

Rethinking the defence of Australia

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‘...the bottom line is that we do not need a new defence policy. Unless, of course, some erudite so-called defence expert can come up with a new set of force structure priorities that are financially responsible and bear more than a passing relevance to our unique strategic circumstances.’

– Paul Dobb, 30 October 2001 (1)

‘It probably never made sense to conceptualise our security interests as a series of diminishing concentric circles around our coastline, but it certainly does not do so now.’

– Robert Hill, June 2002 (2)

‘Our current strategy has four major deficiencies. It is based on a misplaced geographical determinism that ignores the diverse and globalised nature of modern conflict; it has shaped the ADF for the wrong wars; it gives insufficient weight to the transnational threats which confront us; and it fails to recognize that modern defence forces must win the peace as well as the war.’

– Alan Dupont, April 2003 (3)

For seven years the Howard Government has sought to reframe and reform the way defence policy is made and implemented. It has faced entrenched resistance from a set of boffins and bureaucrats wedded to the old defence policy. Chief among these are Paul Dobb and his protégé Hugh White. They have fought a tenacious rearguard action against successive Defence Ministers, Ian McLachlan, John Moore, Peter Reith and now Robert Hill. But they are losing the fight. It’s important to understand why this is so and what the implications are.

The old defence policy emerged in stages after the Vietnam War. Its most basic premise was that the forward defence posture that had led to engagement in Vietnam should be abandoned in favour of defence in depth of Australia and its surrounding oceans.⁽⁴⁾ A decade after the Vietnam War, Paul Dobb, then a senior intelligence analyst with the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO), was asked by the Hawke Government to formalise this policy. The review he

undertook, in 1986–87, has been the basis for defence policy ever since.⁽⁵⁾

The 1987 White Paper, ‘The Defence of Australia’, gave priority to air and naval forces for the defence of what Dobb described as the ‘sea–air gap’ to the north of Australia against a substantial conventional assault. The assault would come from a power in, or lodging itself in, the archipelagic screen extending from Aceh to the Solomons.⁽⁶⁾ The forces that would repel such an assault would be surveillance, aerial combat and strike aircraft and naval vessels at the cutting edge of defence technology. Should any of the assault force make it to the Australian littoral, a mobile land force would deal with them.

Beyond such defence of the continent in extremis, the White Paper, commonly known as the Dobb Report, postulated that Australian forces would make a significant contribution to regional allies under duress. They would also be equipped at need to respond to low intensity crises within the island archipelago to the north, should the need

arise.⁽⁷⁾ A long-range capital equipment acquisition program was envisaged and an annual defence budget set at a firm 2.8 per cent of GDP.

This grand design appealed to many people, from those reluctant to involve Australia in further foreign wars to those likely to profit from producing the massively expensive weapons systems it called for. It suffered, however, from three fundamental flaws, which became more and more evident over the first decade of its existence and have now reached the breaking point.

First, defence expenditure was not pegged at 2.8 per cent of GDP, but declined steadily to less than 1.8 per cent of GDP, radically undermining the capital equipment program the policy called for. It has now inched up to about 1.9 per cent, with recent increments. The cumulative shortfall in funding over the period 1988 to 2000 has been estimated at well over \$100 billion in 2000 dollars.⁽⁸⁾

Second, the contingency placed front and centre in the Dobb Report—having to engage in a serious battle against an assault on Australia itself coming from the archipelagic screen to the north—was always vanishingly remote and has become more so, not less, with the passing of the intervening years. The consequence has been the accumulation of a defence force not adequately equipped for the war it is designed to fight and barely equipped at all for the contingencies it has actually faced.⁽⁹⁾

Third, the combination of a preoccupation with a purely notional need for continental defence in the ‘sea-air gap’ with chronic failure to deliver the capital expenditure needed to fund such a capability created a higher defence organisation that was at once ponderous and demoralised.⁽¹⁰⁾ All of this was evident by the time the Howard Government took office in 1996. It was compounded by a realisation that many of the major weapons platforms acquired or maintained under the existing policy were approaching the end of their life cycles.⁽¹¹⁾ They would need replacing in the first decade of the new century, or soon thereafter—if the old policy was to be continued. There was, in short, a rising problem of block obsolescence in the Dobb arsenal. Overcoming it would cost an estimated \$80 billion to \$110 billion over the period 2000–2020.

What was to be done? The Howard Government acknowledged the complexity of the problem and asked the boffins and bureaucrats to rethink things and come up with policy and force structure options. Dissatisfied with the initial offerings, in 1998 it signalled a desire to shake up fixed assumptions by announcing that it would create and fund an independent institute for strategic policy.

This idea triggered furious bureaucratic politicking, as those whom Chief of Army Lt-Gen Peter Leahy dubbed

‘the gatekeepers of strategic doctrine’ fought to keep control of the agenda. In consequence, two things occurred that reflected political compromise, but policy ineffectiveness. First, a new White Paper, intended to be a fundamental review of the basic premises of defence policy was drafted by those (Dobb and White) whose assumptions it was intended to challenge.⁽¹²⁾

Second, White was appointed to head the new ‘independent’ Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), immediately after completing the 2000 White Paper.⁽¹³⁾ Meanwhile, Dobb had moved across to the ANU to head the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre. While keeping top secret security clearances and an office on Russell Hill, he both undertook many private consultancies and strenuously defended the axioms of his policy against all comers. There were surely conflicts of interest entailed in doing all these things simultaneously.

The Howard Cabinet has persevered, nonetheless, with its defence agenda. It had to improvise to be able to carry out both the INTERFET operation in East Timor (1999) and the contribution to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein (2003). At the same time, it has been moving step by step to bring about a culture change in the defence policy and force structure planning environment.

Three moves stand out in this regard. First, it has lent support to the ANU’s revitalisation of graduate programs designed to educate a whole new cadre of strategic policy and intelligence thinkers. The appointment of Ross Babbage to replace Paul Dobb as head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre has breathed new life into a moribund program. The appointment of Bill Maley to head the proposed new College of Diplomacy, despite his trenchant criticism of the Government’s handling of East Timor in 1999, is similarly promising. Both steps are long-term measures, not quick fixes.

Second, the appointment of senior diplomat Ric Smith as Secretary of Defence is a sign of the priority the Government places on overhauling the defence portfolio. Former ambassador to both Jakarta and Beijing, Smith was also, briefly, Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence, in 1995, before being posted to Beijing. He knows the region and the threat environment as well as anyone in the civilian service.

Third, ASPI itself is carefully being reconsidered, with the appointment of three new members to its advisory board: Paul McClintock, former head of the Cabinet office and overseer of long-term policy guidance; Jim Wallace, a recently retired Commander Special Forces; and the SDSC’s Alan Dupont. Given the public clashes between Dobb on the one hand, and Wallace and Dupont on the other, this is a clear signal that the thinking of the institute is going to be edged in the Government’s preferred direction.

In addition, the Menzies Research Centre, a Liberal Party think-tank, has been holding a series of seminars

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on strategic policy and global developments, which have been well attended by senior figures in the defence and intelligence establishment. It is of considerable significance that the first seminar in the series, in late 2002, featured Alan Dupont, who had already emerged as the most insistent public critic of the Dobb doctrinal line.

All these developments indicate that the Dobb era is at an end. Yet it is worth looking more closely at the underlying arguments, before concluding that the Dobb era should end. After all, the twentieth century is littered with cases of defence intellectuals discarded or disregarded by their governments who turned out to have been right in their analyses or prognoses.

Dobb and White are both charming and highly intelligent individuals, with long-developed views on Australian security. Those views should not be lightly discarded. We need to get their arguments clear, not just the policy and political trends that are overtaking them. Fortunately, we can do so, because their views are a matter of public record, not something classified and, therefore, inaccessible.

The first line of defence for the Dobb doctrine, one might have thought, would be to claim that the chronic underfunding of defence had undermined a perfectly sound doctrine; and that the answer is to make up the shortfall, by increasing defence expenditure to at least 2.8 per cent of GDP, or by around \$7 to 8 billion a year.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this has not been the line Dobb or White has chosen. It would simply not be politically realistic to advance such an argument at this point; least of all for them.⁽¹⁴⁾ They insist that with only a little topping up, the existing policy is perfectly viable. Australia can, as White expressed it on television some months ago, both walk (stick to the existing policy) and chew gum (engage in low intensity or coalition operations around the world on an ad-hoc basis) at the same time.

The first line of defence chosen by them has actually been to assert that their critics are feckless and irresponsible dilettantes who would put the country at risk of invasion by giving us a force structure unsuited to continental defence.⁽¹⁵⁾ In a public blast at his critics, in late 2001, Dobb wrote: 'As the defence White Paper that was issued in December last year says: preventing or defeating any armed attack on Australia "is the bedrock of our security and the most fundamental responsibility of government"'.⁽¹⁶⁾

Now, of course, since he and White were its real authors, quoting the 2000 White Paper as an authority is rather like saying, 'As I and those who agree with me wrote last year...'. Nonetheless, the words in the White Paper are, in themselves, unobjectionable. Who would disagree that preventing or defeating an attack on Australia is, in some sense or other, the bedrock of our security?

The real questions are, what attacks are we in danger of and what means available to us would best enable us to prevent or defeat such attacks? Dobb is rather vague on these questions. Australia, he wrote, 'is not New

Zealand or Canada. We face an arc of instability to our north, a weakened South East Asia and an uncertain balance of power with the rise of China. Indonesia ... has an unpredictable future'.

He acknowledged that we 'enjoy security from conventional threats', but added 'that is at least in part because the ADF has the demonstrable capability to deal with credible threats that could arise at short notice'.⁽¹⁷⁾ What he did not do, though, is specify what 'credible threats' he had in mind, or what he meant by 'at short notice'. Nor, indeed, did he specify what the 'demonstrable capability' of the ADF actually is in regard to such putative threats. How, then, is one to grapple with his argument?

We may reasonably assume that he does not anticipate an assault on continental Australia by a power in or lodging itself in the archipelagic screen to our north, to use the time-honoured language of the Dobb Report. Such a power would be either Indonesia—the only substantial state in the archipelago—or China. But Indonesia is demonstrably incapable of such an assault and could not mount one 'at short notice'. And for China to lodge itself in the archipelago would require a geo-political upheaval that cannot occur 'at short notice'. So what does he have in mind?

It simply is not clear. Consider his observation about the 'arc of instability to our north'. Troubles in Aceh and West Papua, insolvency in East Timor, political decay in Papua New Guinea, strife in Bougainville and the Solomons, uncertainties about the political stability of Fiji and, most importantly, political rumblings at the very heart of Indonesia certainly constitute an arc of instability. But how does this translate into threats to Australia that the ADF, under the Dobb doctrine, has the 'demonstrable capability' to 'deal with ... at short notice'?

Even in a sustained defence of his doctrine delivered within the precincts of Parliament House, in October 2002, Dobb failed to address these very basic questions. Yet he had had at least two years by then, since the INTERFET insertion into East Timor, to reflect on them. That operation had shown starkly, to those paying close attention, just what could be required at short notice in the arc of instability and how far the ADF was from having the 'demonstrable capability' to handle it.

Yet, in that 2002 address, Dobb blurred the substantive point at issue, by alleging that he is a 'regionalist' opposed to those he dubbed 'the expeditionary school' who seek to develop 'long-distance power projection capabilities or expeditionary forces capable of taking on a major enemy'.⁽¹⁸⁾ But this is not what his critics actually call for. Rather, as I read them, they propose the development of amphibious, logistical and special forces capabilities for engaging in the actual (as distinct from the purely notional) regional challenges we face (such as in East Timor); and for participating in coalition operations against major enemies (such as in Iraq, Korea or the Taiwan Strait).⁽¹⁹⁾

Dobb has weakened his own case by his dogged refusal

to acknowledge the merits of his opponents' arguments, as well as by his tendency to conflate the problems posed by the arc of instability with those that would be posed by a major military assault on continental Australia by Indonesia or China. Ultimately, his case would seem to rely on two questionable propositions. First, that Australia will be at greater risk of major assault by Indonesia or China if it abandons his force structure priorities. Second, that what is really needed at present can be supplied without fundamentally changing those priorities.

The first of these claims is spurious. Ordinary Australians, ignorant of military realities, may feel reassured by the thought that we have the latest combat and strike aircraft and naval surface combatants to fend off an imagined Indonesian or Chinese threat to our sovereignty. Those who are better informed know that the problems we face in regard to Indonesia are not such as to require those capabilities; nor are they in prospect of becoming so.⁽²⁰⁾

As for China, it is many years away from having anything resembling the capability to threaten Australia in such a fashion. If it acquired such a capability, only American power could constrain it, not anything even envisaged in the Dobb doctrine. Moreover, there is a case to be made (which he nowhere so much as entertains) that by changing our force structure now—at the obsolescence cross-over point—we would position ourselves better to face serious challenges ten to fifteen years down the track.

To address this proposition, though, it is necessary first to consider Dobb's second claim: that what is really needed at present can be supplied without fundamentally changing current force structure priorities. In the final part of his October 2002 address, 'Force Structure and Budget Implications', Dobb spoke of strengthening the Army, adding new capabilities of various kinds, buttressing homeland security and enhancing intelligence collection and analysis, without interfering with current force structure commitments.

To do all this, he stated, would require an extra \$1 billion per year in the defence budget. This is, he declared, 'hardly the time for the Australian government to pretend that it can do defence on the cheap'.⁽²¹⁾ But he does not, in this calculation, allow that far more than an extra \$1 billion will be required to replace the platforms crucial to his doctrine. Much less does he give any credence to the idea that these platforms might actually be uneconomical and unnecessary. He simply engages in rhetorical flourishes about regional instability and public fears.

Suppose, however, that one was to call his bluff? Suppose we were to contemplate doing what he plainly regards as unthinkable—come up with a 'new set of force structure priorities that are financially responsible and bear more than a passing relevance to our unique strategic circumstances'? What might be entailed? Three things, to begin with: a willingness to accept that capital equipment programs can be cancelled; preparedness to shape our force structure according to our strategic

commitments, not the other way around; and the nerve to leapfrog the block obsolescence problem by embracing a paradigm shift.

A key decision that would indicate all three of these undertakings would be cancellation of the Joint Strike Fighter acquisition, or at least a more cautious decision to buy only 50 or 60 rather than 100 of the new aircraft. Seen as a replacement for the F-A18 Hornets, which they cannot properly replace anyway, one hundred of the JSFs would cost in the vicinity of \$16 billion. They are only being bought because the F-22, the more logical replacement for the Hornets, is too expensive; but more fundamentally because of the untested assumption that the force structure must be maintained as it is.

Yet there is no compelling logic for spending all this money. By common concurrence, the JSFs will be the last manned fighters developed in the West and by the time we have them in commission they would be effectively out of date, as well as inordinately expensive. If, instead, we scrapped or at least curtailed the program, put \$2 billion into research and development on unmanned combat aircraft⁽²²⁾ and leapfrogged the last manned platforms, we would free up a significant proportion of the defence budget for re-equipping the ADF in several ways consistent with 'our unique strategic circumstances'. Other such measures are just as conceivable.

Such an approach would enable Australia to reposition itself rapidly for the world of asymmetric warfare that it faces, especially in the arc of instability, without requiring massive increases in defence expenditure—simply a bold, but prudent reallocation of defence resources from the prodigal and misconceived to the vital and forward-looking.

This, unless I am very much mistaken, is the sort of thing the Howard Government has wanted to see thought through. The time for doing so is now, but neither Dobb nor White is the man for the job, because they are too wedded to the existing set of priorities and assumptions, as they have shown over a period of years. They are being moved aside not, as they claim, because of thoughtless meddling with strategic realities by others, but because they have shown an abiding unwillingness to rethink fundamental assumptions. ♦

Footnotes

(1) Paul Dobb, 'Tinker With Defence Policy and Risk Attack', *The Australian*, 30 October 2001, p. 13.

(2) Senator Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, 'Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence', Address to the Australian Defence College, Canberra, 18 June 2002. Hill's remark was a transparent allusion to the map featured in the 1987 Dobb Report, depicting a series of concentric circles radiating outwards from Australia, indicating the radii of potential threats to the continental heartland.

(3) Alan Dupont, 'Modern Wars Can't Be Based On Obsolete Battle Plans', *The Australian*, 14 November 2002, p. 11.

(4) The Dobb review of Australia's defence policy was commissioned by then Labor Minister for Defence Kim Beazley, in 1985. It emerged initially as 'Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities', Australian Government

Printing Office, Canberra, March 1986. It attracted considerable critical response, but nevertheless formed the clear basis for the 1987 Defence White Paper, 'The Defence of Australia', AGPS, Canberra, 1987. For the fully developed articulation of his views, see 'The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Force Planning and Force Structure Development', Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 88, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1992.

(5) Dibb had been a senior analyst within the Joint Intelligence Organisation for more than a decade when Beazley asked him to do the review in 1985. After completing it, he became Director of JIO and then Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence, before moving across to the Australian National University to head the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre.

(6) The historical memories behind this broad scenario were, of course, the Japanese blitzkrieg of 1942 and the tensions with Sukarno's Indonesia between 1958 and 1965. That Dibb did not, in the mid to late 1980s, seriously consider China to be a security threat to Australia may be gauged by the fact that, under his direction and continuing subsequently, when, as Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence, he had oversight of intelligence priorities, JIO/DIO's and DSD's coverage of China fell away drastically. In 1987, there were something like twenty China analysts in JIO and considerably more than that in DSD. By early 1994, by which time JIO had been renamed DIO (the Defence Intelligence Organisation), the number of China analysts had shrunk to zero. When I took over the job of senior China analyst, in April of that year, the position had been vacant for six months. Yet as staff numbers shrank steadily, so far as I was able to establish, no review was undertaken of collection or analysis requirements. Notionally, JIO/DIO continued to comprehensively monitor China's internal affairs, economy, military capabilities, diplomatic and security relations. In reality, less and less was being done. Before I departed DIO, in late 1995, I had been given three analysts to assist me in analyzing China.

(7) Dibb was at pains to underscore this in his 23 October 2002 address at Parliament House to the National Institute for Asia and the Pacific. 'In the infamous 1986 Dibb Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities we defined an area of primary strategic interest that embraced the whole of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, or some 25 per cent of the globe. We never thought that Australia's defence began and ended at its coastline. To quote the 1987 Defence White Paper, 'This paper has stressed that the priority need for the Defence Force is to fulfil the national task of defending the nation. It has also dealt with the need for Australia's defence effort to take account of developments in our region of primary strategic interest, and to be capable of reacting positively to calls for military support elsewhere, should we judge that our interest require it. The Government considers that Australia can deal with both, but to do so we must be alert to priorities.' 'Does Asia Matter To Australia's Defence Policy?', NIAP Lecture Series, Australian National University, 1 November 2002, p. 4.

(8) As was pointed out by the Australian Defence Association, in a detailed response to the 2000 Defence White Paper, '2.8 per cent of GDP, the 1987 benchmark, stands today at around \$18.5 billion. The shortfall over the past thirteen years compared with the 1987 White Paper is \$102 billion in today's dollars. The shortfall is more accurately measured by personnel shortages (28 per cent cut in regulars over the past decade and hollow units), equipment cuts and obsolescence (40 year old APCs, helicopters, Caribous etc), training and maintenance cuts'.

(9) The fundamental problem for the Dibb doctrine has always been the implausibility of its basic national security scenario. As the ADA paper just cited remarked, the 2000 White Paper advances 'the fundamental nonsense that direct attack on Australia at one of three different levels of intensity is our most serious problem, but then goes on to assert that such a threat is unlikely in any significant sense. Of course it is. The difficulties for any adversary who does not use long range missile attack on Australia are virtually insurmountable unless he first acquires substantial base facilities in our inner region extending from Indonesia to New Zealand'.

(10) This was the most trenchant criticism leveled at the 2000 White Paper by the ADA: 'Most disappointingly, the White Paper makes no commitment to serious reform of the management and command system. This bloated, erratic, disorganized and expensive structure is designed to manage Australia's involvement in a Third World War, which we are told and we know, is not going to happen. In ADA's view, serious reform of the higher defence organization is the most urgent issue in defence. It has been ignored in this statement of government policy'. (emphasis added).

(11) Between now and 2015, the F/A-18 Hornet fighters, the F-111 strategic strike aircraft, the P3C long-range maritime patrol aircraft, the C-130 transport aircraft, the guided missile frigates and amphibious support ships are all scheduled to come to the end of their natural working lives.

(12) Despite moving across to the ANU, Dibb retained his high-level security clearances and was also awarded significant private consultancy work by the Department of Defence. White subsequently rose to the position of Deputy Secretary (Strategy and Intelligence) and has worked closely with Dibb in seeking to control the strategic policy agenda.

(13) In January 1999, I pointed out that the proposal to create an independent strategic policy institute was being resisted by 'bureaucratic interest groups in the Russell Hill Defence complex'. The idea of creating something which would breathe new life into strategic policy and force structure thinking was a good one, I argued, but 'there are ominous signs that, instead, the institute will be created as an arm of the Department of Defence, directly controlled by the Deputy Secretary for Strategy and Intelligence. Should this happen, the whole exercise will very likely prove self-defeating. Watching it happen would be very like watching an episode of Yes, Minister—one called, say, The New Strategic Policy Institute'. 'Time To Bring Spy Agencies Out of the Cold', Canberra Times, 29

January 1999. In due course, Hugh White was given the job and the budget was provided out of Defence coffers. The results have been pretty much what one might have expected under those conditions.

In the January 1999 article, I outlined criteria by which an independent institute would need to work if it was to make a genuine difference to strategic policy thinking:

'Intelligence agencies exist to inform policy-makers of things they would otherwise not be aware of which could have significant implications in their domains of responsibility. Strategic thinking is about imagining how things could change or be changed in ways which would have non-trivial consequences for your goals and interests. Well, the creation of a new institute is meant to address the failure of the existing intelligence agencies to keep the government aware of, or to prompt strategic thinking about, the changes which have been transforming international affairs over the past decade. As the former head of the East German foreign intelligence service, Markus Wolf, has written, the quality of a country's intelligence is generally in inverse proportion to the number of bureaucrats who process it; and the strategic thinking of a government is dependent on its decision-makers being willing to listen to advice that conflicts with their preconceived views.

By its very nature, a normal intelligence agency for these very reasons produces indifferent intelligence and makes little useful contribution to strategic thinking. Ours are no exception. Nor will they become exceptions, being what they are. That's why a truly independent institute for strategic policy could make a difference. The question is how to create one.

There are several quite simple criteria to use in imagining such an institute. First, it must be able to work directly with those who make policy, not through layers of bureaucrats. Second, it must be a globally networked organisation, engaged in conversation with the best centres of thinking world-wide. Third, it should have a charter to work as a consultancy in strategic thinking for clients other than the Federal Government, in order to underwrite its independence and to test its analyses more widely in the marketplace.

For all these reasons, it should be located outside Canberra and be granted its own management and advisory boards. Could all this be done? Quite certainly. But it will require that the Department of Defence bite the bullet and allow critical thinking to take precedence over secrecy and bureaucratic politics'.

(14) *At a time when there are major budgetary struggles over funding of every significant portfolio, even an extra half billion dollars a year for Defence is difficult to gain. This would be far more serious, if the case for maintaining, not to mention enhancing, the Dobb arsenal was robust.*

(15) *In November 2002, for example, Dobb ridiculed what he called 'a phony defence debate' being whipped up by 'my Australian National University colleague, Alan Dupont, a former captain in the army'. He attributed Dupont's views to 'his failure to understand practical defence policy' and his 'fundamental misapprehension of the processes of government'. 'Defence Policy is on the*

Money', The Australian, 13 November 2002, p. 13. In a televised debate with Jim Wallace, he remarked tartly that he was not in the habit of consulting 'retired brigadiers' about strategic policy. ABC TV Lateline, 11 July 2002. He concluded one article with the dismissive remark: 'Short attention span proposals that simply react to the latest media fad or academic fashion are simply not good enough'. 'Tinker With Defence Policy and Risk Attack', The Australian, 30 October 2001, p. 13.

(16) Dobb 'Tinker With Defence Policy and Risk Attack', loc. cit.

(17) Ibid.

(18) *'Some believe that we have entered a completely new strategic era and that we should do away with the defence policies of previous governments, going back to the 1976 White Paper, and indeed that we should scrap the Howard Government's own 2000 White Paper, which gave priority to the defence of Australia and to our regional security interests. This school of thought, which I shall call the expeditionary school, believes that Australia faces no threat for at least the next 10 or 15 years and that there are no foreseeable regional contingencies where the use of military force will challenge us'. [Emphasis added.] The last clause here is a complete misrepresentation of his critics' views, as Dobb had to know when he uttered it. For a serious reflection on Australia's policy challenges in the South Pacific, see Graeme Dobell 'The South Pacific: Policy Taboos, Popular Amnesia and Political Failure', The Menzies Research Centre, Australian Security in the 21st Century Seminar Series, Parliament House, Canberra, 12 February 2003.*

(19) *The key document is Alan Dupont's 'Transformation or Stagnation? Rethinking Australia's Defence', Australian Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 57, No. 1, April 2003. '...the maritime strategy that underpins DOA (the Dobb doctrine) is a maritime strategy in name only. A true maritime strategy, based on the use of substantial naval power to control major sea-lines of communication, or to contain major continental powers, is well beyond Australia's capability. However, the real problem with the maritime strategy is that the so-called sea-air gap is not a gap at all. It is an archipelago occupied by numerous islands of varying size, importance and population where any conceivable military operation would require the effective use of land forces including the means to transport and sustain them. For traditionalists, who pride themselves on understanding the importance of geography, the failure to recognise the archipelagic nature of the northern approaches to Australia is an inexcusable misappreciation'. [Emphasis added.]*

(20) Bob Lowry, 'The Armed Forces of Indonesia', Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1996, esp. pp. 85-115.

(21) NIAP paper, 1 November 2002, p. 15.

(22) *The eminent science journal, 'Nature', in its latest issue, has reported that research is already being jointly conducted by the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency, the US Air Force and Boeing into something called the X-45C Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle Demonstrator System. The Australian, 5 June 2003, p. 3.*