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The Global Security Outlook

Peter Hartcher (pp. 9 – 12) assesses that economic instability, espionage, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and failing nations in the Asia-Pacific, are now constants in the strategic equation. Further, Russia has become a rogue state; China's rise is no longer peaceful; Japan has re-militarised; a new virulent form of terrorism (Daesh or Islamic State) has emerged; sectarian war has broken out within Islam; climate change has become a security threat multiplier; and a weakened United States is losing its will and ability to support its allies. Hartcher concludes, *inter alia*, that Australia needs a defence strategy independent of that of the United States – reminiscent of H. D. Wynter's call in 1935 (see below).

This need is also evident from Clive Williams' review of the civil war which has been raging in Syria since 2011 (pp. 13 – 16). He addresses some of the consequences of that war, such as the emergence of Islamic State and its caliphate, and an overwhelming flow of refugees towards Europe, causing a migrant crisis.

Since these two papers were written late last year, the situation has remained dynamic. North Korea conducted its fourth underground nuclear test on 6 January – detonating what it claimed was a miniaturised hydrogen bomb. It followed this on 7 February by a long-range missile test. Iran, however, has put its nuclear ambitions on hold in the face of overwhelming international trade sanctions which have now been lifted.

China continues to assert its claims to most of the South China Sea. In January, it reignited Sino-Vietnamese tensions by deploying an oil rig (HD-981) in disputed waters west of the Paracel Islands and has prohibited vessels from sailing within 2km of it. China now routinely warns Australian military aircraft patrolling the shipping lanes to stay away from Chinese off-shore installations; and the United States has again incurred Chinese displeasure by conducting another freedom-of-navigation patrol, this time by the USS *Curtis Wilbur* through the Paracel Islands.

Islamic State has suffered some reverses in Iraq, with the Iraqi army recapturing Ramadi and now preparing to re-take Mosul – a much tougher challenge. In response, Islamic State has stepped up its activities in Libya and is encouraging its numerous followers to undertake terrorism in Europe and Southeast Asia.

The flow of migrants towards Europe has become a virtual tsunami and it could yet destroy the European Union as a political entity. The EU 'open-border' policy is breaking down as individual nations re-establish border controls. Further, some migrants have behaved repulsively towards their European hosts and a few Islamic State operatives have committed acts of terror in Europe after entering in the guise of refugees. This is forcing a re-think of humanitarian measures.

Vital to resolving the refugee crisis is a negotiated peace settlement in Syria. In early February, there was

hope when peace talks resumed in Geneva between the warring parties. They broke down almost immediately, though, as Syrian government forces with Russian air support resumed their attacks on the Western-backed armed opposition groups. These groups are now in disarray and at the time of writing, Aleppo was poised to fall to the government.

2016 is shaping up to be a very difficult year.

David Leece¹

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The Wynter Affair and the Institute's Independence

A recent lunchtime lecturer questioned the Institute's independence, suggesting that, as a consequence of the Wynter affair, the Institute had agreed not to promote views critical of Defence policy. Many in our audience were bemused by this claim as they were aware that the Institute jealously guards its independence and they had not heard of the Wynter affair.

H. D. Wynter, a regular soldier, was a sound strategic thinker. In 1926 and 1935, he addressed the United Service Institution (U.S.I.) of Victoria. On both occasions he expressed concern about Imperial defence, especially the "Singapore Strategy", and advocated a more independent defence strategy for Australia². The Japanese capture of Singapore on 15 February 1942 would later vindicate his stance.

Colonel Wynter also presented his 1935 lecture to the U.S.I. in Sydney. In lieu of publication, copies of it were distributed widely by a former U.S.I. president, Senator C. H. Brand. The leader of the federal opposition later used the paper to attack the Minister of Defence, Sir Archdale Parkhill. Parkhill claimed Wynter had divulged classified information which Wynter denied. Parkhill, after refusing Wynter a court-marshal opportunity to clear his name, demoted him. Wynter was not restored to rank until after Parkhill was defeated at the general election in 1937.

Did the Wynter affair lead to the U.S.I. agreeing not to promote views critical of defence policy? It seems improbable, not least because the U.S.I. valued its independence. If, though, there were once any substance to the claim, the detail has been lost during the ensuing 80 years. More to the point, as editor of *United Service*, I am not aware of any extant agreement with Defence which prescribes what I may or may not publish.

Throughout its 127-year history (see pp.25 – 28), the Royal United Services Institute of New South Wales has been proudly **apolitical** and **independent**. It remains very much so today.

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¹David Leece, Editor of *United Service*, is President of the Institute. These are his personal views.

²The lecture in September 1926 was published in the *British Army Quarterly* in April 1927.