

Foreword

The *Indo-Pacific Strategic Digest* is a bi-annual publication incorporating the best student essays from the senior professional development and education program of the Defence and Strategic Studies Course at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies. This edition is written at a time of heightened concerns about an apparently ever-widening spectrum of defence and security concerns.

Concerns arise from fast advancing technology (including cyber security challenges and networked and automated weapons systems), turbulent politics and ideologies, as well as shifting great power dynamics associated with the stunning rise of China, the emergence of a belligerent Russia, and a resurgent India. The knock-on consequences arising from the changed power dynamics for Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia and beyond are profound. In addition, there are momentous environmental challenges, as well as the legacies of long campaigns in the fight against Islamist extremism.

Indeed, progress in the fight against Daesh or ISIS and other manifestations of Islamist extremism in the Middle East and beyond seems to be pointing to some cause for hope, but there are disturbing countervailing signs that tactical victories may be fleeting and the remaining challenges as great if not greater than what preceded them. The so-called global war on terror has dragged on for sixteen years and the situation seems to have shown signs of worsening. Developments in Marawi in the southern Philippines, for instance, augur poorly.

Tactical and operational success is not generating strategic victory. This highlights the need to think beyond military effects and solutions and to understand the use of military force as an incomplete answer to a complex and challenging set of issues relating to the establishment and maintenance of security and stability far from Australia's shores or closer to home. The responses to some of these issues presented here warrant close attention. They demonstrate the thinking and writing of some of the region's best security-related practitioners.

This collection of papers, informed by history and a close examination of contemporary events, is well positioned to consider the implications over the decade ahead. The papers include a reflection on whether a closer Japanese military relationship with China is feasible in an effort to bolster security and stability in Northeast Asia. Is there a role for Australia in this equation? Another examines the uncertain security environment in the South China Sea and the likely impact on Singapore over the decade ahead. What role should Australia play alongside Singapore? Yet another considers whether the growing warmth between Russia and China presents a threat to India. Another considers the potential policy options for Australia in dealing with a nuclear-armed North Korea. Other subjects addressed include: the implications for great power dynamics

arising from the fragility of the global financial system; food security and the implications for national security in Japan; the regional security implications of climate change and disasters in the South Pacific; and an attempt to address the supply of methamphetamine from China to Australia.

This collection of papers shows the gamut of troubling strategic issues facing today's policy makers. It is a forward-looking attempt to grapple with genuine challenges facing policy makers today and into the future. The spectrum of issues addressed points to the need for closer collaboration between complementary agencies within Australia and across the Indo-Pacific region. They point to the need for continued investment in stronger and deeper regional ties to understand counterparts and more effectively work with them to address the growing range of challenges.

'May you live in interesting times' is an epithet that speaks to the fast changing world of the Indo-Pacific. This certainly is a very interesting and readable edition of the *Digest*. I commend it to you.

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