

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICIES A SURVEY OF GENERAL TRENDS

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Introductory Remarks.

The axiom that a nation has neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies, only permanent interests, is little more than a half truth. Foreign and defence policies seldom emerge as “rational” responses to “objective” external conditions, reflecting self evident and immutable interests. More usually, they are the outcome of a complex, continuing interaction between geopolitical circumstances, the changing realities of international society, historical and cultural traditions, economic imperatives and domestic political struggles. For this reason, foreign and defence policies are never static, but evolve over time, sometimes rapidly, sometimes more slowly. Friends change. Enemies change. Perceptions of the national interest also change.

Australia is no exception to this rule. The Australian continent was occupied and colonised by Great Britain, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, at the height of the Age of Imperialism. For the greater part of its history, Australia's foreign and defence policies evolved against the background of the struggles between Great Britain and its European rivals for global hegemony. In this context, Australian governments habitually acted as if their country were located somewhere in the English Channel. With the collapse of the European empires after World War II, the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as the two rival

global superpowers, the success of the Indian independence movement, the Chinese Revolution and the anticolonial nationalist struggles in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Australia, itself on the threshold of a far reaching domestic transformation, was forced to address itself to the difficult task of reconciling its history with the geopolitical and economic realities of the new world in which it found itself. The Australian people, still predominantly of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and European origin, were obliged to come to terms with the fact that they inhabited a large and relatively isolated island continent, only slightly smaller than China or the continental United States, abundant in natural resources, washed by the Pacific Ocean in the East, the Indian Ocean in the West and the Arafura Sea in the North, located 12,000 miles from London, 12,000 miles from New York and 6,000 miles from San Francisco, on the fringes of one of the most politically turbulent, economically dynamic, culturally diverse and creative regions in the world.

Different groups in Australian society responded to the challenge in different ways. War, changing power relationships and economics inevitably had an important, at times decisive impact on political orientations and public attitudes. The process of adjustment has been a long and sometimes painful one. It is still far from complete. Yet the results have been interesting. In a single generation what was, arguably, one of the most isolated, ethnocentric and provincial Anglo-Saxon cultures in the world has transformed itself into an outward looking, cosmopolitan nation, still essentially European in character, but more deeply involved in, and more acutely aware of East, Southeast and Southern Asia than almost any other society of Western origin.

Australia and the British Empire.

From the foundation of the Australian colonies until the Japanese

attack on Pearl Harbour Australia's foreign and defence policies evolved within the framework of the British Empire. In the circumstances, this was only natural. Australia's political, legal and cultural institutions had been modelled on those of Great Britain. From the beginning, the Australian economy had been closely integrated with that of the Empire. British capital played a critical role in developing Australia's agriculture, manufacturing industries, mineral resources and communications network. A substantial portion of the Australian population had either been born in the British Isles, educated in England, Scotland or Ireland or retained strong sentimental attachments to their former homelands. Australia's material standard of living was higher than that of England. The climate was agreeable. The pioneering lifestyle, while demanding, appealed to the spirit of adventure that characterised the age. For these reasons, British rule in Australia was not seen as particularly oppressive, especially after the abolition of the convict system.

Rapid progress towards self government made matters easier. By the time British colonisation began in earnest the English governing classes had fully absorbed the lessons of the American War of Independence. In 1823 the British Parliament enacted legislation providing the two colonies of New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) with nominated Legislative Councils. By the mid-1880s, in the wake of the immense economic and social changes engendered by the Gold Rush, the major Australian colonies had gained almost complete control over their internal affairs. In 1901 the Australian colonies amalgamated to form the present Federation. Finally in 1926, an Imperial Conference adopted the Balfour Declaration, which defined Great Britain and its Overseas Dominions as "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status and in no way subordinate one to another in any respect of external or domestic affairs, although limited by common allegiance to the Crown, and freely

associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.” 1

Despite the Balfour Declaration, foreign policy remained largely an Imperial preserve. Australia relied exclusively on the British Foreign Office for information about trends in world politics. The Australian Department of External Affairs, created in 1921, remained until 1935 little more than a minor adjunct of the Prime Minister's Office. It was only in 1937 that the Australian Government set about the task of establishing independent representation outside the British Empire, appointing a Minister to Washington in 1940 and later sending missions to Tōkyō, Chungking and other capitals.

A sporadic foreign policy debate, of sorts, did take place. By the turn of the century, Australian views about the exact nature of the diplomatic and military relationship with Great Britain had begun to diverge. Australian conservatives, in general, emphasised the paramount importance of Imperial Unity and unquestioning loyalty to England. The Australian Labor Party inclined towards a more “nationalist” position. Australia's particular interests in Asia and the Pacific, Labor spokesmen maintained, made it essential to develop an autonomous defence capacity. The rise of Japan as a major imperial power gave considerable stimulus to these views. From time to time, small groups of radical nationalists advocated separation from the British Empire. These men and women had little influence on public attitudes. Until well on into the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of Australians, conservatives and reformers alike, regarded their country not so much as an independent national state as an integral part of a vast world empire centered on London. For most Australians, even to staunch “nationalists” such as the poet Henry Lawson, loyalty to the Empire was loyalty to Australia. 2

For this reason, Australian troops participated enthusiastically in British colonial wars and in the conflicts between England and its European

imperial rivals. Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, announcing Australia's entry into World War I, pledged that "Australians will stand beside our own (Motherland-England) to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling." 3 Australian forces, he said, would fight selflessly "for the honour and glory of the Empire". In response to his call, 300,000 Australians volunteered for service in Europe and the Middle East. Nearly 60,000 were killed in action: a significantly greater number than the total United States casualties sustained in the conflict, as the Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes tirelessly pointed out to President Woodrow Wilson at the Versailles Peace Conference. Twenty five years later, when Great Britain declared war on Germany in the wake of Hitler's invasion of Poland, the conservative imperialist Australian Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies, in accordance with established precedent, stated simply "Great Britain has declared war.....and, as a result, Australia is at war." 4 Once again, Australia rallied energetically to the defence of the Empire, raising a substantial conscript army and dispatching large forces to Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and, later, to Southeast Asia. Yet by the time the guns had fallen silent the world, and Australia's place in it, had changed in a way totally unforeseen by even the most far sighted pre-war observers.

The Impact of World War II: The Japanese Thrust into Southeast Asia, the Decline of the British Empire and the Forging of an Australian-American Partnership.

The outbreak of war in Europe, the intensification of the Sino-Japanese struggle, the Japanese occupation of French Indochina, the attack on Pearl Harbour, then the fall of Hong Kong, the invasion of the Philippines and Malaya, the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, the surrender of the "impregnable" fortress of Singapore, the fall of the

Dutch East Indies, New Guinea and the Solomons revealed, in a dramatic fashion, Great Britain's relative decline as a global power, its inability to fight a major war simultaneously on two fronts. British strategists, therefore, decided to concentrate on the struggle against the Fascist powers in Europe, reasoning that Japan could be tackled at a later date, after victory had been achieved in the West. Confronted with this situation, the Australian Government and the Australian people, like the Romano-British after the withdrawal of the legions, realised that their destiny lay in their own hands, that their interests could only be preserved by a fundamental break with the past.

As the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces moved closer to the Australian mainland, the wartime Labor Prime Minister John Curtin, for many years an exponent of a more autonomous defence policy, made two, far reaching decisions. First, much to the regret of the conservative opposition, which was still largely committed to the principal of Imperial solidarity, Curtin rejected Winston Churchill's requests that Australian forces hastily withdrawn from the Middle East for a belated defence of Singapore be transferred to India and Burma. Australian forces, Curtin insisted, were needed for the defence of Australia itself. Second, Mr. Curtin, with an eye both to the present crisis and to the long term future, announced that his Government, "free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom", would seek an alliance with the United States. 5

Mr. Curtin was not to know that Japan had no plans to invade Australia. 6 Even if the Prime Minister had been aware of this fact he would probably still have negotiated a close alliance with Washington, reasoning that a Japanese victory in the Pacific War would inevitably have led to Australia's incorporation into the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, an understandably unwelcome prospect from the viewpoint of most of his fellow countrymen.

Australia subsequently played a vital role in the war against Japan. The ties forged with the United States in the battlefields of New Guinea, the Solomons and other areas of the Southwest Pacific during World War II, the emergence of the United States as the dominant Western power in Asia as the invading Japanese forces were gradually pushed back to the home archipelago, the continued decline of the British Empire and the influx of American capital into Australia laid the foundations for an extremely close Australian-American partnership in the postwar era. By the time of the Japanese surrender in September 1945 it had become unthinkable for the Australian Government to take any initiative in the field of foreign policy without at least carefully considering the attitude of the United States, a country for which most Australians now felt a deep bond of comradeship and affection.

The Breakdown of the American-Soviet Relationship. Australian-American Differences over Japan. The Conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty.

The wartime alliance between the United States, the British Empire and the Soviet Union began to disintegrate shortly after the death of Roosevelt in April 1945. By the end of 1946 it seemed clear that American-Soviet rivalry would exert a decisive influence on the shape of the postwar world. By 1947 a head-on collision between these two powers seemed by no means unthinkable.

Australia's historical traditions, political system and cultural patterns, together with the strategic and economic realities of the postwar world, made it a foregone conclusion that it would support the United States in any serious American-Soviet conflict. Nevertheless, despite Australia's unshakeable commitment to parliamentary democracy and liberal institutions, a not insignificant body of opinion found it difficult to accept the assumptions of those American policymakers who came to power after the

death of Roosevelt. In many quarters the collapse of the Grand Alliance and the onset of the Cold War were deeply regretted. The Russians, too, had been Australia's allies in two world wars. The breakdown of the American-Soviet relationship, moreover, had extremely unwelcome repercussions in the Far East. As the lines of the Cold War hardened, the Truman Administration displayed more and more interest in promoting large scale Japanese rearmament. In Washington, a rearmed Japan was seen as the cornerstone of the emerging United States anti-Communist alliance system in Asia. Australian leaders, on all sides of the political spectrum, regardless of their attitude towards the Soviet Union, profoundly questioned the wisdom of American efforts to rearm Japan.

From 1945 until the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, Australian governments went to considerable lengths to persuade Washington that massive Japanese rearmament would not serve the wider cause of peace and security in the Pacific. It seems probable that these Australian efforts were appreciated by General Douglas MacArthur, the Japanese Liberal Party leader Yoshida Shigeru, the Socialist leader Katayama Tetsu and the governments of several newly independent countries in the Asian Pacific region, all of whom, for various reasons, were anxious to avoid active Japanese military involvement in the United States Cold War alliance system.

For some time, Dr. H. V. Evatt, the Chifley Labor Government's Foreign Minister, hoping to limit the impact of the Cold War on Asian-Pacific affairs, attempted to interest the Great Powers in the idea of an Asian-Pacific Pact, including the United States, the Soviet Union and China. ⁷ As superpower tensions heightened this idea became increasingly unrealistic.

The outbreak of the Korean War, the creation of the Japanese Police Reserve Force, the beginning of negotiations on the Japanese Peace Treaty and the first steps towards the conclusion of the Japanese-American

Security Treaty coincided with the fall of the Chifley Labor Government in Australia and the establishment of a conservative Liberal-Country Party coalition led by Mr. R. G. Menzies. The Menzies Government, dominated by men who had, in the prewar period, supported the concept of "Imperial Unity", was rather more inclined than its predecessor to align Australia's policies unequivocally with those of the United States. Nevertheless, so great was its concern about Japanese rearmament that it implicitly threatened not to sign the San Francisco Peace Treaty unless the United States promised to extend some protection to Australia. The Australian Foreign Minister Sir Percy Spender told the Americans bluntly that "Australia's immediate and primary concern was security against future Japanese aggression and that Australia could under no circumstances subscribe to a treaty with Japan unless there were adequate assurances, acceptable to Australia, affording her protection against future Japanese military aggression." 8 It was against this background that the Menzies Government, strongly supported by the Labor opposition, negotiated the ANZUS Treaty with the United States and New Zealand in 1951. As Australian fears of Japan subsided the ANZUS Treaty came to be seen as a generalised, purely defensive arrangement, protecting the interests of all the contracting parties against any threat which might arise. United States policy makers may well have come to interpret the agreement in the context of the Cold War. Australia and New Zealand, while increasingly influenced by the assumptions of American strategic thinking, did not necessarily always do so.

Australia's Response to the Collapse of the European Empires.

World War II established the United States and the Soviet Union as global superstates, temporarily eliminating the European powers and Japan as rival centres of influence. The war had also precipitated the collapse of

European colonial domination in Africa, the Arab world, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, giving birth to a large number of independent new states, accelerating powerful, deep rooted and, in most cases, long overdue revolutionary movements, releasing extraordinary idealism and creativity, reawakening old ambitions and reactivating old enmities.

Australia, located on the fringe of Southeast Asia, at the crossroads of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, an area effectively controlled, for almost three centuries, by the European empires, could not ignore the implications of this process. By 1947 the Chinese Civil War had entered a new stage. India, once the principal jewel in the crown of the British Empire, had emerged as a fully independent nation. In Burma, agitation for independence was growing. French control of Indochina was threatened by a revolutionary nationalist movement under Ho Chih Minh. The days of Dutch rule in Indonesia, too, were clearly numbered. It was by no means obvious that the United States, despite its strong position in the Pacific, would be able to exercise a decisive influence on the course of events. In China, the Communists seemed likely to emerge victorious in the Civil War. The leaders of the Indian nationalist movement favoured policies of non-alignment. This was also true of the Burmese and Indonesian leaderships. In Indochina the communists had long been in the forefront of the struggle for independence. The situation in Korea, divided between American and Soviet occupation zones, was volatile and unclear.

The emergence of this complex, fluid and somewhat bewildering world produced varying responses in Australia. The postwar Labor governments, the dominant groups in the trade union movement, many churchmen, intellectuals and a substantial body of public opinion were cautiously sympathetic to the aspirations of anti-colonialist nationalist movements in the Third World. The Chifley Cabinet welcomed the success of the Indian

independence movement. It actively encouraged the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch. Many Australians also sympathised with the cause of the Viet Minh. The Chinese Revolution of 1949 was hailed enthusiastically by a large spectrum of opinion on the Australian left. Australian conservatives, in contrast, deeply attached to the British Empire and the values of Western civilisation, as they interpreted them, found it difficult not to lament the passing of the Age of Imperialism. While accepting the inevitable, many felt threatened by the emergence of potentially powerful, indigenous states to the north and west. Uneasy about the future of Japan and alarmed at the spread of Communist doctrines in Asia, they rapidly returned to a modified version of the Imperial defence strategies they had favoured in the prewar period. The United States, they believed, could play the role of the New Britannia. Thus, in February 1949, R.G.Menzies, then leader of the Liberal-Country Party Opposition, asserted that

“I would have thought that the furthest spreading out of American interest in the Pacific would have been one of the greatest things that could happen to us. Here is a great nation which is bound to be our friend, not a potential enemy. . . . It is fantastic to be bandying words about fine theories and airy paper schemes at a time when lawless and revolutionary forces are on the warpath in Europe and Asia, and when the human rights of peaceable men and women can be defended only by resolute decisions and the real substance of strength, by complete unity of British policy and action, and by a deep, friendly and enduring association with the Government and people of the United States of America.”⁹

Australian Foreign Policy in the Cold War. The Era of Conservative Dominance, 1950–1972.

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, shortly after Menzies’

conservative coalition had decisively defeated Labor in the General Elections, made the American-Soviet conflict seem irreconcilable, laid the basis for two decades of bitter enmity between Washington and Peking and provided the rationale for a vast extension of United States influence in the Pacific. In June 1950, in one, sweeping set of interconnected decisions, Washington decided to dispatch troops to Korea, rearm Japan within the ambit of the American alliance system, intervene in the Chinese Civil War by sending the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits, support the French effort to defeat the Viet Minh and step up the campaign against Communist insurgency in the Philippines.

The new Australian government threw its support behind the United States with energy and enthusiasm. Over the next two decades, Australia's armed forces played an active and significant *role* in Washington's regional strategies. Australia was one of the first countries to dispatch air and naval units to assist American forces in Korea. At the same time the Australian Government, acting in close cooperation with Great Britain, sent troops to Malaya to help suppress Communist insurgency there. When the Emergency ended in 1959 Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand concluded an agreement jointly guaranteeing the territory of Malaya against external attack and internal subversion. This agreement continued after Malaya gained independence and was widened to cover the newly established Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The Menzies Government also adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the French efforts to reimpose their authority on Indochina, providing diplomatic support, arms and equipment for the struggle against the Viet Minh. In September 1954, under the provisions of the SEATO Treaty, Australia and New Zealand, along with Great Britain and France, joined the United States in a commitment to preserve the territorial integrity and socio-political *status quo* in Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand "and any other state or territory which the parties

by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate.”¹⁰ The SEATO Treaty subsequently provided a legal justification for United States and Australian intervention in the Vietnamese Civil War. Australia also provided substantial military aid to India after the eruption of the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962.

During the early 1960s the Australian Government became alarmed by the increasing intimacy of Indonesia’s relations with the People’s Republic of China, the growth of the Indonesian Communist Party and the implications of President Sukarno’s campaigns to absorb (Dutch) West New Guinea and destroy the newly established Federation of Malaysia. While Australia was unable to prevent the incorporation of West New Guinea (Irian Jaya) into the Indonesian Republic, its diplomatic and military efforts contributed significantly to the preservation of Malaysia.

Finally, in 1965, as the United States began its massive intervention in Vietnam, Australia, too, decided to commit forces to struggle in Indochina. “As Prime Minister of Australia”, Menzies later wrote, in terms reminiscent of Andrew Fisher’s statement in August 1914, “(I) found it impossible to contemplate that Australia could allow the United States to “stand alone” in Vietnam”.¹¹ By the end of 1966 some 8100 troops, nearly a tenth of Australia’s entire armed forces, were engaged in combat operations in Indochina. Australia also began a programme of close military and political cooperation with Thailand and, later, after a military *coup d’état* had removed the neutralist Prince Norodom Sihanouk from office, with Lon Nol’s pro-American government in Cambodia. With prime Minister Holt’s remarks that Australia was prepared to go “all the way with L.B.J.” the process of absorption into the American strategic network seemed complete.

There were, however, important differences in nuance between Australian and American approaches to the Cold War. Despite appearances

to the contrary, Australian support for American policies was never totally unqualified. Throughout the 1950s and the 1960s the Menzies Government vigorously encouraged the United States to assert its position as the dominant power in the Western Pacific. At the same time, under the influence of experienced and far sighted Foreign Ministers like Sir Percy Spender and Lord Casey, it did what it could to help prevent a direct clash between the United States and the two great Communist powers on the continent.

The Australian Government, while strongly opposed to any further extension of Soviet influence, regarded Russia as an important element in the regional power balance. Australian conservative leaders, like their British counterparts, considered that the Chinese Revolution of 1949 was basically irreversible. Certainly, Australia, out of deference to the United States, declined to recognise the new government in Peking. Yet, until 1966, at the height of the Vietnam War, Australia was anxious to avoid too intimate an association with Chiang Kai-shek's rump *régime* in Taiwan. No Australian ambassador was sent to Taipei. The Kuomintang's diplomatic representation in Canberra remained low key. Australia declined to countenance the Kuomintang's participation in SEATO. During the Korean War the Australian Government, disturbed by the possible implications of General MacArthur's push towards the Yalu River and his insistence that the conflict be expanded into the People's Republic, informed Washington that it strongly opposed any attack on China or Chinese territory. Australia, along with Great Britain and several other Commonwealth countries, made urgent representations in Washington to restrain MacArthur.¹² The Australian Government also opposed American plans to bomb targets in China and intervene in Vietnam after the French collapse at Dien Bien Phu.¹³ At the 1954 Geneva Conference, while the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles ostentatiously refused to

shake Chou En-lai's hand, Lord Casey talked amicably with the Chinese Premier and attempted to arrange a personal visit to Peking.¹⁴ Australia urged moderation at the time of the 1958 Offshore Islands crisis, stating that it was not obliged to support any military actions the United States might take to prevent Quemoy and Matsu falling into Communist hands.¹⁵ Like Japan, Australia adopted a policy of "separation of politics from economics" in its commercial dealings with the Communist Powers. Throughout the Cold War period Australia's trade with the Soviet Union and China, though small, grew steadily. No restrictions were placed on travel to the USSR, China or other socialist countries. With the passage of time a substantial number of Australians, of all political hues, became familiar with conditions in these societies. Even during the 1960s, after the Vietnam War had brought Australia much closer to the American position on most matters, these policies continued. Indeed, popular pressure for a more independent stance grew.

Several factors lay behind these subtle differences between Australian and American approaches to "containment of Communism" in postwar Asia.

First, at least some Australian conservative leaders perceived, albeit dimly, and all too often belatedly, that international politics in East, Southeast and Southern Asia were complex and did not necessarily follow European patterns ; that the USSR and China, while undoubtedly Communist states, were not necessarily united in a monolithic anti-Western alliance ; that the post-colonial nationalist and socialist movements in Southeast Asia were not necessarily controlled by either Moscow or Peking. They were convinced, for historical and cultural reasons, that a powerful American position in the Pacific was essential for Australian security. Yet the simple facts of geography made it imperative that Australia eventually develop good relations with all the Asian Pacific powers, non-Communist and Communist alike. These stark realities did not necessarily confront

decision makers in Washington, 12,000 miles away on the other side of the Pacific.

Second, Cold War passions in Australia, although at times acute, and successfully exploited by conservative politicians at election time, seldom reached the levels of intensity prevailing in the United States. Australians are essentially a pragmatic people. Their interest in ideology is minimal. They will readily take up arms to defend their friends. Their sense of justice can be outraged by the spectacle of the strong oppressing the weak. Yet their instinctive realisation that politics among nations, like personal relations among individual men and women, can be a complicated business, makes it difficult for them to develop a crusading mentality. The proposition that such and such a political system or religious belief is the source of all evil strikes the average Australian as rather absurd. The impact of McCarthyism in Australia was thus comparatively mild. Prime Minister Menzies' attempts to ban the small Australian Communist Party were soundly defeated by the people at a referendum. There were no Red Purges, no loyalty oaths, no Parliamentary Committee of Un-Australian Activities. Australian Communists, some of them prominent scholars, writers, artists and labour leaders, while occasionally harassed, continued to occupy positions in public life. This situation provided a striking testimony to the strength of Australia's democratic institutions, to the tolerant, easy going commonsense of the Australian people, to the sense of fair play that underlies all aspects of national life. Translated into the field of foreign affairs these sentiments inclined the Australian man in the street to believe that while Communism might have no particular relevance to Australia it might be an eminently suitable socio-political system for those countries, like the USSR and China, which had adopted it, or those countries, such as Vietnam, which appeared determined to do so. Australians, in short, were less prone than Americans to believe in the universal validity of their

own historical experience.

Australian recognition of the complexity of world politics was enhanced by the close and continuing association with the British Commonwealth, a community of nations different, in almost every respect, to the Cold War alliance systems centered on the United States, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. At the annual Commonwealth Heads of Government Conferences Australian leaders had opportunities to discuss the issues of the day not only with their colleagues from Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and other countries sharing basically similar views but also with a wide range of Afro-Asian nations, some of them committed to policies of non-alignment, others entertaining friendly relations with socialist countries. The constant flow of academics, students, artists, literary figures and sportsmen among Commonwealth countries ensured that these perspectives on the international system would not be limited to the small, policy making *élite*. The influx of a large number of intelligent, cultivated and articulate Asian students into Australia under the Colombo Plan and other schemes, too, had an extremely beneficial impact on the Australian people, making them more conscious of their geographical location, helping eradicate lingering notions of Anglo-Saxon or more generalised "Western" superiority and reinforcing the idea that the conflicts of the postwar world were not necessarily manifestations of an eternal struggle between good and evil, but confrontations between competing rational systems, capable of solution through mutually acceptable compromise.

Finally, the long term influence of the Australian Government's decision to encourage tertiary level research into Asian affairs and to promote the teaching of Asian languages, especially Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese, in Australian schools, cannot be underestimated. By the time American and Australian intervention in Indochina was drawing to an end, amid increasingly vociferous protests from a wide coalition of anti-war

groups in both nations, Australia was well on the way to establishing itself as one of the world's foremost centers of modern Asian studies. A substantial number of the country's most intelligent and internationally conscious young people were familiar, in a way their parents and grandparents had never been, with the history, civilization, political culture and economic conditions of their Asian neighbours. Many of them could speak, read and write Asian languages. They had travelled extensively in Asia. It was increasingly difficult for this generation to accept the simplistic Cold War assumptions that had underlain both Australian and American policies in Asia during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Reconciliation with Japan and the Growth of Australia's Trade with the Western Pacific.

The Cold War coincided with a significant reorientation of Australia's trading links away from Europe and towards the nations of the Western Pacific, particularly, but by no means exclusively, Japan. In retrospect, the Menzies Government's reconciliation with Japan, and its encouragement of economic ties with other Asian nations, may well be regarded as the finest achievement of postwar conservative foreign policy. In 1957, at a time when Australian attitudes towards Japan were still deeply coloured by the experience of the Pacific War, the Menzies Government negotiated an Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce, granting both signatories most favoured nation treatment. During the 1960s, as the Ikeda Cabinet and its successors implemented their strategies of high economic growth, Australia emerged as a key supplier of several crucial raw materials to Japan and an increasingly significant market for that country's exports. By the beginning of the 1970s the Australian-Japanese trading relationship had become the seventh largest in the world. Australia provided half of Japan's iron ore imports, 40 per cent of its coking coal, 30 per cent of its sugar, 50 per cent

of its salt, 80 per cent of its beef, 85 per cent of its wool.

Trading relations with the ASEAN powers, China and Korea were also developed. The result of this process was nothing short of dramatic. In 1950-1951 Western Europe had purchased nearly two thirds of Australia's exports. Great Britain, overwhelmingly Australia's most important trading partner at the time, absorbed more than half of these. During this period, North America purchased some 17 per cent of Australian exports, Japan 6 per cent and other Asian countries 13 percent. By the mid 1970s Western Europe's share of Australia's exports had diminished to 17 per cent. Britain, now the destination of a mere 4 per cent of Australia's exports, was no longer a significant trading partner. North America's share of Australia's exports, too, had fallen to 12.5 per cent. In contrast, the proportion of Australian exports directed to Japan had climbed to 33 per cent, that to other Asian-Pacific countries had jumped to 34 per cent. Broadly similar trends could be seen in the geographical distribution of imports. Capital flows, too, eventually followed the same pattern¹⁶ Thus, economically, as well as strategically and politically, Australia had become part of the Asian-West Pacific region.

Australian Foreign Policy in the Age of Détente : The Whitlam Years, 1972-1975.

Against this background, the final realisation of American-Soviet strategic parity, the relative decline of the United States as a global power, the reemergence of Western Europe and Japan, the American defeat in Vietnam and the Great Power realignments that followed in its wake, coming hard on the heels of the British withdrawal from East of Suez and Great Britain's entry into the Common Market, brought Australia to another parting of the ways. The Viet Cong Tet Offensive, President Johnson's decision to wind down the American war effort, President Nixon's

declaration of the Guam Doctrine and his initiation of policies of limited *détente* with Moscow and Peking, made it clear that the New Britannia was no more omnipotent than the Old. However strong the historical and cultural ties that bound Australia to the Anglo-American world, however desirable it might be to preserve and develop them further, Australia clearly had to make its own arrangements with its neighbours on the basis of its own independent judgement of its own interests.

The Labor Government of Mr. Gough Whitlam, elected in 1972 after the collapse of Sir William McMahon's Liberal-Country Party coalition, began the task of adjusting Australia's diplomacy to the new world order. Almost immediately after assuming office the Whitlam Cabinet normalised relations with Peking and Hanoi, attempted to improve ties with the USSR, opened a dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and withdrew Australian troops from Indochina. Mr. Whitlam also set in motion the machinery which led, eventually, to the conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Japan. At the same time his government began the process of regular consultations with the ASEAN powers. While Australia remained committed to ANZUS, SEATO died a natural (and largely unlamented) death. Within the Government, in the academic world and among the general public the whole question of the military relationship with the United States was debated as never before. Mr. Whitlam, like all his predecessors, attached much importance to Australia's ties with the British Commonwealth. At the same time, his government attempted to establish a more global presence, developing relations with a wide range of states in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Australian Foreign Policy in the New American-Soviet Cold War : The Fraser and Hawke Years, 1975-1988.

Mr. Malcolm Fraser's Liberal-Country Party Coalition, which was

swept into office after the fall of the Whitlam Cabinet in 1975, had scarcely completed its first term when the fragile structure of American-Soviet *détente* began to collapse under the multiple impact of the superpower arms race, the Carter Administration's tilt to China, the complex postwar struggles in Indochina, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the Polish crisis.

Mr. Fraser, while aligning Australia rather more decisively with the United States than Whitlam might have thought desirable, was also conscious that in several areas, most notably Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Southern Africa, Australia's interests would not be served by total identification with American or British policies. Mr. Fraser placed great emphasis on Australia's relations with China (anticipating Carter's tilt to China by two years), Japan, Korea, ASEAN and the Pacific islands. He also played a significant role in negotiating a settlement to the long and bloody civil war in the former British colony of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), accepting the establishment of an independent Marxist orientated government in that country with apparent equanimity.

By the time Mr. Bob Hawke's Labor Government was elected in March 1983 American-Soviet relations had deteriorated to their lowest level since the end of World War II. Not only that but the continuing global economic crisis, the changing structure of the Japanese economy, Japanese-American trade friction and the drift to protectionism among the major industrial powers had begun to confront Australia with peculiar difficulties. Nevertheless the Hawke Government, on the basis of its own assessment of the international situation, its view of the nation's short, medium and long term interests and its understanding of the state of public opinion has continued the long retreat from the Cold War perspectives that dominated foreign policy debate in the 1950s and 1960s, endeavouring to assert Australia's position as a rational, independent international actor,

allied to the United States, and broadly sympathetic to many of Washington's objectives, but also aware of the overriding importance of carefully negotiated superpower *détente*, arms control and disarmament, of the bewildering complexity of contemporary global politics and attuned to the needs and aspirations of the Third World.

The assumptions and objectives of the Hawke Government's foreign policy were outlined by its first Foreign Minister, Mr. Bill Hayden (now Governor General), in a speech to the House of Representatives on 26 November 1985. The Hayden speech is worth examining at some length. In subsequent years, Australian foreign policy has continued to develop within the general framework it established.

The old bipolar system of world order, Mr. Hayden said, had collapsed. The position of both the United States and the Soviet Union was challenged by rival centres of power, the European Community, China, Japan, the oil producing states, the newly industrialising countries and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Australia's friendship with the United States was strong and deep. The ANZUS Treaty remained of vital importance. Yet Mr. Hayden reminded his audience that the realities of world politics no longer permitted small nations such as Australia to shelter from the winds of change in a "kind of escapist dependency in which all necessary protection is provided by great and powerful friends".¹⁷ It was thus extremely important for Australia, while preserving its relationship with the United States, to establish a meaningful dialogue with America's superpower rival. Australia remained critical of Soviet actions in various parts of the world, particularly Afghanistan. Yet it had to be recognised that the Soviet Union was a "powerful state with legitimate interests which have to be considered and negotiated."¹⁸ Australia, like all societies, had an interest in improving the climate of American-Soviet relations. In the short term, no doubt, mutually

assured nuclear destruction provided the best deterrent to superpower conflict. Yet Australia was convinced of the long term necessity for the elimination of nuclear weapons and steps towards general and complete disarmament. The Hawke Government had established a special Ministry for Disarmament, he noted. It was also encouraging peace research in Australian universities. In both Washington and Moscow, Australia was actively promoting the cause of a verifiable freeze on the "production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons." It opposed French nuclear testing in the Pacific. It highly evaluated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It supported the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty endorsed at the South Pacific Forum in 1985. It hoped that the Indian subcontinent and Southern Asia would remain free from the impact of the nuclear arms race.

In his review of Australia's relations with particular, individual countries Mr. Hayden made, significantly, no mention of Britain. He referred only in passing to Europe and Latin America. He focussed, instead, on Australia's ties with the immense arc of countries extending from Japan and the Korean peninsula in the north, through China, continental and insular Southeast Asia, the Southwest Pacific, the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East to Africa in the Far West. This was Australia's region, an area "emerging with enormous energy from post-colonialism, rivalling all the old traditional centres of economic power." 19 Australia had considerable interest in the possibility of Pacific Basin Cooperation. While recognising that there was "no single blueprint for action" in this area, and that the emergence of a more cooperative framework would inevitably be a long term process, Mr. Hayden noted that the Government had established a National Pacific Cooperative Committee to examine the question carefully. 20

In the Far North, relations with Japan, Australia's largest trading partner were good, Mr. Hayden said. In his discussion of Japan, however,

the Foreign Minister alluded to two areas of concern.

The first of these was the old, perennial Australian anxiety about Japan's military role in the Pacific. Australian uneasiness about this matter had predated the Cold War. It seemed almost certain to outlive it. Australia, Mr. Hayden stated, reiterating remarks that both he and Mr. Hawke had made to the then Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Nakasone, viewed the Japanese-American Security Treaty as one of the foundations of Northeast Asian stability. It accepted Japan's right to develop its self defence capability but was anxious that this should be done in such a way as not to undermine the very delicate balance which existed in the region. Mr. Hayden noted Japan's continuing commitment to policies of self defence and welcomed its adherence to non-nuclear principles.

The second concern voiced by Mr. Hayden was related to Japan's possible response to United States pressure to reduce the bilateral trade imbalance by purchasing greater quantities of American raw materials and agricultural products. Without specifically mentioning the United States, Mr. Hayden remarked that Australia had "made clear our concern that Japan adopt a multilateral as distinct from a bilateral and discriminatory response to pressure from its key trading partners."²¹

Mr. Hayden went on to note the extraordinary development of Australia's political, economic and cultural relations with the People's Republic of China, spoke with enthusiasm about the future of the Korean peninsula and the possibilities for North-South dialogue, reviewed Australia's very close ties with the ASEAN countries, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and the Pacific islands, with India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the nations of the Indian subcontinent.

These relationships, the Foreign Minister stressed, were not entirely free from problems. Yet the preoccupation with Soviet expansionism, Communist insurgency and terrorism, which formed at the time an essential

part of the Reagan Administration's rhetoric, was notably absent from his analysis, except in reference to Afghanistan. Thus, in noting Australia's concern at the deteriorating situation in the Philippines, Mr. Hayden attributed the growth in insurgency in that country to "human rights abuses by some organs of the (Marcos) Government and extensive economic injustice resulting from the Government's resolute inaction against the privileges and political power of its wealthy oligarchic patrons." 22 There was no suggestion that the fall of the Marcos *régime* would pose any threat to Australia's vital interests. Mr. Hayden's attitude contrasted dramatically with that of the Menzies Government towards rather similar problems in Indochina during the 1950s and 1960s. Again, while noting that Australia had condemned Vietnam's military intervention in Kampuchea, Mr. Hayden was careful not to characterise the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as an aggressive, expansionist Soviet client state. Deliberately distancing himself from the Reagan Administration, the People's Republic of China and the more hawkish ASEAN states such as Thailand and Singapore, Mr. Hayden stressed that any solution to the Kampuchean problem must take into account the legitimate interests of Vietnam. 23 One of the principal foreign policy preoccupations of the Hawke Labor Government, in fact, has been to build bridges of understanding between Vietnam and its ASEAN neighbours. From the beginning, it has judged that a recycling of the Cold War in Southeast Asia would definitely not be an Australian interest.

Turning to the Southwest Pacific, an area in which Australia had "significant strategic, political and economic interests", 24 Mr. Hayden noted his Government's opposition to disruptive interference on the part of the Great Powers, its determination to maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality in the United States-New Zealand dispute over visits by nuclear warships and its hope that the last vestiges of colonial control would disappear from the region as quickly as possible. In particular, Australia

desired to see the French territory of New Caledonia gain its independence at an early date.

Australia's interests in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean area were also extensive. In his discussion of African affairs, Mr. Hayden's strongest criticism was directed not towards the USSR and its regional allies, for some time the favourite target of conservative American commentators, but towards the Republic of South Africa. "Human rights in South Africa," the Foreign Minister declared, "has been a prominent issue before the Australian community. A system whose laws and institutions discriminate between races is an abomination. A system which does so primarily for economic reasons — which depends on a kind of slave trade — is beneath contempt." 25 He went on to outline the concrete measures Australia had adopted to put pressure on the South African government.

The Hawke Government's efforts to extricate Australian foreign policy from the constraints of the Cold War, while preserving the ANZUS Treaty and its concomitant political links with Washington, have been subjected to intense criticism from both the right and the left. Until the beginning of the second American-Soviet *détente* during the latter part of the Reagan Administration, many conservatives remained convinced that Moscow's global policies made it imperative to develop a closer relationship with the Union States. Many groups in the Labor Party, in contrast, hoped to see an even more independent stance. Total disengagement from the Cold War alliance systems, armed neutrality and an Asian-Pacific centered diplomacy remain to this day options favoured by a not entirely insignificant section of informed public opinion.

Defence Policy

These developments have inevitably had their impact on defence policy. The prewar assumption that Australia was an integral part of a mighty

world empire, that its fate would be determined by the outcome of titanic clashes on the faraway battlefields of Europe and the Middle East, or naval engagements in the North Sea, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, led to the development of armed forces designed to act in close cooperation with those of Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, India and other Imperial possessions. Despite the ongoing debate between exponents of "Imperial Unity" and advocates of a more "autonomous" posture, little attention was paid to the defence of the Australian continent and the protection of purely Australian interests.

The modes of thought and habits of action acquired in the palmy days of the British Empire were carried over into the postwar period. The lessons of World War II, dramatic as they seemed at the time, were quickly forgotten by the nation's political leaders, if not by strategic planners and the public at large. With the rise of the United States as the dominant Pacific power, the onset of the Cold War and the formation of ANZUS and SEATO, Australia's forces began to play much the same role in the American alliance system as they had previously played in the British Empire. Their structure, equipment and training were designed to prepare them for participation, as autonomous units, in larger allied expeditionary forces in conflicts far from Australia's shores. The wisdom of these policies, and their relevance to Australia's security, were queried by the Chiefs of Staff and the Defence Department as early as 1959. Yet no fundamental changes took place until the American defeat in Vietnam and the proclamation of the Guam Doctrine revealed the bankruptcy of traditional assumptions.

Since 1972 Australian governments, while continuing to attach much importance to ANZUS and operating several crucial joint communications facilities with the United States, have devoted increasing attention to the defence of the Australian continent and its maritime approaches. Australia

continues to conduct exercises with the United States. It participates, along with the United States, Japan and other countries in the annual RIMPAC manoeuvres. It has taken part in small scale international peace keeping operations. Yet, in the foreseeable future, it seems highly improbable that Australia will participate in those great expeditionary forces to distant battlefields that characterised the Imperial epoch and the Cold War decades. Australia's decision not to offer Great Britain military support during the Falklands War symbolised the passing of an age.

The Hawke Government, recognising that nature has blessed Australia with an extremely favourable strategic environment, and emphasising the importance of relatively small scale, cost effective, self reliant defence efforts, has not posited any particular hypothetical enemies. On 12 June 1985 the Minister for Defence, Mr. Kim Beazley, reiterating views expressed on many occasions by the Defence Department, the Chiefs of Staff and the Intelligence Services, stated categorically that "our neighbours do not harbour intentions or capabilities which are consistent with the desire or ability to seriously threaten our territorial integrity. We would have substantial warning of a change in either respect." 26 This position has subsequently been reaffirmed annually.

In accordance with these broad assumptions, the Government, despite continued criticism from the right of the political spectrum, has been gradually phasing out equipment and weapons systems designed to enable Australian ground, maritime and air units to act as part of a larger allied force in some remote theatre. Not long after entering office Mr. Hawke decided, for example, not to replace Australia's ageing aircraft carrier *Melbourne* but to invest, instead, some A\$420 million in developing a chain of strategic air bases across the northern part of the continent. It was also decided to equip Australia's F-111 aircraft with Harpoon missiles, similar to the Exorcet, which attracted such attention during the Falklands conflict.

Great importance has also been attached to anti-submarine warfare.

While much military hardware is still obtained from the United States and other allies, the Government has been eager to stimulate domestic production of major items such as conventional submarines, guided missile frigates and defence support equipment. The long term goal is to achieve a high degree of national self reliance.

Notes

- 1 . Quoted in J.A. Camilleri, *An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*, The Jacaranda Press, 1973, p.18.
- 2 . Henry Lawson, "England Yet", 1917.
- 3 . Ernest Scott, *Australia during the War*, p.23, Volume XI in the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Sydney 1938.
- 4 . Sir Robert Menzies, *Aftnoon Light*, Penguin Books, 1967, p.15.
- 5 . Quoted in Russel Ward, *Australia Since the Coming of Man*, Lansdowne Press, 1982, p.190.
- 6 . L.C.F. Turner, "The Crisis of Japanese Strategy, January-June 1942," *RMC Historical Journal*, Volume 1, 1972, pp.11-12.
- 7 . Norman Harper, "Australia and the United States", in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper (eds.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1950-1955*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1957, p.157.
- 8 . Quoted in Malcolm Booker, *The Last Domino*, Collins, Sydney, 1976, p.128.
 . *ibid.* p.76.
10. *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Dept. of External Affairs, Canberra, Volume 25, No.9, September 1955.
11. Sir Robert Menzies, *op. cit.*, p.264.
12. Malcolm Booker, *op. cit.*, p.125.
13. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives*, 10 August 1954.

14. John Welfield, "Australia and Japan in the Cold War", in Peter Drysdale and Hironobu Kitaōji (eds.), *Australia and Japan*, ANU Press, 1981, p.401.
15. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1955.
16. Peter Drysdale, "Australia and Japan in the Pacific and World Economy", in Peter Drysdale and Hironobu Kitaōji, op. cit., pp. 419ff.
17. *House of Representatives, Daily Hansard*, Tuesday 26 November 1985, p.1.
18. *ibid.* p.2.
19. *ibid.* p.4.
20. *ibid.* p.6
21. *ibid.* p.6.
22. *ibid.* p.4.
23. *ibid.* p.4.
24. *ibid.* p.5.
25. *ibid.* pp.7-8.
26. The Hon. Kim C. Beazley MP, Minister for Defence, *Australia's Defence Policy*, Address to the National Press Club, Canberra, 12 June 1985. Mimeo.