

SEMAPHORE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SEA POWER CENTRE - AUSTRALIA

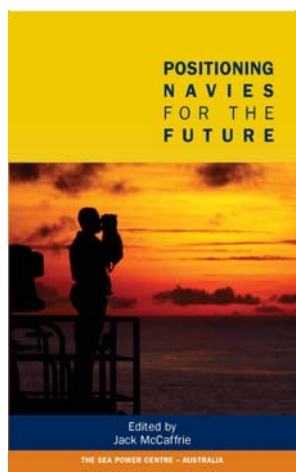
ISSUE 7, APRIL 2006

POSITIONING NAVIES FOR THE FUTURE

The RAN's 2004 Sea Power Conference had as its theme *Positioning Navies for the Future: Challenge and Response*. The aim of the conference was to examine how navies were reacting to the emerging global security environment.

The wave of recent terrorist attacks, especially those in the maritime environment, has caused navies to question how and to what extent they must adapt to this threat. But navies have also recognised that many of their traditional challenges remain as potent reminders of the complexity of maritime affairs. These include the growing focus on littoral operations, technological developments and inevitably the perennial challenges of recruiting and retaining enough of 'the right people'.

All of these issues were examined in some depth during the 2004 conference by an impressive mix of foreign and Australian speakers; including internationally renowned scholars and analysts, as well as senior naval and marine corps officers from eight countries.



The proceedings of this conference have now been published. Each of the conference papers is included, together with transcripts of each of the discussion periods. Individual contributions are contained in five themed sections, with the first being a scene setter. It contains the keynote addresses by then Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Chris Ritchie, and Professor Christian Reus-Smit, of the Australian National University's Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

Admiral Ritchie's chapter covers the full range of challenges confronting the RAN as it plans for the future. It deals, for example, with the strategic situation and also considers the dichotomy between the need for high-technology (and so, costly) ships and the plethora of less technologically demanding tasks now engaging the Navy. Predictably, Admiral Ritchie's chapter acknowledges the ongoing personnel challenges and plans in place to deal with them. Significantly, too, it puts the so-called new roles of the Navy in a most illuminating historical context.

The second chapter, by Professor Reus-Smit, examines the underlying sources of international security - and insecurity. It identifies five major factors shaping global security: globalisation, international opportunity structures, the domestication of war, the revolution in military affairs and the nature of American power. This chapter provides some very thought-provoking and sometimes controversial views, leaving readers to consider a series of significant challenges.

How different countries approach maritime strategy - and their response to the security environment - is the subject of the book's second section. Four of its chapters present

United States (US), British, Australian and Singaporean views. Internationally recognised analyst, Dr Norman Friedman provides the American view. Not surprisingly, his chapter concentrates on the war against terrorism and specifically the US Navy's (USN) role in it. He articulates the USN's current strategy and its significant reliance on forward-based offensive operations. Dr Friedman's chapter also highlights what makes the USN such an important and flexible contributor to this war effort. Importantly for allies, too, he emphasises the USN's continuing reliance on coalition operations.

The British contribution, from Dr Eric Grove, reflects the Royal Navy's current and future planned concentration on expeditionary operations and power projection. Dr Grove also covers the British expectation that most operations will be both joint and combined. In making this point, he stresses the anticipated Royal Air Force contribution to the air groups of the forthcoming attack carriers and offers some fascinating views on network-enabled operations and the place of submarines in future maritime operations.

Retired RAN Commodore Lee Corder provides the Australian chapter and asks two fundamental questions: does Australia have and need a maritime strategy, and, are Australia's security policy and military strategy matched? While providing answers - and several other questions - Mr Corder invites readers to consider the nature of Australia's strategic environment and a range of characteristics that should feature in any Australian maritime strategy. This chapter concludes with some prescriptions for Australia's military strategy and for matching that strategy to the nation's security policy.

In his chapter, Mr Kwa Chong Guan gives a Singaporean perspective, one which might also resonate with other South East Asian states. He considers the major issues likely to impact on Singapore's maritime strategy: the rise of China as a regional power, globalisation, security of sea lines of communications, and, of the growth of military activities in exclusive economic zones. Mr Kwa also offers some typically South East Asian solutions to these challenges.

The book's third section canvasses several important aspects of contemporary maritime operations. Dr Dewi Fortuna Anwar's chapter gives an Indonesian view of the competition for marine resources and the associated territorial and other disputes that make management of this issue difficult. She also indicates how the region is responding to this challenge and makes a particular point of Indonesia's predicament and need for external assistance. There is also a related chapter by Professor Martin Tsamenyi and Commander Barry Snushall, which analyses and assesses the emerging operational implications of the Law of the Sea Convention. This chapter covers many of the issues of concern to the world's navies, including their reliance on freedom of the high seas, and makes some pointed recommendations for navies on the matter of maritime dispute resolution.

In a very thoughtful chapter, Dr John Reeve considers what maritime forces can do to counter the current terrorist threat and how the relevant capabilities fit within established



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maritime strategic and operational theories. Dr Reeve considers historical parallels, the 'complex versatility' of seapower, and the value of maritime coalitions in dealing with today's most prominent threat.

The section concludes with chapters on littoral warfare and amphibious operations. Commodore Peter Jones, drawing on his recent Persian Gulf experience, argues that littoral warfare provides the most serious operational challenge to navies. He offers a range of technological and personnel solutions and highlights the need for interoperability among navies. Complementing this contribution is the chapter on the US Marine Corps' (USMC) approach to littoral warfare and amphibious operations, written by Lieutenant General Edward Hanlon Jr, USMC. As well as providing historical background to the development of USMC operational concepts, General Hanlon provides a comprehensive explanation of the still developing sea-basing concept. He outlines how it is becoming central to both the Navy/Marine Corps and joint concepts of operations and why that is so.

Section four covers technology and its contribution to naval development. The first two chapters detail how the world's largest navy and one of the smallest are approaching 'transformation'. Vice Admiral Balisle's contribution is a reflection of the USN's unique capacity to apply resources to the challenges facing it. Equally, it illustrates just how difficult it will be for other navies to remain interoperable with the USN, despite that Navy's stated desire for coalition operations. Vice Admiral Balisle explains the foundation of the USN's transformation processes, why it is committed to them and how it intends to achieve transformation. It is a stunning illustration of the technological superiority which the USN intends to maintain into the future, but with some concession to the need to ensure coalition partners and allies remain capable of meaningful operational contribution.

Another approach to naval transformation is provided by Rear Admiral Ronnie Tay, who was the Chief of the Singaporean Navy when the conference was held. It is both a contrast to and in places strikingly similar to the USN approach. The main contrast is provided by the reduced scale and the much more limited resources available. The main similarities come in the need to maintain current readiness while investing in the future and acceptance of the need to transform to meet future challenges. Admiral Tay also outlines the main elements of the Singaporean approach, which will rely on adapting force structure, organisation and personnel.

The third chapter in this section chronicles the Indian Navy's transition from being a buyer of ships and systems to becoming a builder and integrator. Mr Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, from the International Institute of Strategic Studies, explains the Indian Navy's gradual growth into a regionally significant force, its continuing reliance on technologies sourced from Western and Soviet or Russian firms and its growing reliance on joint ventures with these firms to develop its future force structure. He also illustrates the extent to which the Indian Navy has invested in its own research and development, thus continuing that service's tension between indigenous and foreign sourced equipment.

Ms Michelle Kelly of Australia's Defence Materiel Organisation completes the section by reflecting on the challenges confronting Australia's shipbuilding industry. She points especially to the need to maintain skills, the size and complexity of forthcoming naval ships, the need for industry consolidation and the need for Defence to manage its procurement activities. On the other hand, Ms Kelly also points to significant opportunities for local industry, including contributions to international building programs – such as the

USN littoral combat ship - and participation in global supply chains.

The book's final section comprises the fascinating results of three panel sessions addressing the challenges facing navies and responses to those challenges. The first panel, the so-called 'Young Turks', presents the views of four junior RAN officers forecasting the shape and state of the RAN in 2022. They provide a most incisive and thorough 'preview' of fleet operations, network centric warfare, naval aviation, business management and personnel developments – what they expect to work well and what they expect to prove problematical. This chapter will be referred to again many times over the next 16 years.

The second panel considers the challenges confronting the navies of New Zealand, Chile, France and Canada, as presented by their Australia-based attachés. In the cases of Canada, New Zealand and Chile, we are presented with small navies faced with enormous maritime commitments. Each is dealing with increased operational tempo, the need for new or updated equipment and the need to solve significant personnel challenges. Each has also recognised the need for innovative solutions and in at least some cases has taken remedial action. The French Navy is presented differently. It is a large navy with global responsibilities and a substantial part of the national nuclear deterrent force. But it too has equipment and personnel challenges, similar in kind if not in scale to those of the smaller navies.

The final panel allowed senior officers from the navies of the United States, France and Australia as well as the Chief of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) to provide some definitive views on the challenges facing their navies and their responses to them. These views covered a very broad spectrum indeed, beginning with the very expansive USN approach, founded on *Sea Power 21* and FORCENet and dedicated to greater interoperability within coalitions and across domestic law enforcement agencies. As with all other navies, the USN is very much focused on the personnel challenge for the future. The high level view from the French Navy is very similar, concentrating on the demands of global power projection – and force protection – and the need for greater interoperability both internationally and domestically and of course, personnel. The unique aspect of the French personnel problem and hence their approach to it is the recent change from being a conscript force to a fully volunteer one.

The fact that Australia's Navy faces many of the same challenges worrying other navies was underscored by the focus in this panel on personnel issues and the work being done to resolve them. There was also recognition of the continuing need to balance investment in current capability and in the navy of the future. One significantly different Australian concern, however, was the stated need to improve the performance of the Defence Materiel Organisation. Finally, the Chief of the Royal New Zealand Navy outlined the major changes taking place as his Navy tries to embrace the extent of the maritime security task in the EEZ, Southern Ocean and South Pacific Ocean. He concludes by emphasising that the RNZN does intend to remain a blue water fighting force.

Positioning Navies for the Future, *the proceedings of the RAN Sea Power Conference 2004*, is published by Halstead Press of Sydney. A complimentary copy will be forwarded to attendees of the conference. Copies are available through commercial booksellers at a RRP of \$34.95 (ISBN 1 920831 33 9).



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