

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

# SEA POWER

## SOUNDINGS



Issue 16, 2020

### **The Indo-Pacific Endeavour:** Reflections and Proposals for Australia's Premier Naval Diplomacy Activity

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### AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE LEAD INVESTIGATOR

After a three decade lull, great power competition has returned to Asia.

This burgeoning strategic era will, however, be very different from what Australia has experienced in the past. First, rather than being on the periphery of the Cold War's strategic competition in Northeast Asia, Australia is now central to the Indo-Pacific region and the new tussle for influence. Second, many of Australia's neighbours in Southeast Asia are wealthier and more militarily capable than they were during the Cold War. This means that the Royal Australian Navy has a greater – and more varied – number of security partnerships to nurture and cultivate. Third, despite the new rivalries, nations have shown themselves to be more hesitant to fight openly with one another. Instead, they have engaged in grey-area tactics to expand their influence and pursue their strategic interests.

The Royal Australian Navy has been cognisant of these changing dynamics and has transformed the way it conducts naval diplomacy. In particular, it has moved away from single ship port visits, which were having diminishing effect, to task group size activities.

Central to the change in the way Australia conducts its naval diplomacy and joint exercises has been the Indo-Pacific Endeavour. After three iterations, we felt it was time to take a step-back and evaluate how this activity has progressed and examine ways of propelling it forward. To that end, Macquarie University and the Sea Power Centre – Australia jointly funded this research project.

I would like to personally thank the many officers and public servants who sacrificed their time to speak with our research team. I would also like to thank the champions of the research project at the Sea Power Centre, namely Captain Sean Andrews, Commander Alastair Cooper, Lieutenant Will Singer, Miss Adela Greenbaum and Doctor Benjamin Herscovitch. Their support and guidance have been integral to the project's success.

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*“Our diplomacy stands for nothing when we have not a fleet to back it.”*

John Stuart Mill

## Introduction

During the early Post-Cold War period, the Indo-Pacific largely lived up to the latter part of its name; at least as far as Australia’s strategic interests were concerned. While our security forces focussed on the threat of terrorism at home, and our defence personnel fought wars in the Middle East, our regional maritime environment remained a relatively benign highway for our energy and mineral exports to Asia and crucial imports such as refined petroleum. Nowadays, however, Australia is increasingly confronting a contested maritime environment with many regional players’ maritime forces expanding and improving considerably.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, several of these actors have exhibited a desire to use their newfound strategic weight to reshape aspects of the existing international order to better match their perceived national interests.

Naval diplomacy is one of the main strategies Indo-Pacific actors are employing to win this new political-military contest. Naval diplomacy involves employing forces to achieve the high-end political goals of the state without fighting; in this sense, it conforms to what Sun Tzu believed to be the supreme skill. This point would hold even during the most benign of strategic periods, but in today’s economically interconnected and interdependent Indo-Pacific the pertinence of Sun’s dictum is growing.

The harsh reality of Australia’s tangled web of economic and security relationships is that even if it were victorious in any medium to high-intensity Indo-Pacific war, it would lose. In almost any imaginable war scenario, Australia’s international trade and security will be in a worse state at its conclusion than at its outbreak, regardless of the result. As Australian diplomat and scholar Garry Woodard recently wrote, Australia’s primary national security interest must now be to astutely navigate the growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific, while working to make *Götterdämmerung* waged between the regional great powers less likely.<sup>2</sup> Australia’s primary objective must be to shrewdly use its strategic power to single-mindedly pursue its national interests and shape the international environment while avoiding war. This does not mean that Australia must avoid war at all costs: some critical strategic interests will always be worth defending. It does, however, mean that if shots are fired, Australia’s naval diplomacy has failed; Australia’s decision-makers will then be left scratching around for the least bad option.

The growing importance of “regional engagement” activities, in general, and naval diplomacy, in particular, has not been missed by Australia’s strategic policy community. The 2016 *Defence White Paper* placed a heavy emphasis upon engagement and urged the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to raise its presence and ability to shape and influence the future political and strategic direction of the Indo-Pacific.<sup>3</sup> Navy’s main answer to this call was the Indo-Pacific Endeavour (IPE).



In just three years, the IPE has become Australia's premier naval diplomacy activity. After three iterations, it is now possible to reflect upon IPE's strengths and weaknesses to enhance its potency as an instrument of Australian strategic diplomacy. This paper is the accumulation of six months of research. It draws upon an extensive appraisal of publicly available materials, internal Department of Defence reports and interviews and discussions with Australian and international officers, academics, and other observers. Most of these interviews and discussions were conducted off the record to facilitate the free exchange of ideas and opinions. Despite learning a great deal from our conversations and interviews we would like to stress that all arguments, opinions and proposals presented below are ours alone.

This paper is divided into four main sections. Section One provides a historical overview of IPE and contextualises the exercise by placing it within Australia's broader naval diplomatic objectives and activities. It also shows how IPE evolved from Australia's previous naval diplomatic undertakings. Sections Two through Four contain proposals for future iterations of the IPE. These proposals cover features ranging from how to "frame" the IPE, organisational and logistical aspects and its strategic objectives. The paper concludes with some thoughts on possible future research projects that relate to Australia's naval diplomacy, generally, and the IPE in particular.

## The Changing Face of Australia's Naval Diplomacy

The IPE is a major break from Australia's previous naval diplomacy activities. Its aims and methods are ambitious. Rather than simply maintaining and managing bilateral relationships, IPE seeks to make a meaningful contribution to Australia's foreign policy efforts and assist in shaping the future regional political and strategic environment. In addition to this, it represents a major redirection of resources into naval diplomacy. Previously, the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) principal naval diplomacy activities were single ship port visits. These were complemented by regular multilateral exercises either hosted by Australia in Australia (e.g. TALISMAN SABRE) or by a major power (e.g. RIMPAC). IPE broke dramatically from this established naval diplomacy pattern by being a task group sized activity, initiated by Australia, across the Indo-Pacific region.

Four main factors precipitated the introduction of the IPE activity.

First, the 2016 *Defence White Paper* provided the primary impetus for IPE. The white paper acknowledged that Australia's strategic environment had become more competitive and unstable and signalled to the ADF that it would be expected to contribute to Australia's overall diplomatic effort to "shape" the region's future direction. For instance, the 2016 *Defence White Paper* submits that:

Defence must be postured to help shape our strategic environment so it supports our security and prosperity, including strengthening our contribution to security and stability in the



South Pacific and maritime South-East Asia. Defence posture is the foundation of how the Government's strategic defence policy will be achieved. This White Paper provides for a more active and internationally engaged Defence posture.<sup>4</sup>

IPE was, in part, Navy's response to this new strategic guidance.

Second, in naval diplomacy terms, single ship deployments were increasingly seen as expensive relative to their diminishing diplomatic and strategic effect. The diminishing impact of single ship port visits was a consequence of the region's growth in strategic power over the previous decade.<sup>5</sup> A single Australian frigate no longer represented the strategic weight needed to produce an enduring political effect.

The third, and related, driver of the IPE concept was that the shift in the strategic balance within the Indo-Pacific led Navy to reevaluate its approach across its warfighting, diplomacy and constabulary roles.<sup>6</sup> In 2017, the decision was made to turn the RAN into a "Task Group Navy".<sup>7</sup> The IPE activity would fit neatly within this new approach. Not only would IPE be a task group naval diplomatic activity, but it would also be a valuable opportunity for Navy – alongside the other two services – to hone their warfighting as a task group. Modern task groups are more than a collection of independent platforms; they form an integrated network system. So, for example, targeting sensors on an Air Force aircraft could guide missiles fired from a RAN warship. It goes largely without saying, however, that task group operations require greater training and planning than those of yesteryear. IPE concept was viewed as being able to make an important contribution to the Navy's new operational approach.

Finally, Australia's capabilities were growing. The RAN is currently in the midst of its largest peacetime expansion. By the end of this transformation, the fleet's size and capabilities will far exceed those available to the previous generation of officers and sailors. Australia has already introduced two Landing Helicopter Docks (LHD – amphibious assault ships), three air warfare destroyers, and plans to introduce 12 new submarines, 9 frigates and 12 offshore patrol vessels. At its conclusion, the total size of the fleet will exceed 50 vessels for the first time in decades.

Navy's new capabilities contributed to the development of IPE in two ways. First, there was the simple logic that Navy, with more, should do more. The introduction of the LHDs, in particular, brought an enormous boost in capabilities both in terms of capacity and scope. Being major assets, however, the LHDs needed to be supported, which necessitated task group sized deployments. The other factor relating to the LHDs was that some Indo-Pacific actors may question why Australia required amphibious *assault* ships. It was anticipated that some within the region could reasonably ask *which nation* Australia intended to assault. It was believed that these suspicions would only be amplified if the LHDs were held back. This could potentially even be interpreted as secrecy. As a consequence, the Navy sought to alleviate these possible concerns by sailing the LHDs out into the region to showcase their humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and sealift capability. The LHDs have since served as the centrepieces for IPE 17, IPE 18 and IPE 19.



### Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017

The inaugural Indo-Pacific Endeavour was the largest Navy task group deployed since the early 1980s.<sup>8</sup> It was led by Captain Jonathan Earley, a career naval officer and confessed LHD enthusiast. At the time of IPE 17, Captain Earley was Commanding Officer of HMAS *Adelaide*. The task group was comprised of the LHD *Adelaide* and, at various stages, by HMA Ships *Melbourne*, *Darwin*, *Toowoomba*, *Parramatta*, and *Sirius*, along with helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft from all three services. It featured some 1,200 personnel and Defence civilians. The task group sailed from Darwin in September 2017 and returned in November. It focussed on South-East and North-East Asia and included visits to Brunei, Cambodia, the Federated States of Micronesia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. Captain Earley described the activity as being “like a bomb burst” that was going to visit “over a dozen countries over the short period we’re deployed.”<sup>9</sup>

Ahead of its deployment, Defence Minister Marise Payne hailed the new activity as a chance to demonstrate capability, foster cooperation, and reinforce the rules-based order. “The [IPE] Joint Task Group will demonstrate the ADF's ability to operate across the full spectrum of military operations, from high-end military capabilities such as anti-submarine warfare to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief,” Minister Payne said. “This deployment is another opportunity to promote security cooperation in the region and exercise our humanitarian and disaster relief capability where it may be used... maintaining the rule of law and respecting the sovereignty of nations large and small is fundamental to continued peace and stability in our region.”<sup>10</sup>

Captain Earley reported that one of the main aims was to introduce our partners in the region to the LHD. “HADR [humanitarian and disaster relief training] was deliberately chosen to present a softer and more acceptable engagement image for the initial introduction of the Canberra Class LHD to the region<sup>11</sup>,” he said in Malaysia, before later adding that: “It is very important to share our understanding on how we do things because, in times of need when a crisis happens, it is too late to sit and discuss what to do.”<sup>12</sup>

IPE’s first port of call was Jakarta, Indonesia, with *Adelaide* and *Toowoomba*. According to reports, their arrival occurred with relatively little fanfare coming just months after full military ties were restored after Indonesia had taken offence to the curriculum used in an Australian military officer exchange program. “We did as much as we could to advertise our presence here and us being here is quite significant,” Captain Earley told the media<sup>13</sup>, adding that the imposing visual signature of the LHD quickly attracted attention and ultimately impressed the Indonesian hosts. It was reported that the departure of the two ships from the Tanjung Priok port two days later featured noticeably more pomp, with a brass band farewell.<sup>14</sup>

A major diplomatic highlight occurred in Manila on 10 October 2017, when HMAS *Adelaide* hosted a rare visit from the Philippines’ President Rodrigo Duterte. President Duterte said it was crucial for Australia, the Philippines and other countries, including the United States and China,



to jointly confront regional threats such as that posed by North Korea. The Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Binskin, also attended.<sup>15</sup>

Earley repeatedly made clear that the goal of IPE was engagement. “We are not instructed to conduct any joint or co-ordinated patrols in the South China Sea. Our focus here is to conduct international engagement,” he said in Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), *People’s Daily*, accused Australia of “encircling” China, pointing out that Indo-Pacific Endeavour would visit “almost all countries across the South China Sea and the East China Sea that surround China”.<sup>17</sup> Later, the *Global Times*, a newspaper associated with the CCP, gave a more measured appraisal, describing the six Australian naval ships sailing toward the South China Sea as “rather impressive in terms of scale, scope, preparation and duration”.<sup>18</sup> According to *The Australian*, these reports were followed by a formal complaint by People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy Commander Shen Jinlong to Australian Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Tim Barrett. And China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Australia’s Ambassador to China, Jan Adams, for a formal rebuke and made further representations to Australia via their embassy in Canberra.<sup>19</sup>

On reflection, some shortcomings of the first effort were apparent. Captain Earley was commanding *Adelaide*, while also commanding the task group. Indeed, Earley was already in Darwin preparing *Adelaide* for IPE 17 when he was informed that he was also going to be commanding the task group. Furthermore, no task group staff were appointed. Commanding an LHD is already a full-time job and, as a consequence, there were lost opportunities at the task group level due to understaffing. The short preparation time meant that obtaining “buy-in” from other parts of Defence and government – including from diplomatic posts across the region – were limited. Indeed, the deployment was already underway before final decisions were made on transit routes.<sup>20</sup> It also meant that the substantial sealift capacity of the LHD was not optimally exploited. Despite these less than optimal circumstances, however, reports suggest that IPE’17 was successful. Euan Graham wrote in *The Straits Times*: “Last year’s Indo-Pacific Endeavour expeditionary exercise was an impressive demonstration of Australia’s regional reach, in partnership with other countries...one thing is certain, going it alone is not an option. Australia needs friends and partners in the region more than ever.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2018**

The second iteration of the Indo-Pacific Endeavour was under the command of Captain Jim Hutton. Captain Hutton served for over 35 years in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines before being loaned to the Royal Australian Navy in 2011 as the Deputy Commander of the Amphibious Task Group and later transferring in 2015 to continue the development of the emerging amphibious capability. Hutton, on appointment as Joint Task Group Commander, had barely one month to prepare and plan the entire activity before departing Townsville in June 2018. The IPE task group was comprised of the LHD HMAS *Adelaide* and HMA Ships *Melbourne*, *Toowoomba*, and *Success*. Task Group personnel included a US Marines platoon from the Marine Rotational





Force in Darwin, and a platoon of Australian soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) and a Sri Lankan Marines Platoon bound for RIMPAC.

The even-year IPE 18 focussed upon the South Pacific. Between June and August 2018, and the task group visited nations including Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The aims were to reinforce Australia's position as the "security partner of choice" for the respective island nations, as well as generally enhancing relationships and building partner capacity.

"These visits are an important opportunity for us to work with our closest neighbours to learn from each other to build interoperability between our nations," Captain Hutton said. "My job was to educate and explain to them why we are in the South Pacific, to demonstrate the capabilities we have to our neighbours."<sup>22</sup> Highlights included a visit from Defence Minister Payne to the Kingdom of Tonga to coincide with the arrival of *Adelaide*, from which a gift of five Australian UNIMOG vehicles disembarked.<sup>23</sup> In Vanuatu, Australian sailors repainted the Vila Central Hospital, facilitated a women's leadership forum, conducted ship tours for schools and community groups, and assisted the Vanuatu Police Force with maintenance work on its patrol boat RVS *Tukoro*.<sup>24</sup>

*Adelaide* and *Melbourne* arrived in Suva on the morning of June 9 and conducted a comprehensive package of over forty activities, including disaster assistance planning, security training, and key leader and community engagement; but their efforts were overshadowed in the Australian media by the arrival of a high-tech Chinese scientific surveillance ship in Fiji on the same day. This was "purely a coincidence" according to China's ambassador, who stridently rejected claims of spying. Captain Hutton played down concerns, pointing out that the Chinese ship was permanently stationed in the South Pacific and sailed in and out of Suva every few weeks to resupply, but confirmed that the task group would "take the appropriate security precautions". Foreign Minister Julie Bishop added that: "The fact that a Chinese vessel is in Fiji is of no concern, we often are in the same part of the world as the Chinese Navy and indeed many other navies."<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, this was the start of a phenomenon where any interaction – regardless of how innocuous – between the IPE and the PLA Navy (or even suspected PLA Navy) came to dominate media coverage of the IPE in the Australian media.

The fleet continued via Tonga and Samoa to Hawaii to participate in the Exercise RIM OF THE PACIFIC (RIMPAC), with the now amphibiously trained Tongan and Sri Lankan marines training with their 2RAR colleagues onboard *Adelaide*. On the return journey, visits were made to Rabaul in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. While in Honiara, Captain Hutton responded to a request for assistance from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and deployed two accident and emergency teams on MRH-90 helicopters from *Adelaide* to retrieve four injured people from Bellona Island, 200 km away. All four patients had deep laceration wounds and were transferred to a hospital in Honiara in stable conditions. "I'm pleased that we had the capability to be able to assist in such a critical situation," Hutton said. "Today's operation, witnessed by the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, highlights the value of what we are doing in the region, the



capability that we have and our commitment to do all we can to help our friends in times of need.”<sup>26</sup> The incident was a highly visible demonstration of the LHD’s medical and surgical capability. Hutton concluded that IPE 18 had been successful, in terms of the volume of activities completed in each location, the social media impact, and the sustained effects as reported later via the respective defence attaches. “There was a focus on security operations and bilateral military operations,” Captain Hutton said. “In Fiji and Tonga particularly, we were able to introduce them to amphibious operations in a minor way, training them the art of planning and moving safely from ship to objective by helicopter, landing craft and small boats.”<sup>27</sup>

### Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2019

IPE 19 departed Fremantle in March 2019 with Air Commodore Rick Owen as the task group commander. This was the first time IPE was not commanded by a naval officer, but Air Commodore Owen brought a wealth of experience and a professional, yet relaxed, manner that was ideally suited for international engagement. Owen was appointed as a commander as a last-minute replacement (due to illness) and had virtually no time to plan or prepare for the activity. The flagship was the LHD HMAS *Canberra*, along with HMA Ships *Success*, *Newcastle*, and *Parramatta*, along with eight helicopters, a P-8A Poseidon aircraft and a Collins Class submarine (HMAS *Collins*). The task group comprised 1,200 personnel including soldiers from Army’s 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> battalions, the Army Band, RAAF personnel, Australian Public Service employees, Royal New Zealand Navy marine technicians, US Marines from Darwin, as well as two Australian academics per leg. Being an odd-numbered year, IPE 19 swung its focus back around to the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia, visiting India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam across three months.

The arrival of the task group in Sri Lanka represented the largest-ever defence engagement between the two countries, with port visits in Colombo and Trincomalee, and RAAF assets visiting Mattala.<sup>28</sup> “Our engagement program provided us with excellent opportunities to learn from our Sri Lankan hosts while sharing some of the capabilities the ADF has deployed on IPE 19,” Air Commodore Owen said.<sup>29</sup> It was immediately followed by the AUSINDEX activity with India, which saw Anti-Submarine Warfare exercises conducted, as well as helicopter cross-decking exercises in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>30</sup>

Other highlights of IPE 19 included the delivery of more than 1,500 life jackets and 20 rescue boards for surf lifesaving from *Canberra* during a visit to Patong Beach, Thailand;<sup>31</sup> cultural exchanges, training activities, and ANZAC Day celebrations in Malaysia;<sup>32</sup> and *Canberra* and *Newcastle* visited Vietnam’s Cam Ranh port for official and social engagements,<sup>33</sup> as well as sharing Australian experience in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and visiting a local school.<sup>34</sup> The final port visits of IPE’19 took place in Indonesia, with the Australian Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mike Noonan joining members of the task group for high-level talks with Indonesian National Armed Forces officials in Jakarta.<sup>35</sup>



Again, media attention focused on interactions with the PLA Navy. Defence confirmed it had a “professional” and “friendly” interaction with the PLA Navy during IPE 19. Air Commodore Owen said that the task group made two transits through the South China Sea. “We were sensitive to all navy interactions, we train for that, we’re aware of how they will behave and how we behave, so I had no extra worries about it at all, I was confident in the capabilities of the Royal Australian Navy and the ADF.” “They’ll want to know who we are, where we’re going and what our intentions are, and the Chinese were no different — they were friendly, they were professional.”<sup>36</sup>

Euan Graham, an Australian academic who travelled on *Canberra* from Vietnam to Singapore, reported that “Some [ADF] helicopter pilots had lasers pointed at them from passing fishing vessels, temporarily grounding them for precautionary medical reasons. Were these startled fishermen reacting to the unexpected? Or was it the sort of coordinated harassment more suggestive of China’s maritime militia? It’s hard to say for sure, but similar incidents have occurred in the western Pacific.”<sup>37</sup> Despite experts agreeing on that it was probably fishermen using an office laser-pointer to wave-off a helicopter that was scaring away their catch, most Australian and international news agencies reported that it was the latter.

Nonetheless, Chief of Joint Operations, Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, said this third iteration of IPE, one of the most ambitious regional engagement activities undertaken by the ADF, had been a success. “The command team performed superbly coordinating this complex series of international engagements, and the embarked forces represented Australia with characteristic warmth and professionalism,” Air Marshal Hupfeld said before concluding that: “IPE 19 was a sophisticated demonstration of joint force integration, combined interoperability with partner forces, and military diplomacy.”<sup>38</sup>

In evaluation, having Air Commodore Rick Owen in command of IPE went a long way towards demonstrating that IPE is a joint task group rather than simply a naval task group. It opened conversations about joint force integration and advertised Australia’s relative progress in this area.

### **Proposal 1:**

#### **Greater branding differentiation between even and odd year Endeavours**

Since the Indo-Pacific Endeavour’s creation, there have been significant differences between its odd and even year iterations. Despite these differences, however, at the point of conception, there were strong reasons why these two activities should be grouped under the same IPE banner. First, taken together, the even and odd year IPE’s represented Australia’s major joint naval diplomacy activity in any given year. Simply being able to announce that the IPE would run every year elevated its importance and cemented the position it would assume within the Australian Defence Forces schedule of activities. Second, one of IPE’s core political objectives was to increase Australia’s presence within the Indo-Pacific region. At first, glance, conducting a biennial exercise would be significantly less of a regional presence than if it were held annually. Third, initially, the IPE was intended to be task group sized joint naval diplomacy effort – regardless of year. As a consequence, how the naval activity was expected to be constituted would be similar between the



years. In short, the initial vision for the IPE contained substantial continuity between the even and odd years in terms of the activities' aims and means.

From the outset, however, the even and odd year IPEs began to diverge across their geographical focus, platforms and capabilities and method of engaging with partner nations. In hindsight, this was inevitable.

First, despite the Indo-Pacific region being a useful political and strategic concept, it remains difficult in an operational sense. It is over 11,000 kilometres (in a straight line) between Sri Lanka and Fiji. Creating a single three-month exercise that captures both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific was always going to be difficult. Second, the partner countries' capacity to exercise with the ADF varies dramatically across the Indo-Pacific region. Generally, the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian states possess significantly greater military capacity than equivalent South Pacific nations. As a consequence, the odd-years tend towards joint exercises and enhancing interoperability. The IPE activities in the South Pacific tend towards goodwill, sporting, medical, musical, or basic training and engagement with security forces such as ship maintenance, firefighting drills, and HADR planning. For example, whereas the Indian Navy conducted advanced Anti-Submarine Warfare exercises in AUSINDEX as part of IPE 19; in IPE 18, Captain Hutton assigned a section of soldiers and small boats from 2RAR to HMAS Success, which by all reports was more than enough capability for the Vanuatu Police Force to train alongside. (The fact that the multinational RIMPAC exercises are held biennially on even years in Hawaii – officially considered “engagement with the US” and part of the even year IPEs – has considerably shaped IPE on those years.)

There are also differences in how the IPE operates between odd and even years. The concentrated task group approach to the South Asian and South-East Asian regions has reverted to dispersed single ship port visits in the Pacific Islands, necessitated by the limited port infrastructure. Furthermore, the focus of odd-years on demonstrating Australia's progress in joint effects has been eschewed in the even-year activities. Indeed, the notion of jointness is relatively meaningless in countries without air forces, navies and in some cases, land forces other than police.

**Table 1: The distinction between odd and even year Endeavours**

	<b>Odd year</b>	<b>Even year</b>
<b>Area of Focus</b>	The Indian Ocean and South-East Asia	South Pacific
<b>Chain of Command</b>	Joint Operations	Eastern Fleet
<b>Operational Emphasis</b>	Joint	Whole of Government
<b>Main Mechanism</b>	Interoperability with Partners	Public Engagement
<b>Type of Force</b>	Concentrated Force	Dispersed Force
<b>Commander</b>	ADF	Navy
<b>Partners' Warfighting Capabilities</b>	High to Medium	Low



### Naval diplomacy as marketing

Naval diplomacy is a campaign intended to shape the audience's beliefs, perceptions, calculations, emotions and, ultimately, their behaviour. The true experts in this field are marketing professionals. Like naval diplomacy, marketing's ultimate aim is to influence the target audience's perceptions to elicit either a change in behaviour (e.g. change brand loyalties), reinforce existing behaviour (e.g. remain loyal to the brand) or deter certain behaviour (e.g. drink driving prevention campaigns). It is not taxing to reimagine "brand of choice" as "security partner of choice". Marketing is an interdisciplinary field that draws upon four main subject areas:

- **Analysis:** understanding the audience's current perceptions, desires, loyalties and behaviour through extensive background research and data collection (e.g. statistical analysis of spending behaviour, focus groups, etc.).
- **Psychology:** understanding the decision-making process of the target audience, so to be able to shape and influence it (e.g. how to overcome loss-aversion when spending money).
- **Strategic Communication:** understanding how to disrupt or reinforce the target's perceptions, calculations and behaviour
- **The Campaign:** thinking in terms of a campaign that spans both time and different mediums (as communicating through a single medium will have limited impact).

Good naval diplomacy should follow the same four-step process. Indeed, they largely reflect Geoffrey Till's three-step processes of naval diplomacy:

- (i) picture building (intelligence gathering);
- (ii) coercion (compellence and deterrence); and
- (iii) coalition building.<sup>39</sup>

Effective naval diplomacy cannot be done on the fly. It involves extensive background research on each partner's current perceptions, emotional beliefs, interests and behaviours. Next, it requires an understanding of the target government's decision-making process when either choosing a security partner of choice or potentially threatening an Australian strategic interest. The third step is arriving at the message of the campaign, which will shape the target's future behaviour. Finally, the campaign will require a concerted long-term effort across government, industry and civil society. In short, naval diplomacy planning should resemble a marketing campaign for a major product. The room should be filled with very smart, very experienced area experts from a range of different backgrounds who are provided with the time and resources necessary to craft a holistic campaign.



### **Australia as the security partner of choice: the lesson from brands**

Brands are the most powerful tool in a marketer's arsenal. They are also incredibly valuable, often being priced higher than the net worth of the company's physical capital. As Distinguished Professor of International Marketing Philip Kotler and Dr David Gertner explains: "Brands incite beliefs, evoke emotions and prompt behaviours."<sup>40</sup> People who claim to know nothing about cars, for example, will be able to describe – sometimes in great detail – what a Mercedes-Benz represents (e.g. prestige, status). Sporting teams, likewise, are often conceptualised as brands. The Dallas Cowboys or Manchester United, for instance, convey a certain personality, values and a level of proficiency. Militaries are also brands. Like sporting teams, the ADF, TNI or USMC all are believed to possess a distinct personality, set of values and a certain level of proficiency. As a consequence of branding, people who know little about military affairs will be able to describe the ethos of the US Marine Corps. This audience does not know the actual USMC, they know its brand. Often, the descriptions of different corporate, sporting or military brands will remain remarkably similar across cultures. That is, the answers will remain consistent regardless of whether the question is asked in France, China, or South Africa. For naval diplomacy, this is a potentially valuable characteristic of branding.

In corporate or sporting marketing spheres, the basic goal is to build brand loyalty. Thus, a certain laundry powder or sporting team becomes a customer's brand of choice. Hopefully, this becomes subconscious with the customer reaching for a certain product without weighing up the alternatives. This might be for a range of reasons, from a psychological process (e.g. humans are cognitive misers and save brain power by only making new decisions when forced) or emotional (e.g. a known brand is reassuring and provokes a feeling of security). This is what the Australian Government should be aiming to achieve when it speaks of making Australia the "security partner of choice" ... at best, there should be no choice made at all.

### **What does all this mean for the even and odd year IPEs?**

In a marketing campaign meeting, the most oft-repeated phrase is the constant reminder to remain "on brand". This becomes problematic if we conceptualise the IPE as a marketing campaign. As shown above, the even and odd year IPEs are currently marketing two different brands: Brand ADF and Brand Australia.

The odd-year IPEs emphasise demonstrating the value of the ADF's jointness, proficiency in combined operations and its flexibility to regional partners. Their main focus is upon building interoperability and high-end warfighting with the partner nations. The message is generally that the ADF's strategic weight is greater than the sum of its parts. This message, in turn, has three outcomes:

- (i) partners see potential value from deepening their engagement with the ADF and learning from it;
- (ii) showcasing capabilities in case they are needed (e.g. HADR), and



- (iii) it acts a deterrent to potential adversities. More than this, however, the odd-year IPE should work to elicit a carefully manicured set of beliefs about the ADF's personality, proficiency, capabilities and values.

It should evoke emotions, which include respect and friendship. And, ultimately, it should lead to certain favourable behaviours that are routine and not a conscious choice in the partner's mind.

The even-year IPEs are significantly different. The engagement with South Pacific nations is less focussed on warfighting and more on capacity building and constabulary operations. The emphasis of the even-year Endeavours is to demonstrate Australia's whole of government effort to the region, including Federal Police and international development agencies. Indeed, the ADF is often simply a critical enabler for these agencies' activities. The brand being marketed is Brand Australia, in a whole of government sense.

To improve clarity, precision and strategic effect, the IPE could be divided into a family of activities. The odd-year activities could continue to focus on Brand ADF and its marketing campaign could be called "IPE". The even-year activities, however, could single-mindedly focus upon Brand Australia and call its marketing campaign "The South Pacific Endeavour" or something similar.

**Table 2: The Endeavour Family of Exercises**

	<i>The Indo-Pacific Endeavour</i>	<i>The South Pacific Endeavour</i>
<b>Brand</b>	Brand ADF	Brand Australia
<b>Strategic Communication</b>	The ADF is the security partner of choice	Australia is the security partner of choice
<b>Strategic Objective</b>	Security Partner Building	Sphere of Influence Building
<b>Area of Focus</b>	The Indian Ocean and South-East Asia	South Pacific
<b>Operational Emphasis</b>	Joint	Whole of Government
<b>Main Mechanism</b>	Interoperability with partners	Public Engagement and state capacity building
<b>Strategic Outcome</b>	Reassurance and deterrence	'Band-wagoning (with Australia)

### **Proposal 2:**

#### **Striking a balance between the two images of naval diplomacy**

There are two images of naval diplomacy: the capacity-image and the strategic-image. These two images view the strategic ends of naval diplomacy in significantly different ways.<sup>41</sup> The capacity-image of naval diplomacy views naval diplomacy as being primarily concerned with providing the Government with options and being able to effectively execute government orders if-, when-, and however, they are received. The Government might call upon the ADF to do any number of tasks, so maintaining readiness and capacity is an end in and of itself. This extends to being able



to operate effectively with regional navies and having interpersonal relationships that can be called upon. It is easy to imagine situations where the Government may call upon Navy to perform a task, which is subsequently enabled by a phone call between an Australian naval officer to a foreign friend and colleague. In contrast, the strategic-image views naval diplomacy as a means of shaping the behaviour of other states, whether they be allies, neutrals or possible competitors. In this image, naval diplomacy should influence the decision making of the governing classes of the region.

Currently, IPE tends to be more closely aligned with the capacity-image than the strategic-image of naval diplomacy. This is not to say that the strategic-image has been completely ignored by IPE planners. It has, however, largely been conflated with the concept of presence.

Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner USN defined “naval presence” missions as “the use of naval forces short of war to achieve political objectives.”<sup>42</sup> Presence is often cited as one of the strategic objectives of the IPE and is emphasised in almost every one of its policy documents and by previous IPE commanders. Vice Admiral Turner, however, continues by explaining that presence needs to have a purpose. He argues that presence has two broad objectives: “deter actions inimical to the interests of the United States or its allies” or “encourage actions that are in the interests of the United States or its allies.”<sup>43</sup> This second step is often not fully developed in the planning phase of the IPE – not because it is considered unimportant, but because (as discussed in Proposal 1), crafting activities that will shape the partner’s perceptions takes a significant upfront investment of time and resources. As a consequence, simply being busy (i.e. presence) has often been used as a proxy for having a strategic effect. This should be rectified with greater resources devoted to planning and preparation that will allow a better balance to be struck between the two images of naval diplomacy.

### **The capacity image of naval diplomacy**

Political scientists would call the capacity image “social capital building”. The “core idea of the social capital theory is that social networks have value” argued Robert Putnam, “Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individually and collectively), so too social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups.”<sup>44</sup> The value within social capital lies not with the individuals involved but rather within the connection itself. A large number of highly virtuous people, living righteous lives, in isolation, would possess little social capital. Individuals living in a traditional tribal society, in contrast, would possess thick and abundant ties with the other members of the group that would produce rich social capital.

Social capital, like other forms of capital, can then be “spent” to accomplish the aims of the individual, community or organisation. Your grandmother, for example, may share stories of growing up in an era that had higher social capital than today. She may reminisce, for instance, of running out of sugar, walking next door to borrow some, only to discover no-one home, and so





letting herself in, helping herself to the sugar and leaving an IOU note on the kitchen bench. Your grandmother may be using different nomenclature, but her story is about exploiting “interoperability”, “partnerships” and “trust” to achieve an objective. History books are littered with examples of military personnel developing social capital, which has been able to be spent at opportune times to accomplish important strategic objectives. One example is John Blaxland’s account of the INTERFET’s experience, where the ADF’s relationship with regional counterparts is attributed to its successful outcome. Blaxland writes:

Equally important, if not more so, were Australia’s links with regional security partners. The long but modest investment in the relationships with Thailand was symptomatic of the significance of maintaining strong working relationships with South-East Asian countries. Even the investment in the relationship with Indonesia over several years helped to avert far worse an outcome...The investment in the relationship with Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines similar paid significant dividends as they committed to support the mission in East Timor. The Australian Army and the wider ADF derived inestimable benefit from the regional relationship.<sup>45</sup>

The most striking aspect of Blaxland’s passage is repetition (emphasis added). Despite each of these relationships were significantly different in scope and nature, Blaxland indirectly infers that they are all cases of social capital: these relations were investments that could be cashed in when needed.

Despite the capacity-image of naval diplomacy being the dominant current approach to IPE, planners still, at times, neglect social capital when developing IPE activities. The IPE itineraries often include activities that seemingly contribute little to either the social capital or the strategic-image. Any activity that does not increase social capital between the Australian contingent and their military and political counterparts should be reconsidered. For instance, arriving in a country and helping to build a school without the participation of the host nation’s military, is much like a virtuous person, living a righteous life, in isolation. It contributes little to social capital. Building a school in partnership with the host nation’s military, on the other hand, could be considered to be more akin to an Amish barn-raising, which is vital for cultivating and reinforcing social bonds and relationships.

### **The strategic image of naval diplomacy**

For over 40 years, Ross Babbage’s strategic analysis has consistently begun from the same starting assumption, which is:

It is not necessarily the will of the entire population of the opposing country that matters or even the will of large numbers of people. The resolution Australia would primarily need to attack is that of a relatively small decision-making elite. It may comprise the country’s prime minister or president, senior cabinet members representing major sectors of society and government authority, a few top military commanders and a small group of advisers...this is the core group whose views Australia’s strategy should aim to change.<sup>46</sup>



Although there may be questions arising from Babbage's subsequent logical flow, his starting point is arguably the soundest of all Australia's strategic thinkers. If the objective is to "shape the international environment", then the focus must be upon shaping the behaviour of the region's nation-states which remain the most consequential actors in the international system. The political elite within each state is subsequently the most consequential actor in determining their state's future international behaviour. It follows, therefore, that they ought to be the target audience of Australia's naval diplomacy – at least as far as the strategic-image is concerned.

Naval diplomacy begins and ends with *influence*.<sup>47</sup> Naval diplomacy shapes the international environment by grooming, prompting, pressuring, reassuring, helping and threatening the region's political elites. Put simply, however, these tasks can be divided into two main efforts: reassurance and general deterrence. As discussed previously, reassurance was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the IPE. There were concerns that the acquisition of the LHDs may cause some security anxiety within the region. Reassurance strategies are designed to regulate international relationships and improve trust by signalling intentions. As a tactic, it involves the reassurer making a goodwill gesture and gauging the other actor's intentions by their reaction to it or in the words of Shiping Tang "...reassurance is a means toward the larger end of knowing another state's intentions and then increasing cooperation if those intentions are benign."<sup>48</sup> This process becomes a self-reinforcing cycle where successful reassurance leads to cooperation, which then permits even greater reassurance, trust and cooperation.<sup>49</sup>

Deterrence strategies dissuade other actors from the undertaking, or even contemplating, malign actions by increasing the costs and/or risks associated with these actions.<sup>50</sup> Deterrence is a threat. That threat, however, can be communicated in non-threatening ways to non-specific parties. Displaying capabilities, even in a friendly way, can deter. To illustrate, imagine a large muscular parent playing with their laughing children by tossing them high into the air. This friendly, even charming, display of physical power and coordination may well convince any would-be thieves to search for an easier victim. Naval diplomacy holds the potential to communicate capabilities similarly (i.e. as a non-threatening threat).<sup>51</sup> This observation reflects Kevin Rowlands' view of classical naval diplomacy, who submits that:

The three pillars of deterrence, status and amity, need not be mutually exclusive. They can be seen operating almost as a virtuous circle. By building alliances, aggression can be deterred. By being perceived as strong in battle, friendships, whether real or of convenience, can be won. By balancing popularity and fear a certain status can be achieved. By occupying high rank in the pecking order of states, the more aggression is deterred and the more partnerships area attracted.<sup>52</sup>

For the IPE specifically, naval diplomacy can deter aggression against Australia or its strategic interests through two mechanisms. First, as a display of the ADF's "jointness". That is, that the ADF's capabilities are greater than the sum of its parts. Second, exercises designed to enhance interoperability can simultaneously be a reassurance strategy with the partner and a deterrent strategy to a third party. The deterrence can operate at both the political-level (i.e. the third party



state recalculates the closeness of the security relationship and how willingly each partner may support the other in a crisis) and operationally (i.e. the more effectively the partners can operate together, the more weight that places on the scales of the regional balance of capabilities).<sup>53</sup>

### Rebalancing the IPE objectives

The IPE should work towards striking a better balance between the capacity-image and strategic-image of naval diplomacy's objectives. This would not only make Australia's naval diplomacy more effective, but it would also be more closely aligned with the strategic guidance handed down through the 2016 *Defence White Paper*. In the executive summary, the 2016 *Defence White Paper* states that:

Defence will increase its investment in international engagement over the next 20 years to help reduce the risk of military confrontation, build interoperability with key partners and improve the coordination of responses to shared international challenges including terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.<sup>54</sup>

There are elements of both the capacity-image and strategic-image of naval diplomacy within the White Paper's thinking on international engagement. Later, when the 2016 *Defence White Paper* transitions onto outlining specific objectives there were once again elements of both images contained in the text.

2016 *Defence White Paper*<sup>55</sup>

This enhancement to our International Defence Engagement is based on four objectives:

- To **enhance ADF capability** by maintaining access to high-end intelligence, technology and military capability from our alliance partner the United States, and by maintaining the ADF's ability to operate effectively with the United States and other partners in our region and further afield.
- To **generate and sustain Australia's regional and global influence**, that is, our ability to influence international security outcomes and to maintain our status internationally as a respected and capable security actor.
- To **generate active and effective security partnerships** that enable Defence to quickly and effectively deploy in our region and further afield, sustain these operations, and to support the capacity of partners to operate in concert with the ADF.
- To **enhance international security resilience** by supporting a rules-based global order, including strong regional and international security architectures, which protects Australia's interests by minimising the risk of coercion, instability, tensions or conflict and resolving conflicts through lawful and peaceful means.

Here, the 2016 *Defence White Paper* gives equal weighting to both the capacity-image and strategic-image of naval diplomacy. Indeed, if anything, points two and four, "generate and sustain



Australia's regional and global influence", and "enhance international security resilience" relate to the strategic image; while the third point "generate active and effective security partnerships" is closer to the traditional capacity-image of naval diplomacy.<sup>56</sup>

How could the IPE operationalise these efforts? In short, activities in pursuit of the capacity image of naval diplomacy will generally require less effort. This is because almost any activity that is performed in conjunction with the partners' military forces can be said to be improving social capital (i.e. anything from barn-raising through to high tempo military exercises). In contrast, the effective application of the strategic-image of naval diplomacy requires time, thought and broad foreign policy expertise. This is because not only is the partner's response relevant, but so too is how other regional actors are likely to perceive the activity and accordingly adjust their future behaviour.

How could this be achieved? It is difficult and there is no silver bullet, however, there are things the ADF could concentrate upon to improve the effectiveness of the strategic-image of naval diplomacy aspects of the IPE, namely: To evaluate every proposed IPE activity's social capital and strategic influence impact. Every proposed activity could be scored against a set of criteria that forces planners to evaluate the activity's likely impact. For example, a cross-decking exercise with the Indian Navy may score highly on the social capital scale, and the strategic influence scale as it will simultaneously act to reassure the Indian political class and contribute to Australia's deterrent posture when viewed by any potentially revisionist third-party actors. In contrast, in the absence of the partner country's personnel, helping a remote school on an isolated Pacific Island may contribute little to social capital, deterrence or reassurance.

### **Proposal 3: Extended 12 month lifecycle for each activity**

Ultimately, the limitations identified in proposals 1 and 2 can only be rectified with more time directed towards planning and preparation and the acknowledgement that successful naval diplomacy requires a skill set that includes:

- (i) operational expertise (i.e. ADF);
- (ii) a deep understanding of the decision-makers and decision-making processes within each partner country (i.e. country experts at universities and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – DFAT); and
- (iii) an understanding what kind of activities are most likely to elicit the desired future behaviour in the target audience while keeping in mind cultural and political differences (i.e. strategic psychologists, political scientists, marketing professionals, etc.).

IPE exercises should have 12-month lifecycles. Arguably the most significant change to IPE 20 is that the commander has been appointed much earlier than in previous iterations. This has allowed the commander to visit the region and develop relationships with political and military partners



and consult and liaise more deeply with DFAT posts and country sections. These reforms should be institutionalised.

To be effective, naval diplomacy requires substantial preparation. It requires a whole-of-government effort where expertise can be brought in to maximise political and strategic impact. It cannot be expected, for example, that the DFAT liaison officer (LO) assigned to the IPE HQ will possess country expertise in every country that the IPE intends to visit and also be fully literate on China and the US alliance. The DFAT LO will need to reach back into their organisation for expertise and guidance. They will also wish to consult with DFAT's overseas posts and the network of Defence Attachés before making decisions, which are already under-resourced and are becoming lighter. This will take time.

The 12-month lifecycle could subsequently be divided into three phases: the preparatory (pre-sail), culmination (sail) and consolidation (post-sail) (See Appendix 1). This paper has already discussed the importance of extending the preparatory stage of the IPE activity and providing it with the necessary human, physical and financial resources. The other missing component to effective naval diplomacy is the consolidation of the gains achieved during the first and second phases. The consolidation phase should span from the return of the task group through to the following activity. It could involve, for example, smaller, specialised targeted exercises that respond to key areas of collaboration between the ADF and the partner force or a critical capability gap identified during the main activity. This phase should also include an opportunity for joint learnings between ADF, DFAT and partners. For instance, the IPE commander and leadership team could return to the partner country for debriefing and a discussion of future activities. The process should also consolidate inter-personal relationships and provide Australian defence personnel with further in-country language and cultural experience (See Appendix 1).

### Permanent office for IPE activities

Along with the institutionalisation of the 12-month IPE lifecycle, there is a strong argument for the establishment of a permanent office. This would provide the enterprise with a permanent address, institutional knowledge and the ability for the command staff to hit the ground running. The office could be relatively small consisting of:

- **Political advisor:** a civilian with a PhD in political science or a similar field. They would be responsible for assembling dossiers on each Indo-Pacific countries' decision-makers and decision-making process. Each year, after the partners have been decided upon, the political advisor would draw upon their network of university country-experts and DFAT posts and desks to update the dossier. They also capture country-specific lessons learnt. In short, these dossiers would be living documents that are regularly updated and made accessible to the IPE planning staff for future operations.
- **Chief of staff:** a 24-36 month posting facilitating greater continuity of operations and a point of contact for any post-activity requests from partner countries.



- **Executive assistant:** at present the Commanding Officer books their travel and schedules their calendar during their preparation time. This is not a cost-effective use of resources.

Due to the significant differences between the even and odd year exercises, it follows that the commander of each will require different skillsets and backgrounds. Consequently, the IPE commanders should continue to change at the start of the new lifecycle.

## Conclusion

The challenges facing the IPE are not unique to Australia. Even the United States, which possesses the most powerful and well-resourced military in human history, finds it difficult to resource naval diplomacy adequately. The exercise schedule for the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) is massive. Annually, INDOPACOM holds 25 to 30 bilateral exercises (from the 36 countries in its area of responsibility). INDOPACOM's exercise schedule is simply too big and moving so fast to contribute very much to the broader strategic objectives or to reflect upon exercise design. Exercise COBRA GOLD, for example, has been run for decades without being significantly refined or improved. The same could be said about RIMPAC or UFL [Ulchi-Focus Lens between the US and ROK]. Indeed, the fact INDOPACOM has to bring in thousands of reservists to execute their exercise commitments shows how overwhelmed the permanent staff are.

As Australia refocuses on naval diplomacy it is important that it not fall into the INDOPACOM trap of valuing quantity over quality – presence over strategic effect. Being busy is not enough. Furthermore, at some point, inertia takes control. That is, it becomes more difficult to reform exercises the older they become. Australia has participated in every RIMPAC since its inauguration in 1971. Not attending, or significantly changing participation would communicate much more than simply continuing to do what has always been done. As a consequence, despite questions over its continued operational utility, the political and strategic consequences for Australia of not participating in RIMPAC means that pulling out will never be a serious option. IPE, in contrast, remains relatively young and so the window remains open to reforming the activity. This report submits that these improvements largely fall under three areas:

- To ensure the messaging (i.e. branding) of the activities is clear to Australian and international stakeholders, participants and audiences;
- To properly resource the activity and acknowledge that longer preparation and consolidation periods would greatly strengthen the activity. Related to this point is the need to establish a small permanent office. There are good reasons for the commander to rotate through 12-month cycles, but a small permanent staff would facilitate institutional knowledge and permit efficiencies in the workflow; and
- A better balance needs to be structured between the capacity-image and strategic-image of naval diplomacy for the IPE to reach its full potential.



### **Appendix 1: Proposed 12-month lifecycle of the Indo-Pacific Endeavour**

#### The Preparatory Phase (pre-sail)

##### *8 months before sail*

- i) Appointment of the Commanding Officer (CO) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Liaison Officer (LO). They join the permanent IPE office staff (e.g. Chief of Staff, political advisor).
- ii) Initial planning conference that, in addition to the permanent staff, includes the new Commanding Officer, DFAT LO and Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO) representative, International Policy Division and representatives from Joint Operations Command's J5 (Plans & Policy), J2 (Intelligence) and J3 (Operations) and Maritime Headquarters' (MHQ) N5 (Plans & Policy), N2 (Intelligence) and N3 (Operations).

##### *7 months before sail*

- iii) The CO, chief of staff, DFAT LO, political advisor, a DIO representative and military staff officers (even years also include AFP, international aid) travel to partner countries to discuss opportunities and future exercises.
- iv) Strategic impact assessments.
- v) Main planning conference.

##### *From 4 months before sail*

- vi) The deployment of advance ADF elements. The timing and composition of these elements would be tailored to the individual partner nation. They could range from additional support to the Defence Attaché through to significant forces arriving months in advance to begin exercising with the partner's military.

##### *1 month before sail*

- vii) Final planning conference.

#### The Culmination Phase (sail)

The arrival of the IPE main element. This represents the culmination of the IPE lifecycle. Along with the main taskforce, other tailored joint elements should arrive in-country. For example, P-8A Poseidon aircraft may join the IPE taskforce in one country before returning to Australia, while a C-17 Globemaster with specialised Army unit may arrive at the following destination. Regardless of the military contribution, however, Australia's diplomatic effort should focus upon this culmination point. For instance, in many cases, the arrival of the IPE main element should coincide with an Australian Ministerial visit. The Ministerial visit ensures that :

- (a) the partner country's government are actively involved; and



(b) that the diplomatic message of the visit can be finetuned (i.e. whether the diplomatic contingent is led by Minister for Agriculture, Defence, Tourism, or Foreign Affairs will communicate intent).

### The Consolidation Phase (Post-Sail)

- i) Subsequent exercises and deployments. Following the departure of the IPE main element, smaller, specialised and targeted exercises can be conducted between the ADF and partner nations' militaries. These may be a continuation of the preparatory exercises or supplementary in nature.
- ii) Joint learnings between ADF, DFAT, and partners. This process builds and develops inter-personal relationships and provides Australian defence personnel with in-country language and cultural experience.
- iii) Drafting the IPE Post-Activity Report and assessing how well the aims of the IPE were achieved, as well as setting out why specific objectives were or were not met.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The modernisation and expansion of China's sea power often looms largest in these discussions. In 2017, the PLA Navy became the world's largest, surpassing the US Navy's total number of warships. Moreover, it continues to build new ships at a rapid rate. Although the US Navy remains superior qualitatively, unlike the PLA Navy, it has truly global commitments and so is spread thinner. See, for example, Steven Lee Myers, "With Ships and Missiles, China Is Ready to Challenge U.S. Navy in Pacific," *International New York Times*, August 29, 2018; Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, (Canberra: Government of Australia, 2016), p49 (para. 2.37) and p50 (para. 2.41).

<sup>2</sup> Garry Woodard, "Australia's China Policy of Strategic Ambiguity: Navigating Between Big Fish." *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2, (2018), pp163-178.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Defence, Press Release: *Task Group Deployment to Strengthen Regional Military Cooperation*, September 4, 2017.

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<sup>47</sup> Schelling, T.C., *Arms and Influence*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1966); Schelling, T.C., *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, (MA: Harvard University Press, 1960),

<sup>48</sup> Tang, S., and Montgomery, E.B., “Uncertainty and Reassurance in International Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (2007), p194. Also see Schweller, R.L., “Managing the Rise and Origins of the Cold War,” in Johnston A.I., and Ross, R.S., (eds.), *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, (London: Routledge, 1999), pp14-15.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Kydd’s work on trust, reassurance and cooperation is particularly good. See, Kydd, A.H., *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) and Kydd, A.H., “Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation,” *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (2000), pp325—357. An interesting case that highlights the relationship between reassurance and intentions was the United States’ invitation to the PLA-N to participate in RIMPAC, which lasted several years before they uninvited them after realizing that the Chinese were simply using the opportunity to spy on the US Navy and other joint US military capabilities.

<sup>50</sup> Lockyer A., and Cohen, M.D., “Denial Strategy in Australian Strategic Thought,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 4, (2017), pp423-439.

<sup>51</sup> This would be a case of “general” deterrence. According to Patrick Morgan, “General deterrence relates to opponents who maintain armed forces to regulate their relationship even though neither is anywhere near mounting an attack.”<sup>51</sup> Only after general deterrence fails, do states construct immediate deterrence strategies (i.e. “if you X then I will Y, so don’t do X”) or in Morgan’s words: “Immediate deterrence concerns the relationship between opposing states where at least one side is seriously considering an attack while the other is mounting a threat of retaliation in order to prevent it.” See Morgan, P.M. *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*, (Beverly Hill, CA: 1977), p28

<sup>52</sup> Rowlands, K., *Naval Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Model for the Post-Cold War Global Order*, (London: Routledge, 2019), p21.

<sup>53</sup> For a more in-depth discussion on the differences between political and operational interoperability, see Lockyer, A., “The Logic of Interoperability: Australia’s Acquisition of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter,” *International Journal*, Vol. 68, No. 1, (2013), pp71-91.

<sup>54</sup> Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, (Canberra: Government of Australia, 2016), p22.

<sup>55</sup> Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, (Canberra: Government of Australia, 2016), pp119-120 (para. 5.12).

<sup>56</sup> The first point relates more to Talisman Sabre and RIMPAC than IPE.