contentious and Australia's influence is being tested because the recipient nations are no longer willing to accept tied-aid programs. These nations now demand the economic aid without any caveats attached and do not want Australian administrative oversight. Strategic containment of deteriorating situations in the near region and stabilising states that are on the verge of collapse is of utmost importance if Australia is to maintain a positive security posture in the broader region and in the global context.

The past three decades of peaceful economic development in the Asia-Pacific has been possible because of the comparative strategic stability that the region has enjoyed as a result of an accepted balance of power between the major powers—Japan, China and India—and the United States. This may be about to change. China is becoming a great power and could conceivably pose a threat to US dominance in the region. Japan is emerging from its self-imposed military exile and is asserting its interests with the help of its defence forces.[7] India is emerging as a confident nation consciously spreading its influence in an attempt to become a regional power. The United States is far too preoccupied with the Middle East and for the time being lacks the capacity to contain fully any disruptions in the region.

There are a number of factors that could change the benign balance that exists, the main one being the Taiwan issue and how the status quo could be maintained. It would require only a very minor miscalculation on the part of the Taiwanese Government and an ambiguous US response to trigger a Chinese reaction that creates a situation with the potential to spiral out of control. The current balance is unlikely to continue with the emergence of China and India as greater powers than they now are, nor will it be able to contain an unshackled Japan flexing its military muscle. Change in the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific is inevitable. In any change from the current balance of power in the Asia-Pacific, Australia would be an unwilling participant because it has no other option available to it. Australia's alliance with the US and its trade with

China dictate that it cannot assume a spectator's role in any power shift that takes place.

Future Security Strategies

Australia's future security strategy will almost completely depend on two evolving factors. The first is the position that the United States will assume in relation to changes in the strategic balance underway in the Asia-Pacific. The second, which will also influence the US reaction, is the power play that is bound to take place between the major Asian powers and the rate and tempo of the realignment of strategic balance this will bring about. The tensions and moves associated with this realignment will invariably influence Australia's security posture and make a visible impact on its endeavours to protect its enduring strategic interests. Balancing the two fundamental factors will not be an easy task, considering the divergence between its economic and trade interests and its purely security alignment.

In the Asian context, while it is acknowledged that both India and Japan will be major influential entities, it will be China's moves that will be the foundation for countermoves and containment pressures. The fundamental reasons for this are, firstly, the sheer size of the Chinese economy makes any thrust or decision that it makes in the politico-diplomatic stage create large and uncomfortable repercussions in the entire Asia-Pacific region, with global effects that cannot be ignored. In a sense, China will be able to lay down indirectly a geopolitical agenda of its choice in the region through its economic machinations. Secondly, for years now China has been following a thinly veiled agenda to further its ambition of becoming a predominant global power, a fact that both Japan and India realise but do not have the capacity or the will to thwart. Moreover, these two Asian powers, although aspiring to global influence, are pragmatic enough to understand that their considerable economic clout is still short of China's and therefore will be reluctant to initiate any contradictory action. Therefore, at least for the foreseeable

future, the Asia-Pacific region will remain reactive to China's manipulations.

Since the end of World War II the United States has been the predominant power in the Asia-Pacific and has been able to set the agenda, especially regarding long-term security prospects, to suit its interests. It has also been the stabilising influence in the region. This situation has not really changed, except that the rising Asian powers are progressively setting priorities of their own, many of which are not entirely aligned with those of the United States. This growing shift affects the security requirements of the other nations of the region. With its preoccupation with the Middle East, the US is only peripherally concerned with the gradual changes taking place in the comparatively stable Asia-Pacific. The US strategic thinking also seems to be conditioned by the belief that its well-established alliances in the region with Japan and Australia, as well as its improving security relationship with India, can be leveraged at a later stage if necessary to enforce its own strategic agenda in the larger Asian region. Therefore, for the immediate future, the United States is more than likely to let the status quo continue even while being aware of the percolations taking place beneath the visible surface.

China's giant economy and the prevailing, but sanguine, US strategic predomination of the Asia-Pacific are two immutable factors that will always influence any shifts in the strategic balance in the region. Under these conditions the entire spectrum of Australian security contingencies would have to be derived with both the US role in the region and China's manipulations as constants within it. In any future contingency analysis, the role that the United States will play in the region vis-à-vis its level of acceptance of the Chinese economic and military initiatives needs careful consideration. Current perceptions point towards a continuation of US domination with minor adjustments to accommodate a more proactive role for China. At the same time the analysis will also have to take into account emerging informal alliances, bilateral and multilateral, as well as competitive antagonism between the larger economies of the

region, that is Japan, China, India, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Australia.

The entire range of future circumstances will therefore revolve around the US-China interactions, with the other powers only being able to react to emerging situations rather than being able to contribute substantially to shaping the strategic environment. The full spectrum of security contingencies, with which all nations of the Asia-Pacific region will have to contend, will be influenced more by the strategic inclination of the United States than China's politico-economic and security manoeuvres. The reason for this is rooted in situational geography. China is situated in the region with its strategic freedom limited by having to operate alongside other Asian powers, whereas in the Asian context the United States is only a virtual presence and engages in the region completely at its own choice of time and pace, with the option to withdraw and leave.

The US, therefore, has the freedom to set the strategic agenda. Accordingly, the spectrum of security contingencies that needs to be analysed is also very broad and based on the actions of the United States. On one extreme is the complete withdrawal of the United States from the region either gradually or at a fast pace. The pace of withdrawal would have crucial effect on how the vacuum so created gets filled and how the balance of power readjusts itself. The end of the spectrum would be the point at which the United States is no longer in the region. The other end of the spectrum would be the conclusive involvement of the United States in the region, with a willingness to confront nations of the region if necessary to achieve its strategic objectives. This has the potential to result in a regular state-on-state conflict between the US and China. All other contingencies will fall between these two extremes. While the main protagonists in all circumstances would be the US and China, each independent situation will bring other nations, mainly the larger economies of the region, into the fray to protect their national interests.

The central point in this spectrum would be the benign maintenance of the status quo, with the US engaged with the region

and China not pushing the stability envelope to its extremes, either covertly or overtly. This would be the best scenario for all the nations of the region and will promote further development and upliftment of some of the poorest areas in the world. This central point is obtained by a precarious balance of power that involves a number of variables, some that could not be controlled by one nation alone, and could be upset by the simplest of actions by even one of the smaller nations of the region. As desirable as the status quo is for all concerned, political ambition of large nations has never been bridled to cater for smaller and fragile economies. It has been the unwritten rule of international statesmanship and diplomacy that the bigger powers will forge ahead in all possible ways to ensure their eminence and global influence. It cannot be hoped that this basic rule will now change for the better. The middle powers, and more so the smaller nations, will have to accept this and mould their politico-economic realities accordingly or risk a downward spiral to quick and possibly irreversible global irrelevance.

The influence that the major economic powers of the region would exert on either of the two powers and their ability to shape the outcome in any given situation would depend mainly on four criteria. These criteria may be present independently or in varied combinations. The nations of the region may not have any direct control over some of these criteria and therefore their influence on emerging events could also be arbitrary and ambiguous. The first is the prevailing global security environment with special emphasis on the region and the influence of the US. Because the capacity of the United States to impose its strategic will on the region would be a direct function of its preoccupation and involvement elsewhere in the world and the perceived stability of the Asia-Pacific, the prevalent global security environment will be the primary determinant of US influence in the region. The second criterion of importance would be the individual staying power of both the US and China in hard and soft power terms. This would be a function of each of the nations' power projection capabilities and global

commitments combined with their political and economic domestic compulsions.

The third criterion is the status of formal and informal alliances and groupings within the region, which would indirectly affect the actions of both China and the US. There are clear diplomatic movements within the larger economies of the region to strengthen their strategic alignment and even forge possible alliances in a bid to increase their collective influence. The fourth is the capacity of these regional powers, independently and collectively in alliances, to project power and therefore to influence emerging situations. The independent political stability of all nations involved would determine the rate and quantum of the application of power to achieve the desired goal.

It is indicative of the large shift in security perceptions that response to any situation within the wide spectrum of contingencies can never be a purely military action. Containment of any emergent threat within the spectrum will need the employment of the full spread of all attributes of national power. Such actions will have to be carefully coordinated at the highest level of government. That coordination must include designating the lead agency to respond and delineating the role of other contributory agencies. This whole-of-government approach is the only way to ensure national security in the contemporary security environment, which is complex and dynamic. The role of the military in these conditions would vary from being the lead in applying force in a high-end conflict of national survival to being the facilitator of humanitarian assistance being delivered by other government agencies in response to natural or man-made disasters.

Australia's Broad Future Roles

In any emerging scenario within the entire spectrum of contingencies Australia will have to play important, and at times crucial, proactive roles if it is to continue to assure its economic prosperity in comparative stability. These roles will range from being the lead in direct projection of hard power at one extreme to playing a predominantly diplomatic and stabilising role in volatile situations in the exercise of its soft power. Considering the spread of the spectrum of possible contingencies, Australia would have to assume the following probable roles. As a lead and catalyst for the formation of an alliance of Asia-Pacific nation-states to contain the unchecked military and diplomatic rise of China in case of a US withdrawal; as an honest and trusted go-between for a US-China dialogue in case of a confrontation; and as a regional security and stability enforcer, in conjunction with other regional powers, when an uneasy status quo is in place when the US is active in other regions of the world. Other scenarios will only be variations of these three basic roles adapted for short-term purposes, but always aligned with the long-term goal of maintaining the status quo balance of power at the central point of the spectrum.

Coalition Catalyst

The probability of the United States staging a unilateral withdrawal from the Asia-Pacific region seems a very far-fetched concept in any contemporary analysis of the emerging trends. Further, there are currently no indications that such a move is even on the horizon of strategic thinking in the United States. However, there is also no vouchsafing that in the medium term future, that is at about 2030–2040, the global strategic environment would not change to an extent wherein the United States would find it difficult to maintain its current global commitments and would have to withdraw from areas that are of secondary interest in its view. The Asia-Pacific could be a region where the US may scale down its presence to concentrate on more immediate threats to its interests,

which might lead to its not being able to maintain a credible presence in the region.

The end of the Cold War saw the United States assume the role of a de facto unilateral global power ensuring international stability. However, events of the past decade have detracted from this role and currently there are more challenges to the US global hegemony than ever before that it does not seem to be able to answer effectively. There is a discernible loss of the moral high ground that the US has been used to, with a number of less than honest and correct actions being undertaken in the name of national security. The legitimacy of its actions to further global peace is being increasingly questioned in world forums and the United States is becoming frustrated with the reluctance of its own allies to offer unconditional support. Further, it is preoccupied with its commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, which does not leave very much extra capacity within the US defence forces to be effective in any other region. Its capacity to sustain more than two large, open-ended campaigns simultaneously is clearly stretched beyond the possible and could perhaps be remedied only if a massive reorganisation of the defence forces is undertaken. The role of unilateral global power does not seem to sit well with the United States anymore.

If the emerging global security environment is analysed in detail, taking into account the international concern regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it will be seen that there is an imperceptible move within the United States itself to withhold commitment to any new stabilising enterprise where it will have to take the lead. Therefore, while a complete US strategic withdrawal from the Asia-pacific might seem a blighted notion, it is not difficult to imagine the US being ambivalent regarding a number of issues in the region that currently seem of the most important consequence.

Under these circumstances it might become incumbent on Australia, as the closest ally of the US in the region, to take on the role of a catalyst to forging a viable coalition of the larger economic powers to ensure stability by ensuring that China's strategic

manoeuvring is contained and does not pose a danger of upsetting the delicate regional balance.

This is a role that is fraught with complications but would be essential for Australia to undertake for two main reasons. First, unchecked political, economic and military actions by China would be an indication of a declining US power projection capability. Such a sign would encourage a number of nations in the region to act unilaterally or with subtle covert assistance from major regional powers to improve their strategic bargaining power. While improving their strategic power is the underpinning reason for all sovereign nation-states to undertake diplomatic manoeuvring, it also has the potential to lead to greater strategic uncertainty that would make the security environment of the region more volatile. Second, Australian prosperity is primarily reliant on the stability of the region, which is to a large extent dependent on a stable, well-intentioned and responsible China. An unpredictable China testing the further reaches of its long-term strategic agenda in the absence of any countering force of compatible strength is certain to lead the region towards unprecedented strategic unpredictability.

To thwart the region's decline into strategic unpredictability Australia would have to become the primary moving force, even though it does not have the largest capacity in terms of power projection capabilities, in creating a regional coalition by bringing together Japan, India, South Korea and Singapore as well as other like-minded nations of the region.

A coalition is a group of nations working together to achieve a common goal even though a formal alliance or treaty may not exist between the members. The nature of coalitions is such that members would have to be willing to contribute to the common goal, while giving partisan national goals a lesser priority if necessary. The formation of a coalition is dependent on there being a sufficiently strong reason for the nations to collaborate in order to achieve a common objective. Normally, when confronted with a common threat a coalition ensures the availability of sufficient power projection capabilities to ensure definitive victory in a given

situation. However, there are also instances when a coalition is built to provide political sanctity and legitimacy to the action being contemplated, even if one of the member nations has the necessary power to achieve a satisfactory end-state on its own. In the case of this regional coalition, the common objective would be to ensure that China does not upset the balance of power and remains a benign giant. This would be the impetus to make these nations come together to act in concert.

Such a regional coalition cannot be crafted in the short term. It needs dedicated long-term planning and mutual appreciation of the peculiarities of each nation's domestic politico-economic situation. In the past two decades, rapid changes in the security environment have necessitated closer cooperation between sovereign nation-states to grapple with amorphous threats that transcend national boundaries. The need to have a clearer understanding of the power projection capabilities resident in other friendly nations has been at least partially recognised. This is an advantage when it comes to forming a coalition. In the case of the larger powers of the region, their well-entrenched democratic traditions form a common backdrop that facilitates the advancement of the concept of security cooperation between them. It also helps that, at least in the post–World War II era, none of these nations have displayed any offensive temperament or laid any unwarranted claims against the territorial integrity of some other nation. These are two major factors that Australia would have to leverage to coax these nations to act together. Australia would also have to rely on its alliance with the United States to initiate and pursue this action, and must ensure that the power of the US would be backing the formation of a coalition, even if it has virtually withdrawn from the region.

The formation of such a regional coalition, if not subtly done, would create a sense of isolation within the Chinese political hierarchy that could lead to irrational actions that would manifest in a confrontational attitude. Given the sensitivity of the undertaking, it is also vital to maintain open diplomatic channels to China to ensure that there is adequate transparency in the actions being

undertaken and to avoid even the slightest misunderstanding. The primary aim of this regional coalition would be diplomatic containment, economic continuity, information envelopment and very careful and non-threatening military actions directed at maintaining stability of the Asia-Pacific. Under these circumstances any point of contention, like the status of Taiwan as perceived by the members of the coalition, could very rapidly become a catalyst and flashpoint for military confrontation. Therefore, coordinating the military aspect—hard power projection capability—of the coalition should be the last piece of the picture to be brought to completion.

The basic question that arises from such a strategy is regarding the role that Australia would have to undertake to ensure its success. First and foremost, it has to be acknowledged that Australia does not have the capacity in soft or hard power—politico-economic or military capabilities—to be the lead in such an enterprise. On the other hand there does not have to be a clearly designated lead in such a coalition since the aim is purely deterrence and not direct military action. It is possible to ensure diplomatic cohesiveness within a coalition by adopting the consensus mode in decision-making. Therefore, Australia's role would be one of a catalyst to the creation of the coalition by facilitating a congenial atmosphere in the region through mediation and intervention to iron out bilateral and other issues. This would assist the other nations to participate in the coalition without major reservations. This role is critical to the success of this strategy.

Japan is Australia's second largest trading partner and also the closest US ally in the Asian context. It shares a mutual understanding with Australia of the negative impact of a deteriorating security environment vis-à-vis their commerce and trade requirements to maintain economic stability. Their bilateral relationship has been further strengthened by a recent memorandum of understanding that aims to enhance mutual cooperation. Considering the commonality of interest and mutual agreement on most major issues, it can be presumed that Japan would be amenable to work in concert with Australia to participate in such a regional coalition.

The Japanese moves to refine their constitution to allow their Self-Defence Forces to participate in operations abroad is a clear indication of the seriousness with which they view the regional security environment.

Similarly, Singapore is a steadfast US ally and can be expected to join without much reluctance, as long as clear and direct military action is avoided. Since the aim of the coalition would be containment and not confrontation, it is not expected that Singapore would have any vociferous objection to being part of a group aimed at ensuring regional stability. South Korea and Japan have ongoing bilateral issues that have not been satisfactorily ironed out. However, both are matured democracies and are pragmatic enough to realise the commonality of the threat posed to their security from a rising China on an economic and military confrontational rampage in the region. Both these nations could be reasonably expected to deal with their bilateral problems outside the ambit of the coalition, at least during critical phases of the coalition activities when cohesiveness counts the most.

From Australia's perspective, of the four major regional powers, India would perhaps be the most reluctant to become a part of such a coalition. There are a number of reasons for this. Post-colonial India has zealously guarded its neutrality in international politics, particularly avoiding Western influence as indicated clearly in its founding role in the non-aligned movement. There is even today a mistrust of Western intentions; an attitude formed and reinforced by the clear and ongoing US support of Pakistan starting from the 1960s, even when that nation did not display any vestige of being a democracy, the sanctions imposed on India after its nuclear test and the reluctance before the events of September 11 for Western nations to accept the fact of cross-border terrorism emanating for Pakistan. There is also a view in the nation that the Western nations, which include Australia, are sceptical about India's close relationship with the erstwhile Soviet Union, which is considered a friend who helped when the nation was in dire straits.

Further, ever since India emerged as an economic force it has been clamouring for its rightful place and status in international forums, especially the United Nations. The reluctance of the Western powers to agree to these demands and give India the status that it feels is its right—being the largest democracy in the world—has not gone down well in the nation. Successive governments, of different political hues, have attempted to move into international centre stage and been blocked by Western manipulations. India is chagrined about constantly being pushed to the periphery of the international stage.

Today the picture of India is of a giant taking, not so much uncertain but reluctant, steps to fulfilling its global destiny. There is a sense of reticence in its international dealings, mainly brought on by domestic politics and the tenuous hold on power that most of its federal governments possess. India's interactions with the nations of the world are still guided by domestic political compulsions, thereby disrupting the continuity of bilateral and multilateral relationships. It is only in the last decade that there has been bipartisan acceptance of some broader foreign policy issues. However, with all its minor drawbacks, India is a bulwark of democracy in a volatile region where nations are prone to being taken over by autocratic rulers.

The interplay of its mistrust of Western diplomacy and the need to pamper domestic political compulsions give an overall perception of tentativeness in India's foreign policy dealings that in turn bring about certain reluctance in major powers to embrace the nation as a steadfast ally.

Australia's overtures to India to bring it within the fold of the larger democratic circle have been earnest only in the past five years or so. There is a lingering natural dislike within the Indian polity for the discriminatory White Australia policy of the 1960s which make the task even more difficult. However, the meteoric rise of China's economy and its single-minded pursuit of policies aimed at increasing its sphere of influence in developing Asia and other poorer areas of the globe have alarmed India. Both China and India understand that confrontation would be detrimental to further

growth and therefore maintain a cordial bilateral relationship. There are, however, underlying basic border disputes, in the north-west at the Aksai Chin region and in the north-east in the Arunachal regions, which simmer in the background and are brought to the forefront at times of diplomatic necessity. When and how any of these issues would become full-fledged confrontation is a matter of opinion. China may, at a predetermined stage of its own in response to India's economic growth or because of indirect confrontation within the region for establishing influence, find the need to develop minor border disputes to sizable confrontations to discomfit India and make it change its priorities.

If India joins the coalition it will add considerable politico-economic and military-strategic clout to it. In order to bring India into the group of nations that could possibly counterbalance China's strategic weight, Australia would have to play on the instinctive mistrust of Chinese intentions within the Indian diplomatic and military establishments. The Sino-Indian border dispute of 1962, where the Indian military was completely humbled and its foreign policy of peaceful coexistence buried forever, is still a very sensitive issue within the Government and thought of as the low point in independent India's history. The ongoing, unresolved border issues could well be leveraged to persuade India regarding the advantages of joining forces with the other nations in a containment effort.

Currently, India is in the process of building a force projection capability based on a blue water navy built around two carrier groups and long-range air strike capabilities provided by the extremely capable Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter aircraft. India is building its capabilities towards becoming the primary regional power in the Indian Ocean region. The Indian Ocean is vital to trade and development in the Asia-Pacific and whoever dominates it would obviously have enormous strategic influence in the entire Asian region. This is obviously India's starting point in its quest for international status and it will not want to be challenged in the Indian Ocean. The same ocean is also shared by Australia and the United States has a strategic outpost there in Diego Garcia. It becomes clear,

even in a cursory analysis, that if India and Australia work in concert they would be able to maintain the independence and stability of the area. This is the crucial point to be emphasised if Australia takes the initiative to hammering home a bilateral understanding with India. Such an understanding will give sufficient impetus for India to join this group, at least informally. It can also be expected that India would, in all probability, have its own reservations and conditions regarding the actual use of force.

India is studiously progressing towards primacy in the Indian Ocean. It is not difficult to visualise it playing this role irrespective of the US position in the region. Being part of a loosely built coalition of the major powers of Asia will suit its strategic purpose. Such a coalition will also be able to exert sufficient pressure—economic, diplomatic and military deterrence—to control the region and maintain peace, albeit an uneasy peace, almost certain to break down if the Taiwan issue deteriorates into a confrontation.

Honest Broker

> *A peace is of the nature of a conquest; For then both parties nobly are subdu'd, And neither party loser.*
>
> —William Shakespeare
> King Henry the Fourth, Part Two, Act 4, Scene 2

At the other end of the contingency spectrum is a situation of confrontation and imminent conflict between the United States and China. Like the complete withdrawal of the United States from the region, even this is a far-fetched situation when considered under the current international environment. There are three fundamental reasons for this. First, it is the belief of China watchers that the most likely reason for a real confrontation between the US and China would be the issue of Taiwanese independence or integration. From a different perspective this looks unlikely for two reasons. Taiwan is well aware of the need to maintain a status quo and not push the independence issue too far if US support in its current form is to

be assured. Further, there is a sizable percentage of the Taiwanese population that welcomes the prospect of integration with China and, therefore, domestic politics may not go so far as to declare independence. Although it has clearly declared that it would resort to the use of force if Taiwan declares independence, China is also aware that at least for the foreseeable future any such move is likely to bring international condemnation and US intervention. For the next few decades China cannot afford negative political fallouts in order to ensure that its own domestic growth and foreign policy initiatives do not get skewed. However, China's proclivity to maximise international issues when domestic problems tend to boil over has the potential to trigger the Taiwan question. China's internal economic and political developments will have to be closely monitored to foresee any such situation.

Second, the trade and economic relationships between the US and China have become so lopsided that some economic analysts believe that China currently has the capacity to stop the US economy in its tracks if they so decide. This is facilitated by the centralised control of the Chinese economy and its non-capital markets approach within the nation. China's complete integration of politico-economy, diplomacy and international power play was demonstrated by the Government's move to convert some of their reserves into Euros in late-2007 in a direct challenge to the US. Although this threat was later withdrawn, it exposed the current weakness of the US position in global economic terms, which will be a crucial factor at the highest level of decision-making if confrontational circumstances arise.

Third, although the United States took a unilateral decision outside the United Nations regarding the invasion of Iraq, it had the support of a number of nations that subsequently formed what came to be called the 'coalition of the willing'. In a similar decision that could lead to conflict with China, it is highly unlikely to receive the same level of support even from the traditional allies of the US. The global instability that such a confrontation would bring in its wake would far outweigh any benefit that could accrue to participating

nations because of their perceived closeness to the US. Further, the United States is going to be engaged and tied down in the Middle East for a long time to come. It also needs to maintain a credible presence in Europe, especially in view of the current upsurge in Russian strategic activities. Therefore, it may not have the military force projection capacity to prosecute a campaign of unascertained duration and intensity against the growing military might of China without the conflict escalating further into other regions and greatly increasing the very real risk of it deteriorating to a nuclear exchange.

This is not to suggest that the probability of conflict is so low as to all but ignore it when the future security environment is analysed and strategic options considered. While the break-out of a full-scale conflict is highly unlikely, the military-strategic environment could become highly charged and unstable if confrontational political rhetoric starts to be converted even to lower order actions, for example the pre-positioning of military forces, covert intervention in the politico-economic system of each others allies, and subversion of stability in the other nation's region of effective influence. Political brinksmanship and adherence to a few uncompromising basics in foreign policy matters have been the hallmarks of Chinese actions in the international arena for a long time. The clash of basic cultural differences between the ancient Chinese civilisation rooted on patience and inscrutability, and the impetuousness of the Western world, almost completely predominated by the brashness of the United States, has the potential to create misunderstandings that could very rapidly deteriorate into conflict.

Australia, as part of the inner coterie of US allies, will have to take into account two possibilities when considering its options. First, it must accept that a minimal conflict situation between the US and China could develop very fast from almost benign actions by either side. Second, it has to be cognisant of the fact that any role that it plays in such a situation has the potential to harm Australia's long-term interests if even the slightest mistake is made in its actions. This is because the two nations involved are of critical importance to

Australia's wellbeing; the US being its primary security partner and China being its largest trading partner. Under this delicate situation, Australia would have to ensure that the situation is de-escalated before it blows up into a regional and possibly global confrontation, by putting in place sufficient processes to be able to influence both sides equally. Considering Australia's unenviable position in these circumstances and its potentially limited influence on both US and China when both are in confrontational postures, its actions would have to be carefully considered and applied proactively. On the one hand Australia cannot afford to antagonise its powerful ally, the United States, by being seen even superficially to be favouring China and on the other it cannot burn its bridges with China or be considered as a nation whose diplomatic and political independence has been compromised by its friendship and alliance with the world's only superpower.

China's bilateral relationships with other major nations of the region are at best described as cordial. There are underlying tensions in the Chinese relationship with all the major Asian nations. Therefore, in all likelihood Australia would be the only nation that might be acceptable to both China and the US as a diplomatically honest mediator to diffuse a confrontational situation. The effectiveness of such a diplomatic role would depend almost entirely on the bipartisan acceptance of Australia's neutrality. However, such acceptance without reservations can only be achieved if Australia is capable of a number of initiatives, both regional and international, to reinforce its independent foreign policy credentials. To start with it would have to work consciously to change the prevalent international perception that it would blindly side with the United States in any matter of security. Such a change in perception would be slow to achieve and need open interaction with the majority of the regional and international community.

Currently, most of the nations of the Asia-Pacific region are sceptical regarding Australia's motives for any action that it initiates because of historic reasons, perpetuated by post-colonial antagonism towards a nation strongly aligned with the West,

culturally, ethnically and by choice. To be accepted as an honest broker within the region, Australia will of necessity have to revamp its image and assert its presence by emphasising its geographic location in the Asia-Pacific. This would involve a two-pronged initiative. First is to make its heavy trade commitments to the Asia-Pacific transparently known, while leveraging off the much needed economic and security aid that Australia is involved in providing to the smaller economies in the region. This would assist in the second initiative to make the nation and its neighbours feel at ease with its presence in the region rather than standing aloof, by choice or otherwise, as an outsider with a more developed sense of right and wrong. The nations of the region have long histories and evolved cultures making them resent any judgmental attitude. Such an attitude, therefore, immediately makes Australia's intentions in any interaction suspect marring the prospect of any real progress under these conditions.

It will be simpler for Australia to win the confidence of the United States because of the longstanding relationship that the nations share. However, even in this relationship a number of issues will have to be handled delicately. First, the timing of the diplomatic effort will be of paramount importance. The success of any effort would depend on diplomatic actions being initiated before any actual physical contact has taken place. Once the confrontation has reached the phase of military muscle flexing, Australia would find it difficult to refuse any US request for basing rights or even for the provision of military forces, albeit in limited numbers. If such a request is accepted, China will not accept the neutrality of Australia and, on the other hand, if the request is refused the US reaction could be to discard any further interaction or advice from Australia. Either of the situations will completely negate any chance of success in the honest broker role. Therefore, it is important for Australia to broach the possibility of such a role during times of relative peace and arrive at a mutual acceptance with the US. The critical factor in such a move will be to have the US agree that the best role for Australia would be as the honest mediator rather than as a military

ally that could add very little to an already overwhelming force. The strength of the alliance, mutual respect and resilience of the diplomatic process between the two nations will be put to the test in these circumstances. Any sign of weakness in the alliance, perceived or otherwise, emanating from either side would have disastrous consequences for the bilateral relationship as well as for the stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

Being a mediator between the two giants in confrontational mode will showcase Australia as a responsible international citizen and is perhaps the biggest service that it could render to world order. Even with both China and the US accepting this slightly changed role for Australia, the negotiations will be difficult and convoluted, conducted at the cutting edge of diplomacy. Australia's primary responsibilities as a mediator will be to use its influence to stop any further deterioration in the situation and to ensure that communications do not break down, even for a brief period of time. Deterioration in an already tense situation or communications breakdown would both be calamitous for the resolution of the situation. Mediating the gradual reduction of tensions will mean the wheedling of concessions from both parties. This will need a comparatively new approach to diplomacy and foreign policy. This would require at least one of two distinct categories of bargaining power. The first is having the power projection capability—economic, diplomatic or military—to enforce a demand that has been made to either side. In this particular case this would be impossible. The second would be to have the capacity to offer something in return for the concessions that are required to be made by either party. In the scenario being discussed, bargaining power would be almost completely dependent on Australia's ability to offer something in return. From an Australian perspective, access to natural resources around which its own economy is built would perhaps be the most attractive bargaining chip.

Such an offer would have great interest for China. It is Australia's largest trading partners and one of the largest consumers of its natural resources. China has a voracious appetite for energy

and other resources, and it will find it difficult to reject a lucrative offer of access to Australian resources at compatible prices. This is a card that will have to be played with consummate skill to ensure that China finds it easy to accept a compromise in the confrontation while publicly not being seen as weak or incapable. Viewed within the current context this seems extremely difficult to achieve, but in a confrontational crisis this would be the only option open. The success of diffusing a brewing crisis between the US and China will be dependent on Australia's ability to negotiate a viable solution. It therefore becomes imperative for Australia to put in place a long-term plan to achieve the necessary credibility to be the honest broker, much before even the slightest inkling of a confrontation is visible.

Regional Stabiliser

In between the two extremes that would have Australia play two very disparate roles in an attempt to avoid direct regional confrontation and the ensuing instability, there is another role that it might have to undertake. This could be considered an extension of the current role that it plays in its near region of influence. Instability in the immediate neighbourhood of any nation increases the probability of deterioration of the larger security environment, thereby making it imperative for the major power in the region to assert a stabilising influence around it. This has become more important with the evolving concept of national security and the rapid changes in the nature of threats as well as the expansion of the threat spectrum. In pursuance of its own security and stability needs, Australia has intervened a number of times in its immediate area of interest in the past decade to stabilise fast deteriorating situations. In 1999, it was the lead nation in a UN-approved international coalition that assisted Timor Leste's transition to independence as the outcome of a referendum that was opposed by certain militia groups. It was required to intervene again a few years later to establish law and order in a political crisis which was rapidly plunging the fledgling nation into civil war. Australia once again

initiated stabilising operations, this time in the Solomon Islands when the state's economy was on the verge of failure, making the small island nation a prime candidate to become a failed state with all its attendant consequences for the region.

None of these interventions have been completely unilateral, even though the absolute necessity for external intervention in some particular case may have been advocated to the international community by Australia. The fact that there was clear approval within the international community in the United Nations for such action, and that Australia was able to obtain voluntary cooperation from other regional nations establishes two irrevocable changes in the strategic politico-economic and military equation of the region. First, there is almost complete acceptance that a failing state—economic or political—in the neighbourhood is a potential catalyst to spread instability at a very fast pace to other parts of the region, especially when a majority of the other nations themselves have fragile economies. Second, there is a tacit understanding that Australia is perhaps the only regional power with the whole-of-government capacity, and more importantly the national will and stated intent, to lead a stabilising force that could succeed in such cases. This understanding however, is not always converted to agreement, approval or acceptance by the smaller nations in the region who at times, paradoxically, blame Australia itself for the deteriorating situation.

There are a few salutary lessons that the Australian polity must assimilate if the role of regional stabiliser that it will have to assume for itself is to benefit the larger region. First, although the past interventions have been approved by the international community, it is more important to have regional approval and acceptance if such actions are to succeed in the long term. Second, with sufficient and well thought through staying power only should any intervention be attempted, since premature withdrawal before clear stabilisation will only exacerbate the situation and might subsequently require an even larger intervention force. Third, although in the initial stages Australia would have to assume the lead, it would be easier for the

regional nations to accept the necessity of the intervention and its conduct if the lead is passed on to another regional partner at an early stage, as soon as practical.

These three factors point to the necessity for Australia to be able to bargain hard at the conceptual level within the region to ensure acceptance of the necessity for intervention. It also needs to provide sufficient impetus for the intervention to be put into action when needed and move forward at a comfortable pace. The most important responsibility is to ensure that there is no wavering of the long-term goal of such actions—that of ensuring regional stability.

The current state of affairs in the US-China relationship is perhaps the best that could be expected. There is obvious jostling to expand one's own sphere of influence and contain that of the other. However, the basic engagement between the nations is being conducted at the economic front and is for the most part amicable. There are only occasional rhetorical threats that tend to ruffle the flow of trade and commerce. Both the nations do not have the extra capacity required to bait the other constantly, with the United States completely preoccupied in the Middle East and China coming to terms with the change in the national government, preparations for the Olympics and trying to project a more benign façade vis-à-vis its human rights record. However, this status quo will not last for ever. Regional stability in the Asia-Pacific would make it difficult for China to exert economic and political pressure and thereby build up its sphere of influence and thereby slow the process of Chinese diplomatic incursions into the region.

With the United States almost completely involved in the Middle East and embarked on a long struggle against global terrorism, as its primary ally in the Asia-Pacific, Australia would be expected to expand its sphere of interest and influence from its near region and the Pacific island nations to encompass the whole of South-East Asia. In the prevalent politico-economic situation in the region such a determined outward movement from a limited sphere of interest to a larger all-encompassing one will be complex. There will be a great deal of direct opposition to such a move and the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can be expected to be very vociferous against it. For example, even a very conceptual statement by the Australian Government a few years ago regarding pre-emption under extremely well-defined circumstances drew vehement criticism and opposition to the very idea from the more economically stable nations in South-East Asia.

Once again the process of acceptance, not only of the necessity to be prepared to intervene but also the modality of such an action, will need consensus building and a holistic approach for success. Gaining the necessary confidence of the nations of the region, all of whom barring Thailand are post-colonial states, will also be a slow process. This would require transparency and accountability of intention and action. Even if there is reluctance within the region to include Australia in the somewhat closed circle of Asian nations, the need to work together for regional stability has to be emphasised. It has to be made obvious to these nations that bringing Australia into the regional groupings would only enhance their security environment. This is primarily because of the considerable international clout the Australia brings with it in terms of its unambiguous status as a responsible nation. A concerted diplomatic, political and economic initiative, which clearly demonstrates the compatibility of Australia's long-term goals with those of the region and its ethos to create a common prosperous future, would have to be crafted to ensure acceptance of an Australian lead role in any regional crisis.

Doubtless the status quo in the regional or global security environment will not remain indefinitely. More than the changes that come with economic realities and diplomatic realignment, the status quo situation is more likely to be challenged in time with the rise of regional powers like China and India. The changes that will come about will also be dependent on the broader alignment of the regional powers with the United States and the international community. Therefore, Australia should be prepared to be agile in its strategic perceptions and be able to adapt its role appropriate to the changing regional power alignment. The role could range from

being the lead in containment, or as member of a coalition or purely as a facilitator, dependent on the larger global situation. This is the niche position where Australia has to position itself in an emergent world where the strategic security environment is dynamic and nations are primarily manoeuvring to ensure their long-term relevance.

Conclusion

The global strategic, economic and political balance is noticeably changing. The rate of change is different in different parts of the world and varies with a number of factors. While the major economic and strategic powers will continue to influence the changes, especially in their own region, the lesser powers will have to manoeuvre within the changing system which they may not be able to even influence. Failure to be proactive to even the slightest strategic manipulation within a nation's sphere of interest could very quickly spiral into an uncontrollable spin towards irrelevance in the case of nations with constrained national power bases.

Australia needs to enunciate clearly its strategic intent and imperatives that would support its long-term prosperity. This requires the evolution of a long-term preparedness plan that would cater for the eventualities that have been described earlier. The three possible roles all need specialised approaches to be successful and cannot be initiated rapidly unless sufficient planning and allocation of resources have been done as an ongoing process. It is during times of comparative peace and tranquillity that these initiatives, in diplomacy, relationship building, influencing and demonstrating goodwill to other nations, must be done so that in times of crisis Australia's chosen role would be acceptable to the region and to the international community.

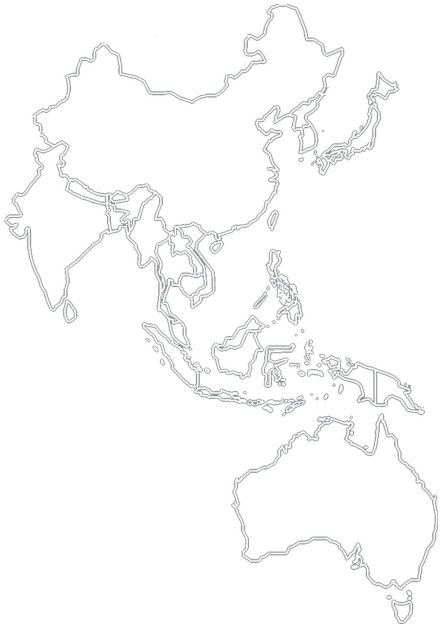
For smaller nations, in terms of national power structure, strategic irrelevance is a real threat in a world which is realigning

itself to adapt to the machinations of large and still growing economies. Three large economies are emerging within Australia's sphere of interest and even the smaller economies of the region are showing clear signs of resilient growth. This growth and consequent shift makes it crucial for Australia to monitor regional changes closely and make adjustments to its own politico-economic situation and diplomatic overtures. Australia needs to refine further its whole-of-government approach to its security imperatives, demonstrate the initiative needed to be a responsible nation with regional affiliations and contribute steadily to stabilising the region by the employment of its considerable economic, diplomatic and military capabilities in order to ensure its own stability and economic growth.

Notes

1 Geoffrey Barker, 'Big questions loom in US relationship', *Australian Financial Review,* 19 October 2007, p. 28.
2 Paul Dibb and Geoffrey Barker, 'Rising to the Russian challenge', *Australian Financial Review,* 16 January 2008, p. 52.
3 ibid.
4 Geoffrey Barker, 'Plenty to fear with a great, powerful friend in decline', *Australian Financial Review*, 9 November 2007, p. 80.
5 Allan Behm, 'The Need for an Australian National Security Strategy', *Security Challenges,* August 2007 (Vol. 3, No. 3), The Kokoda Foundation, Canberra, 2007, p. 14.
6 ibid, p. 19.
7 Dave Peebles, 'Power shifts put pressure on Asia-Pacific stability', *Canberra Times,* 25 January 2008, p. 25.

Chapter 6
Military Competencies in Support of National Security



MILITARY COMPETENCIES IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

In a democracy the election of a government by the people for a defined period of time signifies a covenant between the elected polity and the nation at large. One very important element of this covenant is the implicit imperative that, by giving up a certain amount of individual and collective freedom by way of obedience to laws and legislations under a shared cultural understanding, the population of the nation is expecting the government to ensure their security. This security encompasses physical security from dangers and external attacks, and the mental security and peace that are required for adequate growth and the realisation of an individual's full potential.

The concept of national security, until recently defined broadly as the physical security of the geographic borders of the nation, has undergone a radical change in the past few decades. Today it means the security of the nation's interests, not only physical but also economic and intellectual, in any part of the world. This is mainly because of the increased and instantaneous global connectivity that has come about through rapid advances in information technology. From a limited and narrow view just a few decades ago, national security is now not constrained by national boundaries, and is seen as a function of connectivity on a very broad basis and the freedom to conduct global business. Further, national interest itself has become a term with varied interpretations and nuances, without a comprehensive definition that covers all contingencies and is acceptable to all nations. National interests, and the means that a nation could employ to protect them, vary in definition and scale with the power base of a nation and the spread of its global influence. The greater a nation's global influence, the greater and more complex its national interests. With the international acceptance of

this changed and more involved perception of national security, the means to ensure it have also undergone sweeping changes.

Even 50 years ago, the primary means of ensuring national security was an adequate military force that combined the traits of deterrence, defence and, when necessary, offensive actions. Changes to the entire security environment, both threats and responses, have brought about changes in the concepts of operations and the participatory elements of national power at the strategic level. In a contemporary security scenario it is likely that a purely traditional military force and the capabilities that it brings may not find a place in the broader security outlook. Currently, the national power base primarily consists of diplomatic, economic, information technological and military capabilities that a nation can bring to bear to further its interests in an increasingly complicated world. Because these capabilities are diverse and need specialised professionals to wield effectively, they are also vested in different groups within the government. In any given situation, the optimum national response will usually require the coordinated use of some capability from one group and some from at least one other, applied jointly or individually according to the perceived need at the time. Such a coordinated response to emerging security needs will be complex and dynamic, needing intense activity at short notice. Therefore, the competencies resident in national power elements will have to be developed and maintained at the appropriate degree on a continuous basis to achieve efficiency in such an approach to security.

For the foreseeable future, a whole-of-government approach to national security will be the optimum way to employ all elements of national power to ensure acceptable stability and growth.

Military Competencies

> *Of every one hundred men, ten shouldn't even be there. Eighty are nothing but targets, nine are real fighters … We are lucky to have them for they make the battle … Ah, but One, one of them is a Warrior … and He will bring the others back.*
>
> —Heraclitus (circa 500 BC)

The profession of arms has always been considered a complex activity, and never has it been more so than in current circumstances. The range of military operations has evolved historically from being purely the application of force in the protection of the nation-state, to encompass a rambling but intertwined spread. This ranges from operations as part of national efforts to provide emergency disaster relief, humanitarian aid and assistance to civil authorities to major conflict and war of national survival.[1] The concept of conflict has also undergone changes and now the spectrum of conflict extends beyond conventional war and armed conflict to include military responses to threats like terrorism, insurgencies, transnational crime and illegal exploitation of Australia's natural resources.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has to cater to this wide range of operations and the complexities of the increased spectrum of conflict while functioning as an integral part of the whole-of-government approach to national security. It must ensure that all its operations are aligned with the national security agenda as laid down at the highest level of government. The complexity of achieving this will be the highest in the military when compared to all the other elements of national power. It is therefore incumbent on the ADF to be able to support national security imperatives by ensuring that its military competencies are appropriate to the task they would have to perform. Conversely, there is also a responsibility placed on the Government to set a clear military objective that supports the desired political end-state when committing the ADF to an operation.

Similar to the covenant between the elected government and the nation, the military forces of a democratic nation also have to be cognisant of an unwritten covenant between themselves and the government. The government provides the military with the resources required to build the capabilities that are judged as necessary to ensure national security. Because of the specialisation required to make such judgements, this capability requirement is almost completely based on the perceived needs that the military puts forward. A responsive government trusts the military and does not normally baulk at providing the resources to generate the required capabilities. The other side of the coin is that the military also has great responsibility put on it. This stems from the implicit covenant that the military will be able to employ the capabilities that the government has provided on their request optimally in the service of the nation. It is this responsibility that makes it imperative for the ADF to have military competencies that match its understood governmental remit.

Professional Mastery

Military competencies are underpinned by the professional mastery that is needed to exercise them effectively in a proportionate and humane manner. To succeed in operations, the ADF needs adaptive structures and personnel with professional mastery of joint operations at the tactical and operational levels, and of military strategy and national security imperatives at the strategic level. Such professional mastery is founded on balanced skills acquired through training and professional education and developed to the appropriate level. Professional mastery confidently combines these balanced skills and knowledge with experience to match the capabilities of the force as a whole with national security requirements.

The ADF's capability to generate and apply military force as needed is completely dependent on the professional mastery of its personnel in the single Service and joint domains. Professional mastery is a product of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of leaders

at all levels and the flexibility and robustness of the organisation.[2] Professional mastery also has a moral, ethical and intellectual aspect to it. It focuses strongly on conducting operations with a national ethos to achieve the desired end-state. Such mastery is realised through the commanders and the personnel who execute and support the operations. Professional mastery is a cornerstone for the competencies necessary to achieve the objectives that are laid down. It ensures the relevance and establishes the link between ADF operations and national security.

The Government can legally direct the ADF to apply military force in a wide range of operations to secure Australia's national security interests. The ADF, through the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), is responsible to the Government for the defence of Australia in its broadest form in accordance with national security policies and specific contextual government directives. The political, strategic and geographic environment within which the ADF has to achieve this task is complex and dynamic, requiring the forces to be more than normally adaptive and versatile. The ADF has to be capable of joint operations and must maintain appropriate military strategy, force structure and operational readiness. Such preparedness, while crucial to success, is also extremely demanding. It requires the force to be able to straddle a very wide range of operations, from armed conflict to responsive and controlled application of force, and adapting to carry out other actions short of armed conflict. Only adequate professional mastery at all levels will ensure that the ADF will be able to successfully plan and execute these difficult and dangerous operations.

Joint Military Operations

Military forces normally consist of elements that operate independently in the three environments—land, maritime and air. Taken individually, they may have the capability to operate at the lowest end of the strategic-operational-tactical continuum without much difficulty. For example, an army platoon may be able to operate with the desired efficiency as an independent entity but may not be

able to integrate effectively with the larger force. Similarly, a patrol boat could be operated by its crew throughout its performance envelope, but may not be able to contribute to the broader capability of the fleet. From an air force perspective, a squadron may be able to fly its aircraft, but would not be able to operate as a coherent unit, producing the effects that are needed. A large number of military forces around the world operate at this level and are not capable of contributing meaningfully to national security.

Operating. In all the three cases, when basic operating skills are complemented by the ability to operate cohesively as a unit and deliver the desired outcome as an entity, the force would have achieved technical mastery. Technical mastery is the capability of a force to be able to operate its assets to their fullest potential with skill and deliver the highest levels of tactical competence. This is the base level of tactical proficiency and a force capable of operating at this level will only be able to contribute at the lowest end of the spectrum of conflict and in providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief. These operations are also at the lowest end in terms of the range of military operations and require only competent knowledge of the equipment being employed and the barest minimum of understanding of the larger picture. Such operations normally contribute only in a limited manner to the larger national security issues. Further, they do not normally encounter any adversary opposition on such operations. Therefore, the force will be able to operate their equipment in a benign environment without having to face any complex or dangerous situations.

Creating Effects. A service that is capable of operating in a cohesive manner can aspire to become one that could create desired effects by having and exercising professional mastery of the single service domain. Professional mastery is a prerequisite to utilising the organisational and operational dimensions of the individual domains to enable a particular service to achieve the effects that are needed by the nation. A military force that has professional mastery at the single service level will be able to carry out middle-order operations like peacekeeping or enforcement, limited border security and

evacuation of personnel from conflict zones. The effects created by such operations would still not meet the demands of higher level national security. They will also not be able to function effectively in more demanding scenarios like high tempo counterinsurgency operations and provide responses to greater threats to national security.

Jointness. The nature of conflict and the threats to national security are becoming increasingly complex, demanding a greater understanding of the joint response required from defence forces. This is because the threats cannot be defeated by any one service operating purely in its own domain, and need to be addressed in a joint manner. Joint military operations are the bedrock from which other responses can emanate to ensure national security and require a high order of integration for full effectiveness. A joint force is one which comprises significant elements of the Navy, Army and Air Force, or at least two of these Services, operating under a single commander. Conduct of efficient joint operations is almost completely dependent on the constituent parties having professional mastery of the joint environment. In order to achieve this, the primary requirement is to have professional mastery of the single service domain, from which joint professional mastery can be built up. A force that has achieved such professional mastery will be able to conduct the full range of military operations, from humanitarian assistance at the low end to full-blown armed conflict. By achieving joint professional mastery, a defence force will be able to assure the government of its ability to operate in such a way as to support all national security initiatives that need the application of the capabilities inherent in defence forces.

Whole-of-Government Approach

The whole-of-government approach to security aims to use all the elements of national power, as required, to ensure and enhance national security. This aims to find the most appropriate tool—drawn from national power, with diplomatic, economic, informational or military options—to achieve national objectives.[3]

The ADF will only be one of the agencies, and not always the lead, in assuring Australian security in the future. This approach translates to a National Effects-Based Approach (NEBA) to the use of national power in that the objective is to create effects of the appropriate level and magnitude to protect national interests. These effects could be lethal and nonlethal, achieved by kinetic or non-kinetic action, even when military forces are being employed.

NEBA views national security within an international system that has political, economic, social and military dimensions. Any action in one domain can create secondary effects in the same or other domains, both short and long-term. A particular action could create entirely different effects in different contexts and therefore the full breadth of impacts of every action must be clearly understood before any action is initiated. Failure to factor this into the strategic planning process may prevent the achievement of the desired end-state.

Within the NEBA, military forces can use a combination of physical and virtual presence to create persistent effects that last far beyond the immediate results of the action. The military contribution to NEBA would normally be as a joint military operation to achieve the desired strategic and operational outcomes in peace, conflict and post-conflict situations within the whole-of-government approach to security issues. Ultimately the military force would have to aspire to be one that can operate at the highest levels of integration to make a comprehensive contribution to national effort. Such a force would need to become a seamless entity.

Seamless Military Force. A military force that has attained reasonable proficiency in joint operations should aspire to achieve a higher, more comprehensive jointness and become a seamless force. A seamless force is one that operates beyond the confines of a joint force and is capable of harmonious conduct of operations as a single entity.[4] In order to achieve seamlessness, the military forces must have professional mastery that combines a sophisticated and holistic view of the combined strengths of the force and a clear understanding of military strategy at the appropriate levels

of command. This is necessary to understand the overall strategy and thereby employ the forces necessary to achieve the aims of the campaign. This will also ensure that the strengths of a particular agency, like the military, could be used as leverages to mitigate the disadvantages that another might have so that the power that is finally projected is without any weakness that can be exploited by a determined adversary. A seamless force should be able to integrate the traditional forces with each other and integrate externally with a wide range of supporting organisations, agencies and also the larger community.[5] From a view of purely military operations, seamless operations require the highest level of professional mastery from mid- to high-level commanders.

Multi-Agency Operations. A defence force that has achieved a modicum of seamlessness will be able to operate as an integral partner with other agencies within a whole-of-government approach to national security. From a military perspective this is perhaps the most difficult step to take and consists of being capable of multinational operations. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it is difficult for the military forces to break the mindset created by the centuries-old tradition of being the lead in all matters concerning national security. Secondly, military operations are conducted in a particular manner that does not find resonance in civilian operations and therefore interoperability between the military and other agencies involved would become problematic. In order to ensure smooth and trouble free multi-agency operations, the military leadership must have professional mastery of national security imperatives. Further, they should be able to let this mastery spread both linearly and vertically through the force to ensure that the force as a whole is well informed of the intricacies of multi-agency operations and their importance to national security. Military forces that can achieve this efficiency can easily become part of the nation's grand security strategy.

Grand Strategy. Grand strategy coordinates and directs all the elements of national power towards achieving the political end-state, as defined by national policy, sought in the application

of force.[6] Since the military force is only one of the many agencies that work towards making the nation secure, it is important for the military's senior leadership to be professional masters of grand strategy that guides the security actions of the nation. This mastery does not come easily and is the result of a lifetime of professional education, supplemented by experience from the tactical to the strategic context of military operations, its interaction with government policies, a clear understanding of national security goals and awareness of the nation's politico-economic strengths. However, senior military commanders would be ill-suited to advise the government of national security issues if they do not demonstrate their mastery of grand strategy. In order to make sure that the military is relevant to the nation's interests and provides a tangible return for the long-term investment that the nation does in its military forces, it is necessary to nurture the development of professional mastery at the grand strategic level in officers of the senior middle level. This would ensure a sequential succession of capable officers to the higher command positions, who would contribute confidently and correctly to the national security debate at the highest level.

Summary

The credibility of a nation vis-à-vis its diplomatic manoeuvres and strategic aspirations has to be underpinned by effective force projection capabilities as well as a demonstrated national will to pursue its objectives. The reality of recent times is that national leadership has realised that the military is the best equipped to deal with most crisis contingencies. However, many of these contingencies go well beyond the mandate that is traditionally given to the military forces. In this context, it is necessary for the government to specify the military objectives that are expected to be achieved and how that would further support the desired

political end-state. It is essential that the national security policy be the overarching strategic umbrella beneath which national power elements align to achieve political and military objectives.

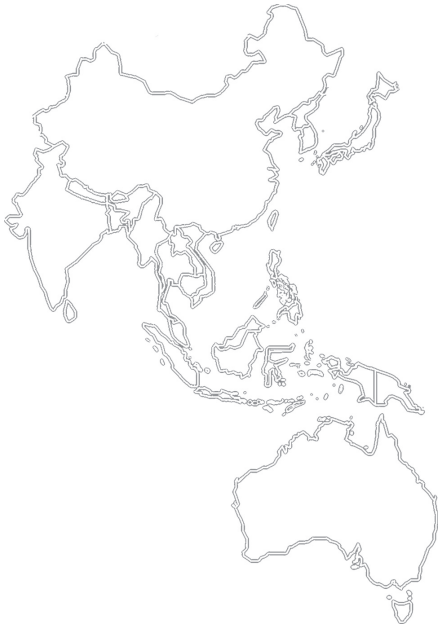
The professional mastery of their personnel is the most important aspect of military education and training and can never be replaced by any amount of automation. Professional mastery can be explained but not adequately defined because it is a combination of multifarious qualities in an individual which, when viewed together with the professional mastery resident in other personnel, makes the professional mastery of a service or joint force apparent. In this case the sum will always be more than the total of individual quantities. Morale and intellect, the most essential qualities to warfighting effectiveness, can only be nurtured within an environment of professional mastery at all levels of the force.

The effectiveness of the military is underpinned by its professional mastery at all levels, from the technical mastery required to operate efficiently as a tactical unit at the lowest level, to being able to contribute to national security at the grand strategic level. Professional mastery spreads like a funnel from the lowest point of tactical efficiency to the highest point where the mastery transcends the purely military and has to grapple with the inherent convolutions of national security at the highest conceptual level. This growth is necessary for military commanders to be effective in the larger stage on which the military forces now operate, within the whole-of-government approach to national security.

Notes

1 Royal Australian Air Force, Australian Air Publication 1000–D—*The Air Power Manual*, Fifth Edition, Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2007, pp. 40–41.
2 ibid, p 18.
3 Department of Defence, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication–D.3—*Joint Operations for the 21st Century*, Department of Defence, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2007, p. 15.
4 Sanu Kainikara, *'Capability Born Joint': Towards a Seamless Force,* Air Power Development Centre Paper No. 22, Canberra, September 2007, p. 10.
5 Department of Defence, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication–D.2—*Force 2020*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2002, p. 17.
6 B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy,* Second Revised Edition, Penguin Books Ltd, England, 1991, p. 322.

Chapter 7
An Air Strategy Within National Security



AN AIR STRATEGY WITHIN NATIONAL SECURITY

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson,
Locksley Hall, 1842

A nation's quest for security is an endless journey, full of twists and turns, mostly determined by circumstances somewhat outside the nation's control and based on the understood balance between evolving threats and opportunities. The trend of rapid and dramatic change in the national security equation is a more recent phenomenon as compared to the more staid and traditional approach. However, there is also a very noticeable continuity in the strategic view of security and the means to achieve this. The Clausewitzian concept of conflicts being a continuation of political policy by other means still holds good.

In the 60 years since the end of World War II, a war to end all other wars, over 200 conflicts of varying intensity have been fought for reasons that are as far apart as maintaining the sovereignty of a nation to furthering religious extremism. However, the international community's propensity to try to manage political, religious and ethnic disputes through the use of force, vested in the military forces of a nation, has not diminished. Irrespective of the form of government and the political and diplomatic manoeuvrings that convulse a nation, there is an indelible connection between a nation's strategic design and the employment of military forces.[1] In fact, most of the conflicts of the past century have been clear

demonstrations of the concept of the use of the armed forces to achieve political ends. This is an accepted historical paradigm.

The military forces of a nation are often the most visible element of national power and play a very influential part in establishing the nation's relevance in the international community. At times the armed forces of a nation exert influence far in excess of their actual capability because of the inherent deterrence that they embody. Australia needs to be cognisant of this peculiarity that the ADF could be a very useful tool in subtly influencing its neighbours. Success in such an endeavour would depend on the ADF having the capacity and being given the resources to develop visibly the abilities required. Further there is also a need for the national leadership to understand the utility of these abilities across a wide spectrum of operations as well as in other contingencies.

Contemporary Conflicts

> *The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose.*
>
> —Henry Kissinger

Contemporary operations straddle the full spectrum of conflict, and involve military and non-military agencies that form part of the combination of national power elements that contribute to national security. The range of operations varies from humanitarian assistance in the wake of natural or man-made disasters on the one end to wars of national survival at the other. The common factor that connects these completely different scenarios is that, within a whole-of-government approach to national security, both these operations and the ones that fall in between involve all elements of national power to achieve the desired strategic objectives. These operations increase in complexity as they shift from humanitarian

assistance to war and demand sophisticated inputs from all agencies that are taking part. In a very simplistic manner it could be said that the intensity of military contribution to the range of operations would be least at the low end and maximum at a high-end war of national survival. The lead agency in these operations would also vary dependent on the nature of response required. It is more than likely that at the higher end of the range, the military would be given the lead since it would involve the concerted application of force to achieve the desired end-state, while non-military agencies regularly lead humanitarian assistance operations.

Australia's military strategy, which is an integral part of national security strategy, guides the ADF's actions in contributing to the achievement of national security objectives, laid down at the highest level of government decision-making. The strategy provides the planning foundation that ensures that all military operations are aligned with the national strategy and that the actions create the desired effects within the National Effects-Based Approach (NEBA) to national security. In effect, the military strategy articulates the ADF's intent in terms of its contribution to the whole-of-government approach to ensuring the protection of Australia's interests and assuring its long-term security.

The spread of contexts within which the ADF will have to operate is vast, ranging from national military operations to global multinational campaigns. Additionally, the security environment is such that all the operations in the spread would have to be conducted within a multi-agency environment, irrespective of the scale of operations and whether the individual action is only military or conducted in combination with some other agency. Within this multi-agency framework, military operations could be conducted in a multinational environment or be part of a national whole-of-government initiative. In the multinational environment the operations could be coalition operations or combined operations. Coalition operations are those where the partner nations are unified by the mission objectives for a particular campaign. Combined operations are carried out by allies jointly with the

three arms of the defence forces to achieve common objectives, primarily military in nature. Joint, coalition and combined military operations are always undertaken within the whole-of-government approach and could be supported by or supportive of non-military operations. The context is dynamic, but the aim of each operation, from the tactical to the strategic, is always aligned with the national objectives. The security of a nation cannot be assured by military means alone.

It is becoming apparent that most military operations would now be conducted in coalition with friendly nations and allies. Three factors affect such multinational operations—complexity in being joint, cohesiveness of the force and interoperability. The complexity in initiating joint action is the lowest when the components of one defence force are acting independently. It is the highest when multinational forces operate together to achieve a common goal. Complexity will be higher in a coalition than when operating with an ally because alliances by their very nature would have exercised together and therefore would have a better understanding of each other's operation ethos. Commonality of training, doctrine and operational concepts as well as common equipment builds understanding leading to interoperability. Cohesiveness of the force and interoperability are interlinked. In multinational forces, unified by need, the cohesiveness and interoperability will be the lowest and in alliances the maximum.

Contemporary military forces need to be agile, flexible and versatile to adapt to the large spectrum of conflict that ranges from the very low technology and low threat environment normally found in humanitarian aid operations to high intensity conflict at the leading edge of technology. The intensity and tempo of operations will also vary, both being the lowest at the low end of the spectrum. Irrespective of the intensity and tempo of operations, contemporary conflict demands that the military forces be able to carry out joint air-land integrated operations, with robust command and control and to provide a timely and adequate response. The force also needs, as a minimum, the critical mass to carry out concurrent operations

and the flexibility to be able to shift up or down the spectrum of conflict rapidly and smoothly.

Modern conflict demands proportionality and discrimination in the application of force and the management of effects that are created to achieve the end-state. This can be achieved by being able to create tailored lethal and nonlethal effects through precisely controlled kinetic and non-kinetic responses to threats. The military force needs to be able to operate at the high end of the spectrum but retain the capacity to scale down to suit the context so that the response is always appropriate to the situation. Technology plays a major part in this capability to 'ramp up' and 'draw down' at a sufficiently fast pace in keeping with the changing environment.

Air Power Beyond The Confines Of The Theatre

> *There are still those who fail to stand back and reflect on the fact that air assets operate in the one medium that surrounds the earth and that touches 100 percent of the earth's population, political capitals and centres of commerce.*
>
> —General Ronald R. Fogleman,
> USAF (Ret.), 1997

Air power has the capability to operate with the necessary agility and flexibility to create the desired effect and thereby provides the government with a clear option when faced with situations that need the projection of power. Air operations are distinguished by three major attributes derived from the inherent characteristics of air power. They are speed of manoeuvre and response, perspective and reach. Speed of manoeuvre and response is a critical capability in determining the effectiveness of military actions throughout the spectrum of contemporary conflict. More than any other force projection capability, air power has the capacity to respond to

emerging situations in a time-critical manner that could be crucial for victory in a number of occasions. Air power's perspective, based on its sensor horizon, can cover vast stretches of the battlespace and in any given situation will be able to cover the entire battlefield. This will not only enhance the joint forces' timely response options, but also complicate the adversary's strategy and tactics. Air power can reach any point in the battlespace and can operate unconstrained by natural barriers. This is a great advantage when the operating theatre is spread out and has different terrain limitations for the operations of the surface forces. Optimally utilising these three unique attributes, air operations, independent or within a joint environment, can create multiple effects simultaneously or in rapid succession as required. Further, they can be applied across the entire theatre and also in deep battles around the battlespace.

The theatre of contemporary operations is dynamic and challenging. It encompasses the land littoral or maritime environment as well as urban or rural settings and could be geographically concentrated or widely dispersed. Further, the forces may be engaged in more than one theatre simultaneously with the full range of operations being carried out in one or more theatres. For example, the force could be engaged in high-intensity conflict in one land theatre, while simultaneously undertaking humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations in a geographically separated second littoral theatre. The diversity of terrain, range of operations and spectrum of conflict can create a mind-boggling number of variations to the traditional force projection capability of the military forces.

Air power has the capability to dominate the battlespace across these diverse environments and can overcome both time and space constraints that encumber the surface forces. Its reach and penetration enables it to project the necessary power and create effects over a very large area. Air power provides a flexible and mobile umbrella for interference-free surface force operations that can be extended or curtailed depending on the requirement. The large number of response and deterrent options that it provides

to joint force commanders makes it a capability that inherently brings strategic depth to a joint campaign. Smaller air forces will, however, face the drawback of not being able to meet the challenge of concurrency under all circumstances. This is because, in a lot of cases, the smaller air forces would already be operating at the critical mass required for one operation, thereby making it impossible for them undertake any meaningful concurrent operations.

Key Tasks for Air Power

> *We do not have to be out and out disciples of Douhet to be persuaded of the great significance of air forces for a future war, and to go on from there to explore how success in the air could be exploited for ground warfare, which would in turn consolidate the aerial victory.*
>
> —Major General Heinz Guderian, 1937

There are four key tasks that air power performs in the joint arena, within the definition of a joint military campaign, to support national security objectives. This contribution would have to be aligned with the contribution of not only other military capabilities, but also of other elements of national power. The first is to obtain control of the air, which is a prerequisite for the success of all operations. The other three are the ability to detect, decide and defeat emerging threats. These three tasks are carried out simultaneously and in very close cooperation with each other. The ability to 'know' or detect is fundamental to creating the necessary situational awareness as close to real-time as possible. From such awareness comes the capability to decide on the optimum course of action to defeat the threat in the best possible manner. The selected course of action could span the spectrum from deterrence, influencing and managing the conflict space, to kinetic actions to

neutralise the target. Defeat requires rapid and offensive response, but does not mean destruction alone. It encompasses even nonlethal actions initiated to achieve success.

By assuring control of the air and leveraging its ability to detect, decide and defeat all existing and emergent threats through airborne operations, air power provides a new concept and understanding of battlespace dominance.

Control of the Air

> *Control of the air is the ability to conduct friendly operations in all three dimensions without effective interference from enemy air power.*[2]

At the risk of repetition, it has to be reiterated that control of the air is an absolute requisite for the successful completion of all other operations—land, maritime or air. This understanding is extremely important, especially to Western forces that for the past 60 years have not had to operate without assured control of the air. This extended Western dominance of the air has brought in an underlying feeling of taking for granted that friendly air forces would always rule the skies. While this may indeed be the case for the foreseeable future, some emerging trends have to be monitored and remedial actions initiated if this situation is to be perpetuated.

Air power is critically dependent on Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) and Air-to-Air Refuelling for its continued optimum performance. These become high-value assets, both because of this dependence as well as the limited numbers of these resources that are available. The trend towards proliferation of very capable air defence weapon systems, even at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict, makes the likelihood of an attack on these assets a distinct possibility. Any loss would have a marked effect on the overall capability of the force to ensure adequate control of the air. The second trend that must be monitored is the development of nascent air power capabilities in some of the more prominent insurgent groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in

Sri Lanka and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Even though these capabilities are at present very limited, they could be built up fairly quickly and easily to create a sufficiently strong opposition. This could come as an unpleasant surprise to complacent forces.

Modern surface combat is diffused and predominantly fought in urban areas if over land and in the littoral if maritime. There is also no clear-cut distinction between combatants and civilians, and the absence of a visible front line makes it difficult to demarcate the combat zone. Under these conditions, there is a necessity to isolate the full theatre of conflict so that external assistance to the adversary is denied. This can only be achieved by air power operating beyond the theatre under constant control of the air. Interdicting supply lines to the combat zone and providing direct support to surface operations can be done effectively only when control of the air has been achieved. In these situations control of the air directly translates to battlespace dominance—a primary requirement for success in conflict.

Ability to Detect: Improving Situational Awareness

Air assets are most suited to gather intelligence, carry out surveillance and reconnaissance, and disseminate the analysed information as necessary. This capability is crucial to understanding the characteristics of the operating environment and knowing the details of events taking place in a dynamic conflict situation. Contemporary air power is synonymous with persistent Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. In addition, its capability to exploit the third dimension and the flexibility of its assets make air power the fountainhead of the 'detect and inform' function critical to the success all military operations.

The term 'detect' has been used in preference to the commonly used 'know' to emphasise the subtle but significant change that airborne ISR has undergone in the recent past. ISR in the traditional sense used to be able to provide an overall knowledge of events. However, technology now provides air assets with the capability to detect adversary movements proactively, in near real-time, and

thereby provide information to friendly forces. Persistent ISR is made possible by a combination of space-based assets and airborne manned and unmanned assets using a robust, high-capacity network. This enables information superiority, achieved by the synthesis of ISR and information operations.

The ability to detect through persistent ISR has three primary enabling characteristics. First, it requires the asset to have very long endurance to be able to loiter over the area of interest. The alternative to this is to ensure adequacy of surveillance and reconnaissance by arranging revisit by the same or different assets at the correct intervals so that no enemy activity goes undetected. This situation might warrant a layered ISR capability, underpinned by area surveillance being done by space-based assets. Second, ISR has to be constantly carried out at the cutting edge of technology. This is to avoid a capability becoming redundant by the use of proliferating countermeasures. Constraints in the detection function will have to be overcome by the innovative use of technology. Third, the ISR will have to ensure fidelity of information that is made available. This assurance is critical for decision-makers throughout the vertical chain of command.

Information superiority, which is what persistent ISR delivers, is critical to situational awareness and permits the initiation of appropriate actions at a pace that gains the initiative. Superior situational awareness, when handled by professional masters of the particular environment, enables decision superiority. Decision superiority, the ability to make and implement appropriate and accurate decisions at a tempo higher than that of the adversary, is the primary war-winning factor for any combat force. Air power provides the fundamental input to assuring decision superiority.

Ability to Decide: Shape, Influence and Manage

There are two independent aspects to the ability to decide: one, the combination of information availability and capability to make decisions, and two, the command and control arrangements to inform and implement the decisions.

Information availability, its adequacy and fidelity, is ensured by air power's ability to detect and the analysed knowledge will decide the course of action that will be adopted by the force. The selected course of action will be oriented towards shaping—by influencing and managing—the battlespace at the times and locations of choice to the desired degree in order to facilitate friendly operations. There are three main inputs to shaping the battlespace and they encompass a range of actions from responsive nonlethal ones to the kinetic application of force. The first input is the creation of a rapid and responsive logistics chain that contributes directly to shaping the battle space and indirectly through the support it provides to the second input, which is the capability to carry out joint manoeuvre warfare. The third input is the capability to create the desired effects, both kinetic and non-kinetic.

Air power has the capacity to create a reactive logistics supply chain rapidly in an evolving scenario, essentially because of its responsive airlift capabilities. In circumstances where the joint forces are operating away from direct contact with home base, this becomes a critical requirement for the conduct of efficient operations. The reach and payload of airlift capabilities ensures that the chain is not unduly extended, thereby ameliorating a crucial vulnerability in expeditionary operations. By its ability to maintain logistics chains for long durations in far-flung areas of operations, air power influences the battlespace in favour of friendly forces. Such a logistics chain is also fundamental to the manoeuvre capabilities of the joint force.

Joint forces manoeuvre warfare capabilities are essential to shape the battlespace effectively. Manoeuvre warfare can be translated to an asymmetric capability because firstly, it can be unpredictable and secondly, joint fires can be brought to bear on an unsuspecting adversary thereby increasing the surprise factor. In pre-emption or unconventional conflict situations, unpredictability is by itself a coveted capability. Two other factors, independent in themselves, have to be considered as essential to the success of joint force manoeuvre warfare. These are persistent

ISR and a robust command and control (C2) system. ISR provides the functional input into the planning of manoeuvre warfare with information regarding adversary dispositions and enables the selection of the appropriate course of action in a given context. This provides increased unpredictability to the manoeuvre options of the joint force. A robust C2 system links the ISR function to joint manoeuvres while also ensuring their efficient conduct. Air power capabilities can create unpredictability, contribute effectively to joint fires and provide the backbone for the provision of persistent ISR and C2 functions. All joint force manoeuvre warfare operations would be heavily dependent on air power for its success.

A major factor in shaping the battlespace is the creation of appropriate effects; kinetic and non-kinetic, lethal and nonlethal. Air power's speed, range, precision and penetration capabilities make it the ideal choice to create lethal, kinetic effects at the desired time and place. Technology empowers air power to be proportional and discriminatory in the application of force. The combination of precision, proportionality and discrimination is unique to air power and when intelligently employed can create devastating effects. Air power is also the frontrunner in creating non-kinetic effects. Its reach and very visual presence can be effective in a show of force to demonstrate the capability and intent of a force to adversaries who may be contemplating actions against friendly forces. In contemporary conflict, this capability assumes greater importance because of the dispersed nature of the threat and the merging of the adversary with the larger civilian population in the battlespace.

Bringing together a responsive logistics chain, enabling joint manoeuvre warfare and the creation of the desired effects are the fundamental inputs to shaping the battlespace and controlling the direction of the conflict to align with one's own strategic objectives.

All the inputs that air power contributes to the ability to decide are underpinned and optimally brought together by a robust, network enabled C2 system. There is an indelible link between ISR and C2. Air power assets are major contributors to ISR functions, as well as in the synthesis and further dissemination of information

gathered from a range of sources. Likewise, air power C2 assets will be able mould maritime, land and air C2 systems into a robust and seamless entity that will provide two major advantages—decision superiority and near real-time targeting capability. Decision superiority translates to controlled manoeuvre warfare and cohesive joint operations that will ultimately control the tempo of operations. Seamless C2 is also an essential component of the ability to defeat existing and emergent threats.

Ability to Defeat: Response Options

Air power has the capability to provide tailored, proportional and timely application of force to create desired effects in joint, coalition or multi-agency campaigns. This capability is the combination of a number of inherent qualities of air power, optimally brought together within the context of the campaign at the strategic level and battlespace operations at the operational and tactical level. Response to all threats will have to be a joint endeavour because the necessity to evolve into a seamless force percolates to all levels; jointness straddles all operations. Coordination of the battlespace is critical to success in joint operations and is heavily dependent on the synthesis of all ISR inputs and the availability of a joint, possibly seamless, C2 system.

Contemporary battlespace is complex and the surface environment has a number of characteristics that could limit the unrestricted application of force. It is expected that a majority of conflicts would be conducted in the urban areas which would provide only limited visibility and manoeuvre options to surface forces. Urban terrain tends to fragment and disorient large surface forces by limiting the perspective and visibility of the battlespace that is available to the commander. Further, it also inhibits and in most case denies the advantages inherent in the use of massed fire in support of surface operations because of the lack of damage discrimination that accompanies such actions. Offensive employment of air power provides satisfactory solutions to all the difficulties in responding appropriately to operational requirements.

The fundamental requirements in joint operations are to be able to conduct concurrent operations and have demonstrated swiftness of response. Air power ensures that the joint force is capable of carrying out both these functions by providing response options through three major contributions, derived from four core competencies. The response options are strategic attack, time sensitive targeting and air mobility. The core competencies are formed by a conscious amalgam of air power characteristics and are offensive attacks, asymmetry, information superiority and force multipliers. Offensive attack capabilities are a function of speed, range, payload, precision, survivability and responsiveness. Air power has an inherent asymmetry in its employment options which is enhanced by its technology enabled capacity for stand-off weapon delivery and stealth. The ubiquity of air assets in the collection, collation and dissemination of information has already been clearly enunciated. Air power is the linchpin in the joint force achieving information superiority and adds to the response options available to the joint commander. A number of technology aided capabilities, like networked C2, multi-task capable assets and swing and switch-role offensive systems, individually and collectively, provide force multiplier capacity and added agility to air power systems.

Strategic Attack. Air power can create the desired effects through kinetic and non-kinetic actions. However, there is also a requirement to keep the collateral damage to the bare minimum. Management of collateral damage has become a sensitive issue that has been politicised beyond reasonable debate and, therefore, has become of primary importance in the politico-military interaction in democratic nations. Air-delivered precision guided munitions (PGM) provide the solution to ensuring that collateral damage is minimised and kept within 'acceptable' limits. PGM facilitate an appropriate level of weapon-to-target match, have the needed accuracy and are discriminate enough to create the desired level of effects. They also have sufficient flexibility and stand-off capability, while being able to be configured for small yield when necessary. Air power can engage multiple centres of gravity of the adversary

in the same mission and assets that have multi-role capability can themselves become force multipliers by being able to switch roles on an as required basis. This flexibility will be greatly coveted, especially in situations where there is only a limited quantity of air assets available.

Time Sensitive Targeting. The concept of time sensitive targeting (TST) is a combined product of the improvements in ISR capabilities that now permit information availability in near real-time and the greatly enhanced response envelope of airborne offensive systems. This provides a force with the capability to engage a target almost immediately after it has been detected. In contemporary conflict this capability is of the greatest importance because the nature of targets has undergone a metamorphosis as compared to traditional warfare. Today, lucrative targets provide only fleeting opportunities to engage and neutralise. A further dimension of TST is that the need to avoid collateral damage makes air power's precision and stand-off capabilities very attractive in such instances. The basic requirement in TST is the capability for immediate response and its success is dependent on the joint force's ability to create timely, proportionate and discriminatory effects reliably and accurately. This in turn is the product of rapid, networked information dissemination employed in close conjunction with responsible, agile weapon platforms. Both these seminal requirements are the forte of air power.

Air Mobility. Optimum employment of air mobility is dependent on adequate control of the air. Air mobility brings together air power's greater range and responsiveness with sufficiency in payload capacity across geographical boundaries. The combination of these characteristics produces a capability that provides tremendous flexibility to a joint forces commander. The rapid and effective response that air mobility provides is an effective deterrent in many instances and in others it facilitates joint manoeuvre in theatre. The capability of air power to provide air mobility in multiple theatres simultaneously is an added advantage

that could be leveraged as a force multiplier, especially quantitatively deficient forces.

Peacetime Concurrency of the Air Force

The commitment of the Air Force to the three key tasks of detect, decide and defeat is not only in times of conflict, but is an ongoing activity at all times. In effect, the Air Force is always functioning at a certain operational tempo. This is because the shaping, influencing and managing of the security environment are continuous activities requiring the inputs made available by the ISR and C2 assets. This deep battle never stops. Therefore, it has to be clearly understood by strategic planners that any commitment to actual conflict operations, from an Air Force perspective, will be concurrent to the peacetime operational commitments and will add to an already existing tempo. Such concurrency can become unsustainable in numerically smaller air forces. Smaller air forces will have to rely on efficiency to be effective. It is of cardinal importance to factor this peacetime concurrency of the Air Force into the planning process when the grand strategy of the nation is being formulated.

Smaller Air Forces: Enduring Criteria

Employing air power assets, optimally and effectively, to contribute to national security has never been an easy task. The complexity of the contemporary battlespace and the dynamic and diffused nature of emerging threats, combined with the technological sophistication of air power systems, have made this task even more involved and complicated. From the tactical level of operations to the grand strategic level of national security planning it is now necessary to have personnel who are professional masters in the application of air power to ensure that this flexible and agile element of national power is positioned at the correct

level and utilised appropriately. Utilisation of air power, especially in the case of smaller air forces, has to be frugally done so that there is absolutely no wastage of effort and no asset is superfluously tasked. Husbanding the meagre resources available to produce the effects required of the Air Force is a fine balancing act that only commanders with a lifetime of experience can achieve. Professional mastery arrived at by conscientious study and reflection has no substitute. In building a force for the professional application of air power, especially when it is constrained to be a smaller air force, there are three enduring criteria that will always have to be kept as the basis for planning—failure to do so would invite unforeseen and unfortunate results. These criteria are flexibility and adaptability, balance and leading edge thinking.

Flexibility and Adaptability

The operations that an air force would be required to undertake range from the technological high end to the lowest level, both in terms of the air power assets and the operating environment. For example, the force may be required to provide disaster relief in an area which is a technology vacuum and on the other hand be tasked to apply lethal force in a highly sophisticated battlespace against technologically advanced adversaries. To build a force that can operate efficiently in this diverse environment is a complex undertaking. However, from a national security perspective, the strategic relevance of the air force is dependent on its ability to straddle this large range of operations and clearly produce the desired effects of appropriate level at the time and place required. The force therefore has to be built based on flexibility and adaptability from the foundation upwards. The basic structure has to be built in this manner because it is difficult to incorporate flexibility into a rigid structure or inculcate adaptability into an organisation that is not so oriented.

The criteria of flexibility and adaptability are particularly important for smaller air forces. As it is, by virtue of their limited capabilities, smaller air forces struggle for strategic relevance in

the broader national security equation. The limited capabilities of smaller air forces are bound by their lack of critical mass and the numerical limitations of their assets. These two failings can be mitigated to a large extent by leveraging the qualities of flexibility and adaptability that must be built into the force structure and organisation. Irrespective of other ongoing improvements in terms of technology and concepts of operations, smaller air forces will always be reliant on their flexibility and adaptability for their performance.

Balance

The Air Force has to meet the government's enduring and emerging strategic needs, across the range of possible operational contingencies, from high-end to low-technology conflict. This capability is based on its capacity to generate the desired effects. There has been a change in the perceived contribution of the armed forces of a nation, from the use of force to assure national security by defending the borders to employing its assets to create the effects that are required to subdue an adversary. Accordingly, the employment of air forces has also undergone a radical change. On the other hand, air power assets have become very expensive to obtain, maintain and operate efficiently. Therefore, more often than not nation-states are constrained to limit the size of their air forces purely because of resource constraints. Smaller air forces are forced to achieve the desired outcomes within very rigid limitations.

Since they have to function within these limitations, smaller air forces have to be cautious regarding the use of their resources. It is necessary to have systems that are affordable and sustainable and capable of creating a range of effects. It is obvious that the number of systems would be limited by financial stringency, but it is also necessary to ensure that these reduced numbers meet at least the base level requirement in terms of the effects to be created. In order to meet all these disparate requirements smaller air forces need to be balanced and retain the capability to operate within the constraints of resources, equipment availability and operational requirements.

This is no easy task. The effectiveness and viability of a smaller air force is almost totally dependent on the overall capability of the systems that it operates. It is therefore important to make sure that the systems are appropriate for the envisaged employment of the force. Air power systems have a long gestation period and need dedicated planning before they can be operationally inducted. Under these circumstances it is important to have a long-term view of national security requirements that can then be translated to military and air power terms. This process of emphatically viewing the long-term requirements of national security and aligning air power system acquisition to them is a foundational need for smaller air forces to remain relevant.

Leading Edge Thinking

The quality of air power is completely dependent on technology—its appropriate use and the ability of the air force concerned to assimilate emerging trends at a pace commensurate with the broader air power developments. Smaller air forces particularly have to be cognisant of the quality of air power that they can bring to bear when required because their national relevance is dependent on their effectiveness. Air forces can be at the cutting edge of technology but this carries with it the chance of failure. Operating at the cutting edge, if successful, is a sure way to ensure supremacy. However, the cost of failure is such that it requires a large mass to absorb and not feel the degradation of air force capabilities. This is a luxury that smaller air forces do not have since they operate almost always at critical mass. Leading edge thinking is a step below cutting edge technology and can provide smaller air forces with the requisite leverage to mitigate the limitations of quantity.

Leading edge thinking provides a capability edge without the drawback of the pitfalls of failure and can provide smaller air forces with adequate strategic depth and, for short durations, the necessary amount of mass. This criterion has another dimension to it which is not related to military technology directly. The availability of

appropriate technology is the basic factor in ensuring the quality of air power. Aerospace technology is a complex entity and cannot be developed easily. Therefore, for most nations the availability of aerospace technology is dependent on their more powerful allies and partners allowing transfer of technology, with or without caveats attached. In effect, the quality of air power that a smaller air force can bring to bear is a direct function of the nation's political affiliations and good standing.

Summary

In the hierarchy of national security initiatives, the military contribution flows from the grand strategic commitment to protect Australia's interests and manifests in the strategic military goal to prevent an adversary initiating actions unfavourable to Australian interests. Within this military contribution, air power plays an important role in ensuring that the appropriate actions are initiated and completed according to the contextual requirements in order to create the desired effects. Such actions are tailored to fit in with the whole-of-government approach to security and therefore will remain firmly aligned with national security imperatives.

The air forces of the Asian region are modernising at different paces. The commitment of most of the governments to this expensive proposal is indicative of the importance being given to air power competencies within the national security agenda. However, there is also unevenness in the modernisation efforts, brought on by a combination of strategic analysis and financial calculations. Most of the South-East Asian nations are moving to acquire weapon systems and platforms at the cutting edge of air power technology while also improving their surveillance and command and control capabilities.[3] Under these circumstances Australia needs to nurture its air power capabilities to ensure that the technological and

conceptual advantage that it has so far enjoyed in the region is not completely lost.

Australia has so far enjoyed having an air force that, even though numerically smaller than some of the air forces in the region, has been qualitatively at par, if not better, than the most of the other air forces. This 'edge' has given the nation a status that translates to an assured place in regional and international negotiations at times disproportionate to its political, strategic and economic capability. This is not to say that the other arms of the ADF do not contribute to national security. They do, and decisively so. Australia's security environment is characterised by complex geography and a dynamic and demanding spectrum of modern conflict. Air power's freedom of action that is not constrained by geographical barriers and its ability to range across large theatres of operations concurrently creates a situation where friendly forces have the initiative, can control the tempo of operations and dominate the battlespace.

Air power alone cannot win the conflict. A combined arms approach to complex security issues produces impressive results in the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war. When employed within the whole-of-government approach to national security the military contribution can vary from being the most important to only a very peripheral support role. However, military forces have a dominant role in engaging with the regional neighbours and they bring a certain amount of stabilising influence even in the diplomatic area. Australia's engagement with the rising powers in Asia will be facilitated better when its military forces are seen to be robust and capable. This is particularly the case when the Asian military forces are on a modernisation spree. It is a paradigm of political and diplomatic overtures that the strength of a nation is not measured purely on economic terms or viewed through the prism of its peaceful intentions, but through the strength that backs the nation in terms of military capabilities and the national will to employ such strength to its advantage.

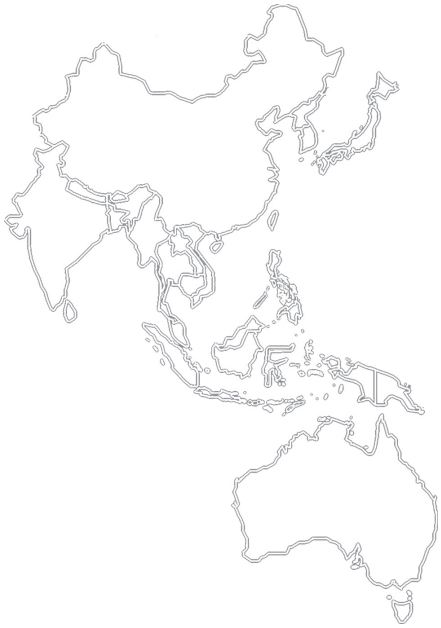
Notes

1 Alan Stephens, *Kosovo, Or the Future of War,* Paper No. 77, Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, August 1999, p. 1.

2 Royal Australian Air Force, Australian Air Publication 1000–D—*The Air Power Manual*, Fifth Edition, Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2007, p. 139.

3 Barry Desker, 'Trends in Air Power Modernisation in the Asia-Pacific Region,' *RSIS Commentaries,* S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, February, 2008, www.rsis.edu.sg, accessed on 27 February 2008.

Chapter 8
Conclusion



CONCLUSION

International relations are all about balancing, manoeuvring and paying the bare minimum for maximum benefit, and the subtle but unmistakable show of strength and resolve by sovereign nations. It is a universal truth that the underlying need to further national interests has not changed in ages, but the means and the methods of pursuing this end undergo periodic and continuous change. In this constant game of international diplomacy, a nation has to nurture astutely its capacity to influence in order to remain relevant in the global stage. More than ever before, this influence is now a function of the economic stature of a nation. The smaller the economy of a state, the less its influence and the greater the likelihood of its becoming irrelevant. Where a nation's economy and resource base are limited, priorities must be set. Identifying vital national interests that cannot be compromised therefore, becomes a crucial need.

National security perceptions have changed globally. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington demonstrated the vulnerability of even the most powerful nation in the world to asymmetric attacks. Such attacks have global strategic consequences. Globalisation of the economy has necessitated the realignment of the sovereign powers of a nation in the diplomatic, political and even at the individual level.[1] It has also become necessary to pay heed to non-state actors in order to ensure that small extremist groups, motivated by political or religious fervour do not disrupt the normal functioning of national governance apparatus.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was expected to usher in an era of international peace, which did not eventuate. A unipolar US-dominated global security 'situation' existed for a number of years following this fundamental shift in global power structure. Now the world is moving towards multipolarity with a number of nations attempting to attain great power status. However, great power status is not easy to achieve, nor is it easy to maintain for

any length of time. Great power status bestows a great deal of international responsibility on a nation with obligations that it must fulfil to retain the status. Such great power status, at least for the foreseeable future, can only be achieved by established, sovereign nation-states. Non-state entities, although capable of creating strategic and long-term effects, can only achieve one element of great powers status—that of projecting power—and therefore cannot become great powers. However, non-state issues have grown in prominence over the past decade and will continue to be of primary importance in the security environment.

The strategic rise of Asia, facilitated by the economic boom that is taking place in the region, has already demonstrated global implications. The international system is adapting to the rise of Asian countries as the power balance shifts gradually towards the Asia-Pacific region. The 21st century will be played out in Asia and the Pacific.

The most important development in the Asian context is the inexorable rise of China and India as economic and military powers, whose ambitions are transparently apparent. Since the US is the predominant power in the Asia-Pacific, and will remain so for at least another three decades, it will continue to shape the security environment. The US interaction with both these nations and its alignment with the traditional US allies in the region, Australia, Japan and South Korea, will be the fundamental determining factor in the strategic power game that is already underway. In addition, the machinations Russia conducts in the region to diffuse the confrontational attitude that it is assuming in the Central European region, will create more tensions.

China remains an enigma, even though currently there is far more transparency in its international economic dealings than a decade ago. Rapid global information transfer, which the Government is trying to control, albeit with limited success, is leading to greater awareness within China regarding global events, and the population is becoming restive to the authoritarian rule that does not distribute the fruits of the nation's economic success evenly

in all areas of the nation. China is determined to emerge as a global power, but is very conscious of the fact that its domestic situation does not permit such ambitions at the moment. Therefore, it has adopted an approach of cooperative development with the other larger powers in the region, while also trying to spread its sphere of influence to Africa and South America. Even with this pragmatic approach, China is rigid on the issue of Taiwan and its foreign policy is fundamentally tied to not accepting Taiwanese independence. This one issue probably has the greatest potential to bring confrontation and conflict in the Asia-Pacific in which no nation will be able to stay neutral as such. These developments might slow China's march to great power status, but by no stretch of imagination can they effectively stop the nation's inexorable move forward.

India too is on the move with its democratic credentials firmly established in the international system. At the same time the nation has a number of problems that slow its progress, including an increase in the number of people who remain below the poverty line. Paradoxically, that same increase in population is also a boon with an estimated 900 million people in the working age group by 2025. Economic liberalisation that was started only about two decades ago is gradually making its effect felt and is making an impact, even against the poverty levels. Whether these paradoxes will become positive movements depend on the policy decisions and implementation capabilities of the Government. Only internal security issues, abetted by external agencies according to the Government, will hold this nation back from moving into a space wherein it will confidently influence global events. The slight hesitation that is visible today in its international diplomatic dealings will vanish sooner rather than later and India will be a contributor to international stability in the long term.

China and India are seen as competitors in their quest for regional, and subsequently global, influence. However, both nations are pragmatic enough to realise that such a competition will be detrimental to the smooth economic progress that both are experiencing now. It is also apparent that both the nations

have a long way to go in aligning their respective societies with the economic development, although the challenges each will face are very different. The systems of government in both the nations are very different with a great disparity in the area of transparency of strategic intent and governance. This makes China's objectives more obtuse and difficult to understand as compared to India. Accordingly, the international community also views both the nations differently. Their strategic competition, at least for the foreseeable future, will be contained to diplomatic posturing and showcasing of bilateral issues and is not likely to be allowed to come in the way of national progress.

In this changing scenario, Australia has to play an increasingly 'Asian' part while being cognisant of its own cultural and societal roots, and political, diplomatic and economic realities. It must also be carefully aware of its limited power projection capacity and the constraints of a population that cannot support any extravagant increases in its military capabilities. Under these fairly stringent constraints, Australia will need to create a space for itself in the Asia-Pacific by nurturing its economy, maintaining the edge in its military capabilities, preventing any instability in its immediate neighbourhood and being a visibly responsible international citizen. The employment of influence is a precarious activity and always comes with a price. Australia needs to understand that the price it has to pay in order to influence events in the region, and globally if required, may at times be too high. A realistic view of its position in the comity of nations, especially within the Asia-Pacific region, and an open pragmatism regarding what it is prepared to do to ensure stability will stand in good stead and enhance Australia's status.

Three broad future roles that Australia could undertake to maintain its status and relevance within the region have been suggested and analysed. However, the reality that Australia is in an unenviable position vis-à-vis the regional security environment is clear. It is caught up between the manoeuvrings of great powers and susceptible to the machinations of the larger powers in the region. It has to act perceptively to ensure the stability of the region, while

keeping the major players—China, India, Japan, Russia and the US—engaged, both bilaterally and multilaterally. It is more than likely that Australia would be called on to play the role of the 'honest broker' in a number of contingencies. This would require that Australia continues to build its credibility as a stable and responsible state, which in turn will need a strong and responsive military force. The current foreign policy initiatives that Australia has in place may also need to be reviewed and reconstructed expansively to cater for the emerging paradigms.

A whole-of-government approach to national security has been accepted as the only way forward. This does mean the reduction of military capabilities. It means an increase in the complexity of military operations and the need to have a military force that is capable of multi-tasking and creating effects that fit in well within the national effects-based approach. Military forces need to be multiskilled, with professional mastery that encompasses national strategic manoeuvrings, to be able to assure the nation of its competence. Professional mastery is the cornerstone to building the necessary capabilities within a defence force and employing them optimally to achieve national security objectives.

The military forces of a nation, while operating within the whole-of-government approach, are the most visible arm of national power and play a very influential role in establishing the credentials of a nation. In situations where the nation has to be involved in a conflict the military forces have to be capable of straddling the full spectrum and operate in conjunction with military and non-military agencies.

Australia's security environment encompasses the land, littoral and maritime environments, and the theatre of operations could be urban or rural while being geographically concentrated or widely dispersed. This diversity creates a number of variations to the traditional concept of power projection, which air power's inherent characteristics help to overcome efficiently. Air power has the capability to operate with the necessary agility to create the desired effects, providing the Government with clear options when power projection is required. The contribution that air power can make to

national security and a possible air strategy for that contribution has been suggested. It further examines the core competencies of air power such contribution demands at the strategic level. Of primary importance to this contribution is air power's ability to detect, that is to gather information and generate knowledge to improve situational awareness, the ability to decide and shape, influence and manage the battlespace, and the ability to defeat by providing response options that neutralise any challenges.

This book presents an objective view of the security contours that Australia will face into the future, in relation to the emergence of Asian giants and the changing strategic balance both internationally and regionally. In doing so, air power and its contribution to national security have been analysed in some detail to emphasise the role that air power will have to play in ensuring Australia's national security.

There are some difficult decisions ahead for Australia, in terms of foreign policy, of defence capability growth, of finding and establishing its position in the region, of its international aspirations and responsibilities, and of its hope for international peace and stability. Australia has limited resources but has global interests and is committed to international security. It needs to weigh carefully the relativity of risk and balance national security objectives with the national capacity to influence events. Australia needs to be pragmatic in dealing with its security issues, without becoming unnecessarily embroiled in areas and conflicts that have lesser relevance to Australia in the strategic balance. Australia, like almost all the nations of the region, is on the threshold of a new era—one that could swing from all-round stable growth to conflict and chaos—and needs to play a responsible part in maintaining the region in stability and peaceful coexistence.

Notes

[1] Simon Moffat, 'Globalisation, Terrorism and Cosmopolitan Australia', *Security Challenges,* Vol. 3, No. 1, (February 2007), The Kokoda Foundation, Canberra, 2007, p. 1.

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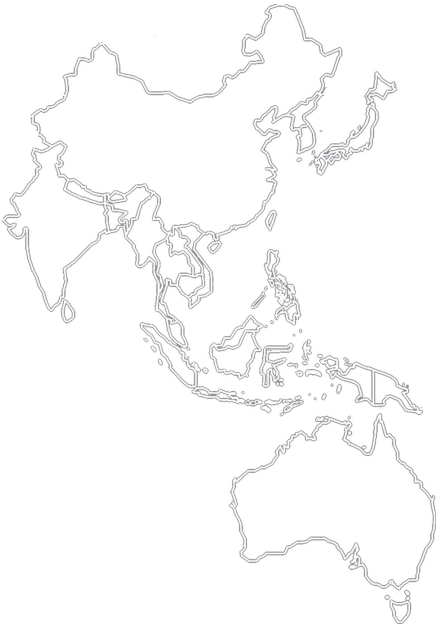

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