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LUNCHEON SEMINAR

Thursday 31 July 2025

at the National Press Club

16 National Circuit, Barton

June 2025

Speaker: MICHAEL SHOEBRIDGE

Founder and Director,

Strategic Analysis Australia

"Strategic Turbulence and Risk"



**Newsletter
of the
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From the President

Mid-year greetings to all members. I trust this finds you well, and warm.

I must start this communication by thanking my fellow committee members for holding the fort during my recent absence. I am reliably informed that our March lunch went smoothly, and that unsurprisingly, John Blackburn delivered an interesting and thought-provoking presentation.

Members will recall that our guest speaker in March was to have been [Michael Shoebridge](#) who, for very good reasons had to withdraw at that time. The good news is that Michael will return as our guest speaker on Thursday 31 July. If his presentation in March wasn't already going to be interesting enough, the international strategic dynamic has become even more compelling. Most recently, we have seen Israel's attacks against Iran's nuclear facilities (and retaliation by Iran), while more directly for Australia, uncertainty surrounds the future of the AUKUS pact and in particular, the delivery of Virginia-class submarines to Australia.

To give us a flavour of what he might cover next month, Michael shared with me a number of ideas that he might take up in his presentation, and which in turn I want to share with you to get you thinking about the questions you might wish to ask.

Bearing in mind that this conversation occurred a couple of weeks ago, and the rapidly evolving geo-strategic events that have occurred since then, Michael told me that:

"A couple of things come to mind: the fact that the RAAF is now likely to have block obsolescence in the 2030s as a result of the problem that the acquisition budget for the Army, cyber and RAAF now being smaller than the Navy's acquisition budget - and that is only going to get worse as the AUKUS subs program eats more of the defence budget, with the Hunters doing smaller but similar damage."

He went on to say that:

"Another is the strategic insanity of Australia doubling down on our economic dependence on a coercive China and simultaneously doubling down on our security dependence on an increasingly unreliable America (by underspending, but spending a growing share of the Defence budget on US tech). Each policy direction looks a bad one for Australia, but the combination is remarkably stupid."

"Of course, there's the 'hiding in plain sight' problem of any war Australia might be a part of going for more than two to three weeks and so using up any stocks of precision guided munitions and probably causing combat losses of irreplaceable systems and personnel. Only affordable mass produced in Australia gets out of that death spiral."

These thoughts were similarly expressed in the Australian Financial Review where Michael wrote on 12 June that:

"Our current plans also commit great chunks of the budget to programs that take decades to deliver small numbers of things to our military. So, over the dangerous period of the next fifteen years, we'll mainly see a weakening of our military power relative to others, instead of strengthening."

Of particular interest to Air Force, Michael wrote in that article that:

"It could be in Australia's and the US's interests for us to turn to the B-21 long-range bomber in any renegotiated deal for example. Unlike nuclear submarines where it is taking three decades to eke out eight extra vessels, the B-21 is going to have a live high-rate production line in the next few years able to make more planes than the US will buy, so Australia could get increased long-range military power in the late 2020s or early 2030s in a refocused deal, while saving somewhere between \$100 billion and \$200 billion."

Now, that should stir the pot, particularly in Navy circles and especially so amongst the submariners!

Without doubt, our lunch on 31 July will be both interesting and informative, and delivered in Michael's usual entertain style - without slides! Certainly it will be a lunch that will make it worth emerging from the cosy warmth of our homes to share each others company and enjoy the hospitality of the National Press Club.

Not wishing to put anyone off attending, we need to have a lightning-fast general meeting immediately prior to lunch being served. With our honorary reviewer, LTCOL Maurice Gault having sadly passed away, our [constitution](#) requires general meeting approval to appoint a new reviewer. To this end we will be asking that everyone be seated in the Situation Room by 1225. Relax! Our hard working Treasurer, David Wade has enlisted a volunteer, Dennis Mitchell, who is willing to take on the role of reviewing our accounts! Meanwhile, the current burdensome constitutional requirement for an AGM to appoint a reviewer suggests the need to overhaul our constitution, a task now in hand and ideally, ready for your approval at the November lunch and AGM.

Having returned over the weekend from my travels, I am able to say that I look forward to seeing those of you who can attend on Thursday 31 July. Finally, I take this opportunity to remind you of the Australian Aviation Club lunch on Thursday 26 June, to which RAAF Staff College Association members have reciprocal access. Details are on the home page of the website.

Stay well,

Ian

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