

LETTER

Deriving a defence strategy for Australia

I enjoyed Adam Lockyer's derivation from first principles of a 'good' Australian defence strategy (*United Service* 68 (4), 12 – 16, December 2018). He made a great start by distinguishing between strategic interests and strategic objectives.

But the strategic interests he listed were all defined geographic areas. Terrain is not synonymous with interests. Australia also has strategic interests around the globe, such as Australian citizens abroad, financial investments made overseas, Australian dollars held abroad as foreign currency reserves, foreign sources of resources and commodities essential to Australia, and Australian intellectual property stored abroad. These strategic interests are constantly moving – unlike defined geographic areas – and so even tracking them would be a significant challenge.

Additionally, while growing power competition between India and China might manifest itself in some form of naval clash somewhere around the Malacca Straits, I'm not convinced that preventing or mitigating this scenario should be Australia's primary strategic objective. With access to both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Australia is in a good position to adjust its sea lines of communication to avoid becoming directly involved. If anything, those two growing powers, with burgeoning populations and increasing demands for resources, might cast their eyes further southward and agree to co-operate on a course of action more threatening to us.

Nonetheless, the debate is welcome; and I look forward to reading Adam's book soon.

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Melbourne, Victoria, 30 January 2018