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Spotlight Brief 1/21

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Our Region

Vietnam and the search for security leadership in ASEAN

Source: [Asian Security – Jun 20](#)

The ASEAN states lie astride the fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific region. That fact, their proximity to our continent, historical ties, and increasing trade and people linkages make ASEAN of vital regional interest to Australia. The authors examine the possibility of emergent security sectorial leadership from Vietnam within ASEAN. As Vietnam grows in importance within the region, and its emergence as a stakeholder continues, its role with ASEAN may increase. An example is Vietnam's efforts in the raising of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (which includes Australia). Understanding regional security concerns and ASEAN nation's strategic goals can help Australia further develop the engagement and strong partnerships which support Australian and regional partner interests.

Further reading:

[‘Vietnam’s Virtual Charm Offensive’, *The Diplomat*, 01 Nov 2020](#)

[‘Vietnam steps up to take ASEAN leadership role’, *The Strategist*, 05 Aug 2020](#)

[‘Vietnam Steps Up to Take ASEAN Leadership Role’, *Foreign Policy*, 31 Jul 2020](#)

[‘Vietnam confirms position and role in ASEAN’, *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper*, 24 Jul 2020](#)

[‘Vietnam has many contributions to ASEAN solidarity and development’, *Korea IT Times*, 18 Jun 2019](#)

The 2019 Presidential Election and the BRI's Prospects in Indonesia

Source: [China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies – 2020](#)

Australian Diplomat Walter Crocker presciently noted in a 1956 dispatch from Jakarta: ‘The emergence of China as the major regional power and its growing impact on Australia’s neighbourhood was a fact “as inescapable as the weather”’. He further observed ‘Geography had decreed that Indonesia lay between Australia and the Sinic (sic) world’. For these, and other reasons, Australia remains deeply interested in both nations and their bi-lateral relations. In this article the author, an Associate Professor at Universitas Gadjah Mada in

Yogyakarta, assesses the likely arc of bilateral relations between China and Indonesia during Joko Widodo's second term as Indonesia's President. He asserts there is pragmatism driving closer economic cooperation between Indonesia and China. This is evident in the 66 bilateral agreements covering various areas of cooperation, including infrastructure, science and technology, culture, law enforcement, tourism, education, health, environment, and anti-terrorism signed between Jakarta and Beijing. However, it would be wrong to expect Jakarta will cede to China on 'long-standing thorny issues [such] as maritime disputes and anti-Chinese sentiments'. The article concludes contemporary Indonesia is better able to pursue a 'free and active' foreign policy commensurate with its size and location than in previous eras. Understanding the various nuances in the Indonesia – China relationship, is useful to guide our ongoing engagement with both nations.

Further reading:

['China's BRI in some ASEAN countries: Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum', *Belt and Road – Europe*, 07 Feb 2021](#)

['For Indonesia, Chinese 5G Cooperation Brings Promise and Peril', *The Diplomat*, 20 Jan 2021](#)

['Indonesia Invites China as Investor For Extended High-Speed Railway', *Radio Free Asia*, 19 Jan 2021](#)

['Indonesia to focus on economic and health cooperation, seek support from China on regional stability', *Global Times*, 18 Jan 2021](#)

['Off the rails – Indonesia's Belt and Road rail mess', *Financial Review*, 24 Sep 2020](#)

Geostrategic Dynamics

Seizing on weakness: Allied strategy for competing with China's globalizing military

Source: [Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments - Jan 21](#)

The opening paragraph of this lengthy (122-page) report asserts 'China's military is going global'. The stated implication is 'the United States and its allies and partners, who have enjoyed largely unobstructed access to the worlds' oceans for the last three decades, will need to adjust to new military realities as the PLA makes its presence felt in faraway theatres'. Yet every new circumstance yields opportunity. Toshi Yoshihara and Jack Bianchi argue the rise in Chinese power also bring new vulnerabilities and weakness for possible exploitation. They present three potential weaknesses as possible sources of Western advantage:

- As a hitherto continental power, China's 'decisive seaward turn' risks an unacceptable two-front dilemma. While amity with Russia over the last three decades has freed China to go sea, the potential for continental challenges to undo China's global ambitions cast a long shadow over its strategic calculus. The recent low-level border skirmishes between China and India in the Himalaya could serve as a test case for determining how Beijing can manage landward tensions even as it extends its reach at sea.
- The PLA's need to sustain a diversified force structure for contingencies near and far precludes a concentration of effort devoted entirely to global missions. The Chinese military must meet disparate and, at times, contradictory demands arising from Beijing's local and global commitments.
- Finally, the PLA needs to close significant gaps in its overseas logistical infrastructure to obtain a credible global military posture.

These three issues provide planners a possible basis for devising and evaluating counter-strategies to constrain the PRC's globalising military.

Further reading:

['Thoughts on the unfolding US-Chinese competition: Washington's policy towards Beijing enters its next phase', *War on the Rocks*, 09 Feb 2021](#)

['US should seize on China's big weaknesses to curb its global ambitions, Washington strategy report advises', *South China Morning Post*, 22 Jan 21](#)

['China is Both Weak and Dangerous', *Foreign Policy*, 07 Dec 20](#)

['A Two Front War Was Never On the Cards', *The Wire*, 17 Sep 20](#)

['China is following Mao's dictum by keeping two-front war option against India open', *The Print*, 23 Jul 20](#)

Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific

Source: [RAND Corporation – 2020](#)

While focused on the Chinese-US relationship, this report seeks to define the basis of competition within the Indo-Pacific region and what it involves for key nations. It identifies positives and negatives of Chinese and American approaches in South-East Asia – specifically related to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – and provides recommendations in how the US can improve national and alliance approaches. While all six are incredibly important to Australia, two are vital security partners of Australia under the Five-Powers Defence Arrangement (Malaysia and Singapore) and one is essential for our security (Indonesia). Australia has different relationships with these nations compared to the US; consequently, opportunity exists to advance our interests and the interests of the wider alliance.

Further reading:

['Southeast Asia would choose the U.S. over China if forced to pick sides, survey shows', *CNBC*, 16 Feb 21](#)

['US-China relations: Southeast Asia cannot afford another neocolonial great power rivalry', *South China Morning Post*, 18 Dec 20](#)

['The challenges in resetting US–Southeast Asia relations', *East Asia Forum*, 10 Dec 20](#)

['The United States and Southeast Asia: A New Start', *Asia Society*, 17 Nov 20](#)

['China tightens ASEAN grip while US looks inward', *Nikkei Asia*, 14 Nov 20](#)

China's political narratives and Antarctic diplomacy

Source: [Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs – Jan 21](#)

As one of the 12 original parties to the Antarctic Treaty Australia has an enduring interest in Antarctica. The Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) covers nearly 5.9 million square kilometres. That is about 42% of Antarctica, while Territory is nearly 80% of the size of Australia itself. While only acceding to the Treaty in 1983, China has not been idle on the southern continent. China has become an important player in Antarctic governance. Nevertheless, it still has not legislated a law on Antarctica or issued any strategy for its Antarctic activities. The key Chinese Communist Party (CCP) political narratives do not contradict the Antarctic Treaty's core values, and may offer common ground for Australian-Chinese rapport. These narratives may represent opportunities for seeking common ground when engaging with China about Antarctica.

Further reading:

[‘Eyes on the prize: Australia, China, and the Antarctic treaty system’, *Lowy Institute*, 16 Feb 21](#)

[‘New Polar Strategy Must Focus On China's Long March To Antarctica’, *Forbes*, 10 Jan 21](#)

[‘With New Gear And Bases, China Is Beginning To Make A Play For Dominance In Antarctica’, *Forbes*, 23 Dec 20](#)

[‘The growing cloud of China in Antarctica’, *SupChina*, 03 Nov 20](#)

[‘What Are China's Intentions in Antarctica?’, *The Diplomat*, 14 Jun 19](#)

Russia's use of its private military companies

Source: [Strategic Comments – Dec 2020](#)

Private military companies (PMC) are a factor in Russian activities in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and wider – the so-called ‘little green men’. Russian ones appear to have closer links to Government than western ones, yet still allow a modicum of deniability. They are heavily armed, with capabilities including air defence, artillery and fighter aircraft. Unlike regular Russian military forces, these PMC operate globally - from Venezuela to Sri Lanka, and from Eastern Europe to Madagascar. This poses potential challenges for Australia, its allies and its regional partners. A main one is the likelihood of meeting Russian PMCs as they advance their operations into other areas of the Indo-Pacific, and the potential use of PMC by other nations already within the region as they seek to replicate perceptions of

Russian success. Another challenge arises from the combat power of some PMC resembling that of a peer state. Forces encountering such PMC in the region will need sufficient capabilities to prevent being over-matched.

Further reading:

[‘Securing the neighborhood: China’s evolving security footprint in Central Asia’, *Trends Research*, 28 Dec 20](#)

[‘Russia’s Escalating Use of Private Military Companies in Africa’, *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, 24 Nov 20](#)

[‘Mercenaries in the Service of Authoritarian States’, *Global Public Policy Institute*, 04 Nov 20](#)

[‘Russia’s Wagner Group and the rise of mercenary warfare’, *Modern War Institute*, 12 Apr 20](#)

[‘PNG documents secret despite ‘transparency’ commitment’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 01 Jan 20](#)

Strategy

Influencing Adversary States

Source: [RAND Corporation – 2020](#)

Deterrence is a key facet of Defence’s response to an increasingly complicated and unstable international environment. This study builds on a similar observation from the US Department of Defence and seeks to inform strategies that can influence threats or potential threats while avoiding opposition aggression or escalation in a crisis. It identifies deterrence is seldom the only answer and posits that a mix of approaches involving a combination of military, political and economic power are essential. Beyond influencing thoughts on how Australia can use Land Power to aid in our crisis response, this report provides historical examples of failures as well as heavy use of the “doctrine of decision-aiding under uncertainty”, a critical skill for commanders at all levels. It offers possible paths for the Army and other Joint Experimentation agencies to explore and tie in with wider Government efforts to develop tangible options and insights.

Further reading:

[‘It’s time to debate the relevance of deterrence’, *The Hill*, 10 Feb 21](#)

[‘Short of War: How to Keep U.S.-Chinese Confrontation From Ending in Calamity’, *Foreign Affairs*, 05 Feb 21](#)

[‘Shaping the America that Australia needs’, *The Strategist*, 14 Jan 21](#)

[‘The importance of European armour’, *Stratagem*, 28 Nov 20](#)

[‘When all you have is a defence hammer, what about some quality diplomacy?’, *Pearls and Irritations*, 20 Jul 20](#)

Understanding the complexity of intelligence problems

Source: [Intelligence and National Security – Feb 21](#)

We hear the refrain of the ‘unprecedented complexity’ in contemporary strategic affairs so often that we might not actually think about its practical implications. Intelligence is a vital field of interest to thinking about land power - and one that remains essential to all levels of

military operations and the formulation of government policy. In this article, Christiaan Menkveld presents the intuitive statement that the complexity of an intelligence problem determines largely the certainty intelligence services can provide. He argues better understanding of how the level of complexity affects analysis is helpful for both study of analytical methodologies and managing expectations of intelligence clients.

Resistance and Information Warfare in Mosul and Raqqa

Source: [The RUSI Journal – Dec 20](#)

The potential of information warfare to transform contemporary conflict is a ‘gold standard’ trope in security studies today. Yet, just like medieval alchemists, a leaden future awaits those who cannot translate or articulate the rhetorical promise into battlefield reality. Usefully, this article draws upon the experiences of an occupied population in two major regional centres that fought back against ISIS and the intense psychological and information warfare inflicted upon captured populations. Low on rhetorical exhortations and high on actual example, this account of the intersection between resistance and information warfare in contemporary conflict provides insight into the reality of counter-ISIS information effects.

Further reading:

[‘What’s in a name? Reimagining irregular warfare activities for competition’, *War on the Rocks*, 15 Jan 21](#)

[‘Islamic State 2.0 and the information war’, *The Strategist*, 02 Oct 19](#)

[‘How Raqqa Became the Capital of ISIS: A Proxy Warfare Case Study’, *New America*, 25 Jul 19](#)

[‘Five Operational Lessons from the Battle for Mosul’, *Military Review*, Jan 19](#)

[‘How Special Operators Trained for Psychological Warfare Before the Mosul Fight’, *Defense One*, 14 Nov 16](#)

War and Peace: Reaffirming the Distinction

Source: [Survival – Feb 21](#)

In recent years, Western security scholars have argued that the lines between peace and war are blurring – with ‘hybrid warfare’ and ‘grey zone’ being two of the most common phrases to account for this phenomena. This is not new; the West generally seeks a finer and finer taxonomy in an attempt to understand and respond to conflict. In this article, Chiara

Libiseller and Lukas Milevski directly challenge the strategic studies zeitgeist with clarity and insight. It notes ‘...concepts and categories are arbitrary. Reality does not dictate them; they are intellectual constructs of our choice’. From this departure point, the weakness inherent in the proliferation of new conceptions of war and warfare is methodically unpacked through analytical comparison with normative strategic studies theory. Libiseller and Milevski conclude: ‘The claim that concepts such as hybrid warfare or the grey zone better reflect the real world, and therefore provide a stronger basis for policy and strategy in practice than the old distinction between war and peace, does not easily survive scrutiny’.

Further reading:

[‘Using Hybrid War Theory to Shape Future U. S. Generational Doctrine’, *Small Wars Journal*, 03 Feb 21](#)

[‘The Importance of Nuance in Strategic Thinking’, *The Wavell Room*, 10 Nov 20](#)

[‘I’m Sorry for Creating the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’’, *Foreign Policy*, 05 May 18](#)

[‘A Critique of Hybrid Warfare in the Light of Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Military Strategy’, *Beyond the Horizon*, 27 May 17](#)

[‘Confessions of a Hybrid Warfare Skeptic’, *Small Wars Journal*, 03 Mar 16](#)

Blurred Lines: Gray-Zone Conflict and Hybrid War—Two Failures of American Strategic Thinking

Source: [Naval War College Review – Dec 20](#)

Starting with the premise that the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy do not mention either grey zone or hybrid warfare, Donald Stoker and Craig Whiteside argue they should be removed from the strategic lexicon. The article depicts the terms as examples of an American (and by extension the West’s) failure to think clearly about the interconnections between military, political and strategic issues; In turn this has seen the scope of war and military use expanded, hindering strategic analysis and development. Similarly, Stoker and Whiteside indicate such analysis sits on shifting sands – and as such is likely to disappear or need to be remade repeatedly. Like the previous article, there is value in considering the implications if this holds true, because new understandings of the difference between peace and war may lead misunderstanding and inadvertent escalation.

Further reading:

[‘Using Hybrid War Theory to Shape Future U. S. Generational Doctrine’, *Small Wars Journal*, 03 Feb 21](#)

[‘The Importance of Nuance in Strategic Thinking’, *The Wavell Room*, 10 Nov 20](#)

[‘I’m Sorry for Creating the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’’, *Foreign Policy*, 05 May 18](#)

[‘A Critique of Hybrid Warfare in the Light of Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Military Strategy’, *Beyond the Horizon*, 27 May 17](#)

[‘Confessions of a Hybrid Warfare Skeptic’, *Small Wars Journal*, 03 Mar 16](#)

Economics

The Future of Work in the Mekong Subregion

Source: [Center for Strategic and International Studies – Feb 21](#)

The Greater Mekong Region is at the geographical heart of the Indo-Pacific. Occupying 795,000 square kilometres, and with an estimated population of 326 million people spread across six nations, the region has global significance. The report analyses the future of work in the Subregion, with a specific focus on Myanmar and Cambodia. While the recent military coup in the former will influence the future of work in that country, and its relations with other countries in the region, the wider themes and trends identified in the report remain regionally valid. The report highlights challenge and opportunity associated with the profound demographic, economic and industrial changes anticipated. How successfully the changes are first understood, and then managed, have implications for the future prosperity and stability of this important subregion.

Further reading:

['The future of work after COVID-19', *McKinsey and Company*, 18 Feb 21](#)

['Exploring the future of work with PwC Australia', *PricewaterhouseCoopers*, 2021](#)

['The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities', *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*, 27 Jan 21](#)

['How Vietnam came to embrace a new vision of the Mekong Delta's future', *Mongabay*, 24 Dec 20](#)

['Women, COVID-19 and the Future of Work in APEC', *APEC*, Dec 20](#)

People, culture and ethics

Moving from Gender Analysis to Risk Analysis of Failing to Consider Gender

Source: [The RUSI Journal](#)

The Australian Defence Force is a world leader in integrating the aims of UNSCR 1325, with it being a critical part of training and operations. Despite some success, we must continue to build on and improve the gender planning considerations within our planning processes. Because in wars fought within and ultimately for the support of civilian populations, the gender dimension is a vital one. The article proposes the needs to develop a dedicated operational level risk assessment relating to gender, affording commanders the ability to include risk mitigation actions earlier within their appreciation process.

Further reading:

[‘Women, Peace, and Security: Is DOD Turning a Human Rights Corner?’](#), *Just Security*, 17 Feb 21

[‘Making Gender in Armed Conflict Operationally Relevant’](#), *International Law Observer*, 20 Jan 21

[‘The new war on women: Weaponising online spaces’](#), *Broad Agenda*, 29 Oct 20

[‘Insecurity, gender and violent extremism in the era of Covid-19’](#), *Monash University*, 25 Jun 20

[‘Understanding the Women, Peace and Security agenda’](#), *The Forge*, 09 Apr 20

The Problem with Killer Robots

Source: [Journal of Military Ethics – Dec 20](#)

Autonomy is an increasing part of the ADF. Our new reality is we will be working with and against autonomous systems capable of lethal force in the near future. There remain significant ethical arguments and challenges surrounding these systems. In this article, Nathan Gabriel Wood discusses many of them, arguing there are serious questions about lethal autonomous weapons violating the principle of necessity. While not arguing against

autonomous weapons in general, Wood does raise points for consideration in determining Australia's course of action in introducing such capabilities. If Australia invests in lethal autonomous systems it is imperative we have understood and addressed the ethical concerns that may arise.

Further reading:

['The Case Against Killer Robots', *The Oxford Student*, 03 Jan 21](#)

['Opening a Conversation About Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems \(LAWS\)', *Motive*, 15 Dec 20](#)

['Should AI-Powered Autonomous Weapons Be Regulated?', *Analytics India*, 14 Dec 20](#)

['Robots aren't better soldiers than humans', *Boston Globe*, 26 Oct 20](#)

['New Weapons, Proven Precedent', *Human Rights Watch*, 20 Oct 20](#)

Good Practice for the Development of Autonomous Weapons

Source: [The RUSI Journal – Jan 21](#)

Despite ethical concerns and legal questions about the use of autonomous weapons, there are possible ways of integrating mitigating factors into such weapons from the design phase onwards. This goes beyond the normal military considerations about ethical action (we do not concern ourselves with how children are raised today, despite being our future recruiting pool), but may be needed to provide a level of reassurance to the Australian population to allow full use of such weapons. In contrast to recent acquisition trends toward lower risk with 'off the shelf' solutions, this will require involvement at the pre-design stage of weapons systems, demanding in turn changes to our procurement processes and associated risk acceptance. Here Tony Gillespie develops and suggests possible interjection points, as well as processes by which we can utilise autonomous weapons once in service.

Further reading:

['The Ethics of the Kill Decision: Should Humans Always be in the Loop?', *The Cypher Brief*, 07 Feb 21](#)

['Drone Swarms Are Getting Too Fast For Humans To Fight, U.S. General Warns', *Forbes*, 27 Jan 21](#)

['Ethical Control of Unmanned Systems', *Naval Postgraduate School*, 18 Jan 21](#)

['What if autonomous weapons are more ethical than humans?', *Extra Newsfeed*, 30 Dec 20](#)

['Putin Urges AI Limits — But for Thee, Not Me?', *Defense One*, 03 Dec 20](#)

Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Using an Online Panel Survey to Assess a Social Media Counter-Messaging Campaign

Source: [RAND Corporation – 2020](#)

The increase in social media influence and penetration has brought significant opportunities and complications from a national security point of view. This report assesses the effects of countering violent extremism-themed social media content used in a campaign to promote tolerance, freedom of speech, and rejection of violence in Indonesia. With the continued high likelihood of extremist organisations operating within Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, having information warfare and cyber tools that aid in countering them is essential. This report suggests some opening steps toward developing and adopting such tools. Of interest in the case study provided is the tension between maintaining the secrecy of our capabilities and actions in the cyber/information worlds and the requirement to share with allies and partners, including non-military actors.

Further reading:

['Women in preventing and countering violent extremism', *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 02 Feb 21](#)

['A global effort to counter extremism through education', *Brookings*, 25 Jan 21](#)

['New Indonesian law empowers communities against extremism, but some fret about rights', *The Straits Times*, 19 Jan 21](#)

['From COVID to the Caliphate: A Look at Violent Extremism Heading into 2021', *United States Institute of Peace*, 15 Dec 20](#)

['Countering the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes', *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 2020](#)

Detecting the need for change: How the British Army adapted to warfare on the Western Front and in the Southern Cameroons

Source: [European Journal of International Security – November 2020](#)

We often utilise overarching theories describing why some militaries are successful at innovation and others are not. The authors propose taking a single step from business and economics literatures on organisational change, the art of detecting failure, as a heuristic to explore the introduction and optimisation of innovation. This can be challenging for those in the fight or immediately afterwards; here Michael Hunzeker and Kristen Harkness highlight the essentialness of institutionalised feedback loops and how they should be constructed. Historical cases of conventional and counter-insurgency efforts by the British Army are used to inform comparisons of results.

Further reading:

['Application of Innovation, Risk Tolerance, Opportunism and Leading through and beyond failure within the Australian Army', *Centre for Australian Army Leadership*, 19 Feb 21](#)

['How 'Small C' Change Can Beat Large-Scale Rebuilding', *Harvard Business School*, 13 Jan 21](#)

['Why Do 75% of Change Management Programs Fail?', *Locomote*, Jan 21](#)

['Bringing the Army to innovation', *War on the Rocks*, 24 Dec 20](#)

['America's military needs an innovation overhaul', *Fast Company*, 08 Dec 20](#)

Captains of War: History in Professional Military Education

Source: [The RUSI Journal – Dec 20](#)

The Australian Army has made recent strides in improving its understanding, delivery, and support of professional military education (PME). Louis Halewood and David Morgan-Owen examine the role of history in PME in light of the recent US Joint Chiefs of Staff's guidance on achieving 'intellectual overmatch'. Halewood and Morgan-Owen argue a narrow approach to the past, underpinned by preconceived notions of 'relevance', undermines what ability history has to serve the aims of military education. History need not be 'applied' to make it valuable. Its study can provide a broader understanding of warfare – what Sir Michael Howard referred to as the important contexts of war which careful study of military history provides. With our increasing emphasis on the so-called 'STEM' side of PME, it is useful to

remember that while STEM may suggest the 'what' and the 'how' , it is history that helps contextualise the 'why' of war.

Further reading:

['American Universities Declare War on Military History', *Bloomberg*, 31 Jan 21](#)

['Decolonising Professional Military Education', *Wavell Room*, 09 Jan 21](#)

['Does India's Professional Military Education Need a Course Correction?', *Mission Victory India*, 23 Dec 20](#)

['Embedding Creativity in Professional Military Education: Understanding Creativity and Its Implementation', *Strategy Bridge*, 10 Aug 20](#)

['Professional military education needs more creativity, not more history', *War on the Rocks*, 28 May 20](#)

Force Design

Envisioning a new command & control (C2) architecture for all-domain operations

Source: [MITRE - Feb 21](#)

It is a universal truism that legacy systems are challenged in the effective command and control of joint forces due to impediments between domains, echelons, classifications, and allies. This article investigates the needs of a future, joint command and control system and uses two operational vignettes against a threat with advantages in geography, initiative, and force generation to discuss these needs. The Australian Joint Force has an ongoing challenge in establishing and normalising an agile and resilient 21st Century digital command and control network. The reality is that the future Army must change to meet the challenge of Unified Domain Operations foreshadowed in the draft *Future Land Operating Concept*. This article highlights some steps required to adapt contemporary command and control structure to meet the emerging demands of all-domain convergence.

Further reading:

'The future of Defence command and control is agile', *Defence Science and Technology*, 19 Feb 21, <https://www.dst.defence.gov.au/news/2021/02/15/future-defence-command-and-control-agile>

'How To Make The Third Offset Real: The Combined JADC2', *Breaking Defense*, 05 Feb 21, <https://breakingdefense.com/2021/02/how-to-build-the-third-offset-the-combined-jadc2/>

'C2, Technology, & the Complex Endeavor Space', *NATO C2 Centre of Excellence*, 18 Jan 21, <https://c2coe.org/2021/01/18/podcast-c2-and-beyond-s1e5-c2-technology-the-complex-endeavor-space-dr-david-s-alberts-institute-for-defense-analyses/>

'Network-Centric Warfare: Can Europe be ready?', *Wavell Room*, 21 Dec 20, <https://wavellroom.com/2020/12/21/network-centric-warfare-europe-defence/>

'Challenges Loom for Joint All-Domain Command, Control', *National Defense*, 08 Dec 20, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2020/12/8/challenges-loom-for-joint-all-domain-command-control>

Russian lessons learned in Syria

Source: [MITRE - Jun 20](#)

While there has been much work on Western conflicts within the Middle East, Russian efforts in Syria have been more constrained due to Syrian and Russian control of media. This paper explains Russian lessons, and includes comments by Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu; General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov, and several of the leaders of military districts (Dvornikov, Lapin, Zhuravlev) who have fought in Syria. It is important reading for two reasons. The first is the practical use of technology, capabilities and concepts that we are ourselves interested in; the second is to understand possible competitor and threat systems. The report specifically addresses:

- use of Special Forces and Private Military Companies
- urban combat
- field testing of new equipment
- updates to military art, including the use of robotics, new tactics and improved leadership (including a shift towards greater flexibility and possibly mission command)
- enabler support.

Further reading:

['The Second Karabakh War: Lessons and Implications for Russia \(Part One\)', *The Jamestown Foundation*, 05 Jan 21](#)

['The Russian military's lessons learned in Syria', *Institute for the Study of War*, Jan 21](#)

['Russia's War in Syria: Assessing Russian Military Capabilities and Lessons Learned', *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 17 Dec 20](#)

['Russian Lessons from the Syrian Operation and the Culture of Military Innovation', *George Marshall European Centre for Strategic Studies*, Feb 20](#)

['Russia's Military Leaders Exploit Lessons From Experiments in Syria', *The Jamestown Foundation*, 23 Jul 19](#)

Cruising for a Bruising: Maritime Competition in an Anti-Access Age

Source: [Security Studies – Oct 20](#)

Recent studies suggest technology has offered defence an operational and strategic advantage over the offense in the age-old tension between the two forms of warfare. Yet most Western militaries remain focused on offensive power projection. Jonathan Caverley and Peter Dombrowski look at the US Navy, an offensively focused organisation, and the potential to escalate a crisis that may undermine the Government's desired strategic goals. While maritime focused, there are key points and concepts here relating to Chinese capabilities that will affect the Joint Force.

Further reading:

[‘It’s the Navy’s world now: preserving the right Army force structure in an era of seapower’s strategic primacy’, *Modern War Institute*, 12 Jan 21](#)

[‘Offence for Defence?’, *Armada International*, 07 Jan 21](#)

[‘How to solve logistical challenges during a South China Sea conflict’, *Defense News*, 24 Dec 20](#)

[‘Why drones have raised the odds and risks of small wars’, *The Print*, 01 Dec 20](#)

[‘The Relations of the Offensive and Defensive to Each Other in Tactics’, *On War*, 1873](#)

A new era for Chinese military logistics

Source: [Asian Security – Feb 21](#)

The recent expansion of PLA operations well beyond the Chinese borders demands an expeditionary, strategic and joint logistics system. The PLA's response is the Joint Logistics Support Force. This force, started by Xi Jin Ping with the Central Military Commission, is the centralisation of many independent units and agencies. The Chinese response to COVID-19 in Wuhan saw its debut as a key actor, allowing for identification of key details and assessments of efficacy. This assessment highlights possible shortfalls in jointery, command structure, logistic information systems and command and control culture. The article is highly pertinent reading for those seeking to understand how China may support its extra-regional military activities into the future.

Further reading:

[‘China’s military modernisation’, *East Asia Forum*, 16 Dec 20](#)

[‘PLA Fields New Rapid-Assembly Camp System’, *Ashtree Analytics*, 12 Dec 20](#)

[‘China’s armed forces and the impact of COVID-19’, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 07 May 20](#)

[‘What the Fight Against the New Coronavirus Tells Us About the Post-Reform PLA’, *The Diplomat*, 15 Feb 20](#)

[‘President encourages PLA logistics force’, *China Daily*, 21 Oct 19](#)

Science, Technology and Industry

Clausewitzian friction and autonomous weapon systems

Source: [Comparative Strategy – Jan 21](#)

Friction is a constant companion in the human activity of war. A lot of effort seeks to reduce this friction, with autonomous systems and weapons being amongst the latest solutions. It is a tempting argument: an autonomous system can be free of human frailty and errors, focusing on a single mission with relentless mechanical application. As with all solutions though, these systems bring in their own friction sources – including some that may unintentionally contribute to escalation or uncertainty. Compounding this is the simplest solution, retaining a human within or on the loop, undermines a forces capability, especially against a threat using AI themselves. We know new capabilities almost inevitably introduce new complexities – it follows that AI and autonomous weapons may not be the ‘fog-clearing’ panacea many claim.

Further reading:

[‘Illiteracy, Not Morality, Is Holding Back Military Integration of Artificial Intelligence’, *National Interest*, 15 Feb 21](#)

[‘Artificial intelligence and ML in workplace: major trends for 2021’, *Analytics Insight*, 22 Jan 21](#)

[‘The Four Mistakes That Kill Artificial Intelligence Projects’, *Forbes*, 16 Dec 20](#)

[‘War machines: can AI for war be ethical?’, *The Cove*, 14 Dec 20](#)

[‘Will Artificial Intelligence Ever Live Up to Its Hype?’, *Scientific American*, 04 Dec 20](#)