

**Address by Dr Allan Hawke
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at the occasion of the book launch of

*Defence Policy-making: A Close-up View, 1950-1980
A Personal Memoir*

by Sir Arthur Tange
edited by Dr Peter Edwards

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(edited version)

May I begin by recognising Chris Tange and his sister Jenny who are accompanied by their spouses Helen Brown and Angus Moir. The last time I saw them and their children (Jessica and Michael Tange, Alice and Nicholas Moir) was when the clan gathered together in the Great Hall of Parliament House on 24 May 2001 with Lady Marjorie where I delivered a Eulogy for Sir Arthur at his Memorial Service.

Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb acknowledges Arthur's persuasive personality, so may I add to his introduction by personally welcoming the great mentor Tony Ayers who taught me and many others so much. Secretaries Nick Warner and Michael L'Estrange are here with our former colleagues Philip Flood and Ric Smith; the Master of the ACT Supreme Court David Harper and his wife Jenny; and Arthur's last personal secretary in External Affairs, Billie Burke.

This evening represents the culmination of a number of things. I suspect all of those gathered here know about *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, published in 2006 and for which Peter Edwards won a major literary award. I commend this wonderful book to you for the marvellous insights it provides into Australian Government history, public service, and Sir Arthur himself.

That biography and this Personal Memoir, edited by Peter, and which we are here to launch this evening, reflects the legacy that Sir Arthur has bestowed on Australia. I commissioned these works when sitting in the Secretary of Defence chair, wanting to see the publication of Arthur's own account in his own hand.

During my tenure as Defence Secretary, I met with Sir Arthur over lunch from time to time to discuss defence issues, the 2000 White Paper and the organisational renewal program that the then Chief of Defence Force (CDF)—Admiral Chris Barrie—and I were pursuing. These were not simply social occasions, pleasant as those might have been; they were more like a cross-examination by one of the finest intellects I have ever encountered.

These meetings originated from my then controversial 'due diligence' speech about the prevailing state of affairs in Defence at the National Press Club on 17 February 2000. My remarks piqued Arthur's curiosity and he prevailed upon the Emeritus Professor to arrange lunch at The Lobby. Paul was usually present on these occasions and sometimes Bill Pritchett, both of whom put their 'two bob's worth' in—as you would expect. The last occasion was in mid April, a few weeks before Arthur's demise on 10 May 2001.

As an aside here, I find Nick Warner's 10 June address to the Lowy Institute very depressing. Aficionados might like to compare it with my 17 February 2000 speech and tell me what's different eight years later. This is not the time or place to go into that other than to observe that Defence Central seems still to be mired in a perpetual Groundhog Day. Perhaps this illustrates the continuing circular nature of the defence debate and the administrative problems confronting and confounding Defence.

Sir Arthur counselled and inspired me to set out my views about Defence issues in a series of public presentations, which I did over the next two years until Robert Hill became Defence Minister. It will probably come as no surprise that my addresses drew on Arthur's views and arguments.

On one occasion, Arthur summoned me to his home near the corner of Flinders Way and La Perouse Streets. I was shown into his study and sat in a chair near the two-bar radiator, surrounded by books and notes he was drawing on when tapping out his Defence Memoir on an ancient IBM typewriter. This was clearly a labour of love, but it was also the way in which Arthur sought to bring closure to his lifetime's work. As Peter Edwards reveals, Arthur intended to write a similar Memoir about External Affairs, but the march of time caught up with him and only a few preliminary passages had been sketched out by the time of his death.

Sir Arthur 'had a deep conviction that Public Service was more than a career—its disciplined performance was a duty to the public'—a duty he practised assiduously with the full weight of his 'formidable administrative ability and sheer force of his personality'.

Before coming to Defence, Arthur served 11 years as Secretary of External Affairs, where through the Defence Committee and other interactions he formed some views that he brought to bear after taking up the Secretary job, returning from his post as Ambassador in India to do so, having declined a simultaneous offer to become Ambassador in Washington and expressed his preference to return as Secretary of External Affairs, which he had also been offered (Arthur later realised that would have been a mistake).

Of passing interest is the fact that R.G. Casey, who was responsible for Arthur then aged 39 becoming his Secretary, had his 1940–42 diaries as Australian Ambassador in Washington published last week.

The 1973 Tange Review was a revolutionary break with the past—it laid the foundation stones for the structure and governance of our current Defence organisation. And it was Arthur's defence of the Australia self-reliance concept that eventually came to be accepted at a time when most still hankered for a subordinate role for our forces under British or American command. It was Arthur who pushed for a sober estimate of Australia's capability to look after itself instead of being solely dependent on the ANZUS Treaty.

Sir Arthur clearly understood that his review and subsequent work was just the beginning of the processes which have led to our much admired Australian Defence Force (ADF), arguably the finest in the world.

He introduced three enduring policy concepts: strategic analysis supported by independent and tough minded intelligence input; rigorous and quantitative force structure analysis; and financial discipline guided by the Five Year Defence Plan.

His ten year term as Defence Secretary was all about articulating and getting observed in practice that the Services should prepare their military capabilities from a strategic assessment that was common to all three and accepted by the Government—something we now take for granted, but do not always practise. That probably explains why his very last day on the job was devoted to a Defence Committee Meeting which reached agreement on the future strategic basis, entitled ‘Australian Strategic Assessments and Defence Policy Objectives’. At a farewell dinner that night on 17 August 1979 at The Australian National University, he handed over the keys to his successor Bill Pritchett on the stroke of midnight which marked the commencement of his 65th birthday.

Even today, many people don’t understand or accept that Tange’s reforms were designed to strengthen the capacity of uniformed officers to give advice on defence and strategic policy within a unified structure. Nor do they appreciate that this was the real purpose behind establishment of the Diarchy and its fundamental importance to proper defence administration.

The Secretary and CDF, by legislation and Ministerial Directive, have separate and joint responsibilities that they carry out under the policy direction and authority of Ministers and the Parliamentary Secretary. Admiral Chris Barrie and I recast these in the form of a Directive from the Minister for Defence codifying what we *could not do* jointly or separately. In doing this, we took great care to preserve the correct civilian–military interface and to prevent the civilian side from interfering in matters properly the preserve of the uniformed side as Arthur had intended.

The Diarchy is not about striking a balance between ‘opposing powers’. Its purpose is to bring together the responsibilities and complementary abilities of the public service and military to achieve the Defence outcome sought by the Government of the day. Those complementary abilities of the two co-administrators are all about giving the CDF unfettered focus on the command of the ADF and allocating clear responsibility to the Secretary for the resource, policy and accountability functions of the Department.

Debate about the CDF’s role as Principal Military Adviser arose from the children overboard incident, but I am inclined to see that as a failure in the chain of command. Some still argue that the Diarchy is fundamentally flawed. They might reflect on the fact that most of us grew up in a Diarchy.

In my 1 May 2000 speech about the Diarchy, I said:

No longer will Australia be sending expeditionary forces abroad in the way that we used to in support of our major allies, largely as the price for our defence. We are first and foremost our own caretakers. We do not any more buy hardware designed for the rolling plains of Europe purely because we might be called upon to use it there. We have developed our own military doctrine, our own equipment needs consistent with our international obligations and our own mature assessments of our national interests. The Guam Doctrine of 1969 was compelling in its strictures about national self-reliance.

That was true then and it is true now, but that didn’t stop Robert Hill’s recidivist attempts to undermine the 2000 White Paper and return us to that paradigm, with the Middle East as the key driver of our force structure. Like Arthur’s experience with Hasluck, Hill shared his aloofness, dislike of policy advice and tendency to scold senior officers over administrivia.

The *Abrams* tank decision fostered by Hill deliberately destroyed the consensus between the three Services and the centre about the Capability Plan. I'll wager the thought that the *Abrams* will never be deployed and never fire a shot in anger. This ridiculous decision shows just how hard it is to remove a capability from the Order of Battle, and puts a new slant on the decision to acquire the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters.

The last White Paper was tabled on the floor of the House of Representatives on 6 December 2000. It included the following prescient sentence:

Australia also faces many non-military threats to our national life, such as cyber attack, organised crime, terrorism, illegal immigration, the drug trade, illegal fishing, piracy and quarantine infringement.

These issues together with humanitarian relief, evacuations, aid to the civil power, peacekeeping and peace enforcement are now commonplace occurrences. The point is that we must not allow these roles to detract from the ADF's core function of defending Australia from armed attack, nor should we allow them to distort our force structure or the way in which we train our forces for armed combat.

Arthur's role in the military call-out associated with the bomb that went off outside the Sydney Hilton Hotel during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1978 is interesting, if only for the fact that I was accused of masterminding that incident.

Sir Arthur's concern to marry defence and foreign policy activities so as to produce sound security policy is rightly reflected in Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's determination to produce a National Security Strategy Statement as the framework for Government policy thinking on security, providing the context for the new Defence White Paper which I expect we will see in 2009.

It is important that this White Paper articulate with clear intellectual rigour the nature of Australia's abiding defence interests. I have no doubt that Joel Fitzgibbon will see to that. But, most of all we need a Force Structure and capabilities to defend Australia's soil and nearer neighbourhood to accord with Arthur's strictures. This approach allows us to deploy niche forces and capabilities further afield to meet our national interests when required.

That's why the associated ten-year Capability Plan and financial guidance envelope within which it is to be delivered are so critically important.

Defence spending grew by a phenomenal 47 per cent during the 12 years of the Howard Government, an unsustainable and unnecessary rate.

While the Capability Plan accompanying the 2000 White Paper followed an internal review of the force structure required for credible contingencies, I believe it is time to commission another external review along the lines of that conducted by Paul Dibb in 1986 where he was given licence by Minister Kim Beazley to conduct a fundamental review of the force structure.

The Howard Government eventually fell into the trap of major capital equipment purchases outside of the Cabinet-endorsed Capability Plan. That is something Prime Minister Rudd, Defence Minister Fitzgibbon, the National Security Committee and the Secretaries Committee on National Security (SCONS) will need to guard carefully against.

They should also heed Arthur's warning that 'restraint was needed on the temptation, particularly for Prime Ministers, to inflate Australia's influence in the world, making commitments that outran the community's willingness to provide the resources needed by the Defence Force if Australia's military capability were put to the test'. The yearning of

political leaders for a place on the world stage and their tendency to commit Australian forces to distant international deployments tends to overplay the national pride engendered and downplay the much more difficult task of withdrawal.

When I was ushered out the door in October 2002, the Rules of Engagement (RoE) that the Augmented Chiefs of Staff Committee had agreed for the Capability Plan were filed in the wastepaper bin. I suspect that no one in Defence remembers what they were or why they were necessary, but if they are not part and parcel of the new Capability Plan then the Rudd Government is destined to repeat the mistakes of its predecessors.

The system of incentives, sanctions and accountabilities under those RoE would have certainly helped to avoid further *Sea Sprite* experiences and lowered Dick Smith's blood pressure. I remain puzzled why it is only Defence that gets singled out in these instances; no one seems interested in holding the private sector suppliers to account in terms of what they promised, for how much and in what timeframe.

These RoE were also intended to focus the Service Chiefs on what matters: to raise, train and sustain those who answer the calling of the profession of arms instead of obsessing with displacement activities. In this context, I was disturbed to read the recent comments about command attributed to Major General Jim Molan. Hopefully, release of his book later this year will lead to a redress of the issues that he raises so that the ADF can retain pride of place.

Thirty-two years of public service, 22 as a Secretary observing at close quarters 17 Ministers and five Prime Ministers with differences in personality and style, relationships and policy acumen, Sir Arthur's verdict on them is delivered in this Memoir. Malcolm Fraser emerges with Arthur's accolade as the best Coalition Defence Minister; they shared a common love of fly fishing and Malcolm encouraged Arthur to acquire his haven 'Koonaroo' in the Yaouk Valley, blessed by the absence of a telephone or easy access. You can see Arthur indulging this passion on the back cover with his dog Hamish.

Arthur declined an invitation to speak to Malcolm about the discontent among Ministers with the demands he was making on them as PM by taking so much business into Cabinet for them to be grilled in lengthy meetings.

The 140 pages of the Memoir comprise three parts:

- the Road to Russell;
- Labor in Office; and
- the early Fraser Ministry.

Many things stand out, but, fundamentally, Sir Arthur believed in testing everything through the prism of Australia's national interests. We do well to recall that this was in an era when the prevailing view was to look to great and powerful friends, and our still fledgling nation was beset with the cultural cringe in so many ways. Arthur's stance took great courage.

As Peter Edwards' preface notes, readers will benefit from Tange's own account of administrative reforms and policy shifts in Defence during his term and Arthur's commentary on political crises such as the downfall of John Gorton as Prime Minister and the dismissal of the Whitlam Government.

Arthur describes the difficulties he encountered, such as prevarication in establishing the Australian Defence Force Academy, Australian sovereignty relating to the Joint Facilities, the Hope Royal Commission and the solutions he proffered.

On Ministerial staff, he observed that they serve electoral interest and, while entitled to be kept informed, they should not condition public service advice. Their advice may be parallel, but it should be separate. Wise counsel indeed!

Many of Sir Arthur's ideas, which were initially resisted, later found favour and were implemented by civilian and uniformed successors. The 1976 White Paper broke new ground, embracing his thoughts, together with major contributions by Bill Pritchett on warning time and Australia's geographical position on the globe.

Readers will be surprised by the warmth and affection Arthur extends to uniformed colleagues, marvel at his commentary on a politically impartial public service and conceptions of Ministerial–public service relations.

This Memoir is a rare treat. Unlike the United Kingdom, Australia doesn't have a record of these kinds of things. I suspect Governments would prefer that to remain the case or that they only come to fruition some way down the track as Arthur's has. The lessons to be learned from the dominant bureaucratic figure of the twentieth century stand the test of time.

The Spanish philosopher George Santayana captured the thesis of my address as follows:

Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness. When change is absolute there remains no being to improve and no direction is set for possible improvement: and when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

In conclusion, I am pleased to launch Sir Arthur's Personal Memoir *Defence Policy Making—A Close-up View, 1950–1980*.