

WHICH WAY IS UP? DISCONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY AND AMBIGUITY IN THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

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The bombing and destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 is a stark symbol of the new strategic age into which the world has entered. It has imprinted itself onto the American psyche in a way that at once reveals a serious insecurity at the heart of the US polity and reinforces a national resolve to combat and destroy those who caused it. But of itself, the calculated and well executed act of terrorism that killed nearly 3000 people and profoundly altered the lives of countless more did not cause the shift in the international strategic paradigm, any more than Gavrilo Princep's murder of the Archduke Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 caused the cataclysm called the First World War. Both events are symbolically powerful, since they suggest a very particular point in time when the international community suddenly recognized that a familiar world had changed fundamentally, and that its successor was at once unfamiliar, unpredictable and frightening.

But lest anyone think that these experiences are unprecedented, it is instructive to reflect on the words of a former Archbishop of York. Speaking in his Minster sometime after Candlemas almost a millennium ago, Archbishop Wulfstan said:

Dearly Beloved, you should understand this to be the truth: this world is in turmoil, and is nearing its end. Day by day, things get worse, and because of the evil people do in the lead up to the coming of the Antichrist, so it must needs be that things will worsen further. Then it will be universally desperate and cruel.¹

The Danes had ravished England, applying tactics with which the English were unfamiliar. Indeed, Wulfstan thought that they were terrorists, though "pirates" is what he actually called them. Following the death of Swegn Forkbeard in 1014, Ethelred was persuaded to return from Normandy to regain the throne for the English. Archbishop Wulfstan subsequently drafted a number of the laws that initiated the process of political and social reconstruction – a process that, notwithstanding the momentous events that occurred fifty years later, culminated in the signing of the Magna Carta some 200 years after Wulfstan's sermon. The relationship between strategic chaos and the development of legal frameworks for its resolution is a matter to which we shall return.

¹ Sermo Lupi ad Anglos quando Dani maxime persecuti sunt eos, quod fuit anno millesimo XIII ab incarnatione Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. See H. Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader* (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1934). The translation is by the speaker.

One might be excused for thinking that resonances of Wulfstan's admonition sound in the more millenarian advice of the White House Deputy Chief of Staff, Karl Rove, who, along with his President, seems to regard the events of 11 September 2001 as the harbinger of a new dark age, and Saddam Hussein (with or without his weapons of mass destruction) as the new Antichrist. But a precocious gift for "spin" does not of itself create a lien on analysis or clarity in reading the signs of strategic change. If the spirit of Wulfstan has survived the centuries, it is perhaps more evident in Churchill's remarkable speech in the House of Commons on 18 June 1940.

I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him all Europe may be free, and the life of the world will move forward into broad, sunlit uplands; but if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, and all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister, and perhaps more prolonged, by the lights of a perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Commonwealth and Empire lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'²

What, in their individual ways, both Wulfstan and Churchill record is humanity's common experience of the *tsunami* of strategic change. For both, the challenge was less to identify the threat than to call for resolution and steadfastness in meeting the challenge.

Strategic Discontinuity

The great strategic shifts that mark the passage of history are never linear. They are inherently discontinuous and usually catastrophic. The huge rebalances that saw empires rise and fall, nations come and go, and wars of appalling brutality, were precipitated by political, economic, social, cultural, demographic and technological changes the consequences of which were both unforeseen and unforeseeable.

11 September 2001 may be the western world's most recent indicator of a strategic discontinuity, just as the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002 may reverberate in the memories of Australians as the end of some kind of age of innocence. But to imagine that the destruction of the World Trade Center was the 21st century's equivalent of the attack on Pearl Harbour, or the fire-bombing of the Sari Club and Paddy's Bar as tantamount to the attacks on Darwin, is seriously to misrepresent the strategic significance of otherwise iconic events. While they are powerful symbols of a new strategic age, they represent but one dynamic of the new age – and a relatively small one at that.

² Hansard, 5th Series, vol. 362, cols 51-61

If there was one day on which the global strategic environment changed fundamentally, it was 11/9 rather than 9/11 – 9 November 1989 when the Berlin Wall was torn down.

For almost half a century, the Soviet Union had mounted a sustained attack on the United States and its allies. It waged this “cold war” in just about every sphere of human activity: it built a massive military apparatus; it employed espionage and subversion against the nationals of western nations; it transformed its satellite states into sycophants (Bulgaria and the GDR) or sullen mutes (Hungary and Czechoslovakia); it sought to align the so-called “Non-Aligned Movement” (itself a stunning oxymoron) against the interests of the west – and, coincidentally against its own interests; it prostituted its own nationals in the world of the arts, exemplified by the exploitative treatment accorded to the violinist and conductor David Oistrakh; it systematically doped its athletes (while, in the west, the athletes doped themselves!); and it maintained the cruel subjugation of its own peoples that had begun in 1917.

The Soviet Union amplified its attack through the political, economic and technological assistance it provided to China. Throughout Africa, Asia and South America the Soviet Union fomented revolution and insurrection – all in its efforts to bring down the western democracies and what they stood for.

No part of the world was too remote for Soviet and, for a time, Chinese Communist interference. Australians often see themselves as distant from the major stages on which global politics are played: yet the Malayan Emergency, the Vietnam War and the emergence of the PKI in Indonesia were all aspects of the struggle for supremacy over the western democracies. While, with the benefit of hindsight, Australian governments may have had rather more options for dealing with the pressures of the cold war than they chose to exercise, the fact remains that the world of the 40s, with the Berlin Airlift, the 50s with the Korean War, the 60s with the Cuban Missile Crisis and the 70s with the Soviet expansion into Afghanistan was perilous.

For Australians, the engagements in Korea and Vietnam brought home the reality of the Cold War. While Australia and New Zealand saw themselves as contributing to the Herculean efforts of the United States to resist communist encroachment in South East Asia, other South East Asian nations, notably Thailand and The Philippines, saw themselves as part of a broader international response (the South East Asia Treaty Organisation) to communist expansion. And, of course, both countries were facing their own communist insurgencies. Commentators will perhaps forever remain divided on the merits of Australia’s contribution to the war in Vietnam. But there was a strategic logic for Australia’s engagement in Vietnam. Sadly, the parameters of that logic remained unstated. Consequently, there was no coherent exit strategy.

Hindsight affords marvelous clarity. But, rather like the “knight sacrifice” in chess, the strategy of containment, so elegantly articulated by George Kennan in his *Foreign Affairs* article in 1947, left little scope for contemporary revisionism. As Kennan put it, “Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of

constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy”.³

As the attrition of Vietnam ground down the resolve of the United States, cultural differentiation in China and South East Asia began to erode the monolith of world communism. China and North Vietnam slowly escaped the Soviet camp, and the Soviet Union itself was increasingly emasculated by the cost of the arms race and the inherent inefficiency of the command economy. Although a number of economists had documented the plight of the Soviet economy, no one was able to foretell how quickly the end would come. Once it became clear that Soviet tanks were no longer able to rumble into Eastern Europe to impose the *Pax Sovietica*, the Cold War was over. As Professor Niall Ferguson has pointed out – with very considerable insight – this fundamental change in the global strategic alignment was the critical prerequisite enabling the US to exercise its own military power overtly in Panama in 1989, and in Iraq following Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990⁴. It also set the preconditions for the independent strategic manoeuvre by the Bush Administration, exemplified in the toppling of Saddam Hussein

The United States has emerged from the Cold War as the most powerful strategic entity in history. Yet, as those who have survived the enforced learnings of Sunday School know only too well, power is, by its very nature, paradoxical. *Judges 16* recounts how a simple haircut was able to bring down Samson and *First Samuel 17* tells how a mere lad with a pebble and a slingshot defeated Goliath’s formidable military might. The point of such allegories, of course, is to underline the fact that every Achilles seems to have his heel!

In the case of the US, and, indeed, of all its democratic allies, power that is built on an acceptance of the universal dignity of the human person expresses itself through the basic freedoms: the freedom of speech, of association, of religious affiliation and of democratic choice. These freedoms are enshrined in the laws through which human intercourse, both domestic and international, is organised and made legitimate. Consequently, to attack the power of the United States and its democratic allies, it is necessary to attack their values and to prosecute campaigns that both constrain the freedoms that are so threatening to absolutists and sap the will of the polity to keep up the struggle against military threats and random violence.

So, is terrorism a strategic discontinuity? The international community has a long experience of the use of terror by States and non-States alike. Whether it was France of the revolution, the anarcho-syndicalists of pre-revolutionary Russia, Stalin’s Soviet Union in the 1930s, the Irgun and the Hezbollah in Palestine, the PLO in the Middle East, the IRA in Britain, the Weathermen in the US, the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany, or the host of small radical groups such as Al Quaida that have proliferated in the world of Wahabism, small and relatively powerless groups have long sought to use random violence to undermine the confidence of the populace and the authority of the state.

³ X (George F. Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”, *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947.

⁴ Niall Ferguson, *Colossus* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p.130. Ferguson goes on to note that the “Islam-Bolsheviks” in Kabul regarded the fall of the Soviet Union less as a victory for the US than a victory for themselves.

Terrorism is driven by ideology. While ideology serves as a rallying point for the alienated and disaffected, the terrorist groups themselves are often ephemeral, drawn together by the prospect of an act of violence, only to evanesce once the deed has been done. Their organisation is organic rather than bureaucratic, and generally has little in the way of hierarchy. The conduct of terrorism is less a centrally planned campaign built around strategy, resources and outcomes than it is opportunistic and sporadic. The targets of terrorism are often symbolic: it was no accident that the targets of the 11 September 2001 attacks were symbols of the economic and military power of the US, and that the fourth aircraft was almost certainly targeted at the clearest symbol of the political power of the US – the Capitol.

Many commentators endorse the view of the Bush Administration that 11 September 2001 was a turning point of history, a day when the global strategic environment changed gears. Certainly, the rhetoric of the Bush Administration and the governments of the “coalition of the willing” has been to posit terrorism as the new enemy and “the war against international terrorism” as the new standard around which the free world should rally. But is it? Perhaps the international community is simply confronting a familiar problem in unfamiliar guise. Perhaps Professor Ferguson’s mordant quip is closer to the mark: September 2001 was the historical turning point at which “history failed to turn”⁵.

The “war against international terrorism” is, in reality, a misnomer. It is no more a “war” than is the “war” against poverty or the “war” against disease or the “war” against crime for that matter. But it is the habit of rhetoric to shape the mindset and fashion the policy. So it comes as no great surprise, perhaps, that the tools chosen so far by a number of western democracies to counter terrorism are those of military deployment and manoeuvre. This, however, is seriously to misconceive the problem. For the very reason that terrorism is asymmetric, its adherents dispersed and vulnerable, and its technologies both inexpensive and primitive, it is not susceptible to defeat by force of arms. What is more, to label terrorism as a kind of warfare, and terrorists as the foot soldiers of indiscriminate violence is to give both terrorism and terrorists a cachet that, in some senses, legitimizes them and what they do – at least in the stellar world of “good” and “evil”.

It is of fundamental significance that, central to Australian counter-terrorism policy (and the policies of the US, the UK and other nations that deal with terrorism in a systematic manner) is the identification of terrorism as a *crime*. By so doing, and by identifying terrorists as common criminals, any form of legitimacy is denied completely. Through a combination of uncompromising and forceful response by *police services*, expeditious and thorough investigation and harsh sentences, the national response to terrorism is, at once, measured and effective. While random acts of violence are virtually impossible to prevent, effective countermeasures provide high levels of assurance that their occurrence is severely circumscribed.

While it is intimidating and unpredictable, terrorism can be defeated at both the domestic and international levels. There are four main tools for so doing: a comprehensive intelligence effort at the national level, supported by effective inter-agency cooperation and exchanges at the international level; dedicated and intensive

⁵ *Op.cit.*, p. 107.

policing at the domestic level, and on-the-ground police cooperation at the international level, especially within proximate regions; adherence to a clear policy of negotiation but no significant concession in dealing with terrorist incidents; and a robust, vigorous sanctions system applied through the courts. Terrorism is, and will always be, a crime. Its vigorous prosecution through the criminal justice system deals with the terrorist as a common criminal, rather than some kind of war fighter or martyr. This is, in part, why the current approach of the USA – indefinite detention of suspects at Guantanamo Bay and the use of special military courts and separate legal process – is failing to have any significant impact on the terrorist groups wishing to attack it.

The Shape of Things to Come

Notwithstanding claims to the contrary, neither the *Book of Revelations* nor Nostrodamus actually predicted the catastrophic changes that have marked the passage of the world's strategic history. Nor is it possible to forecast with any certainty the shape of the global strategic environment in the mid-21st century. There are, nonetheless, three fundamental demographic, economic and political readjustments to the world's power balance that will set the broad parameters for strategic shift over the next four decades or so.

- With respect to population and demography, by 2050, India will have overtaken China as the world's largest national population, with a staggering 1.628 billion people as compared with China's 1.437 billion. Of greater significance, perhaps, will be the demographic composition of India's population. As a result of its "one child" policy, China will have a much older population than will India, with obvious consequences for their relative economic and military performance over the longer term. The population of the USA will be in the order of 400 million, while that of Australia will be in the order of 26.5 million. By way of comparison, Indonesia will have a population of approximately 307 million⁶
- With respect to economic strength, by 2050, the GDP of both China and India will be greater than that of the USA. China's GDP will exceed that of the USA by 20-25%, while India's will be approximately the same as that of the USA. Of course, the *per capita* GDP of the USA will be approximately two and a half times that of China and India – which will have continuing implications for both consumption levels in the USA and the size of the US budget deficit.
- With respect to strategic attitude, the "passive aggression" that has characterized Chinese strategic policy for the past four centuries, and the "imperial resentment" that has marked Indian strategic policy for the past two centuries will give way to a significantly more confident and assertive approach to their respective roles as global players. It is both interesting and frightening to contemplate how the Bush Administration's policy of "strategic pre-emption" might operate in such circumstances, and whether US "exceptionalism" or "manifest destiny" will assist or constrain the application of US strategic power.

⁶ The impact of demography on the ability of a nation to wage war is illustrated by the following anecdote. The late Sir James Plimsoll told the author that, when serving as High Commissioner in India, he had been told by Prime Minister Nehru that, during a bilateral Heads of Government meeting in the early 50s, Chairman Mao Zedong had said, "Of course, Mr Prime Minister, in any war that it fought, the People's Republic of China could afford to dedicate 10 million dead". Plimsoll did not intimate whether Nehru might have thought, "Well, so can we, I suppose"!

This is not to suggest, as has Professor Paul Kennedy⁷, that the USA is on the path to decline and must inevitably fall. The inherent resilience of the USA in almost every field of human endeavour will ensure its status as the global leader for as long as its democratic and economic institutions remain strong. But what the prospective changes do suggest is that the strategic environment in which the USA will seek to exercise its strategic power, and within which Australia will need to make critical strategic choices, will be significantly more complex and unpredictable than it has had to deal with hitherto⁸.

Just how complex the strategic choices of the USA (and its allies, including Australia) might be during the next 40 years can be seen in the following table, which aligns (indicatively) the strategic policy focus and the capability policy focus of the three major players through to the year 2050⁹.

	KEY STRATEGIC FOCUS		KEY CAPABILITY FOCUS	
	2020	2050	2020	2050
USA	Global force projection, integrated land/sea/air dominance	“Fail-safe” national defence against missile attacks; global force projection.	Strategic Strike (conventional & Nuclear), ballistic missile defence	Ballistic Missile Defence, strategic strike (conventional and nuclear)
CHINA	Maritime force projection in the North Pacific and South China Sea; regional land dominance	Integrated land/sea/air dominance in the Asian theatre	Maritime force projection (carriers, SSN, SSBM), strategic and tactical nuclear weapons	Integrated land/sea/air force projection, strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, missile defence
INDIA	Maritime force projection in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal; regional land dominance	Integrated land/sea/air dominance in the Asian theatre	Maritime force projection (carriers, SSN), strategic and tactical nuclear weapons	Integrated land/sea/air force projection, strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, missile defence

⁷ See, for example, Professor Kennedy’s opinion piece “Has the US lost its way” in *The Observer*, Sunday 3 March 2002. See also *The rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989)

⁸ For analysis of the inevitability of a strategic confrontation between the USA and China, and the options for Australia, see A.J.Behm, “Australia’s Strategic Options in the US-China Relationship”, *Asia-Pacific Security Policy Challenges* (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 47-60.

⁹ This table was derived following an extensive survey of the available technical literature. While there is a considerable amount of published material concerning both India’s hopes and ambitions (it would seem that every senior Indian officer, upon retirement, publishes a book) and those of the USA, China’s intentions are significantly less transparent. Consequently, the strategy/capability alignments illustrated in this diagram are indicative only.

If the strategic assumptions underlying this analysis are correct, and the capability consequences of adjustments to strategic policy are credible, the global strategic environment of 2050 will be extraordinarily complex, due mainly to the competitive forces operating between the three major players and the quite differing emphases in their relative strategic priorities. Superior technological capacity will continue to be at the centre of the realizable strategic options of the USA. Its key priority will be to guarantee the strategic integrity of continental USA against any and all attacks. An integrated ballistic missile defence system, presently something of a holy grail, will become an even higher priority than it was during President Reagan's administration. The combined effects of demography, technological capacity and the "saving private Ryan" syndrome (the serious public aversion to combat casualties) will favour a mix of long-range strategic strike and missile defence as the preferred form of US strategic sanction.

For China and India, it is at once simpler and more complicated. While they will seek to exploit their strategic differentiation from the USA, and from each other, the similarity of their strategic objectives and generic capabilities will create significant opportunities for misapprehension and misadventure. The size, reach and structure of their respective forces will reinforce the attrition model of warfare, as distinct from the more current manoeuvre model pursued by the USA and, relative strengths taken into account, Australia. This will in fact afford India and China much less flexibility in dealing with each other at the strategic level, and will probably favour head-to-head "stare downs" rather than strategic finesse and adroitness.

What's worth fighting for (if anything?)?

The prospective changes in the world strategic balance may, at the level of military mass, seem daunting. The evolution of doctrine and tactics, however, offers new and surprising ways of dealing with the sheer preponderance of military might. The adoption of manoeuvre warfare, with its emphasis on the clarity of strategic purpose, the speed of decision-making, the ability to leverage both the complementarities and the differences between weapons systems, and the ability to exploit the multiplicity of information and decision channels (accorded the widely debated sobriquet *network centric warfare*) provides a highly effective alternative to the attrition model of earlier centuries. But a different way of winning does not make the prospect of war any more appealing. Is anything worth the massive loss of life and treasure that a 21st century war would most assuredly bring?

While it is not the view of this writer that the symbolic events of 11 September 2001 amount, of themselves, to a significant shift in the global strategic balance (that occurred more than a decade earlier), the response of the international community to the destruction of the World Trade Centre reveals an important new dimension to strategic policy. It is noteworthy that the Heads of Government of virtually every democratic country, whether in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas or Oceania, recognized that the attacks on New York and Washington were an attack on the values shared by the United States and all other liberal democracies. The point was clearly emphasized by Usama bin Laden in his media interviews immediately after the bombings.

The classical strategic theorists were largely silent on the question of values and war. Clausewitz, Jomini, Mahan and Liddell-Hart – to name but four – were much more preoccupied with the mechanics of war than with the ethical, moral or values-driven aspects of armed conflict. It was left to the theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas and Francisco Suarez, and the legal theorists such as Hugo Grotius to deal with the so-called Laws of War. But even they were much more concerned with the ethical and moral dimensions of war at the individual level of the warrior and the victim than at the broader societal level.

While military strategists have yet to deal with the values dimension of strategy in any detailed way, many political scientists, sociologists and philosophers have noted the extreme reluctance of liberal democracies to resort to warfare, especially against each other. One of the most penetrating modern political theorists, Francis Fukuyama, has written about the relationship between values and behaviours of governments, societies and nations in a number of books and essays, but perhaps nowhere more powerfully than in his often quoted but less often read book *The End of History and the Last Man*.

. . . Among each other, liberal democracies manifest little distrust or interest in mutual domination. They share with one another principles of universal equality and rights, and therefore have no grounds on which to contest each other's legitimacy. . . . The argument then is not so much that liberal democracy constrains man's natural instincts for aggression and violence, but that it has fundamentally transformed the instincts themselves and eliminated the motive for imperialism¹⁰.

What Fukuyama has identified here is the fact that modern liberal societies coalesce around values as distinct from military power, and that these values drive the search for security and prosperity.

If it is the case that values (what we stand for) rather than power (what we have and how we have it) are at the front line of modern strategy, how are they protected and promoted. Warfare, of course, remains perhaps the most effective sanction against direct military confrontation. But to rely on armed force as the only bulwark against aggression is to miss the opportunity created by the global strategic discontinuity that characterizes the current global strategic environment.

Wulfstan and Churchill recognized that the strategic discontinuity confronting them invoked issues and responses that far transcended the retaliatory use of armed force alone. Wulfstan saw the need to address the consequences of evil doing as intrinsic to the defeat of the Danes, just as Churchill saw Hitler's aggression as an attack on Christian civilization and British institutions. President Bush, too, recognizes that the promotion of liberal values (of course, he describes them as democratic rather than liberal) as a more secure approach to combating international terrorism than the use of military power alone.

For Australia, the past three years has been marked by an important debate about the fundamental direction of our national strategy. The Howard government has found

¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), p. 263.

itself confronted with the reality of the global attack on liberal values, and has responded by pursuing (though, interestingly, not advocating) a significantly more internationalist and global approach to force structure and military deployment. Its critics have seen this as an erosion of the strategy pursued by successive Governments for the past 30 years – the defence of Australia from attacks from or through the South East Asian region. But the debate has hitherto generated much more heat than light, owing to the fact that it has been conducted on the narrowest of grounds – the use of reactive military force.

There is, one detects, a growing sense in the Australian policy community, that the drivers of strategy in the 21st century will be at once different and more complex than they have been previously. There are more frequent calls in the security policy community for a “grand national strategy”¹¹, and new institutional arrangements in the Commonwealth public service suggest the beginnings of a more integrated approach to the strategic dilemmas that might face the nation in the future. It is not that those advocating a new approach to strategy are blind to the incalculable consequences of a direct attack on Australia which, notwithstanding its exceedingly low probability, demands an appropriate defence insurance premium. Nor is it that the traditionalists among Australian strategic thinkers are unaware of the need for Government to be able to deploy military forces to wherever in the world Australia’s strategic interests might be engaged. Rather, the issue is one of reconciling the appropriate investments to be made in dealing with the dimensions of modern warfare, dimensions that transcend the traditional space-time dynamics in defined geographical spaces to encompass the promotion and defence of liberal democratic values wherever they might be under siege.

Strategic Chaos and the Law

The great episodic shifts in the global strategic balance bring with them new and different challenges. Just as the field of battle has shifted from the clashes between empires and autocracies to the contest between values, so the concentration on the military technological solutions to national security need to be supplemented by other – and perhaps somewhat subtler – interventions. In a changing world, national security cannot remain the responsibility of the national defence institutions, even if supplemented by (or, indeed, replaced by) the resources of the national police forces in countering terrorism. In a global strategic environment of increasing complexity, national security becomes a matter for a “whole of government” and a “whole of nation” approach: national security planning needs to engage the entire policy capacity of the nation and to comprehend the total national resource base if it is to be effective and successful.

The national legal system, its laws and institutions, provides the most comprehensive expression of the values that bind the nation together. The individual rights of people in a liberal society – the freedoms of speech, association, religious affiliation and democratic choice – reflect a commonly held belief in the intrinsic value and dignity of the human person. The rule of law has become an integral part of a robust and

¹¹ Note, for instance, the forthcoming symposium convened by the Lowy Institute for International Policy entitled *The Inaugural Sir Vernon Sturdee Symposium on Australian Grand Strategy* to be held at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, on 12 April 2005.

vigorous society, and needs to be a central plank of any long-term strategy that seeks to enshrine liberal values as the currency of international relations and “strategic convergence”, that is, the coincidence of strategic interests between nations thereby reducing the risk of armed conflict. And for prosperous, middle-ranking nations like Australia, investment in the creation and development of a community of nations linked by shared values offers a somewhat more hopeful (and less costly) approach to long-term security than a simple reliance on an ability to respond with armed force to the threat of armed force.

This is the “soft power” of which Joseph Nye, the Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University writes. Commenting on the Bush Administration’s approach to global terrorism, Nye wrote:

Soft power is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. It differs from hard power, the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will. Both hard and soft power are important in the war on terrorism, but attraction is much cheaper than coercion, and an asset that needs to be nourished¹².

Soft power lends itself to collaborative action, and while it is not fashionable in some quarters at present to look to the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Development or the international judicial and legal associations as providing a useful avenue to longer-term security, the fact remains that traditional military forces and military alliances (even “coalitions of the willing”) are unable to manage the consequences of strategic discontinuity on their own. Rather, “hard power” will increasingly rely on “soft” and other forms of power if the global strategic environment is to become amenable to any form of long-term shaping.

Nearly two hundred years intervened between Wulfstan’s Candlemas sermon and Magna Carta. The inevitability of the strategic developments that will mark the 21st century as fundamentally different from what has gone before prompts the question: is there any way in which the global community can anticipate strategic discontinuity, and put in place structures and practices that might mitigate the effects of radical strategic change?

The emerging democracy in Indonesia offers an interesting model. Vulnerable and fragile though it be, Indonesia’s democracy can be fostered and helped to work. Countries such as Australia, with its robust democracy, the rule of law, strong and independent institutions, and a sound legal system that protects the exercise of democratic rights, are well placed to assist emergent democracies where the political and legal infrastructure is not so mature. Whether through a deliberate strengthening of the relationship between the respective Parliaments, direct assistance in the framing of laws (statutes the would support greater economic prosperity come readily to mind) or the establishment of a national judicial college in Indonesia to support an independent and incorrupt judiciary, there are any number of avenues whereby

¹² Joseph S. Nye, “Propaganda Isn’t the Way: Soft Power”, *The International Herald Tribune*, 10 January 2003.

Australia can support the development of a more resilient and robust liberal society in Indonesia¹³.

As new powers emerge to shape the strategic environment of this and subsequent centuries, it would simply be foolhardy to ignore the opportunities that currently exist to reinforce and promote the adoption of liberal values, enshrined in law and underpinned by the rule of law, that generate both economic prosperity and national security. There will not be the luxury of two hundred years to think about it.

¹³ Rather like Sancho Panza, this writer has been tilting at the windmills of effective support for Indonesia's fledgling democracy for the past seven years. See, for example, "Indonesia is crying out for engagement", *The Australian*, 26 June 2001 and "Look at Indonesia as an Ally", *The Australian*, 19 October 2004.