



2013 RUSI WA BLAMEY ORATION

The Army's Role in a Maritime Strategy

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It is a great pleasure to address Western Australian Branch of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) today. I am honoured to be able to accept your invitation to speak here on a topic near and dear to my heart *'The Role of the Army in a Maritime Strategy.'* I spoke on this subject to the RUSI of NSW last month, but tonight I will take a slightly different tack in arriving at the same conclusion. A nation is best served by an ADF that is capable of delivering a maritime strategy, and that the ADF that does that is best served by being a joint force, where the sum is much greater than its component parts, the Navy, Air Force and Army.

At the outset, may I compliment RUSI on being one of the great thinking institutions, which has consistently provided a professional forum for the discussion of Defence and Security issues affecting Australia. This branch has a unique perspective on our security climate. The sense of distance and isolation of Western Australians has always given you an acute sense of the importance of national security. The current Minister is a Western Australian, as is the opposition spokesman for Defence. Kim Beazley was a much respected Minister who fought Western Australia's corner during his distinguished service. And even more importantly, Western Australia has long been home to one of our most distinguished military units, the Special Air Service Regiment.

My current visit is even more significant to me and to the Army, as I am to present a Battle Honor to that fine Regiment. As our commitment to Afghanistan draws down, it is fitting that the exceptional efforts of our Special Forces soldiers in that conflict are recognised. No Battle Honor has been awarded to the Australian Army since the end of the Vietnam War. This one is richly deserved and is a fitting tribute to the courage and sacrifice of all our men and women who have served in that theatre. There are some interesting parallels between the end of the Vietnam conflict and our current strategic circumstances and I will address some of the implications tonight.

As the state adjacent to the Indian Ocean, which is the powerhouse of our mining industry, much of what I say here may risk sounding like conventional wisdom. The debate about China, our burgeoning mineral export markets, the rise of India and the security of our offshore resource fields has long been grist to the policy discussion mill in Western Australia. Your business and political communities have led Australia into the Indo Pacific era. Long before the term became fashionable among policy analysts, Western Australians knew we were entering the Asian Century and that our strategic future was entwined with the security of the Indo-Pacific region. Of course just last week the Government released a new Defence White Paper, which embraces that terminology and commits the ADF to calibrating its development to match the shift in our regional balance of power.

I and the other service Chiefs were pleased that it confirmed our major force structure and modernisation plans. The army's role in our declaratory maritime strategy is one of my predominant concerns, as are plans to develop a modest joint force projection capability into our immediate archipelagic approaches and the wider South Pacific. I am appropriately a part of the debate on what is the best national strategy for my country's future. I served, as a junior and mid ranking officer, through a time when I think we it was less appropriate to our strategic circumstances; we tended to turn inward, we sought security through our geographic isolation: It lead to a distortion in our defence force structure that has taken twelve years of operations and too much blood and treasure to correct. I agree fundamentally with the British scholar Colin S. Gray, who expressed in his book, *"Another Bloody Century"* that "if the troops cannot do it, strategy is mere vanity".

Force structures and inventories are not formed in a vacuum. They are derived from our assessments of both the changing character of conflict and the changing complexion of the regional and global political systems. This White Paper takes a measured, realistic view of the seismic shifts in power relations in our immediate region and commits Australia to enhanced collaboration with all of our significant neighbors.

In particular, I welcome the enhanced cooperation with our friends in Indonesia. As Chief of Army I have devoted a great deal of time and energy to developing closer ties with TNI. In this I am following the leadership of our CDF General David Hurley, and the Minister for Defence Stephen Smith. This is a prudent investment in our security as the peaceful resolution of the East Timor crisis in 1999 emphatically demonstrated. And I believe our improved dialogue and training exchanges with Indonesia provide the most impressive and viable template for our wider military to military engagement in the region and beyond. That the Indo-Asia-Pacific region is in dynamic state of flux is beyond dispute. The tenor of global events over the next few decades will be decided by how well all the nations of this region manage the rapid rise of China, India, as well as Indonesia in addition to the continued, indeed enhanced presence of the United States as it pivots west from its Cold War focus on Europe.

I consider myself simultaneously an optimist and a realist. I am optimistic because relative peace has prevailed in North East Asia since the end of major combat operations in Korea, notwithstanding the existence of numerous seemingly intractable territorial disputes, major nuclear armed powers including one which is wildly unpredictable, namely North Korea. I attribute this largely to a normative system which has been shaped by the United States. Let me explain what I mean by this, because I think the system of norms to which I am referring is of immense significance in preventing conventional military conflict in a volatile region, which is the fulcrum of global growth. Only last month I was in Hawaii to address the Association of the United States Army Land Power in the Pacific Conference. I was struck by the significance of the setting for that important gathering of military professionals from our immediate region and beyond. After all, it was the Japanese attack on those islands, in 1941, which brought the United States abruptly into the great global conflagration of that time, the Second World War. It set in motion seismic historical forces, which continue to shape the security environment for our nation. How that status quo evolves will determine the security of Australian territory and its wider global interests for the remainder of this century.

For much of the last decade the ADF has been engaged in irregular war against non-state actors. Some have suggested that the future of conflict will look much like the last decade. We cannot assume that this will be the case. We are witnessing the escalation of interstate rivalry which has/will influence security considerations in the Indo-Pacific. This is inevitable. Indeed global stability, like nature, abhors a vacuum. Stability relies on good order. The alternative is anarchy. That does not mean that a single power must dominate the globe militarily. However, it does depend on a robust and applicable system of norms. Sadly, the much proclaimed 'End of History' never eventuated. The reverberations of the events of 7 December 1941 continue to ripple among all the nations of Asia and the littoral states of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The existing order is in flux. And to avoid anarchy the United States must adapt the existing normative order to promote buy in from rising powers.

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has been indisputably the greatest maritime power in history and our most important ally, eclipsing Great Britain in both of those roles after 1941. Furthermore, less than two decades after the end of those hostilities, Japan had become one of Australia's most important trading partners.

The emergence of the United States as the dominant global maritime power has been the single most influential factor, which has defined the Australian approach to both grand strategy, and its key element, maritime strategy, since 1945. It shaped the global order under which Australia enjoyed unprecedented growth and prosperity. The "Pax-Americana" has been unlike any other in history. Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the perennial debate about whether the United States is an Imperial Power has been resumed with unusual intensity and, on occasions encouraged. I find this an abstract debate characterized more by moral posturing than useful insights into the character of the global order, which I can utilise in my profession. Suffice it to say I believe that the United States has been, from an Australian perspective, the indispensable power since 1942.

Rather than through accruing a formal colonial empire, the United States has exercised its influence through the creation of a normative system, which has benefitted this nation, the West, and ultimately a significant portion of the world's population. Although American maritime supremacy has been the skeleton supporting this normative system, its sinews, arteries and organs have been constituted by a complex, mutually supporting system of institutions, forums and alliances from the United Nations, The International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to NATO and in our case ANZUS. Following the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944, the world's trade has flowed relatively free of interruption, courtesy, in part, of US sea power. From an Australian perspective these were not free public goods. We have been willing to pay a price in blood and treasure to uphold this benign global order. The golden thread of pragmatism, which bestows coherence on our military and strategic history, has been our consistent, unyielding support to the maintenance of that global order.

How does my emphasis on 'norms' assist us in deciphering the emerging world, with renewed superpower competition? And how does this relate to the Australian Army? To me norms are vital as they represent shared standards of conduct adhered to by members of a social group, or international community. They need not be codified, as they are almost intuitive, yet they are powerful nonetheless. While I have described a number of institutions and international treaties above, I believe the shared norms that bind a diverse range of nations to the stability of the current global system are as follows: a benign global security order which prohibits the arbitrary use of force and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) while encouraging a free global economy, the expansion of stable democratic states and a shared responsibility for the natural environment. It is becoming clear that our collective concern for freedom of navigation and commerce is now being matched by a concern that the new global commons, cyber space, be utilised with respect for the property, privacy and the sanctity of the individual.

For a time, some asserted that after the demise of the Soviet Union such norms would be uncontested and a new world order underpinned by universal democratic states, free markets and human rights would replace the bi-polar balance of terror of the cold War. We now know that this was wishful thinking.

Even before the brief American moment had passed, it was proving more difficult to shape such norms due to the proliferation of players including NGOs and other non-state actors, compounded by the diffusion of identity, which has gathered pace with the inception of social media. Added to this, is that a number of rising powers have demonstrated that they are willing to enjoy the benefits of this normative system, while contributing very selectively to its maintenance. It stands to reason that a system created at the height of US dominance would face challenges in the event that such dominance declined in relative terms. Be assured that I do not subscribe to theories of American decline. But it is beyond dispute that global power is becoming more diffuse and while no nation will rival US maritime power in the next few decades, both in the Middle East and Indo-Asia-Pacific zones regional powers may enjoy some local advantages over US military or commercial power. In that context the US pivot to this region is both welcome and inevitable. Clearly we are now entering a period in which the United States will seek support

from its allies to fashion new norms to govern the security, trading and political relations of the region in which we live.

As a mature, affluent nation with a long history of support to peace keeping and humanitarian operations as well as diplomatic support to an array of multi-national bodies, Australia must make its contribution to this process. I am heartened that the current White Paper offers scope for the implementation of military diplomacy and engagement in pursuit of this new normative order.

I believe that we are already proficient at this, but our drawdown from Afghanistan will permit a greater focus on this vital confidence building activity closer to home. Given the prevalence of substantial land forces among our regional neighbors, I envisage a significant role for the Australian Army as an effective arm of statecraft in this endeavor.

As an aside, I recently read *The East Asia Peace* by Mikael Weissemann. In this excellent work he reflects on the 'empirical paradox' whereby despite some of the largest military forces in the world, several intractable territorial disputes, a burgeoning arms races, a nuclear-armed rogue state, and few formal security agreements, peace has prevailed. He points to the contribution to this benign state of affairs that US power has made. One need not read too deeply between the lines to discern the effective operation of international norms adapted to our regional needs. And I share his view that a deep ongoing US military engagement is vital to its continuation.

How does this affect the Australian Army? Firstly, we have always been integral to the implementation of Australian Maritime Strategy. Australia's insular geography, but global interests, demands that it relies on Maritime Strategy to secure its interests. Obviously both demographic and fiscal realities ensure that we contribute to global stability and the freedom of the seas through supporting Coalitions of like-minded nations.

In every case of a significant threat to our interests, or to that international order, we have committed balanced joint, but predominantly land forces to those Coalitions. In both global conflicts of the last century the lead nation in the vast Coalition was the dominant Western Maritime power of the day. Every military commitment that we have made has conformed to the same strategic calculus.

Just as genuine maritime strategy intimately incorporates land forces, so today I believe we must broaden our conception of the elements of national power that contribute to maritime strategy. Today it is uncontroversial that Whole of Government solutions are important to most military deployments at the operational level and so I contend that if Sir Julian Corbett, the father of Maritime Strategy, were among us tonight he would regard it as essential that every aspect of our national power, including our normative influences be incorporated in the execution of Maritime Strategy.

The Australian Army is developing a modest amphibious capability and standard multi role combat brigades in order to be able to achieve the tasks allocated to us by the Government to be capable of sustained operations in the littoral areas of our region.

The current White Paper makes clear that the ability to provide security assistance across the spectrum from training and support to humanitarian intervention to our South Pacific neighbours is a core task for the ADF. This will require ready relevant land forces capable of rapid deployment in a joint or coalition setting. We demonstrated an impressive ability to achieve this effect in East Timor in 1999, though that operation exposed doctrinal and equipment deficiencies that rendered it a risky operation. We performed much better in the Solomon Islands in 2003 and in Timor L'Este in 2006. The current development trajectory of the Army, in concert with our joint partners, will ensure that we can do this in a less permissive environment against a credible peer competitor.

The world is changing and entering a challenging time. I am pleased and proud to be able to report to you today that I believe your Army is adapting appropriately to meet those challenges.

We are as tried in battle, better equipped than at any time in my career and well on the way to modernizing our force structure to make us leaner and more deployable.