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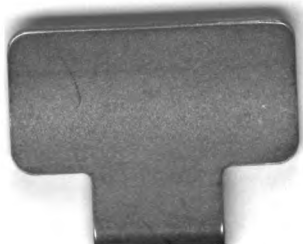
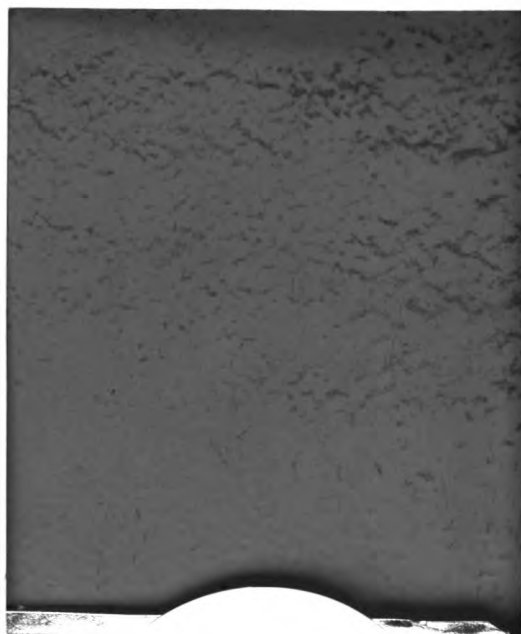
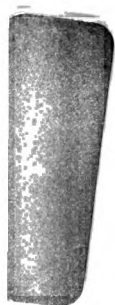
ANZUS: LIFE AFTER 50
ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Ron Huisken

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ANZUS: Life After 50

Alliance Management in the 21st Century

Ron Huisken

Introduction

Australia's alliance with the United States, officially concluded on 1 September 1951, has become deeply embedded in this country's defence and security posture. In its particular field, the alliance is right up there with the Hills hoist, Victa mower and sunburn cream used in the opening ceremony for Sydney 2000 to give an impressionistic suggestion of where we had been as a society over about the same period.

As one would expect with an arrangement that has survived for half a century, public support for the alliance has been consistently robust and is currently as strong or stronger than it has ever been. Within Australia's strategic and foreign policy community, the alliance has been scrutinised and evaluated quite regularly. Does it impinge on Australia's sovereignty? Does it hinder or enhance our foreign and defence policy interests? Does it involve the risk of entanglements that we would prefer to avoid? Do the benefits outweigh any actual or potential costs or risks?¹

While there is a broad spectrum of views, there is clearly strong mainstream support for the alliance from within this community. At the same time, a common theme in the commentary over recent years has been that the end of the Cold War has had or will have a significant effect on the character of the alliance and make management of the relationship more complex². I share this view. The discussion below attempts to explore why this is the case and its likely ramifications.

The Cold War Background

A defence alliance is concerned ultimately with war. For most countries, war represents a major departure from the norm, the extreme abnormality in the state's affairs and something that is feared above all other challenges. For one state to make a prior commitment of any kind to join another state's war is therefore a most significant act.

It is no accident, therefore, that defence alliances are entered into just before, during or just after major wars. It is only in such circumstances that states can be persuaded to go beyond close bilateral relationships and enter into a contract to at least consider making other people's wars their own. The key element of 'such circumstances' is a mutual sense of great danger

and a shared judgment that the chances of deterring or defeating the danger are significantly improved through partnership.

ANZUS was forged in precisely these circumstances. The alliance arguably was forged in 1942 with the Battle of the Coral Sea that removed the immediate danger of Japanese invasion. We were almost too late with the paperwork, but circumstances conspired to allow us to formalise the alliance in September 1951³. Even then, there was for a time an element of false pretence. We did share with the United States a sense of great danger, but it was not the same danger. Australia looked back and worried about Japan. The United States had moved on and was focused on communism, the Soviet Union and China.

Australia's divergent perspective was gradually corrected as the depth of change in Japan's public and political attitudes became apparent, and as that country surged into prominence as a trading partner of decisive importance. It is noteworthy, however, that while lingering Australian concerns about Japan had evaporated much earlier, it was not until the early 1980s that an Australian Prime Minister publicly supported a more prominent international role for Japan, including in the security field⁴.

The first major re-calibration of ANZUS followed the enunciation by President Nixon in 1969 of the so-called Guam doctrine. Responding to the on-going trauma of Vietnam, Nixon signalled US allies in East Asia that the threshold for US intervention would in future be relatively high and that the US expected the allies in substantial measure to provide for their own defence. The Guam doctrine attempted essentially to restore the original basic intent of the several alliances the US had in East Asia, namely deterring the dire circumstance of aggression by a major external power.

The Guam doctrine reinforced Australia's own reaction to Vietnam. An alliance focused more directly on a major direct threat to Australia and less likely to engender obligations in lesser circumstances was attractive. Australia's defence posture began its slow evolution from forward defence in great and powerful company to self-reliance and the defence of Australia (DOA).

Self-reliance and DOA remained the central organising principles of Australian defence policy for the remainder of the Cold War and beyond. The 2000 White Paper continues to give these principles the pre-eminent role in shaping the ADF. It also allowed, for the first time, that contributing to security in our immediate neighbourhood should be an additional force structure consideration rather than a capability that could be regarded as inherent to a force structured for DOA⁵.

Both before and since the transformation from forward defence to self-reliance/DOA, the central balance of the Cold War provided a relatively clear reference point as to what really mattered and what was more peripheral. In Australia's case, Cold War considerations had a greater impact on foreign policy than defence policy. After the mid-1970s, Southeast Asia ceased to be a frontline in the Cold War, allowing Australia to frame its defence policy in a regional context relatively unaffected by the machinations of the superpowers. The alliance was validated because Australian assessments of global and regional security developments remained broadly congruent with those of the United States. We parted company on SDI and our prominence on arms control issues occasioned numerous tactical differences with the US. But we continued to hold very similar views on what were then the fundamentals: the primacy of the challenge from the Soviet Union; the importance of effective and stable nuclear deterrence; and the importance of facilitating the ability of US forces to deploy globally.

Today, 50 years on, the alliance seems to be in good shape. Indeed, it probably has more of a spring in its step than at some of the earlier milestones in its history. It has developed into a strong and comprehensive security partnership that delivers invaluable benefits to the ADF and to wider Australian interests. Moreover, it has become a visibly healthier partnership characterised by more balance and reciprocity. The new deal struck in 1988 on the management and operation of the joint defence facilities was important in this regard because the arrangements took root and set a qualitative benchmark for collaborative activities under the alliance.

Was this outcome inevitable, fortuitous, or made to happen? Even the brief remarks above suggest that it was probably all three. If it has been a complicated journey so far, the road ahead looks every bit as challenging.

The End of the Cold War: An Alliance without a Major Threat

A defence alliance, if it has any substance at all, will be affected significantly by the disappearance of the global condition that inspired it. The Guam doctrine, and Australia's response, was an implicit bargain to return to the original basic intent of the ANZUS treaty. The US would come to our aid in the event of major military aggression against us and, through vigorous containment of the Soviet Union and its allies, preserve a stable world order that made such aggression improbable. For its part, Australia undertook to provide a sufficiency of defence to cope with all contingencies short of major power aggression without relying on US combat forces.

This relevance of this construct as the core bargain described by ANZUS has been put in question by the end of the Cold War and the relatively

abrupt emergence of a new condition combining strong global stability with unprecedented turmoil at the regional and local levels⁶. As noted above, the impact of this event on Australia was softened because the major fronts of the Cold War had long since moved away from our region. But the global scene had changed dramatically. Similarly, the position of our alliance partner in that global scene had been transformed and it set about finding new policy settings. It is worth observing, in passing, that foreign and security policy in the United States had been essentially monopolised by the Soviet Union for 40 years. The end of the Cold War therefore required a more thorough re-think of policy settings in Washington than anywhere else.

Common sense and a decade of experience in the new era inform us that an alliance without a defining threat should anticipate several trends that will influence the character of the partnership. Particularly in the case of ANZUS, which had been only loosely threat-based for some time before the end of the Cold War, these effects are likely to be relatively subtle rather than starkly felt. Nevertheless, being aware of them is important to effective management of the relationship.

First, an alliance not facing a clear and present danger will lose some focus and intensity. The alliance, if necessary by default, will be directed toward a broader and more diffuse set of objectives. The prior discipline of maintaining a strong firewall between the security aspects and other dimensions of the relationship will weaken. Political and economic factors will compete more equally with security and defence considerations. There is correspondingly greater potential for positions to diverge even on important issues.

Second, in the absence of a defining threat to help distinguish the important from the peripheral, the range of contingencies that could potentially invoke alliance obligations will tend to become broader and more varied in their origins, the issues or principles at stake, the countries involved, and their possible ramifications. If the old standards of solidarity are carried over, the alliance could become significantly more demanding in terms of political alignment. As a general observation, it would appear that countries in an alliance are broadly aware of this risk, that is, of the alliance generating expectations of solidarity that turn out to be misplaced.

Third, the security assurances extended by the alliance leader in the context of a major threat can be expected to undergo a process of re-assessment and graduation to fit the less acute but more varied threats that move into prominence when the major threat evaporates. The basic instinct of the alliance leader will be to push the threshold upwards.

Fourth, the removal of the major threat provides all states with both motive and opportunity to build stronger bilateral relationships with a wider group of countries. This is a complex phenomenon. The end of the Cold War expanded the horizons of many states. There was new political, economic and strategic space in which to pursue national interests. Reinforcing this were the perceptions that superpower management of global affairs, particularly in respect of security, was less assured and that states needed to take greater responsibility for their own affairs. With states seeking to build deeper bilateral relationships across a wider front there is an inescapable tendency for alliance relationships to become less distinctive.

These are clearly not separate and distinct observations. They are more in the nature of different manifestations of the same political development, the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the competitive ideology that it championed⁷.

There was a further development that, while not generic to the geopolitical transformation of 1989-91, coincided strongly with it and has significant implications for alliance relationships. The defining feature of a defence alliance is the expectation that military operations will be conducted jointly and all that entails in terms of making forces interoperable (equipment, doctrine, training and so on). The political attractiveness of addressing contemporary security contingencies collectively appears to be undiminished, perhaps even stronger than in the past. On the other hand, a yawning gap has opened up between the American way of war and the way that its allies are capable of. This is true even of big partners like the UK. It is an even bigger challenge for Australia, and presents a latent risk to the balance and cohesion of the ADF.

I am not suggesting that any of this is bad news. These observations do suggest, however, that new forces are shaping the substantive meaning of and processes within Australia's alliance relationship with the US. Moreover, as our partner is the remaining superpower with a daunting global agenda of interests and responsibilities, the onus is on Australia to understand these new forces and factor them into the alliance management process.

As argued earlier, the end of the Cold War was less of a shock to ANZUS than to other US alliances. This is particularly true of NATO, which was permanently on the central front in that struggle. In the case of Japan, while the Cold War was always close and certainly confirmed and strengthened its alliance with the US, the alliance had important purposes separate from the Soviet threat. These purposes are reflected in the unique asymmetric

character of the security obligations described by the alliance and retain significant relevance today. It is also the case, however, that in response particularly to China's burgeoning influence in the region, Japan is looking ever harder at its national capacities to play a fuller role in protecting its interests.

As the direct challenge to ANZUS' *raison d'être* was relatively modest, the process of adjustment has been more indirect and subtle. And it is ongoing. We can discuss some of the trends and developments, what has been learned, and what, perhaps, remains to be learnt, under several headings.

Alliance Objectives

This is the one area in which the process of adjustment can be readily documented. The general prognosis for alliances following the breakup of the Soviet Union in December 1991 was pretty bleak. Most observers predicted that they would wither and become irrelevant. And quite a number advocated this development, notably China but also some American academics.

The experience within the Australia-US partnership belied this prognosis. While there were no particular tests or challenges to confirm the value of the alliance, the quality of the partnership seemed if anything to be growing. To the extent this was seen as mysterious, explanations tended to focus on East Asia figuring more prominently in Washington's world view (if only because its Eurocentric perspective was weakened somewhat by the demise of the Soviet Union) and the astonishing and relentless growth in the region's economic weight.

The idea for a joint statement to modernise the objectives of the alliance was first mooted in the Department of Defence toward the end of 1995. There were those inclined to let sleeping dogs lie but the opportunity to project the alliance into the indefinite future with a new intellectual and political foundation gathered adherents. When the Coalition won office in March 1996, the concept of a joint statement fitted well with the new government's determination to 'reinvigorate' the alliance. Indeed, its importance grew as the government's principle vehicle for re-invigoration - the re-positioning of US defence material in Australia - turned out to be a non-starter: the US was not (or was no longer) interested. The US agreed with the idea and negotiations on the Australian draft text were concluded in the margins of AUSMIN in July 1996⁸.

The simple message of the Sydney Statement was that the alliance was not dependent upon a defined threat. It declared instead that both parties had common interests and aspirations in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in

respect of security and stability, and that they intended to work together and with other states of the region to advance these aims. In other words, the objectives of the alliance were formally made broader and more diffuse. At the same time, the statement re-affirmed the value of a substantive defence partnership with interoperable forces, close intelligence collaboration, exercising and the like.

As so often happens, events intervened to give the Sydney Statement even greater prominence than anticipated, but for rather the wrong reasons. In April 1996, and with little prior indication, the US and Japan issued a major statement re-affirming that alliance. This statement has its own particular roots. The US-Japan relationship had been severely strained by particularly bitter disputes on trade. Then in October 1995 the rape of a schoolgirl in Okinawa by US Marines exposed a depth of public resentment across Japan to the US presence that alarmed both governments. Nevertheless, the US/Japan statement in April had the effect of making the Sydney Statement in July look like part of a calculated strategy. Moreover, China's provocative missile tests in close proximity to Taiwan and the responsive deployment by the US of two aircraft carriers in March/April led to a sharp deterioration in US/China relations and reinforced China's inclination to see dark significance in these statements.

China chose to react sharply to the Sydney Statement. Then US Defense Secretary Bill Perry's characterisation of Japan and Australia as the northern and southern anchors of the US position in East Asia became, in a semi-official Chinese assessment, the claws of a crab seeking to contain China⁹. It was later explained to Australian officials that this criticism was directed at the United States: Australia was guilty only of allowing itself to be used for this purpose¹⁰.

The particular context in which the Sydney Statement eventually appeared considerably distorted its intended message. Some of the domestic commentary was also coloured by this context. There were suggestions that the government had locked itself back into the alliance without giving much thought to Australia's critical relationships in Asia or to the new dynamic of power relationships in the region. Others saw in the statement and associated developments a move away from a defence policy focused on Australia and self-reliance back toward the forward defence notions that had dominated until the mid 1970's.

In substance - as distinct from the context at the time it was launched - it is hard to see that the Sydney Statement conveyed such messages. The concrete activities and initiatives contained in the statement hardly connote a different view.

Regular bilateral military exercises, for example, are critical to the objective of interoperability between US and Australian forces which, in turn, is a hallmark of any close defence alliance as well as a channel through which the ADF develops valuable skills and capabilities. Similarly, the commitment to provide additional training opportunities in Australia for US forces continued a basic alliance obligation (and a core Australian interest) to support forward-deployed US forces. It was different to the extent that the focus was on US ground forces rather than the air force and naval units that more routinely took advantage of access to Australian ports, airfields and training areas.

The decision to give a significant profile to expanded ground force training in Australia would have involved some careful judgments on the part of the US. As noted, the fallout from the rape incident on Okinawa in October 1995 alarmed both the US and Japanese governments. Moreover, it occurred against a background of growing consideration of what should or could happen to US forces in North Asia in the event of unification on the Korean peninsula.

The first priority for both governments was to restore certainty to the stationing of US ground forces in Okinawa. This clearly required not fueling speculation that alternative locations were being considered. The public offer by the incoming coalition government in Australia to consider favourably the pre-positioning of US defence materiel fell into this category, particularly as US interest in this option had never been strong in any case. The same was true of an inopportune comment attributed to the Commandant of the US Marine Corps, General Krulak, that the US needed to prepare to base its forward-deployed forces in Asia more widely and that Darwin was one attractive location¹¹. This comment was decisively buried¹².

The main response was agreement to restructure the US military facilities on Okinawa to reduce interference with the local community, a process that is on-going. The US also clearly judged that the agreement in the Sydney Statement to provide additional training opportunities for US ground forces could be helpful in the Japanese context insofar as it indicated that, prospectively, some of this activity, so disruptive in the confined spaces of Okinawa, might also go offshore. Even so, the Sydney Statement noted cautiously that the prospect of additional ground force training in Australia 'does not reflect any diminution of the United States presence elsewhere in the Asia Pacific.'

Security Assurances

The Sydney Statement, as they say, is history. The episode does, however, illustrate the new complexities that attend the management of alliance relationships. At the core of this complexity is that, in the absence of a defining threat, an alliance relationship embraces the full spectrum of real and prospective security challenges and is more readily buffeted by political and economic considerations. A defining threat provided relatively clear guidance on what really mattered and what did not. It narrowed and simplified the essential business of aligning expectations between alliance partners on where solidarity was and could reasonably be presumed. To offer a geographic analogy, the mountain of the Cold War has eroded to vanishing point leaving alliances to operate in an international arena that, while turbulent, is relatively featureless.

Applying standards of alliance solidarity that became the norm during the Cold War across this much wider spectrum of challenges would clearly be over ambitious and foolhardy. Nor is it sufficient to accept that the former standards of solidarity will have to be relaxed if the alliance is not to be subject to unsustainable stress. An alliance is a partnership and both parties have to be satisfied that it worked when it mattered. In other words, alliance management has and will become more complex.

We have already seen several instances in which the more diffuse security arena has led the US to try to condition expectations in allied countries about the circumstances in which the alliance could be invoked. A clear but relatively modest example came in the lead-up to and at the APEC meeting in New Zealand in September 1999 when Prime Minister Howard requested President Clinton to contribute ground forces to INTERFET. Howard would have been acutely aware at that stage that Australia was committed to lead an operation that was at the very limit of what the ADF could sustain, and probably beyond it if any of the worse case possibilities eventuated. Immediately prior to Clinton's departure for New Zealand on 10 September, senior administration figures, notably Defense Secretary Cohen and national security advisor Berger, signalled quite clearly that East Timor was well below the threshold that could trigger the involvement of US combat troops¹³.

By the time Clinton left New Zealand on 14 September, clarity had been restored. In a final press conference in Auckland, Clinton said he was confident that Congress would support US involvement provided it was 'in a clearly supportive capacity'. He indicated that this would embrace airlift, internal transportation, communications and intelligence, adding that this

was what Australia was asking for¹⁴. In the meantime, however, the Australian media had painted the episode as a portentous failure of the alliance .

One can certainly argue that Howard should have anticipated a no and not made the request, at least not publicly. The request contradicted nearly 25 years of Australian rhetoric on self reliance. It also swam against a tide in US opinion against involvement in peripheral contingencies that was by 1999 very clear (and reinforced by administration figures as soon as the issue arose). Equally, one can point to the fact that, directly and indirectly, the US contribution to the success of INTERFET was generous and invaluable. In addition to the functions mentioned above, this included delivering some clear political messages in Jakarta and backing them up with a force of 900 marines on the helicopter carrier Belleau Wood, anchored in international waters off East Timor for weeks. In effect, the US signalled quite graphically that it would not allow the operation to fail.

The fact remains, however, that, briefly, the two parties revealed that they had not done the sort of careful homework on the others position that alliance management requires in the contemporary era.

A better example - in the sense of illustrating US concern that an ally might presume too much - was the tension between China and the Philippines over structures on the Mischief Reef in the South China Sea. China and the Philippines both claim sovereignty over Mischief Reef. There were suggestions that, after a period of calm over the complex sovereignty claims in this area, China had moved in February 1995 to consolidate its position on Mischief Reef because the Philippines was the least capable of the counter-claimers to contest the issue. Manila, however, despite the parlous state of its air and naval forces, reacted sharply. In March, it ordered a naval vessel to destroy Chinese markers on islets around Mischief Reef and arrested four Chinese fishing vessels for intruding into its waters¹⁵.

The US had consistently distanced itself from these territorial disputes, urging that the issue be settled through negotiation, and insisting that it would not get involved unless developments challenged the principle of freedom of navigation. US relations with the Philippines had remained cool and distant following the US withdrawal from its major air and naval bases in 1992. The US-Philippines security treaty, however, remained in force and some Philippine politicians wanted to make more clear that it would be invoked if Chinese and Philippine armed forces clashed in the South China Sea. Washington did not share this interest and appears to have been concerned to ensure that Manila had realistic views on the circumstances in which alliance obligations could be invoked¹⁶.

The most consequential example, and an issue that could be said to have been unchained by the end of the Cold War, has of course been managing the understandings between Washington, Beijing and Taipei on the nature and credibility of US obligations to defend Taiwan. The US subscribes to the position that there is one China so its 'obligation' to Taiwan is set out, not in a treaty, but in an act of the Congress, the Taiwan Relations Act. China and the US agree that this issue should be settled through peaceful negotiation. For the US this is a requirement, leaving open at least the possibility that agreement will not be reached. China, in contrast, views it as the preferred path to a single permissible outcome, the formal integration of Taiwan into China.

The Clinton administration settled on what came to be termed the policy of 'strategic ambiguity' that had the dual objective of capturing polarised views in Washington as well as reconciling the considerable tensions in the US position vis-à-vis China and Taiwan. The policy of strategic ambiguity recognised that, if it came to a showdown, the circumstances (ie who crossed the line and provoked the other) would probably be obscure and debateable. The policy therefore declared that in the event of conflict between China and Taiwan, neither party should presume that the US would or would not intervene (depending on what would serve its interests).

President Bush has since stated that, in the event of Chinese aggression, the US would defend Taiwan. Strictly speaking, this commitment confirms what was already implicit in the 'strategic ambiguity' approach in the circumstances prescribed. Politically, of course, the impression conveyed by Bush's clarification is that it was difficult to envisage circumstances in which the US would not defend Taiwan.

Raising the Threshold

These episodes of 'adjusting' the security assurances set out in its defence treaties has been progressively supplemented by a campaign to raise the threshold for US intervention in security contingencies.

US pre-eminence since 1990 has been such that it encouraged the widespread presumption that it could and would step in everywhere to fix security problems. This presumption was reinforced by the fact that Washington's criteria for intervention did appear to be broadening.

As the 1990s wore on, the view strengthened in Washington that change was necessary. On the one hand, the United States was over-extending and depleting its armed forces on non-core missions. On the other, the presumption that US could and would step in was, as seen

from Washington, encouraging allies and friends to dodge the responsibilities and risks associated with leadership.

In recent years, Washington has set out quite deliberately to change this culture of expectations. The Bush administration appears equally determined to continue down this path, both to raise the threshold for US leadership and to build prospective coalitions for those contingencies where the US would expect to lead.

Washington has pursued a number of policies that rather clearly reflect the sentiment that the US was not going to be the global policeman. An example that Australia is particularly aware of has been the enthusiasm with which the US has portrayed INTERFET as an outstanding model for the management of smaller scale regional contingencies. From Washington's perspective the critical aspect of INTERFET was that prime responsibility for the operation in both political and military terms was assumed by a regional state. Washington provided invaluable political backing and selected military services but in a supportive capacity.

In the Balkans, setting aside the saga of how the US assumed leadership, Washington has in recent years repeatedly tested the option of leaving the on-going ground force role, especially in Bosnia, to its large and wealthy European partners. President Bush has intensified this pressure on the Europeans to take full responsibility. On a higher level, Washington (under Clinton) signalled a more receptive attitude to its European partners developing the so-called European Security and Defence Identity. Washington has been at pains to insist that this should be a genuine increment in European defence capability and not an elaborate construct ultimately still reliant on NATO and in particular US military capabilities. Nevertheless, this position still contrasts markedly with the distant and even suspicious attitude that Washington had long displayed toward this initiative.

Back in the Pacific arena, Admiral Dennis Blair became CINCPAC in January 1999 and set about using his defence engagement programs to promote the evolution of 'security communities'. This was a curious initiative insofar as CINCPAC, the head of an operational theatre command, provide the intellectual foundation and policy guidelines as well as the concrete activities designed to advance the objectives of this policy. While statements from the major policy agencies in Washington - State, Defense and the White House/National Security Council - were conspicuously absent, CINCPAC regularly testified to Congress on the security communities concept. It was apparent that CINCPAC was operating within Washington's broad policy parameters.

The broad intent of the concept was, through US leadership, to encourage states that shared 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' to develop the capacity for collective military operations and deal with lower-order contingencies in a self-reliant way. It was considered that the concept could take distinctive shape in response to the particular circumstances in the three major nodes of the Asia Pacific region - South Asia, North Asia and Southeast Asia. The existence of ASEAN and, more particularly, the INTERFET experience made South East Asia (plus Australia) the obvious candidate to take the concept forward. Accordingly, PACOM set out to lead ASEAN and Australia toward multilateral exercises with the aim of developing a collective regional capability to conduct operations up to the level of Chapter VI and VII peacekeeping operations.

This effort clashed rather violently with ASEAN ideology (non-interference in internal affairs; the association was not a defence or security grouping), with ASEAN sensitivities about China's perception of developing collective military capabilities under US leadership, and reflected a convenient rather than accurate interpretation of why ASEAN states had joined INTERFET. The added dilemma for Australia, presumably, was that involvement in a program to create a standing regional capacity to conduct Interfet-style operations would have exacerbated our already parlous relationship with Indonesia.

This, however, is a separate issue. The aspect relevant to this discussion is that the security communities program also illustrates the US push, certainly to protect its status as the pre-eminent external security partner, but also to raise the threshold on contingencies that would require direct US involvement and leadership.

There is a further dimension of the security communities' concept that is important to this discussion. Although the concept tended to focus on the main sub-regions of the Asia Pacific, some CINCPAC presentations suggested that US allies in the region could form the core of a community for some purposes¹⁷. The political and security connotations of such a construct - essentially a step in the direction of a collective security arrangement - are very different from those associated with the array of separate bilateral alliances that we have now.

So far as I am aware, CINCPAC's comments, though vague and undeveloped, represent the only official US endorsement of greater collective military collaboration between US allies in Asia. On the other hand, this potential development has had rather more support from the 'administration in waiting', that is, individuals associated with the Republican Party

and former Republican administrations. Some of these individuals are now senior officials in the Bush administration, suggesting that it may become a more prominent theme in US policy.

For example, Ambassador Robert Blackwill contended in February 2000 that the US, Japan, ROK and Australia needed to begin cooperating far more closely on security issues and to even consider joint planning for military contingencies. Blackwill's principle thesis was that Asia was a dangerous place and that, in the absence for the foreseeable future of effective multilateral institutions and processes, the security of the region would depend heavily on the US and these three core allies¹⁸.

Similarly, a RAND study on US strategy toward Asia released in May 2001 - prepared by a team headed by Zalmay Khalilzad who has since joined the National Security Council - gave some prominence to 'multilateralising' the existing bilateral alliances so that the allies could respond to regional crises as a coalition¹⁹.

As a final example, there is the continued strong advocacy by the United States that Japan clear the way legally and politically to play a fuller part in shaping and managing the region's security. The highlight during the Clinton era was the negotiation of revised Defence Guidelines that specified what Japan and the JSDF could actually do in the event that US forces were involved in combat operations that required or would benefit from Japanese assistance.

In October 2000, a high powered group of Americans prepared a report with a number of far-reaching recommendations on the role that Japan should aspire to play in the world and on how the US-Japan relationship should evolve to support and reflect this transformation²⁰. In the security field, the report recommended that the special relationship between the US and Great Britain be a model for the alliance with Japan, an objective that would require a sea change in the character of the alliance²¹.

The significance of this report lies in the fact that two of the authors, Richard Armitage and Paul Wolfowitz, now hold the No.2 positions in the Departments of State and Defense respectively. Others like Jim Kelly and Torkel Patterson have taken senior positions in State and the National Security Council. The report would appear to be far too ambitious to be a guide to realistic steps in developing the US-Japan security relationship. At the same time, there is a strong likelihood that it will shape the thrust of US policy toward Japan over the next few years. This is certainly the expectation of senior officials in Tokyo²².

The significance of these several strands in US security policy has been heightened by the Bush administration's apparent intention to make East Asia its top priority²³. This shift addresses an Australian interest of long standing. In 1997, Australia's then Defence Minister, Ian McLachlan, put it this way to an audience in Washington:

Without in any way belittling the importance or complexity of the situations in, say, Europe or the Middle East, I would assert that the issues of grand strategy, the key developments that will shape the character of the international system in the next century are now concentrated in Asia.

Whether you are a strategist or a statesman, Asia is the region that must command your attention²⁴.

Australia has sought persistently to correct what it saw as an enduring Eurocentricity in Washington's worldview. The concern was never that the US would fail to live up to its security obligations in the region, or that its response to a crisis would be anything other than clear and forceful. The US responses to nuclear developments in the DPRK in 1993/4, and to China's provocative missile tests near Taiwan in 1996 are cases in point. The concern was rather that Asia never seemed to command the sustained political and bureaucratic energy needed to shape the emerging strategic order.

If Washington is able to follow through on this realignment of priorities, Asia will prove extremely demanding of these energies. The region is relatively bereft of the institutions (the EU, OSCE, and NATO) and derivative processes and techniques that now so effectively facilitate the stable management of interstate relations in Europe. Asia remains far more dependent in this regard on continuous direct interaction at the most senior levels.

The one caveat is that, so far, indications of an important shift in US priorities in favour of Asia come from the several reviews being conducted of its military posture. It would be a mistake if the focus of US attention on Asia became a matter of the size, mix and disposition of its military forces. This is not where the deficit presently exists.

Access to Technology

Sitting alongside these more subjective dimensions of the alliance with the US is the question of access to defence technologies. Together with the close partnership in intelligence, access to defence technology is a major practical benefit of the alliance, allowing Australia to field a more effective ADF for any given level of expenditure than would otherwise be the case.

Access to technology is linked closely to the objective of interoperability between US and Australian forces. Among the allies in Asia, this objective

is pursued most strongly with Australia. Interoperability is a vital but elusive quality that depends as much, if not more, on common doctrine, procedures and sheer familiarity as on hardware. For this reason, regular bilateral exercises like Tandem Thrust are indispensable to identify for rectification the inescapable tendency for large, complex organisations evolving independently to develop divergent modes of operation. Such exercises also provide the ADF with invaluable opportunities to benchmark against the most capable military forces in the world. Nevertheless, interoperability requires that equipment capabilities be broadly comparable. In selected areas like communications and the collection and dissemination of intelligence, equipment capabilities have to be closely comparable if the forces are to operate seamlessly.

The US and its allies face sharp dilemmas in this regard. Washington has a real interest in encouraging its allies to have strong, self-reliant military forces so as to raise the threshold for US involvement in local or regional contingencies. Similarly, it wants allies to have military capabilities that can usefully supplement its own should a crisis require a major US-led coalition (which could be described as lowering the threshold for combined operations with the United States).

One potentially important response initiated by the Clinton administration has been the Defense Trade Security Initiative. This initiative seeks to transform the principle guiding US export control machinery from a comprehensive presumption to deny access (the Cold War philosophy to give protection of US military technology absolute priority) to a presumption to grant access to selected allies. Although Australia was among a select group of allies offered the most liberal access, this was conditional on agreement that our capacity to protect technology was as effective as that of the US. It is also the case that there is considerable opposition in the Congress to weaker constraints on transferring technologies, and that in this complex business a transaction may involve less than meets the eye in terms of access to technology²⁸.

It should not be inferred, however, that Australia's access has been unduly restricted in the past. The point is that, in the past, the US applied an elaborate and time-consuming process of checks and reviews indiscriminately to all countries. The effect of the initiative, if it is brought fully into effect, will be to greatly simplify and speed up the acquisition process for selected partners like Australia.

The deeper problem is the wide gap that has emerged between the US and everyone else in the capabilities of its conventional military forces.

Relieved of the burden of maintaining the central balance, and enjoying a vibrant economy that supported a healthy defence budget, the United States has been able to focus relatively strongly on exploring the application of the information revolution to the art of warfare. The results have been little short of breath taking. In Desert Storm in 1991, and even more particularly the air campaign against Serbia over Kosovo in 1998, the US demonstrated capabilities that threaten to make obsolete the traditional indices of conventional military power.

The US has surged so far ahead that it has lost touch even with its major allies like the UK and made interoperability within NATO a major concern. Moreover, while the US recognises that it must reach down and help its key allies to stay in touch, protecting its edge in critical technologies and a general unwillingness among the allies to make the necessary (and very large) financial investment suggest that the gap will continue to widen.

If this is the case for the US and countries the size of the UK, France and Germany, it requires no special powers of analysis to conclude that Australia will also have to look hard at the degree of interoperability to which it can realistically aspire. In a similar vein, we have an ADF funded at about US\$6 billion annually while our closest security partner has a defence budget in excess of US\$300 billion. Moreover, the ADF is constantly and intimately exposed to its US counterpart, and our access to US hardware and military technology is among the best. Again, it requires no special powers to conclude that these circumstances create a potentially significant risk of aspiring to capabilities that will seriously distort the coherence and sustainability of our defence effort.

This is clearly not a criticism of the alliance. It is the sort of problem that many countries wished they had. It does suggest, however, that there will be a growing premium on Australia exercising hard-headed common sense as it juggles defence funding, self-reliance and interoperability.

The Alliance and Australia's Relations with Asia

The majority of countries in East Asia value and, at least privately, support the US commitment to the stability of East Asia and its sustained preparedness to underline this commitment with military forces either based in or routinely deployed to the region. America's several bilateral alliance relationships in the region are seen as anchoring the US in the region in the political sense, and as providing a strong core of practical support for its forward-deployed forces. These arrangements allow the United States to be a key player *integral* to the region, a condition that is crucially different from

being an external player with the capacity to project power into the region.

Quite obviously, the pivotal US alliance from this perspective is that with Japan, but the same reasoning applies, in attenuated form, to the alliance with Australia. In other words, the alliance has in broad terms been an asset for Australia in our engagement with the region. Moreover, this should continue to be the case for as long as most countries in the region prefer to have the US playing a major role in shaping the security environment.

Again, however, capitalising on this asset now requires more care and sophistication in policy development and articulation. The post-Cold War security environment is widely seen as generally stronger but also more complex and multifaceted. This, together with strong confidence in continued US engagement has inclined regional states to be more demanding and require of the US that its security policies toward East Asia be more thoughtful and nuanced than in the relatively black and white days of the past.

There are particular expectations of Australia in this regard. On the one hand, we are seen as the country in the region with the closest and most intimate relationship with the US, not least in the security sphere. Because we share so much with the US in historical, social and cultural terms, we are considered to have more effective channels of communication and influence than our strategic weight would suggest. On the other hand, we are also seen as a country with both motive and opportunity to absorb, understand and, indeed, share Asian concerns and perspectives.

In other words, in addition to the basic function of helping to anchor the US in the region, Australia's alliance relationship with the US is valued because of our potential contribution to shaping US policies to better serve regional needs and interests. Taking advantage of these circumstances is as demanding as it is potentially rewarding. While we can never hope to avoid all criticism that we have failed one side or the other, our longer term credibility is clearly dependent above all on the perception as well as reality that our policies, while reflecting a unique mix interests, are homemade.

Conclusions

The alliance with the United States has been and remains a rewarding relationship for Australia. Since the alliance is widely perceived to be healthy and secure, it must be the case that Washington is broadly of a similar view. This also means that, over the past half century, Australia and the US have continued to share basic values and beliefs, to view the world in broadly compatible ways, and to pursue similar interests and objectives in the international arena. Had this not been the case, the alliance would have withered long ago.

The alliance provides Australia with the assurance that any power contemplating major military aggression against us would have to reckon on a robust American response²⁶. The alliance does not guarantee such a response but it does not have to. If this is simply seen as quite likely it has much the same deterrent effect as if it was practically certain. It is true that Australia has no need at the present time or in the foreseeable future to draw on this assurance. It is equally true that assurances of this kind cannot be reliably generated on demand.

The alliance also provides the ADF with a variety of extremely valuable practical benefits in the form of intelligence, technology, training and exercising. Moreover, it offers us a wide variety of effective channels through which we can seek to influence the policy development process in the United States on issues that affect our interests. This is not to overstate the influence that we can bring to bear but simply to say that the alliance offers greater certainty that we will be listened to by the right people. Moreover, to the extent that other countries appreciate this dimension of the alliance (and they do), it enhances Australia's weight in the international arena.

For a defence alliance to be deemed viable and effective after 50 turbulent years is no small accomplishment. If there is a single phenomenon that can explain this outcome it would, in my view, be this: Australia has, perhaps unconsciously but with adequate consistency, recognised that we are allies because we agree, not that we should agree because we are allies. In the defence and security field above all, assessing events and developments rigorously in terms of Australia's interests, and deliberately testing the presumption that we share US assessments and prescriptions, is critical. Without this, as Stephen Walt has observed, 'the alliance may be dead before anyone notices, and the discovery of the corpse may come at a very inconvenient moment'²⁷.

It is in Australia's interests to be a good ally and a responsible ally. We should not, however, want to characterise ourselves, or be characterised by others, as a loyal ally. In the final analysis, a good defence alliance, indeed the only alliance really worth having, is one that would function as well without the obligations and responsibilities being spelt out in treaty form.

Having got it broadly right in the past, we are going to find that alliance management and maintaining an attractive balance of benefits and obligations will become even more testing in the future. Without a defining global threat, the world looks, and is, more complex. It is disaggregated, less organised and controlled, and relatively featureless in the sense that there is no dominant threat. Security challenges are more diverse in nature, in geographic

location, in terms of the players involved, and in terms of the issues or principles at stake. The standards of alliance solidarity that prevailed during the Cold War, if applied into the future, will require that the coincidence of national interests, concerns and aspirations be, if not stronger, then certainly more detailed.

It would not be sensible for alliance partners to expect or demand such solidarity. It has been argued above that, in contemporary circumstances, the assurances offered in security treaties will inescapably be the subject of more careful and nuanced deliberation in Washington. And, as we have seen, there are real world examples to support this logical deduction. A similar process of careful deliberation will, and should, occur in the countries allied to the US.

A higher risk of policy differences on security issues should be accepted as a fact of life in the post Cold War world. If either party to an alliance comes to view such differences - whether a particular instance or an accumulation of instances - as a split on the fundamentals the alliance will clearly be in jeopardy. As in the past, this is simply a risk that has to be run and any differences managed appropriately.

I am not suggesting pre-emptive acceptance of often going our separate ways. A security alliance is a serious compact. Allies have an obligation to give the most thorough consideration to their partner's interests and concerns, and to allow every opportunity for assessments and prescriptions to come together. We should expect to continue to have similar perceptions of security challenges, and expect to be together when the threat or use of force is considered necessary. Aspiring to have a sustainable degree of interoperability between our armed forces should remain a core objective of the alliance.

What I am suggesting is that current and foreseeable circumstances put an even higher premium on open and frank dialogue, and on protecting absolutely the confidence we now have that neither side has a hidden agenda. Prospective differences should be detectable early. If the differences endure, they should be anticipated and understood, not come as a surprise.

This general expectation that alliance management is likely to become more challenging is compounded by the fact that some of the dominant policy instincts in the Bush administration could present Australia with difficult choices. Missile defence is an obvious candidate. Another might be the instinct to emphasise the special status of allies and both do more for them but, particularly, ask more of them. In East Asia, this could include encouraging them to get involved in joint contingency planning and to begin to develop some capacity for collective action.

In both cases, our obligations (and interests) require that we acquire a deep understanding of US motives and aspirations. If we conclude that US plans could be damaging to our interests (as I believe is presently the case in these two instances) we should use this understanding to develop responsible and feasible alternative approaches²⁸.

Even more so than in the past, the US needs allies that will test and challenge its security policy prescriptions. Groping toward a new mix of arrangements that can generate confidence in the continued stability and security of the Asia Pacific over the coming decades is a very different challenge from managing a global cold war. Alliance relationships can play an important and constructive role provided they consciously adapt their objectives and processes to the new environment and its distinctive challenges. Given the necessary careful attention in Canberra and Washington, the odds that the Australia-US alliance can continue to adapt and remain relevant seem to me to be good.

Notes

1. The most prominent sceptic in recent times has been former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. See 'Fraser urges cut in defence ties with US', *The Australian*, 21 May 2001, p.5. Earlier commentaries that are at least sceptical about the value of the alliance include Graeme Cheeseman, *The Search for Self-Reliance: Australian Defence Since Vietnam*, (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1993); Graeme Cheeseman and Michael McKinley, 'Memories Lost: Promise, Disappointment and Contradictions in the Australian-United States Defence Relationship', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.46, No.2, November 1992.
2. See, for example Desmond Ball, *The US-Australian Alliance: History and Prospects*, Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Working Paper No.330, January 1999; Paul Dibb, 'Will America's Alliances in the Asia-Pacific Region Endure?', Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Working Paper No.345, May 2000; and William T. Tow, 'The Future of Alliances: AUSMIN as a Case Study', in Desmond Ball, (ed), *Maintaining the Strategic Edge: The Defence of Australia in 2015*, Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, Canberra Paper No.133,1999.
3. See the presentation by Peter Edwards in 'ANZUS After 45 Years', Seminar Proceedings, 11-12 August 1997, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade. For additional commentary on Australia's non-Cold War strategic preoccupations see Coral Bell, 'The Cold War in Retrospect: Diplomacy, Strategy and Regional Impact', Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Working Paper No. 298, especially p.27.
4. See A. Rix, 'Japan's Comprehensive Security and Australia', *Australian Outlook*, Vol.41, No.2, August 1987, p.83.
5. 'Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force', p.xi-xii. The key policy development - the addition to DOA of a regional security capability - was arguably made in the 1997 Strategic Review but its significance was lost when the Asian economic crisis appeared to put the entire thrust of the review into question.

6. There has been an interesting debate on whether the post-Cold War world really is or just seems to be more chaotic and turbulent. I tend toward the former view because there are new players and because all players, new and old, have the perception that there is additional political and strategic space in which to pursue national interests. In any event, even if we now notice more of the turbulence because we are not distracted by the superpower struggle that is an important new political reality.

7. For a theoretical discussion of these phenomena, see Stephen M. Walt, 'Why Alliances Endure or Collapse', *Survival*, Vol.39, No.1, Spring 1997, pp.156-79.

8. Joint Security Declaration: Australia-United States: A Strategic Partnership for the Twenty-First Century (Sydney Statement) issued in Sydney in July 1996.

9. 'Australia and Japan are the claws US will use to entrap us, says China', *Australian Financial Review*, 8 August 1996, p.14.

10. 'Chinese critic says US was the target', *The Age*, 9 August 1996, p.A8.

11. 'Krulak Urges Asia Military Coalition', *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 6 December 1996, p.4.

12. The author recalls being interviewed in 1997 by a visiting Japanese newspaper correspondent on the prospect that Australia could, in time, host the Marine Corps forces now based in Okinawa. The premise of the interview was that some groups in Japan considered this a real prospect.

13. Cohen's remarks, couched in terms of the US not being the world's policeman, were carried in a Voice of America report on 8 September. Berger followed up on 9 September during a White House briefing on the APEC trip.

14. White House Briefing Room, Remarks by the President Upon Departure from Auckland, New Zealand, 14 September 1999. Two weeks later, on 29 September, both in Parliament and a media release (entitled 'ABC Report on East Timor'), Prime Minister Howard confirmed that he had asked the US to contribute troops.

15. David Ong & B.A. Hamzah, 'Disputed Maritime Boundaries and Claims to Offshore Territories in the Asia Pacific Region', in Sam Bateman & Stephen Bates, (eds), *Calming the Waters: Initiatives for Asia Pacific Maritime Cooperation*, Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra Paper No.114, p.28.

16. 'A Line in the Sand', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 April 1995, pp.14-16; 'The Spratlys Spat', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 April 1995, p.3.

17. Statement by Admiral Blair before the House Armed Services Committee on the Fiscal Year 2001 Posture Statement, 15 March 2000.

18. Robert D. Blackwill & Paul Dibb, (eds), 'America's Asian Alliances', MIT Press, 2000, p.111-134. In addition to contributing a chapter to the book, Dibb included a comment contesting several of Blackwill's arguments.

19. Zalmay Khalilzad et al, 'The United States and Asia: Toward a New US Strategy and Force Posture', RAND Corporation, 15 May 2001.

20. 'The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Relationship', Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, Washington DC, 11 October 2000.

21. Australia's official position on this issue remains rather more circumspect. During a visit to Tokyo in May 2001, Foreign Minister Downer reiterated Australia's long-standing support for a broader Japanese role, but carefully indicated that Japan should seek initially to play a fuller part in international peacekeeping efforts. See Michael Millett, 'Downer calls for greater Japanese role in peacekeeping', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May 2001, p.10.
22. See, for example, Jason Sherman, 'Japan Anticipates US Will Propose Wider Peacekeeping, Military Roles', *Defense News*, 12 March 2001; and Jason Sherman, 'Japan Lawmakers Seek Stronger US Ties', *Defense News*, 7 May, 2001, p.3.
23. 'Washington targets the Pacific', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 2001, p.11.
24. 'Australia and the United States in Asia', address to the American Enterprise Institute, Washington DC, 7 October 1997.
25. Even for the closest allies, access to technology is not unlimited. Some technologies are considered so precious from a security standpoint that they are protected absolutely (stealth/low observables being perhaps the best example). Others will only be released provided arrangements can be made that give the US ongoing positive control. This is clearly the case with some of the technologies that the US is prepared to share to bring the Collins-class submarines to their full potential.
26. The ANZUS treaty does not in any way limit the military capabilities that the parties could bring to bear in a crisis. By implication, therefore, the treaty makes Australia a beneficiary of extended nuclear deterrence. Major Australian policy statements on defence have consistently referred to the value we attach to this dimension of the alliance. While the US has never contradicted these statements, it is also the case that its own statements on extended nuclear deterrence tend to refer specifically only to European NATO countries and to Japan. Australia has sensibly not sought more specific assurances in the past, and it would make even less sense to do so now. The US has always been exceedingly cautious about explicitly widening the group of countries it would be prepared to defend with nuclear weapons. The more diverse and relatively untidy array of nuclear weapon capabilities that emerged during the 1990s can only have reinforced this caution.
27. Walt, *op.cit.* p.167.
28. In the case of missile defence, see my *ABM vs BMD: The Issue of Ballistic Missile Defence*, Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Working Paper No. 357.

Strategic and Defence Studies Centre

The aim of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, which is located in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies in the Australian National University, is to advance the study of strategic problems, especially those relating to the general region of Asia and the Pacific. The centre gives particular attention to Australia's strategic neighbourhood of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Participation in the centre's activities is not limited to members of the university, but includes other interested professional, diplomatic and parliamentary groups. Research includes military, political, economic, scientific and technological aspects of strategic developments. Strategy, for the purpose of the centre, is defined in the broadest sense of embracing not only the control and application of military force, but also the peaceful settlement of disputes that could cause violence.

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Since its inception in 1966, the centre has supported a number of visiting and research fellows, who have undertaken a wide variety of investigations. Recently the emphasis of the centre's work has been on problems of security and confidence-building in Australia's neighbourhood; the defence of Australia; arms proliferation and arms control; policy advice to the higher levels of the Australian Defence Department; and the strategic implications of developments in Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Southwest Pacific.

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