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The ‘Best Small Nation Navy in the World’? The 21st Century Royal New Zealand Navy

Whether it’s disaster relief, peace support operations, ensuring that the sea trade on which we depend for our survival can get through, or protecting New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone and marine resources, the Royal New Zealand Navy as part of the New Zealand Defence Force protects and serves the causes important to us and our way of life (New Zealand Defence Force 2016a).

Rear Admiral John Martin, Chief of Navy, 2016

As the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) conducts Operation NEPTUNE throughout 2016 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the service, significant time will be devoted to reflecting on past successes.¹ While the RNZN has much to be proud of throughout its history, it is also prudent that the current and future roles of the service be assessed. Fittingly, the release of New Zealand’s 2016 Defence White Paper coincided with NEPTUNE, which has provided an opportunity to consider both past experiences and future capabilities and tasks. Within the recognised constraints of size and budget, the goal of the RNZN is lofty. The RNZN has explicitly stated its aim to be the ‘best small nation navy in the world’ (Royal New Zealand Navy 2015, 2). Although New Zealand may be described as a small nation, its maritime domain is vast. The 2010 Defence White Paper outlined: ‘Ninety-six percent of New Zealand lies underwater, if our extended continental shelf is included’ (Ministry of Defence 2010, 17).

The RNZN’s goal is extremely challenging given the inherently maritime nature of the nation. The RNZN has acknowledged:

New Zealand has an Exclusive Economic Zone which is approximately 15 times the land area of our country and among the largest in the world. We have the ninth longest coastline in the world. Our nearest major trading partner and ally, Australia, is 1000 miles away. We are a vast distance from most major international markets and 99% of our trade crosses the sea...Through our geographical isolation and dependence on maritime trade

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for our economic prosperity, it is clear that New Zealand is a maritime nation
(Royal New Zealand Navy 2015, 3).

The 2016 Defence White Paper noted that the contributions expected of the RNZN are only likely to grow as ‘activity in this domain increases’ (New Zealand Government 2016, 10). Evidently, the RNZN is a small navy that is charged with a big task, which makes it extremely challenging to live up to the ambition to be the ‘best small nation navy’.

Naval history and contemporary maritime studies have tended to be focussed on large and, to a lesser extent, medium navies. In the Asia-Pacific, in particular, much attention is centred on the larger navies, especially the People’s Liberation Army Navy. However, as Joseph Morgan foresaw in 1994, there has been a ‘dramatic increase in the capabilities of small navies in Asia and the Pacific’ (see Morgan 1994). Small navies cannot and should not be overlooked. Equally, assessments of navies should not be entirely focused on combat capabilities. While those capabilities are important, the full spectrum of operations that navies are required to conduct needs to be factored into any assessment. Despite being situated in the strategic hotspot of the Asia-Pacific, New Zealand is not engaged in any significant rivalry with other nations. Nevertheless, the RNZN is expected to play an essential role in protecting New Zealand and its resources, responding to events in the Pacific and contributing to wider multinational efforts. With that in mind, the RNZN is an especially relevant case study for the examination of small navies.

In assessing the RNZN, this article will consider the criteria devised by Basil Germond, which includes: order of battle (number of vessels and types of ships); order of effect (power of weaponry); versatility/flexibility (types and diversity of missions), range/sustainability (geographical reach and capacity for sustained operations) and autonomy and cooperation/interoperability (the ability to operate independently and within a coalition) (Germond 2014, 41). It will outline the size and capability of the RNZN before considering its

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suitability based on the tasks that it is expected to undertake. In line with the expectations of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), the capacity and ability of the RNZN to integrate with likely partners during multinational operations will also be addressed. In particular, interoperability with the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the United States Navy (USN) will be considered. Those examinations will form the basis of an assessment of whether the size and capability of the RNZN's fleet should be enhanced. Whilst direct comparisons between navies are difficult, assessments can be made on the basis of the tasks that are expected of any given fleet. Ultimately, this article will conclude that although the RNZN is a credible small navy, the current composition of the fleet leaves it short of being able to fulfil the ambition to be the 'best small nation navy'. In assessing the RNZN and analysing issues beyond combat capability, lessons can be gleaned for other small navies.

A Small Navy or a 'Small Nation' Navy?

The RNZN is regularly labelled as a 'small navy', but the underlying criteria for that designation is not always clear. Despite a number of scholars proposing naval hierarchies, there is no universally accepted formula for classifying navies.² However, Eric Grove has developed a widely used classification system based on capability, which he revised in 2014. According to the classification, the RNZN is a rank 4 (out of 10) navy – an 'adjacent force projection' navy – that is able to 'project force well off shore' (Grove 2014, 18).

A focus on the number of ships alone does not provide an adequate way of judging a navy, but there are particular challenges faced by small navies. Julian Lindley-French and Wouter van Straten have made reference to a 'capability-capacity crunch':

The task-list is growing due to the increasing operational tempo and intensity. Task attrition is reinforced by the new role of armed forces as planning and command hubs for complex civil-military effect. However, with defence budgets under pressure from defence inflation and the cost of operations, the

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gap between available and required military capabilities for effect is growing (Lindley-French and van Straten 2008, 67).

Whilst larger navies are also susceptible to the ‘capability-capacity crunch’ given that they may be required to undertake a wider range of tasks across a bigger geographical area, the size of fleets maintained by small navies can impose limitations. Geoffrey Till has observed that small navies are often devoid of ‘critical mass’, which means that they may only be able to deploy forces in ‘penny packets’ such as the RNZN’s two Anzac class frigates (Till 2014, 23). Equally, the smaller number of ships operated by the RNZN means that command experience within the navy is limited by comparison to larger navies. Ultimately, the RNZN fits Till’s description of a small navy as one with ‘limited means and aspirations’ (2003).

Ian Speller, Deborah Sanders and Michael Mulqueen have noted that the moniker ‘small navy’ has negative connotations and, for some navies, ‘would represent an intolerable affront to their sense of self and might serve to undermine their position within the national institutional hierarchy’ (Speller, Sanders, and Mulqueen 2014, 5). The coining of the term ‘small nation navy’ by the RNZN did not denote a new classification. Rather, it was the creation of a term that was devoid of the negative connotations associated with small navies. The size of the RNZN’s fleet and its comparatively limited role as compared to larger navies mean that, ultimately, the RNZN can be viewed as both a ‘small nation navy’ and a ‘small navy’. There need not, however, be any stigma attached to those labels as the size of a navy is not necessarily a reflection of competency or capability.

Small but Perfectly Formed? The Composition of the RNZN

Michael McDevitt has emphasised that: ‘Building and maintaining navies is expensive. Because the cost is so high, the strategic rationale for a naval force has to be well thought out and be compelling to decision makers’ (McDevitt 2014, 93). That issue is particularly acute

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in a small nation such as New Zealand. As Rob Ayson has explained, defence policy is characterised by:

[A] challenging triangular relationship between three intersecting and interacting variables: a country's strategic objectives (what it wants to do with the defence force), its defence capabilities (the defence force it needs) and its defence resources (principally the money that will be available) (Ayson 2011, 11).

The defence acquisition process in New Zealand has been the subject of intense political debate and has involved much wrangling in an attempt to counterbalance financial constraints against the requirement for capability. The end result of that process is currently an 11 ship fleet, which is divided into 4 forces: combat, littoral warfare, patrol and support.³

The combat force comprises two Anzac class frigates – HMNZ Ships *Te Kaha* and *Te Mana*. The ships displace 3,600 tonnes and are armed with a 5” gun, a MK 41 vertical launch missile system that utilises the NATO Seasparrow air defence missile, torpedoes and the Phalanx close-in weapons system. Consequently, the ships have the capability to defend themselves against air and sub-surface attacks and provide naval gunfire support. During operations, each ship also embarks a Seasprite helicopter, which can be armed with Maverick missiles, torpedoes and depth charges (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedf). Not only do the ships provide the capability to conduct sustained patrols and surveillance, but they also offer the capacity to contribute to multinational operations.

Notably, New Zealand has committed NZD \$446 million to upgrading the combat and related systems of the ships as part of the ANZAC Frigate Systems Upgrade Project, which will leverage on the Royal Canadian Navy's Halifax-class frigate upgrade program (Department of Defence Undateda). The keystone of the project is the installation of a state-of-the-art combat management system. The ships have already received upgrades to the propulsion and environmental systems, but will soon be fitted with 'new radars, electronic

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detection and other above-water systems, a self-defence missile system, decoys against missiles and torpedoes, and an upgrade to the hull-mounted sonar' (Beardsmore 2014). Essentially, the project has ensured that the Anzacs are capable of higher speeds and will eventually have improved surveillance, combat and self-defence capabilities which should endure for the remainder of their service life (Lee-Frampton 2015; Department of Defence Undatedb).

The patrol force currently consists of two Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), HMNZ Ships *Otago* and *Wellington* and four Inshore Patrol Vessels (IPVs), HMNZ Ships *Rotoiti*, *Hawea*, *Pukaki* and *Taupo*. The OPVs are capable of undertaking long-range patrols around New Zealand and the Pacific. The OPVs also have sufficient range (6,000 nautical miles) and cold-climate capability to undertake patrols in the Southern Ocean. Although not equipped as an icebreaker or designed to enter Antarctic ice packs, the strengthened hulls enable the OPVs to operate where ice may be encountered. The OPVs can conduct helicopter operations with a Seasprite SH2G helicopter and boarding operations with rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIBs). The vessels are lightly armed with one 25 mm Bushmaster naval gun and two .50 calibre machine guns (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedg). The IPVs have a range of 3,000 nautical miles and are designed to operate around the coast and out to the limit of New Zealand's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The vessels are capable of conducting boarding operations using their two embarked RHIBs. The vessels are crewed by 20 RNZN personnel and four agents from government agencies (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedh). The patrol force is responsible for a range of tasks, including maritime patrols, surveillance, search and rescue and support for the activities of other government agencies.

The support force comprises HMNZS *Canterbury* and HMNZS *Endeavour*. *Canterbury* is capable of accommodating 250 personnel and provides vital logistic and sea-

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lift/amphibious support for the NZDF. The ship incorporates the roll-on, roll-off designs of commercial ferries and has the capacity ‘to land personnel, vehicles and cargo by landing craft, helicopter or ramps, as well as conventional port infrastructure’ (New Zealand Defence Force 2015b). In addition, *Canterbury* is fitted with vital command and control facilities and possesses a self-contained hospital with surgical capability (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedi). *Endeavour*, a purpose-built replenishment tanker, can store 5,500 tonnes of fuel in her 4 tanks, ‘hot’ refuel helicopters and store food and supplies in her 4 containers (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedj). A new ice-strengthened maritime sustainment capability is due to replace *Endeavour*, but the type of vessel has not yet been decided.

The littoral warfare support force is based on HMNZS *Manawanui*, a dive tender, but will eventually be provided by a vessel that can cater for mine countermeasures, diving operations and hydrographic survey (which used to be provided by the survey ship HMNZS *Resolution* that was decommissioned in 2014) (Greener 2016, 7). The littoral warfare support force is designed to conduct a wide range of tasks from search, rescue and recovery operations to underwater explosive ordinance disposal (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedk). *Manawanui* has a range of 5,000 nautical miles and is fitted with a 15 ton crane, a triple lock compression chamber, a wet diving bell and various workshop facilities (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedl). The RNZN is embarking on a period of significant transition but it is interesting to note that Peter Greener argued in 2011 that the navy had ‘developed the most versatile fleet it has had in over half a century’ (Greener 2011, 40).

‘Warriors of the Sea’? A Contemporary Role for the RNZN

The 2016 Defence White Paper outlined that Defence contributes to national security in four main ways:

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- the promotion of a safe, secure and resilient New Zealand, including its border and approaches;
- the preservation of a rules-based international order which respects national sovereignty;
- a network of strong international relationships; and
- the maintenance of New Zealand's prosperity via secure sea, air and electronic lines of communication (New Zealand Government 2016, 9).

It was emphasised that the 'highest priority for the Defence Force is its ability to operate in New Zealand and its Exclusive Economic Zone, followed by the South Pacific and the Southern Ocean' (New Zealand Government 2016, 11).

Naturally, the defence of New Zealand is the foremost consideration for the NZDF, although it has been assessed that the nation is 'unlikely to face a direct military threat' (Ministry of Defence and New Zealand Defence Force 2014, 8). Nevertheless, New Zealand still faces a number of security threats that will require a contribution from the RNZN. New Zealand's strategic environment, the South Pacific, is also likely to face challenges that will require a maritime response. It has been outlined that the NZDF is expected to 'continue to contribute to peace and security in the South Pacific' in a number of ways:

- contributing to stability and support operations;
- contributing to international and whole of government development and capacity building efforts (for example supporting the professional development of defence and security forces); and
- assisting with maritime surveillance and search and rescue (for example working with other government agencies and New Zealand's international partners to deter, monitor and report illegal fishing in the region) (New Zealand Government 2016, 39).

It is expected that the RNZN will not only contribute to operations in the South Pacific, but will also lead them when required.

Further afield, the NZDF is required to 'make a credible contribution in support of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region' and assist with the maintenance of 'international

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peace and security, and the international rule of law' (New Zealand Government 2016, 11). As part of that effort, the NZDF is expected to contribute to multinational endeavours throughout the globe when it is deemed prudent and necessary to do so. In advocating the occasional deployment of a single ship to distant waters for a six month period, a House of Representatives Inquiry argued: 'Such a contribution would not be disproportionate to New Zealand's size, and would represent an adequate share, in the area of naval operations, of the international burden' (New Zealand House of Representatives 1999, 86). Clearly, the range of roles that the RNZN is expected to undertake is both expansive and varied.

The NZDF's capacity to 'secure New Zealand against external threat' has been the subject of significant scrutiny. In a blunt critique of what he describes as the 'aching reality of New Zealand's defence capabilities', Tim Wood has argued: 'If it were compelled to operate in isolation, the NZDF...is quite simply under-manned and under-equipped to resist a determined, sustained act of aggression' (Wood 2015, 21). Karl Du Fresne has outlined: 'New Zealand defence personnel are internationally acclaimed for the work they do, but no one should kid themselves that they're capable of defending us against attack. For that we would have to rely on our friends, principally Australia and the United States' (Du Fresne 2015). The 2016 Defence White Paper has since acknowledged that 'the Defence Force maintains a level of capability that allows it to deter threats, enlarge its forces at short notice, and provide sufficient time for additional help to be sought from its partners, should this be required' (New Zealand Government 2016, 19). In truth, the RNZN is not equipped to repel any significant act of aggression. The Anzacs could provide some practical, but largely symbolic contributions to a multinational defence of New Zealand. However, given that a conventional external threat to the territorial integrity of New Zealand is highly unlikely in the foreseeable future, the debate is moot.

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A more pressing concern is presented by the requirement to protect New Zealand's resources, especially fish stocks. Commercial fishing is an extremely important industry for New Zealand. The seafood industry's annual harvest amounts to between NZD \$1.2 and NZD \$1.5 billion (including around \$200 million in aquaculture) and usually represents the fourth or fifth largest export commodity (Ministry for Primary Industries 2015). Importantly, a significant proportion of the species targeted commercially are managed in accordance with the Quota Management System, which has been heralded as one of, if not the, best system for 'managing marine resources' (Ministry for Primary Industries 2016). Although the larger vessels can and do contribute to fishing patrols within New Zealand's EEZ, the role is principally undertaken by the IPVs and OPVs. Fisheries officers are embarked for the purpose of boarding commercial and recreational vessels to ensure that quotas are being respected (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatede). However, it is worth noting that the commanding officer of any NZDF vessel is considered to be a fishery officer under the 1996 Fisheries Act (Mossop 2010, 65). Although the larger vessels can and do contribute to fishing patrols within New Zealand's EEZ, the role is principally undertaken by the IPVs and OPVs. Fisheries officers are embarked for the purpose of boarding commercial and recreational vessels to ensure that quotas are being respected (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatede). However, it is worth noting that the commanding officer of any NZDF vessel is considered to be a fishery officer under the 1996 Fisheries Act (Mossop 2010, 65).

New Zealand's bountiful fishing stocks increases the risk of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). The 2016 Defence White Paper explicitly warned: 'global pressure on fisheries will make New Zealand's EEZ a more attractive area for illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing' (New Zealand Government 2016, 29). It has previously been noted that in the future: 'New Zealand may have one of the few remaining sustainable fisheries. At worst it

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would involve the military presence of another state in or near our EEZ, although this risk is not seen as likely' (Ministry of Defence 2010, 26). The reduction and, ideally, the eradication of the threat of IUU fishing will necessitate that the RNZN plays an increasingly prevalent role.

The potential threat of IUU fishing was demonstrated during *Wellington's* patrol around Antarctica in January 2015 when the ship ended up giving pursuit to three vessels (*Songhua*, *Kunlun* and *Yongding*) that were using gillnets to poach Toothfish. The difficulties in countering IUU fishing were demonstrated when boarding parties from *Wellington* were prevented from going on board the vessels. *Wellington* was eventually required to end the patrol without boarding the vessels owing to low fuel, but the ship had collected what was deemed to be sufficient evidence of the illegal activities ('Illegal Fishing Prosecutions a "Giant Step Forward"' 2015). The failure to board the vessels and the subsequent continuation of the pursuit by the activist group Sea Shepherd prompted significant criticism, but the legal issues around such operations are extremely complex.

The high-profile IUU fishing occurrences in 2015 prompted Minister of Foreign Affairs, Murray McCully, to declare: 'I can't promise you that this is an activity that is going to come to an end today or tomorrow, but I can promise you it is going to come to an end. The New Zealand Government deplores this sort of cynical, criminal international activity' ('NZ Navy in Dangerous Battle Over Illegal Fishing' 2015). The difficulties encountered during *Wellington's* January 2015 patrol did not demonstrate that the RNZN has only a limited role to play in countering IUU fishing. Rather, it indicated an ongoing requirement to conduct fishing patrols and the need to work alongside other agencies and nations to combat the problem.

New Zealand also has responsibilities in regard to 'high seas fisheries enforcement' as a signatory of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention (WCPFC) (Rahman 2009, 52). It has been acknowledged that as there is likely to be 'more pressure on the region's pelagic

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fisheries', New Zealand will need to continue to 'implement monitoring, control, and surveillance regimes within various regional fisheries management and conservation organisations' (Ministry of Defence 2010, 26; New Zealand Government 2016, 31). The significance of fishing stocks in the Pacific should not be underestimated. In 2013, it was reported that tuna alone provided 13,000 jobs for Pacific Island people and generated USD \$260 million toward the combined gross domestic product (GDP) (Parata 2013). The dearth of available air and maritime platforms across the entire South Pacific provides an obvious gap that the RNZN helps, in part, to fill and that requirement is only likely to increase in the future.

The threat of IUU fishing exists throughout the Pacific and Tonga provides a pertinent example. Captain Sione Fifita, Tonga's Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, has noted that Tonga's EEZ, which amounts to 700,000 square kilometres, provides 'bountiful resources that can be exploited for social and economic development, as well as an abundance of fish on which the population depends for its livelihood' (Fifita 2015, 3). While the extensive EEZ offers a number of potential benefits, it also presents a range of challenges – not least the protection of resources. There have been a number of instances of illegal fishing taking place in Tonga's EEZ, some of which have been identified by the NZDF. However, the full extent of IUU fishing is difficult to discern due to 'a shortage of routine patrol capacity' (Sato 2012, 18). That shortage is partly rectified by the RNZN's contributions.

In cooperation with Australia, France and the US, under the auspices of the Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group, New Zealand contributes to maritime surveillance in the Pacific (Vaughn 2013, 3). Importantly, New Zealand is a signatory to the Niue Treaty on Cooperation in Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement in the South Pacific Region (1992), which is intended to enhance the protection of regional fish stocks (Vaughn 2012, 24). New Zealand is also an active supporter of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, which

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provides a platform for cooperation over fishing policies, particularly in relation to migratory species. In addition, the Te Vaka Moana and Te Vaka Toa Arrangements, which were agreed in order to help ensure the sustainability of regional fish stocks and to help maximise the economic gains derived from them, has further deepened New Zealand's commitment to protecting Pacific Island resources (Ministry for Primary Industries 2010). Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) patrol aircraft and RNZN vessels make important contributions to patrolling the EEZs of Pacific Island nations, including participation in major operations such as KURUURU (Australian Fishing Management Authority 2014).

Although Linda McCann has contended that New Zealand has a 'limited capacity to contribute further to maritime security in the South Pacific in the short term, given its small size, global commitments, small budget and limited assets', the reality is that the RNZN is likely to be increasingly called on to help patrol the region's fisheries (McCann 2013, 30). In addition to fish stocks, the RNZN is required to protect the whole gamut of valuable resources possessed by New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

New Zealand also has a commitment to ensure that the Antarctic Treaty System conservation rules are upheld, which is especially significant due to 'heightened interest in Antarctica's resources' (Ministry of Defence 2010, 27). These responsibilities present a clear requirement for RNZN involvement, in conjunction with international partners. New Zealand has international search and rescue obligations in the Ross Sea, which are fulfilled by the NZDF. The OPVs are required to not only patrol the waters of the Sub-Antarctic Islands and the Southern Ocean, but also transport personnel and supplies to Department of Conservation facilities on the Auckland and Campbell Islands (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedd).

The recent visit of HMS *Protector*, a specialist ice patrol ship, to New Zealand in early 2016 demonstrated the ongoing naval role in region. With both Australian and New Zealand

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officers embarked, *Protector* conducted a five week fisheries patrol in the Southern Ocean, which notably made her the first Royal Navy (RN) ship to visit the East. Antarctic and Ross Sea regions for 80 years (British High Commission Wellington 2016). While New Zealand officers only made a small, but useful contribution to *Protector's* patrol, the RNZN has an increasingly important role to play in the region.

Equally, the RNZN's patrol force will be required to continue its support of Customs and bio-security operations. Air Commodore Kevin McEvoy, Air Component Commander, has asserted: 'The NZDF has always used its air and naval resources to support agencies such as New Zealand Customs, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and New Zealand Police in monitoring unwelcome arrivals in New Zealand' (Royal New Zealand Air Force 2015). The RNZN's patrol vessels, as well as other key assets such as the RNZAF's Orion P-3K2 surveillance aircraft are fundamentally important to the surveillance role. While bio-security and Customs personnel are often embarked on RNZN vessels, NZDF officers can also be authorized to exercise the powers of Customs officers (Mossop 2010, 65). Operation RAPANGA in the Marlborough Sounds, which was supported by *Pukaki* and involved ensuring that vessels were undergoing correct processing procedures at designated Customs ports, is characteristic of the role undertaken by the RNZN (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedc). Increasing indications of people smugglers 'targeting New Zealand' means that the NZDF, but especially the RNZN, needs to be prepared to respond accordingly (New Zealand Government 2016, 29). In addition, the patrol force supports the work of a range of other agencies, including the Department of Conservation. In short, the RNZN is an important contributor to multi-agency operations and is likely to be in even further demand in the future.

In addition, as the NZDF is the only government agency that maintains sufficient personnel and capability to respond at short notice, it is at the forefront of New Zealand's

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resilience efforts (New Zealand Government 2016, 19). The RNZN plays an important role in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and stabilisation operations, particularly in the Pacific region. First and foremost, the RNZN provides a capacity to respond to natural disasters in New Zealand. The most notable example was the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. *Canterbury* was docked at Lyttelton at the time and immediately responded by providing meals and support. Subsequently, the ship made multiple supply voyages to deliver personnel, vehicles, a fuel tanker, generators, stores and water to assist the recovery effort. In addition, *Resolution* conducted a survey of Akaroa Harbour and the crews of *Otago* and *Pukaki*, as well as reservists from HMNZS *Pegasus*, supported civil defence efforts (Royal New Zealand Navy 2011). Given the recognised risk of both geological and meteorological hazards that New Zealand faces, which are believed to be increasing, it is important that the RNZN is in a position to respond to natural disasters (New Zealand Government 2016, 29).

The RNZN is also equipped to respond to disasters in the Pacific, as demonstrated by *Canterbury*'s delivery of construction equipment, relief supplies and personnel to Samoa following the 2009 earthquake and tsunami. The NZDF's contribution to the HADR operation in Fiji following Tropical Cyclone Winston, which hit on 20 February 2016, was characteristic of the requirement to respond to natural disasters in the Pacific. The operation was described by the NZDF as one of their 'largest peacetime deployments to the Pacific', with over 500 personnel being deployed (New Zealand Defence Force 2016d). *Wellington* served as the advance force and surveyed entrances and beaches to enable *Canterbury* to operate safely and utilise her landing craft (New Zealand Defence Force 2016c). *Canterbury* and *Wellington* delivered approximately 166 tonnes of aid and the former served as the NZDF's 'maritime base' for operations in Fiji's northern outer islands (New Zealand Defence Force 2016d). The RNZN made an important contribution to the NZDF's commitment, which provided crucial

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support for the local population. The operation is indicative of the ongoing requirement to support HADR efforts in the Pacific, which are anticipated to increase over the course of the next 25 years (New Zealand Government 2016, 29).

The RNZN also assists with stabilisation missions. The Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands, for example, involved important, but unheralded naval contributions.

The 2016 Defence White Paper acknowledged:

The South Pacific has remained relatively stable since 2010...However, the region continues to face a range of economic, governance, and environmental challenges. These challenges indicate that it is likely that the Defence Force will have to deploy to the region over the next ten years (New Zealand Government 2016, 11).

Difficulties in controlling borders in the face of drug, firearm and people trafficking, as well as the destabilising effects of unemployment and demographic pressures may lead to unrest (New Zealand Government 2016, 30–31). The nature of the operating environment, which necessitates a maritime commitment, ensures that the RNZN has an invaluable role to play and is likely to be called on with increasing frequency in the future. RNZN personnel have also been deployed around the world to contribute to non-maritime missions, including in Afghanistan, East Timor, Korea and the Sinai (Royal New Zealand Navy Undatedb).

The RNZN also makes an important contribution in the form of maritime diplomacy. The most noteworthy example is the RNZN's involvement in PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP, which has its origins in the response to the 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami. However, it was not until 2007 that PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP was officially started as a 'humanitarian and civic assistance deployment, designed to strengthen multilateral relationships with regional friends, partners and allies, and to maintain and enhance regional security and stability' (Commander US Pacific Fleet Undated). PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP is now inherently multinational in nature, with contributors including: Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand

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and the US. The exercise is especially relevant for New Zealand because, as Peter Cozens has pointed out, ‘New Zealand is not alone in the South Pacific seas. The destinies of the small nations to the north are intricately knitted into those of this country’ (Cozens 2010, 25).

Notably, New Zealand has made an increasingly significant contribution to PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP. *Canterbury*’s command suite was utilised when the ship served as the headquarters for PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP for a spell in 2011 after Commodore Jesse Wilson and his command team transferred his pennant from USS *Cleveland* (New Zealand Defence Force 2011). In 2013, New Zealand was appointed as the phase lead for the Republic of Kiribati and the Solomon Islands legs of the operation (Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Webb 2013). *Canterbury* also served as the flagship for the Solomon Islands phase of the operation, which involved embarking the mission leaders and staff from USS *Pearl Harbor*. Commander David Turner, *Canterbury*’s Commanding Officer, indicated that the ‘ship to shore connection’ was key to the vessel’s utility:

We’ve got multiple landing craft and helicopters on board that effectively move people and equipment ashore while the ship remains at sea... We’re also a very maneuverable ship, we don’t need a great deal of sea room to be able to work in the littoral, which makes it easier for [sic] resupply personnel ashore (Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Godbee 2013a).

As part of PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP 2013, *Manawanui*, in conjunction with seven embarked USN explosive ordnance technicians, helped to improve the safety of the local populations in the Solomon Islands and the Republic of Kiribati by clearing over 2,100 rounds of unexploded Second World War ordnance (Royal New Zealand Navy 2013b; Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Godbee 2013b). *Canterbury* also delivered 42 hospital beds and an ambulance to Namuga in the Solomon Islands, which had been deprived of organised health care for a prolonged period (Royal New Zealand Navy 2013a). Operations such as PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP provide an opportunity to deliver humanitarian aid, engage in maritime

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diplomacy and improve interoperability with a range of multinational partners. Whilst PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP has received contributions from all of the NZDF's service branches, the maritime/amphibious nature of the operation and the unique capabilities of the vessels, particularly the capacity of *Canterbury* to serve as a command ship, makes the RNZN's involvement especially significant.

The RNZN has also contributed to multinational operations, including to support efforts to counter security challenges and ensure the safety of trade routes. At the most extreme end of the spectrum, the 2016 Defence White Paper stated that as a 'longstanding contributor to international peace and security', it is 'likely that New Zealand would consider the use of the Defence Force for combat operations as part of an international coalition' (New Zealand Government 2016, 49). On the naval side, any such commitment would probably involve the Anzacs or their replacements and may include other assets to support operations. Furthermore, any operation would likely involve integration with a range of navies, including the RAN and the USN.

Distant operations in support of efforts to secure sea lines of communications have a tendency to be perceived by the public as supplementary tasks to the core business of the RNZN. However, as David Dickens has contended, the security of international sea lines of communication is 'a matter of critical strategic significance for New Zealand' (Dickens 1999, 2). Whilst Cozens has rightly argued that the solution to maritime piracy 'most certainly lies ashore', the containment of the issue has been devolved to deployed forces and the RNZN's assets can and do make a worthwhile contribution to multinational efforts to tackle the problem (Cozens 2012, 41).

For example, *Te Mana* was deployed to contribute to NATO's counter-piracy task force under the auspices of Operation OCEAN SHIELD between late 2013 and early 2014. New

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Zealand was the second non-NATO partner nation to contribute to OCEAN SHIELD following Ukraine's involvement (Coleman 2014). *Te Mana* conducted 62 maritime situational awareness visits and the ship's helicopter logged more than 40 hours of intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance operations (NATO Maritime Command 2014). Prior to *Te Mana*'s involvement, an RNZN boat crew deployed to the region onboard HMAS *Melbourne* (Royal New Zealand Navy Undateda). These deployments contribute to New Zealand's role as a good global citizen, assist with the maintenance of maritime security and preserve sea lines of communication, as well as help to develop interoperability with a range of international partners. Although New Zealand's contribution to multinational counter-piracy and maritime security operations has been limited, it has been accepted that the need to deploy forces for those tasks is 'likely to be enduring' due to difficulties in 'addressing some of the underlying causes of piracy in the region' (New Zealand Government 2016, 35). Ultimately, the RNZN has multi-faceted responsibilities and combat capability is only a small part of its role.

Maxing the Mix Work: The Joint Task Force/Amphibious Task Force

The development of amphibiosity was a key tenet of the 2011 Defence Capability Plan and although the name has since changed from the Joint Amphibious Task Force (JATF) to simply the Joint Task Force (ATF), the impetus has remained the same. The *2013 Executive Overview of the New Zealand Defence Force* posited:

By 2020, with the JATF at its core, the Defence Force will be capable of conducting amphibious military operations and responding to emergencies at home and abroad, and projecting and sustaining land or maritime forces with increased combat utility, either on its own or as part of a wider coalition. This combat capability will act as an effective and credible deterrent for any challenge to New Zealand's sovereignty and to stability in the wider Southwest Pacific region. (New Zealand Defence Force 2013 p.7).

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There was a clear intention that the force would be combat capable, but there was also a recognition that non-combat roles in both New Zealand and overseas were more likely activities. These missions were expected to include: 'search and rescue; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; resource protection in the EEZ; maritime border security; and evacuating New Zealand and approved foreign nationals from high-risk environments' (New Zealand Defence Force 2013, 8). It was anticipated that the JTF would be capable of deploying a company-sized force into a low threat environment and that the landing force should be self-sufficient for up to 30 days. Rear Admiral Jack Steer, then-Chief of Navy, acknowledged that the force was not expected to engage in an opposed landing, asserting: 'You'll never see *Canterbury* storming onto a hostile beach; that's not what we do' (Lee-Frampton 2015).

The composition of the JTF is not fixed and will vary depending on the requirement of the force, but *Canterbury* will inevitably be the centre piece as the NZDF's only amphibious vessel. Importantly, the ship can deploy the landing force by landing craft, helicopters and ramps. *Canterbury* can be supported by *Endeavour* and, in higher threat environments, be protected by *Te Kaha* and *Te Mana*. The landing force, which is not fixed but will be provided by the New Zealand Army, is limited to company size as it only amounts to half of the embarked personnel once the enablers are taken into account. The make-up of the force will be dictated by the nature of the operation. For HADR operations, for example, the emphasis will be on medical and engineering personnel. The size of the landing force will constrain the scope of the objectives that can be accomplished and it is likely that only a limited goal such as opening an air- or seaport would be set.

In 2015, Rear Admiral Steer emphasised that significant progress has been made in demonstrating the lift capacity of the JTF. The Army's Medium and Heavy Operational Vehicles have been embarked and disembarked using the ramps, crane and mechanized landing

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craft. Seasprite SH2G and NH90 helicopters have also been tested operating from *Canterbury* (Lee-Frampton 2015). The RNZAF's C-130 and Boeing 757 aircraft can significantly enhance the lift capacity of the ATF. The upgraded P-3K2 Orion aircraft can also contribute in a surveillance and reconnaissance role. Ultimately, the emphasis of the JTF is on jointness and maximising the capabilities maintained by all three service branches.

In order to foster jointness a culture of amphibiosity needs to be generated. Progress toward that goal has been achieved, in part, as a result of a range of exercises such as Southern Katipo (2013 and 2015) and Joint Waka (2016) (New Zealand Defence Force 2016b). Increased opportunities for tri-service interaction and, particularly, more chances for Army personnel to operate onboard *Canterbury* is fundamental to the development of a joint and amphibious culture. Equally, the likelihood of the JTF participating in coalition operations necessitates the development of a multinational mindset.

Cooperation with Australia has been a focal point and led to the development of an interoperability framework that included issues such as doctrine and equipment. As planning for the JTF was conducted on the basis of Australian Defence Force (ADF) doctrine, there is a sound platform for integration of the amphibious forces of Australia and New Zealand. In order to foster interoperability with a wider variety of nations, discussions have been conducted with representatives from the Netherlands, the UK, the US and NATO. These discussions provided an opportunity to extract lessons and attempt to generate cohesion. Multinational exercises have provided a further opportunity to demonstrate and refine interoperability. In reference to RIMPAC 2012, Major General Dave Gawn, Commander Joint Forces, observed:

As the largest maritime exercise in the world, RIMPAC offers our people a unique training opportunity – for our Navy to exercise weapons and sensors, for an Army infantry platoon to embed in a US Marine Corps company and conduct amphibious taskings, and for an

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Air Force P3K crew to conduct air taskings in a complex multi-national environment (New Zealand Defence Force 2012).

While much work remains to be done, clear progress has been made in generating joint, amphibious and multinational mindsets. The development of an effective JTF that is capable of undertaking national and multinational taskings is an important milestone for the NZDF in general and an opportunity to expand the reach and influence of the RNZN.

A Closer Defence Relationship: The RAN

Defence and security are important components of New Zealand's relationship with Australia. Their militaries operate closely together in the Pacific, and as part of international capacity building activities further afield. New Zealand will continue to work closely with Australia in response to security events in the region (New Zealand Government 2016, 32).

The National Museum of the RNZN reminds us: 'In the first half of the 20th century, the Royal Navy was the Empire's Navy, and as the New Zealand Naval Forces developed like other Commonwealth navies – they were closely modelled on the RN – interoperability was essential' (National Museum of the Royal New Zealand Navy Undated). That shared heritage continues to underpin the navies and although the RN was initially the common denominator amongst the Commonwealth navies, its declining influence in the Asia-Pacific helped to bring the RAN and RNZN closer to each other. The capacity to interoperate is especially important as New Zealand would anticipate a contribution from Australia in the event of an attack and vice versa. Furthermore, it has been recognised that both navies will need to work together closely to address challenges within the region (New Zealand Government 2016, 32).

In 2015, Kevin Andrews, then-Australian Minister for Defence, asserted: 'The bilateral relationship with New Zealand is one of Australia's most enduring and important defence partnerships. We are committed to deepening our strategic dialogue, practical cooperation and enhancing our interoperability with New Zealand' (Minister for Defence 2015). In the same

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year Rear Admiral Steer implored that the RNZN ‘must work closely with Australia’ in recognition of its role as New Zealand’s principal defence partner (Royal New Zealand Navy 2015, 2).

The RAN/RNZN relationship has been tested and reinforced during the course of recent operations. Most notably, following the RAN’s involvement in INTERFET in East Timor in 1999, Russell Parkin concluded: ‘It should be noted that, without the naval contributions made by INTERFET partners such as New Zealand, Singapore and the United States, the RAN would have been unable to cope with the complexities of the operation’ (Parkin 2002, 1). During INTERFET, RNZN ships operated under RAN control and participated in a range of missions. David Stevens assessed that Australian and New Zealand forces were ‘highly interoperable’ due to ‘the ANZAC tradition and long-standing cross-Tasman alliance’, which was emphasised by Commander Warren Cummins, the Commanding Officer of HMNZS *Canterbury* (a Leander class frigate that was decommissioned in 2005), observing that the ship effectively ‘became an Australian frigate’ (Stevens 2007, 10). The synergy that exists between the navies has been both developed and enhanced by participation in a range of exercises, including Talisman Sabre and Southern Katipo (hosted in Australia and New Zealand respectively), and internationally hosted initiatives such as RIMPAC. During Exercise Talisman Sabre in 2015, Vice Admiral David Johnston, the ADF’s Chief of Joint Operations, put it simply: ‘New Zealand is a natural partner for Australia and its participation is vital’ (New Zealand Defence Force 2015a).

Since the turn of the century, everyday collaboration between the navies has been enhanced in a number of areas. Indeed, in 2004, it was assessed that the placement of NZDF officers in Australia’s Navy Project Offices would ‘assist the process of exploring opportunities for collaboration’ (Burton 2004). Since then, the extent of collaboration has increased,

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particularly in the wake of the 2011 Review of the Australia New Zealand Defence Relationship. Then-Australian Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith, contended in 2012:

We've got very good collaboration which we are enhancing in our heavy amphibious lift area, in our sea support ship area, including and involving cross-crewing and the like...It's very good for general co-operation, it's very good for interoperability and it also puts us in a good position in response to humanitarian disaster relief exercises, which we are regularly called upon in our part of the world ('NZ and Australia Defence Ties Sound' 2012).

Cooperation between the navies has been an important factor in the development of the amphibious capabilities of the RAN and RNZN and given the primary operating environment of both navies, is only likely to grow in significance. In addition, the impetus to ensure that afloat support could be provided for one fleet by the other represented, in the view of Paul Sinclair, 'a major change in Australia's approach to mutual support' (Sinclair 2013). Initiatives such as the Pacific Patrol Boat Program and the Pacific Maritime Security Program provide further avenues for cooperation (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 2014, 28).

Cross-crewing is viewed by both Australia and New Zealand as a 'valuable method of developing practical cooperation' ('Australia and NZ Ministers Affirm Enduring Anzac Bond' 2015.). Cross-crewing can help to fill gaps in the other navy, as well as provide experience and at-sea opportunities when vessels are not operational. For example, the secondment of three RNZN personnel to HMAS *Melbourne* during her six month deployment to the Middle East between 2013 and 2014 provided a wealth of useful experience. Equally, the 11 RAN personnel that served aboard *Endeavour* whilst HMAS *Success* was undergoing maintenance were able to hone skills at sea and provide a handy addition to the RNZN crew. The secondment of seven RAN personnel to *Wellington* was particularly helpful due to RNZN personnel shortages ((The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 2014, 27). Aside from the obvious practical benefits, the intangible effect of enhancing cultural interoperability makes cross-crewing an

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invaluable practice. There has been a clear upward trend in collaboration between the RAN and RNZN and it is likely to continue, which can only be beneficial for both navies. While the RAN's capabilities far exceed those of the RNZN, both navies can make useful contributions to bilateral and multilateral operations and their capacity to provide mutual support is invaluable. As the challenges faced by the RNZN continue to expand, interoperability with the RAN correspondingly increases.

‘A Promising Thaw’? Cooperation with the USN

Although it would otherwise have been a trivial fact, *Canterbury* docking at Pearl Harbor during RIMPAC 2014 was an incredibly significant event as it was the first time in over 30 years that an RNZN ship had entered a US port. The event was described by the White House as ‘a symbol of our renewed engagement on mutual defense and security, especially in the Asia-Pacific region’ (Office of the Press Secretary, The White House 2014). The event marked the culmination of a series of developments in the relationship between the US and New Zealand. In particular, the Wellington (2010) and Washington (2012) Declarations provided a platform for enhanced security cooperation and increased defence collaboration in the Asia-Pacific, especially in the maritime domain. Recent events have been viewed as a ‘promising thaw’ in New Zealand–US relations, following the freeze that occurred during the 1985 ANZUS crisis, which resulted in the Americans ending military cooperation and withdrawing its security guarantee (Hoverd, Paul, and Nelson 2014). Robert Ayson has gone as far as to assert that it is ‘no exaggeration to say that New Zealand is now an informal ally of the United States’ (Ayson 2012, 347). Although the 2016 Defence White Paper did not go that far, it did state that the relationship with the US ‘has reached a depth and breadth not seen for 30 years’ (New Zealand Government 2016, 32). Like Australia, the relationship with the US is viewed

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as being important in maintaining New Zealand's security. In addition, the RNZN is likely to operate with the USN with increasing frequency both within and beyond the immediate region.

The likelihood of increasingly frequent engagement between the USN and RNZN necessitates a focus on improving cooperation in the maritime environment. Given the shared interests of the US and New Zealand in the inherently maritime environment of the Southwest Pacific, an increased emphasis on interoperability in naval operations is entirely logical. Whilst it may seem inconsequential that the USN has been invited to participate in the International Fleet Review in November 2016 given that 30 other nations have been asked, it is noteworthy in that no American ships have visited New Zealand since the government's decision to reject a visit from USS *Buchanan* in 1985. An NZDF spokeswoman declared that the invitation 'reflects the good bilateral relationship we have with the US' (Davison 2015). The visit, if it occurs, would be more notable for its symbolism than its practical utility, but it is actually a reflection of increased interaction between the two nations.

The NZDF's participation in exercises such as Dawn Blitz, Bold Alligator and RIMPAC, as well as American involvement in Southern Katipo in both 2013 and 2015 has provided a platform for increasing cohesion. In particular, it has provided the NZDF with exposure to the American's amphibious capability and has offered an avenue for enhancing interoperability. In assessing the merits of the Southern Katipo 15, Commodore John Campbell, the NZDF's then-Maritime Component Commander, explained: 'We have to train the way we fight, we have to prove we can do it in a joint environment and we have to do it with our coalition partners because that is the way we will do it in the future' (Holland 2015). Although the implications of the US Pivot to the Pacific have been widely debated, it would seem logical that there is an increased likelihood of the RNZN operating alongside the USN within the region.⁴ Furthermore, the increased involvement of the NZDF in global multinational

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operations, such as *Te Mana*'s deployment to NATO's anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden region, is a further driver for enhancing interoperability with the USN, along with other likely coalition partners.

The Bigger, the Better? The RNZN's Scope for Expansion

A straightforward case can be made for expanding the RNZN. Although New Zealand does not operate alone in the Pacific and important contributions are made by other nations such as Australia, France and the US, the RNZN's responsibilities are vast.⁵ In considering the current roles of the RNZN and the government's own projections of their expansion, an increase in the size of the RNZN would seem a logical step.

Before considering the potential areas of expansion, it is important to acknowledge the manpower constraints faced by the RNZN. In 2012, the New Zealand media reported that just 50% of the RNZN's IPVs could be put to sea for the next 12 months (Levy 2012). By 2013, one commentator described the RNZN as 'The Little Navy that Couldn't' (Cumming 2013). As late as 2014, Rear Admiral Steer conceded: 'We are still a Navy that is short of personnel, especially in some critical areas' (2014, 3). As a result of a civilianization initiative, RNZN personnel numbers had dwindled from 2,197 in March 2010 to 1,881 in 2013. Although numbers increased to 2,101 in April 2015, an intangible wealth of experience was lost during that process (Greener 2015, 4). Whilst the nature of partisan politics must be taken into account, it is noteworthy that the Labour Party's defence spokesperson Phil Goff complained in April 2016 that '[h]alf of the new (IPV) fleet has languished at port and have not gone to sea for years' and that the RNZN has essentially been 'crippled by staff shortages' (Goff 2016).

Despite the staffing problems that resulted from a more drastic cut in numbers than expected, a cadre of experienced personnel still exists and could form the foundation of an

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expanding service. The 2016 Defence White Paper outlined: ‘The Defence Force must attract and retain a committed workforce with sophisticated skills in demand across the wider labour market’ (New Zealand Government 2016, 55). While armed forces recruiters around the world are facing a range of challenges and the possible remedies are beyond the scope of this article, a strong argument can be made for expanding the personnel base of the RNZN. During the periods of extreme personnel shortages, the RNZN turned to secondments from the RAN and recruitment in the UK to plug the gaps. It could be argued that a concerted recruitment drive domestically and amongst international navies, particularly the RAN and RN, as well as an increase in Australian secondees could not only help to redress manpower deficiencies, but also improve interoperability. An expansion of the navy would be neither easy nor cheap, but it is likely to be a necessary measure to ensure that the RNZN can fulfil the tasks expected of it.

Assuming sufficient personnel can be recruited and retained, there is scope for expanding or, at the very least, enhancing the RNZN fleet. In an April 2015 interview, Rear Admiral Steer observed in reference to the replacement of the Anzac frigates: ‘I would like to think that whatever we get, we get three of them. Then you have a better availability... Three slightly used combat platforms is fine; three brand new ones is fine. I just think we need to get away from two’ (Lee-Frampton 2015). Commander John Muxworthy, a retired RN officer, has emphasised that the ‘rule of three’ is the benchmark for ship availability with ‘one fighting, one training and one recovering’ (Ingham 2013). With only two frigates currently in service with the RNZN, the training and refit cycles inevitably reduce operational availability.

Aside from the ongoing requirements for refit, replenishment and repair, given that the JTF is inherently scalable in nature, it is important that the RNZN has a contingency in place should two frigates be committed to operations with the task force. The government has

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recognised that ‘deployments beyond the immediate region should not undermine New Zealand’s capacity to respond to security crises closer to home’ (New Zealand Government 2016, 43). The availability of a greater number of platforms would provide an increased opportunity to contribute vessels to multinational endeavours – such as counter-piracy operations – without fear of diminishing the RNZN’s capacity to fulfil other requirements.

The idea that two frigates is not the optimum number is not a new idea. Greener has observed that although ‘naval combat credibility had previously been predicated upon the notion of a minimum of a four frigate Navy’, ultimately, ‘political and budget constraints’ led to a decision to cap the size of the navy (Greener 2009, 87). In a report on naval critical mass, G. Anthony Vignaux assessed that ‘A frigate force of 2 frigates cannot carry out the Government requirement. A force of 3 frigates is marginal’ (Greener 2009, 82). In spite of that argument, it became clear that a fourth frigate was out of the equation and the purchase of a third was hotly debated. In March 1998, the then-New Zealand Minister of Defence, Max Bradford went as far as to suggest that the RNZN might be required to merge with the RAN if a third frigate was not ordered (Greener 2009, 83). Nevertheless, a decision was eventually made to limit the frigate force to two, which left the RNZN short of fulfilling the requirements of the rule of three.

Although a third frigate would not make a material difference to the outcome of an attack against New Zealand, it would send a clear message that the country is assuming more responsibility for its own defence. If, as the 2016 Defence White Paper outlines, New Zealand expects assistance from other nations in the event of an attack, then a move to expand the frigate force would undoubtedly be welcomed. In addition, the 2016 Defence White Paper also demonstrated an ongoing and increasing commitment to multinational operations beyond the region and even indicated a willingness to commit forces to combat operations if it is deemed

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necessary. Whilst the deployment of a single frigate represents a reasonable contribution to multinational efforts given the RNZN's size, if demands on the service are continually increased, it may not be sustainable. Given the dependence on the frigates to defend New Zealand, fulfil the nation's commitment to Australia, respond to security challenges in the South Pacific, contribute to multinational maritime security operations and, potentially, to participate in combat operations as part of a coalition, two ships would struggle to meet the demands expected of them (New Zealand Government 2016, 49). While a four frigate navy could be deemed optimal for New Zealand, personnel constraints mean that it is not feasible. However, a three frigate force should be considered a minimum in the future.

When the Anzacs come to the end of their service life, which is expected to be 2028/2029, New Zealand will be faced with big decisions about not only the number, but the design of the frigates. It has been noted that the likely main contenders to replace the Anzacs, such as the British Type 26 Global Combat Ship, Germany's Meko 600, the Spanish Navanti F100 and the French/Italian European Multi-Mission Frigate (FREMM), would all represent at least a 50% greater displacement than the current vessels (Greener 2015, 8).

Should none of the potential replacements be deemed suitable or necessary, the planned restructure of the RAN provides an opportunity for the RNZN to expand its capability. The announcement in the 2016 Australian Defence White Paper that the future frigate program is to be brought forward, meaning that construction on nine new frigates will begin in 2020, will lead to the RAN's current fleet of eight Anzac class frigates being decommissioned in the late 2020s (Department of Defence 2016 93 & 113). The eight RAN Anzac frigates represent an opportunity to supplement, if not replace, the RNZN's variants. Indeed, Andrew Davies has posed the question: 'What could be more appropriate than for our NZ allies to take charge of

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some of those recently upgraded vessels to replace their “fitted-for-but-not-with” variants?’ (Davies 2014).

It is likely that the size of the patrol force will also change, but it is probable that there will be a decline in numbers. After figures released by NZDF indicated that *Pukaki* had not been to sea since 2012 and *Taupo* had been stuck in port since 2013, Minister of Defence, Gerry Brownlee indicated that the IPVs were ‘unsuitable’ for the conditions within New Zealand’s EEZ and that two would be sold (Price 2016). Goff countered that the IPVs should not be sold, contending: ‘These ships are not designed for the high seas. We have OPVs that go down to the Southern Oceans and up into the Pacific’ (Government Challenged on Sale of Inshore Patrol Boats, 2016). Although a strong case can be made for retaining the IPVs given the requirements to conduct search and rescue, fisheries protection, border security patrols and to assist with conservation efforts, the sale of two seems increasingly inevitable.

However, the potential loss will at least be compensated by the addition of a third OPV, which will be ice-strengthened (New Zealand Government 2016, 45). An increase in the OPVs was expected as it would be difficult to justify the sale of the IPVs without increasing the longer range capacity of the RNZN. However, if two IPVs are sold, the RNZN will be faced with reduced patrol capacity at a time when the Defence White Paper has implied that maritime contributions are increasingly likely to be required to respond to a range of security challenges. The ideal solution would be the retention of the IPVs (even if they were mothballed in the short term) and the addition of two OPVs, but, at the very least, the addition of the extra OPV outlined in the Defence White Paper is a necessity. If the two IPVs are sold then a convincing case can be made for the acquisition of a fourth OPV. Although it would only balance out the loss of the IPVs in numeric terms, the increase in range and capability, especially if it was ice-strengthened, would enhance the RNZN’s fleet.

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Indeed, capability and capacity is more than just a case of numbers. With the proposed imposition of the Polar Code for shipping on 1 January 2017 and due to the need to operate effectively in the Southern Ocean, the decision to ice-strengthen both the new OPV and the replacement maritime sustainment capability are extremely important measures (Greener 2015, 10). Given the nature of the operating environment and the likely increasing threat to New Zealand's resources, ice-strengthened vessels are not only logical, but a necessary capability for the RNZN.

The policing of NZ's EEZ and the protection of resources requires both aerial surveillance and maritime patrols. As the threat to resources is expected to increase then an expansion of routine patrol capacity will be required. Equally, the RNZN's commitment to work alongside other governmental organisations, which are also confronting an ever-expanding range of challenges, will put further pressure on the navy's resources. New Zealand also faces an increased risk of both geological and meteorological hazards, which will require a response from the NZDF. Furthermore, the Pacific Island nations will encounter even greater challenges and New Zealand will be required to provide an effective response. The prospect of multiple and even concurrent deployments would stretch the RNZN's resources. In addition, a range of domestic pressures has raised the prospect of instability in the Pacific and the potential need for the NZDF to conduct stabilisation operations. In short, the NZDF will be increasingly required to contribute to and potentially lead operations in the region. The ability to effectively cooperate with likely partners such as the RAN and the USN can ease the burden on the RNZN, but it can only mitigate rather than resolve resource challenges. Ultimately, as the RNZN will be increasingly called upon to act domestically, regionally and globally, it needs to be sufficiently resourced to provide immediate and effective responses to the challenges that it will confront.

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Inevitably, expansion would come at a cost, but it is difficult to realistically predict precise figures. The initial decision about the type of frigate to be purchased will determine the feasibility of acquiring three vessels. A decision to purchase a second-hand vessel or, if it proves affordable, variants of Australia's future frigates in an equivalent to the Anzac frigate program, may prove to be cheaper than other alternatives. Although an investment of NZD \$20 billion dollars in defence was announced at the release of the Defence White Paper, it was not clarified what the money would be spent on. Acquisition decisions have been shrouded in secrecy, which makes it difficult to provide realistic costings. However, a broader assessment of the defence budget is telling.

The New Zealand Government has estimated that defence expenditure will average out at around 1% of GDP until 2030. Notably, in 2015, American and Australian defence spending equated to 3.3% and 1.9% of GDP respectively (Ministry of Defence Undated). These figures do not prove anything in themselves as it was noted in 2013 that although Japan only spent 1% of its GDP on defence, it accounted for 20% of total regional spending. Conversely, Singapore spent 3.7% of its GDP on defence, which represented just 3.1% of total regional spending (Carr and Dean 2013, 81–82). Davies has observed that 'buying power is more important than GDP' in determining force structures and that 'the NZDF has little chance of keeping up' (Davies 2014). Moreover, Andrew Carr and Peter Dean have convincingly argued that there 'is no automatic link between a nation's security and how much it spends' (Carr and Dean 2015). Defence spending is highly subjective and contextually dependent. However, it is difficult to overlook that defence spending as a percentage of GDP has become a benchmark for assessment (Department of Defense 2002, I–2). Most notably, NATO has set a target of 2% for its members. While New Zealand is not bound by any agreements that specify minimum levels

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of defence spending, any increase would be welcomed by Australia and likely regional partners.

Mandating a set figure of GDP is neither a practical or necessary step, but it can provide telling indications. More relevant than GDP is an assessment of the threats that New Zealand faces and the interests that it wishes to uphold. When the multitude of threats and interests both within and beyond the region that are outlined in the 2016 Defence White Paper are considered against the RNZN's force structure, there is a clear capability gap. The current focus is on updating rather than expanding the fleet, but if New Zealand expects other nations to come to its aid in the unlikely event of an attack, is determined to meet all expectations in the region and make useful contributions to multinational endeavours beyond the Pacific then a case can be made for increasing the size of the RNZN. Whilst any increase in defence spending would naturally be spread across the NZDF, the inherently maritime nature of New Zealand's primary operating environment provides justification for an expansion of the fleet. As a small navy serving a small nation, there are understandable constraints on the RNZN, but given the fact that New Zealand is an inherently maritime nation, there is scope to maximise the potential of the service.

Conclusion: A Small Navy Exemplar?

One of the few things more difficult than classifying navies, is quantifying the relative quality of any armed force. Whilst striving to be the 'best small nation navy' is an admirable goal, it is something that is difficult, if not impossible, to definitively prove. Moreover, at present, it is questionable whether the RNZN is even close to achieving its ambition. That is not to criticise the individual sailor or, in fact, the service as a whole. The reality is that a great deal is asked of the RNZN and it is expected to fulfil a wide range of tasks with relatively limited resources. The RNZN is generally effective at fulfilling its roles and serves as a force for good in the

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Pacific, but the service is overstretched. Like most navies, the RNZN is constrained by a 'capability crunch', but it also hamstrung by a personnel drought. Consequently, it would be reasonable to conclude that the RNZN is the best navy that the small nation of New Zealand can expect with the resources available.

With the threat to resources, as well as broader security challenges expected to increase, the achievement of the RNZN's ambition will only become more difficult. Captain Mark Worsfold, RNZN, has rightly argued: 'Being a maritime nation does not provide justification to a certain number of ships but it does require an ability to act independently across the spectrum of naval roles and functions, and the political will to employ the capability at some range from home waters' (Worsfold 2015, 15). Whilst there is no magic formula for calculating the number of ships required by a navy, the ability to respond to an ever-increasing range of challenges in one of the world's largest EEZs and within New Zealand's broader strategic environment, means that patrol capacity is extremely important. Increased collaboration with the RAN, the USN and other navies engaged in the region, as well as enhancing the capacity of the Pacific Islands to protect their own resources, could help to manage the pressure on the RNZN, but it is difficult to avoid the inevitable conclusion that an expansion of the fleet is required. The utility of the frigates, as the RNZN's 'only maritime force element capable of operating across the spectrum of operations', means that the acquisition of three vessels when the replacement decision is made in the next decade would seem entirely logical (New Zealand Government 2016, 46). While the third OPV will be extremely useful, the potential loss of two IPVs may need to be offset by an a fourth OPV.

In order to enhance both the capacity and capability of the RNZN, greater synergy is required between the triangular factors of strategic objectives, defence capabilities and defence resources. At present, the expectations on the RNZN are out of synch with the scope of the current fleet. New Zealand needs to be proactive rather than reactive, for as the USN's then-

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Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, cautioned in 1942: ‘You can’t buy yesterday with dollars’ (Beaumont 1993, 194). As both the 2010 and 2016 Defence White Papers warned of a range of increasing threats, it is essential that the RNZN is prepared to respond to them. The New Zealand Government has much to consider when preparing the 2016 Defence Capability Plan and it is important that the defence capabilities identified for procurement are sufficient to fulfil the strategic objectives outlined in the inherently maritime-focussed 2016 Defence White Paper. Expansion would inevitably come at a cost and would create a range of interconnected pressures in terms of recruitment, training and sustainment. However, although the costs and challenges will be difficult to manage, they are not only justifiable, but necessary.

Whilst New Zealand’s geographic location, expansive EEZ and strategic environment make it unique, the RNZN is not alone in facing challenges as many of them are shared by small navies around the world. James Holmes has advised that ‘lesser powers should refuse to despair about their maritime prospects. They should design their fleets as creatively as possible’ (Holmes 2012). Creativity is important, but realism is essential. Small navies need not aspire to be medium or large navies, nor do they need to be prepared for significant combat operations if their circumstances do not require it. Put simply, they need to be tailored to the nation’s unique requirements and be sufficiently structured to successfully undertake all of the tasks expected of them. New Zealand does not need and cannot maintain a large combat fleet, but it does need sufficient capacity to police its EEZ and respond to challenges in the Pacific, as well as contribute to multinational endeavours beyond the region, when it is deemed prudent. The RNZN’s can-do culture has covered over the cracks, but greater investment is required to enable the navy to achieve its ambition to be the ‘best small nation navy’.

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¹ The designation 'Royal New Zealand Navy' was not approved until 1 October 1941.

² For more on the naval hierarchies devised by various scholars, see: Germond (2014, 33–50).

³ The composition of the fleet will change in the future in line with the 2016 Defence White Paper and the forthcoming 2016 Defence Capability Plan.

⁴ For the debate surrounding the Pivot, see: (Ayson 2015; Law 2015).

⁵ Notably, the announcement that Australia will provide replacement patrol boats to 12 Pacific Island countries from 2018 will lead to vastly increased regional patrol capacity. Department of Defence (2016, 74).

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