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Australia and the United States have been extremely close allies since World War II. The engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq have continued this tradition. Yet even before the bombings in Bali and the confrontation with Iraq, an important debate about the costs and benefits of the relationship with the United States was underway in Australia. At a number of levels—economic, political, and even strategic—increasing numbers of Australians were critically reassessing the relationship and questioning the supposed benefits. Recent events have accelerated this process and thrown the relationship into even starker relief. This paper argues that the increasingly unilateral nature of American economic and strategic policy is imposing major costs on even its most loyal allies, a situation that threatens to undermine the legitimacy of, and support for, U.S. hegemony.

When the United States declared war on terrorism in the aftermath of September 11, the first country to offer unequivocal, open-ended support was Australia. Even before it was clear what form this war might take, or who the principal adversaries might be, Australian policymakers were anxious to reestablish the country as America's most dependable ally. That Australia might show such enthusiasm for a struggle that did not directly impinge on its own security is unsurprising. Since World War II, when the United States replaced Great Britain as Australia's principal "great and powerful friend" and ostensible security guarantor, Australian political elites have been at pains to ensure that the United States remains favorably disposed toward its importunate ally. In Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and most recently Iraq, Australians have been prominent players in supporting casts that

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were generally of greater moral than military value. But in the aftermath of the Bali bombing last October, in which Australians appeared to be deliberately targeted among the Western enemies of radical Islam, doubts have begun to emerge about the relative costs and benefits of a close alliance with America. A number of commentators, including leading religious figures, have claimed that Australia's high profile support of America's war on terror has actually endangered Australian security by making the country a more likely target of terrorism.[1]

The U.S. relationship, once the bedrock of Australian security, is becoming a lightening rod for an emerging policy debate in Australia. A number of key issues—trade policy, relations with Australia's Asian neighbours, and security—have long been staples of domestic politics. But the U.S. conduct of the war on terror, culminating recently in its invasion of Iraq, has become a more prominent part of the debate. It is also important to recognize, as I shall illustrate below, that even before the Bali bombings, U.S.-Australian relations were already becoming the subject of increased discussion; Bali has simply thrown such issues into even sharper relief.

Security in an Anxious Nation

The dynamics of the U.S.-Australian relationship and the willingness of generations of Australian politicians to give such unquestioning loyalty to it cannot be understood without reference to Australia's unique strategic position and history. Its geographical location and status as a moderate power ought to make it enviable rather than anxious. An island continent, Australia is arguably more naturally secure than any other part of the planet. And yet, from its inception Australians have felt anxious about their supposed isolation and fretted about the potential threat posed by the far more populous nations of Asia to their north.[2]

During the heyday of the Asian economic "miracle," it seemed that attitudes toward the region might be fundamentally transformed. Sadly, the financial crisis, subsequent political turbulence, and now the Bali bombings in particular have undermined this more positive view, and there is renewed talk of an "arc of instability" to Australia's north.[3] Yet none of the countries of Southeast Asia has the military capacity to threaten mainland Australia directly. Even China, which is generally regarded as the most likely threat to regional stability, and which harbors ambitions to

become a more assertive regional power, hardly looms as a source of danger to Australia. The recent terrorist outrage in Bali notwithstanding, and despite local politicians working themselves into a somewhat belated lather about homeland security, by world standards Australia still looks like a comparatively secure place.

Indeed, if any country was well placed to reap the much discussed peace dividend expected from the end of the Cold War, it ought to have been Australia. Yet even before Bali, defense was the one area of government spending insulated from the budget cuts that have dominated the policy agenda of current Prime Minister John Howard's government.

Two historical factors explain the continuing importance of defense spending. First, as mentioned above, rather than seeing their isolation as a unique strategic asset, generations of Australian policymakers have seen it as a liability. Consequently, shoring up a strategic relationship with Britain, and more recently the United States, has been the enduring bedrock of Australian politics and foreign policy shared by both ends of the political spectrum.

The second influence on Australia's overall defense posture is of more recent vintage. John Howard's coalition government came to power in 1996 promising to "reinvigorate" ties with the United States. Its predecessor—the Australian Labor Party (ALP), under the leadership of Paul Keating—had given greater priority to deepening economic, political, and even strategic ties with Asia. Howard, by contrast, explicitly repudiated closer regional relations in favor of stronger U.S.-Australia bilateral ties.

Howard's desire for closer U.S. ties reflected a personal ambivalence about the whole "Asian engagement" project and a genuine enthusiasm about America itself. Although Howard's paeans to American leadership and the depth of Australia's friendship were off-putting to some, they reflected a warmth toward the United States that is widely shared by much of Australia's political

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elite. Indeed, surveys generally indicate that a majority of Australians believe the strategic alliance with the United States in some way guarantees Australia's security.[4]

Why is the strategic relationship with the United States considered so pivotal, especially by the Howard government? In part this reflects the ambiguous nature of the defense relationship enshrined in the ANZUS treaty of 1951, which originally included Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Not only has ANZUS been undermined by the expulsion of New Zealand following its refusal to allow potentially nuclear-armed American vessels to use its ports, but it contains no iron-clad guarantee of American assistance in the event of an attack on Australia. Consequently, generations of Australian policymakers have felt compelled to demonstrate their commitment to the strategic relationship by signing up for any conflict America found itself involved in—no matter how peripheral it might be to Australia's direct security interests.[5]

The real glue that holds the strategic alliance between the United States and Australia together, however, is not the ANZUS Treaty, but the so-called joint facilities. These intelligence gathering and communications installations are scattered around Australia, controlled by Americans, and an integral part of the U.S. military's command and control systems. Not only did such operations make an otherwise strategically insignificant Australia a prime nuclear target during the Cold War, but successive Australian governments accepted a compromised national sovereignty, acquiescing to an agreement that gave them no control over, or any right to be informed about, the communications passing through the bases.[6] The justification for this situation has always been that Australia gains invaluable intelligence as a consequence of the relationship. Whatever the merits of this argument—it is impossible to judge, as such information is always considered too sensitive for public scrutiny—the Australian government's apparent failure to act upon U.S. intelligence in the period before the Bali attack raises questions about both the competence of the Australian government and the overall utility of this sort of information.[7] The more general point to emphasize is that there have always been signifi-

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cant potential costs for Australia in maintaining the alliance with the United States. For a country with no obvious enemies, the main threats to Australian security since World War II have, paradoxically enough, actually resulted from its U.S. alliance.

Post-Bali, when strategic issues have assumed an unaccustomed prominence in public debates, Howard has had an increasingly difficult task in justifying his emphasis on ties with the United States. He needs to be able to demonstrate to skeptical domestic critics that there are identifiable benefits rather than just obligations and risks flowing from such a relationship. It is proving to be an increasingly difficult task in the face of developments in the Asian region and trade tensions between Australia and the United States.

Trade Troubles

At the top of John Howard's wish list on his most recent visits to the United States has been a bilateral free trade agreement. Australia is somewhat unusual in that it is a developed economy, but one that remains highly dependent on agricultural and natural resource exports. Like other developed economies, Australia has seen a rapid rise in the service sector and a decline in the relative importance of agriculture, but its exports remain dominated by primary products like coal, crude petroleum, iron ore, wool, wheat, and meat. This in itself has meant an inexorable historical decline in Australia's terms of trade as the value of commodities relative to manufactures and (some) services has continued to fall. Consequently, simply maintaining its trade position means that Australia needs to export greater quantities of primary products to satisfy its appetite for the sort of manufactured goods it does not produce itself. Since primary good sectors remain some of the most heavily protected sectors of the international economy, Australian exporters face an array of tariff barriers and subsidies that make it increasingly difficult for them to survive.

Recent U.S. trade policy has only exacerbated this problem and fueled widespread resentment in Australia, making the position of staunch allies like Howard increasingly uncomfortable. Most recently, the U.S. decision to subsidize its domestic agriculture to the tune of some $180 billion sent an unequivocal signal to U.S. allies and competitors alike that, when it comes to economic policy, unilateralism and national self-interest rule. In a move the *Economist* described as "lunacy" and a fundamental blow

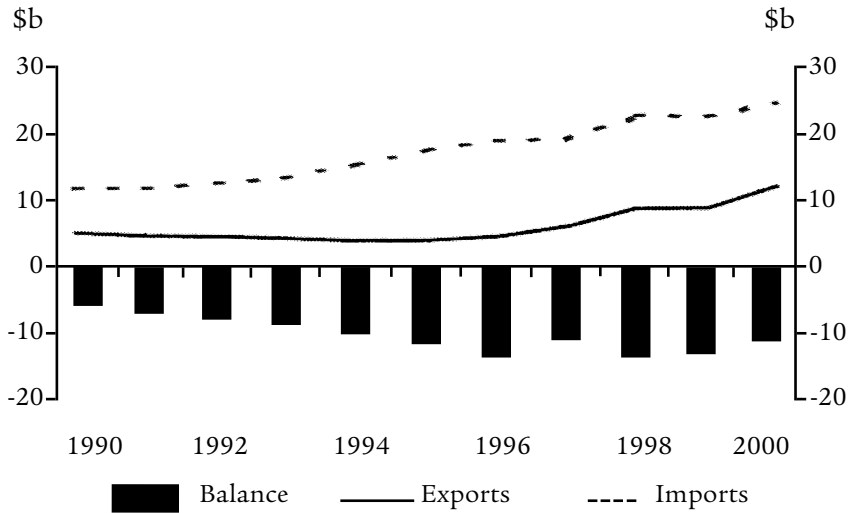to further multilateral trade liberalization,[8] the United States effectively scuppered any realistic hopes the Howard government might have harbored about a free trade deal. America's huge agricultural subsidies simply confirmed the precedent set by its earlier decision to impose 30 percent tariff barriers on steel imports—a move that directly penalized Australia's relatively efficient producers. Significantly, the leader of the National Party, John Anderson,

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described the United States as arrogant, and declared "We see ourselves as allies, but such measures reek of, 'Do as I say, not as I do.'"[9]

The difficulties are not just economic. John Howard's predominantly urban Liberal Party is in a coalition government with the rural-based National Party. Although the Nationals are the junior party, they represent precisely the sort of people who have been most badly affected by recent U.S. policy. A free trade agreement would go some way toward placating the disaffected constituency in "the Bush," while simultaneously shoring up support for the alliance with the United States. But the realities of domestic politics in America—especially the pivotal electoral importance of the farm lobby—mean that the only sort of bilateral deal Australia is likely to strike with the United States would be one that excludes agriculture. Such an agreement would be extremely difficult to sell in Australia and would further enrage Australian farmers.

U.S. actions are especially galling because the United States is actually Australia's largest single source of imports, and runs a major trade surplus with Australia—about two to one in America's favor in the merchandise goods sector, as Figure 1 indicates.[10] The U.S. initiatives on farm subsidies and steel tariffs will not only make this trade balance more difficult for Australia to turn around, but may jeopardize other "traditional" Australian markets at the same time as America's subsidized exports become more competitive.[11] Although Australian officials subsequently managed

**Figure 1: Australia's Merchandise Trade
with the United States**

Source: ABS data on the DFAT STARS database.

to achieve a slightly more favorable deal on steel, the fundamental point remained: the United States was not committed to multilateral trade outcomes, nor wedded to trade liberalization as a major priority. For Australia, both farm subsidies and steel tariffs have worrying implications and threaten to undercut the entire basis of Australian trade diplomacy for the preceding twenty years. In short, both the strategic and the economic dimension of Australia's relations with the United States have potentially major costs and drawbacks. What is most

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significant about current Australian policy, and what places a greater burden of expectation on the relationship as a consequence, is the Howard government's explicit linking of security and economic issues. As the government's recently released White Paper puts it, "a free trade agreement with the United States [is] a powerful opportunity to put our economic relationship on a parallel

footing to our political relationship, which is manifest in the ANZUS alliance."[12] A failure to deliver a meaningful free trade agreement in such circumstances will fundamentally undermine the legitimacy of the relationship.

The Asian Connection

Asia has loomed large in the minds of generations of Australian policymakers as a complex source of threats and opportunities. For much of Australia's brief history, the region to its north has been a source of high anxiety, an anxiety fueled by racist stereotypes and misunderstandings that have made relations with the diverse countries of the region inherently problematic. Over the last three or four decades, however, the remarkable economic transformation that has occurred in the newly industrializing countries of East Asia has driven a major reorientation of Australia's economic relations and a concomitant attempt to engage with the region more effectively at a political and cultural level.

Although close ties with the United States have generally enjoyed the support of both the conservative coalition governments and their opponents in the ALP—currently the major non-government party in Australia—the latter's pursuit of closer relations with Asia rather than the United States encouraged a rethinking of economic and foreign policy during the 1980s and early 1990s. Under Paul Keating's leadership the reality of Australia's growing economic ties with Asia provided the rationale for a fundamental shift in policy. Keating gave greater priority to deepening economic, political, and even strategic ties with Asia. Australia's security was to be reinforced by reaching out to its Asian neighbors rather than warding them off.

One of the most important diplomatic initiatives developed under the former ALP regime was the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.[13] From an Australian perspective, APEC had a number of potential benefits. First, it could give Australia insider status in a region where its colonial history, Anglo-Celtic heritage, and monocultural image meant it has always been regarded as something of an outsider. Second, it not only gave Australia direct institutional linkages to the region, but offered Australia the chance to export its preferred economic vision: securing Australia's economic position by opening up and liberalizing Asian markets. Indeed, the development of closer economic ties with Asia was seen as so important in the late 1980s that former Labor leader Bob

Hawke's original proposal did not even include the United States. But for much of East Asia, the prospect of developing a regional organization to promote deeper economic integration was of little interest if it excluded the critically important U.S. market.

The inclusion of the United States in APEC was not necessarily a bad thing for Australia: clearly, an APEC that included the United States had the potential to be far more significant than an APEC without it. The United States, as a fellow advocate of trade and financial liberalization and other neoliberal reforms, might have been expected to be a formidable ally for Australia's own proselytizing efforts. Such expectations, however, were never realized. Apart from the occasional flurry of interest under the Clinton administration, America has been, at best, a tepid supporter of APEC, judging that it could achieve more through direct bilateral pressure on countries like Japan than it ever could through APEC's notoriously ineffective consensual style and voluntarist approach to trade liberalization.

APEC's increasing irrelevance and ineffectiveness has important implications for Australia's relations with the United States and with Asia. Australian politicians partially blame the United States for APEC's fate. Former Prime Minister Keating—one of APEC's most ardent champions—described the U.S. decision to allow Russia to join as an "act of economic vandalism."[14] Russia's inclusion further diluted APEC's attenuated identity and purpose, which already encompassed East Asia, the Americas, and Australasia. APEC's gradual decline left the centerpiece of Australia's regional diplomatic efforts in tatters.

In the aftermath of the financial and political crises that swept through East Asia from 1997 onwards, Australia has thus been largely sidelined in the regional initiatives that may well redefine East Asian relations. The most significant initiative has been the emergence of the ASEAN + 3 grouping, which includes Japan, China, and South Korea, in addition to the original members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.[15] When originally touted as an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) by Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir in the early 1990s, the United States vehemently opposed the idea—something that ensured a lack of Japanese support and its consequent failure. At the time, this seemed like a good outcome for Australia, as it nullified EAEC's potential threat to APEC. Recently, however, the United States has softened its opposition to a regional political and economic grouping from

which it is excluded, allowing ASEAN + 3 to gain momentum. Australia has not been invited or attempted to join what looks likely to become the most significant regional institution on offer.

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Though the Howard government has belatedly taken an interest in ASEAN + 3, declaring that it would be "pleased" to be involved,[16] this is a bus that Australia seems to have missed. Interestingly, the most pro-American members of the cabinet—Howard and foreign minister Alexander Downer—have been blamed for this major long-term policy failure.[17]

While the Howard government's Labor predecessors could be criticized for placing excessively high hopes on APEC as a vehicle for transforming Australia's relationship with East Asia, they had the merit of being part of a larger strategy of general engagement with the region. The inescapable reality is that about half of Australia's overall exports go to East Asia and only 10 percent to the United States.[18] Ironically enough, it has generally proved easier for Australian exporters to break into the supposedly protected markets of East Asia than it has to penetrate the heartland of free market liberal capitalism.

The Howard government, however, seems not to have heeded this reality. Far from scrambling to find new ways to strengthen ties with Asia, it has actually contributed to a deterioration of relations. In the aftermath of the 1997 crisis, the Howard government declared itself the "strong man of Asia," and suggested that Australia's relative immunity to the crisis was a vindication of its own policies. Not only did such remarks appear insensitive and win few friends in East Asia, but Australian policymakers have subsequently gone out of their way to distance themselves from any emerging regional institutions on the grounds of cultural incompatibility—a position that reveals a naïve understanding of the cultural and historical complexity of East Asia, but which helps to explain the enduring affinity with the United States.[19]

The Howard government has effectively locked itself out of closer regional ties in favor of an alignment with the United States that delivers few immediate benefits. But, as East Asian economies pick themselves up off the canvas, and as American capitalism continues to be plagued by corruption scandals and skittish stock markets, the triumphalism and hubris that characterized the post-crisis period in both the United States and Australia is starting to look premature and misplaced. If East Asia manages to develop financial mechanisms that make it less prone to crisis and trade regimes that make it less dependent on American markets, Australian policymakers may be forced to reassess their priorities. In short, despite the importance of the economic relationship between Australia and the United States, brute geography coupled with the long-term prospects of East Asia generally and of China in particular, suggest that the region will remain of paramount economic importance to Australia. The continuing primacy the Howard government attaches to the U.S. relationship,[20] however, means that achieving a similarly strong political relationship with the region will be one of the defining challenges of the next few decades.

The Evolving Debate in Australia

There is a certain inevitability about continuing debates over the relative importance of Asia and America, and one not based solely on the cyclical fortunes of Anglo-American and East Asian forms of capitalism. Generational change in Australian politics will inevitably encourage a reassessment of current policy settings. John Howard was born just prior to the outbreak of World War II, and for his generation, the American alliance has always been the foundation of Australia's security and foreign policy. The demise of Britain as a global power, the Cold War, and a lingering nervousness about the looming masses of Asia, all combined to give America a central place in Australian policymaking. However, Australia is being steadily transformed by migration: today, 23 percent of Australians were born overseas and 5 percent of all Australians were born in Asia.[21] The concerns that shaped the attitudes of earlier generations have less resonance for a rising generation with no memory of the Cold War and a greater familiarity with Asia. Attitudinal and policy change in such circumstances is unsurprising.

What is surprising, is that the debate about U.S.-Australia relations has been led not by radical critics of American hegemony,

of which there are relatively few, but by some of the most conservative members of Australian society. Representatives of Australia's rural sector, for example, have even suggested that the joint facilities should be used as bargaining chips in trade negotiations with the United States. It is a measure of the continuing importance attached to the alliance that this possibility is never likely to materialize. However, that it should be proposed at all by one of the most conservative elements of Australian society is indicative of the animosity that has been generated by the twin forces of American protectionism and the long-term decline in the competitive position of agriculture.

More dispassionate observers are also shifting their ground and developing more critical stances toward the alliance; the new leader of the ALP, Simon Crean, in his first major statement on the future direction of foreign policy in April 2002, argued that Australia's position should not be "a pale shadow of America's," and that under a future Labor administration, closer relations with China would be a "key building block" of its approach to the region in particular.[22] Hence, the uncritical bipartisan commitment to the alliance was already beginning to fracture in the face of short-term pain caused by the trade relationship, regional political tensions, and a suspicion that some of the longer-term benefits are less compelling than they once were. The confrontation with Iraq and the perception that there is political advantage in opposing American plans has helped entrench such views in the ALP. However, given the volatile nature of the electorate on this issue, things could change.[23] Much will depend on the highly unpredictable aftermath of the war.

Another focus of attention for those questioning the benefits of Australia's alliance with the United States is the potentially central role that the joint facilities could play in the proposed U.S. national missile defense system (NMD). Doubts about its feasibility and concern over its destabilizing impact have created divisions within the normal bipartisan support for the security alliance. The ALP, for example, has suggested it will review the NMD system when it is eventually reelected, on the basis that NMD is "likely to fuel a new nuclear arms race in the Asia-Pacific region."[24] Most notable in Labor's emerging attitude to both the region and the United States is not only that it marks a turning away from the latter back toward the former, but that Labor judges there may be political mileage in doing so. While Australia's parliamentary debates are notoriously colorful and robust, the portrayal of Prime

Minister Howard by a leading opposition figure as an "arse-licker" who sold out Australian interests on his most recent visit to Washington in return for a "pat on the head" from his American hosts, captures the contemporary mood of at least a substantial minority of the electorate in Australia.[25] Somewhat surprisingly, Howard's personal approval ratings have remained high thus far, despite 76 percent of Australians being opposed to military action in Iraq without a United Nations mandate.[26] Indeed, once hostilities commenced, there was a noteworthy swing of support toward the government and the war in Iraq.[27]

Even within Howard's own conservative side of Australian politics, a growing unease about the possible implications of closer alignment had emerged well before the Bali bombings. Malcolm Fraser, one of Howard's predecessors as both prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party, has drawn attention to what he sees as the potentially negative impact that a greater reliance on, and identification with, the United States may have for Australia's regional position. The United States's global perspective and its recently restated commitment toward Taiwan has increased the likelihood of conflict with China. Unlikely as such a scenario may be, Fraser argues, "it would be an act of lunacy for Australia to participate in a conflict between China and America over Taiwan."[28] Yet Australia's current open-ended commitment to American foreign policy locks it into security policies that may yield little direct benefit, while necessitating major defense spending to ensure the compatibility of Australia's armed forces with American strategic objectives.[29] Even more important in the longer term, it complicates Australia's regional relations.

China, for example, frequently complains that Australia is little more than an American puppet. Such criticisms from a potential challenger to American hegemony are predictable enough given China's desire to undermine U.S. regional dominance. And yet, the perception that Australia is little more than an extension of American foreign policy has been reinforced

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by Australia itself. In the wake of its successful peacekeeping operations in Timor—in which the United States conspicuously re-

fused to play a significant role, despite requests from its supposedly key ally[30]—John Howard suggested that this intervention provided a successful exemplar of a new relationship, in which Australia could deputize for America in smaller scale regional trouble spots.[31]

In the aftermath of Bali, unquestioning support for American actions, especially against Iraq where the threat to Australia is far from obvious, has noticeably diminished. Yet even before the Bali bombing, a number of Australia's most senior public figures—including three former prime ministers—had urged Howard not to support U.S. actions without a mandate from the United Nations.[32] ALP leader Crean argued that it was important that Australia not be seen as America's "lap dog" in blindly supporting American action against Iraq.[33] After Bali, even Howard, conscious of growing public disquiet about the government's strategic priorities, suggested that Australia's "own patch" and a predominantly regional focus must now be the priority—though given his role in shoring up the "coalition of the willing," it can be assumed that such comments were primarily for domestic consumption in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.[34]

Howard has expended much political capital in support of the alliance and a great deal hinges, therefore, on the manner in which the confrontation with Iraq is resolved, both domestically and internationally. Domestically, Howard is acting without popular support—something that indicates the depth of his own personal commitment to the U.S. relationship. Internationally, the stakes are even higher: not only may Australia itself become a more prominent target of terrorist attacks,[35] but Australia's position in the region is made increasingly difficult as a consequence of its prominent role in a war on terror that has encompassed Southeast Asia. Howard's blanket support of American policy rankled in some quarters, but his endorsement of the doctrine of preemption, coupled with the suggestion that Australia might follow suit in certain circumstances, sparked real outrage across the region.[36] Some of this has come from the usual suspects, like Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir, but it has also included Indonesia and even the Philippines.

American Hegemony and its Implications for U.S. Allies

American power is now routinely described as unparalleled in the modern era. U.S. leadership in a range of economic, political, cul-

tural, and especially military affairs gives it a preeminence that can accurately be described as hegemonic. The capacity to shape the rules and norms that increasingly govern a multi-dimensional international sphere, or simply to ignore those regulations or institutions it dislikes, is a manifestation of a uniquely American power.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of America's dominance of the international system, especially since the Cold War ended, has been the absence of challengers to its position, or even of serious attempts to balance against its power. As John Ikenberry has persuasively argued, American hegemony has proved remarkably durable because it appeared to provide widespread benefits, depriving allies and potential adversaries of compelling reasons to challenge its supremacy.[37] Yet, as the events of September 11 remind us, there has also been a perception that this U.S.-led international order has benefited some more than others. At a time when America stands at the apex of a system that is seen to do little to address global inequality, it is easy for critics of the United States to depict American hegemony as self-serving and far from benign.

It is in precisely such circumstances that supportive allies can play a crucial role in dispelling the notions that American power is deployed primarily to promote American interests and that it is inimical to a sustainable, collaborative world order. Yet friend and foe alike have been alarmed by the recent U.S. determination to take an independent, unilateral path. Whether it is the withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol, the refusal to sign on to the International Criminal Court, the overturning of arms control agreements, or the more prosaic willingness to use its economic and political muscle to achieve goals that further national, rather than international interests, there is much that is disquieting about the recent

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use of American power. Even in Australia the chorus of concern is growing increasingly louder. If doubts about the benefits of U.S. leadership exist within what has traditionally been the most uncritical of American allies, it augurs badly for the wider legitimacy and durability of American dominance.

Ironically, the contemporary international order that American hegemony helped construct, which has made the likelihood of war between individual nations increasingly remote, arguably makes direct dependence on and support for the United States less essential than ever before. Australia has always been relatively immune from invasion; the contemporary geopolitical order means that conventional threats are almost unimaginable. Unstinting support for a dominant power that is well able to look after itself, and which is not averse to using its power to pursue its own interests at the expense of its nominal allies is, therefore, increasingly difficult to defend, other than on emotional grounds. And yet it is precisely this unquantifiable but fundamental emotional aspect of hegemonic power that is currently being undermined by the more unilateralist and insular elements of American policy.

The crucial lesson to be drawn from the Australian experience is that even the most reliable allies can waver in the face of intense domestic pressures. Australia's prominent place in the "coalition of the willing" confronting Iraq has proved deeply unpopular in Australia and undermined support for the U.S.-Australian alliance among the general population and within the opposition ALP, which sees political advantage in criticizing both U.S. policy and the current Bush administration. Thus, for the first time since the Vietnam era, a close association with the United States has become a political liability in Australia. This subjects the entire bilateral relationship to an unaccustomed degree of critical scrutiny. In such circumstances, when the possible costs of the alliance are plain, but the benefits are controversial and difficult to demonstrate, the crucial normative component of U.S. dominance—in which allies willingly accede to American leadership—risks unravelling.

Although America can easily do without the support of allies like Australia, there are plainly advantages in not acting unilaterally. As Stanley Hoffman has pointed out, the United States may not need to be bound by international constraints, but they "provide far better opportunities for leadership than arrogant demonstrations of contempt for others' views."[38] Acting through multilateral channels may prove advantageous for both America and its allies

in the long run. At the very least, it would add a degree of legitimacy to the actions of states like Australia and may make at least one aspect of the bilateral relationship less contentious by giving the actions of both the United States and Australia wider international support. It might also go some way to making Australia's international position less isolated and regional relations less fractious. Indeed, there are potentially important benefits for both Australia and the United States from Australia assuming a more independent position in the region and the world. The "coalition of the willing" is predominantly a group of Anglo-American countries closely associated with American hegemony: an Australia that was renowned for its independence rather than its automatic, uncritical support of all things American would add much greater legitimacy to similar activities in the future. A more independent Australian foreign policy might have domestic spinoffs as well: if the alliance were a less central part of Australia's overall position, it would make it less contentious, and less susceptible to partisan political change in both Australia and the United States.

If the political stock of some of redoubtable American allies like Howard in Australia and Blair in Britain are seen to fall as a consequence of too close and uncritical association with what is increasingly perceived internationally to be an overbearing and unpopular American administration,[39] then this bodes badly for the future of American leadership of the international system. As Joseph Nye has famously argued, American power is multi-dimensional;[40] without some attention to its "softer" aspects and a concerted effort to cultivate the support of broadly sympathetic nations, American hegemony may not prove as durable, uncontested, or beneficial as some of its admirers believe.

For the first time in three decades, an Australian government finds itself on the defensive because of its close ties with the United States. That this could happen in a country that has, since the end of the Second World War, been closely wedded to America at both an elite level and more broadly across much of the general population, is indicative of the potentially corrosive impact of U.S. unilateralism. The deep reservoir of goodwill toward the United States that continues to exist—recent economic and strategic difficulties notwithstanding—suggests that Australia will continue broadly to align itself with the United States in the immediate future. In the longer term, this goodwill risks being steadily eroded by American actions that appear to damage Australian interests, and by the inescapable geographical reality that must ultimately make

Asia, rather than America, Australia's economic, political, and perhaps even strategic center of gravity. Contemporary American hegemony, paradoxically enough, may ultimately have the effect of accelerating this process.

Notes

[1] Although Prime Minister Howard has repudiated the idea of a connection between the Bali attacks and support for the United States, such a link has been confirmed by the bombers themselves. See Mark Forbes, "Australians were bombers targets," *The Age*, 11 February 2003, 3.

[2] David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850–1939* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999).

[3] Hugh White, "Anti-terrorism programs only one part of long-term security," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 2002, 13.

[4] See, Desmond Ball, "The US-Australian alliance," in B. Rubin. and T.A. Keaney, eds., *US Allies in a Changing World* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 271.

[5] Significantly, Howard invoked the ANZUS Treaty—for the first time ever—after September 11. That Australia's contribution to the war effort was inevitably inconsequential was of less significance than was reminding the Americans—and an increasingly skeptical domestic audience—that ANZUS not only still existed, but might actually serve some purpose.

[6] Desmond Ball, "The strategic essence," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55, no. 2 (2001): 238.

[7] Morgan Mellish, "US alert 'dismissed as overly sensitive,'" *Australian Financial Review*, 18 October 2002, 17.

[8] "Bush the anti-globaliser," *Economist*, 11 May 2002, 14.

[9] Linda Doherty, "Anderson lashes US 'arrogance' on steel tariffs," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 March 2002, 4.

[10] See *Australia's Trade Outcomes and Objectives Statement*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/toos/index.html> (4 April 2003).

[11] Adding insult to injury as far as Australian wheat growers are concerned is the fear that U.S. farmers will gain preferential access to Australia's "traditional" market in Iraq flowing the cessation of hostilities—a pattern repeated in other key markets in Asia and the Middle East. See "Australian farmers' Iraq fury," BBC News, online version, 21 March 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/2871527.stm> (22 June 2003).

[12] Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), xvi.

[13] For the definitive analysis, see John Ravenhill, *APEC and the Construction of Pacific Rim Regionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[14] Paul Keating, "The perilous moment: Indonesia, Australia and the Asian crisis," Public Lecture at the University of New South Wales, 25 March 1998.

[15] See Richard Stubbs, "ASEAN Plus Three: Emerging East Asian Regionalism?" *Asian Survey* 42, no. 3 (2002): 440–455.

[16] Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest*.

[17] John Garnaut, "Tension in cabinet as PM, Downer lose their Asia focus," *The Age*, 25 January 2003, 1.

[18] See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia's Trade Outcomes and Objectives Statement*, 2002, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/toos/index.html> (4 April 2003).

[19] Mark Beeson, "Australia and Asia: The years of living aimlessly," in Daljit Singh and Anthony Smith, eds., *Southeast Asian Affairs 2001* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), 44–55.

[20] Commonwealth of Australia, *Advancing the National Interest.*

[21] Ibid., 13.

[22] Tony Parkinson, "Crean not convinced on Iraqi strike," *The Age*, 23 April 2002, 4.

[23] Significantly, the latest opinion poll available at the time of writing showed a marked swing toward support for the war, something that reflects widespread sympathy for Australia's armed forces in any context, and a remarkably inept performance by the leader of the Opposition. See Dennis Shanahan, "50pc now back PM's war," *The Australian*, 25 March 2003, 1, 5.

[24] Laurie Brereton, "The outlook for Australian foreign policy: A Labor perspective," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55, no. 3 (2002): 348.

[25] Tony Walker, "Labor wrestles with US alliance," *Australian Financial Review*, 12 July 2002, 83.

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[27] See note 23.

[28] Malcolm Fraser, "An Australian critique," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55, no. 2 (2001): 233.

[29] Graeme Cheeseman, "The Howard government's defence white paper: Policy, process and politics," *The Drawing Board* 2, no. 1 (2001): 11–26.

[30] Richard Leaver, "The meanings, origins and implications of 'the Howard Doctrine,'" *The Pacific Review* 14, no. 1 (2001): 15–34.

[31] Fred Brenchley, "The Howard defence doctrine," *The Bulletin* 28 September 1999, 22–24.

[32] Patrick Walters, "Wait for UN, warn elder statesman," *The Australian*, 26 September 2002, 1.

[33] Tom Allard, "Australia's main parties split over military action," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 2002, 8.

[34] Roy Eccleston, "Regional security the new focus," *The Australian*, 21 October 2002, 3.

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[36] John Kerin and Matt Price, "PM fuels Asian ire on terror," *The Australian*, 3 December 2002, 1.

[37] G.J. Ikenberry, "Institutions, strategic restraint, and the persistence of the American post-war order," *International Security* 23, no. 3 (1998): 43–78.

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[39] Jane Perlez, "Americans Abroad Cope With Anger at U.S.," *New York Times*, 18 February 2003.

[40] Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).