



ROLE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC IN THE POST-COLD WAR

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Abstract

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) has a more active and dynamic role in establishing a stable regional order in the Indo-Pacific region. The idea of the Indo-Pacific as a single region of interest is specifically useful for Australia because it encompasses all the maritime surroundings of Australia. Australian maritime attribute claims the efficient and empowered Navy, which can handle any adversaries during conflicts. The lethal power of naval force makes as deterrent power. The naval forward deployment during the World Wars, Cold War, and present conflict clearly shows its deterring aggression. Australian Navy is facing conventional and non-conventional challenges and it paying a key role in countering non-conventional challenges like transnational crimes, illegal immigration, IIUs etc. Australian Navy played a crucial role in the democratic stabilisation process in the Pacific Island countries and participated in different Human Assistance and Disaster Relief missions. In the post-Cold War era, traditional security threats are the least concerned issue for the RAN The expansion of Non-traditional security threats is challenging the notion of 'rules based good order in maritime domain'. Australia is located at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, due to its geographic position, Australian Navy can play a leading role in strengthening the regional order in the Indo-Pacific. Australia seeks cooperation with all the countries that have stake in the Indo-Pacific region.

Keywords: *Australia, Indo-Pacific, Asia-Pacific, Navy, Maritime Security and Transnational Crime.*

Introduction

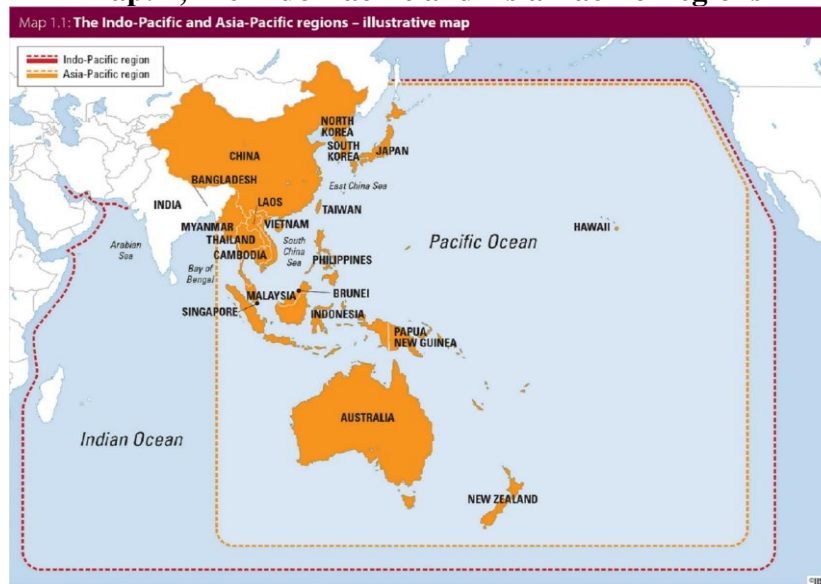
The Royal Australian navy has a dynamic role within this Indo-Pacific region. The role of the Australian Navy is full of variations; strategic interests are the significant factor behind this variation. The Navy is an inherently flexible instrument of national power. The most significant salient feature is its combination of mobility and persistence. Simultaneously, there is no need to acquire basing right or territory during naval operation time; it differs from other forces. Other forces like the Air force should be the ground station for its operation. However, naval floating landing platforms and other vessels like helicopter frigates work as ground base stations in the sea. Therefore, there is no need to take basing right; naval forces operate their mission from the high sea. Thus, these marine forces are also beneficial to mitigate the scenario of conflict. In peacetime, they can demonstrate presence, shape the behaviour of other actors, reassure allies, and peace mission. Apparently, Navy turns out to be significant during both war and peaceful time. The water masses enclose the oblate shape of earth and its landmasses. These water bodies work as a connecting point for the landmasses and behave like sea highways. Spykman denoted this salient feature in his 'Rimland theory' and highlighted that the ocean provides a close passage for the military. Australia's geostrategic position is as an island country, adjacent to the 'Rimland region'. This proximity will control this region and subsequently the 'Heartland region' (Katzenstein, 2015). According to Spykman, the Rimland countries (mainly Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asian and China) have continental and maritime attributes. In this situation, Rimland countries have a better communication advantage than the 'Heartland region'. Hence, any great power can handle this Heartland region with the help of Rimland countries. Australia geographical position as world island, which is contiguous to the Rimland region; herein it can provide a good military base. In



such extent, Australia’s maritime attribute claims the efficient and empowered Navy, which can handle any adversaries during conflicts. The lethal power of naval force makes as deterrent power. The naval forward deployment during the World Wars, Cold War, and present conflict is clearly showing its deterring aggression. The United State naval force has used its naval capabilities as deterrence and reassuring his allies to defend from any threats such as in Korean War, Iraq War, Taiwan crisis etc. simultaneously, the US navy offered assistance during the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and Fukushima disaster (Bradford, 2013). Therefore, the effective sea capability hosts nation’s strategic interest and nurturing good order at sea.

The context of ‘Indo-Pacific’ region within the Australian maritime strategy is a continuous gradual process. Australia is inherently situated between the two great oceans Pacific and Indian Oceans. This coherent feature has remained disappear until the ‘Two Ocean policy’. This paradigm shift was embraced in 1987 with the ‘Paul Dibb report’. (Paul, 1987) Despite this phenomenon acceptance, all consecutive DWPs until 2009 emphasised on ‘Asia-Pacific’ as a major priority. 2013 Defence White Paper (DWP) came as a watershed event wherein first time ‘Asia-Pacific’ term was replaced by ‘Indo-Pacific’; considered stability within this region as primary strategic interest. (DWP, 2013) In fact, the first hindsight of this paradigm shift was visible in the 2009 DWP, wherein it indicated that Australian enduring strategic interest is overlapping with broader Asia-Pacific region concern. (DWP, 2009) On the different side, Australia shares indigenous multilateral platforms as Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA, year 1997) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). The significant circumstances behind this paradigm shift are the continuous growing interest within the economy, security, and SLOCs.

Map: 1, The Indo-Pacific and Asia-Pacific Regions



Source:<https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic%20dossiers/issues/asia-pacific-regional-security-assessment-2015-4c79/rsa15-03-chapter-1-dff2>.

Usually, significant causes of disagreement within the countries belong to land-related border dispute. To such an extent, most of the nation concentrated the capacity building of military forces (land forces); however, naval power is supreme for successful forward deployment or power projection. Antecedent air force, Navy and military worked separately, which means interoperability within these forces was



limited. The technological enhancements and the vibrant modern domain of warfare have demanded interoperability and unified mechanism within the trio of forces in this time and space. This interoperability within the forces makes it more efficient and effective to cope with the issue in astute way. Sea power has an enormous dimension, compared to the concept of land force or airpower, neither of which incorporates the geo-economic dimensions of human activity to the magnitude that sea power does. An author, Alam has interestingly remarked; “unlike the army and the air force, whose size and firepower have to be related to that of potential adversaries, the size of the navy is determined by the quantum of maritime assets and interests that you have to safeguard” (Till, 2013). International conventions and UNCLOS have shown a constructive role to establish order in the sea. Substantially, these norms serve responsibilities to the nation to make good order at sea. Therefore, this maritime Magancarta derives the norm and regulation of sea and codifies enforcing agency against the new evolving non-traditional challenges.

Human’s interest is continuously growing with the ocean resources and in the present scenario; the recreational and aesthetic value is one of the major concerns. According to the Australian perspective, it becomes more valuable and laudable owing to a vast exclusive economic zone. So in this context, the prime objective of naval forces are not limited to combat or coercive act. Contemporary strategic thinkers, notably Ken Booth, have suggested that “the roles of maritime forces in this context fall into one of three categories: military (or combat related), diplomatic (or foreign policy related) and policing (or constabulary)” (Booth, 2014). The military and the policing role are the known behaviour of maritime forces but this diplomatic role is evolving within the benign transformation of naval power; actually, the use of naval power in the peacekeeping role, assistance during the disaster, search and rescue operation making as an effective mechanism to strengthen the relationship with neighbourhood countries or anyone. Logistic shipment for the reconstruction of any conflict led region or state is also one of the effective peace-building mechanisms. Actually, this happens in two particular ways; one is related to the clearance of underwater mines, and another one belongs to the opening of port and ordnance disposal. Owing to this, sea communication runs smoothly. Australian maritime forces have complete experience since 1945 to clear underwater mines and other dangerous ordnance from not only national territory and waters, but from Southwest Pacific islands, Southeast Asian water and Papua New Guinea¹. The RAN contributed a significant role in strike, interdiction and fire support to land forces in Korea and Vietnam Wars; availed the logistic support in the (1990 and 2003) Gulf war and East Timor crisis in 1999.

Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Bases and Naval Capabilities

Navies fight at sea only for the strategic effect they can secure coastal region, where people live. Some of the activities during maritime coercion do not belong merely to adjacent shore security but disguisedly it affects the whole war perspective. Battle of Normandy, Iwo-jima and Okinawa are the major instances wherein these shore areas changed the entire scenario of Second World War. Thus, this combat behaviour is sea-based but affects the continent’s security. The delivery of force from the sea is defined as ‘Maritime power projection’. Within this power projection, sea-borne covert and non-covert vessels like submarines, amphibious landing ships, aircraft carriers etc. play decisive roles in combat time. On the other side, these amphibious, patrolling and minehunter ships work in the peaceful time also as maritime border protection and relief assistance. These naval equipment and vessels bring the tactical edge during operational time.

¹<http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/PIAMA16.pdf>, page no-59.



surface-to-air missiles (SM-2) make it more capable of handling airborne threats. However, it was inducted in the RAN in 1980s, now these all FFG will be decommissioned in the upcoming time³. Resulting in, Australian Navy inducted a new modernisation programme called “Next Generation Navy” wherein Australian Navy is trying to induct three new Hobart class air warfare destroyers (AWD) and five HMAS Canberra Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD), or Amphibious Assault Ship⁴.

Amphibious and Afloat Support

Amphibious Lift

The amphibious ship can be operated along the full spectrum of operations, from disaster relief and search and rescue through to the more traditional roles of amphibious assaults, raids, demonstrations, and withdrawals. These operational postures are pivotal for ‘conflict prevention and crisis mitigation’. During the INTERFET mission, two Kanimbla Class Landing Platforms Amphibious (LPA), HMAS Manoora and HMAS Kanimbla, played a crucial role in logistic support (Paget, 2017). This amphibious ship is constructed under the modular approach wherein the ship is divided into modules. Every module fit to the specific purpose, as transporting tank, marines and land-based equipment and its amphibious behaviour make more significant⁵.

Maintenance and decommissioning are also major concerning issue with these vessels. Australian Navy has decommissioned in HMAS Manoora and HMAS Kanimbla in 2011⁶. Whereas, it necessitates maintaining at least some vessels, therefore Australian government acquired a second-hand vessel (HMAS Choules) from the United Kingdom. Simultaneously, two new large amphibious (Landing Helicopter Dock) vessels have been purchased, the first, HMAS Canberra, was commissioned in 2014⁷. These 27,000-tonne ships are able to land a force of over 1,000 personnel by helicopter and watercraft, along with all their weapons. The LHD has been designed with the shallowest possible draft to enable her to work in optional ports and harbours and move strategically in the shallow waters regular in the littoral regions⁸.

Submarines

The submarine is the covert sea-based vessel that runs mainly under the sea surface. This speciality brings the tactical edge than other naval ships. The attacking capabilities on enemy ship and counter the threat of adversary submarines makes it a more lethal vessel. Simultaneously, it can collect intelligence about the position of enemy ships. The RAN is operating six Collins class Diesel electric submarines. It is mainly Guided Missiles Submarine (SSG). This six SSG fleet inducted during the years 1996 and 2003⁹. The underwater operability makes it a more sophisticated and maintenance led vessel. Resulting in, an optimum number of this vessel should be in the force. Australian defence ministry consented about the acquisition of 12 new-advanced SSGs in 2009 DWP. Nowadays, non-traditional threats are the major security concern for Canberra. In this situation, effective maritime surveillance and patrolling boat is fixing Canberra’s strategic concerns.

³<http://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/ffg>

⁴<https://southfront.org/military-analysis-the-royal-australian-navy-assets-and-capabilities/>

⁵<http://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/lhd>

⁶<http://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/lhd>

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹<http://www.navy.gov.au/fleet/ships-boats-craft/submarines/ssg>



Minor Combatants

Patrol Boats (PBs)

The RAN has 13 Armidale Class Patrol Boats (ACPB). The purpose of these vessels is to support the civil surveillance program in its waters. They can also be used to insert and extract army patrols on the coast, including Special Forces. All PBs are based at either HMAS Cairns or HMAS Coonawarra¹⁰.

Mine Warfare Vessels

RAN currently uses the Huon Class MHC (coastal Mine hunters)¹¹. The Huon Class feature a unique hull design, outstanding shock resistance and an inherently low magnetic signature, allowing the ships to operate in hostile mine environments. This ship employs sonar to search mines, which can be destroyed by using a remote-controlled mine disposal vehicle.

Naval Aviation

Aviation related vehicle moves faster than any other land-based or marine-based vehicle. This speed brings a tactical advantage during combat time. They are configured for anti-submarine and surface search/targeting. The RAN has sixteen US-designed Seahawk helicopters, which mainly based on the FFH and FFG class frigates. The new acquisition of Seahawk 24 MH-60R aircraft and Six MRH-90 are replacing the old Seahawk and UK based Sea King Harrier¹².

Surveillance and Response Group

Surveillance and patrolling of maritime boundaries are one primary task for the naval force. The Australian maritime domain is broadly extended. Therefore, to guard and patrolling, it is necessary to maintain the maritime patrol aircraft surveillance. Its multiple behaviour is beneficial for both combat and non-combat situation. The RAN is using AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft, which undertake maritime patrol, maritime surveillance, reconnaissance, offensive air support, surface and sub-surface strike, and search and survivor supply (DWP, 2013). RAN has upgraded this patrol aircraft on time, but the P-8A Poseidon will replace it in the forthcoming time.

Australian Navy is not deploying the Aircraft carrier in the present time. This floating base becomes the major hindrance of the maritime power projection. The liberalist view related to Australian defence, self-defence notion, and strategic interest are major determining factors for expanding the naval fleet. Several vessels are necessary to maintain the standard operating procedure (SOP). These entire naval vessels involve the huge maintenance costs and resting periods. As well as, decommissioning and technological up-gradation of naval vessels are also parts of this mechanism. The 2009 Australian Defence White Paper announced to acquire 12 new submarines and presently six commissioned Collins-class submarines are already the part of RAN. For the effective and smooth operation, it is necessitated to acquire naval vessels and other related equipment for future course of action whereby, present and future will be secured.

Role of Australian Navy in the Southwest Pacific Island Region

In the South Pacific, Australia is the resident power. It holds 94.5 per cent of the GDP of Oceania and its defence spending is 98 per cent of the region's defence and security spending; the Australian population shares 60 per cent of the region's population; and contributes 60 per cent of all development assistance

¹⁰<https://southfront.org/military-analysis-the-royal-australian-navy-assets-and-capabilities/>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <http://www.navy.gov.au/aircraft/mrh-90-taipan>



to the region. (Wallis and Wesley, 2016) The common maritime identity is the salient feature of PICs. In this situation, the collaborative measures are the suitable mechanism to address the concerning challenges such as Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing, transnational crime, maritime surveillance. The region's security architecture has been strengthened within several regional organisations as the "Pacific Islands Forum, the Forum Fisheries Agency and the South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting" (DWP, 2016).

The Australian immediate Southwest Pacific Island Countries got independence in the second half of the 20th century. 20th century and is still strife-redden with internal disputes and political instability until Cold War period, Australia tried to curb the influence of the USSR navy. Any USSR-related naval establishment might have affected the US-led groups interest. Strikingly, after the 'Guam doctrine', Australia inculcated self-defence, self-reliance and continentalism for securing its interest and the security of the nation (Beazley, 2008). Simultaneously, Canberra followed different security mechanisms in the Southwest Pacific Islands region.

The demise of the Cold War facilitated a broad and Australian led security mechanism wherein the self-security led concern is the main purpose. Therefore, Australian comprehensive defence policy is based on self-defence in the post-Cold War age. On the other side, Australia followed the forward defence policy for the Southwest Pacific region. (White, 2007) In fact, the presence of Australia as the largest island country within this region with the biggest defence expenditure is notifying its responsibilities to secure this region. The active Australian presence is in this region distinctly seeming such as the making the Pacific Island Countries led common platform like Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Canberra decided that its national interests overlap with its sense of regional responsibility, which required it to take a leading role in addressing instability problems among smaller neighbours. Hence, within this expectation, it became necessary to ADF would play a central part in that. The past few years have provided many examples of this-in PNG, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

These island countries are intermittently engulfed in civil unrest, and peacekeeping is the prime concern for Australia. The Solomon Island grappled under the civil unrest (between the leading dissident factions in the Solomon: the Malaita Eagle Force and the Isatabu Freedom Movement) in June 2000 and it became grievous with the resignation of Prime Minister Bart Ulufa'alu. (Moore, 2007) The RAN started 'Operation Plumbob' with the deployment of HMAS Manoora and Tobruk. Tobruk evacuated 480 Australian civilians and 'Approved Foreign Nationals' from Honiara, the Solomon Islands capital, and conveyed them to Australia. (Hill, 2014) During this strife period, to support the Peace Monitoring Council and the International Peace Monitoring Team (IMPT), the RAN ships like New Castle, Tobruk, Darwin, Kanimbla, Manoora and Melbourne were deployed under the 'Operation Trek' to prevent further any violent acts¹³.

However, ethnic violence and civil unrest prevailed throughout 2002. To curb this gruesome situation, Solomon Island's government requested the adjacent neighbourhood countries in June 2003 and in such extent, Australia led military and police peacekeeping force started Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands (RAMSI) with other nations personnel like New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Fiji (Hutcheson, 2007). Later on, Pacific Islands Forum also contemplated the Australia's plan at a meeting held in Sydney on 21 July 2003. This Australia led assistance mission depicts the firm commitment of Canberra for the stability of the region. The RAN ships HMAS Manoora, patrol boat

¹³<http://www.navy.gov.au/aircraft/mrh-90-taipan>



Whyalla, the coastal minehunter Hawkesbury and the RAN's HS 817 Squadron at HMAS Albatross actively participated in the peacekeeping mission¹⁴. Moreover, during the Fiji crisis, the RAN deployed HMAS Ships Newcastle, Kanimbla (II) and Success (II) to the waters off Fiji in November 2006 to evacuate the Australian citizen with the outbreak of any violent incident (Breen, 2016). Nevertheless, the situation did not worsen, and this preventive naval deployment returned in late December. Moreover, it executed a crucial role in the Bougainville crisis also. The RAN's role is not only limited until the pacifying mechanism of civil unrest. The 'Operation Render Safe 2014' is the ADF's commitment to the removal of unexploded bomb and remnants of bombs, which may be fatal for the life beings, district of Tokorina on the West coast of Bougainville. In this annual series, nearly 16 tonnes of ordnance were disposed of. Actually, it is an ADF-led mission wherein the 'Explosive Ordnance Disposal'(EOD) team involved from Australia, US, UK, New Zealand, Canada and Solomon Islands and major technological assets, platforms and Operational Amphibious ship HMAS Choules assigned in this mission¹⁵.

Australia has implemented the policy of active engagement in its neighbourhood Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The fostering of peace, stability and the democratic norm will transform this region as 'arc of opportunity' otherwise, in the absence of these democratic norms and stability may transform this region as the hub of the non-traditional security threats and illicit non-state actors. Therefore, stability and security in the South Pacific remain second merely after the defence of Australia in the ADF's principal tasks and priorities. Henceforth, the Australian naval force had better prepare for any situation to achieve deterrent and coercive effect in this maritime region.

The problem of slow regional growth in the per capita incomes, despite generally favourable natural and human resources grants, high levels of external assistance and proximity to the world's most economically dynamic countries has become known as the 'Pacific Paradox' (Evans, 1995).

In spite of, pacific patrol boat program, Australian government signed the Niue treaty bilaterally to check illegal fishing and law enforcement. Australia also provides financial assistance and Defence assets for a range of exercises and combined operations in the South Pacific, such as "Operations ISLAND CHIEF, Operation SOLANIA, and KURUKURU". Its main concern has to enforce the good order at sea not only limited until IUU fishing. Moreover, "Operation KURUKURU 2006 involved operations in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu against IUU fishing, as well as smuggling, people trafficking and other illegal activities". It was Hosted by Tonga and funded by Australia, France and New Zealand, contributing aerial surveillance and the 'Forum Fisheries Agency' (FFA) providing technical support. Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS Parramatta served in a three-day visit in Solomon Islands, to continue a maritime patrol that assists South Pacific Island states to protect their own fisheries and natural resources¹⁶.

Role of Australian Navy in the Southeast Asian maritime domain

The Southeast Asian region is known for the dispersed islands and the world's major choke point, Strait of Malacca; its geographical position near the Pacific Ocean connects both oceans. This Southeast Asian region and the northern approach of Australia are directly intertwined with this Indian Ocean part. Australian DWPs clearly manifest the significance of this region, whilst the concern is related to the security and stability of East Timor is one of the major strategic interests. In 1999, ADF played a major

¹⁴ <http://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-august-2005>

¹⁵ <http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Oct2014/Operations/1527/Australia-lends-a-hand-in-Bougainville-with-Operation-RENDER-SAFE.htm#.WUGapPmGPIU>

¹⁶ <http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Jul2014/Operations/1221/HMAS-Parramatta-departs-Honiara.htm#.WUGbCvmGPIU>



role in getting Timor's independence from Indonesia (McDougall, 2002). Therefore, it is a moral responsibility to see Timor Leste's independence survive. The Australian offshore island like Cocos and Keeling Islands is 2700 km from the Australian western naval fleet (Perth). The distance between Christmas Island and Java is mere 400 km, and Australia's most significant offshore gas fields are situated near to North West shelf. (Babbage, 1988) Simultaneously this water is also essential for the maritime patrol, submarine operations, freedom of navigation, SLOCs, to deter IUUs and potential illegal immigrants (PIIs) threats. Despite all these factors, this water should be free from the turbulent situation because of this is the known channel of the movement of US naval ship of Pacific Command (7th fleet) and United States Central Command (USCENTCOM or 5th fleet). On the other side, the phenomenal growth of the non-traditional security threats may disturb this security equilibrium. Therefore, stability and good order at sea is essential for the Australian strategic interest.

Over the next few years, small contingents of specialist RAN personnel were involved in a series of peace missions. 'Operation Gemini' was the UN-led peacekeeping mission in Cambodia in 1992; prime concern was implementing the 'Paris Accord' and establishing a lawful government. Therefore, UN set up a governing body called United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). It was the post-War reconstruction process therefore herein; the Australian Navy's role was mainly related to logistic supply and communication establishment.¹⁷ The major concern evolved in the last year to the 20th century with growing demand of independence in East Timor in 1999. UN Security Council took the initiative to resolve the East Timor crisis. It unanimously passed a resolution (1236, 1246, 1264 and 1272) to create a multinational force to restore peace and security in East Timor on 15 September 1999. (Lloyd, 2003) An Australian-led multinational force INTERFET (International Force East Timor, resolution no1264) arrived in Dili. More than five thousand Australian defence personnel from all defence services actively involved in this stabilisation operation. Fifteen RAN personnel were deployed to Dili to form the Naval Component Command (NCC) under Commodore J.R. Stapleton (Commodore B.D. Robertson succeeded him on 21 November 1999). The NCC was the controlling and coordinating authority of a 35 ships fleet, in which the activity of eight ships operating purely in support of INTERFET, assisted in the management of more than 30 merchant ships, and acted as the harbour authority for all East Timorese ports from 20 September. This INTERFET prime concern was to restore peace in this island whereby UN-led independence related referendum could happen. The Australian Navy played a major role to accommodate logistic facility for the UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) and to conduct this referendum peacefully a temporary group UNAMET (United Nation Mission in East Timor) established wherein police and military led personnel were included from many countries like Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, New Zealand, Japan, Russia etc. Australian logistics and personnel were vital for this group.¹⁸ Australian Amphibious ship played an effective role in conducting a peaceful referendum in this logistic supply. The geographical entity as an island and segregated features of this island makes a better landscape for the land forces (personnel-intensive) to do stabilisation operations within this region. Therefore, naval vessels facilitated logistic support for the land forces. The nature of civil unrest is quite different from the usual two-nation confrontation. Herein, the operational uses of naval vessels are limited and sectoral based under the local administration.

After the four years of independence, East Timor again grappled in the civil unrest. Since May 2006, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has sustained troops in Timor-Leste (East Timor) under 'Operation

¹⁷ <https://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/bp/1992/92bp14.pdf>.

¹⁸ http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib9900/2000CIB03



Astute', Australian and New Zealand personnel deployed as an ANZAC Battlegroup. (Waddell, Laughlin and Moore, 2008) In fact, 'Operation Astute' is the ADF led stabilisation operation to assist the government of East Timor wherein all three services of ADF participated actively. The stabilisation operations were multi-faceted wherein amphibious landing ship accommodated medical, communication and various other facilities and other ground troops were actively engaged in the security operations, such as suppressing communal and gang violence in Dili (capital of East Timor). During this operation, the ADF's Amphibious Ready Group was deployed first time in operation, comprising the amphibious transports HMA Ships Kanimbla (II) and Manoora (II), and heavy landing ship HMAS Tobruk (II).

The Australia has a defence cooperation program with especially Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Australian's commitments under the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), which has a role in improving maritime security capacities. Apparently, this region is known for the strong and active organisation as ASEAN its related subsidiary body (ADMM, ReCAAP), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Council for Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CACSP) etc. These multilateral intuitions are responsible for common concern and accommodating a common platform for regional and global issues. Therefore, the role of RAN is limited and mostly related to the protection of its maritime zone from the SIEVs (Suspected Illegal Entry vessels) and PIIs (Potential Illegal Immigrants). The HMAS Coonawara's (Darwin) location is near to the northern water and the border protection command continuously facilitates security for the offshore oilfield near to the East Timor gap.

Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU)

Australian northern water is facing the challenges of cross-border illegal fishing. Interestingly, Southeast Asian water is facing similar type of problem. To curb this problem, three multilateral arrangements RPOA (IUU), ASEAN-SEAFDEC Strategic Partnership (ASSP) and (CTI) Coral Triangle Initiative are working in this region. (Williams, 2013) These agreements have different regional players. Australia is also part of the Regional Plan of Action (ROPA) (IUU) multilateral agreement wherein all ASEAN member states with Papua New Guinea are the major stakeholders except Myanmar and all the member states EEZ coincided with one to another state. Indonesian fishing trawlers have been the major concern for the illegal fishing in Australian water. The illegal incursion number was growing continuously. Hence, Australian maritime forces started "Operation Clearwater" in 2005 to culminate this illegal act. (Cribb and Ford, 2009) Owing to this operation, Australian naval forces detained many fishermen and seized illegal mechanised boats, in this anomaly, the relation between Indonesia and Australia became tensed. To smoothening relation and curb this problem, initially Australian and Indonesian governments signed bilateral agreements and later on, other major nine regional parties signed the agreement against the IUU problem.

'AUSINDO CORPAT' is the joint Australia and Indonesia maritime patrol operation, started in 2010. Its prime objective is to target illegal fishing boat in both countries' maritime zones and improve collective maritime security. (Supriyanto, 2014) The Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the Royal Australian Navy conducted a joint operation, 'Operation GRAB III' to target foreign fishing in Australian waters with two Navy's Armidale class patrol boats and officials of Fisheries Management Authority¹⁹. Thus, to protect Australian water from illegal fishing, ADF personnel work whole year with their colleagues in Australian Border Force and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

¹⁹ http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Oct2015/Operations/2424/Policing-foreign-fishing-in-Australian-waters.htm#.WV1PM_mGPIU



Role in the Human Assistance in Disaster Relief (HADR) Mission

No one country is completely secure from the natural and manufactured disasters. The sophistication and intensity of natural disasters are enhanced with population expansion and global warming. The effective inherent capabilities of naval forces during the disaster are one of the major hindsight of the maritime strategy. Meanwhile, horizon of natural disaster is broad and unpredictable; these natural calamities are belonged to the Earth's inside mechanism (Earthquake and volcano) and outside weather (Tropical cyclone and flood) based dynamics. It is part of the earth mechanism to set up a status-quo in its system in this situation. Therefore, the government or concerned authority can demean the severity of its catastrophic effect by effective disaster management structure. Australian naval forces have already proved their vitality in so many HADR operations such as 'Sumatra Assist'. The different naval ships assist as logistic support base, hospitals, special amphibious vessels to rehabilitations and repair work and as command station during this period. Its self-supporting behaviour and quick endeavour to fix the damaged infrastructure make more effective and less chaotic during these calamities. The naval forces aviation wings provide assistance in distributing life-saving products and evacuating affected people from the hinterland area. This positive approach avails a game changer edge during the disaster time. In fact, quick and effective responding behaviour brings the paradigm shift in the relationship of both donor and recipient countries equally.

Southwest pacific region is one of the major tropical cyclones induced region. Recent technological enhancement and weather-related satellite acknowledges about the origin of any cyclone in this region. Simultaneously, earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis are less predictable. The immediate Australian neighbourhood (Indonesia) and other interested regions have been affected to this geological disaster (2004 Tsunami, Fukushima disaster) on time to time. The Australian naval forces played a crucial role in relief work after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004; it swayed the whole "Northeast Indian Ocean coastal country wherein more than 130,000 Indonesians died and displaced half a million people in Aceh and North Sumatra". (Prothero, 2011) In this havoc situation, The Australian government took quick initiative as 'Operation Sumatra Assist' wherein the ADF provided humanitarian support including emergency relief, engineering and aeromedical evacuation.

Moreover, the Indonesian Padang Island and Samoa (Pacific Island country) affected by the earthquake in October 2009²⁰. ADF started humanitarian mission under 'Operations Padang Assist' and 'Samoa Assist'. In Indonesia alone, 1.3 million litres of water were produced, 1300 medical patients were treated and over 500 tonnes of aid delivered²¹. A similar amount of aid was delivered to Samoa and Tonga in November. The 'Operation Pacific Partnership' was started in July,2009 wherein "the heavy landing craft HMA Ships Betano and Wewak participated with USNS Richard E Byrd and delivered engineering, medical and dental aid to Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands"²².

Nowadays, the domain of HADR is dynamic and vibrant. Search and Rescue (SAR) operation and evacuation of the people from the conflict region are also part of this assistance work. By August, the ADF was back in Tonga, this time to assist with the location and recovery of bodies from the sunken ferry 'Princess Ashika'²³. Moreover, it assisted the PNG authorities in recovering the victims' body of

²⁰ <http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/SP10.pdf>. p.14

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.



the ‘Kokoda air crash’ in August 2009²⁴ and conducted a search operation for the disappeared ‘Malaysia Airlines Flight 370’²⁵. However, the Australian Navy also played a vital role within the domestic front. ADF personnel took part with civilian authority in relief work in ‘January 2009 against the overwhelming bushfires in Victoria and surges in Queensland’. In March, ‘Cyclone Hamish’ washed thirty-one containers off the deck of the cargo ship MV Pacific Adventurer representing a considerable risk to shipping in the area. Over two weeks, the coastal minehunters ‘HMA Ships Yarra and Norman’ located and marked the position of all the containers²⁶. The effective delivering capabilities totally depend on the naval vessels. The amphibious naval ship usually becomes suitable for this HADR related mission. Hence, these technological advancements work as efficiency multiplier in the adverse condition.

The requisite for the ADF to deliver capabilities for home and worldwide HADR is incrementing and the occurrence of more extreme weather events and the impact of climate change may demand higher operational rhythm for HADR missions in the immediate region and across the Indo-Pacific. Apparently, “the Cyclones Wilma (2011), Jasmine (2012), Sandra (2013) and Pam (2015) in the South Pacific and Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines in November 2013”, have been acknowledging a similar catastrophic trend wherein naval non-combatant HADR mission provided better output with its assistance work and vessels. Cyclone Pam devastated Vanuatu Island in 2015, on that time HMAS Torbuk offered a vital lifesaving role in the relief mission (Pacific Assist)²⁷. Recently, in 2016 Fiji is also affected by ‘Tropical Cyclone Winston’, the RAN deployed HMAS Albatross and Canberra under the ‘Fiji Assist’ mission²⁸. Better part of all these assistance missions, the naval forces work as per the local government regulation therefore there is no any fiasco related to the encroachment of any sovereign power of that nation. Simultaneously, it canvasses a colourful benign memory among the regional people within suffering situation.

Australian Naval Exercise with Other Country’s Naval Forces

Naval exercise is a sophisticated and pragmatic mechanism wherein sometimes one nation naval force exercises within their mechanism or with other services like air force and coast guard. Usually, this joint endeavour is bilateral, trilateral and multilateral. Substantially, Joint exercises create stability and understanding between nations, build personal and institutional links between the countries’ military forces, defence-related industries, reinvigorate political, commercial, and defence-related linkages between the participating countries. The mechanism of coalition building for multilateral and joint operations is not essentially standardised. Generally, each nation navy has its self-developed command structure and its staff and commanding procedure varies with other nation. Some time, it depends on the evolution such as the RAN evolved under the British Navy. To such extent, ‘joint or multilateral naval exercises strengthen their efficiency in operation, interoperability and commanding position within other nations’ plans and order’. The joint endeavour eliminates the apprehension due to unexpected rift or weaknesses, and it creates a supportive mechanism for the aid, naval vessel’s lease and acquisition and technological upgradation. Simultaneously, it is also helpful in maritime patrol, counter-piracy mechanisms, raids, naval interdiction and disaster relief mission. During the exercise, “participating personnel and assets will conduct gunnery, missile, anti-submarine, and air-defence exercises, as well as

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/australia%E2%80%99s-search-mh370-regional-leadership-through-hadr-and-search-and-rescue>.

²⁶ <http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/SP10.pdf>. p.14.

²⁷ http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Apr2015/Operations/1963/HMAS-Tobruk-completes-life-saving-mission-to-Vanuatu.htm#.WUGZw_mGPIU

²⁸ <http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Apr2016/Operations/2837/808-Squadron-return-from-Operation-FIJI-ASSIST.htm#.WUGSBPmGPIU>



maritime interdiction and vessel boarding, explosive ordnance disposal, diving and salvage operations, mine clearance operations and an amphibious landing”.

In the post-Cold War era, traditional security threats are the least concerned issue for the RAN. The expansion of Non-traditional security threats is challenging the notion of ‘rules based good order in maritime domain’. Therefore, to maintain rules-based order in the maritime domain, UN has been supporting interstate cooperation and a multination security mechanism to curb Somalia piracy issues. US navy centric ‘1000 navy ship plan’ (2005) is also based on the global cooperation concept within the shared responsibilities. (Ratcliff, 2007) Actually, in this global and trade and commerce-oriented world, every nation is administering more value to this trade relation. These vibrant situations are cherishing a new paradigm in the nations’ relationship (chequebook, railway, pipeline diplomacy). In this situation, Navy is also playing a determining role on the multilateral platform like international naval symposium. The RAN is a significant member of the West Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). (Mukherjee and Mohan, 2015) Usually, this symposium decision and initiative are taken on a consensus basis and not binding for any member countries. Despite these naval symposiums, the Australian Navy takes active participation in multilateral exercises like as RIMPAC, KAKADU, BERSAMA SHIELD, MILAN, AMAN and on the bilateral level Australian navy participates with the other nation naval forces like as Indonesia (Exercise Crossway)²⁹, Singapore (SINGAROO), India (AUSINDEX), US, and PNG Defence Force (Exercise Paradise) etc. Running exercises with foreign nations signals that at some level, there is a hypothetical possibility that the countries involved may actually end up on the same side of a conflict. Exemplary “Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) is a major United States Pacific Fleet biennial combined exercise involving forces from 26 countries including mainly share Asia-Pacific region and some exception is also here like India, Denmark, France and UK”. Any future combat situation, these countries may serve against to each other. Despite, this speculative situation most of the countries naval forces are organizing these exercises either annually or biennially. These naval exercises are organised in multiple forms, such as interdiction, Passex, coercive act, HADR exercise, port visit, etc. The Pacific and Indian Oceans Shipping Working Group (PACIOSWG) is an arrangement to promote common doctrine and procedures for the naval control of shipping (NCS) in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. (Johnston, 2012) Within the NCS doctrine and policy, an annual Exercise BELL BUOY is organised, by each PACIOSWG member on a rotating basis; the Australian Navy organised this exercise in 2000. (Johnston, 2013) The PACIOSWG core membership comprises the allied nations of Australia, Canada, the U.K., and the U.S. Subsequently, the membership has been extended to include other U.S. allies and coalition partners. In an increasingly globalised world, disruptions to sea-borne trade have increased the vulnerability and consequences of disruptions. Various navies work together within the Pacific and Indian oceans to demean disruptions in the international sea borne trades. Apparently, this concept evolved during the Second World War period to protect naval shipping line, reinforcement convoys that flourished until the demise of the Cold War. In the post-Cold War period, it has been metamorphosed as a long-range detection asset for merchant ship movement, as a mechanism to identify legitimate and suspect vessels. This comprehensive cooperation within the countries aims to conceive a good order at the maritime domain.

Conclusion

The Royal Australian navy has a dynamic role within this Indo-Pacific region. The role of the Australian Navy is full of variations; strategic interests are the significant factor behind this variation. This variation is related to the conventional and non-conventional challenges. Huge maritime zone, unstable

²⁹<http://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/SP10.pdf>, p. 96-97



immediate neighbourhood and continuously growing interest in global order brought a roller coaster type pathway for the Australian Navy during these 25 years. Hereby, the Gulf War, War against terrorism, democracy stabilisation process in the Pacific Island Countries and participation in the different HADR mission make the Australian Navy's understanding multidimensional. The Australian Navy mainly faces non-conventional challenges like illegal immigration, IUUs, and transnational crimes in this period. Therefore, the Australian Navy served in various operations like 'Operation Relax to operation Sovereign Border and Operation Resolute' to curb all these illicit acts and maintain order in the maritime domain. Eventually, the Australian maritime strategy is more or less based on the concern of self-reliance herein, the prime concern is to secure the Australian mainland and the country's interest. Continuously growing the number of Australian naval fleets reflects the 'sea control' capability of the Australian Navy within growing interest from neighbourhood to Indo-Pacific region. This interest is the major catalyst to expand the presence of any nation in the worlds political, economic, and security led issues.

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