In terms of defense planning, Australia is a paradox. Though located in a remote region of the world, Australians do not in general draw a sense of security from their geographic isolation. There are no land boundaries, and regional threats since World War II have been distant or sporadic. Nonetheless Australia’s anxiety over its exposed position proves that a country does not need an identifiable threat to consider itself insecure. For example, while sufficiently removed from the frontline in the Cold War, Canberra was a staunch “blue force” during the period of superpower confrontation; indeed, with shared experiences of many wars and a resilient alliance, it has retained a close security association with the United States.

Australia is the world’s most urbanized society with the overwhelming preponderance of its populace in the southeast. Yet it is the climatically inhospitable, underdeveloped, and resource-rich north and northwest that have been receiving attention from the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Geopolitical realities and recent experience have combined to produce an advanced defense planning system. Many post-Cold War difficulties facing Western militaries—such as developing capabilities-based planning systems and achieving greater jointness—have tested defense leaders in Canberra since the early 1970s. What initiated the change in thinking was the official recognition in 1972 that Australia had no threat against...
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which to plan. To its credit, the defense establishment developed a top-down, threat-ambivalent planning system and force development methodology. One outcome of this approach has been to foster jointness by linking joint doctrinal development to strategic guidance. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear that commanders not only know ADF joint doctrine but actually use it.

While the U.S. Armed Forces have now adopted jointness as a formal discipline of study and have tomes of doctrine, comparative literature on joint matters is limited. Thus the Australian experience warrants examination. This article analyzes two key elements of Australian jointness: defense planning/force development methodology and the development of joint doctrine. A description of the evolution of Australian defense policy will place these two systems in context. Whereas it would be imprudent to claim that the Australian experience is applicable to other defense establishments, the processes underlying its elements should be of interest to U.S. planning and doctrine communities.

**Defense Policy**

For those unfamiliar with Australian defense, *Defending Australia 1994*, a white paper issued by the previous Labor government, is the latest iteration of a policy which has enjoyed general support across the political spectrum since 1972. In that year the ruling Liberal-Country Party coalition (the Liberal Party being “conservative” in Australia) issued the first formal white paper on defense. Significantly, the *Australian Defence Review* argued in favor of a defense policy of self-reliance in light of the impending withdrawal of the British from the Far East, the Nixon Guam Doctrine, and evident failure of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

The policy was further elucidated and with stronger language in the Liberal-Country Party coalition government’s *Australian Defence, November 1976*. Reliance on allied military assistance in the event of a direct threat to Australia would no longer be assumed, thereby giving impetus to developing a balanced, more self-sufficient force. The apotheosis of self-reliance was reflected in *Defence of Australia 1987*. For the first time, the concepts of “self-reliance” and the “defense of Australia,” with an endorsed national strategy and policy guidance to help implement them, became more than mere terms. A strategy of “defense in depth” was adopted to direct ADF development. Specific strategic guidance followed in 1991 and set the priorities for improving ADF capabilities to operate in the north by increased force presence and facilities for deployments.

The 1994 paper further acknowledges the new regional challenges involved in their pursuit and “defense in depth” has become “depth in defense,” thereby providing a more holistic approach employing all national assets, as opposed to its earlier more limited definition.

One discernible change in previous policy is an acknowledgement that ADF must be more capable of carrying out missions outside of the defense of Australia. However, force development will still be guided by the defense of Australia, with capabilities for regional engagement, peacekeeping, and external deployment being considered tangentially. The 1993 *Strategic Review* made no mention of “Australia’s area of direct military interest,” which had been given considerable prominence in *Defence of Australia 1987*. This concept had utility in the 1980s in shifting the focus more firmly from filial protection by “great and powerful friends” to the peculiar needs of Australia’s defense. The job done, and with growing engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, limited boundaries were discarded as strategic and force development tools. One result of Canberra’s policy of “regional engagement” was the groundbreaking December 1995 security pact with Indonesia.

While it may appear that Australian planners have long been blessed by policy consistency, this is not so at the implementation level. Between the 1972 white paper and its 1987 counterpart, defense planners lacked adequate guidance from political authorities. It took the publication of the *Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities* in 1986 by Paul Dibb, a consultant to the minister of defense, to move the government to articulate and sanction an official strategy. The 1987 defense white paper offered thorough guidance in which Canberra

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*It is not uncommon to hear that commanders not only know joint doctrine but use it.*

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**TOP DOWN PLANNING AND DOCTRINE**

F-111 arriving in Darwin for Pitch Black ‘93.
stated national security aspirations and announced a strategy of “defense in depth.” Importantly, this paper also had the effect of limiting force structure planning specifically to the defense of Australia.

**Defense Planning**

Australian defense policymaking has four major steps. First, planners consider geopolitical and geostategic factors such as the proximity of states, population centers, terrain, infrastructure, et al. Overall, planners face defending an island continent distant from other countries, having a vast and climatically inhospitable north with a limited population base and infrastructure. On the positive side, Australia has a formidable “air-sea gap” between its coast and the archipelago farther north through which an attacker would have to pass.

Second, the defense establishment develops appreciations of regional military capabilities in being as well as prospect. These are not official threat assessments but rather surveys of regional defense capabilities. As such, there is no consideration of, or judgment on, the motives or intent of regional countries. An appreciation of a nation’s geographic setting and the military capabilities of regional states informs judgments on warning time and defense preparation requirements.

Third, these findings suggest what is credible and what is not in the form of “contingencies.” For example, an invasion or conquest of Australian territory would be too demanding on enemy combat, combat support, and logistics elements. Japan might have thundered on the northern coast during World War II but never realistically looked like conquering the country.

On the other hand, while no motive or intent for conflict at any level can be perceived, prudence demands the ability to meet feasible contingencies, now called “short-warning” (rather than the earlier low or escalated) conflicts. The scale and intensity of short-warning conflict could range

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*Image 1: HMAS Dubbo and HMAS Fremantle during Kangaroo '95.
*Image 2: U.S. Marines preparing to jump with Australian paratroops.*
Contingencies are used as a baseline against which defense capabilities can be weighed.

Contingencies are not used for formal threat-based planning but as a baseline against which defense capabilities can be weighed. Credible contingencies have a direct influence on developing ADF capabilities to meet conflicts that could arise in the near term, and the defense expansion base (reserve forces and defense industrial capabilities) for conflicts that would take longer to develop.

Fourth, planners generate five and ten-year plans based on realistic financial guidance set by the government. This provision grew from a failure to garner the appropriations which the Dibb review and earlier white papers assumed.

This planning process produces the following conclusions:

- Australia possesses a natural and formidable air-sea barrier.
- There is no identifiable country with the intent or ability to threaten fundamental national interests, let alone national security (that is, to launch and sustain a lodgement on Australia).
- Certain countries do possess some capabilities which could be employed against Australia, and their acquisition of more threatening weapon systems could be countered by increasing ADF capabilities.
- Nevertheless, in the short term and without expansion, such capabilities could only generate conflict short of major attack or invasion.
- As a consequence, Australia will protect itself through a strategy of depth in defense.

These conclusions equal a net assessment and establish requirements for a standing force structure and defense base. The assessment has the following implications for defense policy:

- In light of Australia's threat-ambiguous environment, sophisticated intelligence gathering and assessment capabilities are crucial to providing sufficient warning to allow an appropriate political response.
- Inhibiting incursions and monitoring sovereignty and maritime areas suitable for peacetime and wartime.

- ADF must be directed to meeting short warning-time conflict.

These processes establish a practice by which defense officials can delineate ADF missions without accentuating implausible threat scenarios. This is not always easy since it requires clear policy and consensus on key areas in the defense community. The system has provided planning with stable direction to develop force structure for the defense of Australia in a top-down manner.

Force Development

The process used by the Australian Department of Defence and Headquarters ADF to carry out force development has three stages: strategic concepts, defense force capability options papers, and specific capability proposals, including key capability submissions. The process must be seen as a continuum since distinctions drawn between the stages are somewhat arbitrary.

Stage 1—Developing strategic concepts. Guidance identifies likely ADF roles in the defense of Australia. Currently, strategic concepts are written for each of eight roles. The concepts are developed to ensure a joint focus as well as the full and complementary capabilities of ADF:

- Intelligence collection and evaluation
- Surveillance of maritime areas and northern Australia
- Maritime patrol and response
- Protection of shipping, offshore territories, and resources
- Air defense within maritime areas and northern approaches
- Control of incursions on Australian territory
- Protection of civil and military assets (including infrastructure and population centers)
- Strategic strike.

But because these roles are broad, a strategic concept derives a list of tasks including specific tasks, in the greatest possible detail, of task parameters such as rates of effort, location, duration, and sustainability and, whenever possible, initial judgments of task priorities.

Tasks derived from strategic concepts must be identified correctly and comprehensively as they evolve since they form the basis for force development. It must be made clear what is to be done, when, where, how many times, and for how long. Note that strategic concepts do not specify how to accomplish missions.

An update of these concepts over time is envisaged as factors change. Moreover, once all eight have been endorsed they will be supported by environmental (land, sea, and air) concepts and one master concept as a baseline repository for common consideration.

Stage 2—Defense force capability options papers. These documents examine the extent to which current and approved ADF capabilities can underpin tasks identified in endorsed strategic concepts. Where tasks cannot be completed to an adequate level, the papers identify broad options for overcoming deficiencies. This drives the system to examine in a joint manner what can be done with existing capabilities and, should deficiencies arise, to determine what capabilities are required for the future.
Capability options papers are developed to accomplish the following:

- Assess the performance likely from using all existing capabilities. This step establishes the baseline against which the cost of adjustment options will be measured.
- Determine what level of performance is acceptable and the consequences of not meeting that standard; that is, does a deficiency need to be overcome? This analysis must also consider the effects of not completing the tasks. Conversely, surplus capability requires a decision as to whether to reduce structure or shift excess capabilities elsewhere, for example, reserve components.
- Explain how a defense force could reduce the deficiency inexpensively with cost-effective adjustments such as changes in doctrine, training, or command and control.
- If the defense force cannot fulfill a task, this stage will explain ways it can acquire greater proficiency by improving such components as manpower, facilities, equipment, training, organization, etc.
- Estimate level of improvement and likely costs of an enhancement option as well as consequences of not performing to the level judged acceptable.

Finally, establish force development priorities based on the preceding analyses as well as the best return for expended resources.

While complicated, this process can be summed up as follows:

- Can the identified tasks be done now? (What are existing capabilities and how well can they perform the task?)
- How much is enough? (Identify where excess/shortfall exists and what to do about it.)
- What are the costs and risks?
- What are the preferred generic options?

Stage 3—Specific capability proposals, including major capability submissions. Following approval of generic options, the final step before funding approval and acquisition is determining specific solutions and matching resources with force structure requirements. Questions involved at this stage focus on cost, type, and density of equipment required and timing of procurement.

Joint Doctrine

Just as Australian force development is highly influenced by strategic concepts, so is joint doctrine. In short, endorsed strategic concepts provide the foundation for the development of ADF joint doctrine. So important are these concepts that it is extremely difficult for a service to obtain new capabilities unless it can show that they would directly support existing strategic concepts.

Joint doctrine must demonstrate how ADF is capable of performing the missions described by strategic concepts and has thus become more influential. For instance, while responding to an inherently low “force-to-space ratio” through a series of command reorganizations, ADF has had to become more proficient in joint operations. Consequently,
all exercises are joint. The capstone ADF Publication
1, Doctrine, has become umbrella guidance for the
three services, to which their own doctrines
must conform. The services have come to accept
joint doctrine as a useful means to achieve
the often elusive goal of jointness, noting, however,
the important role of each service's professional
doctrinal sources in influencing joint culture.

As concepts mature, joint doctrine increas-
ingly flows from and supports specific concepts.
ADF joint doctrine thereby provides methods by
which the services can support national strategy.
Although the individual services previously found
it difficult to demonstrate that they could execute
strategic concepts separately, joint doctrine com-
bined with emerging operational concepts pro-
vides integrating and rationalizing guidance.

Lastly, joint doctrine will help the comman-
der, Australian Theater, and his one geographic
and three environmental component commanders to
assess and demonstrate command preparations to
accomplish missions stipulated in the Headquar-
ters ADF Master Task List, as well as respond to the
Chief of Defence Force's Preparedness Directive (on
readiness levels and resource allocation).

Joint doctrine is drafted at the ADF Warfare
Centre by teams of field grade officers from all
services with recent operational experience. The
centre, organized in 1990 from two joint warfare
schools, is chartered to develop and teach joint
document, manage the ADF exercise analyses plan,
and maintain a data base for post-exercise analy-
yses. It is concerned with developing and validating
judgment. It is concerned with developing and validating
joint doctrine on the operational level. Con-
sequently, the centre does not normally develop
tactical level doctrine, which is done by the indi-
vidual services in accordance with joint doctrine.

Valid joint doctrine must address strategic
concepts when it is drafted. Once completed and
votted, doctrine is reviewed by the Joint Opera-
tions Doctrine Group which is comprised of ser-
vice representatives, joint commands, Headquar-
ters ADF, and other interested parties. Draft
document is then staffed through the services.
Agreement to publish is reached by consensus.
The tendency to water down joint doctrine which
can arise in the United States during consensus-
building is largely mitigated in Australia because
the process is focused on strategic concepts dur-
ing the early stages of development and through-
out the coordination phase.¹

Once endorsed, joint doctrine is validated
for relevance and utility through the observation of
joint and combined exercises by the ADF War-
fare Centre. The assistant chief of defence force
(operations) sponsors such observation visits,
thus ensuring the involvement of Headquarters
ADF in the review. Any observed inadequacies
result in a doctrinal review. In this manner,

there is a routine method of ensuring that doc-
trine remains relevant to operators in the field.

Post-1972 defense gave Canberra a twenty-
year head start in planning to operate jointly in a
threat-ambiguous regional environment. More-
ever, geostrategic realities, financial exigencies,
and defense guidance forced ADF to take joint-
ness seriously. This is not to suggest that the Aus-
tralian model is either perfect—it is evolving—or
appropriate for other countries. Australia clearly
enjoys a unique strategic culture.

What is relevant are the methodologies and
systems outlined above. Developing a planning
process that translates national policy and strate-
gic guidance into overarching concepts, capability
options, and principles to govern force employ-
ment should not be discounted. Given shortcom-
ingis in current joint strategic planning within the
Pentagon, the Australian experiences could hold
answers for improvements in the U.S. planning
system. Thus, in an era of financial penny in
many nations, and recognizing that future opera-
tions will require joint capabilities, a study of Aus-
tralian defense planning and joint doctrine could
reveal what will and what will not work.

¹ While defense officials emphasize that these ap-
precations are not threat assessments, references to "in-
telligent adversaries" and Australia's "favorable security
environment" presuppose a threat, however ill-defined.
Officials respond that their methodology does not allow
threats to overly influence their force development
methodology.

² Levels of conflict include low-level, escalated low-
level, and more substantial conflict. Islelated low-level
conflict is defined as an "attacker supplementing or
substituting unconventional tactics and forces with mil-
itary units prepared to confront our forces direct." ²

³ As further feedback, an operational level concept for
the defense of Australia will produce the "warfighten-
view" and improve interaction of the separate service
planning for all eight roles or combinations of them.

⁴ Concept papers make assumptions on actual geo-
graphic locations, frequency, intensity, and currency of
significant conflict periods similar to two MRCs and the
win/hold/win judgment.

⁵ For a critique of the U.S. doctrine development
process, see Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr., and Thomas-Durell
Young, Strategic Plans, Joint Doctrine, and Antipodean In-
sights (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College,
Strategic Studies Institute, 1995).

NOTES