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Transatlantic relations have reached a nadir under the presidency of Donald Trump and, if he is elected to a second term as United States president on 3 November 2020, may continue their downward spiral. Should, however, Joe Biden become the next United States president, transatlantic relations and international governance norms and institutions can be expected to experience a recovery, though with some caveats.

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea – Peter Sweeney
The pivotal Battle of the Bismarck Sea was fought on 2-4 March 1943. The United States Army Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force attacked an Imperial Japanese Navy convoy transporting 6900 Japanese army reinforcements from Rabaul to Lae. Eight Japanese transports, four of eight destroyers, and 20 of 100 fighter aircraft were destroyed for the loss of four allied aircraft. Only 1200 Japanese reinforcements reached Lae and 3000 perished at sea.

Australia’s national security over next 100 years: opportunities and challenges – Jim Molan
While Australia is now the world’s 14th most economically-powerful nation, it has only been able to focus on its economic development because, heretofore, it has not had to provide for its own defence. With United States power diminishing and China’s power increasing, Australia’s historic grand strategy is becoming unsustainable both militarily and economically. To craft a way forward for the next century, Australia needs first to develop a national security strategy.

OBITUARY

Colonel John Malcolm Hutcheson, MC
John Hutcheson Jr and Paul Irving
John Hutcheson, Vice-President of the Institute and a life member, has died aged 92 years.

H.M. Bark Endeavour by Ray Parkin – reviewed by Ken Broadhead
This is a beautifully-produced volume about H.M. Bark Endeavour and her first voyage to the south Pacific under the command of Captain James Cook RN in 1770.

An interesting point: a history of military aviation at Point Cook by Steve Campbell-Wright – reviewed by Bob Treloar
This is the 2nd edition of a centenary history of RAAF Base Point Cook, which also blends in the histories of the Australian Flying Corps and the Royal Australian Air Force.

William Holmes: the soldiers’ general by Geoffrey Travers – reviewed by Jon Breen
This is a biography of an eminent Australian citizen soldier and public administrator, Major-General William Holmes, CMG, DSO, VC, who was born in Sydney in 1862.

This book, through its analysis of the Supreme War Council and its subordinate committees, provides a detailed insight into the formulation of global allied strategy for 1918-19.

The Marshall Plan: dawn of the Cold War by Benn Steil – reviewed by Marcus Fielding
As World War II ended, General Marshall feared that, without American aid, key allies would be unable to build strong democracies. Steil provides a new perspective on the Marshall Plan.

Written in the sky by Mark Carr – reviewed by Bob Treloar
Written in the Sky is an autobiography of one man’s desire to fly, recording his efforts to achieve a boyhood dream and the challenges and rewards of realising his ambitions.

Sad joys on deployment by Greg Bruce – reviewed by David Lееce
This is the memoir of an orthopaedic surgeon in the Royal Australian Air Force Specialist Reserve who deployed overseas ten times on operations between 1995 and 2008.

Arunta Japanese, Australian, American and New Zealand naval vessels (JS Ise, JS Ashigara, HMAS Stuart, HMAS Arunta, USS Chafee and HNZS Manawanui) conducting a multinational group passage off Hawaii on 3 September 2020. Senator Molan (pp. 12–16) argues that Australia, in conjunction with regional allies, must develop greater defence self-reliance. [Photo: Department of Defence]
President’s Column

Welcome to the December 2020 issue of United Service which contains papers on declining relations between Europe and the United States under the Trump administration (Dr Gorana Grgić, University of Sydney); the diminution of American power and the need for Australia to develop greater defence self-reliance (Senator Jim Molan); and a look back at the pivotal Battle of the Bismarck Sea in World War II (Lieutenant Colonel Peter Sweeney); plus, seven very interesting book reviews.

We held our RUSI NSW annual general meeting virtually on 24 November 2020, and I was honoured to be elected your President for the next three years in succession to Major General Paul Irving. Paul has done a sterling job over the last four years in overseeing the move of our office and library from Defence Plaza to the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney. His inspiring leadership, detailed planning and exemplary dedication to the task has resulted in a new home of which we can all be extremely proud. On behalf of us all, I thank him most sincerely.

As incoming President, I want to both honour our distinguished past, whilst recognising the rapid and significant changes that are occurring within our geopolitical and societal worlds to which the Institute has to adapt and respond. I look forward to working with our incoming Board to develop and refine a ‘futures oriented’ RUSI NSW value proposition – one that will make the Institute attractive to both our existing membership and to our future partners.

One of the few positives of the COVID 19 pandemic has been to force us all to work more readily with electronic media, and I am heartened by the growth of interest from around the world in our online activities and programmes.

As your President, I will work very hard with our Board to make RUSI NSW of central value to our members and to our clients and partners. The latter include serving Australian Defence Force members, defence industries, academics and others interested in defence and national security issues.

During 2021, please follow us on social media to keep updated on our monthly programme of lectures and events. I look forward to meeting you at a face-to-face activity ere long.

Finally, and very sadly, I wish to record the recent death of our Vice President, Colonel John Hutcheson MC, aged 92 years. John was a stalwart of the Institute and of our Ursula Davidson Library. He will be sadly missed.

Michael Hough
Australia’s Relations with China

Discussion within in the Institute’s Special Interest Group on Strategy (Strategy SIG) over recent months has focused, inter alia, on Australia’s increasingly strained relations with China. Strategy SIG member, Lieutenant Colonel Ian Wolfe CSM recently spent three weeks in Canberra interacting with government and non-government subject-matter experts discussing relations with China. He reported that the consensus among the experts was that Australia should look at how, over the last decade, South Korea and Japan have managed their relations with China (with whom they have many major historical concerns) and apply a similarly tailored/nuanced approach.

It is interesting that recent Lowy Institute debates on the same matters have focused on the China-United States rivalry. That is, of course, not unimportant, but there are around 190 other countries in the world, all of whom have, or shortly will have, a relationship with China. Some, particularly in South and Southeast Asia and Africa, have become client states where the terms of the relationship are imposed by Beijing, but Colonel Wolfe’s references to those countries that live cheek-by-jowl with the People’s Republic of China are central to how rapprochement, even with Xi Jinping’s Communist Party of China, might develop.

Those Australian commercial operations that rely for their financial survival on China are naturally very concerned at what has happened in our bilateral relationship over the past 12 months, particularly in relation to the barley, beef, wine, copper, coal, timber and lobster trades. Australia, though, is not blameless and some of the issues have been brewing for several years, e.g. barley. In May, China imposed an 80 per cent tariff on all barley grain imported from Australia, alleging dumping and unfair government subsidisation of Australian farmers (drought support; diesel fuel rebate) to the disadvantage of local producers. Fortunately, Australian barley farmers have now found other international markets and the damage to other companies that currently rely heavily on selling into Australia, though, is not blameless and some of the issues have been brewing for several years, e.g. barley. In May, China imposed an 80 per cent tariff on all barley grain imported from Australia, alleging dumping and unfair government subsidisation of Australian farmers (drought support; diesel fuel rebate) to the disadvantage of local producers. Fortunately, Australian barley farmers have now found other international markets and the damage to other companies that currently rely heavily on selling into China may depend on how successful they are at finding alternative international markets.

It is not clear why China has moved to impose these tariffs now. While several policy tensions may well be playing a key role, at the time of writing, neither government had stated this openly. Indeed, trade observers suggest that China may be playing a long game, the real grievance being Australian ‘anti-dumping’ duties charged on Chinese paper, aluminium and steel imports (to protect Australian manufacturing industries and jobs).

(Continued on page 16)
Transatlantic relations since World War II have been characterised by a military-power differential between the United States and Western Europe coupled with differences in foreign policy goals among the nations of the transatlantic alliance. Since the Cold War ended, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has struggled to identify a new role for itself, although the newly-independent nations of eastern Europe have looked to it as a shield against Russian territorial ambitions. Transatlantic relations have reached a nadir under the presidency of Donald Trump and, if he is elected to a second term as United States president on 3 November 2020, may continue their downward spiral. Should, however, Joe Biden become the next United States president, transatlantic relations and international governance norms and institutions can be expected to experience a recovery, though with some caveats.

Key words: European Union; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; United States; transatlantic relations; Donald Trump; Joe Biden.

Transatlantic relations have traditionally been mired in issues that stem from the different positions the United States and its European allies and partners occupy in the international system, and, consequently, the differences in the preference of instruments they use to achieve their foreign policy goals. Where the United States has been seen primarily as a military superpower using all the available instruments at its disposal, the European Union has been known mainly as an economic and diplomatic partner with often a frustrating and cumbersome focus on process rather than objectives.

In the eight decades of transatlantic co-operation, it has always been clear the relations between the two sides of the Atlantic have never been a relationship between equals. Consecutive United States governments lamented the European Union’s inability to act decisively and criticised the inadequate contributions of European NATO member-states to military budgets. At the same time, leaders from European capitals have been equally critical of the United States’ penchant for unilateralism and its undermining of efforts that were meant to enhance European political and military clout.

These days, it is clear Europe no longer attracts the same level of strategic attention it did during the Cold War era or even during the first post-Cold War decade. Moreover, multiple crises on the home front have consumed a lot of policymaking bandwidth and made the United States and Europe look more inward over the past decade. The Obama administration managed to patch up the strained relations from the Bush years and deliver significant progress on vital policy issues as a result of transatlantic co-operation. Yet, even though President Obama enjoyed a broad degree of popularity in Europe throughout his two terms in office, his tenure was not spared notable disagreements and even outright divergence with European allies on everything from free-trade deals, surveillance programmes and relations with China.

Ever since Donald Trump’s election, however, it has become commonplace to characterise the dynamics of United States-European relations as on a precipitous downward spiral. The two sides of the Atlantic have found themselves disagreeing on a number of critical policy fronts including trade, climate change, nuclear proliferation and arms control. This has begged the question about the extent to which the nadir in transatlantic relations has been a product of solely President Trump’s actions or a symptom of more durable forces at play.

In this paper, I will examine the extent to which clouds over the Atlantic have been a product of agency of a single president, as opposed to the broader structural factors at play.

President Trump as the Source of Transatlantic Discontent

There is no doubt President Trump’s actions have been deeply and uniquely damaging for transatlantic

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1 Email: gorana.grgic@sydney.edu.au
2 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – a military alliance of North American and European countries, headquartered in Brussels. When established in 1949, it only included Western European nations, but, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has grown to encompass some 30 member-states.
relations. To say that President Trump has been uncommitted personally to the transatlantic relationship would be an understatement. He has called the European Union a foe – ahead of Russia and China – and has passed on a number of opportunities to affirm the United States’ commitment to Article 5 of the NATO treaty. Given his brash style and nativist policies, it has been no wonder that President Trump’s approval ratings across Western European countries remain at historic lows.

Yet, it would be erroneous to say the Trump administration has been friendless in Europe. Those in Central and Eastern Europe who are worried about Russian assertiveness in their neighbourhood, as well as those who share his illiberal principles, have been able to forge and strengthen ties with the United States in initiatives that span military co-operation, energy policy and novel regional diplomatic cooperation.

The Structures that Bind and Divide

On the other hand, to study transatlantic relations is to permanently have a sense of déjà vu. Since the creation of NATO in 1949, the history of the alliance has been a history of crises among allies. Some of the issues that have upset the relations between the two sides of the Atlantic have been features, rather than bugs, of the power imbalances purposefully built into the alliance (Thies 2003). Moreover, most of NATO’s contemporary problems are related to its post-Cold War quest for reinvention, as, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the alliance seemed to have outlived its original purpose (Goldgeier and Itzkowitz Shifrinson 2020).

Therefore, from a structural perspective, issues that have been miring the NATO alliance have all been related to alliance management more broadly. From the fears of abandonment and entrapment, challenges over the best course of action when allies have divergent views surrounding a vital issue, to the perennial issue of burden-sharing and the concern that junior partners become “free riders”, have been on the agenda for a good part of the past seven decades.

On the United States-European Union relations front, the crux of the problem emanates from the very fact that the European Union is a strange interlocutor – a veritable economic giant, relatively new diplomatic power and still a military weakling. The transatlantic space has seen plenty of trade spats even before President Trump took the office – one only has to be reminded of the never-ending saga of the Airbus versus Boeing cases in front of the World Trade Organisation. On the diplomatic front, frictions often have arisen due to the European Union’s inability to build a united position and speak in unison in international affairs. Equally, even though the European Union was built as a peace and reconciliation project, it has been abundantly clear that, with its rise as a single political bloc, the impetus to boost its defence capabilities has been growing. Yet, its attempts to achieve strategic autonomy have been blocked by both the member states and the United States (Albright 1998; Smith 2018).

The Impact of 2020 United States Presidential Election on Transatlantic Relations

The presidential election in the United States on Tuesday, 3 November 2020, is shaping up to be not only the most important election in the modern United States history, but an inimitable international event with significant bearing on the state of transatlantic relations.

A Trump Second-term Presidency

Thus far, President Trump has defied a lot of what has been considered orthodoxy in United States presidential history, but a second term will likely follow at least one convention – in their second term and facing an oppositional Congress, post-Cold War presidents have tended to pursue a more active foreign policy.

If so, President Trump’s second term would see the continuation of unilateralism as evidenced in the imposition of tariffs, withdrawal from jointly-negotiated treaties and deals, and a lack of co-ordination with European counterparts on issues ranging from climate change to relations with China. We also would be more likely to see the continuation of his administration’s alignment with European populist leaders and illiberal regimes, thus widening the chasm among European states.

Should President Trump win, protectionist measures would likely continue to be used as bargaining chips in trade negotiations with Europe well

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1. Article 5 provides that if a NATO ally is the victim of an armed attack, each and every other member of the alliance will consider this act of violence as an armed attack against all members and will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the ally attacked.


4. The European Union was founded on 1 November 1993 and is headquartered in Brussels. It now has some 27 member-states with a total population of about 447 million.

into his second term. The prospects of coming to a comprehensive trade agreement with the European Union would be extremely slim. It is reasonable to expect, however, that a United States-United Kingdom free-trade agreement would be one of the foreign policy achievements of Trump's second term.

Similar to the previous years of Trump's first term, we could expect more NATO summits ending in impasse at best, or worse yet, the alliance seeing a deepening of the greatest internal crisis in the post-Cold War era. There are plenty of accounts from those who have been close to President Trump over the past four years that corroborate the suspicion that he has seriously considered withdrawing from NATO. The odds of him acting on his instincts would be higher in a second term. While Congress has already built in checks against this by linking in to appropriations in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, the credibility of the administration's commitment to any of its allies would be immediately brought into question.

One of the developments to watch will be the energy diplomacy front. This is a policy area in which the Trump administration has been particularly active – from strong promotion of United States LNG (liquified natural gas) exports to the ramping up of sanctions on those involved in the Nord Stream II project⁴. Key questions, however, remain over how the global slump in energy demand and the European Union’s pledge to base its economic recovery on the Green Deal goals⁵, will affect the transatlantic LNG trade. Should the global energy prices remain low, the United States’ LNG projects will become increasingly unprofitable and result in depressed energy exports. On the other hand, if the coronavirus-induced recession deepens, the European Union’s commitment to a green transition might be deprioritised, thus leaving an opening for more United States LNG exports.

**A Biden Presidency**

On the other hand, should Joe Biden become the 46th president of the United States in January 2021, there will undoubtedly be a lot of sighs of relief around the European capitals. A Biden presidency is poised to have an instantaneous and curative effect around the European capitals. A Biden presidency is poised to have an instantaneous and curative effect on transatlantic relations, at least on a symbolic level. The Biden approach to foreign policy would prioritise restoring alliances, the promotion of human rights, and confronting – instead of revering – foreign dictators. Multilateralism, rather than unilateralism, would be the default stance of a Biden administration, with a concerted push to resuscitate international organisations and deals that have been defanged and rolled back under President Trump – ranging from the World Trade Organisation and World Health Organisation to the Paris climate agreement¹¹ and Iran nuclear deal.¹²

We should keep in mind, however, that even with the most well-meaning leader in the White House, transatlantic relations are bound to be mired by long-standing issues. Some of them are more *longue durée* as they stem from the different positions the United States and its European allies occupy in the international system, as well as the shifting United States strategic priorities. Others are more acute, and, as such, relate to the imperatives of responding to the public health and economic crises resulting from the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.

Nonetheless, these issues will be managed and mitigated through deft diplomacy and focus on areas of policy commonalities. Under a President Biden, we could expect significant and strong action on policy areas where we have seen major U-turns during the Trump presidency. Climate action and arms control are on top of that list. Furthermore, we would be bound to see more effort on co-ordinating policy responses to China, particularly on trade, security and human rights. A Biden administration would undoubtedly have a more coherent Russia policy, which would provide plenty of space for co-operation with European counterparts in realms such as military deployments, arms control, cyber policy, intelligence co-ordination and anti-money-laundering efforts. There is little doubt Biden's political appointees at the State Department would be much better equipped to address complex policy issues, so we would be spared the discombobulation of the past four years on United States foreign policy in places like Ukraine or the Balkans.

Co-operation on trade matters would be one of the policy areas where there would be an early opportunity to develop a more unified front towards China,

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¹ Nord Stream is a gas pipeline linking Russia with Germany through the Baltic Sea and enabling Russia to supply gas to western Europe. Stage II was completed in 2019.

² The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives designed to make the European Union climate neutral by 2050.

¹¹ L’accord de Paris is an agreement reached in 2015 at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It deals with mitigation of greenhouse gases and was signed in 2016. The Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal is to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C, recognising that this would substantially reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

¹²The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is an agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015 and negotiated with Iran by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (i.e. Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States) plus Germany, together with the European Union. Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium, cut its stockpile of low-enriched uranium by 98 per cent and reduce the number of its gas centrifuges by c. two-thirds for 13 years.
along with the added benefit of mending relationships damaged by Trump's tariffs on European allies. A more ambitious undertaking, though, such as reviving the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, would seem to be more far-fetched at the moment as Biden campaigned on a “made in America” platform. Moreover, given that treaty negotiations have to be approved by Congress, much would depend also on the post-election ideological makeup of the Congress. It is equally to be expected the United Kingdom would be actively lobbying for a trade deal with the new administration in the post-Brexit era, although this has not been set as a priority by Biden.

Conclusion

Ultimately, regardless who wins the November United States presidential elections, the policy priorities in the short term would remain firmly with dealing with internal crises on both sides of the Atlantic. European allies are poised to grow more autonomous, but the prospects of transatlantic cooperation would drastically differ depending on the resident of the Oval Office over the next four years.

The Author: Dr Gorana Grigić is a jointly appointed Lecturer at the Department of Government and International Relations and the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. She is also an Adjunct Lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Business, Law and Education – School of Social Sciences at the University of Western Australia. Gorana was a Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Center for European Studies in 2018-2019, while in 2021 she will be joining the NATO Defense College as the Partners Across the Atlantic Resident Fellow. Gorana's research interests include United States politics and foreign policy, transatlantic relations, conflict resolution and democratisation. She has been a regular political analyst for the ABC News Australia and has contributed to a number of Australian and international media outlets and policy institutes.

Literature Cited and Further Reading


The Battle of the Bismarck Sea

A paper based on an online presentation to the Institute on 29 September 2020 by

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Sweeney RFD (Ret’d)
Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea was fought on 2-4 March 1943 largely in the Bismarck Sea and the Vitiaz Strait (between New Britain and New Guinea). The United States Army’s 5th Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force attacked an Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) convoy attempting to transport 6900 Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) reinforcements from Rabaul (New Britain) to Lae (New Guinea). Eight IJN transport ships, four of eight escorting IJN destroyers and 20 of 100 escorting IJN fighter aircraft were destroyed for the loss of four Allied aircraft. Of the IJA reinforcements, 1200 reached Lae, 3000 perished at sea and 2700 were rescued by the IJN and returned to Rabaul.

The historian, Lex McAulay, has described the Battle of the Bismarck Sea (2-4 March 1943), as “thirty minutes that changed the balance of power in New Guinea”; and as “a battle for land forces, fought at sea, won by air” (McAulay 1991).

The battle took place in the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA) during World War II when aircraft of the United States Army’s 5th Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force attacked a Japanese convoy carrying troops from the Japanese fortress at Rabaul in New Britain to Lae in New Guinea. Most of the Japanese task force was destroyed and Japanese troop losses were heavy (Odgers 1957; McCarthy 1959; Tanaka 1980; McAulay 1991).

By early 1943, Imperial Japan had established its ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’, but its attempts to isolate Australia and prevent its use as base for an American-led counter offensive had been repulsed by the United States and Australian armed forces. The naval battles, won largely by naval air power, in the Coral Sea (4-8 May 1942) and at Midway (4-7 June 1942), had greatly reduced the offensive power of the Imperial Japanese Navy and had saved Port Moresby, capital of Papua, from naval assault. The land battles in Papua – at Milne Bay (25 September-7 August 1942), along the Kokoda Trail (July-November 1942) and at Buna-Gona (16 November 1942-22 January 1943) – had prevented the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) from consolidating its foothold in Papua and most of its forces there had been withdrawn to New Guinea or New Britain. In the Solomon Islands, American forces had triumphed in the battle for Guadalcanal (7 August 1942-9 February 1943) and the IJA had withdrawn its forces north to Bougainville in the northern Solomons (McCarthy 1959).

The Allied position having been stabilised in Papua and the southern Solomons, the way was now open for a counter offensive to be launched from Australia towards the northern Solomons, New Guinea and New Britain, with a view to either capturing or isolating Rabaul, the main Japanese base, and then advancing by bounds (sites with suitable airfields and harbours) to the Philippines.

Recognising this threat, the Japanese decided to reinforce its naval, land and air forces in New Britain, New Guinea and the northern Solomons in an attempt to check the anticipated Allied advances.

Japanese Plans for the Battle

Japanese Imperial General Headquarters decided in December 1942 to reinforce the Japanese position in New Guinea, particularly at Wewak, Madang and Lae. A plan was devised to move some 6900 troops by naval convoy from Rabaul to Lae (Tanaka 1980; Nelson 1994).

In late February 1943, the Japanese assembled a convoy comprising eight troop transports, escorted by eight destroyers, some submarines, and approximately 100 fighter aircraft. The convoy was planned to set out from Simpson Harbour, Rabaul, on 28 February 1943, steam west through the Bismarck Sea along the north coast of New Britain, before turning south through the Vitiaz Strait to the Solomon Sea and thence west to Lae (see Map 1 next page).

Allied Plans for the Battle

The Allies gained an inkling of the Japanese plans when, on 16 February 1943, naval codebreakers at Fleet Radio Unit, Melbourne, and in Washington finished decrypting and translating a coded message revealing the Japanese intention to land convoys on the north-east coast of New Guinea at Wewak, Madang and Lae (McCarthy 1959: 582; McAulay 1991).

To counter this threat, the Allies assembled an air armada comprising three attack groups and three bombardment groups from the United States Army’s 5th Air Force (5th USAAF) and seven squadrons of fighters and bombers from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) under the command of Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, USAAF (Morrison 1950).

The 5th USAAF contribution was based at Buna, Milne Bay, Mareeba (North Queensland) and Port Moresby. It comprised the:
- 35th Fighter Group (P-38 Lightning; P-39 Airacobra);
• 49th Fighter Group (P-38 Lightning; P-40 Warhawk);
• 3rd Attack Group (A-20 Havoc bomber; B-25 Mitchell bomber);
• 38th Bombardment Group (B-25 Mitchell bomber), each bomber with a crew of five and a bomb load of 3000lb (1360kg);
• 43rd Bombardment Group (B-17 Flying Fortress bomber), each bomber with 10 crew and a bomb load of 8000lb (3600kg);
• 90th Bombardment Group (B-24 Liberator bomber), each bomber with a crew of 11 and a bomb load of 8000lb (3600kg);
• 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron (F-4 and F-5 Lightning photo reconnaissance aircraft).

The RAAF assembled four squadrons at Milne Bay and three at Port Moresby. At Milne Bay were:
• No. 6 Squadron (Hudson bomber);
• No. 74 Squadron (P-40 Kittyhawk fighter and ground-attack aircraft);
• No. 75 Squadron (P-40 Kittyhawk fighter and ground attack aircraft); and
• No. 100 Squadron (Beaufort torpedo-bomber). At Port Moresby were:
• No. 4 Squadron (Wirraway trainer and general-purpose military aircraft);
• No. 22 Squadron (Boston bomber and ground-attack aircraft); and
• No. 30 Squadron (Beaufighter multi-role military aircraft).

The Beaufort torpedo-bomber had a crew of four; and a bomb load of one 1605lb (728kg) bomb and an 18-inch Mark XII torpedo, or 2000lb (907kg) of bombs or mines. The Boston bomber had a crew of three and a 4000lb (1800kg) load of bombs. The Beaufighter had a crew of two; and two 250lb (110kg) bombs, or one British 18-inch torpedo, or one United States Mark XIII torpedo.

The commander of the Allied Air Forces in the South West Pacific Area, Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, USAAF, decided on an all-out assault on the convoy. The plan was prepared by Group Captain William ‘Bull’ Garing, RAAF, and involved a massive, co-ordinated attack. Garing envisaged large numbers of aircraft striking the convoy from different directions and altitudes with precise timing. Reconnaissance aircraft would detect the convoy; then long-range USAAF bombers would attack it. Once the convoy was within range of the Allies potent anti-shipping aircraft – RAAF Beaufighters, Bostons and Beauforts and USAAF Mitchells and Bostons – a co-ordinated attack would be mounted from medium, low and very-low altitudes.

Bombing tactics would include both skip bombing and mast-height bombing. Skip bombing involved bombers flying at very-low altitude (only a few dozen feet above the sea – maybe 15-20m) toward their targets before releasing their bombs which would ricochet (bounce) across the surface before exploding at the side of the target ship, under it, or just over it. Mast-height bombing involved bombers approaching the target at low altitude, 200 to 500 feet (60-150m), at about 265 to 275 miles per hour (425-440km/h), and then dropping down to mast height at about 600 yards (550m) from the target, before releasing their bombs at around 300 yards (275m) while aiming directly at the side of the ship.

The Battle

On the night of 28 February-1 March 1943, a convoy of 16 ships (eight destroyers, seven transports and the special service vessel Nojima) steamed from Simpson Harbour, Rabaul, bound for Lae to reinforce the Lae-Salamaua garrison. The reinforcements mainly comprised the second echelon of the Japanese 51st Division (McCarthy 1959: 582).

The weather initially aided the Japanese. About 15:00h on 1 March, the crew of a patrolling B-24 Liberator spotted the IJN convoy in the Bismarck Sea north of New Britain. Eight B-17 Flying Fortresses

Map 1: Map of New Britain, New Guinea and the Bismarck and Solomon Seas. The Vitiaz Strait separates New Britain from New Guinea. [Source: RB-Deskkart via Wikimedia commons]
subsequently sent to the location failed to find the IJN ships, so no attack could be pressed home until the next day (McCarthy 1959: 582).

At dawn on 2 March, a force of six RAAF A-20 Bostons from Port Moresby attacked Lae to reduce its ability to provide fighter cover for the IJN convoy. About 10:00h, another Liberator found the IJN convoy in the Bismarck Sea north of Cape Gloucester at the western end of New Britain (Map 2). Eight B-17s took off to attack the ships, followed an hour later by another 20 B-17 bombers. They found the convoy and attacked with 1000lb (450kg) bombs from 5000ft (1500m). By nighttime, there were reports of ships “burning and exploding”. It later emerged that the Kyokusei Maru, carrying 1200 army troops, had been sunk and two other transports damaged; and eight Japanese fighter aircraft destroyed and 13 damaged. Through the night, an Australian Catalina shadowed the fleet (McCarthy 1959: 582).

The main planned Allied attack on the convoy occurred on 3 March 1943 (McCarthy 1959: 582) and some authorities give this day as the date of the battle, e.g. McAulay (1991), “thirty minutes that changed the balance of power in New Guinea”, quoted earlier.

Beginning early on 3 March, Bostons of No. 22 Squadron, RAAF, from Port Moresby again attacked the Japanese fighter base at Lae, further reducing the convoy’s air cover. Attacks on the base continued throughout the day.

At 10:00h, 13 B-17s reached the convoy, now entering the Vitiaz Strait off the Huon Peninsula, and bombed from a medium altitude of 7000ft causing the ships to manoeuvre. This had the effect of disrupting the convoy’s formation and reducing the convoy’s concentrated anti-aircraft firepower. Nevertheless, a B-17 was hit. It broke up in the air and its crew took to their parachutes. Japanese fighter pilots machine-gunned some of the B-17 crew members as they descended and attacked others in the water after they landed. Five of the Japanese fighters strafing the B-17 aircrew were promptly engaged and shot down by three Lightnings (Craven and Cate 1950).

Shortly after, some B-25 bombers arrived and released their 500lb bombs at between 3000 and 6000 feet (900-1800m), causing two Japanese vessels to collide. By the end of their attack runs, the B-17 and B-25 sorties had left the convoy ships separated, making them vulnerable to strafing and mast-head attacks.

Thirteen Beaufighters from No. 30 Squadron, RAAF, approached the convoy at low level to give the impression they were Beauforts making a torpedo run.
attack. The ships turned to face them, the standard procedure to present a smaller target to torpedo bombers, allowing the Beaufighters, with flights in line astern, to maximise the damage they inflicted in strafing runs (Craven and Cate 1950: 143-4). The famous Australian combat cameraman Damien Parer accompanied the raid. He sat behind the pilot of one of the Australian Beaufighters and captured the attack scenes on film.

Immediately afterwards, seven B-25s of the 71st Bombardment Squadron bombed from about 2460ft (750m), while six from the 405th Bombardment Squadron attacked at mast height inflicting further damage. “And then came 12 of the 90” [Bombardment Group's] B-25 Mitchels in probably the most successful attack of all. Coming down to 500 feet above the now widely dispersed and rapidly manoeuvring vessels, the new strafers broke formation as each pilot sought his own targets” (Craven and Cate 1950: 143-4).

More flights sailed out from Port Moresby in the afternoon, but although they had some successes, bad weather over the Owen Stanley Range reduced the planned size of the attacking force. Still, the close of day found the work done. That night, motor torpedo (PT) boats swept out of their base at Tufi (on the northeast coast of Papua – Map 1) to undertake cleaning up tasks which they largely completed on 4 March (McCarthy 1959: 582-3).

The Allied air commander was given intelligence on 4 March that, despite their transport ships and some of their escorting destroyers having been sunk, hundreds of Japanese soldiers and sailors had survived the air attacks of 2 and 3 March and the survivors were awaiting rescue at sea. He ordered the Allied airmen to do everything they could to attack these Japanese survivors with a view to preventing them from getting ashore and reinforcing the IJA forces at Lae (McAulay 1991: Chapter 5). Over succeeding days, strafing aircraft at sea level gunned survivors; and garrisons in the Trobiands and on Goodenough Island hunted down and killed survivors cast up by the sea (McCarthy 1959: 583; McAulay 1991: Chapter 5). These ‘mopping up’ operations on 4 March and subsequent days concluded the battle.

In total, during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, the Japanese had lost all eight transport ships, four of their eight destroyers and 20 aircraft. Of the Japanese reinforcements, 1200 reached Lae, 3000 perished at sea and 2700 were rescued by IJN destroyers and submarines and were returned to Rabaul (Tanaka 1980: 50). The Allies lost four aircraft and 13 airmen (Nelson 1994).

Conclusion

As brilliant and extensive as this Allied victory was, its real lesson lay in in the significance of Allied air power (McCarthy 1959: 583). The success of Allied airpower during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea convinced the Japanese that even strongly-escorted convoys could not operate without air superiority. This they could no longer generate. In the absence of air superiority, the Japanese were unable to reinforce, resupply and otherwise logistically support their forces in the region other than by small ships, patrol boats and submarines.

As a result, the Japanese were permanently put on the defensive in the northern Solomons, New Guinea and New Britain. This opened the way for the Japanese fortress at Rabaul, garrisoned by some 100,000 personnel and deemed impregnable, to be isolated and bypassed. This, in turn, enabled successful Allied campaigns along the New Guinea coast and on to the Philippines over the next 18 months.

The Author: Lieutenant Colonel Peter Sweeney RFD (Ret'd) has been a member of the Institute since 1968. A military historian and a member of the United Kingdom-based International Guild of Battlefield Guides, he is in partnership with fellow Institute historian, Lieutenant Colonel Ron Lyons RFD (Ret'd), in the battlefield touring company, Battle Honours Australia. He holds a Master of Military History degree from the University of New South Wales, a Graduate Diploma in Management (Defence Studies) and a Diploma in Accounting. He is a noted presenter to community groups on Australian military history; and travels from time-to-time on cruise ships as an enrichment speaker on naval, army and air force history. [Photo of Colonel Sweeney: the author]

Acknowledgement

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References


United Service 71 (4) December 2020
Australia’s future over next 100 years: opportunities and challenges

A paper based on a presentation to the Institute via Zoom on 23 October 2020 by

Senator Jim Molan AO DSC
Senator for New South Wales

This paper describes how Senator Molan sees Australia’s future unfolding over the next century, including likely opportunities and challenges ahead. While Australia is now the world’s 14th most economically powerful nation, it has only been able to focus on its economic development because, heretofore, it has not had to provide for its own defence. With United States’ power diminishing and China’s power increasing, Australia’s historic grand strategy is becoming unsustainable both militarily and economically. To craft a way forward for the next century, Australia needs develop a national security strategy and should do so urgently.

Key words: Australia; 21st century outlook; national security; future opportunities; future challenges; Islamic extremism; United States; Russia; China; North Korea; Iran.

In 1901, 119 years ago, Australia emerged from its colonial past as a unified nation-state. Using gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of economic power, the Australian economy is now the 14th most powerful economy globally – the United States is ranked first, well ahead of China ranked second. In Asia and the western Pacific, we are ranked sixth, behind China, Japan, India, Russia and South Korea (Table 1). On this basis, we have the potential to grow to become a major power within the Indo-Pacific region over the next century, although Indonesia is close behind us and may eclipse us in the near future.

Two factors, in particular, have been responsible for Australia’s remarkable economic achievement over the past century, despite our relatively small population. The first factor has been the development of our primary and secondary export markets, both globally and within our region, enabled and enhanced more recently by our geographic proximity to, and the economic growth of, our neighbours in East, Southeast and South Asia. The second factor has been the security of our region, especially of our maritime lines of communication (maritime trade routes), made possible by the unchallenged dominance of the United States since World War II and, since the end of the Cold War in 1990, as the world’s only superpower.

Indeed, the protection afforded us by the United States over the last 75 years has enabled Australia to focus on its economic development and to maintain only token military forces for its defence – we have been spared the high cost of a defence strategy based on self-reliance. We have not needed to prepare for, or engage in, wars of necessity, except arguably in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. Rather, we have been able to maintain small defence forces which we have deployed on wars of choice, mostly at long distances from Australia, in support of our superpower protector who has borne most of the cost, both human and economic.

Over the last 20 years, in particular, we have seen a significant diminution of the United States’ military and economic power and the rise of strong challengers, particularly China. This is a real challenge for Australia because China is also our largest trading partner and export market – in 2019, our exports accounted for 38 per cent of the value of exports to China (Cranston 2019). Hence, the strategy of reliance on ‘great and

Table 1: Top 20 national economies ranked by gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP ranking</th>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>U.S. Dollars (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>21,427,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>14,342,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>5,081,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3,845,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2,875,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2,827,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2,715,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2,001,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1,839,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,736,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>1,699,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Korea, Republic of</td>
<td>1,643,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1,394,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1,392,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1,258,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1,119,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>909,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>792,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>754,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>703,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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powerful friends for our security while we concentrate on building our economy, a strategy that has brought us to this enviable point over the past 120 years, no longer will be sustainable over the century ahead.

In this paper, I will touch on some of the national security challenges that we are likely to face and suggest some opportunities we may be able to exploit over the next 100 years.

The Diminution of United States Power

The communist nations in Asia have seen the United States as no longer invincible since the Chinese intervention in the Korean War led to a stalemate and then a truce in 1953. This perception was reinforced by the victory of the North Vietnamese over the South Vietnamese and their American allies in 1975. These perceptions have been exacerbated this century by the failure of the United States to achieve its stated nation-building goals in Iraq and Afghanistan after some two decades of warfare against Islamic insurgencies. It is now clear that the American people no longer support their post-World War II role as the ‘global policeman’ – the cost in national treasure, both human and financial, has become too great and can no longer be sustained either politically or economically.

The problem can be summarised in the guidance for the military: in the 1980s the United States military had to be able to win two major wars and one small one simultaneously. Now, it is to defeat aggression by a major power; deter opportunistic aggression elsewhere; and disrupt imminent terrorist and weapons of mass destruction threats (US Department of Defense 2018: 6). This change is reflected in their forces and budgets.

Today, we find that the number of active duty troops in United States Armed Forces have decreased by over 35 per cent since 1990 (Macrotrends 2020).

The United States Navy has experienced a reduction in fleet units (ships) of some 50 per cent since the late 1980s (Thomas-Noone 2020). While the newer ships acquired may be more capable than their predecessors, a ship can only be in one place at a time. If ships deployed to the North Atlantic are suddenly required to reinforce the 7th Fleet in the Western Pacific, there may not be time to redeploy them.

Similarly, the United States Air Force is struggling to cope with a combination of budget constraints and arguably unfortunate policy decisions. It has ceased producing the world's best air-superiority aircraft, the F-22 Raptor, and is now reliant essentially on a single multi-role aircraft, the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter, for air superiority (tactical fighter), strategic strike, maritime strike and ground attack. While maintaining a single combat aircraft has cost and logistic advantages, there are concerns about the F-35's ability to perform all of the necessary air combat roles, especially when compared to true fifth-generation aircraft. Further, the Air Force is understrength by some 2100 pilots (U.S. Department of the Air Force 2020).

The United States Army is faring little better. Its principal combat unit is no longer the multi-brigade division with its integrated supporting combat arms and logistic support units. The division has been replaced in this role by brigade combat teams (essentially the equivalent of an Australian brigade group), which have the flexibility to be deployed either concentrated in larger formations or dispersed to operate alone. The United States Army establishment provides for 50 of these brigade combat teams, but, two years ago, only two were operational – although this position may have improved recently and there may now be as many as 20 brigade combat teams which are deemed operational.

The Rise of Challengers to United States Supremacy

In short, the United States is no longer willing or able to maintain its global military commitments and there are numerous players who, sensing this weakness, are keen to exploit it for their own ends. They include Islamic extremists and nation-states who wish to push the boundaries of American tolerance, without engaging in full-scale war with the United States. They include Russia, China, North Korea and Iran.

Islamic Extremism

We have seen Islamic extremism in operation over the last 20 years in the United States – the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 – and subsequently in insurgencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Mindanao (Philippines), and in atrocities committed by terrorist individuals and cells, some inspired by extremist values and propaganda propagated via social media, across Europe, southern Thailand, Indonesia and even in Australia, among other places.

While such individual and collective actions are of continuing concern, they certainly do not pose an existential threat to Australia and would not do so unless the extremists acquired nuclear weapons. Other players, nation-states who have or who may soon acquire nuclear weapons, are potentially less benign.

Russia

The Russian Federation is a nuclear power which has effectively become an autocracy under the leadership of President Putin. It is smarting from the loss of its former (Soviet) empire and is incensed by the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to its western borders. It is countering this by rebuilding its armed forces, which are now described as “better equipped (than their Soviet predecessors), with professional personnel increasingly prevalent” (IISS 2019), and its air force is on the way back with a fifth-
Of equal, if not greater, importance, it is pioneering the development of ‘grey-zone’ tactics, designed to push the boundaries of United States’ tolerance short of provoking war. Such tactics include cyber warfare against all levels of society, social media-based disinformation campaigns, election meddling, economic coercion and the ambiguous (unattributable/deniable) use of unconventional, and even conventional, forces. It has had notable successes in deploying such tactics in disrupting elections in the United States, Europe and elsewhere; and in seizing territory in the Crimea, eastern Ukraine and Transcaucasia.

**China**

The People’s Republic of China, also a nuclear power, is clearly on the rise as its economic status as the nation ranking second after the United States in gross domestic product (Table 1) attests.

China’s annual military spend is now some 75 per cent of that of the United States (Robertson 2019). China is reforming and rebuilding its military (Gill 2020; Gill et al. 2020). The Peoples’ Liberation Army (PLA), according to the latest Chinese data, has been slimmed down to some 2.5-3.0 million personnel in total. The PLA Army, the ground forces component, is being re-focused from domestic security to expeditionary warfare; and the PLA Navy has been ordered to focus on projection of power up to and beyond the second island chain into the Pacific and Indian Oceans. China is using its Belt-and-Road Initiative to secure bases, especially in the Indian Ocean and to a lesser extent in the Pacific, to facilitate this power projection. The PLA Air Force is also modernising and introduced a fifth-generation fighter aircraft, the Chengdu J-27, into service in 2017 (Seidel 2017). These PLA reforms are to be completed by 2035, with a view to achieving a ‘world-class military’ by the centenary of the PLA in 2049.

China also is following Russia’s lead by developing and employing grey-zone tactics in an attempt to bully countries which displease it into conforming to China’s will. Australia has not been immune, facing trade bans, cyber warfare, influence activities in politics and academia, and the like. Other countries bordering the South China Sea and even as far away as South America have experienced the unlawful intrusion of Chinese ‘fishing’ fleets into their exclusive economic zones, among other activities of dubious validity.

**North Korea**

North Korea (The Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea) is now accepted to be a nuclear power and its intercontinental missiles may now have the range to deliver nuclear warheads to attack United States’ cities. If so, they could also attack Australia.

President Trump’s attempts to negotiate an accommodation with President Kim Jong-un so far have been unproductive. While North Korea would only be expected to use its nuclear capability defensively on the ‘mutually assured destruction principle’ (knowing that the United States would wipe out North Korea if it were to launch a first-strike on the United States), its nuclear weapons capability poses a serious threat to its neighbours and virtually rules out any possibility of a conventional attack on North Korea.

**Iran**

Iran also aspires to become a nuclear power. Attempts by the United Nations Security Council to negotiate an agreement with Iran to avoid this have been undermined by the Trump administration, which wishes to link constraints on Iran’s sponsoring of Shia Islamist forces in the Middle East to any nuclear deal. So far, despite the re-introduction of United States trade sanctions on Iran, no progress has been made on the substantive issues and Iran may have resumed its nuclear weapons development.

A particular issue for Australia is Iran’s importance as an oil producer, as it holds around 12 per cent of proven oil reserves (OPEC 2020). While Australia has joined with other countries in deploying warships to maintain freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, it is unwilling to support the United States otherwise on the Iran issue. Indeed, it supports the United Nations’ nuclear agreement with Iran. This is but one example of the national interests of the United States and Australia differing.

**Australia’s Outlook and Response**

**Opportunities and Challenges**

Once the bushfires, floods and coronavirus pandemic of 2020 are behind us, Australia should be poised for a market-driven period of great prosperity for the foreseeable future. This prosperity should be a great platform for the next century of our national development.

Such a rosy outlook, however, is dependent on us maintaining robust export markets. Currently, China takes more than one-third of our exports (Cranston 2019), so our export markets are very vulnerable to Chinese trade policies and to PLA Navy interference in our maritime lines of communication (maritime trade routes).

Further, the diminution of American power poses a threat to the ANZUS Treaty and the capacity of the United States to honour it should it be engaged in another theatre, just as Great Britain was in 1941 when Japan launched the War in the Pacific. This suggests that, to realise the dream enunciated herein, Australia needs to develop a much greater degree of self-reliance than it has before, particularly to meet the scenario of a

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(Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty signed in 1951 to protect the security of the Pacific.)
major Indo-Pacific War. A greater degree of self-reliance will be expensive, but it cannot be avoided.

Indeed, Australia has not been prepared for any of the conflicts in which it has become involved over the last 120 years. Except for the two world wars, these have been wars of choice – not of necessity. Since World War II, Australia has developed a very small, but highly professional, defence force, augmented by volunteers in Korea and conscripts in Vietnam, which has proved brilliant at fighting wars of choice. This tiny defence force, though, will not be suitable for our needs in the rest of this century.

The Need for a National Security Strategy

This raises the issue of what type and size of defence force we need. It is not a question easily answered. Ideally, we would develop a sustainable, bipartisan agreement in the Commonwealth Parliament to threshold matters such as:

• the types of threat we, and our neighbourhood and wider region, realistically may face over the planning period which should be at least 50 years;
• to what extent we could expect to work with old and new allies to assist us meet those threats and under what circumstances we might need to address them unaided;
• what moral and legal responsibilities we have and would be prepared to accept for the security of our neighbours, especially those who lack our military and economic capacity; and
• where is our preference geographically for defending Australia e.g. would we prefer a ‘forward defence’ posture with Australia viewed as the main support area or logistics base (and would our neighbours allow it), or would we prefer (or have to accept) a ‘continental defence’ posture with Australia as the ‘vital ground’ and with defence assets deployed as far forward into maritime south-east Asia and the western Pacific as practicable.

Once threshold matters such as these had been agreed, and following consultation with the Australian community and allies and stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region, Defence could prepare options for government as the basis for a new defence white paper and a defence strategic plan.

I believe the first step, however, should be the preparation of a much broader national security strategy, within which the defence strategy would be nested. The overarching national security strategy should be informed by relevant foreign affairs considerations and embrace border security, transnational crime, international and domestic terrorism, national emergency and disaster management (cyclones, severe storms, floods, bushfires), climate change (as the energiser and enhancer of weather systems which cause natural disasters), and similar issues, as well as defence. I have been advocating such an approach among my parliamentary colleagues since I entered the Senate. While I have gained traction in some quarters, I have met with scepticism in others.

Conclusion

While Australia has grown since World War II to become the world’s 14th most economically powerful nation, it has only been able to focus on its economic development because, up until now, it has not had to provide for its own defence. With the increasing competition between China and the United States, both regionally and globally, Australia’s historic stance is becoming strategically unsustainable both economically and militarily. A new grand strategy is needed which defines the nation’s international role, covering all levers of national power (economic, social, political and military) and which aligns means with ends to achieve the nation’s goals in peace and war. To craft a way forward for the next century though, Australia needs first to develop a national security strategy within which a new defence strategy could be nested. It should do so as a matter of urgency.

The Author: Major General Andrew James Molan, AO, DSC, retired from the Australian Army in 2008 after 40 years’ service as infantry officer. He is now a Senator for New South Wales in the Commonwealth Parliament and currently is Deputy Chair of the Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media. His military service included a range of appointments in operations, training and military diplomacy, including service in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia, Germany and the United States. Command appointments included the Solomon Islands evacuation force in June 2000. In April 2004, he was appointed for twelve months as Chief of Operations of the Multi-National Force (MNF) in Iraq where he controlled all MNF operations, including the security of Iraq’s oil, electricity and rail infrastructure and the Iraqi elections in January 2005. He is an Officer in the Military Division of the Order of Australia. For his service in Iraq he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the United States Legion of Merit. In 2008, he published his Iraq memoir (Molan 2008). Shortly thereafter, he addressed the Institute on the War in Afghanistan (Molan 2009). [Photo of Senator Molan: Parliament of Australia]

References


OPINION

(Continued from page 3)

So, before blaming China for trade difficulties, our own exporters had better be sure we have assiduously kept our side of the bargain. Also, our trade difficulties may be eased somewhat now that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a trade pact among 15 Asian countries including Australia and China, has been signed.

Further, the experts are naïve if they believe that being ‘nice’ to China is the way forward. Diplomatic bluster aside, confronting China is the only sane response when its policies or activities impinge on how we genuinely believe things should operate bilaterally and internationally. If we do not do this, then the Communist Party of China would be entitled to rearrange things to its own liking and then to advise us that the rules have changed. In the 1930s, not confronting the aggressor was called ‘appeasement’, and we know to what that led.

We have a collaborative relationship with China already; it is not in good shape currently, but it struggles on to our mutual benefit. I think we have steadily but firmly drawn our line in the sand and that has just been reinforced by the Australia-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement, a military pact which will deepen our defence collaboration with Japan.

The Communist Party of China knows what rules we will be abiding by, and that is no bad thing. The Chinese are not mindless ideologues. Their whole history is a roiling mass of rivalry, leading to calamity, followed by reaching an accommodation with the other side – for a while at least. Hopefully, we can come to an accommodation with China ere long.

Ian Pfennigwerth

LETTER

Training Army Officers in Tactics

In his concise background briefing in the last issue on training army officers in tactics (United Service 71 (3), 17 – 21 (September 2020), Brigadier David Leece drew on the excellent British Army training manual Training for War (His Majesty’s Stationery Office: London, 1950).


Written in three parts, it covers the basics of strategy, the role of the strategist and advanced strategic concepts. At 250 pages, it is substantive (although many pages are notes/references), but the various chapters are stand-alone to an extent, and some could be the initial focus of study, i.e. Chapters 6, 7, 9, 12, 16, 18 and 19. The manual is recommended particularly for officers of any service who are preparing to take up a strategic policy or general/operational staff appointment.

Ian Wolfe
Neutral Bay, 25 August 2020

Dr Ian Pfennigwerth is a member of the United Service Editorial Advisory Committee. Formerly, when a captain in the Royal Australian Navy, he served as Australia’s Defence Attaché in Beijing. These are his personal views.
Colonel John Malcolm Hutcheson, MC

John Hutcheson, soldier, engineer, accountant and scholar, has died aged 92 years. Vice-President of the Institute and a life member, he was working in the Institute’s office the day before he died.

John Hutcheson was born in Townsville in 1927 where his mother owned a small Greek café and his father worked as an accountant for Burns Philp. The family moved to Newcastle in 1940 and John entered the Royal Military College at Duntroon on 24 February 1945. The key influencers in that decision may have been his strong connection to the scouting movement, Army cadets and watching a military parade in Glasgow (home of the Malcolm clan). He completed Duntroon second in his class and was awarded several of the graduation prizes.

John was commissioned on 10 December 1947 into the Royal Australian Corps of Engineers. He was posted initially to the School of Military Engineering before serving in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan. On return to Australia, he completed a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering at the University of Sydney in December 1951. In June 1952, he returned to the BCOF, before being posted to Korea, first as the assault pioneer officer of the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), and then as the engineer intelligence officer of a British engineer unit. For his gallantry in mapping minefields by night in no-man’s-land, at times under fire from both sides, John was awarded a Military Cross which the Queen presented to him in Sydney in 1954.

In 1956, after completing a basic parachute course at Williamstown with Major Mac Grant (who would later command 1st Commando Company in Sydney), John was posted to the Royal Marines in Britain to train as a commando, replacing Major John Anderson who had died on the course earlier that year. En route home, John undertook on-the-job training with the British 22nd Special Air Service Regiment during the Malaysian Emergency, before taking command of the 2nd Commando Company in Melbourne.

His commando service was followed by postings to the School of Military Engineering (Officer Commanding Dog Section), Army Staff College (as a student), the Jungle Training Centre and as Director of Engineer Stores, where he designed the Army’s Lysaght hut (known as Hutch’s huts) as well as mobile hospitals, and he built up the engineer stores for Australia’s involvement in Vietnam. In March 1971, John was posted to South Vietnam as the Chief Engineer Australian Forces for which service he was awarded a United States Army Commendation Medal for meritorious service and two South Vietnamese public works awards.

On 4 March 1973, John transferred from the Regular Army to the Army Reserve and held numerous postings culminating in his appointment as Colonel Plans, Headquarters 2nd Division. He retired from the Army on 3 October 1982.

On leaving the Regular Army in 1973, John commenced civilian employment in Cambridge Credit Corporation Limited (owned by his cousin). In 1975, John embarked on an academic career as a lecturer in the School of Building at the University of New South Wales teaching scientific management, arbitration, applied building economics, and quantity surveying. Concurrently, he undertook further studies in the administration of building contracts at the university leading to a PhD being awarded to him in 1980. In 1994, John was appointed a visiting professor in the School of Building and developed and taught postgraduate courses in the Master of Real Estate Management degree and the Graduate Diploma in Valuation. John also became head of the campus live-in accommodation at Philip Baxter College and shaped the future of many students at the University. On retiring from academia, John continued to consult on the design and supervision of a number of building projects and acted as an expert witness in many court disputes.

Over his 92 years, John was committed to hard work and to the organisations of which he was a member. In his later years, John would spend his week going to talks at the Royal United Services Institute, CPA Australia – a certifying body for practising accountants (57 years a member), the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Engineers Australia.

John was Vice-President and a life member of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales (RUSI) when he died. He was serving on the Institute’s Board and he especially enjoyed volunteering in the RUSI’s library at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney. The day before John passed away, he was in the library managing the sale of surplus books and talking with visitors who were fascinated by his depth of knowledge, intellect and experiences. But the two things that RUSI members will remember most about John were his insightful questions of guest lecturers and his being behind the camera that recorded so many moments in the life of the RUSI.

John Hutcheson (Junior) and Paul Irving
BOOK REVIEW:

H.M. Bark Endeavour

by Ray Parkin


This is a beautifully-produced volume about H.M. Bark Endeavour and her first voyage to the South Pacific under the command of Captain James Cook RN in which he charted the east coast of New Holland in 1770. It includes an account of the Admiralty's acquisition of the Earl of Pembroke; her conversion to H.M. Bark Endeavour; her fitting out, crew and equipment; and narratives by participants in the voyage.

This first voyage took almost three years of which eight months were in transit to the Pacific from Plymouth, about six were in Tahiti where Cook observed the Transit of Venus, almost six involved charting the New Zealand coast, and six involved charting the east coast of New Holland.

Cook's second voyage is best known for his unsuccessful search for the Great Southern Land (now Antarctica) although he reached Easter Island, the Tongan group, New Caledonia and South Georgia. He further tested the chronometers that enabled the accurate determination of longitude. His third voyage ended tragically on Hawaii in 1779.

The first edition of this book, published in 1997 when the author was 87-years-old, was entitled H.M. Bark Endeavour: her place in Australian history: with an account of her construction, crew and equipment and a narrative of her voyage on the east coast of New Holland in the year 1770. The first edition was reprinted three times and was followed by a second edition and a paperback edition. This 2020 reprint, a facsimile reproduction of the 2nd edition, was published to coincide with the 250th anniversary of Cook's landing in Australia. It is in two formats: a single volume reviewed here; and a two-volume boxed set. This 2020 reprint contains a foreword by Emeritus Professor Alan Frost of La Trobe University, an authority on 18th century European exploration in the Pacific, who notes that, since the ship was built, no one has known as much about Endeavour as Ray Parkin.

The late Ray Parkin had an extraordinary life. He served in the Royal Australian Navy for 18 years, which included surviving the sinking of HMAS Perth in 1942 before enduring over three years as a prisoner-of-war (POW) of Japan on the Burma Railway and in Japanese coal mines. Parkin's 'wartime trilogy' is a classic of Australian POW literature.

This book was the focus of his work for 25 of his 95 years and reflects his love of 18th century vessels, his admiration for the voyages Cook undertook, and his own naval experiences. Parkin's own literary skills are remarkable. His writing is elegant but starkly evocative and he created most of the book's drawings and sketches.

The book is in two parts. Part 1 covers the plans for and construction of the Endeavour and the geo-politics of the world in which it was built. It constitutes a quarter of the book. Part II constitutes most of the book's remainder and focuses on the voyage itself. Each chapter in Part II has three elements:

- key extracts from Cook's daily log and his journal;
- extracts from journals kept by members of the ship's company, mainly those of botanist Joseph Banks and Sydney Parkinson (a botanical draughtsman, who provided the only contemporary sketches of Endeavour and its work boats); and
- analyses and comments by Parkin.

Parkin avoids putting words into the mouths of the characters but provides interpretations of their attitudes. The accounts of the ship's grounding on Endeavour Reef and of almost being washed onto the outer Barrier Reef (Part II, Chapters 8 and 13 respectively) are riveting and portray seamanship and leadership beyond reproach. Parkin's line drawings and maps illustrate the story as clearly as photographs embellish other books. Part 1 includes notes and a comprehensive index covers both parts.

The contribution of Cook's 1770 discoveries to the settlement of the Colony of New South Wales by Europeans in 1788, has attracted some critical attention 250 years after he mapped the east coast of New Holland. Many of his supposed attitudes towards the local inhabitants are now compared adversely and, in my view, unjustifiably, with current values. Parkin, whose work predates this development, examines Cook's responses to, and views on, the 'Indians' (Indigenous Australians) he met, following earlier encounters with Tahitians (very friendly) and Maoris (mostly hostile). He spent only about a week at Botany Bay and slept on board, but, while his vessel was repaired near what is now Cooktown, he spent some seven weeks ashore. He observed and interacted with the locals and provided the first small glossary of Aboriginal words.

Parkin's book has a dignity and authority rarely seen. A definitive reference for Endeavour and her times, it provides invaluable records and informed commentary. It is an attractive resource for those keen to understand Cook, his vessel, his crew and the conditions under which they created history.

Ken Broadhead
BOOK REVIEW:

An interesting point: A history of military aviation at Point Cook

by Steve Campbell-Wright


On Sunday, 1 March 1914, a Bristol Boxkite aircraft flown by Lieutenant Eric Harrison, took to the skies over Point Cook, Victoria, marking the first flight by a military aircraft in Australia. It was the beginning of Australia’s long and distinguished military aviation capability.

The first edition of An Interesting Point: A History of Military Aviation at Point Cook, was published in 2014 to mark the centenary of military aviation in Australia. It sold out. This second edition has been prepared to provide a lead-in to celebrations marking the Royal Australian Air Force’s centenary in 2021. It updates the 2014 edition’s concluding chapter and makes some minor corrections.

The author, Steve Campbell-Wright, served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) for over 35 years. He holds a doctor of philosophy degree in arts from the University of Melbourne and postgraduate qualifications in cultural heritage from Deakin University. He has written on subjects as diverse as heritage homes of the Australian Defence Force and Australia’s motoring heritage. His recreational interests include rebuilding historical aircraft.

He skilfully weaves a history spanning a century that gives a glimpse into the often-secretive world behind the gates of the birthplace of military aviation. He blends the history and development of Point Cook with that of the Australian Flying Corps from 1914 to 1918 and the RAAF from 1921. While describing the development of the Base buildings and infrastructure that became historical heritage, his portrayal of the people who took the decisions, implemented plans and conducted operations from Point Cook brings a compelling human touch to the history.

In an historical account of the establishment and development of Point Cook, it is difficult not to address the history of the RAAF also. He has done this with great skill, describing the broad history of the Service without overlooking the detail of life at Point Cook.

Despite its success and pivotal role in the early development of the Australian Flying Corps, the efforts to get these pilots into the air stumbled because of government bureaucratic delays, including the delayed purchase of Point Cook and its designation as a military airfield. Overcoming a painful gestation, Point Cook developed into the centrepiece for the early Air Force with a life that reflected the challenges and triumphs of the Air Force in a golden period in peacetime and a demanding period of world war.

In early years, the development and continued existence of the Air Force was directly attributable to the vision and drive of Wing Commander Richard Williams, the father of the Air Force – from the selection of uniforms, training regimes, setting of standards, public relations with a community that knew little of aviation, to the political infighting to avert the efforts of the Army and Navy to absorb the Air Force into their own Services.

The situation no doubt was exacerbated by a reputation of Point Cook being a gentlemen’s flying club arising from the “sensational aspects of exuberant aircrew” in the 1920s. Point Cook, however, became the epicentre for the establishment, development and mastery of the technical and engineering expertise essential for the successful conduct of future aviation operations. As the RAAF’s primary operational establishment, it had a significant role in the establishment of national and international air routes; sponsored the development of civil aviation within the community; and hosted the Royal Victorian Aero Club before its move to Moorabbin Airport. It was the home of the Australian National Airlines Commission Training School, training pilots, aircraft mechanics, ground engineers and hostesses for the newly-formed Trans Australian Airlines.

Status as the RAAF’s primary operational establishment was eclipsed during World War II with the development of a myriad of other training schools. Nevertheless, Point Cook supported the Empire Air Training Scheme graduating almost 3000 pilots and over 7000 signallers. Towards the turn of the century, economic rationalisation, recession and expenditure on Middle Eastern wars threatened the continued existence of Point Cook as a military base. In line with its past, however, it survived and is now the home for various Air Force units as well as the RAAF Museum, which holds a trove of treasures from Point Cook’s past.

An Interesting Point is well researched, well written and easy to read. It easily maintains the reader’s interest throughout. It is very well presented and supported with beautiful photographs that bring the history to life. Of necessity, photographs of the early life of Point Cook are black and white; however, they are of high quality and are amply supported with excellent colour plates of the more recent history of the Base.

The book will appeal to those who have at least a passing interest in aviation history. Point Cook is the ancestral home of the RAAF and the site for the first military flight in Australia. To quote a former Chief of Defence Force and Chief of Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston: The history of Point Cook is an important story. It is one which should be better known to all Australians.

Bob Treloar
William Holmes: the soldiers’ general

by Geoffrey Travers

Big Sky Publishing: Newport, NSW; 2020; 447 pp; ISBN: 9781922387004 (hardback); RRP $34.99; Ursula Davidson Library call number 570.02 TRAV 2020

William Holmes is a biography of an eminent Australian citizen soldier and public administrator, Major-General William Holmes, CMG, DSO, VD, who was born in Sydney in 1862. A Boer War veteran, he developed Sydney’s water supply and sewerage system before commanding Australia’s first military expeditionary force and accepting the surrender of German New Guinea in 1914. From 1915 to 1917, he served as a brigade and then divisional commander in the Australian Imperial Force on Gallipoli and the Western Front, where he was killed-in-action at Messines in June 1917.

The book is based on a thesis written by his grandson, the late Basil Holmes Travers. That work has been brought to publication by Travers’ nephew, Geoffrey Holmes Travers, a great-grandson of General Holmes.

William Holmes’ father came to Australia with his regiment in the 1850s. Seeing a better future for his family in New South Wales, he settled here instead of returning with his regiment to Britain at the end of its tour.

Holmes became well-known in the colony during the Boer War when the poet, A. B. (Banjo) Paterson, a war correspondent for The Sydney Morning Herald, commended his bravery. Wounded in June 1900, Holmes was invalided home. He led the returned soldiers in the Federation Procession in Sydney in January 1901.

His life on return saw the continuation of his development as a senior executive of the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage. He developed Sydney’s water supply and sewerage system; and, during a severe water shortage, proclaimed extreme water restrictions and dealt with a three-part royal commission. Concurrently, as a citizen soldier, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and appointed to command the 1st Australian Infantry Regiment from 1902 until 1911. In August 1912, he became a colonel and subsequently commanded the 6th Infantry Brigade until war was declared in 1914.

When the Great War began on 4 August 1914, Australia’s first independent military expeditionary force, the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF), was raised. Holmes was appointed its commander. His force comprised principally experienced naval reserve infantry from Victoria (who were sent to Sydney by train) and army infantrymen rapidly recruited and given initial training in Sydney. Rear-Admiral Sir George Patey, KCMG, RN, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty’s Australian Fleet, provided fleet support to the force – there were 16 vessels in the fleet including the submarines AE1 and AE2.

The ANMEF’s first task was to neutralise the German communication network centred near Rabaul in New Britain and then to occupy, but not annex, all of German New Guinea. The convoy reached Rabaul on 11 September 1914 and landed a party of naval infantry on the south shore of Blanche Bay some 10km north of the Bita Paka communication tower. The force advanced to Bita Paka, despite opposition from a German-led delaying force. There were casualties on both sides – the first loss of Australian lives during the Great War. Once Bita Paka had been captured, Holmes became a diplomat. He negotiated the surrender of all German territories and took over their administration.

He resigned from the ANMEF and as Administrator of German New Guinea in February 1915 so he could join the Australian Imperial Force. He was sent to Egypt as a colonel commanding the 5th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Australian Division. His brigade trained in the desert and then took a turn guarding the Suez Canal. In August 1915, four months after the original landing, 5th Brigade arrived on Gallipoli and entered the line, before being withdrawn back to Egypt in December.

The 2nd Australian Division moved from Egypt to the Western Front early in 1916. Holmes, now a brigadier-general, led the 5th Brigade during the First Battle of the Somme from July to December 1916. Holmes was promoted to major-general to command the 4th Australian Division in early 1917 and led it during the First Battle of Bullecourt in April where it suffered heavy losses (3000 killed or wounded). The 4th Division next played a very successful part in the Battle of Messines in Belgian Flanders in June 1917. Following the battle, whilst escorting the Premier of New South Wales around the Messines battlefield, he was killed by shrapnel from a stray German shell.

Chapter 11, “The Forgotten General”, assesses Holmes’ military career, muses on what might have been had he not been killed, and wonders why he is not better known. Holmes earned a reputation for fearlessness in battle, believing that reconnaissance should be conducted by the commanders making the decisions. He was known to all his soldiers and his leadership inspired their loyalty. Holmes, a contemporary of John Monash, arguably achieved more in his early career than his peer and certainly would have been a contender for command of the Australian Corps in 1918 had he still been alive.

The Australian Army History Unit provided seed funding for this book, which deserves inclusion in the Chief of Army’s approved reading list.

Jon Breen
BOOK REVIEW:

Coalition strategy and the end of the First World War: the Supreme War Council and war planning, 1917-1918

by Meighen McCrae

Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2019; 292 pp.; ISBN 9781108475303 (hardback); RRP $62.95

In November 1918, the guns fell silent after four years of fighting which, while centred on Europe, encompassed the globe. The political and military leaders of the allied nations had spent much of 1918 planning and setting the conditions to enable the Great War to be won in 1919. The main forum for this inter-allied co-operation was the Supreme War Council (SWC).

The rapid and unforeseen collapse of the Central Powers in late 1918, however, meant that the SWC, its actions and intrigues, have received relatively little attention when compared to the battlefield actions of 1918 or the political manoeuvring of the peace conference that followed in 1919.

This book, through its analysis of the SWC and its subordinate committees, provides a detailed insight into the formulation of global allied strategy for 1918-19. McCrae examines the motivations and machinations of the key allied powers, namely the French, British, Italians and Americans and how they used the SWC and their Permanent Military Representatives (PMR) to advance their national interests.

Dr Meighen McCrae, an historian, is a lecturer in strategic studies at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University (ANU) and also lectures on strategy and operations at the Australian War College. Prior to ANU, Dr McCrae taught at Aberystwyth University, Kings College London, and the United Kingdom Joint Services Command and Staff College.

The book is based upon the author's PhD thesis and the reader is struck by the quality and quantity of the research undertaken to examine the SWC and its subsidiary committees. It is comprised of six chapters complemented by a short introduction and conclusion. The thematic structure enables the reader to comprehend the complex interplay of military, industrial and personnel pressures. The use of a timeline, maps and tables enables the reader to grasp the complex global nature of the industrial and manpower issues facing the allies. The index is well structured and facilitates quick examination of key personnel, organisations and themes.

The first chapter provides an overview of the environment facing the allies when they formed the SWC. Importantly, the author examines the various PMRs, their construct, and their relationships with their respective national command elements. This provides key context due to their centrality to SWC determinations on the direction of the war.

Chapters two through five examine allied actions in subsidiary theatres and their relationship to the Franco-Belgian Front. McCrae demonstrates the inter-dependent nature of the various theatres and how the SWC, through Joint Note 37, sought to ensure allied actions in all theatres were premised upon their contribution to defeating the German Army. While the SWC had minimal executive power, the United States' insistence that it be used as a forum, combined with the coalescence of national interests on the Franco-Belgian Front, saw it gain primacy in the planning and direction of the war.

The final chapter focuses on resources, particularly allied shipping. The author's examination of the SWC subordinate committees, particularly the Allied Maritime Transport Council and the Inter-Allied Munitions Council during 1918, is detailed and insightful. McCrae examines the provision of shipping by the British to the Americans and how they sought to leverage this to further their own national interests, namely exchanging shipping tonnage for American formations to shorten the British sector of the line on the Franco-Belgian Front. The chapter also exposes political concerns, particularly those of the British relating to the build-up of a large American merchant fleet which would directly compete with their own after the war. Indeed, McCrae adds to the existing scholarship on allied grand strategy by providing new insights into the tensions, motivations and assumptions which underpinned allied strategy from 1917 onwards.

A key theme examined by McCrae throughout this book is the allies' continual overestimation of the manpower and industrial capacity of Germany. This was premised on their failure to accurately predict the character of the German offensive in early 1918. As the author demonstrates, this continual overestimation of German strength is the primary reason the allies failed to predict the rapid German collapse in late 1918 and were ill-prepared for the armistice. The armistice terms imposed by the allies were premised on neutering German military capability due a fear that Germany would reorganise over the winter of 1918-19 before resuming the war. Thus, the author provides key context to the modern reader who, with the luxury of hindsight, is aware of the subsequent consequences of these terms.

Overall, this is an excellent book examining the tensions among national interests within a coalition and how the various allies exploited the SWC, its committees and their PMRs to further their interests. This book will appeal to serious historians, military professionals and those with an interest in grand strategy.

Luke Holloway
BOOK REVIEW:  

The Marshall Plan: dawn of the Cold War  

by Benn Steil  
Simon and Schuster: New York; 2019; 624 pp.; ISBN 9781501102370 (hardcover); RRP $35.00

Faced with widespread destruction in Europe, strong communist parties in Greece and France, and the Red Army deployed throughout Eastern Europe and in the eastern zone of Germany, General George C. Marshall, United States Secretary of State under President Harry S. Truman, was concerned that without American aid, key allies would not be able to build strong democracies with thriving market economies. The harsh winter of 1946-47 exacerbated the situation.

Meeting in the Kremlin with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in April 1947, Marshall got the impression that Stalin expected Western Europe to fall under his sway as conditions worsened. Marshall was determined to prevent such a scenario and set out to reconstrcut Western Europe as a bulwark against communist authoritarianism.

The massive, costly, and ambitious undertaking would confront Europeans and Americans alike with a vision at odds with their history and self-conceptions. In the process, it would drive the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the European Union, and a Western identity that continues to shape world events.

Focusing on the critical years 1947 to 1949, Steil’s account brings to life the seminal episodes marking the collapse of post-war United States-Soviet relations – the Prague coup, the Berlin blockade, and the division of Germany. In each case, we see and understand like never before Stalin’s determination to crush the Marshall Plan and undermine American power in Europe.

Steil even identifies the day the Cold War began: 7 July 1947, when the Soviets cabled their Eastern European allies to forbid them from attending a planning meeting in Paris to discuss aid under the Marshall Plan. Soon afterward, Stalin’s top ideologist, Andrei Zhdanov, announced that the world was divided into “two camps” and that the communist countries of Europe were banding together in a new organisation, the Communist Information Bureau, which was created to solidify Moscow’s control over Eastern Europe in the face of growing United States’ influence in Western Europe.

Given current echoes of the Cold War as Putin’s Russia rattles the world order, the tenuous balance of power and uncertain order of the late 1940s is as relevant as ever. The Marshall Plan provides critical context into understanding today’s international landscape. Bringing to bear fascinating new material from American, Russian, German, and other European archives, Steil’s account will forever change how we view the Marshall Plan and the birth of the Cold War.

Drawing extensively on United States archival material as well as some Russian, British, French, German, Serbian and Czech sources, Steil is at his best when describing the myriad agencies and policies that oversaw and executed the Marshall Plan as it distributed more than US$13 billion in aid to 17 countries from 1948 to 1952. He writes elegantly on economics, explaining complicated mechanisms used to fuel the Western European recovery, such as implementation of counterpart funds, the creation of the European Payments Union and the cancellation of German debt.

Steil emphasises the roles and personalities of leading United States statesmen driving the effort to enact the Marshall Plan and devotes considerable space to describing the American domestic political scene and the “legislative drama” behind the plan’s political passage. He concludes that the Marshall Plan achieved the goals of its creators and, while it played a role in drawing the lines of the Cold War, the conflict itself was inevitable.

Steil ends the book with a distracting discussion of the post-Cold War period and a critique of United States-supported NATO expansion to countries of the former Soviet bloc and the resulting alienation of Russia. Steil’s work might have benefited instead from an analysis of the impact on the legacy of the Marshall Plan of current American protectionist trade policies and strains within the European Union and in United States-European relations.


The book includes a number of black-and-white images embedded in the text; four appendices (one with several poor-quality maps that may have been better placed in the text); a list of references and extensive notes; and a comprehensive index.

The Marshall Plan is a polished and masterly work of historical narrative. Told with verve, insight, and resonance for today, it will interest students of politics, diplomacy, economics and national security. Steil’s fresh perspective on a well-tended subject will be appreciated by specialists for its wide-ranging analysis and welcomed by general readers for its engrossing style and accessibility.

Marcus Fielding

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BOOK REVIEW:

Written in the sky

by Mark Carr

Melbourne Books: Melbourne; 2020; 480 pp; ISBN 9781925556612 (soft cover); RRP $39.95

Written in the Sky is an autobiography of one man’s desire to fly, recording his efforts to achieve a boyhood dream and the challenges and rewards of realising his ambitions.

The author, Mark Carr, joined the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as a midshipman to train as a naval aviator in the Fleet Air Arm. He has flown with the RAN, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Ansett Airlines and Cathay Pacific Airways. While many before, and after, him have followed a similar path, Mark has expertly woven an historical backdrop across his experiences. The demise of the Fleet Air Arm, the infamous and bitter airline pilot strike of 1989 that drove him from Australia to Hong Kong, and the transition of an entrepreneurial international airline into a business venture fighting for market share of air travel, are keystones in his career.

A chance meeting with his father’s friend, a former Fleet Air Arm pilot, sharpened a desire to fly into an ambition to “Fly Navy”. While there were close encounters with failure while undergoing basic and advanced flying training phases in the RAAF, graduation saw him transfer to the Fleet Air Arm training regime. The demands of Navy flying, particularly landing on the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne, then flagship of the RAN, a very small aircraft carrier by world standards, quite rightly draws admiration for Australian Navy pilots who routinely faced the challenges of carrier operations. His light-hearted description of Navy terminology provides another example that sets the Navy apart from the other Services.

Like many Fleet Air Arm pilots of the time, his bitterness at the government’s decision to scrap the Fleet Air Arm is clearly demonstrated. Subsequent transfer to the RAAF to fly Orion long-range maritime patrol aircraft provided an extension to his military career. His description of flying a complicated and lethal aircraft and the requirement to enforce Australia’s military interests across the Indian and Pacific oceans is instructive.

Family commitments, however, and a desire to avoid the staff duties that come with promotion to senior rank, caused him to look beyond the Services. As a boy in Mornington, Victoria, he had wistfully looked up at airliners overhead plying their way to and from Tasmania. Leaving the RAAF and joining Ansett Airlines helped him realise another boyhood dream until it was shattered by the vicious, bitter and protracted airline pilots’ dispute in the late 1980s. His description of the policies and operational procedures of the domestic airline sets the scene for his ongoing commentary on his flying experiences in the civil environment.

While the pilots’ dispute forced people to take sides with either the airlines or the pilots’ union, Mark and his family chose to leave Australia and fly for Cathay Pacific Airways, an organisation that had an entrepreneurial flair and reflected the drive of its founders. The latter part of the book recounts his experiences flying in the busy skies over South-East Asia, the Middle East and long-haul flights across the Pacific Ocean. While long distance flights for an international airline might seem somewhat less than stimulating after a career in the Services, the author’s writing skills ensure that the reader remains engaged and absorbed with his accounts of challenges and rewards. The insight he provides is fascinating.

While there are quite a few autobiographies with similar themes, this autobiography stands out as a simply told, down-to-earth account of his adventures without ‘gilding the lily’. His honest appraisal of his flying abilities, his personal attributes and his outlook on life are refreshing. He takes the reader into the cockpit with him, describing cockpit activities, the mechanics of flight, navigation and the challenges of menacing weather conditions, among other subjects, where his commitment to flying and managing these demands is clearly evident. Written in the Sky is suitable for those with an intimate knowledge of flying and will not disappoint them, while it will also engage the aviation enthusiast who will enjoy the experience.

Written in the Sky was quite literally written in the sky when the author was routinely returning home to Melbourne from Hong Kong in the back of an airliner. To use his own words: I wanted to do justice to all the wonderful aircraft that I have flown, a credit to their designers, manufacturers, and the people who maintained them … I sincerely hope that the reader, of whatever age or background, finds the work informative, entertaining, and possibly even inspiring.

I believe that Mark has ably met his objectives and in doing so has provided an opportunity for aviation enthusiasts to share his experiences with a rare insight into the activities in the cockpit and on the flight deck.

Bob Treloar
Sad Joys on Deployment is the memoir of an orthopaedic surgeon\(^1\) in the Royal Australian Air Force Specialist Reserve (RAAFSR) who deployed overseas ten times on operations between 1995 and 2008.

The author, Group Captain Gregor Bruce (Ret'd)\(^2\), is a surgeon with extensive experience in the public and private sectors. He eventually became a civilian orthopaedic surgeon at RAAF Base, Richmond, New South Wales. There, he was persuaded to join the RAAFSR while continuing to serve as a civilian surgeon at the base and maintaining a private practice. In his RAAFSR capacity, he became a member of a three-person team of a general surgeon, an orthopaedic surgeon and an anaesthetist.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is heavily dependent on its reservists, no more so than in health services. It invites its reservist doctors to volunteer for deployments, usually of from one to four months' duration, as the need arises.

Greg Bruce accepted ten such invitations over 13 years and describes them briefly in Chapter 2: Kigali, Rwanda, 1995 (peacekeeping); Vanimo, Papua New Guinea, 1998 (humanitarian assistance); Bougainville, 1998 (peacekeeping); Dili, East Timor, 1999-2000, 2000 and 2001 (peacekeeping); Honiara, Solomon Islands, 2003 (peacekeeping); Balad, Iraq, 2004-05 (warfighting); Bali, Indonesia, 2005 (humanitarian assistance); and Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, 2008 (warfighting).

In four, short, generic chapters, Bruce describes medical issues he encountered and the types of surgeries he performed when deployed. These chapters may be of more interest to the medically-minded than the general reader.

In a further series of 15 chapters of more general interest, most of which, again, are generic covering all deployments, Bruce describes how he was recruited into the RAAFSR, preparation for deployment, travel to the operational area, the military base and its security, the hospital workplace, military hardware and his choice of personal weapons, recreation on and off base, local citizens in the operational area, managing differences in culture between Australian and allied forces, encounters with hostile forces, working with the United Nations and non-government organisations, and issues and adjustments on returning home.

He concludes the book with reflections on his deployments, including some lessons learned; comments on the ADF from the perspective of a reservist; and an epilogue, which includes some observations on post-traumatic stress disorder and his reasons for writing the book. The book's name, we learn, reflects both the professional fulfilment and personal pleasure he gained from each operational deployment, diminished by the sadness he experienced from the human misery he observed everywhere – hence "sad joys".

The book also has an appendix containing nine, brief, well-written articles that he penned in Balad, Iraq, between 10 January and 20 February 2005 – they were published concurrently in the *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney. There also are 33 black-and-white photos of varying quality, some suggested further reading and a glossary.

I found the book very informative, particularly with respect to the provision of medical services on counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in the period from 1995 to 2008. Also, Greg Bruce's perspectives on the ADF and on working with allies are insightful. His listing of lessons to emerge is helpful, but his observation that the ADF does not seem to learn from errors made on previous deployments is concerning.

Military historians, however, may quibble about his description of Sparrow Force and its fate in East Timor in 1942 (p. 98). It actually comprised 2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion, 2/2nd Independent Company and later 2/4th Independent Company, among others. While the infantry battalion surrendered on 23 February, the commando companies resisted until withdrawn by sea in January 1943. Only some commandos were captured and executed by the Japanese. Some historians also may query the relative significance of the Australian and American victories at Milne Bay and Guadalcanal (pp. 49 and 98-99), but I consider Bruce has assessed the relative significance accurately.

Unfortunately, the book lacks a coherent storyline, largely as a consequence of the generic approach taken in many chapters. This also has necessitated repetition – material presented in earlier chapters has had to be represented, sometimes three or more times, to provide relevant context in later chapters. Further, the copy-editing leaves much to be desired in places, with some sections lacking fluency and others containing errors in syntax or spelling.

I would have preferred the book either to have addressed the deployments sequentially (the conventional approach to a memoir of this type), or to have had the deployments grouped by type, e.g. humanitarian assistance (Vanimo, Bali), peacekeeping (Kigali, Bougainville, Dili, Honiara) and warfighting (Balad, Tarin Kowt). Either approach may have provided a better storyline and reduced repetition.

These drawbacks notwithstanding, Greg Bruce has keen eye for detail and enlivens his observations in places with colourful word pictures and a dry sense of humour. I commend the book to readers interested in the role of the ADF health services in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

David Leece