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More than submarines

New dimensions in the Australia–France strategic partnership

Edited by Jacinta Carroll and Theodore Ell

December 2017

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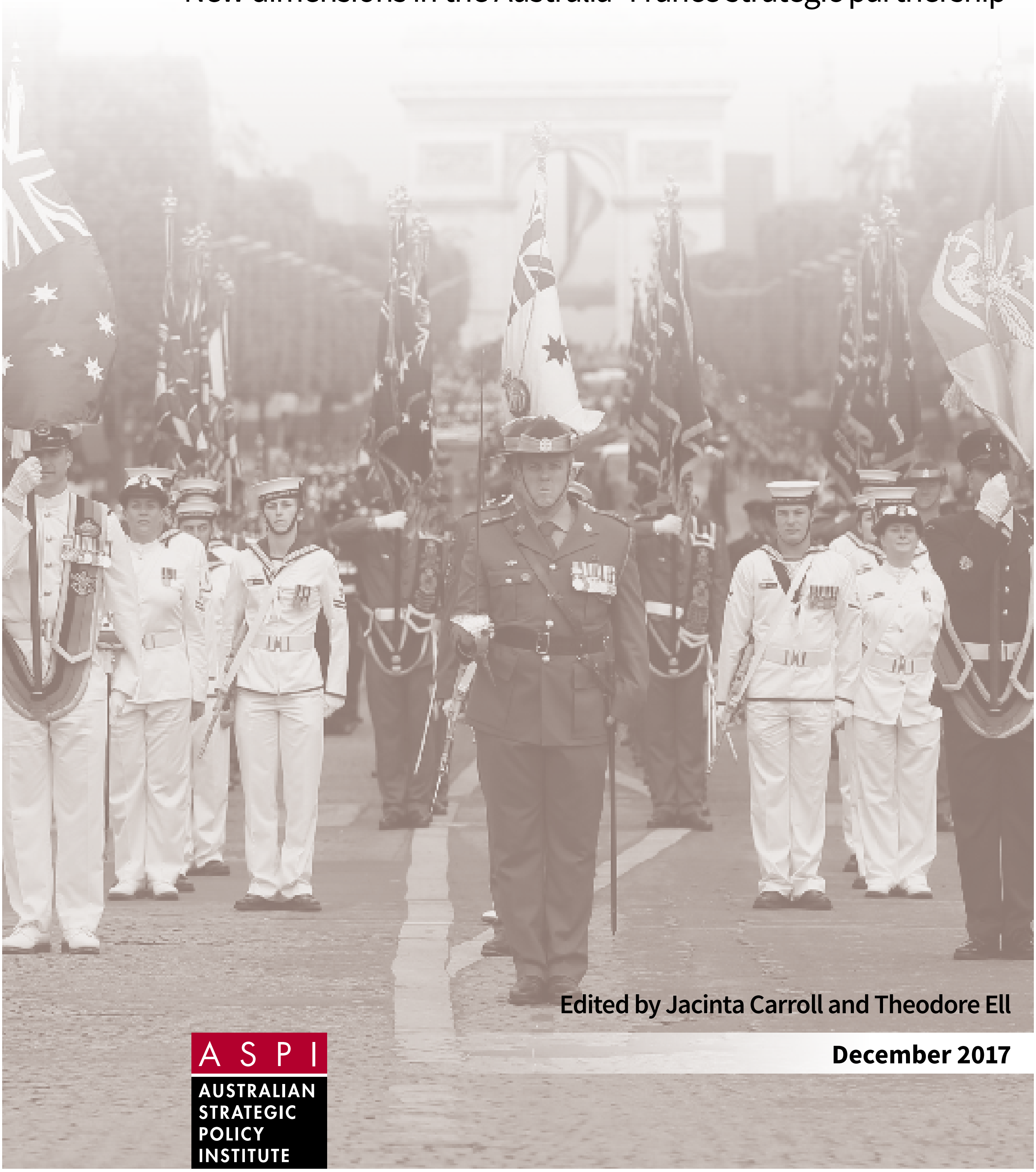

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PREFACES

Observations on the evolution of the Australia–France relationship

Peter Jennings,
Executive Director, ASPI

When we view bilateral strategic relations between Australia and France from the Australian point of view, we find a paradox: this is a partnership that's warm, valuable, effective, longstanding and growing in scale and significance, but seemingly hidden in the shadows of our traditional foreign policy shibboleths. This relationship isn't as widely or deeply understood as it should be. Australia and France are becoming increasingly active in each other's spheres of influence, but new phases in our relationship tend to take policymakers and the public by surprise. Often, the analysis that then follows doesn't keep the most relevant facts in view or the most significant strategic influences in proportion. Australia and France continue with the business of bilateral policy, but with a strong sense that the larger meaning of what we're doing hasn't been sufficiently interpreted or explained.

This volume sets itself the task of joining together the most important pieces of what to many policymakers is still a puzzle. What really is the nature of the Australian–French strategic relationship? How do our priorities align or diverge, and what demands does that place on each country? And how do we make use of our shared good fortune to shape policy in the interests of shared achievement?

The theme that connects all the reflections in this volume is understanding—crossing the gap that has historically separated our mindsets, for all our shared sympathies. In the Australian imagination, France is greatly respected and admired, but in a way that tends to hold it outside our immediate concerns. It's essential that Australia and France share a commitment to democracy, liberty and the rule of law. Yet it's also now the case that France's strategy, institutions and economic policy have become more relevant to Australia than ever before, just as Australia's have become to France. Events are drawing Australia and France together in such a way that we'll thrive only if each of us understands how the other thinks. We need to know each other in practice as well as in theory.

France and Australia are immediate neighbours in the Indo-Pacific region, sharing maritime borders in the Southern Ocean and in the Coral Sea between Queensland and New Caledonia. This is a critical part of the world for us both, but do we view the great changes underway in it from the same standpoint? Will our policy responses be harmonious? What does Australia learn about France from the frequent but fragmentary references to it in public commentary—as a crucial pillar of the European Union, a leading voice on the UN Security Council, a nation in the front line of the fight against terrorism? Identification on each point is strong, but do they combine into a nuanced picture of a partner we know well?

Incomplete understanding risks leaving policymakers unprepared for unexpected turns in the bilateral relationship, let alone for epoch-making changes.

The selection in April 2016 of French shipbuilder Naval Group (then known as DCNS) to build Australia's future submarines ushered in a program of bilateral cooperation that will last into the middle of this century. Public scrutiny of the program's early stages has concentrated on its cost and the division of labour between Australia and France. Such matters merit attention, but, equally, we shouldn't assume that they'll tell us everything we need to know about how Australia and France can or should work together. For every question asked about single transactions, a question about the larger strategic interests of the parties is left aside. While we're awed at the decades the submarine program is intended to last, we little imagine how the bilateral relationship may evolve around or beyond it, or the decisions this will require of us. Quite simply, the submarine program has seized so much attention that it has begun to obscure as much as it illuminates in Australian–French relations.

It's evident—as readers of this volume will realise—that the submarine program is as much the result of a convergence in our two national strategies as a cause of it. With surprise comes an opportunity to bring events into fresh focus. That's the impulse of this volume, which brings together Australian and French commentators from a wide range of backgrounds to assess what they believe to be the most significant developments in the bilateral relationship, to point out the most difficult trials that may lie ahead, and to consider solutions that keep the partnership resilient while balancing each party's distinct needs.

There's a great deal about the growth in our bilateral ties that's encouraging and reassuring, but Australia and France have reached a stage at which our attitudes towards each other have to do more than hold their familiar shapes. Events and pressures beyond our control require this of us. It's our great fortune that our relationship already contains the goodwill necessary for greater cooperation and the essential terms on which to design it. What we must consider now are its depth and details.

His Excellency Christophe Lecourtier, Ambassador of France to Australia, 2014-2017

Half a century ago—following the Cuban missile crisis—French President General Charles de Gaulle succinctly captured the principle that has guided France's foreign policy in the modern era: 'Just as a ship on the sea is not the master of the winds or the waves, a people cannot alone command the calm and the eddies of the world.'

Through times of great tension during the Cold War, then following the fall of the Berlin Wall, France has tirelessly been guided by collective action and multilateralism to contribute to building a free and open world, where the great challenges for humanity are managed through the rule of law and shared governance.

More recently, the international order has been subject to a great many challenges. The liberal dream of the 'End of History' failed to materialise, and brakes have been put on the bright dynamics of the 1990s. Here and there, democracy has ceased to progress and, in some cases, developments in liberal democracy have broken down. Not all developing countries chose to fully assume their responsibilities in the realm of international affairs. While violence and war engulf whole regions—including areas of Europe—radical Islamism imperils the security of our societies and aims to destabilise our institutions. Today, at the heart of many of our nations, the fundamental values that have shaped the 'free world' since 1945 are also being undermined by populism.

In this context, the rapprochement between Australia and France makes perfect sense. It undeniably represents for both our countries—but also far beyond—a resolute and consequential choice to tackle the headwinds and global turmoil.

There is no luck or chance in creating a community of destiny between people. While Australia and France may have lost sight of one another at the end of the 20th century, our relationship has its roots in the same soil: through the shed blood of Australia's soldiers in northern France—as with the blood shed a century earlier during the French Revolution—the land of France became the crucible of the young nation. One hundred years ago in the mud of the trenches, our countries forged our common values: liberty, despite paying the ultimate price; respect for others without distinction by gender, religion or race; and solidarity or 'fraternity'.

Neither one of us renounced these values despite many testing times, but we may have sometimes taken them for granted. The challenges of recent years mean we must better understand what is at stake, and how best to respond to these challenges. It is this reality that now defines our renewed relationship: one hundred years after the decisive intervention of the Diggers on the Western Front, Australians and French both express an irrevocable attachment to the same values: the same type of society and way of life. Beyond this, our people look now to the benefits of an even closer partnership to combat the challenges of this century through security, prosperity, intelligence and innovation.

Since 2014, our governments have worked together to translate into concrete, ambitious commitments this convergence of interest of our peoples. Let’s be clear: through the submarine program, France has offered to Australia a level of technology transfer never provided to any other partner, and this is because we hope Australia will play an increasing and increasingly capable role in regional stability and beyond. As maritime powers and neighbours in the Pacific and Indian oceans, the dynamics of our political, defence and security cooperation will play a vital role in the future to counter the tension and destabilisation that is on the rise in these regions.

Beyond our shared history, values and borders, Australia and France are partners in sending a strong and necessary message to all the nations of the world: in the face of the rising winds, we are resolved to go beyond petitions and intentions. From the Middle East to Adelaide and Cherbourg, in our laboratories, universities and companies, we are resolutely acting together to preserve our shared principles. During another century of turmoil Montaigne said, ‘It is a beautiful harmony when saying and doing go together.’ This is what Australia and France will be doing together in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and overview of the bilateral relationship

Introduction

Jacinta Carroll

The announcement in April 2016 that Australia would partner with French company DCNS—now Naval Group—to develop Australia's future submarine capability has caused many in both countries to look with renewed focus at the bilateral defence and security relationship. This lengthy program of work will see the two countries come together in a substantial way not previously seen. And, beyond 'cutting steel', the submarine program provides the opportunity to collaborate across weapons, communications and intelligence systems as well as to put them into practice through exercises and operations.

A review of the bilateral relationship presents many instances of Australia and France working together on issues of concern, fighting alongside each other a hundred years ago on the Western Front and today in Iraq and Syria, as well as overlapping areas of interest, such as in the South Pacific and—increasingly for Australia—in Africa. The future of this relationship, however, depends on how the two countries elect to proceed from here.

France's role in the South Pacific, where it shares a border with Australia, and the two countries' commitment to expeditionary military and humanitarian operations as well as to multilateral institutions, mean that both countries will continue to encounter each other.

But there's now a historic opportunity to strategically shape that relationship into one that entails much more than incidental shared interests. We have a good foundation in the recently signed 'Joint statement of enhanced strategic partnership between Australia and France', and delivering on that agenda will serve both countries well.

With the centenary of the battles on the Western Front and the first anniversary of the submarine program announcement, we at ASPI thought it would be valuable to dive into the various aspects of this longstanding relationship to see how we got here and where we can go together.

In this compendium examining the France–Australia relationship, we have brought together experts from each country to explore our shared histories and plot a course for where we might take the relationship in the future. Each section examines a different aspect of the relationship—historical, international security, defence and the South Pacific—from a French and an Australian perspective. The experts brought together in this volume cover a breadth and depth of knowledge and experience as officials, academics and practitioners.

What emerges is a rich and complex picture of two vibrant and activist countries, grappling with complex problems, but each determined to contribute to making the world safer and more just. At a time when the international order appears under threat, the willingness of our two countries to continue to commit to the global rule of law and strengthening the liberal order and respect for human rights is both heartening and vital.

It's also clear, however, that maximising the benefits of the bilateral relationship requires a strategic plan and practical commitment to getting things done. This compendium is a contribution to enhancing the relationship so that it can truly be more than the sum of its parts and we can navigate confidently through the decades to come.

Australia’s long dread of France in the South Pacific

Graeme Dobell

A striking duality drove Australia’s thinking about France in the 20th century. Expressed as a chant, it might be, ‘France: In Europe, good! In the Pacific, bad!’

When Australia turns its gaze to Europe, it sees France as an old ally, a cultural cornucopia and an expression of the Enlightenment. What finer destination could there be for an Australian traveller?

In the South Pacific, though, Australia long saw France first as a colonial rival, then as just a rival. Indeed, the fear of France’s imperial ambitions in the neighbourhood was one of the elements driving Australia to become a nation in 1901. Australia found it a lot easier to love France when it was on the other side of the world. In the South Pacific, we oscillated between fear and forgetfulness.

The suspicion about what France could have been up to in the neighbourhood was present from the moment of settlement. Six days after Captain Arthur Phillip’s First Fleet reached Sydney in January 1788, French explorer Jean-François de Galaup, count of La Perouse, arrived. Contacts between the two parties were polite but distant during La Perouse’s six-week stay, and the two naval officers never met. Such cordial distrust flavoured much that followed.

Australia has a deeply rooted instinct of strategic denial in the South Pacific, striving to be the top strategic partner for island states while minimising the role of outside powers. As Australia can never achieve complete strategic denial in the South Pacific, the instinct is beset by a faint, constant ache. Throughout the 20th century, much of that ache was directed at France, with occasional appearances by others, such as Germany and Russia (including in the period of the Soviet Union).

Australia’s South Pacific fixations—and the strategic denial twinge—are founding elements of the Commonwealth and find expression in its founding document.

While the Constitution makes no mention of the post of Prime Minister or the function of cabinet government, it’s explicit about Australia’s role in the South Pacific. Subsection 29 identifies the Australian Parliament’s power over external affairs, and the next clause specifically identifies its authority over the ‘relations of the Commonwealth with the islands of the Pacific’. The two clauses expressed a tacit division of responsibilities. The new nation born in January 1901 conceded the operation of most external affairs powers to London, but, from the start, Australia would take hold of its interests in the South Pacific. This indicates the importance that the new nation placed on relations with its neighbourhood, and how the presence of other powers in the Pacific contributed to the impetus for federation.

The traditional inability of the states and the federal government to agree on much at all—still, today, a defining characteristic of the federation—makes the original act of creation even more striking. The first major convention of the states to discuss federation, held in Sydney in 1883, was driven by the immediate need to get a common policy to oppose French and German colonisation in the Pacific; New Zealand and Fiji also participated, although both withdrew from deliberations later in the federation process.

The first truly ‘Australian’ spy was a French-speaking businessman who was dispatched shortly after federation to monitor French intentions in the new Anglo-French New Hebrides Condominium. France reciprocated the suspicion, and was still looking for Australian plots nearly 80 years later in the difficult breech birth that turned the New Hebrides into the independent nation of Vanuatu. Older residents of Noumea used to recall Australia’s naval show of force in World War II, intended to ensure that New Caledonia sided with the Allies rather than Vichy France.

Australia’s dealings with France were strained by the traumatic birth of Vanuatu, Kanak unrest in New Caledonia in the 1980s, and decades of acrimony over French nuclear tests in Polynesia.

The twin issues of Kanak independence and French nuclear tests provided the then South Pacific Forum with high-profile, vital issues that united all island leaders. France gave the forum a convenient 'hate figure': a shared foreign foe is always a useful unifier.

One of the regional achievements of the forum—the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty—was made possible, and necessary, by anger at France. France's 1996 signing of the protocol of the treaty, which enshrined the end to its nuclear tests, marked the moment when rapprochement between Paris and the Pacific could truly begin. The rapprochement process delivered France a big win last year: full membership of the Pacific Islands Forum for New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Forum membership is an early reward for the long game France has played in New Caledonia over three decades.

A France that stays in the South Pacific

The argument stretches over decades: Can France stay in the South Pacific and, if so, on what terms? Being in the Pacific may serve the glory of France, but can France also act as a member of the Pacific?

When the war of words between Paris and Canberra was at its height in the 1980s, Australia's Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, crystallised a core proposition: Australia, he said, would be in the South Pacific forever, but you couldn't necessarily say the same for France.

Hayden's scepticism was grounded in a period when France seemed intent on literally 'blowing up' any hope of regional belonging—from nuclear tests to sabotage blasts in Auckland harbour. The France that went rogue and sank the *Rainbow Warrior* in 1985 has spent the following 30 years slowly adjusting its Pacific colours in attempting to become a different sort of regional presence.

Grappling with the question of whether France can belong, Denise Fisher has commented, 'As in most key areas of France's presence in the Pacific throughout history, ambiguity is rife.'[1] That word 'ambiguity' keeps appearing. As Fisher notes, France's behaviour is sometimes that of a power 'in' the Pacific, while at other times France can be a power 'of' the Pacific. New Caledonia's vote next year will say much about whether France can be 'of' as well as 'in' the region. This is another three-decade story.

After intermittent violence in New Caledonia through the 1980s, the moment of truth for the territory came in 1988. Members of the Kanak independence movement seized hostages on the island of Ouvea and demanded talks on independence. The fortnight siege from 22 April to 5 May was broken by a military assault, at the cost of 25 lives. This was a society tearing at its own soul, peering into the abyss of civil war.

The Kanak leaders were urbanely French in language, manner and argument, but they wanted New Caledonia remade to serve Kanak identity, not French. Out of that tragic moment came the 1988 Matignon Agreements, signed in June 1988. The agreements agreed on a program of development and peace, while deferring the issue of independence for a decade; the subsequent 1998 Noumea Accord extended the timeline for a decision on self-determination by another 20 years.

The Matignon and Noumea accords have allowed France to play a long game. Kanak leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou legitimised an autonomy process that Paris could use to seek permanence, not departure. For his leadership in stepping back from the brink, Tjibaou was assassinated in 1989 by a fellow Kanak.

Now the moment for decision approaches. One parallel between 1988 and 2018 is that each date with destiny is framed by the French presidential election calendar. Next year's vote is the moment of decision that eventually arrives for any peace process seeking to salve deep differences with time and money.

The New Caledonia accords have influenced Australian thinking about other independence issues, as well as altering Canberra's assessment of France's capacity to stay in the region. The Bougainville settlement brokered by New

Zealand and carried through by Australia was an Anglo version of Matignon—the deferral of the immediate decision on independence as a means to stop conflict and embark on a long period of preparation and development.

Prime Minister John Howard invoked the Matignon model in his famous and notorious 19 December 1998 letter to Indonesian President BJ Habibie on the future of East Timor. Howard's letter stressed Australia's continuing support for Indonesia's sovereignty in East Timor. Reflecting Canberra's view of France's achievements since Matignon, Howard argued that the offer of independence could become part of a lengthy process 'to convince the East Timorese of the benefits of autonomy within the Indonesian Republic'.[2]

The aim, Howard wrote, should be to avoid 'an early and final decision of the future status of the province. One way of doing this would be to build into the autonomy package a review mechanism along the line of the Matignon Accords in New Caledonia. The Matignon Accords have enabled a compromise political solution to be implemented while deferring a referendum on the final status of New Caledonia for many years.' The Howard letter illustrated Australia's judgement that the Matignon/Noumea accords delivered Kanak autonomy but could keep New Caledonia as part of France. Indonesia should take the same lengthy route to retain what it wanted.

On 9 November 1998, only forty days before Howard wrote to Habibie, Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer warmly welcomed the New Caledonia referendum and strongly endorsed the Noumea Accord, stating:

> A positive vote of over 70% and the high voter turnout demonstrate that New Caledonians want to assume greater responsibility for their own destiny. The result will maintain the impetus of political and social development in New Caledonia and help France to continue its constructive role in New Caledonia and the Pacific.[3]

France's 'constructive role in the Pacific' had become the Canberra mantra. For the South Pacific, France had rid itself of the habit of blowing things up. Australia's 20th-century dread of France's role in the South Pacific has slowly transformed to a 21st-century desire—that France stay and play, and help pay.

21st-century partners for the regional status quo

As the quintessential status quo power in the South Pacific, Australia today embraces France as a bastion of the existing, preferred order. The shift in Canberra's thinking acknowledges that France has adapted its ways and adopted regionalist colours. No longer is France the feared outsider prone to blowing up both bombs and its own interests.

Australia can embrace France as a fellow status quo power because this is the region where the colonial powers stayed. Unlike in Asia and Africa, decolonisation around here didn't always equate to departure. Of the great European colonial powers, only Britain did a full exit, handing off to Australia and New Zealand as it left.

New Zealand set the decolonising-without-departing model, demonstrating intelligence and creativity and using a different model for each of its four colonies. In 1962, Samoa became the first island state to get independence, including free movement to New Zealand for 20 years. The Cook Islands followed in 1965 with self-government, sharing with New Zealand control of its defence and foreign affairs. Niue achieved self-government in 1974, in free association with New Zealand, while Tokelau is a nation that remains a dependent territory of New Zealand.

Less deftly, but with equal determination, the US managed the same trick: America Samoa is an unincorporated territory, and the US has compacts of free association with Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau (although it took eight referendums to ratify the compact with Palau).

Compared to the Kiwis, France has taken nearly 50 years to decipher the decolonisation-without-departure memo; but, with the baggage carried by Paris, the long game may have been the only option.

Last year's decision by the Pacific Islands Forum to admit New Caledonia and French Polynesia as full members has rewarded France for its long game. Nic Maclellan rightly judges this 'a momentous change'. The forum, which hammered out much of its identity and cohesion in fighting France, now accepts that 'France seems to be in the Pacific to stay.'[4]

Theodore Ell calls forum membership the prize for 'a marked change in French Pacific strategy, which was previously strongly individualistic and isolationist'.[5] To normalise and reinforce its presence, Paul Soyez writes, France has embraced South Pacific regionalism, giving Noumea and Papeete enough autonomy to join in.[6]

The Pacific Islands Forum is the institutional expression of Australia and New Zealand as insiders, both 'of' and 'in' the South Pacific. Equally, Australia and New Zealand use the forum not just as a vehicle for regional consensus, but as a mechanism to create and police norms. For the islands, the forum is a mechanism to manage relations with Australia and New Zealand, as well as other big players outside the region. The nature of the club reflects island polities that are conservative, pro-Western, capitalist and Christian. That suits Australia wonderfully—as it will France.

France—through New Caledonia and French Polynesia—gets two seats at the top table for what will be a protracted argument about the nature of the forum and the future of the islands. More than a diplomatic debate, the wrangle goes to issues of power and identity, pitting status quo interests—such as Australia—against revisionism. A key aim of regional revisionism—led by Fiji—is to redefine the South Pacific to exclude Australia and New Zealand; in this debate, Australia sees France as a welcome reinforcement for the established order.

In reaffirming Australia's 'leadership role' in dealing with instability, natural disasters and climate change in the South Pacific, the *2016 Defence White Paper* named a set of partners, in this order: New Zealand, France, the US and Japan.[7] The hierarchy of lists always matters in white papers, and this provides high expectations of what France can deliver. In discussing France, the White Paper offered the three layers of history, international approach and new South Pacific partnership:

- Australia and France 'share a longstanding and close defence relationship'.
- The two nations have a 'shared commitment to addressing global security challenges such as terrorism and piracy'.
- And, in the neighbourhood, 'We are strong partners in the Pacific where France maintains important capabilities and we also work closely together to support the security in our respective Southern Ocean territories.'

In April 2016, two months after the White Paper was published, France won the $50 billion submarine 'prize': French company DCNS—since renamed Naval Group—would build Australia's next submarine fleet and the Australia–French strategic partnership shape-shifted to a new universe.

In an ironic reversal of history, the South Pacific relationship now provides ballast for the inevitable arguments and agonies of the submarine build.

The long submarine marriage—construction is slated until 2050—will be marked by passionate, expensive acrimony between two disparate partners. And no divorce is possible in this enormous project, which is as diabolically expensive as it is technically difficult.

In the decades ahead, partnership in the South Pacific will be the natural and easier part of the Australia–French relationship. Change, indeed.

Australia and France: where now for the like-minded?

Theodore Ell

Expanding common ground

It's often said that Australia and France are like-minded countries. Bilateral statements of concern on global issues are truthful and readily available. The strategic partnership renewed in March 2017 provides the latest example, committing to joint action in fields ranging from human rights and counterterrorism to education, environmental protection and cultural exchange.[8]

Carrying out joint policy, however, depends on more than trusting to statements of principle. It means understanding how like-mindedness is exercised in practice. In recent years, the main arena in which Australian–French bilateralism has found practical form is military cooperation in the South Pacific. Australia, France and New Zealand signed the FRANZ agreement on Pacific disaster relief in the early 1990s.[9] The biennial 'Croix du Sud' multinational military exercises[10] continue to refine both nations' forces' capacity to operate in joint task groups, and the forthcoming Mutual Logistics Support Agreement[11] will grant Australian forces regular access to French Pacific military bases.[12]

It's tempting to leave strategy at that. In these uncertain times, France's regional presence comes as something of a relief: it's a permanent member of the UN Security Council, nuclear-capable, democratic, respectful of international law and norms, and rates highly for good business, prosperity, security and low risk.

Except that not analysing France and not being curious about its intentions and capacities leaves Australia seriously underinformed.

Events in recent years have required Australia and France to develop their bilateral relationship more quickly, more closely and on a larger scale than at any other time. Both countries need to weather unsettled geopolitical conditions in the Indo-Pacific region, where the order that has sustained their influence is under stress. Following the April 2016 announcement of the French company Naval Group as the design and construction contractor, Australia and France are also preparing for decades of strategic, scientific and industrial partnership in the complex business of submarine-building. The new circumstances challenge the notion that Australia and France are too far outside each other's spheres of understanding to collaborate in sophisticated ways.

Neither country has had much warning of the convergence. Not only have the domains of cooperation expanded, but they now also weld together major sectors of Australian and French domestic policy, in addition to foreign policy. Australia seems to register France's strategic choices as unconnected and unremarkable episodes. Together, however, they play directly and saliently on every tenet of Australia's regional strategy: the rules-based order, stability to the near north and credible military capability. The scale and duration of the submarine contract, combined with evolving regional strategic pressures, mean that Australia can't afford to dissociate one aspect of France from another any longer. Strategically, there's no arm's-length distinction between France proper, France in the Indo-Pacific, and France in Australian shipyards.

The greatest risk is misunderstanding. In a partnership that's required to deliver so much over so long, a misreading of actions in one area can pose considerable risks to investments in another. It's in Australia's interest to understand what the whole French state is thinking and doing. Until now, such work has typically been seen as a specialist's specialism. Only a relatively few representatives of either country could describe the experience of developing Australian–French bilateral policy. Countless Australians know discrete aspects of France in depth—politics, history, language, art—but rarely have Australian policymakers had a concept for dealing with France as a system.

France is arguably far more readable than other powers of strategic significance to Australia, and the benefits of understanding it in depth will repay the effort involved. Crucial to shaping Australia's judgement is to learn how France defines success. This means understanding France's world view and the ways in which it pursues its aims.

Presence and participation—from compulsion to consensus

To many Australians, France might seem a distant European hub with haphazard overseas spokes. It's seldom recognised that France's territories collectively make up the second largest exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the world and are a crucial source of its wealth. Moreover, the French state is a highly cohesive worldwide polity, held together not only by history, language, law and economics but also by a self-assured, energetic idea of citizenship. To a large degree, Australian–French like-mindedness springs from sympathy for a lively democratic spirit. If Australians haven't always understood France as a political force, that's due mainly to differences in style rather than theory.

The doctrine of *liberté, egalité, fraternité*, distilled from the rights proclaimed in the Revolution of 1789, is an ideal of social organisation that France has felt duty-bound to export. It has done so explicitly in the form of the civil codes of its overseas territories and implicitly via the cultural norms expressed by its citizens. France thinks of itself as an institution of values to which anyone can belong.

This ideal republic didn't consistently organise society or solve problems in ways that indigenous populations in overseas territories found welcome, or favour a flexible mindset for exchanges with powers beyond the republic. In the decades following World War II, French foreign policy was further inflected with Charles de Gaulle's notions of France's *grandeur*, its *mission* to spread its civic values, and the *rayonnement* ('radiation' or 'transmission') that enabled it to do so, simply by being there and being itself. Yet there was nothing inevitable about prestige. It took protracted insurrections in the 1950s and 1960s in Algeria and Indochina, and in the 1980s in the South Pacific territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, for France to realise that single-mindedness could do more damage than good. Nuclear testing in French Polynesia—in the face of international outcry, with Australia and New Zealand even taking legal action at the International Court of Justice—was the last and most potent demonstration of France's forceful individualism.

That era ended more than a generation ago—and countless distinctions could be drawn between policymaking and the beliefs of individual French citizens. Even before the last nuclear device exploded at Moruroa Atoll in 1996, France had realised that integrating its South Pacific territories ever more closely into its national economy, and into regional political and economic organisations, would be a more secure path to regional acceptance and influence. In New Caledonia, in particular, France committed itself to decades of infrastructure-building, economic stimulus and political consensus-making.

Yet 20 years of relative calm, with France playing a more nuanced and constructive role, shouldn't obscure the fact that it still conceives of its interests and its powers clearly. France's strength and long-term intentions offer opportunities that Australia will grasp if it is observant and prepared.

2013–2017: France on the move

France hasn't become more closely involved with Australia by accident. It has had the initiative for some time. In 2013, France released a White Paper on Asia–Pacific security, and since then it's been pursuing the interests identified there with ebullient energy. It may surprise many Australians to find France defining its security in Asia. In fact, it's the only continental European power capable of attempting global diversification via geopolitical as well as commercial means. Yet, as unlikely as France's strategy seems, it has yielded substantial dividends.

In 2015, France invoked the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to reclassify the continental shelves of several of its overseas territories.[13] This expanded the usefulness of its EEZ and secured rights to much-needed oil and gas reserves,[14] including below the seabed off New Caledonia, which is already a source of valuable nickel. The secure transportation of minerals has also been on France's mind. It will depend more than ever on shipping routes that run through the South China Sea, where competing territorial claims may endanger commercial passage. At the 2016 Shangri-La Dialogue, French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian made a decisive announcement that France would coordinate European naval patrols in the South China Sea in support of freedom of navigation.[15] And one of the many political surprises of 2016 was the admission of New Caledonia and French Polynesia as full members of the Pacific Islands Forum, affording France unprecedented opportunities in regional trade.[16]

Why should France take such pains to join governance bodies and economic communities and contribute to critical strategic debates, so far beyond the reach of its European neighbours?

More than just access or influence, France is seeking legitimacy: more seats at more tables, and recognition that its role is constructive, lucrative, influential and not dependent on the troubled European project. President Hollande's administration intensified these efforts in 2016, after the shock of Brexit and after Donald Trump declared NATO obsolete while campaigning in the Republican primaries. (Although, as President, Trump has stated that he does support the alliance, his calls on European powers to contribute more funds have become more strident.) The 2016 update to the White Paper on Asia–Pacific security invoked NATO as a matter of course, as did the 2013 version, but the alliance was conspicuous by its marginal role, next to enthusiastic discussions of France's expanding strategic ties to economies growing far larger and faster than any in Europe.

The Pacific Islands Forum's acceptance of French membership signals a regional consensus that France contributes credibly to Pacific governance, development and capacity-building. It also recalls a lesson from the nuclear decades: France has a longevity and a freedom of action independent of those of other powers in the Indo-Pacific. It's able to act quickly and decisively, but is detached enough from the region's everyday political whirlpools to make cautious, forward-looking judgements.

So, Australia began 2017 working more closely with a France that sees distinct advantages in an influential role in this region. How to ensure that Australian interests, too, are well served?

Future submarines

It was another surprise of 2016 that Australia awarded the contract to design and build our future submarines to French company Naval Group. The choice showed confidence in French expertise and France's compatibility with Australian strategic interests. However, the choice also subjected the future submarine project to local economic pressures beyond Australia's control. We aren't alone in seeing the project as a chance to expand sovereign shipbuilding capability. France has the same aim for itself.

This submarine contract isn't just any defence procurement effort. It might be Australia's largest, with a projected cost of $50 billion and a rolling build planned to last until 2050,[17] but as a commercial materiel project it's essentially no different from the selection of Spanish company Navantia to build the Royal Australian Navy's replenishment ships,[18] or even the engagement of local Australian shipbuilder Austal to replace the Pacific patrol boats.[19]

What distinguishes Naval Group is that it's majority-owned by the French state.[20] Behind Naval Group are the larger needs of its parent nation, which regards closer security ties with Asia–Pacific countries as major opportunities for economic gain in otherwise difficult times. Australia needs to take care to understand what its French partners are seeking.

France has made particularly intelligent use of long-term engineering contracts to cement its Asia–Pacific strategic presence. By securing rights to rolling builds and gradual technology transfers, it ensured its participation in certain economies for decades. When Naval Group secured the Australian contract, it was already building submarines for India and Malaysia—a fact noted in the 2016 update to its White Paper on Asia–Pacific security, which reproduced, almost verbatim, the relevant paragraphs from the 2013 version and simply added Australia to the list of partner nations.[21] Moreover, a Defence Ministry report tabled in the French Parliament in May 2016 declared that the state's advocacy of French armament exports is a guarantee of their quality and reliability, while also emphasising that the state is at the service of French armament businesses' returns.[22]

Such declarations indicate that France's attitude to the future submarine project is conditioned by a military–industrial complex. The relationship between government and military manufacturers is institutionalised to the point where it isn't solely defence strategy that determines materiel production. Instead, there's a mutual understanding that both state and industry will profit from armaments.

Naval Group's fulfilment of Australia's future submarine contract will contribute billions of euros over several decades to a French armaments industry that doubled its annual income to €16 billion in 2015 alone.[23] The numbers are impressive, but the fact is that armaments manufacturing is the only booming industry in France. The OECD reports that the French economy is all but stagnant.[24] Growth is constrained by mass unemployment and a low tax take, and the state has to spend billions to support essential public services. In this context, France's shares in international armaments contracts are a precious resource, to be capitalised upon wherever possible.

Australia's selection of Naval Group in April 2016 was greeted with jubilation by the French Government, and Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian characterised it as an exceptional contribution to long-term economic security. The minister declared that the contract would secure 'thousands' of French jobs and that France would be 'married' to Australia for 50 years.[25]

France's efforts represent a pragmatic and legitimate way to stimulate economic growth. What will its high expectations of the Australian submarine contract mean for Australian policymakers? How does Australia ensure that the project remains focused on building strategically effective submarines, rather than yielding to military–industrial profit motives?

It's easy to overstate the risks to major defence acquisition projects, given their scale, complexity and cost. It would be a mistake to believe that France's sole intention is to manipulate the submarine project for profit. That would be contrary to France's interests and inclinations and would undermine the entire premise of the strategic partnership with Australia. However, a time may come when France's motives favour profit over partnership and, if so, its institutional arrangements will allow it to act quickly. The election of President Macron in 2017 may see France take a more assertive approach to maximising the profits of national enterprises, so it's vital that Australia enters into the project with as much a commercial eye as a strategic one, now that the agreement is sealed. That is business sense.

Maintaining the balance? France's 2017 presidential election

A deeper knowledge of France is essential not only for serving the shared principles to which France and Australia are committed. It's critical to understanding how the higher direction of those policies might change when French governments change.

The 2017 French presidential election result is unlikely to alter the substance of the bilateral relationship. The beliefs and interests that Australia and France share run too deep for that, in sectors of economics and national security that are too valuable.

The submarine decision will push Australian–French bilateralism into the unfamiliar territory of high-level exchanges of information and expertise. In addition to several accords struck between French colleges of engineering and a number of Australian universities and technical colleges, Australia and France signed a treaty in December 2016 that redefined their methods of sharing classified information. The treaty sets standards for mutual recognition of classification categories and security clearances, as well as determining the responsibilities of government agencies and contractors collaborating on sensitive projects. The treaty also enables cooperation across a wider range of security issues than submarine-building.[26] It's reasonable to envisage that one priority might be to expand the exchange of counterterrorism officers—a joint initiative that began in 2015.[27] In any case, the treaty allows Australia a mechanism to chart a course for the bilateral security relationship on terms that can negotiated systematically and with legal force. The types of expertise that Australian and French government agencies and high-tech industries can now share, the regulations governing those exchanges and the numbers and diverse roles of the specialists involved are acquiring institutional shape and depth.

What might shift is the way France manages those exchanges.

France depends more than ever on its connections abroad to reinforce the security it is finding hard to guarantee close to home. It needs its strategic partnerships to yield greater returns than they're currently designed to do. Now that the Australian–French partnership has grown so much closer, France is in a position to drive harder bargains. Even while the Australian–French strategic partnership has been developing with new speed and purpose, conditions in France itself, and more broadly in Europe, have been deteriorating. More hinged on the 2017 French presidential election than different approaches to the status quo. The main candidates and parties offered radically different visions for the French state and its position in the world.

Should France continue to regard its prosperity as an integral contribution to, and dividend from, the European Union, and expand free market capitalism within the Eurozone, however stressed it may be? Or should it leave the EU, abandon the euro, revert to the franc, protect its industries, quit NATO High Command and reinforce its nuclear deterrent, to act forcefully on its own terms? Many consider reshaping the French state in that way an anathema, and the election of Emmanuel Macron represents a clear rejection of the isolationist option for the time being, but it could still happen. France is experiencing a rise in anti-establishment sentiment similar to the movements that led to Brexit and the election of President Trump, and the secession option is focusing grievances.

The politics of the moment aside, the election decided only the climax of a change in French foreign policy that has been unfolding for much longer. France has been seeking diverse partnerships beyond Europe for years in an effort to alleviate its strained socioeconomic situation, offset the major imbalances in the Eurozone and boost spending on defence to between 2% and 3% of GDP. That's one principle on which all the major presidential candidates—centre-left, independent, centre-right and far-right—agreed.[28] It will dominate French strategy no matter what the character of President Macron's administration.

Greater value, greater need

Viewing France's situation from Australia (outside specialist areas of policy), it's difficult to appreciate its implications. Australian–French bilateralism is unlikely to become as intense and all-embracing as either country's relationship with, for instance, the US, but the truth is that France needs Australia increasingly seriously. France's dependence on strategic and industrial connections has grown disproportionately larger and more urgent precisely because of their long-term value in deeply uncertain times.

France has always been there, but Australia has never needed to get to know it so deeply, so fast. As unexpected and unorthodox as these demands may be, developments so far demonstrate that Australian–French bilateralism is building a strategic partnership of consequence. On that basis, the two countries will remain like-minded.

But will Australia understand precisely what's on France's mind after the presidential elections? Will we be ready to adapt if our friend and partner changes countenance and expects the partnership to deliver more, sooner? These questions have arisen in circumstances mostly beyond Australia's control. Answering them is entirely our responsibility.

Theodore Ell is an employee of the Department of Defence. The views expressed in this article are his own and do not reflect those of Defence or the Australian Government.

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CHAPTER 2

International security

French perspective: solid partners in an uncertain world

Nicolas Regaud

The close relationship between Australia and France isn't one that was naturally formed from a common history, family or language—as was the case for France with our Canadian cousins in Quebec, and also between Australia and the UK. We need to be able to accept our differences to appreciate what we share. In reality, we share many things in many fields, be it history, geography, values, interests, our vision of the world and its dangers, and our sense of responsibility.

What brings us together?

The aim of this chapter isn't to provide a summary of the history of Franco-Australian interaction in terms of international security since World War I. It's important, however, to point out that this major commitment, in which Australia sacrificed the lives of more than 60,000 soldiers, will never be forgotten; the numerous commemorations that are taking place on the centenary of the Great War demonstrate the mutual importance of this painful memory and the brotherhood in arms that unites us. Australian participation in World War II battles in Europe, in particular during the D-Day landings in Normandy, is also greatly present in the French collective memory.

This creates extremely strong ties, but doesn't necessarily commit us to a shared future. There are other factors that, today and tomorrow, will bring us together in common or coordinated actions. Geography has a part to play, as it's a fact that our countries are neighbours in the Indian and Pacific oceans and Antarctica. This territorial and human proximity has formed the basis for several agreements, in particular concerning cooperation in the field of surveillance and policing fishing activities in the southern seas (Kerguelen, Heard and McDonald islands) that entered into force in 2011, and another between France, Australia and New Zealand signed in 1992 to ensure cooperation in assistance efforts in the event of natural disasters in the South Pacific, more commonly known as the FRANZ agreement.

This agreement is of great importance because it enables rescue operations to be coordinated by maximising the available operational resources to help island states that are often struck by tropical storms and cyclones. Since the agreement was signed, our three armed forces were deployed on more than 30 occasions in coordinated rescue operations to assist Pacific island states, which demonstrates a shared vision of our responsibility towards less developed countries and the benefits of increasingly closer international cooperation.

This sense of responsibility and desire to work as committed actors for peace and international security have been shown by both our countries on several occasions, in Asia and also the Middle East. This was true in Cambodia, where our countries played significant roles in the 1992–1993 UN operation[1], and again at the turn of the century in the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET).

In the Indian Ocean, our two countries fought side by side against piracy and terrorism during Operation Manitou (France also participated in the CTF 150) and during the European Operation Atalanta, launched in 2008 at France and Spain's initiative to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Aside from our joint participation in operations in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force, Australia and France are strongly committed to fighting Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria and are among the very first participating countries in the international coalition after the US, in terms of both strikes and training of Iraq's armed forces. Faced with terrorism on our territory, and unfortunately with large-scale attacks carried out against France in 2015 and 2016, our countries believed that in addition to the actions of police and intelligence services at home we must also participate determinedly in destroying the sanctuary that the terrorist group has established on the Iraq–Syria border, where attacks against our populations are plotted and where hundreds of young Western citizens have gone to join the fight.

This short, far from exhaustive reminder of our shared political and military commitments demonstrates several points that we agree on and that are fundamental to pursuing cooperation and extending it to other horizons and fields. The first is the sense of international responsibility and the ability to support a political vision and defend values through significant international military commitment. This always means taking risks, but they're worth taking to defend the strategic independence our countries lay claim to. It's another element that unites us, which doesn't mean that we delude ourselves into believing we can do everything alone, but we have a realistic vision of the world around us, which is constantly changing. This means that we consequently need to make a solid contribution to international security, in accordance with international law. We also share a common vision of the importance of responsible multilateralism, which is the best guarantee against power politics that trample international law, as illustrated by the annexation of a part of Ukraine by Russia in 2014.

Australia and France, both allies of the US, have improved coordination and strengthened their mutual support with Washington in recent years. This is clearly a uniting factor. But in a world where power is becoming widely dispersed and the balance of economic, technological and military power is experiencing structural changes, our two countries know that a solid alliance is a balanced alliance, in which each partner takes on its own responsibilities, sometimes agrees to differ on major strategic issues, makes the necessary efforts to ensure its defence and, in some cases, takes the initiative in theatres where it's best placed to act, such as in France's intervention in Africa's Sahel region in 2003 in order to prevent a large-scale terrorist sanctuary being established on Europe's doorstep. This means that powers such as Australia and France, despite their differences, share a vision of a more fluid, more dangerous world that requires new partnerships to be strengthened or created, tailored to the multiple risks and threats and the changing regional equilibrium.

All of these factors, and the worrying evolution of the international and regional strategic context, help reinforce our joint action in international security. As I work for the French Ministry of Defence, I won't go into detail on the exchanges between our countries that aim to densify our cooperation in several fields. However, as my job is to contribute to the debate of ideas in regional forums on defence and security, I would like to present some forward-looking reflections on the avenues that Australia and France might venture down in terms of international security in the years to come, particularly in eastern Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Freedom of the seas and capacity-building in eastern Asia

In Southeast Asia, the key strategic question for France is naturally that of freedom of the seas, as one-third of French trade outside the EU transits by sea from Europe to northeast China across the China seas. Freedom of circulation, with respect to international law, is therefore fundamental for our country and for Europe. Consequently, France—as a nation, within the G7 and the EU—has, on several occasions, called for international law to be respected, particularly for the peaceful resolution of conflict, and stressed the need to rapidly draw up a code of conduct.

To give weight to these words, the Minister of Defence, Jean-Yves le Drian, mentioned at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2016 that French combat ships transit several times a year across the South China Sea and make full use of their right to navigation and overflight as part of their regional cooperation activities and with respect for international law. He also said that better coordination between European naval forces would be useful to provide a visible and regular presence in this theatre, and to highlight European support for responsible multilateralism, founded on dialogue and respect for the law, but also without provocation to any concerned power.

On these issues and the possible answers, there's no question that our countries would benefit from strengthening bilateral coordination because we share the same core values and, as first-rank maritime powers, a specific attachment to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and its enforcement in all maritime theatres.

In another vein, France has signed defence partnerships with several ASEAN countries—particularly with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam—and developed defence cooperation with all the others. The French approach has always shown a readiness to foster the development of autonomous defence capabilities in the context of a balanced partnership. This has mainly resulted in technology transfer, but also in several cases in an excellent transfer of military skills accompanying armament sales. This was recently the case when Scorpene-class submarines were sold to Malaysia. However, French military cooperation in the region isn't restricted to accompanying major armaments contracts. France has supported the creation of the Royal Khmer Gendarmerie and the National Centre for Peacekeeping and Mine Clearance in Oudong, where we continue to deploy military instructors permanently. In maritime security and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations, France appoints a liaison officer to the Information Fusion Centre and the Regional HADR Coordination Centre in Singapore. Almost a hundred service-members from countries in the region complete training in France every year, and French language teachers play a valued role in military institutions in the region, where six UN peacekeeping operations are conducted in French-speaking countries.

Australia shares the same cooperation partners, being also highly committed to military cooperation in the region, because it's important to accompany the development of ASEAN countries' strategic self-reliance. We also work together on regional cooperation, which the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the ADMM Plus strive towards. Australia contributes to the ADMM Plus, and France hopes to join. In the seven areas of cooperation that the ADMM focuses on, France is a highly skilled country and would like to share those skills.

This approach that aims to foster increased defence capabilities among ASEAN countries is shared by our two countries, and it's in our interest to support multilateral cooperation efforts in an ASEAN or subregional framework, in particular in the area of maritime security. The bilateral cooperation that aims to encourage exchanges in our cooperation programs would be a worthwhile development and could potentially lead to some forms of coordination or mutual support. The rise of terrorism in Southeast Asia—the returning foreign fighters from the Syria–Iraq theatre are an aggravating factor—is also a major issue that our two countries should work on to further develop our exchanges and perhaps act together in the region. It's in everyone's interest to prevent terrorist groups from establishing sanctuaries in areas that aren't under full state control, and from there organising attacks against the surrounding countries. As the Malaysian Minister for Defence, Hishammuddin Hussein, recently highlighted at the Fullerton Forum, if ISIS 'takes hold in the region, it will be much more destabilising than the problems in the South China Sea'.

Maritime security and multilateral cooperation in the Indian Ocean

France is present in the Indian Ocean via its overseas territories,[2] population (over 1 million inhabitants), economic resources,[3] and military bases and infrastructure in Reunion Island, Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates. The French Armed Forces have a permanent presence of around 4,000 soldiers, 24 aircraft and four surface combatants, currently strengthened by the plan in place against ISIS (Operation Chammal, 1,200 soldiers and 12 Rafale multi-role fighter aircraft) and even more when the carrier battlegroup is operating in the area.

This is important to remember, as it shows that France has a sovereign presence, forces stationed in Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates and capacities for force projection from the mainland. Its capacity for action in the Indian Ocean is therefore significant, even if it can't be compared to that of the US or Indian armed forces.

The French presence is strong in the southwest and northwest of the Indian Ocean, and would therefore be able to establish close defence partnerships with certain countries—India specifically, as it has been a strategic partner of France since 1998 and we have greatly developed close military cooperation since the early 2000s. Based on common values and interests, this unique partnership has two aims: to accompany the rise in power of India, a major and responsible power, and help make the Indian Ocean a place of prosperity, peace and security, rather than a theatre for power rivalries. This is mainly being achieved by the construction of a regional cooperation and security architecture, in which France is actively involved. It has contributed to the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium since the creation of the symposium in 2008 and will chair that forum in 2020, while contributing as a dialogue partner in the Indian Ocean Regional Association, although it nonetheless actively seeks full membership.

The fields of action of the Indian Ocean Regional Association overlap quite largely with those of the Indian Ocean Commission, a subregional organisation in which France actively participates.[4] Created in 1982, the commission has achieved remarkable results in economic and sustainable development, regional connectivity and maritime security for an organisation of such modest size. On this last point, I would like to point out that the Indian Ocean Commission countries, together with Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania, agreed to create, with the support of the European MASE (MAritime SEcurity) program, the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre and a regional centre for the coordination of maritime operations. The first, located in Madagascar and established with active support from France, has been operational since 2016; the second will be set up in the Seychelles.

These initiatives give an idea of the potential for cooperation between France and Australia in the Indian Ocean:

- France and Australia could work together on developing maritime security capabilities for coastal actors, particularly in maritime domain awareness, as the sea is particularly important for the development of those countries, whereas their capabilities to combat illegal activity are highly insufficient.
- We could work hand in hand on developing regional cooperation forums such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and the Indian Ocean Regional Association, and raise awareness on the achievements and original functioning method of the Indian Ocean Commission.
- Finally, as Australia turns increasingly towards the Indian Ocean, and particularly India, it would be a natural step to launch cooperation between our three countries in order to study the possibilities for trilateral cooperation on regional strategic issues, to strengthen regional institutions and to provide assistance to coastal countries.

Australia's decision to purchase French submarines provides considerable momentum for the development of bilateral defence cooperation, at all levels. The list of avenues for cooperation in this chapter is far from exhaustive, because the risks and threats that we must face can only be fought by strengthening international cooperation. This is true for the fight against terrorism, proliferation, piracy, cybersecurity, global warming and its impact on security, all of which are issues on which Australia and France must certainly stand proudly as first-rate partners in an increasingly uncertain world.

Australian perspective: updating tradition

Jacinta Carroll and Lisa Sharland

The complexities of the current international security environment have called into question many longstanding assumptions about threats, national interests and relationships.

Traditional challenges, such as friction between Russia and the West and conflict in the Middle East, have been joined by new ones, such as the rise of China and challenges to cybersecurity, and the re-emergence of older threats, including terrorism and North Korea, in reinvigorated form.

Against this backdrop, Australia and France appear to be rediscovering each other, like old friends in a crowded and sometimes hostile environment.

The bilateral relationship isn't the most high-profile for either country, but it persists due to our common values of democracy and the rule of law and our contribution to a global order based on those tenets, as well as some shared history.

The two countries each contributed to some of the major military campaigns of the past century, serving alongside one another in World Wars I and II and contributing to the First Gulf War and to recent coalition operations in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force and in Iraq/Syria under Operation Inherent Resolve. Both countries also have historical military and security ties to the Pacific.

Despite the strength of the relationship and shared interests, however, efforts to deepen and strengthen the security relationship between Australia and France beyond the Pacific region have historically been overlooked. While Australia readily views itself as an influential player in Asia and a regional leader in the Pacific, it has historically been reluctant to see itself as a significant global actor, particularly in remote or distant geographical contexts, such as Africa. Yet Australia has demonstrated its credentials as a global actor in recent decades as the largest non-NATO contributor in Afghanistan, a member of the G20 and more recently as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Australia and France have worked cooperatively on many issues of international security and in support of the rules-based global order, but there's considerable scope to do more.

As the recently concluded 'Joint statement of enhanced strategic partnership between Australia and France' notes, security and defence cooperation continues to be a foundation for the partnership, and Australia's Future Submarine program has opened another chapter in that engagement.

This chapter explores Australia and France's shared international security interests. It looks at regional and global security challenges in the Middle East, Africa and Europe that affect the interests of both countries and at current action to address those issues, and then identifies opportunities to enhance the strategic security partnership between Australia and France.

The global environment

Europe has been relatively stable since the end of World War II, and particularly stable in the Eurozone for most of the zone's 40-year history. However, recent pressures, including the irregular migration crisis, economic troubles and the UK's decision to leave the EU, have taken their toll on stability and unity. This has been matched with real security threats, including terrorist attacks and plots throughout Western Europe, a resurgence of right-wing extremism and an emboldened Russia, which seeks to assert control over Eastern Europe and is challenging NATO.

France has taken a strong approach both to its domestic security and to reinforcing a cooperative approach to European security through its leading role in the EU and NATO.

In the Asia–Pacific, the disruptive threat of North Korea, big-power politics and assertiveness from China at one extreme, and the resurgence of international terrorism empowered by the successes of Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the Middle East at the other, have created a challenging environment. Cross-sector issues such as transnational crime, irregular migration and illegal fishing are presenting a complex array of challenges, particularly to more vulnerable countries in the region.

Australia is actively engaged with partners across the region, both bilaterally and in encouraging the use of multilateral forums such as ASEAN, the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Pacific Islands Forum. Australia has historically taken the lead in a range of security-building interventions and initiatives, including the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands and INTERFET. Like France, Australia has experience deploying in parallel alongside a UN peacekeeping mission through the International Stabilisation Force in Timor-Leste. Over the past decades, Australia has also provided expeditionary contributions to peacekeeping and military interventions beyond the immediate region, including in the Middle East (Lebanon, Sinai, Iraq, Syria), Cyprus, Somalia, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

Australia has close bilateral security relations with many of its neighbours, including longstanding and broad-ranging relations with New Zealand, which is the newest member of Australia's domestic counterterrorism body, the Australia – New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee. Australia has collaborated closely with Indonesia since 2002 on counterterrorism and law enforcement and has ongoing close relations with other neighbours, including Papua New Guinea and East Timor.

Terrorism and counterterrorism

Terrorism continues to be the highest security threat facing both Australia and France, which are regularly named by the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group as key targets and enemies. The reversal of IS's fortunes in Iraq and Syria since 2015 has led the group to refocus its efforts on calling for attacks in the West.

France has suffered three significant mass-casualty attacks since 2015 (the January 2015 attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hypercaché supermarket, the November 2015 Paris attacks and the July 2016 Nice attack), as well as more than a dozen smaller lethal attacks. Except for the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, which were claimed by al-Qaeda, the others were mounted, assisted or inspired by IS. Following the 2015 Paris attacks, France entered a state of emergency, which remains in place.

Since late 2014, Australia has experienced five low-scale terrorist attacks, while authorities have prevented a further 12 planned mass-casualty attacks.

Nationals of both countries feature significantly among the foreign fighters who have travelled to the Middle East to operate with various terrorist groups. An estimated 200 Australians and 1,700 French have done so to date, and French nationals are estimated to make up around 46% of all Western European fighters in that theatre.[5] With the demise of IS in Iraq and Syria, the surviving Western fighters—and their dependants—may move on to other conflict zones and terrorist safe havens or seek to return home, where they may pose a future threat.

France is already contributing to military efforts to counter IS and other terrorist threats in Africa through Operation Barkhane in northern Mali, where it's conducting counterterrorism operations alongside the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). France is also involved in efforts to counter terrorism in Libya, providing special forces and other support as part of a multilateral effort that includes the US, the UK and Italy. This builds upon France's longstanding engagement in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, which flows from its colonial history and subsequent Francophone network, as well as the proximity of the continent to Europe.

While Australia has been engaged in the Middle East for a decade and a half, it's increasingly focusing its attention on the terrorist threat in Southeast Asia, working with ASEAN partners such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

But the diffusion of terrorism back to traditional geographical areas of interest shouldn't see the dissipation of Australia–France counterterrorism engagement. Indeed, it should bring the two closer together.

Australia has a much lighter footprint in Africa than France, but does have significant and increasing economic investment in the continent, particularly through mining. Nonetheless, Australia's diplomatic network on the continent is comparatively small. Limited diplomatic and security ties create challenges when Australia's interests are threatened. Africa is also increasingly a contested area of economic and security interest, and countries in Australia's geographical area of interest—that is, in Asia—have stepped up their engagement on the continent, including through UN peacekeeping missions (such as in South Sudan), economic investment and military engagement, including the notable presence of China.

It's directly in Australia's national interest to develop a close partnership with France to assist its understanding of the environment, and also to collaboratively progress engagement with African nations that promotes security, autonomy and human rights.

Similarly, France's economic and security interests in the Asia–Pacific would benefit from a trusted partner in the region. This is already happening in the business sector, as more than 350 of France's major companies operate in Australia.

But probably the greatest value to each country in preventing extremism and countering terrorism is through the strategic perspective each could provide the other, based on their very different experiences. Australia's knowledge and expertise on Australia and Southeast Asia and France's understanding of Europe and North Africa could be brought together in collaborative threat assessments and in jointly evaluating lessons learned from both regions.

The rules-based global order is at the heart of how both countries seek to address many of these global threats and challenges.

Shared strategic interests

Australia and France have both worked to support the rules-based global order, to support multilateral institutions, to address instability through the rule of law, and to protect civilians.

Supporting the rules-based global order and multilateral institutions

During 2013 and 2014, Australia joined France (a P5 member) as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This provided an unrivalled opportunity for the two countries to engage on a range of matters of international security that hadn't previously formed a significant part of the bilateral relationship. Both countries were engaged in discussions and negotiations with the other 13 members of the Council on a range of international security issues, including the deployment of new UN peacekeeping missions in Mali and the Central African Republic, ongoing crises in South Sudan and Syria, the downing of flight MH17 over Ukraine and the drawdown in Afghanistan.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, France maintains the lead on several issues (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Central African Republic), but Australia demonstrated its weight as an actor on international peace and security issues by working closely with Luxembourg and Jordan to take the initiative on Syrian humanitarian work—something very rare for a non-permanent member. Australia subsequently engaged closely with permanent members, including France, on Syrian humanitarian resolutions and other issues for which Australia had been assigned responsibilities by the P5 (Afghanistan and the Iran, al-Qaeda and Taliban sanctions committees). Australia's recent term serving on the Security Council added weight to its bilateral and multilateral engagement with France on a range of international security issues.

Both countries nominated, along with Spain, to run in the elections for a seat on the Human Rights Council from 2018 to 2020. France decided to postpone its candidacy in July 2017, and in October Australia was subsequently elected to serve on the council for the first time. Regularly running for and serving on UN bodies demonstrates the shared commitment of both countries to shaping the global order.

Addressing instability through the rule of law and protecting civilians

Peacekeeping is one of the most visible mechanisms through which France and Australia contribute to the rules-based global order. Both countries have long histories of deploying capable and high-quality military and police peacekeeping elements to UN and other peacekeeping activities, including taking leading roles in operations in their areas of influence (as demonstrated by Australia's military commitment to and alongside UN missions in Timor-Leste and France's current commitment in Mali).

Both countries have also been strong advocates for the protection of civilians. France has consistently used its voice in the Security Council to push for the P5 to exercise voluntary restraint of veto use in cases of mass atrocity, with reinvigorated focus in 2015 in relation to the conflict in Syria. While this has yet to succeed, as Russia and China continue to exercise their vetos, it has provided a focus for the international community to push for reform. Australia has similarly been a strong advocate for the protection of civilians, advancing the responsibility to protect concept and consistently pushing for the protection of civilians in the context of UN peacekeeping missions.

Australia already has allies in the other two liberal democracies among the P5 members—the US and the UK—and it makes sense to work closely with France as an influential player in this peak body.

Future strategic partnership: the view from Australia

The 'Joint statement of enhanced strategic partnership between Australia and France' agreed in March 2017 provides a good foundation to strengthen the bilateral relationship.[6] The statement is extremely comprehensive, identifying 13 areas for collaboration—across defence, security, economics, trade and science, among other areas—and a whopping 102 supporting initiatives. What is clear from this statement is that the shared interest is understood, and in quite extraordinary detail, reflecting existing knowledge and dialogue. What is less clear, however, is how this ambitious agenda will be put into action.

Each of the 13 areas should have a lead agency responsible for progressing the initiatives and reporting on annual progress against an agreed plan, and other agencies, as appropriate, should be responsible for each of the 102 actions. Dedicated funding is required in order to resource this additional effort.

Particularly relevant to the security relationship are those initiatives pushing for enhanced information sharing. This includes 'intensifying' existing engagement on counterterrorism; progressing classified information sharing; undertaking joint threat assessments and preparedness and planning activities; cooperating on cyber initiatives; and undertaking annual Track 1.5 dialogues on international security issues.

The starting point for all of these issues is managing classified information. As a Five Eyes member, Australia links its classified information on security and defence with that of the other partners, but not with France's. This needs to be addressed in order to progress the other initiatives on security. This doesn't necessarily mean an immediate move to a 'Six Eyes' including France—although such an option could be explored. France has special and close bilateral arrangements with Canada, the US and the UK, and those arrangements should be explored for their utility to the bilateral Australia–France relationship. Canada provides a particularly useful reference point due its substantial francophone population and culture and the similarities between Australia's and Canada's security and defence arrangements and federal systems of government based on common law.

For the initiative relating to joint threat assessments, preparedness and planning, both countries need to identify a real area of shared interest. The threats of terrorism, transnational crime and foreign interference are issues of direct significance to both in the Pacific and Indian oceans; in the longer term, Australia and France might share concerns over emerging powers seeking to control territory in Antarctica. Consideration should be given to inviting France to be a partner to or an observer on the Australia – New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee, including involvement in multijurisdictional exercises, and engaging with the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus Experts Working Group on Counter Terrorism to take on France as a dialogue partner.

In the context of security, the Future Submarine program is an area where the Australia–France relationship is already set to expand. As a consequence, both countries have already started to explore how they might strengthen that cooperation, for example through intelligence sharing.

While much public discussion about the Future Submarine program is focused on the construction of the hull, the communications technology and intelligence aspects of the capability provide enormous potential for the Australia–France relationship. As this arrangement matures, it may provide a vehicle for deeper intelligence and technical engagement in defence and more broadly.

Other areas where the security interests of both countries intersect more broadly should be explored. As noted above, Australia's economic investment in Africa means it has an interest in ensuring countries on the continent are well placed to manage security concerns. However, Australia has traditionally had a narrow view of its security interests on the African continent.

Given the shared interests between Australia and France in countering terrorism and violent extremism—which are global challenges—Australia should consider how it might work with France in addressing and learning from France's efforts to address security concerns both at home and in Africa.

Similarly, there's scope for both countries to share more lessons from their efforts to address domestic terrorism and manage foreign fighters. This is already happening on an ad hoc basis, but it could be optimised through developing a strategic program of activity.

Beyond that, the shared interest that Australia and France have in the common values of the rule of law and the protection of civilians suggests that both countries could look to identify areas where they can work to strengthen the norms that govern the rules-based global order, including through multilateral work at the UN, which may be increasingly important if the US administration becomes less engaged. Consideration should be given to how that cooperation might extend to operational engagement in areas such as peacekeeping, drawing on shared lessons.

Limitations

While a focus on the bilateral relationship naturally brings to light the range of shared interests, it's also important to identify limitations on working more closely together. After all, despite a century of shared international security and defence experiences between Australia and France, the relationship isn't the most important for either country.

The first and most obvious limitation is geographical. The two countries are on opposite sides of the globe, so regional matters will necessarily demand the attention of each. France's possessions in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific provide it with geographical interests close to Australia, but this is secondary to immediate demands in France's European and Mediterranean neighbourhood.

Similarly, Australia is focused primarily on the Asia–Pacific. Canberra's security concerns are focused on developments in Northeast Asia (the rise of China, volatility in the South China Sea and North Korea's push for long-range nuclear capability), on Southeast Asia, where terrorism is having a resurgence, and on the US alliance.

Other limitations are domestic. While both countries face a high terror threat, the attacks in France have drawn considerable resources to both build up France's counterterrorism capability and to provide augmented protection from attacks. The use of the military to support policing through the state of emergency has had a concomitant impact on broader military, paramilitary and police capacity for further engagement.

While Australia hasn't experienced the same short-term diversion of security resources, over the past decade it has drawn down its discretionary commitment to international security activities. The International Deployment Group of the Australian Federal Police has significantly reduced its activities, and ADF and Australian Federal Police contributions to UN and other multinational operations are also at a low ebb. Participation in multinational security exercises is also low, and limited to only small numbers of individuals for those exercises outside the Asia–Pacific.

Reasons for this include, for the police and intelligence agencies, reduced real resourcing, domestic demand for policing and diversion to other priority tasks, and, for the ADF, ongoing commitments to operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

The stretched resources of both countries mean that any practical increase in engagement will need to be expressed clearly, have ongoing and measurable value, and be adequately funded.

Despite the progress of a globalised and interconnected world, language remains a practical limitation to closer engagement. French and English are the languages of government and business in France and Australia, respectively. Australia operates only in English, reinforced by English being the common language of the Five Eyes arrangements. While English is the most spoken second language in France, that doesn't apply at all levels of official communications. However, France's bilateral and multilateral security engagement in Europe and NATO means that it's well placed to accommodate and work across the language divide. To deal with language and military–security cultural barriers, both countries could look to the existing close partnerships that France has with Canada, which has French and English as official languages, the US and the UK.

Advancing mutual interests

The complex threats and challenges of the international security environment often present a bleak outlook. As France has recently suffered hundreds of casualties from terrorism, and Australia appears to be coming within the strike range of North Korean missiles, among various other threats, there's comfort for both countries in affirming a shared commitment to human rights, liberal democracy and rules-based multilateralism.

The 2017 bilateral joint statement provides a foundation for a wide range of initiatives that have the potential to add substantial value to each country. For this to be effectively implemented, however, requires dedicated lead agencies, programs, resourcing and reporting.

Our different geographies, histories and languages have produced deep and complementary expertise that can assist both countries to advance their national interests, and distance provides particularly valuable perspectives that can benefit both. France's knowledge of and links into francophone Africa and the Pacific provide Australia with a true partner to work with.

Notes

1. The UN Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) was placed under French military command. France and Australia were among the greatest contributors (1,500 and 600 troops, respectively) to the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), which was under Australian military command.
2. The Reunion Island and Mayotte overseas *departements*, the islands of Crozet, Saint Paul and Amsterdam, Kerguelen, Tromelin and the Scattered Islands have an EEZ of 2.6 million square kilometres, the second biggest maritime EEZ in the Indian Ocean after Australia's (3.88 million square kilometres).
3. The GDP of Reunion Island and Mayotte is approximately A$28 billion, which is equivalent to that of Madagascar and Mauritius combined.
4. The Indian Ocean Commission has five members, all French-speaking: the Comoros, France/Reunion Island, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.
5. Numbers of Australian foreign fighters from J Carroll, 'Australia: the year in review and the year ahead', in J Carroll (ed.), *Counterterrorism yearbook 2017*, ASPI, Canberra, 2017. Estimates of French foreign fighters from Soufan Group, *Foreign fighters: an updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq*, Soufan Group, December 2015.
6. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Joint statement of enhanced strategic partnership between Australia and France*, 3 March 2017, Canberra, online.

CHAPTER 3

Defence

Australian perspective: France and Australia—a military–strategic partnership for the future

Rupert Hoskin

The *2016 Defence White Paper* (DWP16) foreshadows Australia taking an active role in both regional stability and the maintenance of the rules-based global order.[1] Those two requirements are linked by a simple reality: alone, Australia has limited ability to uphold our interests and to materially change the course of international events without the leverage of multilateralism and like-minded bilateral partners. Our neighbourhood is Southeast Asia, our core strategic alliance is with the US, and our heritage links us with the UK and New Zealand, but we're also increasingly independently minded and can afford to widen our partnerships.

France and Australia are strategically like-minded, with similar interests both regionally and globally. We're both significant middle powers and like to balance independence of action against the benefits of alignment. We have broadly similar military cultures, and France has maintained a war-fighting and expeditionary mindset that provides a useful comparison and counterpoint to Australia's approach to defence. In recent years, there's been growing awareness of the potential in this relationship, but there's still more to be gained from deepening Australia's strategic partnership with France.

The strategic relationship between France and Australia

There's a solid framework of agreements for security cooperation between France and Australia. In the 2012 Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership, the two governments 'reassert the importance of close bilateral cooperation to address major international security issues of common concern … and their cooperation in the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, where they both have an interest in promoting peace, stability and prosperity', and this has been reinforced in the 2017 update.[2] The 2009 Defence Cooperation and Status of Forces Agreement provides a robust and flexible legal and administrative basis for bilateral military activities.[3]

Recent strategic policy guidance for both countries has brought us closer together. France's 2013 Defence White Paper refers to the 'growing convergence of the two countries' interests on a large range of subjects, both international and regional, relating to the Pacific and to the Indian Ocean'.[4] Similarly, Australia's DWP16 states that:

> Australia and France share a longstanding and close defence relationship with a shared commitment to addressing global security challenges such as terrorism and piracy … we are strong partners in the Pacific where France maintains important capabilities.[5]

Where France fits among our other allies

French security relations with both the US and the UK have also deepened significantly. For example, US Secretary for Defense Ashton Carter said of the US–France relationship in July 2015:

> Now, I've been working on Trans-Atlantic Security for a long time, both in and outside of government, and I think … this is the best our defense relationship has been in a very long time, probably ever, and we're committed to strengthening it still.[6]

The 2010 Lancaster House Agreement between France and the UK has similarly marked growth in their bilateral defence and security relationship.[7] Like Australia, France is a significant contributor to the Operation Inherent Resolve counter-Daesh intervention in Iraq and Syria. In that mission, France is very much in the inner circle: it has a key general officer position in the coalition HQ, and most planning efforts are classified 'SECRET Releasable to Five Eyes plus France'. This is a strong endorsement of the substantial and kinetic nature of France's military contribution as well as the respect and faith it has generated through its work in Africa and Afghanistan. DWP16 confirms the primacy of our US alliance and the value of the Five Eyes intelligence community, but there's room for Australia to work more with France as well.[8]

France's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region

In addition to its roles in Europe, Africa and the Middle East and its position on the UN Security Council, France is also heavily engaged in the Indo-Pacific region. As asserted by France's Foreign Minister in late 2014, '[o]ur prosperity and our security are intimately and inseparably linked to the prosperity and security of Asian countries; any crisis in this region will directly impact our interests.'[9]

France's regional interests and strategy are comprehensively expressed in its 2014 policy paper titled *France and security in the Asia–Pacific*.[10] In its foreword, France's Defence Minister noted that:

> The Asia–Pacific region is characterized by the importance of its maritime areas and the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) which extend from the Yellow Sea to the Arabo-Persian Gulf. These SLOCs are vital both for Asia and Europe and they form globalization's 'jugular vein'.[11]

France has a substantial military presence throughout the Indo-Pacific region, with bases in Djibouti, Reunion Island, Abu Dhabi, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. The 7,150 personnel at those bases make up 60% of France's permanent overseas military establishment—its 'sovereignty and presence forces'.[12] In addition, France regularly deploys substantial forces for operations and international engagement in the region. Recent examples include deployments of the Aero-Naval Group (based on the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*), ship visits and patrols in the South China Sea (typically twice yearly), annual 'Jeanne d'Arc' amphibious and officer-training two-ship deployments, submarine patrols in the Indian Ocean, and increasing bilateral cooperation with the US Marine Corps.

France's commitment is also demonstrated by the emphasis it has placed in recent years on defence engagement with regional states. Formal strategic partnerships have been signed with Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Vietnam. France also has substantial and deepening defence relationships with Singapore and Malaysia. As part of an extensive diplomatic presence, it has 18 defence attachés in the Asia–Pacific region.[13]

France's strategic thinking on the region is explained by Nicolas Regaud, Special Adviser to France's Head of International Relations and Strategy in its Defence Ministry:

> France is not 'discovering' the Asia–Pacific … France commenced a 'pivot' starting in the early 90s: multiplication of strategic dialogues, military cooperation linked to defence materiel exports, participation in regional fora (Western Pacific Naval Symposium, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group, South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting) and numerous regional military exercises. Our 2013 Defence White Paper portrays—like never before—the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region, the issues with the potential to seriously threaten our interests, and the need to actively participate in regional security.[14]

France's increasing presence gives it the potential to be an important 'influencer' in the region, and one that Australia can work with to mutual benefit.

Common philosophies on security and military preparedness

France and Australia each takes a global view of its security interests and the need to maintain capable expeditionary military forces. We're similarly prepared to accept tactical and strategic risk for our military forces if the situation requires it and to lead military interventions in our respective areas of influence. For example, Australia's leadership of the INTERFET deployment to Timor-Leste occurred in the face of great uncertainty over potential military resistance from Indonesia and major logistical risks.[15] Similarly, the 2013 French intervention in Mali was launched rapidly against a determined and well-armed insurgent force and conducted over vast distances that stretched logistics arrangements.[16] Many states make contributions to military interventions, but France and Australia are among a particularly select group in the above respects.[17]

Current Australia–France defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

Australia already cooperates well with France, both bilaterally and in multilateral arrangements such as the FRANZ agreement, the Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium.[18] The Povai Endeavour exercise framework is an Australian initiative for Pacific defence cooperation, and France is a major participant through hosting exercises such as Croix du Sud.[19] France was the first regional country to respond to Australia's request for participation in the INTERFET mission in Timor-Leste and, during the Fiji crisis, Noumea was used as a staging and logistics base for ADF operations.[20]

Other examples include a regular program of strategic dialogues and military-to-military staff talks, humanitarian assistance missions, naval passage exercises, individual exchanges, modest French participation (or observer roles) in Australian-hosted major war-fighting exercises, materiel cooperation, the Cooperative Fisheries Surveillance Treaty, and the 2015 trilateral Maritime Surveillance Summit in Noumea with France and New Zealand.

Opportunities for increased cooperation

Some of the strategic-level intentions described above are being only partially realised, and there's potential to do more. This would be welcomed by France. Nicolas Regaud has asserted that:

> We should enlarge our thinking on what brings us together—beyond the Pacific—because, while France is a middle power, it has global reach … and Australia's interests go well beyond the Asia–Pacific … We share the same vision of strategic autonomy (that is to say, the ability to act alone if necessary, such as in Africa for France and in the Pacific for Australia, or sometimes with other partners and the United States for major operations); we also share the same 'fighting spirit', a somewhat rare quality … There is rich potential for cooperation in numerous domains: Africa, Middle East, cyber, counter-terrorism.[21]

In what's likely to prove a major development in the defence relationship, the French company Naval Group has been selected as the supplier of Australia's future submarines. Extensive technical and industrial cooperation will be required, but there's also considerable scope for growth in naval and joint military engagement over many decades to come. The strategic and enduring nature of this commitment is typified by the recent signing of an intergovernmental agreement that extends well beyond the commercial contract between Naval Group and Defence's Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group.

France has long since worked through the difficult process of developing its sovereign defence industry and the government and industry skills that are needed to manage it. It has worked out how to harness the nexus of materiel exports, strategic influence and military interoperability, and to complement its own equipment requirements with an aggressive export approach that keeps its industries viable. We aim to achieve similar outcomes but have a lot to learn, and again France provides some lessons.

A Mutual Logistics Support Agreement between Australia and France will soon be ratified as a treaty.[22] This will bring many benefits for both parties, including providing access for Australia to the French Pacific territories' basing facilities and logistics support. Noumea's role in World War II as an allied base illustrates its potential strategic significance, particularly in an era of changing regional power balances.

Australia's recent focus on defence diplomacy (as expressed in DWP16) also suggests a useful area of cooperation. France has a sophisticated approach to military engagement around the world, typified by its relationships with francophone Africa. The 2013 Mali intervention and ongoing trans-Sahel counter-extremism operations are proving highly effective, in a manner not typical of other recent Western interventions. This was greatly facilitated by longstanding personal and institutional ties, as well as a sound French understanding of how to cooperate effectively with indigenous governments and military forces. Australia could usefully incorporate French insights into our training and education, and into our evolving mechanisms for international engagement.[23]

So, what's holding us back?

Inevitably, there are risks involved in any change in strategic settings. France has a very particular position in relation to our closer Five Eyes allies, and the merit of closer cooperation isn't easy for some to envisage. For example, the word 'France' didn't appear a single time in Australia's *Defence White Paper 2013*.[24] There seems to be a persistent sense that France is viewed as too independent, difficult to work with, and either not a priority for engagement or (incorrectly) lumped in with other European states that are considerably less globally active and barely present in the Indo-Pacific region.

This probably had its origins in French policy settings during the intensely difficult period following World War II. After profound humiliation and a complete loss of sovereignty, President Charles de Gaulle and his successors needed to rebuild French self-respect and security autonomy, and were prepared to do so at the expense of others' sensitivities. Hence the ejection of NATO from France and the development of an independent nuclear deterrent, as well as domestic initiatives such as nuclear power to avoid reliance on imported coal or electricity. Scars were left by issues such as nuclear testing in the Pacific, competition with the US and the UK for spheres of influence and defence equipment exports, and decades of policy differences on Iraq. The long-running, almost fraternal, rivalry between the UK and France also influenced Australian perceptions.

France has now recovered its desired place in the global system and has reset its security relationships. This is well illustrated by the speed and scale of France's commitment to the Operation Inherent Resolve intervention against Daesh in Iraq and Syria, by the unprecedented request by the US for the French to replace the American carrier battle group in the Gulf during periods of unavailability in 2015 and 2016, and by the pragmatic division of labour between the US and France for security in North and West Africa.

France's participation in Pacific region peacekeeping interventions has been inconsistent: it wasn't involved in Timor-Leste after INTERFET, or in Operation Anode in Solomon Islands or Operation Bel Isi in Bougainville. The reason is that France has a complicated relationship with its Pacific territories, which then affects other Pacific states' willingness to work with it. However, depending on how France manages independence demands in New Caledonia and autonomy demands in French Polynesia, there's potential for this to improve significantly.[25] That would benefit Australia by allowing France to become more engaged in regional security interventions, providing extra military capacity, logistics support efficiencies and enhanced global profile.

To enhance preparedness for such cooperation, there's scope for greater French participation in exercises such as Talisman Sabre and Pitch Black and trilateral amphibious training with the US Marine Corps in northern Australia (which the US would welcome).[26] This would enhance interoperability and deepen military-to-military links with a potentially valuable future partner.

Europe's growing concerns over Russia, internal security and immigration flows may result in a reduced ability or willingness to act further afield. This is possible, and France is certainly very engaged on those issues, but France has a global view of its security imperatives and clearly intends to remain a global actor. If anything, this will make France more likely to seek efficiencies from enhanced regional cooperation and from engagement with Australia as a like-minded influencer.

So there are risks and mitigations are required, but the same applies to all our allies and partners. There's clearly a net benefit to be gained for Australia from investing more deeply in this relationship.

Conclusion

France and Australia are strategically and militarily like-minded and have a well-established policy basis for security cooperation. Our respective national interests are equally focused on regional stability and the rules-based global order, and we have similar policy positions for how to achieve those goals. Our armed forces have similar cultures and capabilities, and we're both members of the small group of nations that are ready, willing and able to lead military interventions in high-risk environments.

Australia's DWP16 foreshadows growth in Defence's international engagement capability to better shape Australia's security environment. In addition to deepening engagement with other regional and alliance partners, we should further advance defence and diplomatic engagement with France on security issues. This would enhance our ability to influence events, while also usefully widening our circle of like-minded partners and maintaining military interoperability for an uncertain future.

Rupert Hoskin is a serving member of the Australian Defence Force. The views expressed in this article are personal, and do not reflect the official views of the Department of Defence. This paper is based on an article that originally appeared in the Indo-Pacific Strategic Digest, Summer 2016 edition, published by the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies.

French perspective: 'neighbours by the sea'—Australia and France's maritime cooperation

Virginie Saliou

It's a little known fact that France is one of Australia's closest neighbours. This is understandable, given that our capital cities are separated by a 24-hour flight and almost 17,000 kilometres. Our shared borders are defined by the sea, which appropriately features as a major element in our bilateral and multilateral engagement. The Coral Sea draws one frontier between our two countries in the Pacific, and we share another maritime border in the Indian Ocean between the Kerguelen Islands (France) and Heard and McDonald Islands (Australia). Motivated by similar concerns for the importance of a sustainable approach to the oceans, and rather than engaging in maritime disputes, Australia and France succeeded in finding agreements on joint management processes while respecting each other's sovereignty.

Our maritime cooperation and shared experience began a long time ago. In the late 18th and early 19th century, French explorers sailed along the western and southern Australian coasts. Two of them—d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin—helped to map Australia's coastline and returned to France with more than 1,500 drawings and sketches, creating one of the first illustrated natural histories of Australia. Our geographical proximity and early maritime commercial exchanges led to the establishment of a French consulate in Sydney in 1839, which was the first foreign consulate in Australia. A century later, our bilateral military cooperation was reinforced during World War I, when nearly 315,000 Australian soldiers volunteered to cross the oceans to fight for freedom on French soil. Today, our defence cooperation continues and is growing. At bilateral and multilateral levels, we're allies in the coalition fighting terrorism in the Middle East, and we're partners in the fight against maritime piracy around the Horn of Africa.

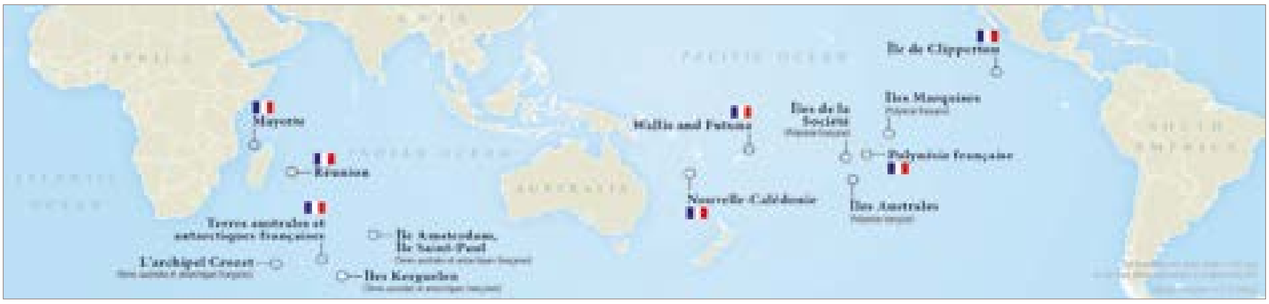
The close cooperation of Australia and France can be explained by our shared views on several issues. One of them is sea-based. France has the world's second largest EEZ, while Australia has the third largest. By virtue of its overseas territories, France is a maritime nation. Its EEZ covers 11 million square kilometres, mainly in the Pacific (62%) and Indian (24%) oceans, while Australia's is about 8 million square kilometres. More than 500,000 French citizens live in the Pacific, in French Polynesia and on the islands of Clipperton, Wallis and Futuna and New Caledonia, and more than a million live on Indian Ocean islands, mainly La Réunion and Mayotte. This worldwide presence is reflected in the 2013 French White Paper for Defence and National Security:

> France is a power in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Along with its territories, it must protect and guarantee the security of an increasing number of citizens who live in these regions. In addition, as a permanent member of the Security Council, France is true to its international commitments as well as to its friends and partners. It seeks to contribute, as much as possible, to regional security in all its dimensions through its presence, cooperation, and commitment alongside its European allies and partners. It is deeply committed to contributing to an international order based on peace, justice, and law.

France's primary obligation is to protect its territories and population. Our armed forces stationed overseas and our permanent military bases in the Indian and the Pacific oceans give France a presence that's unique among European countries. France's military presence in the Indo-Pacific is adapted to its defence and security needs. A permanent body of 8,000 personnel is stationed across the whole area: 4,500 in the Indian Ocean, 2,800 in the Pacific Ocean and 700 sailors on deployment. France is a party to the FRANZ agreement, signed on 22 December 1992 with Australia and New Zealand, to coordinate civil and military assistance to Pacific island countries affected by natural disasters. It's part of the Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group, involving France, the US, Australia and New Zealand, which coordinates security efforts in the Pacific, primarily in the maritime domain, by helping island nations to sustainably manage their natural resources, particularly their fisheries. Australia, France and New Zealand are also partners in the FRANZ agreement, aiding others after natural disasters.

Despite this strong commitment, however, many people don't know about France's role in these waters. A quick look at Figure 1 shows that Australia is 'gently surrounded' by France!

Figure 1: The French presence in the Indian and Pacific oceans



As a consequence of this geographical proximity, Australia and France also share similar concerns, interests, rights and duties. Indeed, when it comes to maritime issues, frontiers are a very relative concept: fish pay no attention to conventions on national boundaries, and neither do marine pollution nor maritime disasters. Being neighbours by the sea leads naturally to shared concerns and interests, and to understanding better the issues at stake in the 'maritimisation' of the world.

Globalisation intertwines with maritimisation in the form of increasing maritime exchanges. It's one of the key factors in understanding the new strategic situation. It's characterised by an explosion in tangible and intangible flows, by new inequalities between states and, within them, increased pressure on resources and major impacts on the environment. This aspect of globalisation contributes to the growing interdependence of states and disrupts understandings of space and time. Most commercial exchanges are conducted by sea, and the development of maritime trade favours the emergence of 'transverse' threats, targeting ships or using them in illegal activities.The end of an earlier strategic equilibrium parallels the emergence, or the return, of great maritime powers, contributing to the establishment of new regional balances, which are potentially more unstable than those that they supersede.

A few figures relating to the evolution of navies in the past half-century allow us an overview of the growing importance of maritime issues. In 1950, only 18 countries had operational submarine forces. In 2016, 42 countries did. In a few years, China will have four aircraft carriers and India will own three. Increasingly, European navies sail far from European waters to the Horn of Africa as part of EU naval operations, as well as to the Gulf of Guinea or to Southeast Asia.

Maritime countries must deal with a growing list of issues. They must fight maritime piracy and armed robbery; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; marine pollution; illegal exploitation of resources; all kinds of illegal trafficking, including human trafficking; and maritime terrorism. These increasing maritime risks and threats are mainly due to two factors. On the one hand, the development of technology allows outlaws to become sailors. Whereas, only few years ago, people needed specialist knowledge and long experience to sail far from the coast, nowadays satellite technologies, such as the Automatic Identification Service or GPS, allow untrained people to go to sea and, worse, target their victims more efficiently. On the other hand, more than 90% of the volume of international trade travels by sea. About 30% of the world's oil and 27% of its gas are extracted at sea, where 20% to 30% of estimated global reserves is located. International maritime traffic currently totals nearly 10 billion tonnes per year; the transport of energy products makes up nearly a third of this traffic.

France and Australia are obviously concerned by this trend. Most goods consumed in France are moved to Europe from Asia, and 40% of Australian exports are carried through the South China Sea. Our goods go through maritime corridors, straits and canals, especially the Bab el Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal, which are threatened by increasing instability ashore. This phenomenon partly explains why Australia and France consider it their duty to contribute to the safety of maritime spaces and of seafarers.

To do so, France has an ocean-going navy that's interoperative with partner forces and has worldwide scope. The French Navy is capable of intervening alone or as part of joint and international operations in distant theatres, giving us a continuous presence in theatres of major importance and allowing us to protect our essential security interests. The French Navy is able to provide all of the strategic functions defined in the 2013 White Paper on Defence and National Security: knowledge and anticipation; deterrence; protection; prevention; and intervention.

As well as maintaining the skills and instruments of combat that enable it to respond to threats of force, the French Navy also fulfils a coastguard function, which is referred to in French doctrine as 'state action at sea'. This function is performed by the *Prefet maritime*, which is an administrative and operational organisation that implements laws and regulations at sea, which set out the requirements for protection and safety of waters under national jurisdiction. The *Prefet maritime* monitors, controls and, if necessary, takes action. It relies not on the assets and skills of a single agency but on those of all the agencies (customs, navy, police and so on) dealing with maritime issues. It's based on the complementarity of skills and assets and applies to national strategic interests and resources from the coastline to the border of the EEZ and beyond.

On 22 October 2015, the Prime Minister of France endorsed the French national strategy for the security and safety of maritime spaces, which is a coherent interministerial framework for developing France as a major maritime power and fighting for maritime security. It's based on an analysis of risks and threats likely to affect France's strategic interests but also those of its partners, among them Australia. This strategy is resolutely collaborative. To achieve those objectives, France favours a dynamic approach to maritime safety and security, which involves some important definitions.

First, maritime security is defined as preventing and opposing all intentional activities that are hostile to our national interests. It's defined in relation to threats (terrorism, illicit trafficking, piracy, pillaging of resources, intentional pollution), maritime safety (of navigation, ships, people and goods) and, more generally, the safety of states. It's thus mainly about preventing or combating the effects of events that are natural, human-caused or unintentional and that harm people, the environment, ships or infrastructure, and is essentially defined in relation to risks (such as climatic hazards and events at sea).

Although the two domains of security threats and safety appear to be distinct, they're closely related. Indeed, achieving a security objective indirectly contributes to the achievement of a safety objective, and vice versa. This duality is fully expressed through the use of the naval, air and land forces of the coastguard function in the context of state action at sea. Due to this close relation between maritime security and safety, France considers the surveillance and safety of maritime spaces as one concept. It requires us to take into consideration not only naval issues but also air and terrestrial approaches and the use of newer technologies, such as satellite observation.

Building on this all-embracing definition of maritime issues, Australia, France and New Zealand decided in October 2015 to organise the first trilateral and interdepartmental seminar dedicated to the surveillance of maritime spaces in order to fight transnational crime and illegal fishing, protect marine protected areas, combat the illegal exploitation of resources, use new technologies such as satellite monitoring, improve the safety of navigation and improve rescues in large-scale events. The seminar identified ways to improve cooperation among our three countries but also with regional organisations to protect our marine resources, support our Pacific island partners and optimise the use of limited resources across gigantic maritime areas—a shared space of almost 2 million square kilometres.

The seminar also supported existing maritime cooperation. For example, Australia and France are involved jointly in the fight against drug trafficking in the Pacific Ocean. An identified drug route between South America and Australia crosses the French Pacific territories, where some French naval forces are located. Thanks to the satellite observation of maritime spaces, exchanges of maritime information and increasing cooperation between our two navies, France and Australia have managed to disrupt some of this traffic. In August 2015, for example, Australian forces, with the support of satellite surveillance and the French services, seized around 70 kilograms of cocaine from a yacht in Queensland. The Australian Border Force Commander South Pacific said publicly at that time that the operation showed the importance of cooperation and shared intelligence across the South Pacific in targeting small vessels.[27]

Satellites are also used in the fight against illegal fishing. In June 2016, satellite surveillance contributed to the seizure of 1.5 tonnes of sea cucumbers taken illegally in New Caledonian waters. Australian–French cooperation in the fight against illegal fishing is particularly well structured, especially in the Indian Ocean. In 2011, the two countries signed an agreement to optimise and mutualise their resources and enhance prosecutions of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the EEZs and other maritime areas adjacent to the French Southern Ocean and Antarctic territories, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands. This expression of confidence between the two countries, enabling joint action on sovereign matters, can be considered as a model for the cooperative resolution of maritime issues.

Maritime tourism engenders further cooperation between Australia and France. Globally, France is the fourth most popular travel destination for Australian citizens. Even if Paris remains their favourite French location, more are now travelling to New Caledonia. Maritime tourism accounts for the rapid rise in demand for cruise births and estimated global revenue of €110 billion, and growing numbers of giant cruise ships are being launched. However, it can also cause marine pollution, runs the risk of large-scale accidents, and offers cruise ships as potential targets for terrorist attacks. To deal with those issues, France, Australia and New Zealand are increasing their cooperation to optimise the use of their resources in emergencies.

France and Australia also cooperate in many humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions. For example, France provided civilian and military assistance to the people of the Philippines, Vanuatu and Fiji in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan in November 2013, as well as cyclones Pam in March 2015 and Winston in February 2016. This cooperation was within the framework of the FRANZ agreement, which organises Australian, New Zealand and French support to Pacific islands during and after natural disasters.

Maritime cooperation between our two countries continues to cover a wide range of tasks, from rendering humanitarian assistance and combating illegal trafficking, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and new maritime threats, to joint preparation for large-scale pollution or accidents. Our cooperation is based on our similar approaches to maritime affairs and similar concerns for secure and free oceans. It will continue to strengthen as ocean-related issues increase greatly in importance.

Notes

1 As expressed in the 'Strategy' and 'International engagement' sections, *2016 Defence White Paper*, Department of Defence (DoD), Canberra, February 2016, 14–18, 22.

2 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership between Australia and France*, January 2012, online.

3 DFAT, *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic Regarding Defence Cooperation and Status of Forces*, 14 December 2006, online.

4 Ministry of Defence (MoD), *White Paper on Defense and National Security*, MoD, Paris, May 2013, 57, online.

5 DoD, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 140.

6 US Department of Defense, 'Joint press briefing with Secretary Carter and Defence Minister Le Drian in the Pentagon Briefing Room', 6 July 2015, online.

7 UK Ministry of Defence, 'UK–French defence cooperation reaffirmed on fifth anniversary of Lancaster House Agreement', media release, 3 November 2015, online.

8 DoD, *2016 Defence White Paper*, 122.

9 MoD Head of International Relations and Strategy, Philippe Errera, quoted in Kelvin Wong, 'France highlights Asia–Pacific strategic imperatives', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 October 2014.

10 This was prepared by the Defense Ministry, with significant Ministry for Foreign Affairs involvement, and then issued as a national policy statement; MoD, *France and security in the Asia–Pacific*, 3.

11 Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's foreword in MoD, *France and security in the Asia–Pacific*, ii.

12 MoD, *Defense key figures*, MoD, Paris, 2015.

13 MoD, *France and security in the Asia–Pacific*, 10.

14 Pers. comm., Dr Nicolas Regaud, Special Adviser to the Delegate-General for International Relations and Strategy, MoD, 11 March 2016; my translation.

15 As described in Bob Breen, *Struggling for self-reliance: four case studies of Australian regional force protection in the late 1980s and the 1990s*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, ANU Press, Canberra, 2008, 136–48; see also Peter Cosgrove, *General Peter Cosgrove: my story*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2006, 166–188.

16 The rapid decision by President Hollande and his National Security Committee to accept these risks is described well in Sergei Boeke, Bart Schuurman, 'Operation "Serval": a strategic analysis of the French intervention in Mali, 2013–2014', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 24 July 2015, 38(6):12, online.

17 This chapter describes French military and political culture as it affects the use of force in the national interest and in terms that illustrate commonalities with Australia. See Michael Shurkin, 'Bet on it: Hollande's counterattack against the terrorists is going to hurt them', *Politico*, 17 November 2015, online.

18 The FRANZ agreement is a trilateral agreement between France, Australia and New Zealand, signed in December 1992, on disaster relief cooperation in the South Pacific; see DFAT, *Joint Statement on Disaster Relief Cooperation in the South Pacific*, 22 December 1992, online. The Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group is a multilateral agreement between France, Australia, the US and New Zealand to provide maritime surveillance support in the Pacific. ADF support is provided under Operation Solania; see DoD, *Operation Solania*, no date, online. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium is 'a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues'; see Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, *About IONS*, Indian Navy, 2012, online.

19 Australian High Commission, Papua New Guinea, *Joint Communiqué of the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting*, 1 May 2015, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, online.

20 Denise Fisher, *France in the South Pacific: power and politics*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2013, 7.

21 Pers. comm., Dr Nicolas Regaud, 11 March 2016.

22 See, for example, the discussion by Nic Maclellan, 'The Australia–France Defence Co-operation Agreement: implications for France in the South Pacific', *Nautilus Institute*, 2 November 2009, online.

23 See, for example, Michael Shurkin, 'France's war in Mali: lessons for an expeditionary army', RAND Corporation, 2014, online.

24 DoD, *2013 Defence White Paper*, Australian Government, Canberra, May 2013.

25 Pers. comm., Denise Fisher, 14 March 2016.

26 Personal observation, based on numerous discussions with US Embassy and Joint Staff representatives while serving as Defence Attaché in Paris. Typically, they express frustration at the insistence on bilateral cooperation in our region, by Australia and others.

27 Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 'Joint Queensland operation nets cocaine haul on yacht', media release, 25 August 2015, Australian Government, Canberra, online.

CHAPTER 4

The Pacific

French perspective: redefining a strategic narrative for France’s future presence in the South Pacific

Paul Soyez

Is a French–Pacific identity an oxymoron? Arguing that both identities can fully overlap, French policymakers are currently working to define the future shape of France’s presence in the South Pacific in an initiative strongly supported by Canberra. France’s current renewal and clarification of its oceanic strategy is one of the most significant factors enabling the construction of the French–Australian partnership.

As a regional laboratory for the French–Australian bilateral relationship, the South Pacific has been a key site for cooperation and opposition between Paris and Canberra. Until the end of the 1990s, the two Pacific neighbours looked askance at each other. Despite French and Australian attempts to maintain a positive relationship by promoting regional scientific cooperation, the South Pacific was the site of two of the major diplomatic disputes between the two countries: France’s nuclear program in French Polynesia and Australia’s ambiguous position on political tensions in New Caledonia. Australian policymakers often judged France as an arrogant, lingering colonial power disrupting the region’s *modus vivendi* for the sake of its global interests, while French policymakers were convinced that Australia, like other Anglo-Saxon countries, was naturally opposed to their interests.

More precisely, France and Australia’s opposition in the South Pacific was the product of their policymakers’ misunderstanding of each other’s conception of political legitimacy. France’s political legitimacy is founded on its republican principle of the unicity of its people, their rights and their duties, in both metropolitan France and its overseas territories. Until the Rocard government and the Matignon–Oudinot Accords in 1988, French policymakers made little attempt to explain this conception of the indivisibility of the French Republic to their Pacific neighbours, who understood this inflexibility as the remains of an illegitimate colonial imperialism. Because of this discrepancy, and influenced by the South Pacific countries’ lobbying against France’s presence in the Pacific, Australia regularly condemned France’s policies in its overseas territories. However, in the past two decades, France has endeavoured to modify its definition of political legitimacy to encompass greater institutional autonomy for its overseas territories. This has allowed reflection on a joint French and Pacific identity for these archipelagos. It has also enabled Paris and Canberra to move beyond their intellectual opposition in order to forge their strategic partnership.

France’s diplomacy in the South Pacific is now twofold. It coordinates traditional national diplomatic action, led from Paris, with territorial South Pacific diplomacy, led from Noumea and Papeete. The French state has encouraged its regions to develop their own diplomatic administration, under the supervision of Paris, in order to improve transborder cooperation with their neighbours. This institutional reform, begun in metropolitan France as part of the EU’s integration policies, has now been extended to overseas territories. As is allowed by their constitutional organisation, New Caledonia and French Polynesia have now developed their own diplomatic administration. New Caledonia has its own *Service de la Coopération régionale et des Relations extérieures* (SCRRE; the Department of Regional Cooperation and Foreign Relations), which is comparable in size to the ministries of foreign affairs of other Pacific island states. By 2018, the SCRRE will open four new independent posts in Vanuatu, Australia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji, in addition to the one already operating in New Zealand. This territorial diplomacy was also strengthened in 2016 by the Letchimy law, which enables French overseas territories to increase their diplomatic autonomy and sign international agreements; Paris intervenes only to ensure that such partnerships don't break France's political and legal unity. France's efforts to develop a territorial diplomacy in the South Pacific have engendered two positive consequences: the acceptance of our presence in the Pacific and the integration of our overseas territories into regional oceanic institutions.

France's primary expectation from Australia, as its closest regional partner, has been Canberra's clear and official support of our presence and strategy in the South Pacific. Therefore, after having frequently considered France as a disruptive source of regional insecurity in the past, Australian policymakers have assured their French counterparts that Canberra values France's contribution in the South Pacific. This acknowledgement of France's positive contribution to Australian security has been increasingly reasserted since the 2012 Joint Statement of Strategic Partnership and further reinforced by the French–Australian intergovernmental agreement signed in December 2016.

However, the coordination of national and territorial diplomacies remains a complex exercise that requires a unifying strategic narrative. Consequently, France must devote some of its resources to the renewal of its oceanic strategy, and has done so. French policymakers are engaged in this process in order to reinvent a French–Pacific identity in a context of increasing administrative and identity-related differentiation between France and its Pacific territories. This new narrative must encompass three components.

First, France's renewed narrative for its South Pacific strategy must be able to increase in flexibility by progressively becoming more multidimensional. French policymakers no longer believe that France's overseas territories solely constitute outposts of France's metropolitan interests and identity. To be fully accepted, our strategy in the South Pacific needs to combine three dimensions: regional Melanesian and Polynesian approaches, plus a metropolitan approach, which serves France's global interests. This innovative and multidimensional strategy aims to correspond to the current context in Oceania. If the South Pacific is increasingly engaging on the global stage, for example through numerous South Pacific +1 meetings, the region is also contracting into three subregions—Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia—which are becoming more and more institutionalised. French policymakers intend to improve the efficiency of their strategy in the South Pacific by developing specific subregional approaches in Melanesia and Polynesia, led in collaboration with the governments of New Caledonia and French Polynesia, respectively. Therefore, this refined strategy underpins the progressive territorialisation of France's foreign policy in the South Pacific.

Second, France's strategic narrative in Oceania must encompass an increasingly significant European dimension. The EU is now one of the largest aid donors to the South Pacific, and its financial and technical contribution is crucial for the region's development. For example, between 1975 and 2006, through the Lomé and then the Cotonou agreements, the EU contributed €194 million to development projects in the Pacific and more than €2 billion in direct bilateral aid to countries in the region.[1] France has acted as a solid intermediary between Oceania and Europe and now intends to fully integrate this role into its Pacific narrative. For example, in the lead-up to the negotiations for the renewal of the Lomé Agreement, French policymakers will lobby so that the Pacific remains a significant beneficiary of Europe's development programs. Seeking to strengthen France's legitimacy and leadership in the South Pacific, they regularly remind their counterparts in Oceania of France's role as a relayer of their claims to the EU.

Moreover, the French Pacific territories themselves promote their role as bridges between the South Pacific and the EU. Policymakers in Noumea and Papeete have asserted this argument for more than a decade in order to convince their neighbours to fully integrate them into regional organisations, especially into the Pacific Islands Forum—an aim achieved in September 2016. Therefore, the European dimension of the French strategic narrative has also constituted a significant component of France's territorial diplomacy in the South Pacific. Being a French–Pacific citizen also implies being European.

Australia values France's role within European institutions as a relayer of South Pacific interests. The French–Australian partnership emphasises this dimension, even though Australian policymakers seem cautious about the possibility of the introduction of the EU as a significant actor in the Indo-Pacific, perhaps disrupting the regional order that Canberra has tried to build. However, Australia's reliance on European funding to share the cost of foreign aid in the Pacific is one of the key reasons explaining Canberra's support for the regional integration of the French territories.

Third, French policymakers intend to integrate the Australian concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' and to adapt it to French economic and security interests. Asserting the strategic coherence of the Indo-Pacific space for France enables Paris to harmonise and strengthen the strategic narrative that legitimises our presence in overseas territories. By doing so, France doesn't rely solely on a republican and almost sentimental discourse to explain its ties with its overseas territories, but also demonstrates that a coherent Indo-Pacific region, sharing common interests and facing similar threats, benefits from a coherent French strategy. Therefore, influenced by Australian policymakers, Paris increasingly asserts that it must articulate an Indo-Pacific strategy for the security and development of this region and France's overseas territories, from Mayotte to Wallis and Futuna. Moreover, this narrative significantly reinforces the French–Australian strategic partnership by extending Paris and Canberra's tangible cooperation in the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean. Australian policymakers support France's adoption of an Indo-Pacific vision because it will provide Australia with a strong ally, as Canberra intends to reinforce its diplomacy to its west. Basing its strategy on a clearer and more sophisticated regional narrative will enable France to reinforce its role in the South Pacific and its partnership with Australia.

What does France aim to achieve in the Pacific with its new strategic narrative?

French policymakers in Paris, Noumea and Papeete hope to achieve three main political and diplomatic objectives in order to implement their narrative for Oceania, all strongly supported by Australia. France's national and territorial diplomacy aims to uphold French sovereignty over New Caledonia in the light of its future referendum on independence, to integrate Noumea and Papeete into regional multilateral institutions, and to protect the region's security, serving French and Australian common interests.

The institutional clarification of the diplomatic competencies of territorial and national actors has served France's interests within its territories. French policymakers have empowered New Caledonian and French Polynesian diplomatic administrations as a demonstration of Paris's will to provide greater autonomy to its territories. Therefore, this policy has reinforced the position of supporters of French sovereignty over New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna against pro-independence movements by showing that a middle ground exists between independence and the status quo. More precisely, in preparation for New Caledonia's referendum on independence in November 2018, such significant transfers of responsibilities correspond to France's efforts to conduct peaceful negotiations about the future of New Caledonia and to convince the local population that their archipelago can combine significant autonomy with integration into the French Republic. This territorial diplomacy is designed to manifest a French–Pacific identity. Australia has supported our management of the political tensions in New Caledonia in order to support its own regional interests. Australian policymakers want France to remain in the Pacific. However, many pro-independence New Caledonians remain convinced that territorial diplomacy isn't sufficient to protect and promote their interests, as opposed to those of metropolitan France.

The same suspicion exists in South Pacific countries. For decades, Pacific island states have refused French Pacific territories full membership in their regional institutions on the basis that, because of the territories' lack of autonomy, they would defend Paris's interests over those of the region. Even though this concern hasn't vanished and is still relevant, the development of a territorial diplomacy has partly assuaged this apprehension. Moreover, in the Pacific context of regular political instability, strong climatic threats and ongoing economic difficulties, the need for France's contribution to the region's development has become even more significant. Therefore, France and its territories convinced South Pacific countries to integrate New Caledonia and French Polynesia as full members of the Pacific Islands Forum from September 2016, while the Territory of Wallis and Futuna Islands retains its observer status. The forum hopes to benefit from the territories' economic strength and from the contribution that Noumea and Papeete promise to make, including relaying from France and the EU. Also in 2016, New Caledonia joined the Pacific Committee of the World Health Organization and the International Organisation of La Francophonie. Noumea is also hoping to join the International Labour Organization and UNESCO. Australia has been France's strongest partner in this regional integration, actively lobbying at the Pacific Islands Forum to support New Caledonia's and French Polynesia's membership. That support is based on Paris's and Canberra's common interests in maintaining the region's security.

In the past two decades, France and Australia have developed regular military cooperation as part of our tangible strategic partnership. Our joint operations are an additional lever for the region's stability and strengthen Australia's and France's leadership in the South Pacific. This military cooperation encompasses maritime patrols to secure trade routes and fishing resources, and aid programs, especially following natural disasters. French and Australian military forces mainly cooperate in the South Pacific during FRANZ operations. Initiated in 1992, the FRANZ partnership brings together Australian, French and New Zealander troops, the French contingent being the New Caledonian Armed Forces. The most recent French and Australian defence white papers emphasise the importance of the FRANZ arrangement to the two nations' regional strategies. In addition, regular joint exercises in the Pacific have been conceived by Canberra and Paris in order to develop a collaborative culture between French and Australian forces for other military engagements and as tools to reduce mutual misperceptions of each country among the other's policymakers and military.

To conclude, France's strategy in the South Pacific is primarily notable for its complexity, which originates in its national and territorial layers. To invent a new narrative defining France's legitimacy and objectives in the South Pacific, French policymakers must encompass and articulate simultaneously Melanesian, Polynesian, territorial, metropolitan and European approaches and identities, while serving France's global interests. Solving this equation is a difficult task, and the possibility of a French–Pacific identity remains questionable. Nonetheless, France now benefits from Australia's solid support to achieve such a complex strategy. Our two countries are now fully engaged in a tangible strategic partnership, with the South Pacific at its centre, which has been significantly reinforced by the recent submarine contract between Paris and Canberra.

Australian perspective: strategic cooperation with France in the South Pacific

Denise Fisher

From Australia's perspective, France's behaviour in the South Pacific has changed dramatically in recent years from that of a bullying outsider to that of a charming partner, as Paris has adapted its diplomatic tools to achieve its strategic aims.[2] For France, Australia is no longer so much a target of opprobrium and suspicion as a valued ally with a unique leadership role. As both countries face a changed regional context, Australia has leverage in its joint collaboration with France, which it should use to strengthen security and economic development.

Cooperation in the South Pacific is a cornerstone of the Australia–France relationship. It's where interaction is at its most practical and quotidian, and involves joint engagement with island partners, primarily via defence links. This suits France, since it has resident defence forces to maintain and enforce its sovereignty in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, the Wallis and Futuna Islands and Clipperton Island, and Australian support reinforces its legitimacy as a regional sovereign power. It also suits Australia to share the burdens of regional leadership with a well-resourced Western ally. But the two countries' principal strategic objectives aren't the same. Australia plays a leading role in ensuring security and prosperity in an inherently fragile neighbourhood vulnerable to increasing influence from without,[3] contributing by far the largest regional aid program. France's primary aim is retaining sovereignty, and its Pacific objectives are focused more on security in North and Southeast Asia.[4]

Joint regional cooperation is at a turning point. France sees Australia's granting of its largest ever $50 billion submarine construction contract to a French state-backed company as a new step in the strategic relationship.[5] Both countries redefined areas for strategic cooperation, including in the Pacific, in a joint statement in January 2017.[6] As is explored below, renewed collaboration in the region is important to both countries because they face strategic challenges there, arising not only from exogenous factors, such as competition from new external players, but also from endogenous change, as island countries reshape the way they engage with external partners. But the stakes are higher for France, as it derives a range of strategic benefits from its Pacific presence well beyond those accruing to Australia. France also faces, by November 2018 and after years of delay, the imminent redefinition of its sovereignty in New Caledonia, with spin-off effects for its global territories. Australia is thus in a strong position to leverage greater constructive regional financial and trade engagement from France.

France's commitment to sovereignty in the region, expressed in its nuclear testing and decolonisation policies, has been destabilising in the recent past. Such was local opposition that major regional architectures, including the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Melanesian Spearhead Group, were formed out of dissatisfaction with France.[7] Indeed, current Australia–France collaboration sprang from France's need to improve its image in response. Only after successful pressure, led by Pacific islanders, did France cease its nuclear testing in French Polynesia in 1996. And similarly, by 1988, France negotiated an end to bloody civil war in New Caledonia, extended in the 1998 Noumea Accord on yet another promise of an independence referendum, this time by the end of 2018.

France has since worked hard to win regional support for its presence, and its defence relationship with Australia and New Zealand has been at the forefront. The three nations cooperate to provide disaster assistance, maritime surveillance and shared intelligence on fisheries for regional countries under the 1992 FRANZ arrangement, using mainly defence links. From 2003, France joined Australia and New Zealand in the South Pacific Defence Ministers Meetings, along with Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Chile and, from 2009, with the US in Quadrilateral Defence Coordinating Group talks. The three countries conduct regular regional defence exercises, including with Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu. The 2006 France–Australia Defence Cooperation and Status of Forces Agreement relates largely to the South Pacific, and the related Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement, still under negotiation, essentially covers existing French military logistical support in New Caledonia for Australian forces conducting regional emergency operations. But some independence supporters say such agreements are premature, since defence is an explicit subject of the 2018 referendum.[8]

At a lower level, there's joint cooperation in development assistance across a range of regional technical bodies. As with defence cooperation, France mainly joins existing areas of assistance long established by Australia and New Zealand, such as for fisheries and coral reefs, but only at a very modest level. While figures are opaque, France's aid to the region is at most around US$100 million a year, compared to Australia's A$910 million in 2016–17, and there's a trend of diminishing direct contributions and increasing contributions via the EU.[9] This is in marked contrast to France's expenditure in its own territories of around $2 billion annually in each of New Caledonia and French Polynesia.[10] There's also some small aid engagement from the French territories themselves.[11]

Trade and economic cooperation is almost non-existent, given the French territories' dependence on French and European markets and their reluctance to engage in regional frameworks such as the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER). The 2002 Australia – New Caledonia Trade Arrangement has involved occasional bilateral discussion but minimal practical liberalisation.

France has developed its own Oceanic Summit meetings with island countries, where it has progressed its global climate change objectives, some of which are at odds with those of Australia.

France has generally succeeded in its efforts to secure greater regional acceptance of its sovereignty, with its relationship with Australia at the core, from the 1990s. A big win was the decision by the PIF in September 2016 to admit New Caledonia and French Polynesia as full members. Apart from Australia, which supported full membership from 2011,[12] forum leaders had long resisted the idea, granting first observer status and then a specially devised associate membership, pending the full implementation of the Noumea Accord referendum process, based on concerns that full membership would effectively mean three voices for France. French pressure was persistent and included promises of support for a Polynesian Leaders Secretariat and climate change initiatives and duchessing regional leaders in Paris. For example, Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister made his first state visit to France in June 2016, flagging a proposed $10 billion investment in liquefied natural gas by Total.[13] Discussions among PIF members had clearly been difficult, and the chairman noted some remaining dissension, saying that the leaders were responding to requests by the French territories and citing shared interests in cross-border issues such as fisheries and climate change.[14] Island countries expect New Caledonia's referendum to proceed. They also expect the wealthy territories, particularly New Caledonia, where per capita GNP exceeds New Zealand's,[15] to deliver economic and development benefits in return for membership.[16]

The PIF's decision was no doubt shaped by an altered regional context. It's consistent with wider shifts in regional cooperation in response to complex strategic change. When France began consolidating regional acceptance in the 1990s, the context was predictable: the South Pacific Commission and the PIF were the main regional organisations; the UK and the US had withdrawn, leaving security leadership to Australia and New Zealand; China and Taiwan played chequebook diplomacy for recognition as the legitimate China; and Japan worked to shore up its fisheries and UN interests.

But the past 10 years have seen significant geostrategic change. With China's rise, its regional presence has inevitably grown exponentially, and fast, to the point where it's now at least the region's third biggest donor by one measure.[17] Its trade, business and tourism presence has grown apace.[18] Stability in the fragile island states and the resilience of their limited infrastructure have been affected as they comply with China's requirements for commitment to a one-China policy, for bilateral rather than the more usual multilateral avenues, for the use of Chinese inputs and labour (with accompanying social tensions), and for concessional loans that create indebtedness. The French territories haven't been immune, especially in French Polynesia, which is strategically located for China in its outreach across the Pacific to South America, and France has reiterated the need for foreign investment to comply with French law and for France (not its territories) to be the major stakeholder.[19]

In response to China's presence, traditional regional players, including the US, Taiwan and Japan, have revamped their own approaches. The US has adjusted its regional defence presence, primarily in Australia, and marginally increased its aid, while increasing the level of its participation in regional political meetings. Taiwan and Japan have increased their aid levels and formed their own regional forums.

And new players have engaged with Pacific island countries to advance their respective and varied interests. There were five dialogue partners with the PIF in 1989: Canada, France, Japan, the UK and the US. There are now 17, with the addition of entities as varied as China, Cuba, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Italy, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Spain, Thailand and Turkey—each courting UN votes, resources or strategic presence.

Island leaders have reshaped their collaboration, excluding Australia and New Zealand. Some, such as Fiji after Western sanctions of its military dictatorship, espouse a deliberate 'Look North' policy, seeking new partnerships in Asia, especially with China.[20] Fiji has set up the Pacific Islands Development Forum as an alternative to the PIF. In the UN, in 2011, the Pacific islands achieved a name change from 'Asia' to 'Asia–Pacific' for the group in which they participate. They work in the Pacific Small Islands Developing States Group and similarly cooperate on climate change within a Small Islands States group, involving partners from Asia and the Caribbean. None of those groups involves Australia or New Zealand.

Back home, the island states are adjusting to the styles of the many other players who prefer bilateral rather than regional arrangements, led by the EU and China. While the Biketawa collective security arrangement[21] is unaffected, regional trade agreements led by Australia and New Zealand that had been devised to ease duplication and capacity burdens for the tiny island states have been reshaped.[22] The 2005 Pacific Plan became the Framework for Pacific Regionalism from 2014, and the 2001 PACER, which includes the old partners Australia and New Zealand, became the PACER (Plus) from 2009. Both changes allow flexibility to accommodate bilateral arrangements with others. Only the 2001 Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement, which excludes Australia and New Zealand, continues unchanged.

Meanwhile, there's been a heightened appreciation in France of the strategic value of its continued sovereignty in the Pacific region. In the five years from 2011, six major government or Senate reports highlighted specific strategic benefits.[23] By virtue of the extensive EEZs of its Pacific territories, France is the world's number two maritime nation (after the US and before Australia), has access to significant resources (including nickel and hydrocarbons), can uniquely support the European space program, builds impressive research capability in areas such as marine sciences and biodiversity, and claims an enviable (for a European country) entrée into Asia–Pacific regional forums.[24] These advantages all underpin its claims as one of only five UN Security Council permanent members, EU leader, NATO contributor, and major Western ally. From a French domestic perspective, a major strategic benefit in retaining its Pacific territories is the demonstration effect for its string of territories around the globe, enabling it to claim a unique presence in 'the three oceans'. French Polynesia, the headquarters of the French Pacific fleet, has long sought rights already accorded to New Caledonia[25] and is closely watching the referendum process. Recent history, for example, of demonstrations about the costs of living, shows that what happens in one French territory now has an immediate effect on others around the globe.

So, Australia and France face similar challenges presented by regional change: notably, how to retain the attention, priority and cooperation of island governments with limited capacity, as new players, including a new superpower, compete for influence. But France has a further, overriding objective, which is to manage the final years of the Noumea Accord in a way that ensures its continued sovereignty and peace and stability in that territory and its territories beyond. The referendum in New Caledonia must begin by November 2018, either at the instigation of three-fifths of its local Congress or by the French state if agreement isn't possible. It must focus on New Caledonia's future status, the voting and employment rights of longstanding residents, and specific sovereign responsibilities of defence, foreign affairs, currency, justice and law and order.

The path isn't smooth. France has prepared carefully. In 2014, it published a discussion paper by two French jurists on the institutional future, setting out legal aspects of four different options: independence, integration, and two types of continued association with France. After two years of consultation, in 2016 a French commission summarised areas of convergence and divergence. It's now time to focus on the areas of divergence, often profound, that the commission highlighted. These are the core issues over which civil war was fought in the 1980s: preserving employment and voting rights for long-term residents; ensuring the fair distribution of revenues from the nickel resource; and sensitive core issues involving responsibility for defence, local security, foreign policy, UN representation, and currency.

The politics are complicated. The pro-France group is in the majority but divided, even over the very question of having a referendum, in seeming disregard of the Noumea Accord's specific provisions for one. Some are seriously proposing policies ranging from deferring the referendum yet again to holding one 'guillotine' referendum, when the accord requires three, to get the process over with. To supporters of independence, each of those proposals is equally unacceptable and indeed explosive. In between, there's a range degrees of cooperation with pro-independence groups. And there's an underlying pattern of violence, including shootings, by disaffected young Kanaks against Europeans.

Major French national elections from April to September 2017 interrupted the critical work schedule. Those elections determined which local pro-France groups will have the most influence. The impact is serious: the only local candidate publicly backing the mainstream Republican candidate in the French presidential election, François Fillon, supports deferring a referendum yet again.

Australia's official approach has been to support the full implementation of the Noumea Accord process, providing for a democratic vote on the future of the territory. It hasn't bought into any particular local position, apart from reaffirming the expectation that a vote will proceed, and shouldn't do so.

But in the short term Australia could show a more nuanced touch in its regional defence collaboration with France. Its defence cooperation, its support for French territories' PIF membership, and its awarding a French state-backed company the largest ever defence contract have so far delivered strong support for France and its continued sovereignty in the Pacific at a critical time. Australia thus has considerable leverage, which could be used to ensure that France:

- meets regional expectations to implement the Noumea Accord in its full spirit, including by holding the long-promised referendum as prescribed by the end of 2018
- delivering a far higher level of development assistance and support to the region
- providing for more genuine engagement of its territories by opening their markets on favourable terms to the benefit of the region.

More immediately, with the referendum set for November 2018, Australia should be wary of being drawn into specific defence activities involving Noumea that could be misinterpreted as support for one of the local groups. Our policymakers should understand that there's a fundamental difference among the local parties over defence: some see France alone as the defence guarantor, while others want New Caledonia to decide its own defence partners, which might or might not include France. A detached, careful, sensitive approach could accrue dividends for us as a valued long-term partner, whichever way New Caledonians decide to go.

In the longer term, Australia shouldn't underrate its regional leadership role and the value that has for France, as both countries adapt to new regional realities. For France, full implementation of the promised referendum in New Caledonia is fundamental to its future. Only after that referendum will France be able to reassess its position and benefit fully from the potential assets and responsibilities that resident sovereign status can deliver.

Notes

1 Nathalie Mrgudovic, *La France dans le Pacifique Sud, les enjeux de la puissance*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2008, 370.

2 For France, the result of this shift, according to former Prime Minister Michel Rocard, is that France has passed 'from the ranks of detested power … to one more like a big sister.' See Denise Fisher, *France in the South Pacific: power and politics*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2013, 3.

3 Department of Defence (DoD), *Defence White Paper 2016*, DoD, Canberra, sections 3.21, 2.35.

4 See France's Defence White Paper 2013, 29–30. Successive French leaders, of both socialist and conservative persuasions, have declared France's goal to be retaining sovereignty in its overseas territories. Sarkozy drew a 'red line' at independence when speaking of increased autonomy for the French *outre-mer* ('Discours de voeux de nouvel an', Saint-Denis, 19 January 2010. Hollande stated 'l'Outre-mer est dans la République', and 'Quand la République est présente; pourquoi s'en séparer?' ('The *Outre-mer* is in the Republic' and 'When the Republic is present, why separate from it?'); in 'l'Outre-mer est dans la République', interview, *Le Journal de dimanche*, 3 January 2013). Candidates in the French presidential elections had remarkably similar policies on the French overseas territories (see those of François Fillon, Manuel Valls and Benoît Hamon).

5 President Hollande styled the contract as 'historic' and a 'decisive advance in the strategic partnership' (media release, 16 April 2016). Prime Minister Valls talked of a new level of relations when he detoured to Canberra from New Caledonia just after the decision was announced ('Valls à Turnbull: notre relation vient d'atteindre un autre niveau', *Petit Journal*, 2 May 2016). See also French Minister of Defence Drian's statement, Adelaide, in February 2016 ('France seeks enhanced "strategic partnership" with Australia', *NewsX*, 1 March 2016, online).

6 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Joint statement of enhanced strategic partnership between Australia and France*, 3 March 2017, online.

7 France banned political discussion in the then sole regional body, the South Pacific Commission (SPC), leading to the formation of the South Pacific Forum (now the PIF) in 1971. The Melanesian Spearhead Group was formed in the early 1980s to monitor France's handling of decolonisation demands in New Caledonia.

8 Nic Maclellan, 'The Australia–France Defence Co-operation Agreement: implications for France in the South Pacific', *Nautilus Institute*, 2 November 2009, online.

9 In 2014, it gave just over US$3 million to the SPC, plus about 19% of the EU contribution, or another US$3.7 million, which together is about equal to New Zealand's contribution. France funds about 19% of all EU aid to the region, which was about €150 million a year from 2008 to 2013 (a French annual contribution of €28.5 million or US$30.5 million), but this may be double-counting the contribution to the SPC and certainly includes contributions to the French territories that are beneficiaries of EU assistance. Moreover, not all allocated EU aid is actually spent.

10 France spent A$1.6 billion in New Caledonia in 2014 and A$2.14 billion in French Polynesia in 2015; Institut de la statistique et des études économiques Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Chiffres-clés 2006–2015*, online; Institut de la statistique de Polynésie française, online.

11 The French territories contribute to the SPC. Latest figures show that in 2014 New Caledonia contributed US$852,747, French Polynesia US$331,741, and Wallis and Futuna US$47,554; SPC, 2014 annual report, 'Donor contributions', 57. A Pacific Fund funded by France

(€1.38 million in 2016) is designed to assist regional integration for its territories, and is the umbrella for cooperation by New Caledonia with Vanuatu under a 2002 bilateral agreement and by French Polynesia with the Cook Islands. Both territories have given emergency assistance to neighbours after natural disasters.

12 Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, in a joint statement with French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé, said '… both countries supported New Caledonia's application to become a full member of the Pacific Islands Forum'; Joint Australia–France Ministers Statement, Canberra, 11 September 2011.

13 Nic Maclellan, 'France and the forum', *Inside Story*, 13 October 2016, online.

14 Forum chair FSM President Peter Christian commented that 'there were concerns how we are doing it but … we agreed that French Polynesia and New Caledonia have been knocking on our door many many years' and shared concern over issues such as global warming and the preservation of fisheries; press conference, 11 September 2016.

15 See Trading Economics comparisons, GDP per capita for New Caledonia was US$38,896 in 2011 with New Zealand's at US$36,801 in 2015 at online accessed 7 March 2017.

16 Personal communications, senior regional official December 2016.

17 While China's figures are opaque, Lowy Institute figures show that from annual aid of around US$33 million in 2005 China delivered aid worth around US$1.78 billion from 2006 to 2013, just behind US aid of US$1.89 billion, but well behind Australia's US$7.7 billion for the period.

18 Denise Fisher, 'One among many: changing geostrategic interests and challenges for France in the South Pacific', *Les Études du CERI,* Centre de recherches internationales, Sciences Po, no. 216, 1 December 2015, 18–20.

19 François Hollande, 'L'Outre-mer', interview, TV channels Outre-mer 17ere and France Ô, 24 January 2014.

20 Including Fiji, the Cook Islands, Samoa and Papua New Guinea. See Fisher, 'One among many: changing geostrategic interests and challenges for France in the South Pacific', 27.

21 The Biketawa Declaration was agreed to by the PIF leaders in 2000. It has led to military, police and civilian personnel of PIF states participating in regional peacekeeping and stabilisation operations, such as those in Solomon Islands, Nauru and Tonga.

22 The Pacific Plan was crafted by the PIF in 2005 'to strengthen regional processes and outputs so that the regional system carries some of the burdens of sovereignty for the Pacific island countries that lack the capacity to do all that statehood requires of them.' See R Herr, A Bergin, *Our near abroad: Australia and Pacific islands regionalism*, ASPI, Canberra, November 2011, 45.

23 These include one Foreign Affairs Ministry report (Ministre des Affaires étrangères et européennes, *La France en Asie-Océanie: enjeux stratégiques et politiques*, August 2011); the 2013 Defence White Paper; one Economic Social and Environment Council paper (Conseil économique, social et environnemental, *'L'extension du plateau continental au-delà des 200 milles marins: un atout pour la France, avis de Gérard Grignon' Journaux officiels*, October 2013); and three Senate reports: Sénat, *'La maritimisation' Rapport d'Information*, no. 674, 17 July 2012, online; Sénat, *Colloque La France dans le Pacifique: quelle vision pour le 21e siècle?*, 17 January 2013, online; Sénat, *ZEEs maritimes: Moment de la vérité*, 9 April 2014, online).

24 Elaborated on in Fisher, 'One among many: changing geostrategic interests and challenges for France in the South Pacific', 6–14.

25 While New Caledonia retains a *sui generis* status explicitly provided for in the French Constitution, there are strong parallels between statutes introduced in French Polynesia and New Caledonia from the 1970s to the early 2000s.

CHAPTER 5

Prospects for the future bilateral relationship

Jacinta Carroll and Theodore Ell

The chapters of this compendium demonstrate that Australian–French cooperation across the defence and security spectrum has evolved rapidly in recent years; indeed, the number and variety of areas of collaboration are surprising.

A common theme from all the authors is acknowledgement that Australia and France have recently found ways to translate the sense and history of like-mindedness into practical and meaningful activities, supported by a shared intent to interact in complex areas and with high-end capability.

But there's a note of caution. Running through all of the chapters is a warning that activity is no replacement for strategy: the relationship needs a considered and long-term plan of approach, supported by an array of mechanisms to assist information sharing and collaboration. To do otherwise would be to risk ignoring the very real limitations that have affected the relationship to date, including differences between the two countries' national interests, defence and security cultures, legal systems and operational procedures.

Successful bilateralism requires a focus on areas of difference as well as commonalities; to do otherwise is to talk past one another.

The tension in Australian–French mutual comprehension is the subject of this volume's introductory chapters. Graeme Dobell explores the mistrust that was seeded between Australia and France in the earliest years of the European presence in the Pacific and endured up to the 1990s as disagreement over nuclear testing and independence struggles deepened. Theodore Ell argues that the rapprochement of recent years, though welcome in uncertain times, comes with the price of greater vigilance and investment of strategists' time and energy. Whether by circumstance or as a result of a genuine shift in the ways in which Australia and France think of each other, there's now the opportunity to do much more than simply hedge against a lapse into the unproductive rivalry and cross-purposes of the past.

While history will always carry its warnings, this volume makes it clear that Australian–French cooperation is more focused, effective and promising than it has ever been. The security, defence and foreign policy practitioners from France and Australia who have offered their perspectives share the view that the relationship has moved beyond the frictions and tensions of the past and is now overwhelmingly positive and congruent with each country's interests. Nicolas Regaud argues that wider understanding of this shared world view in Australian and French society—particularly of earnest joint work in the national security and counterterrorism spheres—would reinforce shared commitment to safeguarding democratic society without eroding the freedoms at its heart. This sentiment is shared by Jacinta Carroll and Lisa Sharland, who argue for closer Australian–French cooperation and joint leadership on global security matters, refocusing efforts to see each other as regional experts on a shared global problem, rather than divided by geography, and also through a collaborative approach to multinational institutions, where both nations could contribute to expanded multilateralism. They note that the 2017 'Joint statement of enhanced strategic partnership between Australia and France' provides recognition of shared interests, but caution that the ambitious program of initiatives requires an equally strong commitment to implementation. Rupert Hoskin and Virginie Saliou demonstrate that military cooperation, from disaster relief and maritime law enforcement in the Pacific to joint action and mutual assistance in the Iraq–Syria conflict, is the area in which Australian–French bilateralism is growing fastest and strongest, thanks not simply to a shared world view but to a readiness to engage with tactical risk. When the ideas and institutions that Australia and France most value are endangered, Hoskin and Saliou suggest, close partnership is the first instinct.

But it's not all plain sailing. Where Australia and France's interests are closest—in our shared region of the Indo-Pacific—there's a need for careful management. Paul Soyez and Denise Fisher make it clear that a refreshed and healthy view of the relationship also requires a new understanding of each other and new obligations. Australia and France must take the time to understand each other's intentions in order to develop complementary approaches to promoting stability and security in the region. France's engagement in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific—including through regional multilateral forums—is overwhelmingly beneficial for the future of those parts of the world, and it's in Australia's interest to ensure that involvement continues.

The new developments and potential cooperation explored in this volume are only the beginning of the larger effort that will be required if a more substantial Australian–French relationship is to be achieved. Circumstances are likely to continue pressing Australia and France to work more closely together, if we stand by the world views that we espouse. The next lesson in cooperating effectively in challenges we both face is to know how to face one another. We are just in time to learn.

THE AUTHORS

Jacinta Carroll joined the Australian National University (ANU) National Security College as Director, National Security Policy, in August 2017. Before that, she was the inaugural head of ASPI's Counter-Terrorism Policy Centre, a position she held from August 2015. Jacinta joined ASPI from the Australian Government, where she had held a variety of Senior Executive appointments and worked in the Department of Defence and the Attorney-General's Department. Her career experience includes working on national security, counterterrorism, strategic policy, border security, military operations, campaign planning and scenario development, information management, and international policy, with a particular focus on the Middle East and Afghanistan; she has served in Iraq. Jacinta is a graduate of the ANU, has postgraduate qualifications in management from Flinders University, and holds Masters degrees from the University of Sydney and Deakin University.

Graeme Dobell, a journalist for 45 years, has been reporting on Australian and international politics, foreign affairs, defence and the Asia–Pacific since 1975. He is a Journalist Fellow with ASPI and from 2008 to 2012 was a Journalist Fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Policy. In reporting on Asia, Graeme covered the security dialogue of the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit and a dozen APEC summits. Assignments in his career as a correspondent have included the Falklands War, coups in Fiji, Thailand and the Philippines, Beijing after the crushing of the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square, and the return of Hong Kong to China. Graeme was a member of ASPI's Independent Task Force on relations with the South Pacific, which reported in 2008. In 2011, he was a member of the Independent Task Force convened by ASPI and the Foundation for Development Cooperation to report on national security and Australia's aid program. Graeme is the author of *Australia finds home—the choices and chances of an Asia Pacific journey*, published in 2000. In 2011, he was made a Fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs 'for his distinguished contribution to journalism through his reporting on politics and international affairs'.

Theodore Ell is a policy officer in the Department of Defence and was seconded to ASPI from October 2016 to February 2017 to conduct research on the Australia–France bilateral strategic partnership. His articles on this topic were published by *The Strategist*. Before joining the public service, Theodore was an editor, translator and researcher in literature and history. He was awarded a PhD at the University of Sydney in 2010, was an Honorary Associate there until 2014 and became a Visiting Fellow at the ANU until 2016. Between 2012 and 2015, he was co-editor of the international literary journal *Contrappasso Magazine*. In Defence, Theodore's experience has centred on naval force design and international policy.

Denise Fisher was an Australian diplomat for 30 years, serving in Australian diplomatic missions as a political and economic policy analyst in Yangon, Nairobi, New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur and Washington DC, before being appointed Australian High Commissioner in Harare (1998–2001) and then Australian Consul-General in Noumea, New Caledonia (2001–2004). Denise is currently a Visiting Fellow at the ANU Centre for European Studies. Her book, *France in the South Pacific: power and politics*, was published by ANU Press in 2013. Denise was made a Chevalier in the French National Order of Merit in August 2011 and was a Chercheur Invité at the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Internationales at Sciences Po Paris in 2015.

Rupert Hoskin is a brigadier in the Australian Army. His military postings have included troop, squadron and regimental command in the 3rd Combat Engineer Regiment, instructing at the Australian Defence Force Academy and staff roles in various HQs. He has served on military operations in Bosnia, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, and (on sabbatical from the Army) as a water engineer for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Niger. He's currently deployed to Kuwait as the Director of Plans and Strategy for the US-led Coalition Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve, the mission of which is to defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria. In 2011, Rupert served at Parliament House as the Defence Adviser to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. From 2013 to 2015, he was Defence Attaché Paris, with non-resident accreditations to Morocco and Algeria. He has also worked as a civil engineer and project manager in various roles for both Defence and private enterprise. In 2017, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (Military Division) for his services to international relations and to Defence infrastructure.

Nicolas Regaud serves as Special Adviser to the Director General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS), French Ministry of Defence. Before the creation of DGRIS in January 2015, he was in charge of strategic foresight and policy planning as Assistant Defence Policy Director at the Delegation for Strategic Affairs (DAS) from 2008 to 2014. Nicolas previously served as deputy director in charge of international crisis and conflicts at the Secretariat General of Defence and National Security (SGDSN) and as deputy director in charge of strategic export control at SGDSN. He was also assistant to the deputy director in charge of regional affairs at the DAS, attaché for defence equipment at the French Embassy in Tokyo (1993–1997), adviser to the policy planning staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and senior research fellow at the Centre for International Relations and Strategy of the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Nicolas obtained an MA in international relations, an MA in contemporary history and a PhD in political science, all from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. He has published two books on war history in Indochina and numerous articles on contemporary security issues in Asia.

Virginie Saliou specialises in maritime security and has served in policy roles in the French Government and the EU. In 2006 and 2007, she was a member of the Maritime Policy Task Force with the European Commission, and after PhD studies at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique she was a consultant at CAPS (Centre d'Analyse, de Prévision et de Stratégie) in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Her publications address significant emerging challenges in the maritime domain, particularly undersea energy resources and multilateral approaches to maritime governance. Virginie is currently a special adviser on the safety and security of maritime spaces at the French Ministry of Defence and a researcher in European and maritime studies at Sciences Po Rennes.

Lisa Sharland joined ASPI in March 2014 and is head of the institute's International Program. Her research focuses on Australia's engagement in UN peacekeeping operations, UN peace operations reform, women in defence and security, and Australia–Africa engagement. During her time at ASPI, she has undertaken field research on UN peace operations in South Sudan and the Central African Republic as part of a visiting fellowship with the Stimson Center in Washington DC, where she remains a non-resident fellow as part of the Protecting Civilians in Conflict program. She has also worked as a consultant for the International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations. Before joining ASPI, Lisa worked as the Defence Policy Adviser at the Permanent Mission of Australia to the UN in New York, where she advised on peacekeeping and defence-related policy issues and represented Australia in multilateral negotiations in the UN Security Council and General Assembly bodies, including the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34). Lisa holds a Master of International Studies from the University of Sydney, as well as a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from Macquarie University, Australia.

Paul Soyez is a researcher in French–Australian relations at the Paris-Sorbonne University and the University of Melbourne. He's also a lecturer in history and international relations and has taught at the Paris-Sorbonne University and Sciences Po Paris (of which he is also a graduate), specialising in trials in international law and the development of the modern international system. Paul's current research considers the emergence of Australia as a 'middle power'. His articles on French–Australian strategy, relations and geopolitics have appeared regularly in *The Conversation* and *The Strategist*. Dividing his time between France and Australia, Paul has previously worked for the French Honorary Consulate-General in Melbourne and UN Youth Victoria.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
ANU	Australian National University
APEC	Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DWP16	*2016 Defence White Paper* (Australia)
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EU	European Union
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
HADR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
INTERFET	International Force in East Timor
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P5	permanent members of UN Security Council
PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
SCRRE	*Service de la Coopération régionale et des Relations extérieures* (Department of Regional Cooperation and Foreign Relations) (New Caledonia)
SPC	South Pacific Commission

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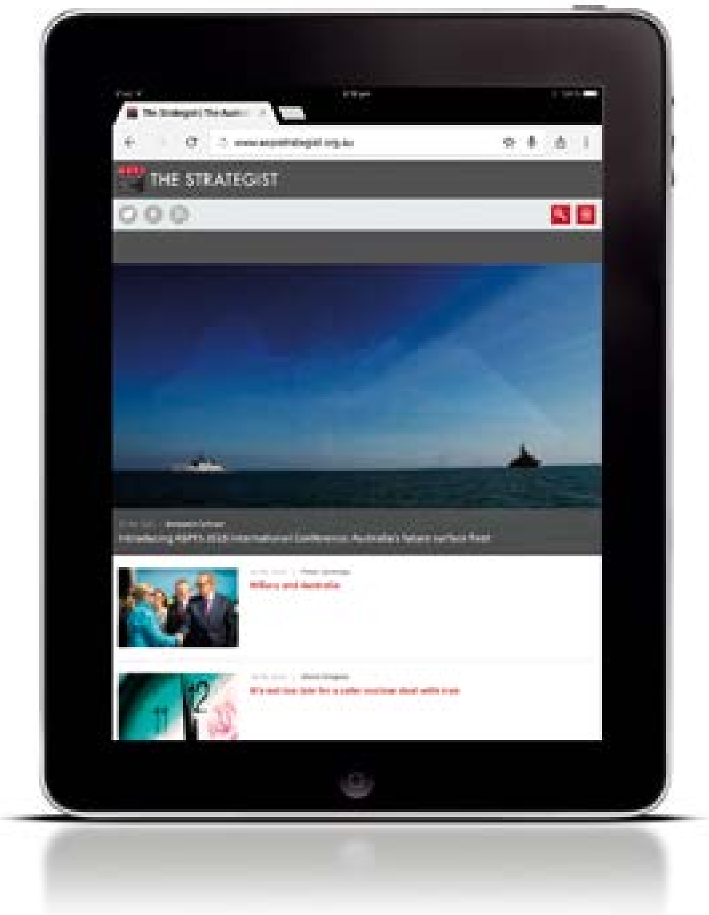

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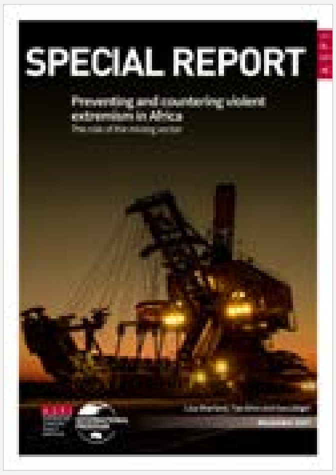
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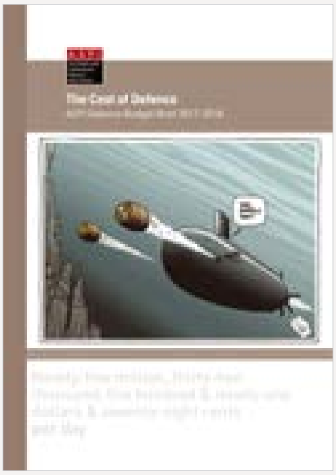
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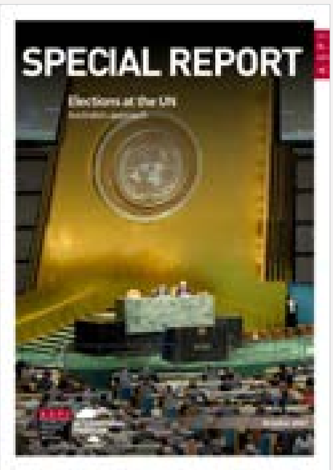
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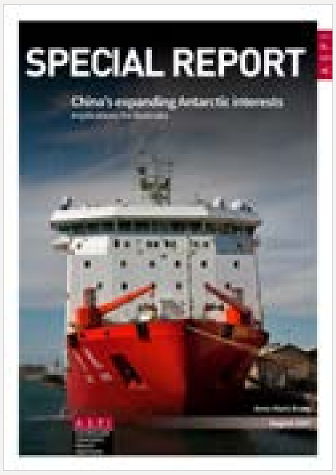
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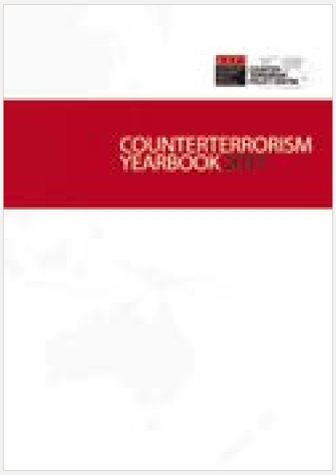
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What emerges is a rich and complex picture of two vibrant and activist countries, grappling with complex problems, but each determined to contribute to making the world safer and more just. At a time when the international order appears under threat, the willingness of our two countries to continue to commit to the global rule of law and strengthening the liberal order and respect for human rights is both heartening and vital.

It's also clear, however, that maximising the benefits of the bilateral relationship requires a strategic plan and practical commitment to getting things done. This compendium is a contribution to enhancing the relationship so that it can truly be more than the sum of its parts and we can navigate confidently through the decades to come.

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