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AUSTRALIA AS A REGIONAL SEAPOWER:
AN EXTERNAL VIEW

by

Michael McGwire



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Presented at 'Seapower '79', the Australian Naval
Institute's First National Seminar, Canberra,
2-3 February, 1979

by

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First published by the Australian Naval Institute in
Seapower '79 Seminar Papers, Canberra, May 1979.



AUSTRALIA AS A NATIONAL SEAPOWER:

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Michael MccGwire

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The purpose of "Seapower 79" is to consider the role of maritime forces in protecting and promoting Australia's national interests, and my task is to provide an outsider's viewpoint. I have therefore added a question mark to the title I was given, and ask "Should Australia be a Regional Seapower?".

The term "regional seapower" implies the capacity to influence the outcome of events in distant parts of adjacent regions by bringing military force (latent or applied) to bear by sea. For most of the last twenty-five years Australia has been such a power. It has had a well-balanced fleet, with a true distant water capability, which could operate in a hostile maritime environment on its own, or as a component of a larger allied force.

However, the fleet was only one side of the equation, and the capacity to be a regional seapower depends on the balance of capabilities in the regions concerned. It also presupposes a surplus of capability over the essential requirements for maritime defence. There has been progressive change in both these factors. The general proliferation of weapons among developing nations now makes it more difficult to bring preponderant power to bear, and the spread of sophisticated maritime systems has increased the capacity of coastal states to prevent the use of the sea in their vicinity. Meanwhile, the growing pressure on world resources, coupled with the exponential growth of population throughout most of Asia, means that Australia is acquiring a potential attractiveness to other states in the region and, as temptation increases, so too must the defences against them.

The question of whether or not Australia should aspire to be a regional seapower in the years ahead, must therefore be addressed in two stages. First, we have to identify the essential requirements for maritime defence in terms of geographic scope and the structure of forces. And then we need to consider what additional capability would be required for Australia to play the role of a seapower in other parts of adjacent regions. But before addressing the question of future requirements, it is useful to recall the circumstances in which the present naval capability evolved, and the context in which future policies must operate.

Background

At the end of World War II, the West possessed a cooperative monopoly of seapower, which ensured world-wide maritime domination and allowed the projection of Western military force to all parts of the globe. Before the habits of wartime cooperation had time to erode, the Korean War raised the

spectre of global communist aggression and evoked a network of alliances encircling the Sino-Soviet bloc, with Western navies as an essential component of the containing forces. In the event, containment was not their primary role, and the first 25 years after the war probably saw a greater use of navies as instruments of overseas policy than any previous period in history. Meanwhile, despite the progressive withdrawal from empire, British commitments east of Suez remained substantial and its navy was the dominant maritime force in the Indian Ocean region.

These were the general circumstances in which Australia decided on the basic shape of its navy, and then participated in the general build-up of Western forces, which was accelerated by the Korean War. World War II had highlighted the central importance of aircraft carriers, surplus units were available at comparatively low cost, and Australia therefore acquired a small but effective distant-water fleet, built around the carrier. As if to confirm the wisdom of this choice, the arming of Indonesia by the Soviet Union brought a substantial (if rather old-fashioned) naval capability to Australia's doorstep in the late fifties.

We all know that circumstances are now changed, and I won't run through these differences, since they have provided the substance of the debate on Australian foreign policy and defence during the last ten years and are therefore well known. There are, however, certain points which are not always mentioned in this context, but are relevant to the role and structure of maritime forces. First, the proliferation of nation states and the emergence of a Third World voice in the United Nations' and regional organisations, has progressively circumscribed the political utility and the military feasibility of overseas intervention by the Western maritime powers. Second, there has been a massive increase in the world's dependence on international seaborne trade and in the number of national shipping fleets, which has brought about a measure of interdependence at sea. Third, the sea is no longer the sole means of gaining access to distant areas, and airflight vehicles now have a substantial (although specialised) capacity in this respect. And fourth, development in weapons and sensors allow land-based systems to make an increasingly important contribution to maritime warfare. In common parlance, maritime weapons systems now encompass those which can be brought to bear at sea (whether from land, sea or space), as well as those which can be brought to bear against land from the sea.

What is the requirement for maritime forces in the future? A logical approach requires us to review the likely situation in the years ahead; derive policy objectives from the review; determine the role of armed forces in pursuit of these objectives; and establish the maritime component of such a force. Unfortunately, life isn't logical. Not only do we have difficulty in predicting the course of international affairs, but national policy is subject to the vagaries of domestic politics. In other words, objectives may change over a relatively short period, while costly items of military hardware such as major warships can last for 20-30 years. The problem is therefore to build "a navy for all seasons." Obviously, we cannot ignore current objectives or future prognoses, but we must pay particular attention to such permanently operating factors as geostrategic location, the principles of war and the certainty of uncertainty.

The International Context

I will not review the international context in which future policies must operate, except to note where I disagree with certain viewpoints expressed during the ongoing defence debate. First, I think that some analysts exaggerate the implications of the Guam Declaration in terms of US policy towards Australia. The section of "Self Reliance" in the 1976 Defence White Paper sums up the present situation admirably, namely, that the USA would respond to a fundamental threat to Australia's security, but that the threshold of direct US combat involvement might be quite high. It is not clear that, in practical terms, this represents any substantial change from the past. On the other hand, I am not persuaded by those who argue that because such a fundamental threat could only emerge in circumstances of global conflict, America would be unable to spare resources for Australia at such a time. This argument applies equally to those countries capable of posing this kind of a fundamental threat, while it ignores the importance of Australia in Western contingency plans for world war.

I am sceptical that a military posture of "self reliance" will be any more or less effective in securing US support for Australian policies, than the former posture of "faithful ally." As in the past, America will continue to pursue its own interests (which it identifies with those of the broader world community), even when they conflict with particular Australian concerns, such as Indonesia. There would, however, seem to have been two new developments in this area. First, the reorientation of Australia's foreign policy away from the global bi-polar model towards a more complex concern for the Indo-Asian region will mean that perceptions of interest are likely to diverge more frequently with the USA, although they will continue to be congruent over vital interests. And second, Australia is becoming increasingly important to America in geo-strategic terms. The uncertain future of Taiwan and the perennial problems in the Philippines have increased the significance of Australia's position at the southern end of the US island-defence perimeter, which is so important to American influence in the Asian-Pacific region. The west coast of Australia allows direct access to the Indian Ocean, and the Cocos Islands provide a valuable staging post. The various US facilities in Australia, such as naval communications, space tracking and seismographic installations are seen as bearing directly on the Soviet/American strategic balance. And it may be relevant that the most suitable great circle route between the Indian Ocean and the Trident base on the US Pacific Coast, passes close south of Australia. Although we should not exaggerate this geo-strategic importance, it is reinforced by the advantages of a stable democratic political structure, and a common language and cultural heritage. The absence of these factors elsewhere in Asia was partly responsible for the Guam Declaration.

My second disagreement concerns the over-preoccupation in some quarters with the Soviet threat, both in global terms and as it affects Australia directly. I will address the latter when considering naval requirements, but the former is more serious since it distorts the broader reaches of Australian foreign policy. This undue emphasis on the Soviet threat ignores relative capabilities and confuses what the Soviets might like to happen, other things being equal, with what it is possible for them to achieve. Other things are not equal, and the Soviet Union finds itself in an extremely disadvantageous position within the international system. The four other power-centres of the

world are aligned against Russia and it no longer has a favoured position vis-à-vis developing nations, which see it as just another neo-imperialist power with a very restricted capacity for economic aid. Although the Soviet Union has achieved nuclear parity with the USA and retains an adequate grip on the European satellites, its broader foreign policy has had more setbacks than successes, and many of the latter stem from Western ineptness rather than pre-meditated Soviet planning. China presents a double threat to Russia, with its ideological claim to leadership of the world communist movement and its physical presence along a 4,500-mile frontier, its hostile influence spreading along Russia's southern flank, through Pakistan and perhaps Iran. Meanwhile, the Soviet economy is slowing down and they are running into serious bottlenecks for investment funds and key resources, while they continue to lag in applied technology and managerial skills. And, as if this were not enough, the problem of national minorities will not go away and they have yet to demonstrate that they have solved the question of orderly political succession.

This Western preoccupation with the military aspects of Russia's capability to the exclusion of other factors, has the effect of reinforcing the more paranoid elements within the Soviet Union and weakening those forces within the leadership, who are satisfied with the strategic balance and see detente as serving the national interest. During 1960-61, the rhetoric of the Western defence debate, coupled with the upsurge in US procurement of strategic weapons, prompted a reversal of Khrushchev's new defence policy, with its reduction in ground forces and a shift in strategic policy towards Western-style deterrence. That reversal did not serve Western interests, military or political. Nor would a reversal of Brezhnev's moves towards arms limitation and detente. Yet that is the most likely effect of indiscriminate anti-Sovietism. Meanwhile, in terms of Australian foreign policy, such type-casting of the Soviet Union unnecessarily restricts the range of available options.

This leads directly to my third point, which concerns China and Japan. The euphoria over the recent rapprochements with the USA and Japan, which served to consolidate China's anti-Soviet stance, has somewhat obscured the fact that any long-range assessment of potential threats to Australian interests would have to place China high up the list, while a Sino-Japanese condominium would be particularly worrying. For the time being, China welcomes the American presence in the Asian-Pacific as a counter-poise to the Soviet Union, but in due course she expects to resume her natural role as paramount power in the region, and meanwhile remains a self-confessed revolutionary state. In contrast, the Soviet Union's centre of gravity lies well to the west of the Urals, and in many respects its access to Pacific-Asia is worse than America's. Furthermore, Russia is disadvantageously located within the region. Its territory lies at the far end of the important north/south axis of movement, which passes through waters which could be controlled by the other three powers.

This will not prevent the Soviet Union from being involved in South East Asia, as it attempts to contain the spread of Chinese influence. While it might be preferable if neither of the communist powers dabbled in the region, this is not an option. It is therefore best to have both there, since this shifts their primary emphasis away from supporting subversive revolutionary movements towards competing for the approval of the governments in power,

as we have seen recently in ASEAN. A pre-determined anti-Soviet stance denies Australia this opportunity to influence policy in the region, while doing nothing to enhance the nation's security.

Objectives

It is hard to quarrel with the objectives set out in the Defence White Paper. They are to defend Australia's interests against military attack or harrassment, and to influence those developments in the area, which could affect Australia's long-term security. What we may want to question is whether the area of concern reflects the full scope of Australia's maritime interests. The White Paper defines this zone as extending from South East Asia to the South West Pacific countries and territories, with particular reference to adjacent maritime areas, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. This covers about a quarter of a million square miles and, in certain directions, extends 2,000 miles from the Australian coast.

These objectives generate two main types of requirement, which can be labelled defensive and assertive. These break down as follows:

- Defensive .. prevent attacks on Australian territory
- .. secure maritime communications

- Assertive .. regulate the offshore zone
- .. project military force ashore in distant parts of the area

Past experience suggests that it would be wise to cover against a third type of requirement, which is to contribute to a larger allied capability. And a fourth type of requirement, which is very important but will not be discussed further here, is the provision of military aid to other states in the area in the form of training, advisory services and the supply of weapons and equipment. The political effectiveness of this policy instrument derives largely from Australia's geographical location, which legitimises its military involvement in the area.

In many circumstances the same forces will have to meet the different requirements, but at this stage of the analysis it is useful to distinguish between the two main types, since they stem from different determinants. The type of forces needed to meet the defensive requirements are determined by the scale and nature of the threat, whereas the choice of forces to meet the assertive requirement will reflect cost/benefit considerations.

When using threat as a determinant of force structure, military planners in a country with Australia's history and geography have to guard against two types of public reaction, both perfectly justified. One is that the postulated threat is so remote that one doesn't really have to bother about it. The other is that the problem of defending Australia is so vast as to be beyond the country's capability. The correct answer lies somewhere between these two

extremes and relies heavily on the insurance analogy, where money spent on premiums reflects a judgment concerning the scale of possible calamities and the likelihood of their occurrence. Of course Defence insurance is unique, in that the probability of occurrence decreases as the size of the premium rises. The proper size of premium remains a political judgment, balancing costs, risks and consequences.

How best to invest the defence premium is complicated by the fact that perceptions of threat, and the political and budgetary responses they evoke can change very rapidly (as we saw at the time of Korea), whereas the reorientation and build-up of a military capability is a much more complex process. The problem is how to formulate a politically persuasive defence policy in a period of low-threat perception, which will also be fully effective at a time of high-threat perception and high political commitment to defence. Such a policy must provide the political justification for a stable defence posture during a period of low-threat perception and constricted budgets such as the present, and at the same time provide for a rapid and effective response to any sudden increase in the allocation of resources to defence.

Two different approaches to this problem are to provide a framework (cadre) into which the enlarged force expands, or a core around which expansion takes place. For the same investment, a core force will have a greater current capability, while a cadre force will provide a greater future capability. The concept of a core is more appropriate when the length of politico-strategic warning could be short, or where it takes a long time to develop the necessary operational capability. The cadre approach is preferable in the opposite circumstances. In practice one usually needs a mixture of both, but Australia's circumstances suggest that there should be a bias towards cadre. One of the problems with the core approach is that it introduces strong pressures within each service to emulate its international peer groups in these different types of warfare, rather than concentrating on what is appropriate to Australia's special circumstances. Similarly, it encourages a "state of the art" approach to all weapons and equipment, rather than emphasizing "appropriate technology" and cost-effectiveness, whereby state-of-the-art technology is used to solve scenario-specific problems.

There is never going to be "enough" money for defence, and a measure of ingenuity is needed to cover current requirements as well as future contingencies. One way is to apply the cadre principle to weapons platforms, as for example, by building ships which are fitted for but not with their full weapon outfits, which escapes the design penalties of peacetime habitability, while providing more ships at sea. Another approach is to exploit Australia's geography. Its vast size offers the advantages of internal lines of communications, which can be used by contemporary aircraft. The concentration of population in the south-eastern corner allows the bulk of the continent to act as a shield for oceanic communications. Australia's geopolitical remoteness allows warning time to be built into various operational and mobilisation plans.

The problem can also be tackled from the other end by focusing on vulnerabilities and having defence considerations play a greater part in economic policy. Dependence on overseas oil can be reduced by providing the commercial incentives to discover and exploit Australian resources, including

alternative types of energy. Coastal shipping becomes less vital if there are alternative means of land transportation. The concept of actively linking defence and development would seem particularly appropriate to the north-western coastal region, where the defence factor might be sufficient to tip the balance in favour of positive action. But the same considerations would seem to apply to the transportation infrastructure throughout much of the country. A related approach is to adopt immigration policies and incentives designed to encourage the development of under-populated areas, which would also increase the tax base and hence the size of the defence budget.

Cost-effectiveness requires innovative thinking, and there are two sure ways of fostering that precious commodity. The first is to adopt a combined arms or inter-service approach to all military problems. And the second is to recognise that the best is almost always the enemy of "good enough."

Requirements

The Australian defence debate reflects considerable disagreement about the plausibility of different threats, and in formulating force requirements, the various protagonists tend to focus on one threat to the neglect of the others. A more fruitful approach is to consider all four main requirements and to see where they reinforce or compete with each other, and to what extent the preferred capabilities are mutually exclusive.

In this context we must avoid confusing what is "nice to have" with what we "need to have." Military planners sometimes claim that their task is to specify what capability is required to discharge a certain mission, after which it is up to the political leadership to decide what the nation can afford. This implies that formulating force requirements is a precise science, whereas in practice it involves a complex process of balancing priorities, which recognises that there is no such thing as total security, that defence involves deterrence as much as combat, and that war is about attrition as much as battle. The purist approach to force requirements is akin to an architect who insists on designing an "ideal" house, irrespective of his client's bank balance. The building analogy can be extended. When money is short, the design of one's house (structure of one's forces) is closely tied to the prevailing climate (the geographical environment) and local materials (the geostrategic circumstances), and the design of richmen's residences (major powers' forces) is only partially relevant to one's essential requirements.

In the discussion which follows I have therefore borne in mind the current level of defence expenditure and the type of increases which might be possible if a requirement could be clearly demonstrated. I have focused on the four main requirements and taken account of warning time and the varying capacity for a rapid build-up of capability in the different fields. Two of the requirements, "preventing attacks on Australian territory" and "regulating the offshore zone," overlap in geographical scope but not in time, hence they are mutually reinforcing. "Securing the passage of coastal shipping" also comes within this geographical scope; but it could overlap in time with "preventing attacks on Australia," and hence compete for resources.

Any discussion of maritime requirements should flow from a broader defence analysis, but space precludes such a survey. It is, however, implicit in many of the proposals which follow, and the postulated concepts of operation assume a range of appropriate developments in all three services.

Preventing Attacks on Australian Territory

This represents a very broad spectrum of threat and I will consider only two of the many possibilities, namely, a seaborne invasion and a seabased strike against military and industrial targets.

In discussion invasion, I focus on the well-protected assault force and assume two possible types of motivation behind such an operation. The least implausible is a resource grab at some time in the future, and this would tend to locate the assault area on the north-west coast. In today's circumstances, the type of politico-economic pressures required to prompt such an adventure, and the capabilities needed to carry it out are of a kind which should provide at least two years warning. A more implausible (but still conceivable) motivation is a Soviet requirement to exploit Australia's industrial capacity in the post-exchange phase of a nuclear war, which they define as a fight to the finish between two social systems. There would be little warning of such a war, since it would be the result of miscalculations.

How best to defend against a resource grab? As important as anything is the self-evident capability to prevent the resources from being exploited, even should a lodgement be achieved, since this will tilt the balance of costs and benefits against initiating such an operation. This requires a substantial capability for destruction at long range, and this same capability can be used to prevent the establishment of enemy airfields and air-defence facilities in the lodgement area. Land-based forces (ground and air) are best qualified for this task.

The navy's primary role is to deal with seaborne invasion. It is sometimes argued that maritime forces should attack the invading force at the maximum distance from the shore. There are two flaws with this argument. First, the enemy force is most vulnerable when it shifts from passage to assault formation as it nears the beach-head. Second, the further from Australian territory the engagement takes place, the less support will be available from shore-based weapon and sensor systems.

The aim is to prevent the assault force from putting troops ashore. The principle of concentration argues that the main emphasis should be on combined attacks on the enemy when he is at his most vulnerable, when the maximum number and types of Australian weapons can be brought to bear, and when our own forces enjoy all the advantages of working off a friendly coastline. Planners must assume that the enemy would be able to cover the invasion force with a battle fleet more powerful than the strongest naval force Australia can muster, and in such circumstances an engagement in the open ocean should be avoided rather than sought out. Obviously, this does not exclude attacks by submarines, unless there are likely to be problems in gaining contact. Long-range air strike may

also be appropriate, although the air defences of the invading force will be at their strongest when on ocean passage, and consequential losses may unduly weaken the vital combined attacks close to shore.

Similar considerations apply to the Soviet threat in a world-war scenario, except that there would be limited warning time. In compensation, the threat would be against a relatively densely settled part of the country, with an infrastructure in place which would enable rapid redeployment and concentration of forces.

One prerequisite for such an anti-invasion concept is a long-range warning system of the kind which will allow sufficient time to concentrate forces in the threatened area. This can be provided by the type of OTH-B radar now being developed at Jinderlee. Another prerequisite is to be able to redeploy land and air forces rapidly to different parts of the coastal perimeter. Irrespective of the amount of strategic warning, this will have to depend in large part on unimproved airstrips. The primary target will be soft-skinned assault ships with limited point-defence, and the most appropriate weapons will be PGM carried by aircraft and relatively small naval units, while helicopter gun ships will be useful against enemy assault craft and helicopters making to the shore. Command of the air will be important but, given the advantages of operating from land, there seems no reason why this cannot be ensured. However, the need to exploit unimproved airfields, coupled with the specific anti-surface ship role, suggests that the emphasis should be on the design of stand-off weapons, rather than aircraft performance.

This general concept of operations can be adapted to deal with lesser types of threat. The range of possibilities argues that emphasis should be placed on comparatively simple vehicles (submarine, surface and air) which can be used in a variety of roles, their weapon suits being changed to reflect changes in requirements over time.

Turning next to the threat of sea-based strike against military and industrial targets, this raises the requirement to counter the enemy force before it launches its weapons, and we must distinguish between submarines and surface ships. To detect a submarine prior to missile launch requires some type of area surveillance system such as SOSUS and, given reaction time and the sea areas involved, this would offer only a measure of defence against submarines armed with medium-range missiles.

Initial target location should not be a problem with an enemy carrier-strike force. Since one has to allow that such a force would be more powerful than the Australian surface fleet, defence would be based on coordinated missile attacks launched by submarine and aircraft, using the well-proven Soviet concept. However, unlike the Soviets, Australian forces would be operating off their own coastline, within range of shore-based systems. This will be particularly advantageous to the submarine component, allowing greater flexibility of operation (including initial high-speed deployment with surface escort) and reducing design requirements for size and endurance. Attack on the surface-strike force would be only one part of the total response, and land-based air-defence forces would engage aircraft and cruise missiles as they neared the Australian coast.

To sum up. Large surface units are not essential to the defence of Australia against seaborne attack. It must be assumed that an enemy who is set on such a course of action will be able to achieve a concentration of naval force, including sea-based air, which is sufficient to ensure superiority at sea. The classic arguments about the role of navies in defence against seaborne assault took place before the advent of long-range surveillance systems, air transportation, and the homing weapons which give coastal craft the punch of a battleship. Present-day circumstances allow one to exploit the advantages of operating close to one's own coastline, with land-based weapons (air and ground) playing a major, perhaps predominant role. Local command of the air is essential and requires the capability to concentrate forces at relatively short notice along selected parts of the coastal perimeter. The aircraft carrier is not critical to this requirement, and it can be argued that it is more flexible and more cost-effective to redeploy the aircraft and their support systems, rather than the airfield. The submarine has a role to play, but the circumstances suggest that money would be better spent on a larger number of smaller units rather than on a lesser number of larger ones.

Regulating the Offshore Zone

It is often said that because Australia now has a 200-mile economic zone (EEZ) it must be enforced. In fact, the majority of countries in the world have no capability to enforce their 200-mile zone, and while it is true that the Law of the Sea (LOS) negotiating articles place an obligation on the coastal state to manage its offshore resources, the onerousness of this task will depend on the level of exploitation. Regulating the offshore zone is therefore largely a matter of choice, and the level of regulation will be based on calculations of cost and benefit. The costs are clear enough. The benefits are more complex and may range from intangibles like national sovereignty, to social factors like drug abuse and uncontrolled immigration, to concrete economic benefits such as custom revenues, pollution avoidance and resources preserved for Australian exploitation.

Few of the problems in the offshore zone are new, but several of them have intensified over the last ten years, particularly drug running, illegal immigration, marine pollution and the foreign exploitation of living resources. That is, the benefits to be gained from effective regulation have risen. Furthermore, the LOS negotiations have simplified the problem of regulation by de facto extending the Territorial Sea by rather more than nine miles, while simplifying its alignment; by extending the Contiguous Zone to 24 miles (for immigration, health and customs control); and by introducing a new type of limited jurisdiction over the water column out to 200 miles (the EEZ) which, among other things, has the effect of closing off the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The EEZ also provides a source of income to help pay for the regulation of the whole offshore zone. The coastal state has sovereign rights over the resources in the EEZ and, while it is required to ensure full utilisation of these resources by allowing other nations to harvest surplus stocks, it can decide who has access for what purposes, and has the right to charge for such access through licensing fees, which are negotiated on a bilateral basis. Taking all these factors together, the question of regulating the offshore

zone is different to hitherto, although it is still a matter of balancing costs and benefits. Within those benefits we can count the potential spinoff to territorial defence. But regulation remains a policing problem.

The effectiveness of a policing policy will depend on (1) the detection rate, and (2) the type of sanctions applied to the transgressor. In respect to resource management, the coastal state now has a very powerful sanction at its disposal, since it can deny entry to its fishery, either to individual offenders or to a whole national fleet. Controlled entry also limits the detection problem by establishing through bilateral negotiations the fishing strategy of each national fleet in terms of quota, effort and general location. This simplifies the three elements of crime detection, namely, surveillance, search and arrest. To facilitate surveillance, foreign vessels can be required to report entry and departure from the area, as well as daily positions. The requirement for search (or inspection) can be reduced by placing observers aboard a proportion of these vessels, Australia picking the ships at random and the flag-state paying all the costs involved. This policy has been adopted successfully by Canada. The problem of actually arresting a transgressor is partly circumvented since the coastal state can call vessels into port for spot checking, under threat of losing their license if they don't comply.

A key aspect of this approach to regulation is that a substantial part of the onus for enforcement is shifted to the flag-state. The success of such a policy will of course depend on the extent to which the flag-state does or can control its fishing vessels, but even here the coastal state has the lever of refusing to negotiate a bilateral agreement unless the flag-state initiates a satisfactory system. This approach to regulation is particularly effective with the distant-water fleets, which are of course the most important ones in terms of resource depletion. It may be necessary to accept a fairly high level of petty pilfering by the smaller craft operating from the Indonesian archipelago, although the general upgrading of surveillance should improve the average detection rate.

This partial overview of the problem suggests that the balance of costs and benefits has tilted sharply in favour of a comprehensive (but selective) system for regulating the Australian offshore zone, and raises the question of how this can best be achieved. While recognising the theoretical appeal of handing over the whole task to the Armed Forces, or of establishing a special coastguard service, I would argue that a cooperative approach to the problem is preferable, both for a range of political reasons (domestic and foreign), and because it is more efficient, even though it lacks administrative tidiness.

Regulation is an instrument of government, and different departments have developed special skills which are relevant to both land and sea environments. The problem of frontier control (smuggling, illegal entry) is a three-dimensional one, stretching from the offshore zone to far inland, and it relies heavily on a common intelligence system which has international links. Offshore oil and gas is an extension of the land-based industry, and comes under the same general kind of rules and regulations. The management of fisheries (which covers both salt- and fresh-water species) cannot be divorced from regulation, and success depends on continuity of effort. If the task of regulating the offshore zone were handed over completely to the

Armed Services, there would be severe penalties from loss of special expertise and lack of continuity. On the other hand, if a Coastguard Service were established, it would have to sub-specialise to be effective, and it would still have the physical and bureaucratic problems of linking into the broader land-based picture. Meanwhile, a Coastguard Service would deny the armed forces the advantages to be gained from a cooperative arrangement, in terms of acquiring knowledge of a potential combat environment, and of improving training and morale.

Obviously, there would need to be unified command and control, and there would be several advantages in locating the national coordination system within the defence operations structure. Nevertheless, it is in the interests of national security to stress the cooperative nature of the enterprise, since the dividing line between regulation and territorial defence is blurred. This cooperative approach will involve a wide range of individuals and authorities in the general problem, and facilitate shifts in emphasis as external circumstances require. For similar reasons, the "all methods" approach to surveillance should be encouraged, rather than emphasising the use of single-purpose units and equipment. It would seem particularly important to involve the local population in the problem, and exploiting the part-time availability of vessels and aircraft from the private sector brings specialised knowledge of the geographical area, as well as being cost-effective. There is, however, the danger that a cooperative approach will lapse into pure "ad hocery." If the system is to work efficiently in peacetime and have the capacity to respond effectively to changes in external threat, it must be served by a fully integrated operational infrastructure, designed to develop long-term procedures as well as to handle current problems.

It is clear that a comprehensive system of regulating the offshore zone will contribute to the territorial integrity of Australia, inhibit lodgments on offshore islands and underpin the military capability needed to deter or repel a seaborne assault. But it can also make a more concrete contribution by increasing the number of ships and aircraft which can be made available for military tasks, either immediately or after limited conversion. We have seen that regulation should be self-financing, either in terms of monies saved or dues received, and a share of these funds can be claimed by Defence to cover the cost of its contribution in terms of hardware or manpower. These and perhaps additional funds should be used to maximise the armed forces' surge capacity, which can be achieved in several ways. Special fittings such as bed plates and load-bearing frames can be incorporated into the design of civilian ships and aircraft, to allow weapons and sensors to be fitted. Vessel construction can be subsidised to embody desirable military features such as better sea-keeping qualities or non-magnetic materials. And the military can procure additional vehicles for the regulating role, whose primary characteristics reflect wider military requirements.

Among this last category, consideration might be given to small airships and helicopters. The airship is ideal for monitoring large numbers of small vessels and has a demonstrated but untapped potential in coastal ASW. The helicopter is an immensely versatile vehicle of which one can never have enough. As a means of transportation it can be used on land and at sea, and between the two. As a combat vehicle it can be used against surface vessels and submarines, and against other helicopters and troops on the ground. It also lends itself

to modular conversion. In regulating the offshore zone, the helicopter (operating from shore) can be used for search and arrest on its own, or in conjunction with patrol vessels. It can carry its own boarding party and sling the type of inflatable craft normally used by surface ships. If required, it can be fitted with stand-off enforcement weapons.

Securing Sea Communications

Sea communications involve three types of shipping: import, export and coastal. In the discussion which follows, the needs of New Zealand and other S.W. Pacific countries will be ignored, but the same general principles apply.

It is hard to develop plausible scenarios for sustained attacks on shipping outside the circumstances of major international conflict, and I therefore postulate four sets of circumstances without trying to justify them. The first involves an attempt to halt the flow of oil from the Middle East. The second involves general war, where Australian shipping would share the submarine threat to the West. The third involves a major power (Russia, China, Japan) attacking Australian shipping as a means of applying pressure. And the fourth involves conflict with a regional power, such as Indonesia.

The first scenario differs from the rest in that it raises the question of whether there is a specific requirement for Australian ASW forces to be capable of sustained operations 4,000-5,000 miles from their home base, either in the close escort or distant support role. We will set this question aside until we have identified the requirements generated by the other scenarios.

Although the general war scenario presents the greatest threat to Western shipping world-wide, Australia's location distances her from the main axes of the battle for sea communications. During the initial stages of such a war, the majority of Soviet general-purpose submarines will be committed to attacking Western striking forces and defending the ocean bastions where the SSBN components of the national strategic reserve are deployed. As the war progresses, submarines will become available to other tasks, but by then the Soviet force should have suffered substantial attrition. We are therefore talking of a limited submarine threat, unless the Soviets decided to take over part of Australia, in which case submarines would accompany the invasion force.

The third scenario, involving a concentrated attack by a major power, poses the greatest theoretical threat but is also the least plausible. Commerce war relies on attrition, and as an instrument of coercive diplomacy it has all the drawbacks of being uncertain in its timing and its effects. Because of the general interest in safe passage, there could be little confidence that the conflict would remain limited. The attacking power would therefore have to hold back the majority of its forces to cover their primary missions.

The last scenario, involving conflict with another power in the region, is the most plausible, and Indonesia is located closest to Australia and lies across the sealanes between Western Australia and East Asia. The scale of submarine threat will, however, remain limited for several years to come, even if there is a shift in political alignment and a build-up of naval armaments.

In formulating a collective threat from these scenarios, we see that they all originate to the north of Australia, that the closest lies over 2,000 miles from the Australian Bight, and that the others originate between 3,500-6,000 miles away. These latter distances imply a very high proportion of time spent in transit to the operating area, and diesel submarines would need to replenish en route if they were to spend a useful time on station.

The submarine problem can be tackled from two directions. By reducing the threat, and by improving the defence. One way of reducing the threat is to attack at source. Given the distances and the relative capabilities involved, this would only be practical against Indonesia and perhaps India. The success record of air attacks against submarine facilities is not high, and a surface strike force would be hard put to survive attacks from land- and sea-based forces as it closed its target. Submarine mine-laying is a practical option, although uncertain in its effect.

A more certain way of reducing the threat is to route shipping as far from enemy bases and as close to one's own as possible. A sure way of strengthening the defence is by concentration of force. This argues for a single shipping route to and from Australia. In face of a threat from East Asia, this defended approach would run south from Spencer Gulf or Port Phillip Bay to about latitude 50°. If Indonesia or India were the enemy, the route would run south-east from Sydney. In both cases, maritime forces operating out of Tasmania could cover the outer reaches of the route. Merchant ships would make for the southern end of the defended approach by a circuitous route, maintaining the maximum distance between themselves and enemy submarine bases.

In considering the effectiveness of such a system, we start from the fact that no group of countries has the resources to provide continuous protection to all its shipping, and only in the North Atlantic does the scale of threat and concentration of Western forces allow a trans-oceanic convoy system to be contemplated. Elsewhere, ships are escorted to and from the focal area, beyond which they seek safety in dispersion. To argue that we have to protect peacetime shipping routes between the Persian Gulf and Cape Leeuwin is to ignore the advantages to be derived from evasive routing and the concentration of force.

However, the concealment formerly provided by the ocean expanses has been breached by satellite surveillance and the availability of such intelligence to the enemy would be a factor in deciding on the type of convoy policy to adopt beyond the defended approach route. A second factor would be the presence or absence of nuclear submarines in the opposing force. A nuclear submarine, vectored onto an undefended convoy with satellite intelligence, would be limited only by the number and reliability of the weapons it carried. Better to have the submarine scour the oceans for its prey, and delay forming a convoy until within range of ASW forces. Appropriately enough, the process of bringing ships together in the lower forties would be reminiscent of mustering free-ranging sheep or cattle for droving, and would require similar capabilities, with ships and aircraft acting as the dogs. It would also imply the existence of a control-of-shipping network in Pacific and Indian Ocean ports, whereby ships would be routed to converge at about the same place and time, although the accumulating convoy could cruise in the lower forties,

adding ships to its company. The weather would mostly be atrocious, and while professional opinion differs as to whether this would affect a torpedo-attack submarine as much as the ASW forces, the advantage of distance lies with the defence.

This system would be suitable for all import shipping and most export shipping, but what of the mineral resources being shipped direct from ports on the north-west coast, at present mainly to Japan? If the threat came from Indonesia, one can envisage Japan joining forces with Australia to fight a series of convoys through the archipelago, but given the type of Indonesian capability which underlies this scenario, this is not a very realistic option. Attrition among merchant ships and escorts would be high as they sailed through narrow and often shallow waters, attacked by land- and sea-based weapon systems operating from the shelter of the islands. It would be safer and less costly to accept diversion and sail these ships in coastal convoy, south about, to join an ocean convoy departing by the protected route. These coastal convoys would comprise the regular coastal shipping, plus the import and export cargoes which cannot be moved to and from the ocean convoy terminals by land transportation. About 80% of coastal cargoes comprise bulk products (about half petroleum, half minerals) and, by tonnage, roughly half the movement is concentrated between Newcastle and Spencer Gulf, that is, in the south-eastern sector.

Turning to the protection of this shipping, the importance of a properly thought-out stockpiling policy is hard to exaggerate. In the initial stages of a conflict it provides time to organise the defences and convert ships and aircraft for ASW, while shipping is held back in safety and enemy submarines use up patrol time. During the course of the conflict, it provides the buffer stocks which allow convoys to be organised to meet the requirements for effective defence rather than the demands of the economy. With limited ASW forces and an unpredictable scale of enemy attack, convoy schedules need to be organised to achieve the necessary concentration of force, rather than an even flow of supplies.

The most extreme example of the principle would be to allow only one convoy at sea at a time. In practice, the requirements for defending the ocean and coastal convoys are likely to be sufficiently distinct for them not to detract from each other's protection. Arriving and departing ocean convoys can be scheduled so that only one is at sea at a time, escort forces working a shuttle, with no dead time in transit. For example, one 60-ship convoy every 10 days, inwards and outwards, would represent over 20% of individual ship-arrivals in peacetime, and a much higher proportion of import tonnage. This is probably an over-generous target for short-term austerity conditions.

The scheduling of coastal convoys is less critical, since protection requirements (including minesweeping) can be met with extemporary measures covered by the surge capability. Besides filling ASW equipment to the ships and aircraft used in regulating the offshore zone, helicopter pads can be added to the tankers and bulk carriers which ply the coastal trade, and maximum use would be made of shore-based support. In addition, suitable ships in the convoy can be issued with weapon kits, which are transferred to other ships on reaching port, the kits being designed to add to the convoy's ASW capability. Of particular relevance is the ARAPAHO concept, which uses specially fitted

With limited ASW forces
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standard containers to provide loaded container ships with the capability to carry and operate ASW helicopters. Other examples include towed sonar arrays and homing torpedoes.

In Australia's case, the ARAPAHO concept cannot be used for ocean convoys, and the requirements for open ocean ASW limits the opportunities for temporary measures. However, the use of a single defended approach-route tailors these requirements to acceptable dimensions. It also raises the question of whether to install a fixed surveillance system (such as SOSUS) to cover this approach quadrant, which would also be relevant to the threat of submarine-missile attack against south-eastern Australia. The costs are, however, prohibitive, although there might be a case for the large tug-towed passive arrays which the Americans are now introducing. Long-range maritime patrol aircraft would be a key element of the ocean ASW effort, and could be reinforced by converted civilian airliners whose primary role would be to lay and monitor very large sonobuoy fields. Although the alignment of the approach and the location of the gathering/dispersal zone would change continually, it would always be within range of sustained shore-based air support.

Surface ASW forces are equally essential, and the need for helicopter-carrying escorts, capable of operating effectively in these stormy seas is self-evident. Less certain in terms of cost/effectiveness is the requirement for a larger, air-capable ship, and the relative importance of its contribution must depend on the level of shore-based air support which can be ensured. There would seem to be no essential requirement for sea-based fixed-wing air in this geographical scenario, and the need, if any, is to reinforce the ASW helicopter capability of the escort force.

We can now return to the first scenario of a threat to the flow of Middle East oil, and whether this contingency should be covered in naval requirements. There are several reasons against this. The flow of Middle East oil is most likely to be interrupted by internal political disruption or military action by land-based forces, and the only way to guard against this possibility is to diversify the sources of supply. Meanwhile, Australian shipments are very small compared to the oil going to North America, Europe and Japan, and the main responsibility and response must lie with them. But the most important reason is that if Australian maritime forces are to be able to handle the broader range of threats closer to home, they must be optimised to exploit the unique geographical scenario which provides them with the chance of success. Australia may wish to contribute to an international force in the Arabian Sea, but this possibility should not influence the basic design of their ships and aircraft.

Projecting Military Force Ashore

The purpose of projecting force ashore in peacetime can be (1) to support a state against an external military threat, (2) to coerce a state or regime, (3) to affect the balance of an internal struggle for power, or (4) to secure the safety of Australian interests and property. These purposes generate different types of military requirement, the major distinction lying between supportive and coercive intervention.

In the case of supportive intervention, a measure of cooperation by the country being supported can be assumed, and the requirement is to deliver some additional capability as necessary to redress the military balance. Coercive intervention (actual or latent) requires the capability to deliver preponderant military force, the scale of which will differ within three main categories. At the bottom of the scale is the short, sharp rectifying operation, or coup-de-main. In the middle comes coercion by the threat (or application) of punishment, such as a punitive expedition or an air strike. And at the high end of the scale is coercion by military takeover or occupation.

Relative military capabilities in S.E. Asia mean that, except for the coup-de-main, coercive intervention is not a practical option against states in the area, nor would it have political utility. Supportive intervention, meanwhile, presents few military problems in terms of delivering the additional capability, and if there is a requirement for a rapid response, this is best met by air. Attention is therefore focused on the possible requirement for coercive intervention in the islands and territories in the South West Pacific and in Papua New Guinea.

Australia might consider it essential to intervene in Papua New Guinea, if the government offered an unfriendly major power extensive rights and facilities within its borders. Power disparities are so great, and PNG lies so close, that an Australian military take-over could be mounted without much difficulty. This could rely primarily on airborne assault, with merchant ships providing the lift for succeeding echelons. While participation by carrier-borne fixed-wing aircraft would be useful, comparable support can be provided by other means.

There would be similar grounds for concern if an unfriendly major power sought to establish itself on one of the islands in the S.W. Pacific, but this poses a different type of problem in terms of access and speedy response. These states and territories lie 700 to 2,000 miles from the Australian coast and, although the main islands boast an airfield, access to most of them is normally by sea. Where reaction time is critical, an airborne response may still be necessary, but there is clearly a requirement for a long-range seaborne intervention capability.

Before considering what that implies in terms of ship characteristics, we need to survey the record of military intervention since the war. Supportive intervention has a good record on the whole, and is still considered to have political utility as an instrument of overseas policy. So, too, does coercive intervention by coup-de-main, and also by military takeover, except where it involves a long, drawn-out struggle. In the case of the islands in the South West Pacific, the capabilities required for a coup-de-main and a military takeover shade into each other, and they are also similar to those required for supportive intervention.

The capabilities required for coercive intervention by punishment are different, and there are considerable doubts about the continuing value of this type of intervention, particularly when air strike is the chosen means. It may damage and frighten, but it also forges political opposition and the individuals will to resist.

We can, therefore, exclude from our requirements the need for a fixed-wing strike capability in this context. Can we also exclude the fixed-wing air superiority aircraft? I would argue yes. One must assume that ANZUS will not allow command of the air in the S.W. Pacific to pass to an unfriendly power, and the distance between islands will allow a measure of conventional shore-based fighter cover, should it be required. There is also the "Big Momma" concept, where air cover is provided by a converted Jumbo Jet carrying intercept radar and air-supremacy stand-off weapons, such as Phoenix. Meanwhile, surface ships can be fitted with SAM, and it is relevant that Soviet units rely on this approach in areas of high air threat like the Eastern Mediterranean.

A long-range intervention capability can be provided by several smaller ships, or a few larger ones. The balance of advantage lies with larger unit, not least because of its potential in other roles. Large ships can carry helicopters as well as landing craft, and be fitted with self-defence systems and a range of sensors. Bearing in mind that, at worst, landings will be only lightly opposed, the attractions of a dock-type hull must be weighed against the loss of usable space which may be critical to other roles.

Peacetime Force Structure

Drawing together the four separate analyses, we see a fairly sharp distinction between the type of forces required for distant-water operations (ocean ASW and the projection of force ashore), and those which take place within the offshore zone (regulation, coastal convoy, and defence against sea-borne assault). We also notice that, in the main, the latter involve comparatively simple vehicles, whose ASW and/or anti-invasion potential can be increased relatively rapidly should either such threat develop. This surge capability builds on existing peacetime requirements for coastal shipping and regulating the offshore zone, and would expand into a pre-existing military cadre, configured for war. The resultant fighting posture would rely heavily on shore-based weapon and sensor systems.

The distant water forces pose a more difficult problem. First, the requirement to operate in distant waters places higher demands in terms of vehicle design and performance. Second, there are inherent limits to the contribution which land-based units can make. And, third, ocean ASW involves an extremely sophisticated type of warfare, demanding integrated systems, teamwork, and a high level of training and practice. None of these requirements lend themselves to extemporary responses, and this argues for a core force. However, in defining the characteristics of this force, we face the complication that its two primary missions are radically different: ASW operations against a sophisticated enemy; and projecting force ashore in the face of relatively slight opposition.

The requirement for continuous training in ASW severely limits the extent to which interchangeable modular design can provide a solution. Unless we are willing to totally discount the submarine threat, a substantial proportion, perhaps all the distant-water surface units, need a sophisticated ASW capability, and there is a similar requirement for dedicated long-range air.

However, on the favourable side of the account, there is no requirement for a sophisticated force projection capability. Furthermore, there is no air or surface threat in the ASW scenario, nor is there in the force projection scenario, anyway at present. However, worst-case assumptions about the latter would have to allow for the future emergence of a low-intensity threat from missile and torpedo armed coastal craft, and of a strictly limited threat from manned aircraft.

The analysis also leads to the conclusion that there is no essential requirement for sea-based, fixed-wing air in the ASW, strike, reconnaissance or air defences roles, although of course it would be nice to have. The future possibility of a low-intensity threat from manned aircraft in the South West Pacific can be adequately covered by shore-based air cover and point defence systems. There remain, however, a cluster of requirements which can best be met by a helicopter carrier with an amphibious assault capability. These requirements are projecting force ashore, countering patrol craft, and escorting ocean convoys.

We now have a feasible structure for Australia's maritime forces in peacetime, based on cadre and core components, an organising concept which reflects time responsiveness as opposed to the Hi-Lo mix, which reflects threat intensity. I will not attempt to fill in the details or to review all the different aspects of maritime warfare, such as the use of mines in thwarting seaborne attacks on Australia or in securing the passage of ocean shipping. I must, however, touch briefly on the main component of the core force. It would seem sensible to think in terms of two task groups, each comprising one small helicopter carrier and 4-5 distant-water ASW ships; two task groups provide an important element of flexibility in peacetime, and allow for continuous operations (such as convoy work) in war. The helicopter carrier, which might displace 12,000 to 15,000 tons, would be primarily configured for ASW, including VDS and other hull-mounted systems. It would be designed to carry a dual-purpose missile launcher (ASW or SAM) and perhaps a number of point-defence weapons, but there is no reason to fit these systems until the threat of submarine or aircraft attack becomes more real. A strictly limited weapon's fit will allow the incorporation of a through-deck, which facilitates the recovery of remote piloted vehicles (RPV) and the use of STOL aircraft for trucking functions, including sowing sonobuoy fields. The ship would be designed to carry landing craft when required, and in this mode it would embark a smaller number of helicopters, to allow space for troops and their equipment. As a design determinant, the capability to project force ashore would be secondary, since there is no requirement to assault heavily defended areas.

What difference would it make to the essential characteristics of the core force if we added the requirement to be able to operate as a component of a larger allied force, when the threat could be more varied and intense than in the geographically protected Australian and S.W. Pacific scenarios? The difference in characteristics is less than might be expected. Australian units will already be optimised for ASW, they can be covered by the main force's long-range air defences, and the long-range, surface-to-surface capability can lie elsewhere in the force. The one serious deficiency would be point air-defence, and maximum flexibility would be achieved if all the distant water ASW ships had a modest anti-air capability. However, a word of warning, since it is at this stage that the pressures towards peer group emulation become strongest. Unless the Australian navy is seen to have a key role in alliance diplomacy,

there is no intrinsic reason why the force should be designed to meet requirements other than those which stem from Australia's geo-strategic circumstances, except when operational flexibility can be added at relatively little cost in terms of alternative capabilities foregone or additional expenditures.

A major difference between the foregoing proposals and present capabilities and procurement priorities is the absence of sea-based, fixed-wing air. This partly reflects the geographical focus, but it also reflects the diminishing utility of this particular capability. Until about fifteen years ago, only a small proportion of a carrier's aircraft had to be devoted to force defence, the remainder being available for such tasks as reconnaissance or strike. The steady proliferation of sophisticated weapon systems among newly independent states is altering relative power gradients radically and, when operating within range of hostile shore-based systems, a carrier force now has to devote a disproportionate share of its resources to remaining afloat. A small to medium-sized carrier could be totally preoccupied with this requirement, which places a lower limit on useful size and, for a country like Australia, virtually dictates that it can only afford a single unit, with all that implies in loss of flexibility. Meanwhile, an increasing number of the tasks which were formerly discharged by fixed-wing carrier aircraft can now be carried out by various types of RPV or missile, whose full potential has yet to be assessed.

Another difference concerns the role of strike aircraft against major surface units, which provides part of the fixed-wing carrier's traditional justification. Given the nature of the threat (including Soviet naval forces), I just do not understand the present emphasis on the long-range and anti-surface strike role, nor does this seem a serious problem in the future. The value of long-range, anti-shipping missiles launched by land-based aircraft in the counter-invasion role has already been acknowledged, but, given the politico-strategic warning involved, it should be necessary to maintain only a very limited capability in the current inventory.

I have not discussed the submarine force which, besides having a potential role in ASW and in countering assaults on Australia, can carry out interdiction operations in waters where control of the surface and air is in the hands of the enemy. Even though there is no immediate requirement for the latter capability, it provides an important element of flexibility at relatively little cost. Whether the Oberon class is best suited to Australia's particular circumstances is another matter. It can be argued that the full span of requirements would be better covered by a boat whose design had been optimised for operations in the Mediterranean rather than the Atlantic Ocean.

As a final point, let me emphasise the importance to the cadre concept of good intelligence and an effective naval reserve structure. The cadre approach makes it easier to achieve the latter, because of heightened relevance and interest, while mobile simulators allow the reserves to be organised on a territorial basis and facilitate their training. Good intelligence has to rely heavily on contributions by friendly countries, particularly the USA, and this requires that Australia have something to offer in exchange, such as the location of U.S. facilities on Australian soil.

Regional Maritime Capabilities

We can now turn to the matter of Australia as a regional seapower. Judgements about the type of regional policies which will best serve Australia's interests are separate from those concerning the utility or the cost-effectiveness of maritime forces as instruments of such policies, and this discussion focuses on the latter.

Within the context of a regional policy, maritime forces have two main roles. They can secure the passage of shipping throughout the region against attempts to prevent such use. And they can bring military power (latent or applied) to bear in distant sea areas. In considering the latter role, we must distinguish between coercive and supportive intervention and recognise that the latter implies the availability of friendly facilities ashore. In the latter circumstances, the attack carrier has the attraction of bringing pre-packaged firepower to bear, but it is not necessarily (or even usually) the most appropriate form of support. Land-based forces can provide a much broader spectrum of response and can be tailored to meet specific requirements. They can be brought to the area by sea or by air, but naval involvement becomes necessary only if attempts are made to prevent the passage of such ships.

The Indian Ocean

The geography of the Indian Ocean means that it cannot be considered as a single region, and it is best thought of in terms of the main axes of movement and groups of littoral states. There are three clusters of naval power in the region: the main one, located in the north-west quadrant and extending from Somalia to India : the Republic of South Africa : and Australia. South Africa is linked to the north-west quadrant by the major axis of oil shipments, but Australia is so far removed from these areas of activity (some 4,000-5,000 miles), that it is effectively in another ocean.

Australia depends on imports from many parts of the globe and, perforce, has to rely on the common interest in the safe passage of shipping in those distant waters to secure her supplies. There is no good reason why the Arabian Sea should be treated as an exception and, in any case, the necessary independent capability is well beyond Australia's income.

Similar arguments apply to bringing force to bear in distant parts of the region. Australia is not in a position to compete with the emergence of India as a dominant maritime power in the northern part of the region. Attempts to do so would invite a naval arms race, and the purposeful extension of India's influence into the southern part of the region. As for the limited Soviet naval presence in the north-west quadrant, Australian maritime forces could probably match their capability, but Australia lacks the substantive power for such a deployment to provide any kind of political counterpoise in the area.

It would therefore seem to be in Australia's best interests to limit her concerns in the Indian Ocean to the south-eastern sector, and leave the rest of this vast region for others to worry about.

South East Asia

Although this is an area of immediate concern to Australia, the scope for maritime forces to influence developments in the region is very limited. The size of the various national forces means that Australia's capability for coercive intervention in the region is negligible, even if it were thought to have political utility. Maritime forces might be required to secure the shipment of military support to a friendly state in the region, but this would mean that Australia was taking sides in an intra-regional conflict, and the need for maritime escort implies that Indonesia would be on the other side.

Individual military convoys could probably be fought through, if one allowed that attacks on the territory of the opposing coastal states were politically acceptable. However, Australia would not have (and could not develop) the capability to secure the use of the narrow and frequently shallow waters in this region for the uninterrupted flow of commerce against sustained opposition. If local states sought to prevent such use, the most cost-effective response is to accept the diversion of transit shipping, and seek to resolve the problem by means other than military.

The South-West Pacific

A very small quotient of military power has immense leverage in this scattered region. Australia and New Zealand are seen as the natural leaders of a co-operative protectorate, their role being accepted as legitimate and beneficial by the majority of the micro-states in the area. The institution of the South West Pacific Forum was a fruitful development, which served to distance the region from great-power preoccupations and this general trend should be encouraged.

It is clearly in Australia's interest to exclude China and Russia from this region, but, for this to be possible, it will also be necessary to exclude the USA. Australia should therefore seek US acceptance of an ANZAC version of the Monroe Doctrine in the South West Pacific, and the proposal that the region be declared a non-nuclear zone should be welcomed. The boundaries of such a region are a matter for discussion, and it would obviously be simplest if the Australian mainland was not included. If, however, this were not possible, the affected territory could be limited to the area east of (say) 150°, and need not affect existing bilateral arrangements in other parts of Australia.

Antarctica

Australia has territorial claims to Antarctica, which lies some 1,300 n.m. south of Tasmania, and the region could assume importance in the future as a source of raw materials. By virtue of its relative proximity, Australia is in a better position than most countries to bring force to bear in the region, if need be. These factors are not, however, of sufficient importance to influence

the characteristics of the distant-water forces. The concept of Australia engaging major war to secure the use of these resources is not realistic in present-day circumstances and presupposes a radical shift in national attitudes and in the world resource situation. Even then, such a concept would still have to face the problem that it is relatively easy to prevent the extraction of resources, particularly in areas such as the Antarctic and extremely difficult to exploit such resources in the face of opposition. Despite complexity of the issues involved, some form of negotiated settlement still seems the most likely outcome.

Australian activities in Antarctica require seaborne logistic support, and there is no intrinsic reason why this should be seen as a military commitment. It is, however, possible that if this special requirement were added to existing naval requirements for afloat support, the procurement of an additional underway replenishment vessel could be justified. This would, of course, provide greater flexibility in respect to all distant-water missions.

Conclusions

The first conclusion to be drawn from this brief survey is that Australia's defence requirements are manageable. Its geographical location, the scale and nature of possible threats, and the availability of politico-strategic warning, combine to produce a situation which is potentially more secure than that of most comparable states. However, to ensure that potential security requires a defence policy tailored to Australia's special circumstances, rather than one based on general-purpose forces.

Neither of the two main threats, seizure of Australian territory and attacks on Australian sea lines of communication are very likely at this time. Both are conceivable in the future. Of the two, the resource grab is the more plausible, since it offers the assailant some concrete benefits, whereas the attacks on shipping provide no direct returns. However, the disruption of sea communications is more difficult to prevent and in the long term could be more lethal. Therefore, both threats demand equal attention.

An assault on Australian territory could come by air and/or sea, the airborne mode being the most likely for the initial echelons of a major attempt at invasion. The basic requirements for a rapidly deployable air-defence capability is therefore clear, as is the requirement to be able to wreak destruction at long range against successful lodgements, and although these are best handled by land-based forces, they provide an important backdrop to maritime operations.

The fact that the latter take place relatively close to shore, in order to achieve maximum concentration of force, has important implications in terms of naval force requirements for these missions, since they can build on the resources required to regulate the offshore zone. Regulating the offshore zone and rebuffing an assault on Australian territory lie at opposite ends of the same spectrum and, if the armed forces are to be able to exploit this potential

in times of rising threat, it is essential that they participate actively in a collective approach to regulating the offshore zone in peacetime. This new requirement should be seen as an opportunity and not an incubus, since skillful bilateral negotiations can use the 200 n.m. EEZ to enhance Australia's territorial integrity at little or no extra cost.

The maritime defence against seaborne assault and the protection of coastal shipping rely on the existence of cadre forces in peacetime. By contrast, the protection of ocean shipping requires the existence of a core force, not because the battle will be more intense (probably the reverse), but because of the time it takes to develop an effective anti-submarine capability. This specialised requirement, which is deliberately tailored to a favourable geographical scenario south of Australia and does not envisage an air or surface threat, provides the primary justification for distant-water surface forces in peacetime. The secondary justification is the requirement to project force ashore in the South West Pacific against limited opposition (which may include a low-intensity surface and air threat), as a means of exercising Australian influence and/or denying access to the region by unfriendly powers.

The analysis suggests that such a core force would best be structured around two task groups, each centred on a relatively small through-deck helicopter carrier. The latter would be designed primarily for ASW, but would be capable of amphibious assault and operations against missile and patrol craft. Although optimised for operations within range of shore-based air support, these task groups would have an organic ASW capability and be able to operate independently in the face of a low-intensity air and surface threat. They would also be able to operate as effective components of an allied force operating in the face of a high-intensity threat, assuming that organic air defence is available.

This is a very respectable naval capability, which would allow Australia to play the role of a regional seapower in the South West Pacific and in the south-eastern sector of the Indian Ocean, and to act with its allies in more distant areas. But what of the South East Asian region? The area is of such immediate importance that it is natural to think of using Australian military force to affect the outcome of events in the region. However, as we discovered earlier in this paper, the concept becomes increasingly unattractive as one thinks through the full implications. In respect to naval operations, the geography of the area favours the coastal states, and the continued proliferation of sophisticated weapon systems means that this unfavourable bias can only increase. The capability to project maritime power throughout the region will therefore become increasingly costly.

This is not to deny the importance to Australia of developments in Papua New Guinea and the nearer Indonesian islands, but the military problem must be seen in its full tri-service dimensions, including the role of deterrence. It is true that a fixed-wing carrier would increase the navy's capacity to operate in the area, but the distances involved mean that such a capability comes within the category of "nice to have" rather than necessity. The advantages it would bring in this limited scenario are certainly not sufficient to justify skewing the more fundamental requirements for distant-water forces, and forfeiting the flexibility provided by a "two task-group" fleet structure.

Finally, we should note that the concept of Australia as a regional seapower is deleterious, since it focuses attention on one branch of service to the exclusion of the others. We should, instead, talk of Australian capability to bring military force to bear in adjacent regions by whatever means are appropriate. In the South West Pacific the navy can certainly play a predominant role, but in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia it is likely to take second place to army and air components.

By making the best use of each service's attributes and by exploiting Australia's geographical circumstances, we can have more military capability at far less cost, both for use as an instrument of policy in peacetime and to defend Australia in war. Tying these capabilities to a specific (if extensive) geographic scenario implies a notional loss of flexibility to discharge hypothetical "general purpose" missions elsewhere in the world. But that capability is a great-power luxury, which Australia neither needs nor can afford, and its absence would be more than compensated for by the improved capability to meet more tangible requirements. These are of two kinds. In the short term, Australia must be able to project force against limited opposition in adjacent regions, as necessary to prevent developments which could threaten its vital interests. In the longer term, Australia must be able to build up its forces at short notice, as necessary to defend against a range of possible threats which may emerge in the future.

This requires the correct balance between current and future requirements, between investment in cadre and core components. In the case of maritime forces, the intelligent use of geography, combined with the concept of a cadre force for the offshore zone and a core force for distant-water operations, would provide considerable flexibility and allow Australia to cover a wide range of current requirements and future contingencies. It would also provide an effective naval force in being, optimised for operations in the waters of greatest concern to Australia.

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Finally, we should note that the concept of Australia as a regional power is debatable, since it focuses attention on one branch of service to the exclusion of the others. We should, instead, talk of Australian capability to bring military force to bear in adjacent regions by whatever means are appropriate. In the South West Pacific the navy can certainly play a predominant role, but in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia it is likely to take second place to army and air components.

By making the best use of each service's attributes and by exploiting Australia's geographical circumstances, we can have more military capability at far less cost, both for use as an instrument of policy in pacific and to defend Australia in war. Tying these capabilities to a specific (if extensive) geographic scenario lightens a notional loss of flexibility to discharge hypothetical "general purpose" missions elsewhere in the world. But that capability is a great-power luxury, which Australia neither needs nor can afford, and its absence would be more than compensated for by the improved capability to meet more tangible requirements. There are of two kinds. In the short term, Australia must be able to project force against limited opposition in adjacent regions, as necessary to prevent developments which could threaten its vital interests. In the longer term, Australia must be able to build up its forces at short notice, as necessary to defend against a range of possible threats which may emerge in the future.

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