

strong with modern equipment. A proportionate Australian contribution would have been 15,000 not 2,000. One of the reasons we did not send a larger force was that we couldn't. Even if we had the time to scrape together a larger force, it would have lacked enough modern equipment to fight in a modern battlespace and we could not have rotated or sustained the force anyway.

The vehemence of the debate between the two camps, at least since the 1980s, is partly due to the defence debate having been unfortunately monopolised by a relatively small group of academics, bureaucrats and diplomats. Various governments, and the people of Australia, should have not permitted this sad state of affairs to arise, let alone to allow it to flourish like a noxious weed. At the very least, this latest strategic lesson for Australia over Iraq has (as did the East Timor crisis before it) emphasised a vital point. Public debates on national security issues should be just that — public and debated. What passes for a debate must never again be monopolised by self-selected, intellectually incestuous, insular and self-styled 'elites'. The results of strategic deliberations must never again be a supposed consensus foisted on us by such a flawed process.

Time for a national security Green Paper?

Any strategic deliberations have to grapple with the profound sea change gathering force in our global strategic architecture. Despite being rescued by the US, UK and Australia over prolonged Iraqi defiance of its strictures, the UN and its underlying concept of collective security continues to struggle for effectiveness and credibility.

As the UN and regional collective security organisations dither, debacles of national disintegration and horrific human rights abuse continue in west, central and southern Africa. North Korean brinkmanship is resurgent and Japan is now openly proposing a break with its post-World War II restraints concerning the projection of force. The macro- and micro-states of the Pacific basin continue to disintegrate socio-economically, although some optimism is beginning to revive about Fiji. Terrorism by Islamic fanatics threatens the West, delays resolution of the Israel–Palestine dilemma and destabilises central, south and South East Asia.

The US can, and now is, withdrawing forces from Saudi Arabia in toto, and increasingly from Turkey, Germany, France and the Low Countries. NATO seems increasingly driven by the types of membership tensions, wishful thinking and loss of focus that led to SEATO's demise. In North Asia, the US appears to be headed towards a redeployment and large downscaling of its 100,000-strong forward deployments in South Korea and Okinawa.

The time for an integrated Green Paper on Australia's national security is now well and truly upon

us. This should, in turn, lead to a single, integrated White Paper rather than separate defence and foreign affairs and trade versions.

Just as importantly, such papers must be developed by intellectually and morally robust, and professionally inclusive, processes. The White Paper in particular must be drafted by a broadly drawn expert team, which includes the full range of ADF and diplomatic expertise available, and which is supervised by the Chief of Defence Force, Service Chiefs and relevant Permanent Heads. In this way we would avoid the many flaws, underlying intellectual dishonesty and overly prescriptive nature of most recent Defence White Papers. These numerous flaws in process and result largely occurred because principles of accountable governance and ADF professionalism were forgotten or deliberately ignored. This wrongly allowed recent White Papers to be developed in detail, and with far too much internal bureaucratic secrecy, by a small, narrowly drawn and closeted clique of Defence civilian bureaucrats.

On the right path but too small a step

The recently announced government initiative to form a Defence and Security Division within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is a small step forward in interdepartmental and inter-agency cooperation. The proposed separation of international issues into a separate division, however, does seem somewhat contradictory. If the bureaucratic method is to be followed, perhaps what is really needed is one integrated national security division.

The ADA has long believed, however, that solutions primarily dependent on bureaucratic reorganisation, or which are focused on one problem at a time, will not adequately address the real need for integrated national security decision making as well as bureaucratic coordination. This is the main reason why a specialist department of 'homeland security' is not required in Australia's case.

Starting from first principles, the National Security Committee of Cabinet appears to have functioned particularly well in the current government. The Association believes that this cabinet committee would function even better if directly served by a National Security Council. This Council should be established by statute and vested with appropriately delegated executive authorities and administrative co-ordination responsibilities. The Council should be supported by a deliberately small and independent secretariat not a division within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Most Australians would understand why the last Defence White Paper went to the National Security Committee of Cabinet accompanied, appropriately, by the then Chief of Defence Force (CDF) and Secretary

of the Department of Defence. They might wonder, however, why senior Defence civilian bureaucrats were also present for discussions but the three Service Chiefs were excluded.

The backdoor demise in the mid 1990s of the statutory interdepartmental Defence Committee (comprising the CDF, Service Chiefs, Director-General ASIO and key Permanent Heads) has resulted in some highly unfortunate consequences. Not least of these is the exclusion of the commanders of the navy, army and air force from the highest-level interdepartmental committees involved with national security issues. This is just plain silly and unprecedented by any comparable international standard or practice.

Furthermore, in the case of a future integrated national security White Paper, there would obviously have to be high-level input from many departments and agencies. The current 'process' of committees of some departmental Permanent Heads supported by lower-level interdepartmental committees and task forces needs serious reform.

Given the integrated approach to national security now required, Australia needs a proper National Security Council rather than interdepartmental committees comprised of officials only. Such a council would involve ministers, senior ADF commanders and civilian officials in a similar manner to the War Cabinet and later the War Conference instituted during World War II.

Our proposed National Security Council would be chaired by an appropriate minister, and include all or most of the members of the National Security Committee of Cabinet when required by the seriousness of the issue. The Council would also always include: the Chief of Defence Force and all three Service Chiefs; the Directors-General of the Office of National Assessments, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service; the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police; and the heads of key departments (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Treasury and Attorney-general's). Some State premiers might also be invited to attend from time to time when relevant.

A National Security Council constituted along these lines would allow the highest political level of government to be continually across the issues and up with the thinking of its most senior professional advisers. It would also stop much of the process-driven bureaucratic game playing that sometimes prevents ministers from being as fully informed as they should be (and the expert advice of the Service Chiefs being excluded).

Many will be the self-serving arguments against such a concept from various senior officials. There are, however, no valid constitutional, legal or professional impediments. In the light of 21st century whole-of-nation threats a whole-of-government response, not a bureaucratic response, is clearly required.

Garnering disaster

While the force-on-force phase of the US-led campaign to topple Saddam Hussein succeeded beyond nearly all expectations, the continuing chaos of the subsequent occupation risks undoing much of the good. Over two months after organised Iraqi resistance collapsed in early April the allies still appear to have inadequate forces to impose order on the chaos.

US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld's direction to cut the forces needed may have appeared to work for the fight but any campaign also includes the consolidation and the orderly withdrawal phases. Occupations, even relatively benevolent ones, soak up forces until a semblance of street-level law and order is re-imposed and public confidence is restored enough for some semblance of normality to return. The corrupting nature and longevity of Saddam Hussein's regime and the Sunni-Shia schism in Iraq, has contributed to the problem as there is little enduring civil society to fall back on for rebuilding.

Unless this situation is fixed quickly, the US risks replicating the British quitting of Aden in 1968 on a large scale, rather than midwifing the first of a new order of democracies throughout the Middle East. Even worse, the US at first seemed to lack the will to restore order. Growing Iraqi impatience and even antipathy to their liberators may be in no small part due to many Iraqis just wanting enough order re-imposed, however temporarily, so they can eat, drink and work before moving forward to rebuild and democratise Iraq.

Despite pre-war Pentagon hype about post-war planning there were obviously not enough occupiers to deter or stop post-combat looting. Such looting also continued for far too long. Whatever the reality, the whole world unfortunately contrasted the photos of a well-protected Oil Ministry with the burnt-out shells of other ministries and museums. Losing much of the common treasure of mankind's earliest urban civilisation, despite Iraqis being the looters, was a colossal goal for the allies in the struggle of perceptions. Not giving Iraqis the bulldozers to topple the statues of Saddam Hussein on their own, and draping US flags everywhere, were examples of unprofessional military discipline and unnecessary triumphalism we may all regret in the long run.

There was an easily foreseen serious shortage of Arabic interpreters during combat operations that led to many unnecessary civilian deaths through misunderstandings and concern about suicide bombers. Misunderstandings and, much worse still, proliferate with a US armed forces not well populated with diggers oozing cross-cultural awareness and sensibility. Many US soldiers interviewed on TV continue to say exactly the wrong thing.

Given the US's long involvement with the Middle East it is somewhat surprising that they had no 21st century, Arabic speaking, 'General MacArthur' equivalent waiting in the wings. While things have looked up since the diplomat Paul Bremer eventually replaced the profoundly