



ABSTRACT

The reliance on the great and powerful friends has been considered as a distinctive feature within Australia's foreign policy. However, with the changing geopolitics and Australia's more dynamic foreign policies in facing the ever growing challenges, there's a need to look back at what exactly the reliance means and what it may present for Australia's defence. This thesis aimed to contribute in the debate to reveal the logic behind the increasingly adopted interoperability within Australian Defence Force and Department of Defence. Interoperability, as an established keystone aspect within all Australia defence policies and decision, may also hides tremendous drawbacks if not assessed properly.

In the case of this research, strategic cultures are effective to explain the rationality behind interoperability, to prove whether it is a descendant from the earliest strategic culture, a return of pattern or a break off from the previous pattern. Looking from the material and non-material aspects of strategic culture, the thesis has able to determine that interoperability within the ADF was born from a failed attempt to break off from the earlier strategic culture pattern during the 1970s-1980s to bridge the gap between reliance and self-reliance, and further reinforced during the 2000s "Regional Defence Plus". How the strategic culture shapes the interoperability can be seen from the various compromised defence policies, procurements and operations to fit the logic of interoperability. The procurement of F-35 JSF for the Royal Australian Air Force, the intervened development of Royal Australian Navy's *Collins* class submarines and the ADF's Joint Intelligence Facilities with the United States showed a permanent adoption of interoperability logic. Yet, as the thesis will reveal, interoperability hides significant disadvantages as it jeopardizes self-reliance capabilities of the ADF where it reduced the quantity and quality of its defence equipments, and may even violate the sovereignty of Australia itself. In the end, these drawbacks seem to be ruled out in exchange of a "guarantee" to be able to conduct joint operations with the big and powerful friends and a faux sense of self-reliance, but the risks are lurking out there.

KEY WORDS: Australia, Strategic Culture, Australia's Strategic Culture, Australian Defence Force, Interoperability, Defence.