



Royal United Services Institute of Western Australia

Newsletter

February 2014 Edition

Promoting National Security and Defence

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YOUR PATRONS, OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEE

2014 PROGRAM

FEBRUARY	
Thursday 27 February	7:00 for 7:30pm Professor David Denemark, University of Western Australia: <i>Growing Up Democratic</i>
MARCH	
Thursday 27 March	7:00 for 7:30pm Lorraine Findlay. <i>Prosecuting War Crimes – Can Theory and Practice be Reconciled?</i>
APRIL	
Thursday 10 April	7:00 for 7:30pm Commodore Peter Lockwood, Senior Officer WA: <i>WA Defence topic. Note Lecture date due to Easter and ANZAC Day</i>
Friday 11 April*	*11am Sharp Brigadier Alison Creagh, CSC <i>The ADF Theatre Project and the production of the 'Long Way Home'</i> . Note - to be held at the Lecture Room of the Army Museum of Western Australia, Fremantle
Thursday 22 May	Blamey Oration – The Minister of National Defence has been invited
The next Newsletter will be published on 1 March 2014	

Copy Deadline 15 February 2014

Please RSVP to events

THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE MUSLIM WORLD

The Indian Ocean touches Asia, Africa, Australia and Antarctica. It also connects and links the Continents called the Old World, in contrast to the New World, which is touched by the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Seas.

The evidence collected on each era of Indian Ocean history illustrates a wide variety of interactions that took place during more than ten thousand years of human history, and a much longer prehistoric period. People migrated and traveled, traded and transferred ideas and technologies, engaged in warfare and peacemaking, spread religions and artistic ideas. Each era of history in the Indian Ocean was different.

In the western part of the Indian Ocean, a major empire rose after Muhammad (d. 632 CE) brought Islam to the Arabian Peninsula. A century of rapid expansion brought huge territories under Muslim rule. The Umayyad and Abbasid Empires controlled territories from Spain in the west to the borders of China in the east. In the following centuries, both Islam and the Arabic language spread through much of this territory. The Arabs had already been active traders in the Indian Ocean, and Islam encouraged trade and created opportunities as it spread a universal belief system, Arabic language, and a system of law. Sufi mystical orders or brotherhoods spread and popularized Islam along the trade routes, and annual pilgrimage journeys to Makkah reflected a diverse and growing Ummah, or Muslim community carrying out this religious duty.

The Muslim lands, with their growing cities, were wealthy and demand for goods of all kinds was high. Like the Chinese at the time, science, learning and the arts were prized, and production rose. Crops such as sugar, rice, hard wheat, vegetables and fruits spread from east toward the west. All sorts of imports flowed into the Arabian (Persian) Gulf and the Red Sea, and exports flowed out. Recent finds of shipwrecks from the medieval period are beginning to show the large volume of this trade, which travel accounts have described in detail.

No Muslim empire set out to control trade in the ocean, but merchant communities spread widely, and through them, Islam spread around the lands bordering the Indian Ocean. It spread along the Silk Road and into West Africa. Arab and Persian traders stopped at ports in the growing East African city-states, where a Swahili, or coastal, culture combined African, Islamic and regional influence. Trade on the Red Sea and Arabian (Persian) Gulf linked to land routes and the Mediterranean trading system.

Content for this article was taken from: "Historical Overview: Continuity and Change in the Indian Ocean," *Indian Ocean in World History*. <http://www.indianoceanhistory.org/>.

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AUSTRALIA'S LANDING HELICOPTER DOCKS

The *Canberra* class is a ship class of two Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD) ships being built for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Planning to upgrade the navy's amphibious fleet began in 2000, based on Australian experiences leading the International Force for East Timor peacekeeping operation. In 2004, French company Direction des Constructions Navales (DCN) and Spanish company Navantia were invited to tender proposals, with the companies offering the *Mistral* class amphibious assault ship and the "*Buque de Proyección Estratégica*" design (later commissioned as *Juan Carlos I*) respectively. The Spanish design was selected in 2007, with Navantia responsible for construction of the ships from the keel to the flight deck, and BAE Systems Australia handling the fabrication of the superstructure and fitting out.

Construction of the first ship, HMAS *Canberra*, commenced in late 2008, and the hull was launched in early 2011. Work on the second vessel, HMAS *Adelaide*, started in early 2010. The ships are expected to enter service between 2014 and 2016. They will be the largest vessels ever operated by the RAN, with a displacement of 27,500 tonnes (27,100 long tons; 30,300 short tons).

The *Canberra* class vessels are 230.82 metres (757.3 ft) long overall, with a maximum beam of 32 metres (105 ft), and a maximum draught of 7.08 metres (23.2 ft). Keeping the maximum draught low was an important factor during design, allowing the ships to operate in littoral waters and small harbours. At full load, each ship will displace 27,500 tonnes, making them the largest vessels to serve in the RAN. The *Canberras* have the same physical dimensions as *Juan Carlos I*, but differ in the design of the island superstructure and the internal layout, in order to meet Australian conditions and requirements. Unlike the Spanish vessel, the Australian ships are built to meet Lloyd's Naval Rules.

Propulsion is provided by two Siemens 11-megawatt (15,000 hp) azimuth thrusters, each with an onboard electric motor, driving two 4.5-metre diameter propellers. The electricity is provided by a combined diesel and gas system, with a single General Electric LM2500 turbine producing 19,160 kilowatts (25,690 hp), supported by two MAN 16V32/40 diesel generators providing 7,448 kilowatts (9,988 hp). The main thrusters are supplemented by two 1,500 kilowatts (2,000 hp) bow thrusters, and a 1,350-kilowatt (1,810 hp) Progener-Mitsubishi S16MPTA diesel generator is fitted as an emergency backup. The vessels will have a maximum speed of over 20 knots, a maximum sustainable full-load speed of 19 knots, and an economical cruising speed of 15 knots, with a corresponding range of 9,000 nautical miles (17,000 km). The LHDs can maintain full directional control while reversing at up to 8 knots.

Each ship is fitted with a Saab 9LV Mark 4 combat management system. The sensor suite includes a Sea Giraffe 3D surveillance radar, and a Vampir NG infrared search and track system. For self-defence, the LHDs will be fitted with four Rafael Typhoon 25 mm remote weapons systems (one in each corner of the flight deck), six 12.7 mm machine guns, an AN/SLQ-25 Nixie towed torpedo decoy, and a Nulka missile decoy. Defence against aircraft and larger targets is to be provided by escort vessels and air support from the Royal Australian Air Force. The ships' companies will consist of 358 personnel; 293 RAN, 62 Australian Army, and 3 RAAF.

The LHDs will transport 1,046 soldiers and their equipment. They are to be capable of deploying a reinforced company of up to 220 soldiers at a time by airlift. In mid-2010, the intention was to retrain 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment for the commando and amphibious warfare roles, but under Plan Bersheeba, released in December 2012, 2nd

Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment was the unit marked to become the core of the Australian marine force. Two vehicle decks (one for light vehicles, the other for heavy vehicles and tanks) have areas of 1,880 square metres and 1,410 square metres respectively, and between them can accommodate up to 110 vehicles. Each ship has a 69.3-by-16.8-metre deck. This can house up to four LCM-1E landing craft, which can be launched and recovered in conditions up to Sea State 4. The well deck also has room for four RHIBs (although these will not be carried as standard), and can be used by other nations' landing craft and amphibious vehicles.

The flight deck is 202.3 by 32 metres and sits at a height of 27.5 metres with six spots for helicopters up to MRH-90 size to operate simultaneously. Alternately, helicopters up to Chinook size can take off or land simultaneously on four spots on the flight deck. Flight operations can be conducted up to Sea State 5. The standard air group aboard these ships will be a mix of MRH-90 transport helicopters and S-70B Seahawk anti-submarine helicopters. The 990 square metres hangar deck can accommodate eight medium-size helicopters; with room for another ten if the light vehicle deck is used for additional helicopter space. Two aircraft lifts (one large one centre-aft, and a smaller one to starboard and in front of the island superstructure) connect the flight deck to the hangar deck. The ski-jump ramp of *Juan Carlos I* has been retained for the RAN ships. Because of this, there have been multiple recommendations that the *Canberras* be used for carrier-like flight operations (primarily with a flight group of F-35B Lightning II STOVL aircraft). Although cross-decking with other nations' aircraft may occur, the RAN maintains that embarking Australian-operated, fixed-wing aircraft is not under consideration.

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INDIAN NAVY COMMISSIONS INS VIKRAMADITYA

Marking a new high in India-Russia strategic cooperation, the Indian Navy has commissioned its largest ship the completely refurbished 44,500 tonne carrier Admiral Gorshkov into the Indian Navy as INS Vikramaditya at Sevmash Shipyard in Severodvinsk in Russia.

Speaking at the event, Defence Minister Shri Antony said INS Vikramaditya would significantly enhance the reach and capability of the Indian Navy. He said, the country has a rich maritime history and the Indian Ocean has guided our fate over the centuries. "India's economic development is dependent on the seas and safeguarding the nation's maritime interests is central to our national policy. Aircraft carriers have been part of the Indian Navy's force structure since our independence and have effectively served the country over the past five decades or so. The induction of 'Vikramaditya' with its integral MiG29K fighters and Kamov-31 helicopters, not only reinforces this central policy, but also adds a new dimension to our Navy's operational capabilities. The meaning of 'Vikramaditya', which literally translates into "Strong as the Sun" is complemented by the Ship's motto – "Strike Far, Strike Sure", he said.

Reflecting the mood at the ceremony, Shri Antony said, 'the event realizes the vision of capability-based transformation of the Indian Navy that was conceived more than a decade ago'. Calling it a Red Letter Day in the history of India- Russia cooperation, Shri Antony said this relationship remains a matter of the highest priority for both nations for our mutual benefit and as a factor of global peace and stability. Describing the Project 11430 as a unique one, Shri Antony said, it was a challenging task for both the Russian and the Indian sides and congratulated the entire team for converting the 'Dream Project' into a reality. He expressed confidence that all possible support would be extended by Russia to ensure that the ship serves India effectively and efficiently for the duration of its expected operational life cycle.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral DK Joshi said the INS Vikramaditya will bridge the time-gap that may come up between the INS Viraat and the Indigenously built aircraft carrier Vikrant. It will also help achieving our medium term goal of operating two aircraft carriers.

About INS Vikramaditya

The 44,500 tonne INS Vikramaditya, has an overall length of 284 meters, a maximum beam of about 60 meters and stands about 20 storeys tall from keel to the highest point. With a crew of over 1,600 personnel on board, INS Vikramaditya is capable of operations up to a range of over 7,000 nautical miles or 13000 kms. To achieve speeds of up to 30 knots, she is powered by 08 new generation steam boilers generating a total output power of 180,000 SHP. These boilers power four enormous propellers; such a four propeller - four shaft configuration is another first in the Indian Navy.

An extensive revamp of sensors including fitment of Long range Air Surveillance Radars, Advanced Electronic Warfare Suite makes the ship capable of maintaining a surveillance bubble of over 500 kms around the ship. The ship has the ability to carry over 30 aircraft comprising an assortment of MiG 29K/Sea Harrier, Kamov 31, Kamov 28, Sea King, ALH-Dhruv and Chetak helicopters. The MiG 29K swing role fighter is the main offensive platform and provides a quantum jump for the Indian Navy's maritime strike capability.



These fourth generation air superiority fighters provide a significant fillip for the Indian Navy with a range of over 700 nm and an array of weapons including anti-ship missiles, Beyond Visual Range air-to-air missiles, guided bombs and rockets.

The heart of the operational network that infuses life into the combat systems onboard the ship is the Computer aided Action Information Organisation (CAIO) system, LESORUB-E, with the capability to gather data from ship's sensors and data links and to process, collate and assemble comprehensive tactical pictures. This state of the art system has been specifically designed keeping in mind the essential requirement on the carrier for fighter control and direction.

One of the most prominent equipment fitted on the super structure is the Resistor-E radar complex. Resistor-E is the automated system designed for providing air traffic control, approach/landing and short range navigation for ship borne aircraft. This complex along with its various sub-systems provides navigation and flight data to ship borne aircraft operating at extended ranges from the mother ship. The precision approach guidance system aids the fighters on approach to be directed down to a distance of 30 meters short of flight deck. INS Vikramaditya also boasts of a very modern communication complex, CCS MK II, to meet her external communication requirement. Installation of Link II tactical data system allows her to be fully integrated with the Indian Navy's network centric operations.

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**AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE
AMERICA'S DEADLIEST EXPORT: DEMOCRACY**

William Blum, *America's Deadliest Export: Democracy* (Zed Books 2013), 355pp.

Reviewed by Shean Ledwith

If you only read one book about global politics this year make it this one. William Blum has put together a coruscating set of essays that leaves the reader reeling with anger and indignation that the world's supreme military power has got away with - and continues to get away with - a blood-soaked litany of interventions, assassinations and manipulations since World War II that has left the rest of the world cowering in its shadow. As he states at the outset, 'the magnitude of US aggression puts it historically into a league all by itself' (p.3). If this one does not make you feel like burning the Stars and Stripes outside the US Embassy you need to check your pulse.

Blum has collated and documented a chilling array of global machinations that builds towards an unanswerable indictment of America's role in the world. Blum is a particularly authoritative guide to the subject as he spent some time in the heart of the beast. He is a former official at the State Department in Washington who resigned his post in 1967, in protest at US operations in Vietnam. Since then he has been an indefatigable critic of the direction and scope of American foreign policy, notably through his online newsletter, *The Anti-Empire Report*.

Blum achieved notoriety in the US in 2006 when Osama Bin Laden, no less, praised the perspicacity of one of his previous publications: 'And if Bush decides to carry on with his lies and oppression, then it would be useful for you to read the book *Rogue State*. Whatever his political shortcomings, this tells us that Bin Laden was at least a discerning judge of a good read. In this book, Blum talks about how this comment from Bin Laden only served to deepen the suspicion and prejudice of the mainstream US media towards his attempts to counter their blinkered world-view. Having been virtually ignored by them for years he suddenly found himself in the spotlight. However most of his interviewers were unable to comprehend the notion that Bin Laden's antagonism to the US might actually have had some rational basis. When this was expressed to Blum, his deadpan response was: 'Have you been in a coma the past twenty years?' (p.284).

His viewpoint is that such is that ideological iron grip the US ruling class has over its population that many of them might as well have been in a coma when it comes to political awareness. As he puts it, 'the American government has pulled off what must surely rank as one of the most outstanding feats of propaganda and indoctrination in all of history' (p.9). This feat consists of persuading the bulk of US public opinion that the country's role in the world is fundamentally benevolent. Blum's stance is that the opposite is the case. The best way, he argues, to comprehend Washington's actions on the global stage is with a terrifyingly simple premise: 'The secret to understanding US foreign policy is that there is no secret. Principally, one must come to the realization that the United States strives to dominate the world, for which it is prepared to use any means necessary' (p.1).

Blum underlines this stark statement of fact with a powerful itemisation of America's attempts since World War II to re-orientate the political trajectory of other countries on its own terms. This includes seeking to overthrow fifty elected governments; meddling with elections in thirty countries; attempting to assassinate fifty leaders; bombing civilians in thirty countries and (if that was not enough) seeking to thwart popular uprisings in twenty (p.1). This trail of Washington's nefarious activities refers back to the ironic title of the book. Democracy is the last thing the US is interested in exporting. Blum argues that the US can only be compared to the Roman Empire for the scale of the suffering it has

inflicted on the downtrodden of the world. He observes how an official in the Bush administration commented approvingly on Rome's attitude to those it had crushed: 'Let them hate so long as they fear' (p.2).

The fundamental question of 'Why do they hate us?' (p.25) that Blum's media interlocutors could not fathom is one he sets out to answer. The answer, he argues, falls into three parts. Firstly, the US categorises all those who oppose it as extremists, but most Americans do not stop to think how the behaviour of their government looks to the rest of the world: 'What makes a million young Americans willing to travel to places like Afghanistan and Iraq to risk life and limb to kill other young people who have never done them any harm and to commit unspeakable atrocities and tortures? Is this not extreme behaviour?' (p.28).

Secondly, the US diplomatic community likes to kid itself that antagonism from abroad is simply due to image problems that can be resolved by improved marketing. Blum scornfully describes how an inept State Department minion struggled to cope with harsh questioning about US policy at a press conference in Turkey: 'Right, Karen, it's all just PR, nothing of any substance to worry about your banality-filled little head about' (p.29).

The third factor is the fallacy that Washington's technological superiority over the rest of the world gives it the capacity to use that technology to fix any political problem. Blum notes that in 2005 the Pentagon awarded contracts worth \$300 million to IT companies with a remit to improve the international perception of the US, particularly in the Muslim world. Again, he is blisteringly dismissive of this pointless waste of money. The people of the Middle East 'have come to the bizarre conclusion that saturation bombing, invasion, occupation, destruction of homes, torture, depleted uranium, killing a hundred thousand, and daily humiliations of men, women and children do not indicate good intentions' (p.30).

Having identified the wrong-headed thinking that dwells at the core of the US state apparatus, he charts in a brilliantly incisive but often funny way how these misconceptions have generated an unparalleled level of destruction in the key political regions of the world. The most obvious recent example of that trend, of course, is the cataclysmic US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Blum lacerates the dishonest view that flat-earthers like Blair cling to that the war was still worth it because it toppled a dictator: 'if you went into surgery to correct a knee problem and the surgeon mistakenly amputated your entire leg, what would you think if someone then asked you: Are you glad you no longer have a knee problem? The people of Iraq no longer have a Saddam problem' (p.60).

The shattering human cost of the invasion is charted in unsparing detail by Blum. Particularly horrifying was America's deployment of uranium-depleted shells against the city of Fallujah in 2004. The consequences of this military technology affect not just this generation but future ones. The level of children born with heart defects after the attack was thirteen times above average. One baby was subsequently delivered with three heads, one with an eye in the middle of its forehead and one with a nose in the same place. Cases like this used to occur every couple of months in Fallujah, but by 2010 they were happening every day (p.55). Reading this sort of horrific detail cannot help but remind us of Rosa Luxemburg's comment about 'socialism or barbarism' as the choice facing humanity.

Blum also records a conversation between Bush and one of his commanders in Iraq about the same time as this war crime was being perpetrated. As the General reported a mounting level of resistance, Bush flew off the handle: 'Kick ass! If somebody tries to stop the march to democracy, we will seek them out and kill them!' (p.65).

Presumably, the unborn children of Fallujah were also blocking the march to democracy. The ongoing refusal of the US ruling class, including Obama, to accept responsibility for this catastrophic war, and its determination to keep its collective head firmly in the sand, is compared by Blum to a classic story of what Jewish people call chutzpah: 'It's the young man who kills his parents and then asks the judge for mercy on the grounds that he's an orphan' (p.70).

Also in the Middle East, Blum takes a chainsaw to US policy regarding Iran. He explains how former President Ahmadinejad was lambasted in the West for his supposed comment in 2005 about wanting 'to wipe Israel off the map'. An American professor of Farsi pointed out that the translation should more accurately have read 'the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time' (p.89). Needless to say the US media preferred to use the first version to the second, which has no overtones of compulsion. Blum describes how an internet search with the words 'Israel' and 'off the map' would receive the following message: 'This search has been interrupted because it will return 3000 results' (p.93).

Last year, even the Israelis accepted that their version of Ahmadinejad's speech was a distortion (p.94). Behind closed doors, the leadership of the Zionist state is happy to admit the Iranian nuclear threat is non-existent. Blum reports how at closed session of the Israeli cabinet in 2007, Foreign Minister Livni said as much, and went on to criticise her boss, Prime Minister Olmert, for 'the exaggerated use ... of the issue of the Iranian bomb, claiming he is attempting to rally the public around him by playing on its most basic fear' (p.96). Blum discusses how the perception of Iran in the Middle East is radically different from the one we are subjected to in the West. The 2010 Arab Public Opinion Poll asked respondents in six countries a question with these results: 'Name two countries that you think pose the biggest threat to you - Israel 88%, US 77%, Algeria 10%, Iran 10%, UK 8%, China 3%, Syria 1%' (p.101).

It would be interesting to get Cameron's response to the suggestion that the UK is seen by many Arabs as only marginally less of a threat than Iran. The results also indicate that many people in the region share Blum's view that the two most dangerous countries named here shared a common agenda of bellicosity and misinformation; hence his use of the term 'USrael' to describe the overlapping relationship between them (p.98).

Blum also applies his shibboleth-slaying style to US activities in Latin America. The author travelled to Allende's Chile in the early 1970s because he was attracted by the attempt to construct a social infrastructure outside the capitalist orbit of the US. The lethal sabotage of this experiment by the CIA is well known but Blum recounts the interesting view of a State Department official who tried to deny the idea that the US had helped toppled Allende: 'It would have been better had Allende served his entire term ... Only then would the full discrediting of socialism have taken place. Only then would people have gotten the message that socialism doesn't work' (p.214).

As Blum spells out, this senior figure, an Assistant Secretary of State, let slip the real agenda of American policy in its backyard: prevent the rise of any society that might serve as a successful example of an alternative to the capitalist model (p.214). Other attempts to construct an alternative to the Washington Consensus in the region, such as Cuba and Nicaragua, are also examined by Blum, alongside illuminating descriptions of American plots to undermine them. In the former, the US has repeatedly tried to concoct an anti-Castro movement out of the dregs of the reactionaries who fled the 1959 revolution. These have all failed miserably but that has not stopped a lot of innocent people dying on the way. In 1976, an anti-Castroite militant called Orlando Bosch masterminded a bomb plot that blew a Cuban airliner out of the sky, killing all 73 people on board including an entire youth fencing team. Where is this man now? Walking around freely in Florida. In fact, as

Blum recalls, 'In 1983 the City Commissioner declared a Dr Orlando Bosch Day' (p.52). Of course, Blum describes how cases such as this expose the hypocrisy and double standards of America's absurd War on Terror.

The book is jam-packed with countless other examples of US chicanery and double-dealing all over the globe, including Libya, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia. The cumulative effect could be to make the reader feel powerless in the face of the leviathan of US power and perhaps despairing of ever seeing it brought down. Yet, Blum is an optimist about America's future as he does not lose sight of the fact that within the US itself there have always been voices of dissent that refuse to be cowed by its military machine. This includes recent upsurges of resistance such as the 2011 Occupy movement, to which he pays generous tribute. An optimistic perspective should be strengthened by the recent defeat of the UK government's attempt to join a US attack on Syria. This underlines the point that concerted mass opposition to war and imperialism does make a difference. The last page also includes an invigorating number of reflections from other great American radicals such as Chomsky and Zinn on the necessity never to give up the struggle, even when it seems futile. One of these is from IF Stone and is a salutary message for all activists engaged in campaigns that seem hopeless, not just those taking on the American Empire: 'The only kinds of fights worth fighting are those you are going to lose because somebody has to fight them and lose and lose and lose until someday, somebody who believes as you do wins. In order for somebody to win an important, major fight 100 years hence, a lot of other people have got to be willing ... to go right ahead and fight, knowing you are going to lose' (p.338).

See more at: <http://www.counterfire.org/index.php/articles/book-reviews/16628-americas-deadliest-export-democracy#sthash.5MKNs6IW.dpuf>

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**INTERVIEW WITH ADMIRAL SIR TREVOR SOAR,
ROYAL NAVY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FLEET**

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, *FDI Senior Analyst, January 2012*

Key Points

- 50 per cent of deployed Royal Navy manpower and assets are situated in the Indian Ocean Region.
- 25 per cent of the total British force deployed in Afghanistan comes from the Royal Navy.
- Due to budget constraints, the Royal Navy is increasingly seeking to work with alliances and partner nations.

Summary

Under pressure from unprecedented defence budget cutbacks and perennial operational deployments, the Royal Navy today is confronted by escalating demands on its limited resources. In this context, **Admiral Sir Trevor Soar**, the Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief Fleet, spoke with **Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe**, and addressed matters such as the changes in the Royal Navy over the last decade, its contribution to the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, the importance of the Indian Ocean as a theatre of operations, the implications of defence budget reductions and the growing importance of coalition interoperability.

Analysis**Future Directions International**

Q: Tell us about the main changes that have taken place in the Royal Navy over the last ten years?

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar: A decade ago I was the director of the Naval Staff with responsibilities for the Royal Navy's strategic plan, the 'Future Navy Vision'. This concept effectively set the tone for the future shape of the Navy. Similarly, we had a concept called 'Swing', which emphasised the need for the Navy to be adaptable, flexible and to cover a whole range of tasks. It was not just the high-end war fighting, but the Navy's contribution to every task that defence may need, including disaster relief. Over the last ten years we have had to respond to increased terrorism, conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean tsunami, crises in Lebanon and Libya and, of course, piracy off the Horn of Africa. Our original view of how the Navy should adapt has fitted in well with the changing operational context.

Future Directions International

Q: How significant has the Navy's contribution been to the twin theatres of Iraq and Afghanistan?

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar: In Iraq the Royal Navy were the first people in and the last out. The Iraq training mission was run by the Royal Navy and was completed in May 2011. In Afghanistan, often people do not realise that the Royal Navy make a significant contribution. At one stage of the campaign up to 40 per cent of the UK military in Afghanistan were from the Navy.

Presently, there are over 2,000 Navy personnel deployed, which is the equivalent to about 13 warship crews, which is about 25 per cent of the total British force deployed in Afghanistan. The Royal Navy is running the joint-force support headquarters and the joint-force medical headquarters. The Navy's presence there is also significant in more routine matters with the provision of helicopter squadrons, truck drivers and general support. Similarly, the contribution of the Royal Marines in Afghanistan has been fundamental. For example, when I was in Afghanistan over a year ago, it was hard fighting at the time and the focus was on providing security. A few weeks ago, I returned to Afghanistan to see the difference being made by our Royal Marines, for the first time I was being briefed by the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police. We are now moving forward to enable them to provide the governance and security to their own country. There is a significant improvement.

Future Directions International

Q: Tell us about the Royal Navy's intervention in Libya's Civil War?

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar: There were a series of lessons from Libya. The concept of a Response Force Task Group provided us with choice. In fast changing and dynamic scenarios it also showed the value of interoperability. Libya showed the importance of working not just with NATO alliance nations, but with other partner nations as well.

For Libya, the Royal Navy mustered a Response Force Task Group, which in simple terms was an outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, namely a high readiness group capable of operating either as a task group or a single unit to carry out a variety of tasks. This group, which this year was called 'Cougar' was made up of an assortment of warships, submarines and amphibious ships and aircraft. Prior to Libya, Cougar was set up to operate in the Mediterranean Sea and then to proceed into the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to work with various partner-nations and deliver a contingency for defence.

When the situation in Libya arose, we adapted the Cougar group and prepared it whilst it was in the Mediterranean for contingency operations off Libya. We split the group into two; one half continued into the Middle East to conduct assurance and training; and the other half was available off Libya. Their activities ranged from seaborne maritime strike using attack helicopters, naval gunfire support from HM Ships Liverpool, Iron Duke and Sutherland, submarine launch cruise missiles from HMS Triumph, maritime embargo operations, evacuation operations from Benghazi and mine clearance operations. It was really a testament to the quality of the concept, which through the task group was able to prove its operational capability in real-world scenarios.

Future Directions International

Q: Why does the Indian Ocean remain so important to the Royal Navy?

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar: The Indian Ocean is fundamental to UK interests. For instance, Britain purchases 60 per cent of its liquid natural gas from Qatar. Furthermore, the choke points in that region such as the Straits of Hormuz and Suez Canal are all vital to Britain's energy supplies. In addition, there are over 200,000 British citizens throughout the Indian Ocean Region.

British interests in the Indian Ocean are significant, that is why the Royal Navy has operated in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean for well over 30 years. We work with partner nations in the region and provide a level of assurance and security. We operate our headquarters from either Northwood in England or Bahrain and where we run counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa through NATO, the EU and coalition maritime forces.

It should not come as any surprise that at any one time, out of the 25 per cent of the Royal Navy that is deployed, probably over 50 per cent of the Navy's manpower and assets are located in the Indian Ocean. In the Persian Gulf we maintain four mine hunters, an LSDA, a tanker and at least two warships continuously, as well as an SSN. That is quite a high percentage of units that are deployed in that region permanently.

Future Directions International

Q: What are the implications of the Royal Navy's budget reductions?

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar: Despite the sort of immediate and headlined reductions, there is a future for the Navy capable of meeting the Future Navy Vision. In the short term we have had a reduction in the size of the Royal Navy. In the long term, however, we have still assured what the Navy is actually going to be in 2020. The Navy has to play its part in the fiscal reductions that the government has chosen to make. It has been challenging, but it has made us work smarter. In the distant future, I can look forward to a capital investment program of new ships, submarines, aircraft carriers, and a successor to Trident.

Future Directions International

Q: Given the major reductions in defence budgets throughout the Western world will interoperability become increasingly important for the Royal Navy?

Admiral Sir Trevor Soar: Interoperability is increasingly very important as every Western nation has undergone some level of fiscal reduction. An important part of the Royal Navy is its ability to work with alliances and partner nations. The only way we can do that is to exercise with them, to have presence in those regions and to give confidence that we are there to work with them. It is about having that ability to work with alliances and partner nations. The more that we can work together, the better we can deliver co-operation, alliances and partnerships as we move in to the future. What we are talking about now is really the ability to work together to deliver a maritime or defence effect in whatever region of the world.

- See more at: <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publications/fdi-feature-interviews/364-the-indian-ocean-is-fundamental-to-uk-interests-admiral-sir-trevor-soar.html#sthash.DxHcyRpe>

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BOOK REVIEW – THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY FROM WHITLAM TO HOWARD**The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard by Dr John Blaxland**

Cambridge University Press, 2013; 434 pp.; ISBN 9781107043657 (hardback); RRP \$59.95

Reviewed by Marcus Feilding

The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard is the first critical examination of Australia's post-Vietnam War military operations, spanning the 35 years between the election of Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister in 1972 and the defeat of the Howard Government in 2007.

As David Horner, Australia's pre-eminent military historian writes in the foreword "the task of integrating new military operations into the broader narrative of Australia's military history was made difficult because they did not fit the mould of earlier operations." To his great credit, Blaxland has done a tremendous job in collating and documenting what the Army was doing.

John Blaxland is a Senior Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. Prior to this he spent 28 years in the Australian Army including appointments as Defence Attaché to Thailand and Burma and Chief Staff Officer for Joint Intelligence at Headquarters Joint Operations Command. His previous publications include: *Strategic Cousins* (2006), *Revisiting Counterinsurgency* (2006), *Information-era Manoeuvre* (2002), *Signals, Swift and Sure* (1999) and *Organising an Army* (1989). He currently writes about Asia-Pacific military, intelligence and security affairs, and is very well qualified to write this book.

In addition to being a historical record, Blaxland contends that the Army has adapted and been successful over this period, and puts forward five reasons why; including individual and collective training, regimental or corps identifies, ties with close allies and regional partners, as well as links with society. These themes are teased out regularly throughout the book to demonstrate prowess but equally Blaxland identifies several issues that could have been perhaps better dealt.

He shows how the Army grew in capability and confidence to play leading roles in East Timor, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, and to contribute to combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Blaxland usefully addresses the international, national and tactical levels of activity in his account. He has organised the book into four parts covering from Vietnam to the eve of the East Timor intervention (1972-1999); land force operations in East Timor and Solomon Islands; the Middle East area of operations; and Asia-Pacific engagement and adaptation at home.

At a time when the Australian Army's decade of continuous operations is drawing to an end, and as the 'Asian Century' gathers pace, the Army's strategic role is once again the subject of some debate. Many foresee some parallels from the era following the end of the Vietnam War – reduced budgets and a greater political reluctance to deploy forces overseas. But at the same time, there is significant capital investment being made into air and naval platforms including the two Landing Helicopter Docks. The role of the Army in a 'maritime strategy' is a topic currently engaging the minds of Army's highest echelons.

My sense is that Australia has an enduring interest and will continue to support a rules based global order and will contribute to a range of endeavours that seek to realise a more just

and peaceful world. The broad range of military operations and activities conducted between 1972 and 2007 demonstrate this.

The book includes a large number of photographs, a comprehensive list of abbreviations, several clear maps and an appendix listing the operations undertaken in the period, as well as the meticulous notes and references that you would expect from a seasoned writer.

Horner assesses that “until the official histories appear, Blaxland’s book is likely to remain the most thorough, all-embracing account of the Army’s recent activities.” And the official history of the Australian Defence Force’s activities from the East Timor intervention in 1999 has not yet been commissioned. In years to come Blaxland would be well qualified and positioned to lead this effort.

The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the evolution of Australia’s military land forces since 1972.

Colonel Marcus Fielding recently retired from full-time service with the Australian Army and is currently the President of Military History and Heritage Victoria.

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