

It is also worth noting a recent national security example where concerns about the potential for ASIO abuses proved quite unfounded. The claimed need for an independent 'Security Appeals Tribunal' was a major cause celebre for ASIO's critics in the 1960s and 1970s. They feared that public service advancement, and other rewards and rights, were somehow being wrongly denied on security grounds. After being set up during the Whitlam Government with much fanfare, the tribunal was later merged with other human rights bodies due to sustained lack of work.

The current impasses with the ASIO Bill and in how we list acknowledged terrorist organisations for proscription are inexcusable. Given the testimony in the Bali and Jakarta terrorist trials, all parties in Australia contributing to this situation should revisit their professed positions and expedite commonsense measures to protect Australia without further delay.

Counting them all out and counting them all back

As for all Australia's previous wars the Government committed the ADF to the war in Iraq using the millennium-old Crown prerogative conferred under Section 61 of the Constitution. Even if Australia became a republic, and even if the Westminster model of government was discarded, it is likely this power would not fundamentally change except for the term perhaps becoming 'executive privilege'.

While there was and remains some party-political controversy about the current government's decision to commit the ADF to military operations in Iraq, all the major and minor parties represented in Parliament appeared to express their support for the forces once they were committed. This is as it should be and the ADF deserves no less.

It has also been encouraging to see both government and opposition parliamentarians join the Australian community in the farewell and welcome home ceremonies for the forces deployed on our behalf.

Such ceremonies are truly national occasions. They are above partisan politics and inter-State or inter-Service rivalries. The time-honoured and tested traditions and protocols involved emphasise the importance of the ADF in Australian life as one of our oldest, most integrated and honoured national institutions. In constitutional and professional terms, such national ceremonies especially illustrate that the ADF is apolitical in function and history and that it serves all Australians equally. Such national ceremonies particularly emphasise that while the ADF quite properly always carries out the lawful orders of the government of the day, the defence force itself has a wider and longer-term reciprocal relationship with, and responsibilities to, the Australian people.

It has therefore been more than a pity that the farewell and welcome home ceremonies for the ADF elements who served in Iraq have not had the traditional 'above politics'

theme that would come with the presiding dignitary being the Governor General or the relevant State Governor.

Whether in truth or just common perception, and on this matter it does not much matter which applies, it seems both of the main parties have, at times, sought to make party-political capital out of such ceremonies or the associated media coverage. This is to be regretted. It is hoped the appropriate sense of constitutional perspective and professional decorum prevails in future.

After all, even Parliament is always opened by the Governor-General rather than a politician for similar reasons.

Structuring the ADF to sustain our enduring national interests

With the war in Iraq another generation of Australian Service personnel have seen combat in the Middle East. At least this time round we did not have to capture Damascus yet again.

Once again Australia's enduring national interests required the projection of force outside our territory and its immediate region. Once again we were a junior partner in a multinational coalition. Once again this coalition included several of the principal Anglo-Saxon democracies. This is at least the tenth time these national security criteria have applied over the last century or so.

Some commentators have expressed the hope that this latest lesson in the apparent folly of configuring the ADF primarily for semi-independent 'home defence' will be absorbed. The Association wishes it were so. Australian history, however, shows a perpetual swing of the pendulum between the 'home defence' and 'wider international interests' camps under various labels. What cannot be denied, by either camp, is that the pendulum swings have resulted in the ADF generally being too small to cope with the eventual calls made on our forces. Today is no different. The ADF faces increasing calls — and likely future ones — without possessing many of the capabilities actually required. At best, this needlessly risks casualties and/or strategic embarrassment. Even worse consequences need to be considered without being at all alarmist.

All three Armed Services continue to struggle with increasing capability development problems, especially in obtaining realistic numbers and types of modern equipment, and in closing the interoperability gap with Australia's major allies. The underfunded 10-year Defence Capability Plan continues to struggle with resolving the key problem that so many of our major weapons platforms are becoming obsolescent over the same short period. All three Services do not have sufficient people, not least because we too often quickly wear out those we have through high operational and training tempos.

The war in Iraq illustrated our much-reduced capabilities dramatically. The UK contingent was 45,000

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