The Third Way:
Towards an Australian Maritime Strategy for the Twenty-first Century

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Executive Summary

This paper argues that, despite being the world's largest island, the greatest paradox of Australia's existence is that the country lacks a maritime consciousness to guide defence policy. National development has been marked by several historical characteristics which have created an ingrained culture of sea-blindness. These include a long tradition of maritime dependence on great powers; the growth of a martial cult centred on Anzac; a schism between continental and expeditionary approaches in strategic behaviour; and the fact that, until the twentieth century, a lack of direct responsibility for security permitted a continental rather than a maritime ethos to shape the country's essential cultural traditions. As Australia emerges as a twenty-first century middle power in a globalised world increasingly dominated by Asian economic power, defence thinking must undergo a philosophical change. In particular, a credible maritime strategy needs to be developed as a 'third way' to unify the older continental and expeditionary approaches. Australia must seek strategic maturity based on broad maritime principles. Given contemporary challenges stemming from long-held inland cultural affinities and deep-seated political traditions of alliance dependency and low defence spending, future strategic planning should concentrate on a balanced posture that is sufficient rather than self-reliant. In the years ahead, it will be imperative for national leaders to develop a vision of Australia's defence that is aligned to political economy and which integrates an older continental identity with a sophisticated appreciation of the value of maritime strategy.

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Introduction

> *Australia is an island. It is very big and difficult to defend. It is very big and difficult to attack. Those three propositions, which are not contradictory, lie behind every discussion of Australian strategy.*

> Rear Admiral Richard Hill, *Medium Power Strategy Revisited* (March 2000)*.*

In 1915, in the midst of the First World War, the British maritime strategist Sir Julian Corbett wrote of 'the mysterious power [affecting] the men who go down to the sea in ships'. He went on to suggest that 'the free-spirit of the sea' was understood intuitively by the British and the Americans as maritime peoples but not by the continental Germans and French. For Corbett, both Germany and France — despite their development of formidable navies — remained at heart land powers dedicated to the might of their armies.[1] Almost a century on, given the powerful combination of a continental identity and the Anzac tradition, one could easily add Australians to Corbett's list of peoples for whom 'the free-spirit of the sea' remains elusive.

As the world's largest island continent, lying between the Southern, Pacific and Indian oceans, enclosed in the east and north by the Timor, Arafura, Coral and Tasman seas and dependent on oceanic trade and sea lines of communication for its prosperity, one might expect Australians to be natural seafarers. After all, Australia's colonial development in the nineteenth century coincided with Britain's greatest era of oceanic consciousness. As Howard Isham has written of the Victorians, 'perhaps no people in history have been so conscious of the importance of the sea for their livelihood and safety since those citizens of Greek city-states in the fifth century BC.'[2]

Yet, a British consciousness of the sea was not shared by the Australian colonists. On the contrary, from settlement in 1788 onwards, it was not the sea but what Corbett might have called 'a free spirit of the land' that shaped Australian identity. A decade after Federation in 1901, a major national newspaper could observe that, despite its origins in British civilisation, the new Australian Commonwealth was not Shakespeare's 'sceptred isle' intimately 'bound in with the triumphant sea', but a continent containing 'essentially a nation of landmen'.[3] While Australia's population is settled mainly along the coastal rim and, while the country possesses an important naval tradition, neither a littoral lifestyle nor naval professionalism is synonymous with a maritime strategic consciousness in the classic Mahan-Corbett sense that 'the sea is history'. Rather what prevails in Australia is the maritime ambivalence of a nation whose modern history began on the 'fatal shore' of a vast and unknown continent. It has been noted that 'confusion still lingers about what to call Australia: children are taught that they live in "the world's largest island, the world's smallest continent".'[4]

Australia's continental ethos, its army and its pastoral and mining industries have always been of more importance than its maritime awareness, its navy and sea-based industries. To paraphrase Lord Bryce, the history of maritime strategic thought in Australia 'is like the study of snakes in Ireland: there are no snakes in Ireland.'[5] Indeed, it was only in 2000 that an Australian Defence White Paper actually employed the term 'maritime strategy' for the first time. Yet even at this late date, the term was still primarily equated with narrow concepts of naval activity for continental defence measures. There was little evidence in *Defence 2000* of a modern maritime philosophy that saw the sea as an arena that embraced all the elements of national power.[6] It is surely the greatest paradox of modern Australian history that an island continent, settled by the British, the greatest seafaring people of the modern era, remains bereft of an effective maritime culture to guide its strategic theory and practice. It is a paradox, moreover, that any serious student of Australian strategic history must explore and seek to explain before any attempt to ponder future national security requirements.

Australia's immaturity of maritime outlook has not gone unnoticed by successive generations of observers. In 1910, as the new Commonwealth debated its direction in defence policy, the Melbourne *Argus* pointed to the differences between Britain and Australia in maritime outlook:

> *[In the British Isles] the insularity of the country, the deeply indented nature of the coast, the proximity of alert and powerful enemies, who could be struck by means of sea-power and by no other means – these were and still continue to be, great factors of British maritime supremacy. The situation in Australia is in almost every respect entirely different.*[7]

In 1959, in his comparison of the United States and Australia, H.C. Allen was struck by the fact that 'America has a great maritime tradition, which Australia, having been perhaps too long reliant on that of the mother country, really has not.'[8] A decade on, the historical geographer James Bird lamented: 'Australia is a maritime nation and scarcely knows it.'[9] Similarly, in 1979, John Bach bewailed the absence of a sense of the sea in the Australian psyche observing, 'European Australia should have been the archetype of a maritime nation. The offspring of a mighty sea-power, it might have been expected to look instinctively to the same source for its strength.'[10] More recently, Frank Broeze highlighted the way Australia's states have been captive to a 'regional littoralism' which has restricted the evolution of a national maritime outlook. While New South Wales and Queensland look out onto the Pacific, South Australia abuts the Southern Ocean and Western Australia overlooks the Indian Ocean. The nation's maritime diversity between east and west is further compounded by the fact that the Northern Territory's seaward focus is on the Timor Sea and into South-East Asia through the Indonesian archipelago.[11]

This paper argues that it is the peculiar trajectory of Australia's national culture that has impeded a sense of a maritime consciousness and that this situation is particularly reflected in defence policy. Historically, the imperial, literary, and politico-economic aspects of Australian cultural awareness have tended to uphold a strong continental ethos, elements of which have transmuted themselves into a view of defence that has prevented the emergence of a mature appreciation of the strategic value of the sea. Three areas are examined to support this thesis. First, the way in which British naval power from 1788 until the fall of Singapore in 1942 fostered in Australian strategy a tradition of maritime dependence on the colonial motherland and permitted a primarily volunteer military tradition to flourish is briefly assessed. Second, the manner in which a lack of responsibility for national defence permitted an unhindered focus on settlement and internal development of a vast continent — a process which created a cult of the inland in the Australian cultural imagination — is described. Finally, as Australia emerges as a significant twenty-first century middle power in a globalised world, the potential for developing a coherent maritime strategy is explored. Such a maritime strategy may serve

as a 'third way' between the traditional approaches of continental defence and expeditionary warfare and so contribute to an evolution in both Australian strategic maturity and national identity.

Maritime Dependence: British Naval Power and the Defence of Australia

John Hirst has observed that 'for most of human history defence spending has been the biggest item in government budgets. In the Australian colonies it was one of the smallest, which allowed government funds to be spent on the internal development of the colony.'[12] From settlement in 1788 to Federation in 1901, Australia was part of the world's greatest seaborne empire and its defence was underwritten by Britain's global naval supremacy. The metropole subsumed Australia's maritime identity into an imperial system absolving the colonists from any direct responsibility for defending themselves in international affairs. Australia's colonists were able to settle an island continent while cultivating a sense of *mare incognitum*. With physical safety ensured by the Royal Navy, colonial Australia enjoyed the luxury of focusing on social and economic development and the evolution of constitutional government. The transition to democratic self-government in the 1850s and 1860s saw colonial governments such as New South Wales and Victoria duplicate the virtues of British political stability providing security for property rights and individual liberty under common law.[13]

Throughout the nineteenth century, the defence of the Australian colonies was conceived in imperial rather than in national terms. Indeed, it was only with Federation in 1901 that defence became a serious political consideration. While modern Australia's founding fathers, Edmund Barton, Joseph Cook, Alfred Deakin and Andrew Fisher, came to view defence as a national responsibility, they continued to view any Australian effort as part of a wider British imperial system. As early as 1887, Deakin encapsulated the view that would prevail at the time of Federation when he remarked, 'we cannot imagine any description of circumstances by which the Colonies should be humiliated or weakened or their power lessened under which the Empire would not itself be humiliated, weakened and lessened.'[14] Australia's geographical size and small population meant that national defence could only be practical if it sought to reinforce and, in turn, be reinforced by the resources of empire. In the first decade after Federation in 1901, the formation of the 'Australian settlement' expressed a synthesis of domestic socio-economic ideals, national

defence imperatives and imperial strategy.[15] At its core the settlement was cast in terms of a fortress defence of an expatriate Anglo-Saxon civilisation.
In the words of Paul Kelly:

> *Australia was founded on faith in government authority; belief in egalitarianism; a method of judicial determination in centralised wage fixation; protection of its industry and its jobs; dependence on a great power (first Britain, then America), for its security and finance; and above all hostility to its geographical location, exhibited in fear of external domination and internal contamination from the peoples of the Asia/Pacific. [The Australian settlement's] bedrock ideology was protection; its solution a Fortress Australia, guaranteed as part of an impregnable Empire spanning the globe.*[16]

Given Australia's development of a strong military tradition after 1915, it is easy to forget how the post-1901 Australian settlement enshrined Dominion navalism as the original strategic creed of the nation. In adopting this creed, Australians were merely following the advice of American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan who wrote in 1902 that Australia must 'frame its [defence] schemes and base its estimates on sound lines, both naval and imperial; naval by allowing due weight to battle force; imperial, by contemplating the whole, and recognizing that local safety is not always best found in local precaution.'[17]

Under the strategic umbrella of Dominion navalism, Australia's defence was viewed largely in terms of the security that would result from the creation of 'a great Pacific Fleet of the Empire'. In 1911, in pursuit of this aim, the Royal Navy's Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson envisaged Australia's future defence planning and acquisition in terms of naval rather than military power. He estimated that, by the early 1930s, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) would transition from a local squadron to a regional fleet of 40 surface vessels and 12 submarines with 15,000 naval personnel.[18] It is a striking irony of Australian historiography that, prior to 1915, C.E.W. Bean was known as an ardent supporter of Dominion navalism. Bean's 1913 book, *Flagships Three*, celebrates the birth of the RAN with what the author calls 'a fascinating dream' — that of a mighty Australian flagship leading a British Pacific fleet of cruisers and destroyers into home harbours before patrolling Asia's waters from Wellington to Hong Kong. Describing Australians as sharing the 'blood of sea peoples', Bean went on to assert that 'Australia is *the* sea continent' and 'the sea is Australia's best means of defence; it is her only means of attack'.[19]

In strategic consciousness, post-Federation Australia remained in the grip of what Gregory Melleuish has called 'the meta-narrative of Empire'.[20] Although this imperial narrative was to last for the first half of the twentieth century, its early concentration on the navy over the army as a focus for national identity did not survive the First World War. This transition was exemplified by Bean himself who transferred the power of his pen from sailors to soldiers so elevating Australia's military performance into the Anzac tradition by marrying the bushman to the digger to create the legend of the 'natural soldier'. By 1921 the first volume of Bean's official history, *The Story of Anzac*, had eclipsed the early Dominion navalism of *Flagships Three* and replaced any maritime vision with a dashing military image of Australian troops fighting on distant fields in Europe and the Middle East. Bean's earlier invocation of 'the blood of sea peoples' disappeared as he celebrated the 'spirit and skill of the Australian Imperial Force'.[21] The subsequent official histories of Australia in the First World War only reinforced the supremacy of the Anzac tradition as the embodiment of the nation's martial spirit and the central mythology of the Australian people.[22]

What this meant in strategic terms was that, when Prime Minister Billy Hughes went to the Versailles Conference in 1919, he did so in the ironic knowledge that Australians had made their reputation not as sailors in defence of their island continent but as soldiers in a far-flung expeditionary army. His major concern then, was to try to ensure that Australia's military sacrifice on the battlefields of France would underwrite a British naval counterweight to the rapid rise of Japanese power in the Far East. As Hughes put it, 'the [northern Pacific] islands [are] as necessary to Australia as water to a city. If they were in the hands of a superior power there would be no peace for Australia.'[23]

Yet, while Japan's strategic challenge to Australia might have been identified, resolving it was far more problematic. Paradoxically, the replacement of the early Federation vision of Dominion navalism by the First World War Anzac military tradition meant that, despite Australia's enormous contribution to the victory of the British Empire over Germany in the First World War, the country became more, not less, dependent on Britain. By 1923 the RAN had fallen from its wartime strength of 23 ships to 11 and most of these were rendered either non-operational or confined to local waters by a lack of coal and oil. A year later, in April 1924, fewer than 11 years after steaming into Sydney as the pride of the new RAN, the battlecruiser *Australia* was scuttled off Sydney Heads. It was an ignominious end to Bean's 'fascinating dream' of a Pacific fleet of Empire dominated by Australian vessels.[24]

In the inter-war period Australia relied on the Singapore strategy for its maritime security. The dual problems of a threat from a great Asian power and a growing lack of maritime security in the inter-war years exemplify what Bruce Grant has called the 'double dilemma of Australian existence':

> The dilemma of Australian nationhood is the desire to be a nation, while lacking the capacity to defend the national territory. The dilemma of Australian civilisation is that Australia is white, capitalist and Christian in a part of the world subject to ancient and powerful Asian influences. Cherishing Western values, Australians have become intellectually and materially dependent on the power centres of the Western world to protect them from Asia, thus inhibiting the growth of an Australian nation.[25]

To this double dilemma one can add Australia's ambiguity about the value of the oceans as strategic space and the increasing tendency towards 'sea-blindness' over the course of the twentieth century.[26] Sea-blindness has been usefully defined by Duncan Redford as 'the inability to connect with maritime issues at either an individual or political level'.[27] In Australia, prominent admirals from William Creswell to Anthony Synnot have failed to capture the national imagination in the manner of generals such as John Monash or Peter Cosgrove.[28] In terms of philosophical outlook, many of Australia's most influential strategic thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century from Edward Hutton through E.L. Piesse to Richard Casey, were men with military rather than naval backgrounds — dingoes rather than sharks. Moreover, despite the post-Vietnam dalliance with the doctrine of a direct 'Defence of Australia', little has occurred to change the pattern of Australian overseas deployments which continue to remain heavily dominated by land forces. One historian sums up the supremacy that the Australian Army has achieved over the RAN in the twentieth century in the following terms:

> The experience of the second half of the twentieth century seems to suggest that, when cabinets or senior ministers decided that serious military action, or the threat of military action, was appropriate, they thought principally of the commitment of troops, either infantry, or more recently special forces. These were perceived as 'the sharp end' of the defence force's support for the nation's diplomatic and strategic goals.[29]

Australia's history of sea-blindness has been much lamented by figures as diverse as Frederick Eggleston, T.B. Millar, Kim Beazley and Alan Robertson. In 1930, Eggleston, a pioneer of Australian strategic thought, noted: 'we do not have that sense of the sea and our surroundings which is generally developed in an island people.'[30] In a similar vein Millar, in his 1965 book *Australia's Defence*, was moved to remind

his readers that Australia was an island nation and, as such, did not have to be invaded in order to be defeated by events occurring at sea.[31] In the late 1980s, the political architect of Australia's continental defence doctrine, Kim Beazley, could observe, 'Australia is not a maritime nation and its people do not sustain much of an interest in Australian maritime strategy.'[32] For most of its existence what has passed for a maritime philosophy of the sea in Australian defence is, in Commodore Alan Robertson's memorable words, 'a continentalist's idea of maritime strategy'.[33]

An Australian maritime strategic outlook has also been further retarded by the character of a national political debate that is marked by division over how the country might best develop its own defence. Australians have never agreed on the fundamental question of democratic national defence, namely: who should bear arms and where? The country was bitterly divided by the conscription disputes of the first half of the twentieth century which shattered any consensus on the shape and direction of future defence policy. Indeed, the defeat of conscription in 1916–17 was a disaster for the evolution of coherent defence policy-making in Australia, not least because it severed the political bond between the duty of bearing arms and the rights of citizenship.[34] The conscription debates made discussion of defence issues less a priority of the state than an issue of partisan politics in which Australians have been constantly at odds over where it is proper for them to fight. As one political analyst writes, 'Australia [has] been a pro-war and anti conscription country – a unique mixture.'[35] From the schisms over defence in 1916–17 and again with the 'two armies' policy of 1942 through to the political divisions over Vietnam service in the 1960s, '[the proposition] that defence of the nation is a single project, and that the State should have the power to command all men to serve – these commonplace ideas have not been accepted in Australia.'[36]

Thus, even when Australia fought in a great maritime campaign vital to its national survival in the South West Pacific from 1942 to 1945, the country continued to bicker over the wisdom of deploying conscripts into the strategically vital northern islands. As American sea power replaced Britain's after the fall of Singapore and secured Australia against Japan, many Australians came to believe that the Second AIF's amphibious offensives of 1944–45 in New Guinea and Borneo represented futile campaigns against a beaten enemy. Attacking trapped Japanese garrisons on isolated islands was often seen as an 'unnecessary war' and missions of 'evident futility'.[37] Indeed, Australia's strategic conduct in the Pacific War during 1944–45 has inspired a verdict from the British journalist and historian Max Hastings that 'the last year of the year proved the most inglorious of Australia's history as a fighting nation.'[38]

The controversial island campaigns of 1944–45 threw a pall over the amphibious operations of the 7th and 9th Divisions of the Second AIF that continues to resonate. This legacy has served to ensure that the South West Pacific campaign of the Second World War is overshadowed in the national iconography by the First AIF's undoubted contribution to allied victory in the First World War in France.[39] In 2015 when Australia celebrates the centenary of Gallipoli, festivities will arguably be less about a failed seaborne assault in the Dardanelles than the bravery of the Australian soldiers who, following the landing, created the Anzac legend fighting the Turks at Lone Pine and The Nek.[40] The expense and pomp of the Anzac centenary will serve only to camouflage two essential truths. First, for all its controversy, the 1942–45 South West Pacific campaign remains far more relevant for developing Australian strategy in the twenty-first century than the Anzac effort of the First World War. The second truth is that, for all the proud exploits of Australian arms in Europe and the Middle East between 1915 and 1918, a tradition of discord and disunity has marked the history of national defence policy.

Such paradoxes are, as foreign observers as diverse as Mark Twain and Jeanne MacKenzie have pointed out, central to any real understanding of the anatomy of Australian history. As Twain wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, Australian history represents a strange narrative so full of 'incongruities and contradictions and incredibilities' that many of its essential truths are either concealed or simply appear to be 'the most beautiful lies'. Writing over 60 years later, the English writer Mackenzie reached a similar conclusion, reflecting: 'To see that Australia is a set of paradoxes is, perhaps, the beginning of an ability to understand it.'[41] In perhaps no other sphere are the observations of Twain and MacKenzie more pertinent than when applied to the history of Australia's defence. In the face of such historical paradox, critics are correct to point out that Australia possesses 'a martial history of symbolism and emotional significance, without experience in applying the first principle of the martial arts, which is that of self-defence' and that 'defence has been the empty core of Australian nationhood'.[42]

The legacy of disputation over defence policy endures today even in an age when the volunteer principle clearly defines the Australian profession of arms. The most recent manifestation of political discord was the sharp division between the Coalition government and the Labor opposition over involvement in the Iraq War between 2003 and 2007.[43] In the second decade of the twenty-first century, Australia possesses a strategic culture which, while it embraces a naval tradition and an expeditionary military ethos, lacks the essential maritime identity required by a people who occupy an island — an identity that might help to ensure a more coherent approach to formulating the nation's defence policy.[44] Yet, for all

the paradoxes and divisions in defence policy, perhaps the greatest barrier to Australia's developing the kind of maritime strategy it will require in the twenty-first century is as much cultural as it is political. Nowhere is this more evident than in representations of the country's literature and art.

Australia's National Culture: The Challenge of the Cult of the Inland

The way in which a country's literary culture develops plays a vital role in determining a nation's sense of political identity and self-consciousness. Australia is no exception to this rule. As Vance Palmer wrote in the Melbourne *Age* in February 1935:

> *We have to discover ourselves – our character, the character of the country, the particular kind of society that has developed here – and this can only be done through the searching explorations of literature. It is one of the limitations of the human mind that it can never grasp things fully till they are presented through the medium of art.*[45]

Palmer was reflecting on the reality that, for much of Australia's existence, there has been a division in artistic culture between universalists who have upheld Britishness and European ideas, and nationalists who have upheld Australianess and local ideas.[46] With physical security guaranteed by British warships, Australian settlement was free to concentrate on the interior geography of a vast continent. In the nineteenth century, the major concern of the colonists became the struggle to master the land. As T. Inglis Moore has written, in the course of the nineteenth century, there developed in Australia a spiritual geography of landscape leading to 'a literature born of the land'.[47] He notes:

> *[The land] has not only been the background of the nation's story, but also the home of its heroes, the maker of its ideals, and the breeding ground of its myths. It has even developed amongst a people eminently secular and pragmatic, an unexpected strain of mysticism that has produced a mystique of the bush.*[48]

Indeed, it is no accident that in 1973, Geoffrey Serle chose to call his important study of artistic creativity in Australian culture *From Deserts the Prophets Come*. The line was drawn from A.D. Hope's poem 'Australia', the quintessential literary description of Australia as 'the last of lands' but one from whose alien shores and inland sands a new people might emerge.[49] As poet Bernard O'Dowd was to write, Australia's immense landscape was 'the scroll on which we are to write'.[50]

The sense of security that emanated from a global combination of British mastery of the seas and the intellectual supremacy of ideas of the European Enlightenment fuelled a fierce quest for a distinctive national identity. It is another one of the great paradoxes of Australian history that British seaborne security and European universalism came to encourage an inward-looking cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century. Indeed, between settlement in 1788 and the consolidation of the self-governing colonies in the 1880s, Australia underwent what Melleuish describes as a 'transformation from an outward-looking and dynamic view of the world and historical processes to one that saw the world in static and national terms.'[51]

Under such conditions, it was not mariners but explorers such as Sturt, Leichardt and Burke and Wills who captured the Australian imagination.[52] Echoing T. Inglis Moore, Alan Moorehead notes that the explorers elevated their trials with an implacable interior into 'a mystique, a cult of barrenness and asceticism'.[53] This mystique of the Australian landscape was reflected in the books of Marcus Clarke and Rolf Boldrewood and later further elevated by the bohemian writers and journalists of *The Bulletin*. Australian literary culture celebrated the struggle with the land as symbolised by convicts, pioneers, bushrangers, diggers and drovers. By the 1890s, Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson emerged as the two great poets who would immortalise the bush as a lost Eden and the bushman as the true Australian national type. Joseph Furphy's 1903 novel *Such is Life*, about rural workers in the Riverina of New South Wales, is perhaps the most celebrated example of the bush genre in Australian literature.[54] Those few Australian writers with any interest in the sea such as the poets Roderic Quinn, John Blight and Edward James Brady could not counterbalance Australia's overwhelming literary preoccupation with its landscape. One looks in vain through Australian literature to find a parallel for Herman Melville's celebratory remark: 'Meditation and water are wedded forever.'[55] At best, Australia is what one writer has called a 'veranda country', in which experience of life on the coastal fringe rather than a genuine sea consciousness, reigns supreme.[56]

As it was in literature so too was it in art. The seascapes of painter John Passmore have never matched the popularity of the Heidelberg painters of the 1880s. Like their literary counterparts, artists such as Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder idealised the landscape, the outback and the pioneer spirit. Australia's Heidelberg School celebrated 'a visual continentalism' that complemented and reinforced the literary impact of the writers and poets so infusing a powerful imagery into Australian patriotism.[57] It was the romanticised interior that came to inform the works of later painters such as Russell Drysdale

and Sidney Nolan and writers such as Patrick White, Ion Idriess and Russel Ward. For example, White's novel *Voss*, based on the explorer Ludwig Leichardt, is characterised by a striking imagery of landscape in which 'the great empty mornings were terrible until the ball of the sun was tossed skyward.'[58]

The victory of an inward-looking, nationalist paradigm in Australia's literary culture and sense of identity became increasingly evident in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, in some respects it is possible to detect in some Australian writing an antagonism toward the sea. In the 1940 poem 'Underground' by poet Ian Mudie, the land is deliberately celebrated over the sea:

> *Deep flows the river,*
> *deep as our roots reach for it;*
> *feeding us, angry and striving*
> *against the blindness*
> *ship-fed seas bring us*
> *from colder waters.*[59]

For Mudie, it is the outback not the ocean that grips the minds of Australians 'like heart and blood, from heat to mist'.[60] As a member of the nationalist Jindyworobak literary movement, Mudie viewed the sea as alien and representative of an unwelcome pseudo-Europeanism and transplanted Englishness. What has been styled 'Jindyworobak nativism' assumed a political dynamic in the 1930s and 1940s as writers and poets affiliated with or influenced by the movement such as Rex Ingamells, Percy Stephensen and Roland Roberts 'came close to, or participated in, an organic [Australian] nationalism that was often at loggerheads with a more internationalist vision concomitant with the allied effort in both World Wars.'[61]

The Jindyworobaks were strongly influenced by D.H. Lawrence's 1923 novel *Kangaroo*,a book which remains unrivalled in its brisk evocation of the connection between landscape's 'spirit of place' and the evolution of a national psyche in Australia.[62] For Lawrence, the Australian preoccupation with a harsh, alien landscape characterised by 'grey, charred bush … so phantom like, so ghostly, with its tall, pale trees, and many dead trees, like corpses' encouraged a metaphysical dread in the form of a withered and empty space in the national consciousness that created 'a profound Australian indifference'. Australia's British colonisers were, for Lawrence, like souls without passports, mere 'hollow stalks of corn' confronted by the immensity of the continent. Lawrence detected a 'withheld self' in the Australian psyche that symbolised an inner struggle to reconcile with the natural environment.[63]

It was to overcome this sense of alienation that the Jindyworobaks insisted that the Great South Land should roll itself inward like an Antipodean hedgehog or porcupine. As Percy Stephensen put it, Australia needed to concentrate on assimilating a national cultural identity from 'the Spirit of the Land, the *genius loci*'.[64] Stephensen's 1936 polemic, *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, has been described as 'probably the most influential piece of critical writing in the [inter-war] period.'[65] Elements of Jindyworobak nativism, with its rejection of cosmopolitanism and fierce embrace of Australia's landscape, are reflected in the work of such literary figures as Xavier Herbert, Judith Wright, A.D. Hope and, more recently, Les Murray.[66] It was Hope who memorably dismissed Australia's cities as 'teeming sores' and their inhabitants as 'second hand Europeans [who] pullulate timidly on the edge of alien shores'.[67]

In artistic terms then, an inward-looking, nativist spirit has dominated much of Australian cultural life. Even the evolution of a body of cosmopolitan authors such as Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Patrick White, Peter Carey, Thomas Keneally and David Malouf — all of whom demonstrate interest in the integration of the national and the universal — has never extended to oceanic themes or the reasons for the absence of an Australian maritime consciousness. It is also striking that Christopher Koch's insightful novels about Australians confronting violence and war in South-East Asia are devoid of any sense of maritime milieu. In some ways, the writer who is nearest to the sea is the West Australian Tim Winton, whose books often concern the interface of ocean and land. Yet, on close examination, Winton's works are more properly described as coastal and regional rather than maritime and national in spirit.[68]

Despite a greater integration of universal and national themes then, much of Australian literature continues to be focused inwards on the land and the self rather than outwards on the sea and the world. This tendency has not passed unnoticed by foreign literary observers. As the English writer Matthew Parris observed in 2010, the Australian island continent remains a Prospero's kingdom, 'but a kingdom where the spirits [of the land] have not quite been brought under control'.[69] Similarly, the French scholar Jean-François Vernay believes that a sense of physical isolation remains central to the Australian psyche. As he puts it:

> *A key element of the Australian psyche is having the feeling of living on the margin of society, with the geographic centre an unwelcoming desert and the identity centre being somewhere else in some far-away otherness. There is a diffused feeling of belonging without really belonging to a place, a land, a people.*[70]

It is this insular national spirit which now contends with the rise of globalisation and its impact on Australia. It is to this interplay and its potential impact on any development of a future maritime strategic consciousness that we must now turn our attention.

A Third Way: The Requirement for a Twenty-first Century Australian Maritime Strategy

In 2005 the Chief of the Royal Australian Navy, Vice Admiral Chris Ritchie, noted that Australia had faltered in fulfilling Creswell's 1902 belief that 'in Australia our seamen [will be] our frontiersmen'.[71] Ritchie noted the ambiguous place of the sea in Australian national life and called for a cultural re-examination of Australia's insular, land-based identity:

> *The 'bush myth' which has … coloured so much of Australian culture and tradition, is more concerned with looking inwards than outwards. Whatever its former value, such a vision is hardly enough to sustain a modern progressive nation, one which seeks to play a leadership role in its region and actively support the maintenance of a peaceful global community.*[72]

Despite Ritchie's lament it is uncertain whether, as a people, Australians in the twenty-first century have any greater interest in maritime affairs than in the past. There are, however, some contemporary signs of a greater outward awareness that may signal the potential for a gradual change in national consciousness. The Australia of 2014 is not the polity of dependent colonial self-governments in 1884; nor is it the tentative Federal experiment of 1914, little more than a decade old and on the brink of plunging into a disastrous world war. Still less, is Australia the inward-driven, tariff-laden and protectionist country of 1984 agonising over international economic competition and on the cusp of declining into Paul Keating's 'banana republic'.

On the contrary, the Australia of 2014 is a product of over 30 years of profound socio-economic revolution involving an embrace of both globalisation and free market liberalism.[73] In combination, these forces have created a more confident country that increasingly balances universalism against insularity. As Paul Kelly has observed, the struggle to free the Australian economy from the Federation-era 'Australian settlement' that enshrined protectionism, the White Australia policy and security dependence was, at its heart, a struggle between contending visions of past and future. Between the 1980s and the first decade of the new

century, the 'internationalist rationalists' of free-market reform triumphed over the 'sentimentalist traditionalists' of state control, bringing Australia into a new age of prosperity and economic growth.[74]

Australia's developmental statistics over three decades are certainly impressive. Between 1990 and 2010 the Australian economy tripled in size. Per capita GDP grew by 182% following the reform and internationalisation of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s, a process driven by the combined forces of information technology, the rise of Asia and a domestic minerals boom. Today, with a population of 23 million, Australia possesses the thirteenth largest and the seventh most developed economy in the world. Australia is a member of the exclusive Group of Twenty (G20), of the East Asia Summit and a foundation member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. In 2008, the Australian dollar emerged to become the sixth most traded currency on world markets and, on current trends, by 2025 Australia's per average real income is expected to be $73,000 per person, putting the country into the world's top ten country index.[75]

Such global outwardness in economics and trade might be expected to encourage a stronger Australian maritime school of thought. Yet the Australia that is moving into the second decade of the twenty-first century remains in its spirit a deeply contradictory country. It is a polity of 'insular internationalists' — wealthy and lucky, but also complacent and incurious about its future status.[76] In a philosophical sense, at least, it is possible to suggest that little has changed in the Australian character since D.H. Lawrence claimed to have detected a 'profound indifference' in the Australian personality. Indeed, in 1997, in an echo of Lawrence, Stephen Fitzgerald wrote of the combination of insularity, mental lassitude and 'prodigal excess' of Australia's materialism in which the 'lazy country' becomes a natural outgrowth of the 'lucky country'.[77]

The Gillard Labor government's October 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* illustrates the country's continuing insularity of spirit. In a document of over 300 pages there is an astonishing lack of consideration of the maritime implications of deeper Australian engagement with Asia. However, the White Paper does contain one striking statement: 'As the global centre of gravity shifts to our region, the tyranny of distance is being replaced by the prospects of proximity.'[78] Although the White Paper fails to investigate the implications of this statement, historically, the 'prospects of proximity' with Asia have never been comfortable for Australia. It is no accident that aspects of an older Jindyworobak-style national insularity

remain strong — most strikingly in defence policy, which has struggled to keep abreast of unprecedented socio-economic change between the late 1980s and the first decade of the new millennium.

In a striking paradox, in 1987, even as Australia had begun the process of opening its political economy to the world, an insular and continentalist doctrine of Defence of Australia (DOA) was proclaimed by the Hawke government. The new policy was an introspective posture which flew in the face of an emerging global era and the waning of the Cold War. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to suggest that, in some respects, the DOA doctrine of the 1980s and 1990s appeared to be a strategic confluence of ideals drawn from Jindyworobak nativism, literary continentalism and the spirit of John 'Black Jack' McEwen's economic protectionism. It is revealing that, in 2003, a Chief of the Army referred to DOA strategists as 'Henry Lawsons' who contended against expeditionary advocates who represented 'Banjo Patersons'.[79] Under DOA doctrine, official strategy adhered to the traditional view of Australia as an Antipodean Eden but one perched uncomfortably close to the edge of an alien Orient. Australian strategy thus became focused on denying the 'sea-air gap' to a northern enemy with Suharto's regime in Indonesia seen as a potential threat to national security.[80]

The military force projection capacity of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was stripped away in favour of a geographical 'porcupine' defence strategy based on land-based aircraft and submarines. In the course of the 1980s, the last Australian aircraft carrier was decommissioned and amphibious warfare capability all but eliminated, making the RAN less a blue-water than a brown-water force. The focus on creating an inward-looking ADF resulted in an army — previously renowned for its expeditionary skill and valour — coming to resemble a strange cross between a Home Guard and a Long Range Desert Group. Military exercises in the wastes of northern Australia took place against imaginary incursions by thinly-disguised Indonesian forces which, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, masqueraded as Musorians and Kamarians, fictions necessary to preserve diplomatic niceties with Jakarta.[81] Military thinking in these years was reminiscent of an earlier, no less phantom scheme — the 1913 Thring-Onslow plan — aimed at using troops to prevent enemy landings in northern Australia as part of a layered defence. The military component of the 'Thring Line' was memorably dismissed by no lesser figure than Rear Admiral Creswell as being 'as futile as building a wall to catch a bird'.[82]

None of the adherents of DOA doctrine appeared to have read Lieutenant General Sir Sydney Rowell's perceptive memoir, *Full Circle*, in which the author recalls how, in early 1942, he educated the Americans about the way in which Australia's unforgiving northern geography would deal with potential invaders. Asked by an American general what he would do if the Japanese landed divisions at Broome, Rowell replied laconically that he would send for the Australian Army's Salvage Corps 'to pick up the bones [because] there is no water between Broome and Alice Springs'.[83] Rowell's wisdom was lost on later generations. As a result, the inward-looking DOA doctrine of the 1980s and 1990s was decoupled from foreign policy and represented the antithesis of a maritime strategic outlook. Strategic doctrine insisted on viewing an economically burgeoning South-East Asia as a potential military enemy to be feared rather than as a security partner to be embraced. In this way, the combination of moat mentality and fortress defence that prevailed in late twentieth century defence policy recalled the nostalgia of the 'Australian settlement' — an outdated political edifice that was disappearing like sand through fingers under the impact of economic reforms. As Alan Robertson remarked, 'if Australia is ever to develop an appropriate strategy, it will need to get rid of its unwarranted fears of a bogus invasion and come to terms with its maritime geography.'[84]

Since the turn of the century, as globalisation and the rise of Asia's economies became the economic sinews of a new Australian prosperity, traditional defence policy imperatives have begun to obsolesce. This reality was clearly recognised by John Howard who, between 2001 and 2007, promoted a broader defence outlook and sought to develop the geopolitical concept of Australia's inhabiting a 'special intersection' between a European history and an Asian geography in which a 'balanced alignment of Australia's global and regional engagement [is] a measure of our strategic maturity.' Much of Howard's approach was endorsed by the policy direction adopted by the post-2007 Rudd government.[85]

The logical extension of such 'strategic maturity' is that traditional forms of strategy based on contending concepts of continental defence and expeditionary warfare require careful integration into a new maritime strategy. This is a process not without inherent tensions. The adherents of the continental DOA doctrine are often prone to cite the concept of defending the country's northern 'sea-air gap' as evidence of their maritime credentials.[86] Yet, a continental 'moat defence' cannot be equated with a genuine maritime strategic outlook and it is increasingly evident that any form of continental defence is inadequate given the unpredictability and fluidity of contemporary global security conditions.[87] Similarly, expeditionary warfare advocates tend to uphold the maritime character of 'overseas' Australian military

operations. Yet, with the exceptions of the South West Pacific campaign and the East Timor intervention, the 'overseas' components of Australia's expeditionary contributions have not been multi-service maritime operations. On the contrary, most operations have been overwhelmingly land-centric in character.[88] While the Australian strategic tradition of expeditionary warfare remains extremely important in upholding a favourable Western international order, it should never be mistaken for an ersatz national maritime strategy.

The above problems aside, the main philosophical change in Australian defence policy over the past 15 years has been the gradual realisation by policy-makers that the nation must seek to come to terms with its maritime strategic environment. How this can best be achieved, however, has been contested and subject to problems of funding and political events. Maritime strategic concepts first began to emerge in the late 1990s and were validated by the experience of East Timor.[89] Yet, despite a major parliamentary inquiry into the subject, their official importance appeared to wane after 2001 in the face of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Only since 2009, with the continuing rise of Asia and the fall in the tempo of major Western operations in the Middle East and South West Asia, have maritime issues once again assumed primacy in Australia's strategic debate.[90]

Since 2011, both the Chiefs of the Navy and Army have called for the creation of a robust Australian maritime strategy. In August 2012, the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, argued that Australia's traditional schools of strategy, continental defence and expeditionary warfare are inadequate since they 'fundamentally ignore the value of the sea to Australia'.[91] He went on to call for an integrated maritime approach:

> There is, in my view, a third way – a maritime perspective, or school if you wish, which is rooted in the geo-strategic reality of our national situation. I reiterate that when I say maritime I use the term in its broadest context. It is a view which incorporates all the elements of military power – it is a view that integrates all dimensions of national power.[92]

Griggs' view of a 'third way' in Australian strategy has been implicitly endorsed by his colleague, the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison. In a series of important speeches between 2011 and 2013, Morrison called on Australian policy-makers to recognise the intrinsic strategic value of the sea. In one address he stated:

> Let me make two definitive statements. Firstly, Australia needs its ADF more than it needs its navy, its army or its air force … Secondly, the foundation to Australia's national security is a maritime strategy … But a maritime strategy

is not a naval strategy, it's a joint, indeed an inter-agency, and perhaps
coalition strategy and Army has an essential role to play if that strategy is to
continue to have relevance in the coming decades.[93]

Although the Chief of Army did not renounce the long expeditionary heritage of the land force, he was careful to emphasise that force modernisation through the amphibious-oriented Plan Beersheba — a scheme to field three similarly organised multi-role combat brigades — was fully focused on making the Army an essential component in a maritime strategy. Morrison described Australia as 'a maritime nation with a continental culture' and pondered the 'cognitive failure' of those Australian strategic thinkers who relied on a narrow continental mindset to ensure national security.[94]

The views of Griggs and Morrison reflect the reality that the strategic direction and force structure imperatives of recent defence documents including two Defence White Papers in 2009 and 2013 respectively have been marked by a steady abandonment of DOA principles.[95] In 2013, even the Royal Australian Air Force, long a repository of continental defence thinking, held a symposium sponsored by the Chief of the Air Force exploring the theme 'Air Power in a National Maritime Strategy'. In the ADF, long-term capability acquisition has concentrated on re-equipping the Navy for a larger blue-water role, including a welcome return to capital shipping in the form of large helicopter carriers. The combination of air warfare destroyers, landing helicopter docks for the RAN and a new combined arms amphibious approach by the Army through Plan Beersheba can be seen as representing the beginnings of generational change towards the use of the sea in Australian strategic thinking.[96]

The Gillard government's January 2013 national security strategy reaffirmed the need for a maritime perspective, stating: 'we are entering a new national security era in which the economic and strategic change occurring in our region will be the most significant influence on our national security environment and policies.'[97] Following on from the national security statement, the May 2013 Defence White Paper asserts that 'Australia's geography requires a maritime strategy'. Such a strategy is seen as essential in 'deterring attacks against Australia and contributing to the security of our immediate neighbourhood and the wider region'.[98] These statements seem encouraging but one needs to exercise caution and avoid confusing declaratory aspirations with concrete policy development. After all, the commitment to a maritime strategy is occurring against a bleak background of

$5.5 billion in cuts to the Australian defence budget, the worst since the late 1930s. Consequently, it remains deeply uncertain whether the political economy of defence will match the ADF's strategic ambitions over the next decade.[99]

Funding difficulties, however, have one clear benefit: they reinforce the need for hard-headed thinking on defence priorities. Australia needs to return to first principles on defence and view itself less as a continental land mass than as a medium maritime power whose area of security stretches far out to sea. A future Australian maritime strategy needs to aim to use the sea to achieve an acceptable degree of autonomy — not self-reliance — within the framework of the US alliance. Canberra needs to abandon the pernicious fantasy that self-reliance can be achieved with a defence budget of less than 2% of GDP. In the future, in place of self-reliance, a doctrine of defence sufficiency conditioned by fiscal reality must be adopted. A sufficiency doctrine means that ambitious visions of large numbers of submarines and the notion of 100 Joint Strike Fighters — both of which are conditioned by exaggerated concerns over defending Australia's enormous but, *a la* Rowell, largely inhospitable geography — must be pared back. As a medium power Australia needs to have sufficient joint forces under its national control to uphold its sovereignty, rather than its geography, and 'to initiate and sustain coercive actions whose outcome will be the preservation of its vital interests'.[100]

Given the requirements of a doctrine of sufficiency for sovereign interests rather than self-reliance for continental defence, the most useful joint force structure for a maritime medium power is one that emphasises balance, versatility and flexible capability. Accordingly, there should be a premium on possessing a variety of surface vessels, a combined arms land force with enough amphibious manoeuvre expertise for executing limited force projection. The ADF should also seek to possess a powerful high-technology air combat capability and a small but highly effective, as opposed to a large and unaffordable, submarine fleet.[101] Given the combination of Australia's limited defence resources, the need for a doctrine of sufficiency and the archipelagic realities of its immediate region, it makes eminent sense for the ADF to concentrate on mastering the techniques of littoral warfare — the balanced action of land, sea and air forces. An Australian approach to littoral warfare should emphasise a manoeuvre philosophy and logistical endurance alongside an understanding of how strategic reach across the immediate region will always be conditioned by operational austerity. It is difficult to disagree with British strategist Rear Admiral Richard Hill's diagnosis of Australia's defence requirements delivered in 2000:

In the next two decades more emphasis can be foreseen on amphibious work in low intensity operations, and for this reason extra effort on this force and its protection, and de-emphasis on the submarine arm, is indicated. I would not support, for example any increase in submarine numbers beyond six.[102]

In any event, support for an effective Australian maritime strategy needs to be forged not simply by experts in Russell Offices pondering force structure alternatives but on the broader anvil of political reality and greater national security awareness. It is ingrained cultural traits and Lawrence's 'profound Australian indifference', as much as problems in political economy and defence strategy, that loom as barriers to Australia's international future as a sea-conscious, outward-looking nation.

Any 'third way' maritime strategic approach then, must be meticulously crafted to integrate the nation's fiscal reality, its Western historical identity and its American alliance with the benefits of a geographic location in the world's new Asian economic heartland. Such an outlook will require statesmanship, considerable debate on higher defence spending and a much deeper philosophical reflection on Australia's place in the twenty-first century world. And, unfortunately, the future will not wait for Australia in terms of either its demography or its strategy. Between 2010 and 2012, for the first time in Australia's immigration history, China and India rather than Britain, were the main sources of permanent residents and permanent migrants respectively.[103] Moreover, in 2014, the outlines of an 'Indo-Pacific strategic arc' are beginning to visibly emerge as the Indian Ocean surpasses the Atlantic to become the world's busiest trade corridor. Currently, one third of the world's bulk cargo and two-thirds of its oil passes through the Indonesian archipelago en route to north and south Asia.[104]

In geopolitical terms, the shift of global economic power from West to East will make Australia a maritime strategic anchor that is situated adjacent to the vital trading routes from the Indian into the Pacific oceans. As Michael Wesley notes, while Australia has never considered itself a South-East Asian country — and by extension a genuine maritime state — it may nonetheless become one in the eyes of large Asian countries such as China, Japan and India in the years to come. Such a development would fulfil Saul Bernard Cohen's 1957 prediction that Australia's geopolitical destiny has always been to become the southern anchor of offshore Asia. Revisiting this proposition 40 years on in 1999, Cohen stated: 'The question now is not whether Australia is Asian but how it can best adjust to *being* Asian.'[105] Such Asian dynamics have been reinforced by the US strategic 'rebalance' towards Asia announced by President Barack Obama in the Australian parliament in November

2011 and symbolised by a US Marine Corps presence in Darwin. The American pivot reflects a distinct maritime flavour and future US force dispositions in South-East Asia may require Australia to host US Navy vessels at HMAS Stirling in Western Australia; to boost the air-maritime facilities on Cocos Island for allied use; and to pursue still deeper security cooperation with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).[106]

In the face of these developments, Australia's intellectual and policy elites face many challenges. They must begin the process of reconciling the nation's terrestrial cultural identity with a new maritime consciousness and attempt to construct a modern narrative of Australia as an island continent connected to both globe and region. Given Australia's entrenched continental culture this is likely to be a formidable philosophical and political task indeed, but it is one that the future national interest suggests must be undertaken with intellectual vigour and persistence. As one British historian of landscape, Simon Schama, has argued, a nation's identity is as much 'the work of the mind' as the disposition of natural geography. If this is so, then an enhanced appreciation of the value of the sea must become for a future generation of Australians 'a work of the mind'.[107]

The Australian public needs to appreciate its global maritime dependence and to understand that the European Union is Australia's largest trading partner; that the United States is the nation's largest investment partner as well as its vital military ally; and that Asia is Australia's largest export market. In regional maritime terms, Australians need to understand that their country is not so much separated by a *sea-air gap* as connected by a *sea-air-land bridge* to the South-East Asian and Pacific archipelagos that encompass the Cocos in the north-west running through Indonesia and Papua New Guinea to the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia in the north-east. In the future, Australians must learn to view the surrounding seas as highways to a better future not as moats to defend vanished eras; it is within maritime South-East Asia and not against it, that Australia will find its best guarantee of security and prosperity.

In particular, the 'prospects of proximity' in Asia must be debated in a sophisticated geopolitical context. Australia's political and business leaders must seek to reassure the nation that long-term engagement and cooperation with the economic players of the dynamic Asia-Pacific Rim will be positive, enhancing both national prosperity and physical security in the twenty-first century. In maritime affairs, the challenge for Australians is one of vision: of developing an over-the-horizon perspective, to grasp that the future stability of the regional geopolitical architecture is directly related to sea-going trade and national prosperity. 'The starting point for

such a project', writes Paul Battersby, 'is not simply to reconcile Australia's history with its geography but to *re-imagine* them.'[108] As part of any re-imagination of possibilities, the choice of futures that Australians face needs to be sketched clearly: to engage confidently with the maritime environment that links them to the wider world in order to prosper economically as a new 'greater Australia', or to shrink inwards, to withhold engagement and retreat into an outdated 'little Australia' of insular continental geography. Since the latter choice is a prescription for autarky and national economic decline, some type of enhanced Australian maritime consciousness that embraces foreign policy, trade and security is likely to emerge in the decades ahead from a new synthesis of history, geography and national culture. But the speed of any such change and the philosophical contours of the journey remain impossible to predict.

Conclusion

Australia's ambiguous relationship with its maritime environment dates from the arrival of the first Europeans on the 'fatal shore' of the vast and mysterious Great South Land. A maritime strategic consciousness was inhibited from the outset by dependence on British sea power and by the evolution of a distinctly inward-looking Australian culture focused on the mastery of continental geography. The 'free spirit of the land' not the 'sea as history' became the tapestry for Australia's ideals and myths culminating in Federation in 1901 with its creed of 'a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation'.

The early Australian Commonwealth attempt to develop a strong Dominion navy rather than an army as the principal arm of its defence was short-lived and perished along with the youth of the Federation generation in the trenches of France. Subsequent generations of Australians have overwhelmingly viewed soldiers and expeditionary missions as the cultural symbols of national defence. At the same time, the tension between European history and Asian geography has seen Australian strategy oscillate between the binary opposites of expeditionary warfare and continental defence. While the Australian armed forces have possessed, and continue to possess land, air and naval elements, it has taken a century to introduce the concept of maritime strategy into official thinking. There is much merit in the integration of Australia's continental and expeditionary warfare traditions through the agency of a 'third way maritime strategy'. Such a strategic approach is long overdue and would serve as a truly joint device; it would simultaneously capture single service capabilities and convert them into additives for the collective benefit of the ADF.

It is a counsel of despair to believe that the combination of the weight of history, the realities of political economy and public complacency about defence matters will conspire against the evolution of a 'third way' Australian maritime strategy. To be sure, the task will rigorously test the 'work of the mind' of Australia's present and future political and military leaders. Much will depend on the ability of Australia's Anglo-Celtic democratic political system to absorb changes from being part of a vibrant, multicultural global civilisation and a more powerful Asian regionalism. Such absorption is not a question of abandoning a rich continental culture, but of adaptation to new conditions. Australia must develop a parallel maritime narrative to meet a changing present and an unfolding future — one which encompasses the oceans of South-East Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific.

In the course of the twenty-first century, it is perfectly possible that the larger and more prosperous Australia becomes in terms of population size and material wealth from overseas trade, the greater its strategic awareness of the sea will also have to become, thus giving real meaning to the words 'girt by sea' that feature in the national anthem. Finally, it is worth remembering that, for all the weight of an inland culture, the evolution of a national maritime character was the hope of one of the greatest founding fathers of early Australia, William Charles Wentworth. Writing in 1823, this colonial statesman called on a future Australia to become sea-minded and to develop itself as 'a proud Queen of Isles' and an 'Empress of the southern wave'.[109] In the first half of a twenty-first century marked by accelerating globalisation and the geopolitical rise of Asia, Australians must rediscover Wentworth's vision and become a people more imbued by 'the free spirit of the sea'.

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