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BOOK REVIEWS

Australia's Defence: towards a new era?

edited by Peter J. Dean, Stephan Frühling and Brendan Taylor

Melbourne University Press: Melbourne; 2014; 344 pp.; ISBN 9780522866070; RRP \$49.99 (paperback)

Australia's Defence: Towards a New Era? brings together a dozen papers from leading experts that examine the domestic and international context of Australia's defence policy, Australian strategy, and the size and state of our armed forces. Whether or not the strategic security environment and Australia's future responses herald a 'new era' as the title questions, this book provides an in-depth overview and key insights into the past, present and, to a degree, the future of Australia's defence.

The book contains contributions from Russell Trood, Andrew Carr, Charles Miller, Amy King, John Blaxland, Joanne Wallis, Paul Dibb, Stephan Frühling, Peter J. Dean, James Goldrick, Mark Thompson and Richard Brabin-Smith; the majority of whom work at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University.

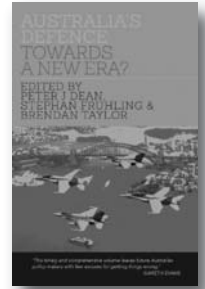
Professor Brendan Taylor, head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, states in his introduction that Australia's awkward position between a 'rising China' and a 'rebalancing America' is creating many new challenges for how the country perceives its defence. "We are in an era where Australia's status as a 'middle power' and its capacity to maintain its longstanding military technological edge over other countries in its region will likely be tested," Professor Taylor said, "particularly as Asia's giants, China and India, and other medium-sized powers, like Indonesia, South Korea and Vietnam, stand up."

The twelve papers are arranged into four parts titled the

national context, international context, strategy, and size and state of our defences. The topics they collectively examine include Australia as a middle power, public attitudes on Defence, the east Asian region, the Anzus Alliance, policymaking, the Australian Defence Force as a joint force, force structure, force posture and funding. In all, *Australia's Defence* is a comprehensive collection of arguments and suggestions. Its editors have done a good job in managing duplication and stitching gaps between the twelve papers.

There is no conclusion in the book. An attempt to try to draw all insights and suggestions together would have had tremendous utility, but would also be extremely difficult and perhaps take sides when there were opposing views expressed between the authors. So the reader is left to draw their own conclusions. The book contains a lot of material, so it is likely that many readers will cherry pick certain chapters of personal interest. This is a risk the editors have accepted.

Australia's Defence is a useful snapshot of the security challenges and opportunities presently facing Australia. Taylor highlights that it is not intended to be a work of advocacy, but it is well timed to indirectly inform the 2015 Defence White Paper development process of which James Goldrick and Stephan Frühling are members of the expert panel.



Marcus Fielding