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National Security and the Sea

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My thesis today is that all right-thinking nations have a common interest in the maintenance of 'good order at sea' for a variety of reasons - concerned namely with the protection of their sovereignty, their economic security and environmental welfare, and in extreme circumstances their national defence against armed attack. Maritime nations such as Australia have a leading interest in actively pursuing the goal of 'good order at sea' through the development and application of military seapower on the one hand and civil maritime security capability on the other hand, and the promotion of comprehensive maritime security objectives in both spheres in concert with partners and allies. For a nation such as Australia, it is simply not possible to conceive of national security without thinking about the sea, and its control and management.

Good order at sea permits the unhindered flow of seaborne trade which - notwithstanding the growth in air cargo in recent decades - remains the lifeblood of the global economic system. The sea is crucial for the energy security of many nations. The protection of sea borders is crucial in terms of countering the illicit entry into nations such as Australia of unauthorised persons, prohibited goods, or both. It also allows us, our allies and partners to deploy military force if required, for either humanitarian purposes or should the need arise to protect our strategic interests.

The ability to control and use the sea has of course been one of the fundamental drivers and underpinning features of global history since the 15th century when Europeans embarked on the era of discovery, territorial expansion, and eventually the formation of a truly global economy, which was initially founded on the maritime supremacy of the United Kingdom from the 18th century until the Second World War. Thereafter the maritime dominance of the United States became the foundation of the global security system which has underpinned post-war economic development and prosperity.

After the Second World War, international norms and practices concerning good order at sea, as well as customary maritime law were

codified through the United Nations system, and principally through the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, although it took of course almost four decades after the creation of the United Nations to give form to one of the most profound elements of the global rules-based order upon which our security and prosperity depend.

The post-war era has of course long since passed into memory, and it could be argued that the 'post-post-war' era which came about with the demise of the former Soviet Union is itself becoming but a mere chapter in the book of global history. As China and India, and possibly others, emerge as global economic and strategic powers in their own right, new patterns of interests at sea will also emerge. These and other nations will develop their own deep stake in good order at sea, especially across the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

It would require a separate lecture on the emerging redistribution of global strategic and economic power to tease out the consequential changing nature of seapower (including the effect of the emergence of new naval powers), and what this might mean for the future strategic environment. Suffice to say, the Defence White Paper (launched in May 2009 and with which I was incidentally associated) places at the centre of Australian defence strategy and force structure a recognition of the

crucial importance of seapower and effective maritime warfighting capabilities. It also makes clear the fundamental importance for our own security of the continued strategic primacy of the United States, including in the global maritime domain.

Military capability underwrites good order at sea. My task today is to focus more on the civil dimensions of Australia's maritime security challenges.

This audience, more than most, would instinctively appreciate the fact that we have one of the largest maritime domains in the world and a significant stake in the security and management of the Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans, as well as the seas lying to our north in our immediate neighbourhood – the Timor, Arafura and Coral Seas.

In keeping with the integrated approach to national security which was spelt out by the Prime Minister in his National Security Statement to the Parliament (4 December 2008) and reinforced by the Minister for Home Affairs in his speech a moment ago, a comprehensive approach to maritime security engages a number of agencies across the Commonwealth Government (including the Customs and Border Protection Service which I represent today), the States and Territories in

our federation, industry (including the shipping, port and offshore resource industries) and our international allies and partners at the multilateral and regional levels.

There are significant risks and threats in our maritime domain, which include:

- Maritime terrorism, including against shipping, ports and offshore oil and gas installations;
- Piracy, armed robbery and violence at sea;
- Illegal and unregulated fishing;
- Marine pollution and illegal dumping at sea;
- Biosecurity threats introduced by seaborne means;
- Drug trafficking;
- The shipment of prohibited arms and other goods and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by sea; and
- Maritime people smuggling.

Our civil maritime security approach is based upon a layered approach which starts with our relationship with global and regional partners to detect, deter, disrupt and defeat threats before they reach our shores or

maritime boundaries. This offshore approach emphasises that many maritime threats do not 'belong' to any one nation but are international in nature.

I cannot stress strongly enough the crucial importance of effective operational responses and interventions against these challenges being mounted through collaborative action by states working together for mutual advantage. For example, coordinated action by states in the Southern Ocean has had a real impact on the incidence of illegal and unregulated fishing off the sub-Antarctic islands in recent years.

Similarly, by working together with Indonesia in relation to illegal fishing in our northern waters, we have seen a dramatic decline over the past three years in the levels of illegal entry by Indonesian fishing vessels in those waters. This has included coordinated and joint maritime patrols and development assistance on land in the coastal regions of Indonesia from whence the vessels come.

The scope of the threats we face, together with the scale of the operating environment and the inevitable trade-off required to be made in relation to finite resources, means that a risk based approach is required. Planning is critical. Because of the size of our maritime zones we cannot hope to be everywhere, all the time. Our responses therefore need to maximise

the outcomes our maritime security system can deliver, by carefully targeting high risk areas.

My colleague, Rear Admiral Allan du Toit, will in the next presentation spell out in more detail how the Customs and Border Protection Service, through Border Protection Command, approaches this challenge, building on what the Minister laid out in his address a moment ago. More broadly, the Australian Government has undertaken capability planning across the border protection agencies to ensure an appropriate set of arrangements and capabilities are in place and will emerge over time to undertake all aspects of maritime security.

Close cooperation between Customs and Border Protection and Defence will continue to ensure that ongoing capability exists to manage the threats we face today and into the future. The Defence White Paper reflects the important role that Defence plays in promoting and protecting Australia's maritime security. Defence will continue to support the maritime border protection task by providing surface assets, aerial surveillance and other capabilities. The arrangement whereby Border Protection Command, accommodated within the Customs and Border Protection Service as a joint venture with Defence, plans and coordinates responses to border security threats reflects the Australian approach to

managing our waters. It is a pragmatic and effective arrangement, and able to fuse and consolidate available information and intelligence, and provide a whole-of-government response, ensuring that our investment in assets and personnel are employed intelligently. Put simply, centralised BPC planning and coordination enables the most effective use of our capabilities, ensuring a coherent approach using best available information to task patrol, surveillance and response activities in our maritime domain.

I should say something about maritime security in the Pacific region. Australia is strongly committed to supporting Pacific Island Countries in responding to common maritime security challenges. The Prime Minister announced at the Pacific Island Forum in Cairns in August 2009 that Australia would contribute to Pacific maritime security through bilateral security partnerships, continued assistance through the current Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP), and Australia's intention to undertake an assessment of a new Pacific maritime security program to replace the current patrol boat program at the end of its life, in consultation of course with Pacific Island partners.

The current program comprises 22 patrol boats that Australia gifted to 12 Pacific Island partners between 1987 and 1997, in addition to ongoing in-

country Maritime Surveillance Adviser (MSA) and Technical Adviser (TA) support, the provision of integrated logistic support and training of local personnel.

Customs and Border Protection is leading the development of this new Pacific maritime security program. Extensive consultation has commenced with Australian Government agencies to assess the likely future Pacific maritime security environment and to shape the initial direction of the program. Australian Government delegations have commenced engagement with several Pacific Island partners on bilateral security partnerships and maritime security issues, and Australia has also been working with Quadrilateral Defence partner countries (the United States, France and New Zealand) on initial directions for the new program. There is also scope in the short term to improve regional maritime security efforts through the better coordination of reporting and use of existing assets, which is currently being examined. The Australian Government is committed to getting this long-term agenda right and has made it clear to my agency and others that it expects us to devote the requisite level of resources and strategic development work in order to achieve this.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to end on a historical and philosophical note in order to pull this together. It has been said by scholars of our national identity that our self-perception and identity revolved for the first two centuries of European civilisation on this continent around inward-looking and insular notions of Australia as a 'sheltered land' where the sea was seen as a God-given natural barrier against the unwelcome and unwelcoming region in which we lived.

Whether this was ever an accurate picture of Australia is a matter for debate at meetings of history experts. What we know today is that the opening up of the Australian economy (and its society more generally) in the 1980s, along with the codification at the same time (by coincidence) of an international regime of maritime laws and norms, required us to change our view of the sea.

Today, Australia is an enthusiastic and committed actor when it comes to the management of the sea and the maintenance of good order and security there. We want to pursue and promote our interest in maritime security with like-minded nations. Where appropriate we want to share our expertise and capabilities to help build the capacity of our allies and partners to do the same. All nations share in both the benefits of safe and

secure oceans and the responsibility to address threats and challenges to be found at sea. You can be sure that Australia will do its part, today and into the future.

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