AUSTRALIA'S THREAT PERCEPTIONS: A SEARCH FOR SECURITY
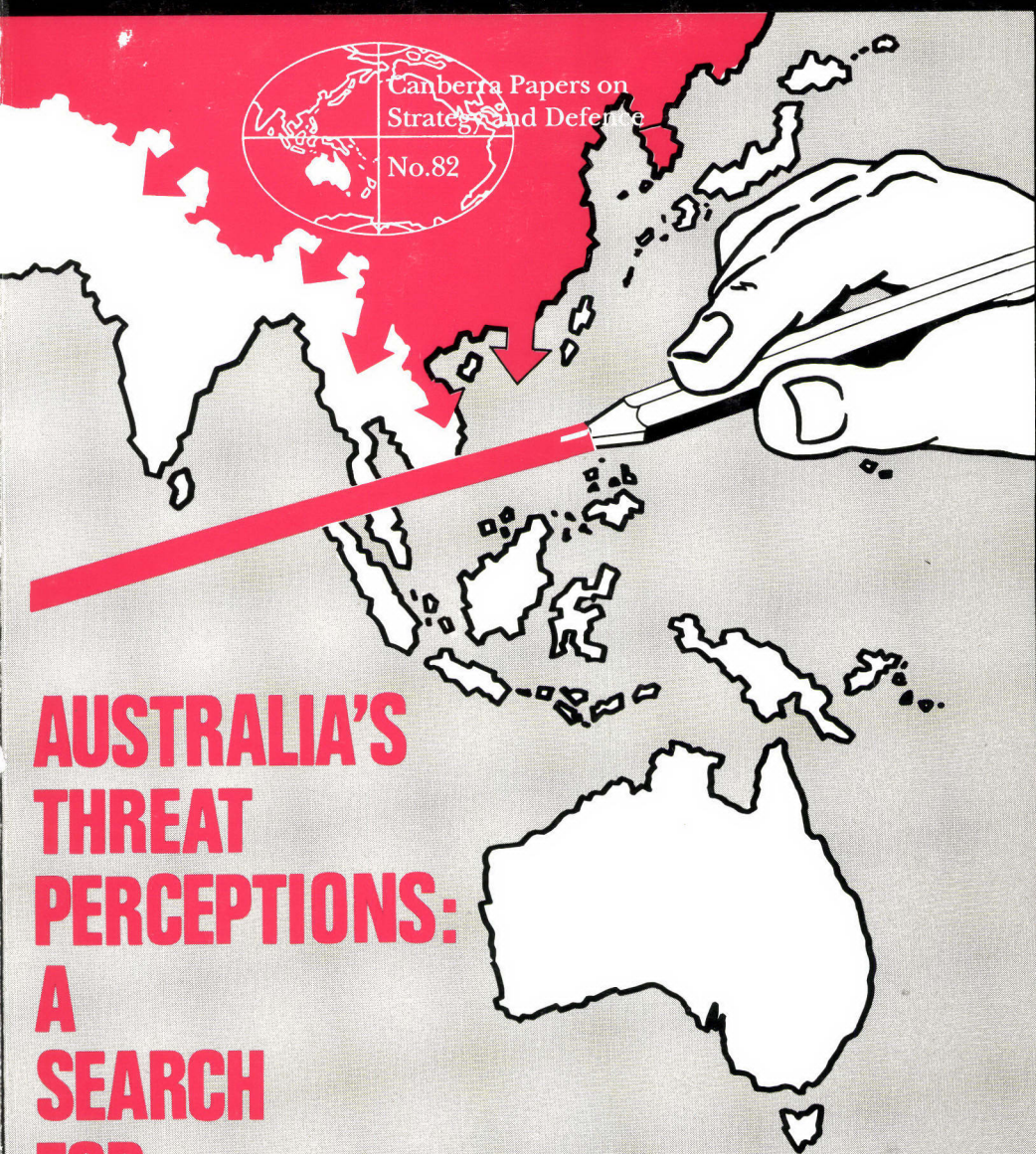
Alan Dupont

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ABSTRACT

A nation's perception of the likely origin, nature and level of potential external threats is fundamental to its sense of security and well-being, and reveals much about its character and value system. Australia has evinced a high level of insecurity for much of its history, and a degree of anxiety and apprehension about external threats which appears inconsistent with its relatively benign geostrategic environment.

This monograph traces the evolution of Australia's threat perceptions from early colonial times to the present, exploring the patterns and themes of the nation's security concerns, and the philosophical and rhetorical differences which have characterised the attitudes of the major Australian political parties towards notional threats. In doing so it seeks to provide some explanation of the causes of Australia's sense of vulnerability, comparing and contrasting popular perceptions with the official threat assessments of Australia's military and intelligence community. The monograph also makes some judgements about the accuracy and perspicacity of the official forecasts.

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Preface

PREFACE

The subject of Australia's threat perceptions has been touched on by many historians and international relations specialists, but there has been no systematic attempt to chart the evolution of this important aspect of Australia's defence and foreign policy, or to explore the ideological, cultural, political and strategic dynamics which have shaped Australia's perceptions of external threats.

The extent to which a nation feels threatened reveals much about its character, psychology, social development and value system. Threat perceptions are also central to national security, which is a fundamental concern of government. The problem with threats, as Barry Buzan has observed, is that they come 'in diverse forms ... vary enormously in range and intensity, pose risks which cannot be assessed accurately, and depend on probabilities which cannot be calculated'.[1] In Australia's case, the problem of making accurate assessments about its threat environment has been compounded by Australia's poor understanding of the Asia-Pacific region in which it is geographically located but from which, for most of its history, it has remained culturally, economically and politically apart.

It is difficult to do justice to such an important subject in a paper of this length, and the writer makes no claim to exhaustive or comprehensive treatment of what is a complex and somewhat elusive notion. The approach adopted has been to identify the principal themes and strands in Australian thinking about its threat environment from colonial times to the present, and to compare popular perceptions with the official assessments of the day, virtually all of which were produced by the professional military and civilian analysts of the Department of Defence. Fortunately, there is now sufficient information on the public record to make reasonably informed judgements about the accuracy and perspicacity of the official threat assessments, which have been produced at regular intervals since the Second World War under the generic label of the Strategic Basis Papers or, more correctly, the Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy.

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[1]   B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex, 1983), pp.88-89.

It is possible to identify four distinct phases in the evolution of Australia's perceptions of external threats. In the colonial era, which is the subject of Chapter 1 and encompasses the period up to the late 1890s, the Australian colonists showed acute sensitivity to the regional activities, both real and imagined, of Britain's European imperial rivals - most notably, France, Russia, and Germany. The second phase, which is examined in Chapter 2, lasted for over five decades (roughly 1895 to 1950). During this time, Australia was overwhelmingly concerned with the growth of Japanese strategic and economic power, and Japan's ability to challenge the Western dominated *status quo* in Asia and the Pacific. This period came to an end with Japan's conclusive defeat in 1945 and the signing of the ANZUS treaty in 1951. Chapter 3 covers the third phase, which parallelled the Cold War era, and was characterised by fear of China. Hostility towards China persisted until the early 1970s, when a broad consensus began to emerge that there were no foreseeable, major threats to Australia, and that a substantial threat would take many years to develop. This may be seen as the fourth and current phase, and is dealt with in Chapter 4.

Alan Dupont
March 1991

CHAPTER 1

THE COLONIAL PERIOD:
INSULARITY AND INSECURITY

Early Threats

Concerns about external threats emerged in the Australian colonies well before they were granted self-government by Great Britain in the 1850s. As early as 1827, New South Wales had shown a keen interest in the nearby Pacific islands, because of the widespread fear that a hostile foreign power might become entrenched there and threaten the Australian-British commercial monopoly. Of equal concern was the prospect that an unfriendly power, such as the United States or France, might use bases in the islands for launching an assault on the Australian continent.[1]

In 1839, New South Wales also voiced its alarm about the threat to British interests in China at the beginning of the Opium Wars. In July of that year, the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, reported to London that he had received intelligence that Captain Elliot, the British Principal Superintendent of Trade, was threatened with immediate death by the Chinese authorities.[2] Gipps asked Sir Gordon Bremer, the Captain of a British naval squadron currently in Sydney harbour, to intervene by despatching to China 'as large a portion of the force under his command as ... he might think fit'.[3] Bremer did not intervene in the end, but the episode demonstrated an emerging awareness in the colonies that conflicts in Asia could have direct security ramifications for Australia, particularly where they threatened the interests of Britain as 'the power responsible for ... Australia's security'.[4]

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1   G. Greenwood and C. Grimshaw (eds), *Documents on Australian International Affairs, 1901-1918* (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1977), p.xc. (Hereafter cited as Greenwood and Grimshaw, *Documents*.)

2   Gipps to the Marquis of Normanby, 31 July 1839, quoted in A.W. Stargadt, *Australia's Asian Policies: The History of a Debate, 1839-1972* (Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg, 1977), p.17.

3   ibid.

4   ibid., p.21.

France was regarded as the chief danger to British interests and colonial security in the period between the 1840s and the late 1880s. French and British imperial competition had spilled over into the Asia-Pacific region in the mid-nineteenth century, and in 1853 Napoleon III of France apparently considered privately the possibility of seizing Australia.[5] While the colonists were unaware of these Napoleonic ambitions, they were certainly cognisant of French expansionism in the Pacific, and bitterly resented the announcement of a French protectorate over Tahiti in 1844, and the French annexation of New Caledonia in 1853.[6]

Russia was also the object of colonial hostility and suspicion, particularly after the Crimean War of 1854-56. The Governor of New South Wales, Denison, publicly justified the construction of an island fortress in the middle of Sydney harbour by citing the danger of Russian attack.[7] The visit of a Russian naval force to the colonies in 1862 stimulated fears of an invasion, and for the remainder of the century Australian colonial attitudes towards Russia were antagonistic and distrustful, reflecting the imperial rivalry between Britain and Russia for strategic and commercial supremacy.

The Jervois Report

In 1877, colonial fears about the inadequacy of Australia's defences against attack, and latent suspicions about the imperial designs of European powers such as France and Russia, led the colonies to request the British Government to despatch a military expert in order to assess Australia's defence needs. The man sent by

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5   T.B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War, External Relations 1788-1977* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1978), p.57.

6   ibid.

7   The construction of Fort Denison was actually prompted by colonial concerns over American and French intentions in the Southwest Pacific, but Denison took advantage of the Crimean conflict to play up the Russian threat. G. Jukes, 'Australia and the Soviet Union' in F. Mediansky and A. Palfreyman (eds), *In Pursuit of National Interests: Australian Foreign Policy in the 1990s* (Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1988), p.192.

London was Sir William Jervois, a military engineer, who later became Governor of South Australia.[8]   Jervois' 'Preliminary Report on Defence, New South Wales' was delivered 'in an atmosphere of renewed and heightened insecurity, due to suspicions about French colonial designs in Asia and the Pacific'.   Jervois assessed that the greatest danger was from small-scale naval raids launched from the French port of Saigon, and from Russian and American Pacific bases.[9] He envisaged a single cruiser or a small group of cruisers sailing into Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide or Brisbane harbour, in order to capture merchant vessels, intercept gold shipments, bombard large towns or demand payment 'of many millions of money'.[10]

These fears had little foundation in fact, given the preoccupations and capabilities of the three notional protagonists at the time, although Jervois did discount the likelihood of a major attack against the colonies.   Despite its deficiencies, the Jervois Report was the first detailed analysis of Australia's defence needs by a professional soldier, and it set the tone for many of the subsequent assessments carried out by British and Australian military officers and, later still, the series of official reviews written by the Australian Department of Defence known as the Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy.

By the 1880s, Germany had supplanted France and Russia as the pre-eminent perceived threat to British and Australian security interests.   Australian fears were aroused by Germany's territorial acquisitions in the Southwest Pacific, particularly East New Guinea. The colonial governments of New South Wales and Queensland argued that Germany would soon move to establish bases in New Guinea which, in their view, 'would be injurious to British, and more particularly, Australian interests'.[11]   Colonial agitation for Britain to

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8   Stargadt, *Australia's Asian Policies*, pp.42-43.

9   ibid.

10   ibid., p.45.

11   Letter from Thomas McIlwraith, Agent General for Queensland to the Governor, Sir A.E. Kennedy, on 26 February 1883. N.K. Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1985), p.54. (Hereafter cited as Meaney, *Documentary History*.)   Queensland had earlier successfully pressured Great Britain into permitting it

pre-empt Germany, by annexing East New Guinea, continued unabated until the Anglo-German Agreement of April 1886, which divided the Western Pacific (including East New Guinea) into British and German spheres of influence.[12]

Ironically, it was to far-away Sudan and in defence of British interests against an indigenous nationalist movement rather than a European imperial rival, that Australian military forces were first committed. The deployment of a contingent of troops from New South Wales to the Sudan was by no means universally supported, and the arguments of supporters and detractors were to be echoed, in various forms, for decades to come. As John McCarthy has noted, the proponents of this early expression of 'forward defence' believed that Australians were defending themselves in Egypt just as if, in the words of New South Wales Premier Dibbs, 'the common enemy menaced us in the Colony'.[13] In the eyes of many Australians, there was a direct link between Britain's ability to project global military power to the farthest corners of the Empire and the security of the colonies. However, a contrary view was expressed with equal force and conviction by the republican antecedents of the Labor Party, who rejected Australian involvement in imperial wars, attacked what they regarded as the uncritical acceptance of the assumptions and aims of British foreign policy, and argued for a more self-reliant and independent defence posture.[14]

The 'Yellow Peril': China

While the colonies regarded the imperialist ambitions of Britain's European rivals as the principal threat to Australian security for most of the nineteenth century, the sudden influx of Chinese to the

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to annex several islands in the Torres Strait, including Tuan, Saibai and Talbot.

12 For the full text of the Agreement signed in Berlin on 6 April 1886, see Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.69-70.

13 J. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence, 1918-1937: A Study in Air and Sea Power* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976), p.2.

14 ibid.

New South Wales and Victorian goldfields in the early 1850s awakened anxieties and apprehensions of an altogether different kind. The first Chinese arrived in Sydney in 1848, and their numbers increased steadily throughout the 1850s and 1860s, mainly because of the discovery of gold in Australia but also as a result of British pressure on the Qing Government to allow free emigration of Chinese 'on board any British vessel at any of the open ports of China'.[15]

By the late 1880s, the issue of Chinese immigration was creating considerable controversy in the Australian colonies. Chinese immigrants were commonly regarded as a major threat to British rule, and to Australia's cultural and racial homogeneity. In 1888, after a virulent press campaign against the 'yellow peril' by virtually all sections of the colonial press, from the conservative Melbourne *Age* to the radical *Boomerang*, founded by the socialist William Lane, the colonies all passed legislation effectively prohibiting further Chinese immigration.[16]

One of the most articulate and influential purveyors of the 'yellow peril' theme was the New South Wales Premier, Sir Henry Parkes. Writing to British Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, in 1888, Parkes implored Salisbury to consider the detrimental effect on the colonies, should a Chinese enclave be established 'in some remote part of the Australian territory'.[17] Parkes opposed Chinese immigration on strategic, racial, cultural and social grounds, and concluded that while the question of Chinese immigration was of little concern to Britain, it vitally concerned the Australian colonies. The New South Wales Premier urged Salisbury to take immediate steps to open negotiations with China in order to prevent further immigration to Australia.[18] In a speech made at Wagga in the same year, Parkes referred specifically to the strategic threat posed by China:

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15 Article v of the Sino-British Convention of Beijing of October, 1860. Cited in S. Fung and C. Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship: Australia's Policies Towards the People's Republic of China, 1966-82* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985), p.14.

16 ibid., pp.14-15.

17 Message from Sir Henry Parkes, NSW Premier, to Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, March 1888. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.94.

18 ibid., p. 95.

> In Europe there are five Great Powers which ... could without any extra strain place 20,000,000 of armed men in the field: and coming to something which is nearer home, there is a Power, hitherto chiefly known as the barbarous power, which is so rapidly creating armies and a formidable navy, that it is sufficient at all events to awaken the intelligent attention of reflecting man. I mean the empire of China.[19]

While many of his countrymen shared Parkes' concern that the Chinese posed not only a strategic, but also a subversive threat to the colonies, the reality was that very few Chinese came to Australia in this first wave of Asian immigration, probably not more than forty thousand between 1848 and 1888.[20] The Qing Government itself fiercely resisted Chinese emigration, which it regarded as an insult to China and as sowing the seeds of a future political threat from a growing and potentially disaffected emigre community.[21]

Australian hostility towards the Chinese was the product of a complex, and potent, psychological mix of ignorance, racial prejudice, and xenophobia. Many colonists felt increasingly under siege because they saw themselves as outposts of a white, Eurocentric civilisation in an alien and menacing Asiatic sea. Leaders of the nascent labour movement regarded the Chinese as a threat to wages and living standards[22] and saw themselves as guardians of the social and economic interests of ordinary Australians, defined in starkly racist

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19   Speech upon the Chinese Question to the People of Wagga Wagga, ibid., p.96.

20   Between 1881 and 1891, the number of Chinese in Australia fluctuated between 30,000 and 40,000. R. Gollan, 'Australian Populism and Nationalism Before the Second World War' in P. Drysdale and Hironobu Kitaoji (eds), *Japan and Australia: Two Societies and their Interaction* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1981), p.35. By 1947, the number of Australians born in China had declined to 6,404.   R. Garnaut, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy: Report to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989), p.291.

21   Fung and Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship*, p.14.

22   ibid., p.15.

terms by the *Bulletin*, the mouthpiece of the movement, as 'all white men who come to these shores'.23 The Chinese, along with Australia's other non-white ethnic groups, were specifically excluded. 'No nigger, no Chinaman, no lascar, no kanaka, no purveyors of cheap coloured labour, is an Australian'.24

It was not only the labour movement which opposed Chinese immigration. The middle classes, who had been responsible for bringing in many Chinese as a source of cheap labour, grew ever more resentful of the enclaves and settlements which sprang up wherever the Chinese appeared in significant numbers. Overlaying these antagonisms was a sense of racial and cultural superiority over the Chinese felt by even the lowest strata of Australian society. This was partly attributable to the fact that the Chinese who came to Australia in this period were generally from the poorest and least educated classes, but it also stemmed from Australian ignorance of China's long imperial past and rich cultural, intellectual and artistic tradition.25 It should be noted, however, that Australian ignorance of China and expressions of racial superiority were not unique to the colonists; racism would probably have been found to at least an equal degree among the Chinese.

The 'Yellow Peril': Japan

In the 1890s, the Chinese threat was supplanted in Australian eyes by a more virulent and dangerous incarnation of the 'yellow peril'. Under the Meiji Emperor, the Japanese sun appeared once more in the ascendant as Japan pursued, with characteristic determination, its goal of becoming a modern, industrial nation and the pre-eminent Asian power. Colonial concerns about this new Asian threat, as with the Chinese, focused on the question of immigration, and there are remarkable parallels in Australia's response to the first group of

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23   R. Gollan, 'Australian Populism and Nationalism ...', p.35.

24   ibid.

25   G. Greenwood, *Approaches To Asia: Australian Postwar Policies and Attitudes* (McGraw Hill, Sydney, 1978), p.228.

Japanese settlers, who arrived in the early 1870s.[26]   Although considerably fewer in number than the Chinese immigrants - there were only 3,593 Japanese in Australia by February, 1902, when the Immigration Restriction Act completely closed Australia to further Japanese settlement[27] - Australian hostility and suspicion of the small community[28] was out of all proportion to any conceivable social, economic or subversive threat which the Japanese immigrants could have posed to the white majority.

In fact, like its Chinese counterpart, the Japanese Government actively discouraged the emigration of its nationals, particularly those employed as indentured labourers. In 1872, legislation was passed in Japan 'prohibiting contracts of service for periods of more than one year's duration, on the grounds that such were tantamount to slavery'.[29] Although there was some loosening in official Japanese attitudes towards emigration under contract in the 1880s, the negative attitude of the Japanese and colonial governments, combined with popular resentment in Australia and the traditional Japanese reluctance to eschew the familiarity of their homeland, restricted the

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26   The first Japanese immigrant probably came to Australia in 1871. Only a handful of Japanese immigrants took Australian wives, became naturalised and purchased land. D. Sissons, 'Immigration in Australia-Japanese Relations' in J. Stockwin (ed.), *Japan and Australia in the Seventies* (Angus and Robertson in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Sydney, 1972), p.194.

27   ibid., p.200.

28   See, for example, the speech by Australian Attorney-General, Alfred Deakin,   *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, House of Representatives, vol.iv, p.4812, 12 September 1901, and that by T.T. Ewing, the Member for Richmond, during the Naval Agreement Bill debate. Ewing stated, in uncompromising terms, that: 'Between the white and yellow man there is racial hatred ... they are destined to be enemies for all times'. *CPD*, vol. xiv, p.2056, 14 July 1903.

29   D. Sissons, 'Immigration in Australia-Japanese Relations', p.195.

numbers of Japanese in Australia to a tiny fraction of the total population.[30]

Fear of Japan was rooted in the same racial and xenophobic mix which determined the attitudes of the colonists to the Chinese, but was heightened by Japan's rising political and military power in Northeast Asia, its decisive defeat of China in 1895, and its consequent territorial and economic gains. Reflecting the popular mood, the annual colonial military exercise in 1895 'took the form of repelling a fictitious attempt by Japanese war vessels to enter Sydney harbour',[31] and a leading New South Wales Legislative Assemblyman asked:

> In view of the warlike events in the East, and the great success attained by the Japanese nation, will the Government consider the advisability of immediately introducing legislation to prevent Japanese immigration into New South Wales similar to that passed into law against the influx of Chinese?[32]

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30 The resident Japanese community in Australia never exceeded more than 0.2 per cent of the population, based on the figures provided by David Sissons.

31 Cited in N. Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987), p.5.

32 Question tabled in the NSW Legislative Assembly by Mr Willis on 8 May 1895. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.108.

CHAPTER 2

THE THREAT FROM JAPAN

Australia: A Reluctant Ally

The signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 created something of a dilemma for Australia. While fear of Japan, commonly expressed in racial terms, was quite widespread, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance gained broad popular support because it was seen as beneficial to Australia's security and commercial interests. In security terms, the Alliance reduced the likelihood that a revitalised and expansionist Japan would seek to enhance its power in the Asia-Pacific region at the expense of Britain and Australia. This view was summed up by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in its issue of 14 February 1902:

> The general opinion expressed in political circles is that the alliance is of the greatest importance to Australia, because it gives the protection of the Japanese fleet to our commerce. The alliance will, it is contended, offer to Australia effectual protection against possible attacks from a Russian fleet at Vladivostok or Port Arthur, or from a German fleet in the Chinese Sea. Australia is most vulnerable on the north, so that an offensive and defensive alliance with Japan will, it is contended, not only protect the northern portion of the Commonwealth, but will secure the trading interests of Australia in the Far East.[1]

Many Australians at this time were also sufficiently prescient to note the considerable trade opportunities afforded by a rapidly modernising Japan.[2] The *Adelaide Register*, for example, decried the

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[1] ibid., p.125

[2] The trade advantages to Australia of a modernised China and Korea were also recognised by some commentators. See, for example, articles in the *West Australian*, (31 July 1905) and *Brisbane*

arguments of 'ultra-Protectionists', and pointed out that as Japan grew prosperous she would become 'a larger buyer as well as a seller', offering advantages to Australia 'through the exchange of commodities'.3

Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905, following the destruction of the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Tsushima Straits, came as a shock to Australia and renewed fears that Japan would extend its power southward and threaten Australia's security. On 12 June 1905, Prime Minister Deakin called for a re-examination of Australia's defence needs which would relegate 'the German threat to a secondary status' and concentrate 'attention on Japan's role in the Pacific.'4 In August, the National Defence League was established in Sydney in order to lobby for compulsory military training 'as one defence against Japanese invasion'.5 There were also expressions of concern about Britain's diminishing naval strength in Asian-Pacific waters and, as a portent of a later period, calls to engage the Americans in the region as a counterweight to Japan.6

On the other hand, there were those who believed that, after its struggles with Russia and China, Japan was economically incapable of waging another major war for a generation to come without courting industrial ruin and internal revolution. Labor parliamentarian, Frank Anstey, criticised the inconsistency and hypocrisy of those who had conjured up pictures of almost certain invasion by Japan, claiming that 'the jingoes must fake an enemy from somewhere'.7 Anstey was not alone in his criticisms of the 'jingoes'. A significant minority of Australians supported the view that there was no genuine threat to Australia from Japan or any other Asian or European power. Joseph Cook, for example, argued in his first speech

Courier, (18 September 1905) cited in Greenwood and Grimshaw, *Documents*, pp.332 and 333 respectively.

3   The *Adelaide Register*, 29 July 1905, ibid., p.331.

4   N. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific 1901-1914* (Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976), p.122.

5   J. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence, 1918-1937*, p.8.

6   There is an excellent summation of changing Australian perceptions of the United States after the Russo-Japanese War in Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, pp.8-19.

7   Stargadt, *Australia's Asian Policies*, p.126.

on defence to the Parliament that the danger of invasion to Australia was remote:

> We are away from Europe, and the balance of power is so even amongst the nations that no one of them could afford to send a marauding army here to despoil us ... With regard to the East, I have no such fear as some others entertain, that we are likely to be attacked by Japan.[8]

King O'Malley, the American-born Tasmanian Labor Member of the House of Representatives, was even more to the point in this typically colourful and irreverent comment:

> When I lived in Mexico, I heard the same cry that I hear now in Australia, 'Somebody is going to invade us.' We cannot tell which nation it is, but surely some nation is coming. Ever since I have been in Australia, a period of thirteen years ... I have heard the same cry of 'an invasion', but the only invasions that I ever read of are invasions of rabbits.[9]

The Early Official Threat Assessments

Compared with some of the political and press rhetoric, the first official 'threat assessment' undertaken by the fledgling Australian nation, in 1901, is a relatively sober and objective document which supported the arguments of men like Cook and O'Malley that there was no imminent threat of invasion. Written by Major General Hutton, General Officer Commanding the Australian Military Forces, the assessment was presented to the Government shortly after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in April 1902. Hutton concluded that world events had increased Australia's vulnerability, because of Japan's rise to prominence 'as a first rate military power'. However, in contrast to the alarmist, and often wildly innaccurate public speculation about Japan's ability and desire to threaten Australia,

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8   Speech by Joseph Cook, Free Trade Member for Paramatta, *CPD*, House of Representatives, vol.iii, p.3529, 7 August 1901.

9   Speech by King O'Malley, ibid., p.3532.

Hutton noted that Australia's geographical remoteness rendered it less likely to attack and aggression from foreign powers than any other part of the Empire.[10] The British navy afforded Australia a guarantee of protection against potential enemies, and the maintenance of British supremacy at sea was seen as vital to the security of the whole British Empire.

Hutton argued that 'overseas aggression' against Australia could be conducted either by a small raiding party supported by cruisers, or a large, well-equipped invasion force, escorted by a major fleet. However, due to the formidable strategic and political obstacles posed by a full-scale invasion, Hutton thought that foreign aggression against Australia would probably be limited to 'raids by an enemy's cruisers based in his defended ports. Such raids might be undertaken to extort an indemnity under threat of bombardment, or to destroy commerce, or obtain coal ...'.[11]

In the light of technological progress and far-reaching changes to the strategic balance of power in the Far East, Hutton recommended that Australia should make provision 'not only to defend her own soil, but to take steps also to defend those vast interests beyond her shores upon the maintenance of which her present existence and her future prosperity must so largely depend'. This would require Australian Garrison and Field Forces, the latter capable of 'undertaking military operations in whatever part of the world it may be desired by Australia to employ them'.[12] Some of Hutton's themes were taken up by Prime Minister Edmund Barton in a speech to Parliament which emphasised the need to centralise control over the disposition of all British naval forces:

> I have explained that the French have collected a strong Squadron in the Eastern Seas ... Russia has massed not merely a strong squadron, but a mighty fleet in the Eastern Seas, and in the China Station

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10   Minute Upon the Defence of Australia by Major General E. T. Hutton, First Commandant of Australia's Military Forces, to Minister for Defence, 7 April 1902. Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.129 -130.

11   ibid., p. 130.

12   ibid., p. 131.

today she has, all told, a fleet of some 69 vessels. With a success gained by concentration in those waters, our fear begins ... Our danger is to be feared from a raid by hostile cruisers, which, after some success, even a temporary one, in the dominion of the Seas, may be set free to descend upon our commerce and ourselves.[13]

Throughout this period, Australia's politicians and strategists gave pre-eminence to the maintenance of naval supremacy over the maritime approaches to Australia and Australia's sea lines of communication. A naval assessment written in 1907 for Prime Minister Alfred Deakin by the Director of Naval Forces, Captain W.R. Creswell, stated that in regard to Australia, 'immunity from attack is in direct proportion to the strength and efficiency of Naval Defence'. Creswell considered the 'present conditions and dangers' to Australia and concluded that, due to Australia's dependence upon sea-carriage and open coastal routes, uninterrupted sea-carriage was essential to the nation's security, and was a 'condition peculiar to Australia'. 'Other British possessions', he observed,'less in extent and served by internal lines of communication, would only be inconvenienced by threatening coastal routes. Australia, wherever her coast routes are closed, must stop work'.[14]

While Germany was seen as the primary threat to Australia prior to the Russo-Japanese War, the Cresswell assessment acknowledged the rising military capability of Japan by considering, for the first time, the possibility of attacks from a combination of European and Asian powers, or from Asian nations alone.[15] The Cresswell assessment also expressed the view that Australia's defence policy 'should be from this day forward centred on self sufficiency in every detail ...'.[16]

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[13] Speech by Prime Minister Edmund Barton, *CPD*, House of Representatives, vol.xiv, p. 1791, 7 July 1903.

[14] Assessment prepared by Director of Naval Forces, Captain W.R. Creswell, in a confidential memorandum to Prime Minister Alfred Deakin on 6 March 1907. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.165.

[15] ibid., p.166.

[16] ibid., p.167. Deakin had already determined to expand the navy and to deploy it in Australian waters contrary to the wishes of the

Apart from the assessments written by Hutton and Creswell, the one other strategic prognosis of note prior to the First World War was the Memorandum on the Defence of Australia prepared by Field Marshall Kitchener in 1910 for the Australian Government. Kitchener's Memorandum was mainly concerned with the organisation of Australia's military forces, following the enactment of the Defence Bill of 1909. However, Kitchener briefly considered the strategic factors relevant to Australia's defence and cautioned against over-reliance on British naval supremacy, because considerations of time and space might not permit the British Navy to establish local superiority over an actual or potential enemy. Kitchener advised that it was the duty 'of all self-governing Dominions to provide a military force adequate, not only to deal promptly with any attempt at invasion, but also to insure local safety and public confidence until our superiority at sea has been decisively and comprehensively asserted'.[17]

Ambivalence Towards Japan

As tensions in Europe increased, Australian apprehensions about Japan remained undiminished, notwithstanding the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1911. Senator Pearce, the Minister for Defence in the Fisher Labor Government, confided in 1911 to the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, that there was continuing nervousness in Australia about the Japanese, despite the passing of the

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British Admiralty, which wanted Australia to contribute financially to the British Navy and not build a navy of its own. In an address to Parliament on 13 December 1907, Deakin pointed out that Australia was no longer outside the area of major world conflict. Its wealth had to be protected, and the first line of defence was the Royal Navy. He proposed, however, a naval force 'Australian in character' to serve on Australian vessels on the local station with its members then to pass into other ships of the Royal Navy and continue training elsewhere. T.B. Millar, *Australia's Defence* (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965), pp.12-13.

17   Extract from the Memorandum on the Defence of Australia by Field Marshal, Viscount Kitchener, 12 February 1910. Greenwood and Grimshaw, *Documents*, p.251.

1902 Immigration Act, and there was also a feeling in Australia that 'it degraded the position of the Empire' to enter into an alliance with an Asiatic country like Japan.[18]

In fact there was a significant difference of opinion between Australia and Britain about the security guarantees provided by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the nature of the threat represented by Japan. The British regarded the Alliance with Japan, combined with their own naval strength, as a more than adequate guarantee of Australia's security. A significant number of Australians, however, continued to be distrustful of Japan and doubted whether the formal obligations of the Treaty with Britain would prevent Japan from pursuing policies in the region inimical to Australia, if Tokyo considered that her vital interests were at stake. This led to a dispute between Canberra and London about the best way to obtain adequate naval protection for Australia. Canberra argued strongly for the formation of a British Pacific Fleet while London felt that Australia should contribute its naval forces to the North Sea to augment the British fleet.

The Threat from Germany

Growing tensions between Britain and Germany in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War exacerbated Australian *angst* about the presence of a German colony on its doorstep in New Guinea. Australia still deeply resented Britain's decision to permit Germany to retain a presence in New Guinea, as a result of the Anglo–German Agreement of 1886,[19] and from time to time there were outbursts of anti-German feeling because of the commercial and imperial policies pursued by Berlin in the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon Islands, which were regarded as anathema to Australian interests.[20]

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18   Cited in Stargadt, *Australia's Asian Policies*, p.123.

19   See speech by Prime Minister Alfred Deakin at the Colonial Conference, 9 May 1907. Greenwood and Grimshaw, *Documents*, pp.457-460.

20   For example, by Senator Staniforth Smith's speech in the Senate, 24 November 1904, ibid., pp.536-537.

As war approached, many Australians thought that Germany might use its Pacific Squadron as a base for raiding Australian cities and threatening Australia's sea-borne trade.[21] Australia's official First World War historian, C.W. Bean, regarded the local danger from Germany as minor, pointing out that:

> The Germans had only slightly developed New Guinea, it possessed no landforce except a few volunteers, and the German naval squadron in the Pacific, based on the German port of Tsingtao in China, was not powerful enough to raise serious fears in view of the protection that could fairly soon be brought to all British territories by the British Navy - and, as part of it, the Australian squadron.[22]

Nevertheless, in Australia the perception persisted that the German presence in the Pacific, especially in New Guinea, was detrimental to Australian security. The outbreak of the First World War fuelled speculation that a German victory over Britain would fundamentally prejudice Australia's security, to the point of eventual subjugation by Berlin.[23] Canberra responded with impressive alacrity to a telegram from London on 6 August 1914, inviting Australia 'to seize German wireless stations at New Guinea, Yap in the Marshall Islands, and Nauru'.[24] Only twelve days later, a Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, consisting of 1,500 volunteers, left Sydney under the command of Colonel William Holmes. After several minor skirmishes with the heavily outnumbered and outgunned German garrison forces, the Australians occupied Rabaul, the administrative centre for Germany's Southwest Pacific territories.[25] By 17 September 1914, Holmes had forced the German Acting Governor Haber to sign

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21   C. W. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens: A Shorter History of the Australian Fighting Services in the First World War* (Halstead Press, Sydney, 1968, fifth edn), p.2.

22   ibid.

23   W. Hudson and M. Sharp, *Australian Independence: Colony to Reluctant Kingdom* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1988), p.49.

24   Cited in C.D. Rowley, *The Australians in German New Guinea, 1914-1921* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1958), p.2.

25   ibid.

the Terms of Capitulation, which gained for the Commonwealth the surrender of all German possessions north and south of the equator which had been administered from Rabaul, and a cessation of hostilities.[26]

The German Pacific Squadron, which had been the subject of considerable Australian anxiety, had in fact steamed for South America in August, after initially hiding at Panape in the Caroline Islands, some 950 miles northeast of Rabaul.[27] The Commander of the German Squadron, Admiral von Spee, had ordered two of his merchant cruisers to combine in attacking trade routes in West Australian waters. However, the German ships were unable to do so and after an abortive attempt to raid coastal shipping routes in eastern Australia,[28] they departed the scene. Further German raids were carried out in the Pacific islands, and on allied shipping near Penang, Malaya, but after the German light cruiser *Emden* was sunk by the Australian cruiser *Sydney*, on 9 November near Cocos Island,[29] the threat of further raids against the Australian coast and trade routes quickly evaporated.

With the objectivity and clarity permitted by hindsight, Australia's fear that German territorial expansion in the Pacific might eventually lead to subjugation by Germany was clearly misplaced, given the strength of the forces assayed against Germany, its relatively weak navy and its consequent limited ability to project power into distant areas such as the Pacific. However, the depth of feeling against Germany was such that it tended to discourage dispassionate analysis. Moreover, there was a widespread conviction in Australia that she had not only special interests, but also special rights, in the Southwest Pacific. This led to increasing calls for an Australian 'Monroe Doctrine' in the early 1900s, in which it was argued that Australia should lay claim to dominion over 'all the islands of Oceania'.[30] In

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26 ibid., p.4.

27 Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p.30.

28 ibid., p.38.

29 ibid., pp.60-61.

30 Greenwood and Grimshaw, *Documents*, p.461. King O'Malley, elected as a Labor representative in 1903, adopted a decidedly Messianic tone in proclaiming that 'by natural geographical

1909, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin attempted to give substance to the Australian Monroe Doctrine by constructing a Pacific pact, clearly aimed at restricting or eliminating German and Japanese influence in the Pacific. However the major powers declined to provide the guarantees sought by Australia and the proposal lapsed.[31]

The Japanese Problem and the German Pacific Colonies

After an initial burst of war hysteria directed mainly at the putative German threat, Australia began to see opportunities for annexing the German Pacific colonies. Japan was also quick to grasp the consequences of Germany's diminishing capacity to protect its distant Pacific colonies, and in late 1914 she occupied them, much to Australia's consternation. Britain, preoccupied with the war in Europe and unwilling to risk a quarrel with its ally Japan over what was regarded in London as a peripheral matter, attempted to allay Australian concerns and prepare Australia for the probability that Japan would remain in occupation of the German colonies north of the equator.[32]

However, the Australian Government's concern was such that in 1915 the External Affairs Department prepared a draft letter to be sent to London setting out Australia's position on the German North Pacific colonies, specifically the Marshall, Caroline, Marianne and Pelew groups of islands. These islands, according to the Department, were surrendered to the Australian Expeditionary Force by virtue of its occupation of Rabaul on 17 September 1914, which was acknowledged as 'the seat of Government of the German Pacific Possessions'. The essence of the Australian position, as argued to

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conditions the controlling destiny of the islands of the Southern Seas is sacredly vested in the Australian people', ibid., p.xci.

31 Confidential letter, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin to Lord Crewe, British Colonial Secretary, 27 September 1909, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.187. See also Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p.20.

32 See letter from Lewis Harcourt, British Colonial Secretary to the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, 6 December 1914. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.223.

London, was that the Japanese were only in 'temporary occupation of the Islands to the north of the Equator' and that in any final arrangement for their disposal Australian claims ought to be fully taken into account.[33] In April 1916, Hughes informed acting Prime Minister George Pearce that he had advised British Foreign Secretary Grey that Australia 'was prepared to consider favourably the Equator as a line of demarcation' between Australian and Japanese claims to the German Pacific colonies.[34]

The issue of the German Pacific colonies was revived by Prime Minister Hughes on the eve of the armistice in November 1918. Hughes, who was in London, wrote to British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, to remind him of 'Australia's deeply rooted mistrust of Japan, and to enter an emphatic protest ... against Japan's right or even claim' to the Marshall, Caroline and Ladrone groups of islands. Hughes also set out the strategic significance of the islands in the following terms:

> The islands are most important to Australia from the point of view of both defence and of possible offence. They contain many harbours, several of which are capable of holding very large fleets. In British hands the island could be provided with wireless stations and would serve as advance bases for aeroplane and sea plane patrol ... Truk, in the centre of the Carolines, is about 1,700 miles from Townsville, Queensland. It is 1,920 miles from Yokohama. An air patrol based in

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33   Draft letter, classified secret, from Hugh McMahon, Minister for External Affairs, to the Governor General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, 20 February 1915. The letter was not sent because of the unsympathetic attitude of the British Government. ibid., pp.226-227.

34   ibid. The depth of Hughes's feeling about the failings of the imperial system, specifically the lack of attention devoted to the concerns of the Dominions by Britain, is very evident in this letter. Hughes told Pearce: 'Something must be said on this vitally important matter ... the present system under which the Parliament of Great Britain determines our destiny - we having no voice, [can not] continue ... Please put this view before the Government and cable me immediately'. ibid., p.235.

these islands would enable Australia to obtain the following information in the event of an attack from the North:

a.   Direction of attack ...
b.   Probable date of arrival of hostile forces off Australia
c.   Strength of enemy forces ...

If on the other hand, these islands were in foreign hands, ... the islands would afford to the enemy all the advantages already mentioned ...[35]

Hughes went on to question the motives of Japan in Siberia and the Pacific, concluding:

[that] Australia profoundly distrusts Japan, that its national welfare and its trade alike are seriously menaced by Japan. The recognition of Japan's claims to these islands will enable her to pursue much more effectively her policy which is directed towards securing for herself the trade which Britain and Australia have built up.[36]

Japanese expansionism in the Pacific was only part of the reason for the growth of anti-Japanese sentiment in Australia. The 'Japanese problem', as it was euphemistically referred to by Prime Minister Hughes, had three aspects. First, there was Japan's attempt to abolish or modify Australia's alien restriction legislation.   Second, there was Japanese pressure for Australia to accede to the Commercial Treaty signed with Britain. Third, there was the question of Japanese control of the Pacific.   While Hughes was adamantly opposed to concessions on the immigration and commercial questions, he had

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35   Letter, classified secret, from Prime Minister William Hughes to British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, 4 November 1918. The letter was provoked by a Japanese article reprinted in *The Times* on the eve of the armistice, written by the Marquis Okuma, who was   Japanese Prime Minister in 1914. Okuma set out the reasons why Japan should continue to occupy the Marshall, Caroline and Ladrone Islands. ibid., pp. 260-262.

36   ibid., p.262.

little choice but to recognise the *de facto* Japanese possession of the German North Pacific colonies.[37]

Australian Attitudes towards Japan in the 1920s

The end of the First World War ushered in a new international order in which the Powers least affected by the devastation of the war, primarily the United States and Japan, occupied more prominent positions in the hierarchy of states at the expense of the largely exhausted European protagonists. The Australian Government decided that a major review of Australia's strategic circumstances was required and commissioned two reports, one by the British Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe, in 1919, and the other by a senior Australian Army officer, Lieutenant General Harry Chauvel, in the following year.

Jellicoe identified Japan as a potential threat to Australia and 'saw the future course of Japanese planning to include an invasion of Australia, the seizure of New Guinea or the Dutch East Indies, a decisive sea action and concurrent thrusts at the British bases of Hong Kong and Singapore'.[38] In Jellicoe's view, a substantial joint Australian-British fleet, based in the Pacific, was essential to Australia's security.[39] In February 1920, Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel submitted 'The Report of the Conference of Senior Officers' to Minister for Defence, George Pearce, remarking in familiar terms on the geostrategic vulnerabilities of Australia, resulting from her extended coastline, small population and White Australia policy, which Chauvel believed 'could become a *casus belli* for a hostile nation'.[40]

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37 Letter, classified confidential, from Prime Minister Hughes to Acting Prime Minister, Senator George Pearce, 21 April 1916. ibid., p.234.

38 'Report of Admiral of the Fleet, Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia'. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence, 1918-1937*, p.8.

39 ibid.

40 Memorandum, Lieutenant General H.G. Chauvel, Chairman of the Conference of Senior Military Officers, to Senator George

Chauvel's report considered potential threats from the United States and Japan,[41] noting that the British were justified in excluding war with the United States as a probability to be guarded against. However, Japan was seen as remaining, 'in the immediate future, as the only potential and probable enemy',[42] particularly as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which had proved effective in neutralising the Japanese threat for some two decades, was due to lapse in 1920.

The Chauvel report assessed that British naval supremacy remained the linch-pin of Australia's security, but conceded that Japan would have a temporary sea command of the Pacific Ocean and might be able to retain that command to delay, 'almost vitally, the arrival of help in Australia', and to successfully land troops at almost any place in the Australian coast.[43] This highlighted the need for a 'strong Far Eastern Naval Unit properly based', to which Australia should contribute as a first priority. The report also echoed one of the themes of the earlier Creswell assessment, that while Australia derived strength beyond its own limited capabilities from its membership of the British Empire, 'in the event of a serious attack by Japan ... being made, Australia for an appreciable and anxious period, must rely on her own resources ...'.[44]

While Australian attitudes towards Japan in the 1920s continued to be dominated by fear, hostility and suspicion, there were some who took a less apocalyptic view, contending that the threat from Japan was exaggerated, and without real substance. The arguments used to support this position were essentially the same as those advanced some twenty years earlier by the Labor politician, Frank Anstey. One of the more informed and articulate proponents of

Pearce, Minister for Defence, 6 February 1920. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.294.

41   The European powers were dismissed as immediate threats because of the debilitating and destructive effects of the war. ibid., p.293.

42   ibid.

43   ibid., p.294.

44   ibid., p.295. An abbreviated version of the assessment contained in Chauvel's Report appears in the minutes, classified secret, of a meeting between the Naval and Defence Departments on 10 February 1920. ibid., pp.296-298.

what was still a minority view was E.L. Piesse, who was at the time Director of the Pacific Branch of the Prime Minister's Department.[45] Writing in 1926, Piesse said that 'there is little or nothing in the past conduct of Japan to support the view, which many Australians hold, that she will challenge the White Australia policy and that she envisages the future domination of Australia'.[46]

The Piesse view reflected the optimistic British strategic assessments immediately after the First World War, such as the British Cabinet's declaration in 1919, which assumed 'that the British empire will not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years ...'.[47] In 1925, the Committee for Imperial Defence specifically extended the ten-year no threat prognosis to Japan, assessing that 'in the existing circumstances aggressive action on the part of Japan is not a contingency seriously to be considered'.[48]

The Changing Balance of Power in the Pacific

While these assessments had undeniable credibility in the decade following the end of the First World War, by the early 1930s their central assumptions had been invalidated by the dramatic changes in the Pacific strategic balance. These included the emergence of Japan as a major military and economic power, the retreat of the United States into isolationism, and the palpable decline of British naval strength. Following the creation of the puppet state of Manchukuo by Japan and the despatch of an expeditionary force to Shanghai in February 1932, the ten-year no threat ruling was revoked

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45 The Pacific Branch of the Prime Minister's Department was established by the government in May 1919, to acquire and evaluate intelligence on 'the affairs of the countries of the Far East and of the Pacific' insofar as they might affect Australia. Cited in Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p.41.

46 M.L. Piesse, 'Japan and Australia', *Foreign Affairs*, vol.iv, April 1926; Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.354-356.

47 Note by N.Hankey, Secretary to the Committee for Imperial Defence on the Basis of the Service Estimates, 2 July 1928. Cited in McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence*, p.19.

48 ibid.

by Britain and the Committee which dealt with the Far East declared in prophetic terms:

> The assumption that there would be no major war for ten years was contrary to the lessons of history, had no counterpart in any foreign country and had produced dangerous results: notably, in the Far East, a situation wherein one could not count on being able to bring British sea power to bear in time to avert the direct consequences in the event of aggression by Japan ...[49]

This provoked an Australian reassessment, in which even those who had been dismissive of the view that Japan sought suzerainty over the region began to accept that Australia should rearm and face the possibility of war with Japan. At the same time, the Lyons Government continued to seek an accommodation with Japan in order to give 'her no excuse to adopt an aggressive policy vis-a-vis the Commonwealth ...'.[50]

In a particularly lucid and perceptive political and strategic analysis, written in 1935, Piesse again reviewed Australian-Japanese relations and concluded that Japan was likely to extend her empire southwards towards Australia. While this did not mean that she intended to annex Australia (indeed, said Piesse, Japan had never evinced much interest in the Southern Continent) it would be unwise of Australia not to plan for the possibility that the military lobby in Japan might seize upon a minor issue, such as the White Australia policy, as a pretext for attacking Australia. Accordingly, plans for the defence of Australia should be made 'in the expectation, not that the British Navy will be available after local means of defence have served us for a few months, but that we shall have to rely solely and finally on our own resources and preparations ...'. Piesse dismissed the hopes of those who sought to enlist the assistance of the Americans: 'Australia has little reason to expect that America would interest herself in any

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49   ibid., p.20.

50   Prime Minister J.A. Lyons, during conversation with United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Canberra, July 1935. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.397. See also assessment by Hughes, ibid., pp.397-399.

quarrel Japan might have with us ...'.[51] He could not, of course, have foreseen Pearl Harbor.

The 1937 Imperial Conference

In 1936, the Australian Government began planning for the forthcoming Imperial Conference, which was to be held in London from 14 May to 15 June 1937. The 1937 Imperial Conference marked the beginning of a watershed period in Australian defence and foreign policy. Not only was it the last Imperial Conference held before the outbreak of the Second World War, it was also agreed that the major concerns of the conference would be foreign affairs and defence, although there would be some discussion of economic, constitutional and legal matters.[52] In preparing for the conference, the Australian delegation conducted probably the most thorough and comprehensive review ever taken of Australia's external policies to that time, resulting in over twenty memoranda on foreign affairs, and twenty on defence.[53]

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51   E. L. Piesse, Former Director of the Pacific Branch of the Prime Minister's Department, writing under the pseudonym 'Albatross' in 1935. ibid., pp. 399-402. Piesse's considered analysis contrasts with other, more emotive outpourings about Japan. See, for example, an article by Erle Cox, a journalist and writer, in the novel *Fool's Harvest*, published in 1939, ibid., pp.446-450.

52   R.G. Neale (ed.) for Department of Foreign Affairs, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy, 1937-1949*, vol.1: *1937-38* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975), p.6. (Hereafter referred to as Neale (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*.) The Australian delegates were Prime Minister J.A. Lyons, Minister for Defence, Sir Archdale Parkhill, Treasurer R.G. Casey, and the High Commissioner in London, S.M. Bruce.

53   See ibid., pp. 8-9 for a summary of the memoranda. In terms of assessing the threat to Australia, the most important documents are those entitled 'The German Colonies'; 'Unoccupied Islands in the Pacific'; 'The Strategical Importance of the Pacific Islands'; 'The Political and Strategical Considerations Relating to Imperial and Local Defence'; and 'Problems Relating to the Basis of

Australia's overriding concern with the threat from Japan is evident in the summary of the twenty defence papers sent to the Secretary of the Committee for Imperial Defence, Sir Maurice Hankey, on 28 April 1937.[54] The opening paragraph reads:

> The Commonwealth Government [of Australia] desires a review of the political and strategical position relating to Imperial and Local Defence in the light of the present international situation and the Foreign and Defence Policies of the United Kingdom Government. The review would lead to a definition of the political aim in peace, in the Pacific Region, and hence the strategical object of Empire Forces in the event of -
>
> (i)   War against Japan and another first-class Power simultaneously
>
> (ii)   War against Japan only.[55]

Japanese territorial incursions, both real and potential, were the subject of one of the key memoranda submitted by the Department of External Affairs. The Department observed that 'until recently, the question of the ownership of the small islands lying off the coast of Australia had not previously been of any great significance to the Commonwealth', but the activities of the Japanese along the Queensland and northern Australian coasts,[56] and the Dutch East Indies and the Western Pacific islands generally, were causing considerable uneasiness.[57]   The Department argued that it was

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Australian Defence Policy' - the latter actually a series of papers, which are the forerunners of today's Strategic Basis Papers.

54   The Summary was sent to Hankey by the Minister for Defence, Sir Archdale Parkhill. ibid., p.56.

55   Extract from Paper No.1, 'The Political and Strategical Considerations Relating to Imperial and Local Defence'. ibid.

56   The activities referred to included intrusions by Japanese pearling boats, particularly in the area around Darwin, and heightened Japanese interest in the iron ore deposits at Yampi Sound. See ibid., pp.59-61.

57   Australia believed that Japan had designs on Timor and that, if Japan were successful in establishing a base there, Australia's communications   and   links   with   Singapore   and   the

therefore essential for Australia to gain effective control of these islands because they could be used 'as bases and sources of fuel and water supply'.[58] The memorandum also drew attention to Japanese trawling activities on 'a large scale in Australian waters'.[59]

Another area of concern was the demand by Germany for the return of its former Pacific colonies which, according to the Department, had resulted in greater international interest in the whole question of unoccupied or unannexed islands, 'even those having no value'.[60] In fact the question of Germany's claims to its former Pacific colonies was considered sufficiently important to warrant its own discussion paper, in which it was concluded that these islands were of paramount importance to Australia.

The Department of External Affairs advanced three arguments in support of this conclusion. First, if Germany were to successfully reclaim her colonies she could use them to justify an increase in her navy by arguing that she had to protect distant colonies and long sea lines of communication. This in turn would effectively restrict the size of the British naval forces which could be sent to the Pacific, or Far East, in the event of hostilities.[61] Second, if Germany were to return to the Pacific, Australia would once again have her as a near neighbour, which was undesirable and disturbing, as Germany had not been 'a good neighbour in the past'. Third, the return of Germany to New Guinea would raise the possibility of having military bases in close proximity to Australia, and would bring Australia 'face to face with the conditions prior to 1914, but in an accentuated form owing to the development of the air arm'. This would engender 'a feeling of constant disquiet and insecurity' in Australia.[62]

Commonwealth would be at serious risk. See J. Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed* (The Jacaranda Press, Queensland,1983), p.124.

58 Neale (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*, p.14.

59 ibid., p.15.

60 ibid.

61 Memorandum entitled 'Germany - Question of Colonies', prepared by Department of External Affairs, ibid., p.12. At that time, German naval strength was limited by the terms of the Anglo-German Treaty to 35 per cent of British naval strength.

62 ibid., pp.12-13.

Australian concerns about the strategic vulnerability of the Pacific islands to its north and northeast, were far more soundly based in the prevailing international climate than they had been in the period immediately prior to the First World War. Japan was a substantially stronger and demonstrably more expansionist power that it had been in 1912 and 1913, while conversely the British Navy's force projection capability had diminished markedly in the inter-war years. Moreover, there was no Anglo-Japanese Alliance to provide a guarantee of Japanese neutrality in the event of a European war. In fact, by 1937, a German-Japanese pact was already in prospect, and Japan clearly had the capacity to seriously challenge the *status quo* in the Pacific.

The Singapore Strategy

Australian anxiety about its increasingly vulnerable strategic position focused on Britain's plans to construct a naval base at Singapore, which was the subject of considerable discussion at the 1937 Imperial Conference. Singapore was central to Australian and British defence planning in the Asia-Pacific region in the inter-war years. At the 1923 Imperial Conference, which determined 'the basic principles of Australian defence policy'[63] for almost two decades, a resolution was passed which provided for the development of a major naval base at Singapore deemed 'essential for ensuring the mobility necessary to provide for the security of the territories and trade of the Empire in Eastern Waters'.[64] However, it was not until the mid-1930s, when the storm clouds of war were again building in Europe and Asia, that serious attention was devoted to the task of completing the base.

By 1935, fears were already being expressed in Australia that the Singapore strategy was seriously flawed. Former Prime Minister Hughes frequently proclaimed, in his ascerbic way, that Britain was no longer mistress of the seas, that the Singapore base was still incomplete and that there was no guarantee that the British Navy could reach the Pacific in time to defend Australia, even if the main fleet could deploy from its principal area of operation in the Atlantic and

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63   P. Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941* (Halstead Press, Sydney,1965), p.17.

64   Resolution 4(a) of the 1923 Imperial Conference, ibid.

Mediterranean.[65] Several senior Australian Army officers, with an admittedly vested interest in criticising a naval-based defence strategy, predicted with impressive perspicacity that Japan would attack when the British navy was preoccupied, Singapore would fall, and that Japan would make a direct attack on Australia.[66]

Given these doubts, it is not surprising that the Australian delegation to the 1937 Imperial Conference voiced similar concerns about the Singapore strategy, noting that the British position in the Far East *vis-à-vis* Japan was unsatisfactory, due to the time required for new naval construction at Singapore[67] and the nature and scale of possible Japanese military operations against Australia.[68] The Australians also questioned the validity of the British assertion that the British Main Fleet would arrive at Singapore 'with a minimum of delay, after the outbreak of War in the Far East'.[69]

The British, for their part, assured the Australians that Japan was unlikely to mount a major invasion of Australia in the event of war, although limited raids on the northern coastline might be expected.[70] With breathtaking lack of vision, the Committee for Imperial Defence informed sceptical Australian defence analysts that the presence of Japanese aircraft in Australian waters was unlikely,

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65   ibid., p.45.

66   ibid., p.47.

67   Extract from Paper No.3, 'Problems Relating to the Basis of Australian Defence Policy', No.1 - Priority of Provision for Defence and the Time Factor. Neale (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*, p.58.

68   Extract from Paper No.4, 'Problems Relating to the Basis of Australian Defence Policy', No.3, 'Defence Against Invasion', ibid.

69   ibid., p.59. The phrase 'minimum of delay', according to Neale, was probably within a period of 42 days after the outbreak of war.

70   See Churchill's Memorandum of 21 November 1939, in J. Robertson and J. McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy, 1939-1945: A Documentary History* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985), Document 112, p.144.

and therefore that 'defence against organised air attack from carrier borne aircraft' was unnecessary.[71]

In response to a query from Stanley Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner to London, the British Chiefs-of-Staff affirmed in March 1938 that adequate stores would be built up at Singapore and that the British 'Fleet could be expected to arrive at latest in 70 days'.[72] Given its traditional reliance on British military strength for protection, and lacking an independent intelligence capability, Australia had little choice but to accept British assurances. When war with Germany erupted, Australia committed the bulk of its ground forces to the European and Middle East theatres, although elements of the 8th Division were sent to Singapore in February 1941.[73]

War in the Pacific

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and the sinking of the British cruiser *Repulse* and the battleship *Prince of Wales*, dramatically altered the strategic equation in the Pacific. The subsequent fall of Singapore to a brilliantly planned and executed campaign by the Japanese Army conclusively demonstrated the conceptual and operational weaknesses of Britain's Singapore strategy and for the first time exposed Australia to the very real threat of attack by a foreign power.

Ironically, despite almost fifty years of often exaggerated and misplaced fears of a Japanese attack, when Japanese military forces posed a genuine threat to Australia's trade routes and lines of communications in late 1941, Australia's political and military leaders had taken few concrete steps to defend the approaches to the

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71   P. Donovan, 'History of the Northern Territory' in D. Ball and J. Langtry (eds), *The Northern Territory in the Defence of Australia: Geography, History, Economy, Infrastructure and Defence Presence*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No.63 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1990), p.76.

72   Robertson and McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy, 1939-1945*, Document 110, p.140.

73   ibid., Document 123, p.157.

continent. Nor had they planned for a land campaign in Australia,[74] or developed the more self-reliant defence posture advocated as early as 1907, in the Creswell Report, and in the 1930s, by Hughes and others. British and Australian intelligence assessements also grossly underestimated the strength of a possible Japanese strike against Australia.   For example, in 1937, a report of the Australian Joint Services Subcommittee assessed that any land attack against Darwin would be one by about 1,000 men from sampans, unaccompanied by artillery and armed solely with rifles and light automatics. Darwin's defences were built accordingly.[75] Australian defence thinking until 1941, in Hasluck's words, remained 'inseparably bound up with Empire defence, and plans for Australian security were inseparable from the plans for the security of the Empire as a whole'.[76] Unfortunately, Australia ranked as a low priority in Empire defence, and this was reflected in the totally inadequate preparness for the defence of the continent.

Japan's War Objectives and Allied Assessments

In early 1942, Australia entered the nadir of its brief and, until then, uniquely secure nationhood. Japanese bombing of Darwin

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74   ibid., p.257. According to Donovan, 'it was 18 December 1941, a fortnight after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, before an Allied conference was organised in Singapore to consider the coordination of defensive efforts in the South West Pacific, and the end of December before there was agreement on the creation of the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command under Britain's General Sir Archibald Wavell. Australia was not included in the ABDA area until 23 January 1942'. Donovan, 'History of the Northern Territory', p.89.

75   Donovan,'History of the Northern Territory', p.78. Although the 1937 Imperial Conference had confirmed that the Navy was to have the central role in defending Australia and that Darwin was to be the 'Southeastern base of the Malay Barrier balancing that of Singapore', little action was taken to give effect or substance to this policy. ibid., p.79.

76   Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, p.61.

commenced in February 1942, and by March the country was bracing itself for a major Japanese assault. However, there was a considerable range of opinion as to the form and strength a Japanese attack would take. At one end of the spectrum were the vast majority of ordinary Australian men and women who feared a full-scale invasion, a not unreasonable assumption given the audacity and speed of the Japanese southward advance, and the 'air of panic or desperation' which 'hung over the Government including the Prime Minister'.[77]

On the other hand, American military intelligence assessments, which greatly influenced the perceptions of the Australian Chiefs-of-Staff, were far more sanguine. On 26 March 1942, the American General Douglas MacArthur, who had just been appointed Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces, South West Pacific Area, presented his threat assessment to the Advisory War Cabinet in Canberra. MacArthur conceded that it was possible the Japanese 'might try to overrun Australia in order to demonstrate their superiority over the white races', but on balance he doubted that the Japanese would undertake a full-scale invasion. MacArthur thought it more likely that they would seek to obtain air bases in northern Australia, and that the main danger was from raids.[78] On 4 April, a joint Australian-US estimate predicted an 'attack on Australia's supply lines and against Australia itself' in the very near future.[79]

A few days later, on 10 April 1942, General Sir Thomas Blamey, the newly installed Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Army, postulated that the vital Newcastle-Melbourne area would not be subjected to attack on a major scale, but that if Japanese forces captured Port Moresby they would probably attempt to land on Australia's northeast coast and advance south covered by land-based aircraft.[80] On 23 April, less than two weeks before the Japanese southward thrust was halted in the Battle of the Coral Sea, thereby relieving pressure on Australia, MacArthur repeated his earlier assessment:

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77   D. Horner, *High Command: Australian and Allied Strategy, 1939-1945* (Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1982), pp.182-183.

78   ibid., p.183.

79   This estimate was produced by MacArthur's headquarters and the Australian Chiefs-of-Staff. ibid.

80   ibid., p.184.

> ... a large scale attack on Australia was possible but
> not probable ... he [MacArthur] did not think a major
> attack was likely ... the enemy's previous operations
> had been designed to achieve definite objectives -
> bases, oil, rubber etc. Moreover, the inhabitants would
> give no assistance to an invader here.[81]

MacArthur's analysis was close to the mark, as can be seen by
an examination of Japan's war objectives prior to the outbreak of
hostilities, and the revised strategic plans of the Japanese General Staff
in early 1942. Japan's 'Basic Plan for the Greater East Asian War' was
formulated in 1938,[82] and the operational objectives were agreed to in
November 1941. The Basic War Plan consisted of three phases, as
follows:

> Phase 1. The seizure and occupation of the Southern Areas,
> defined as the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong, British Malaya,
> Burma, the Bismarck Archipelago, Java, Sumatra, Borneo,
> Celebes and Timor, and the establishment of a secure strategic
> perimeter around the occupied areas.

> Phase 2. The seizure of the Solomon Islands, East New Guinea
> and consolidation of the Southern Areas. This was to be
> completed by November 1942.

> Phase 3. The consolidation of all occupied areas by March
> 1943.[83]

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81   Robertson and McCarthy, *Australian War Strategy, 1939-1945*,
      Document 230, p.275.
82   P. Jennings, 'Coral Sea: The Balancing Act' in A. Preston (ed.),
      Decisive Battles of the Pacific War (A.Q. Publishing Pty Ltd, Lane
      Cove, 1979), p.35.
83   See United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Pacific Naval
      Analysis Division, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War* (Greenwood
      Press, New York, 1969), pp.3, 43, 58 and 78. On 15 August 1945,
      President Truman commissioned a survey to study the effects of
      all types of air attacks in the war against Japan, and this was later
      extended to cover the entire United States air effort, which
      included this particular study by the Pacific Naval Analysis
      Division. The information compiled in the survey was based on

There were no plans to invade Australia at this time, or to establish a major lodgement on Australian soil. However, after the unexpected ease with which the objectives of Phase 1 were achieved, the Japanese military leadership decided to expand Phase 1 to include the seizure of New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa and Port Moresby, in order to isolate Australia by severing her lines of communication with the United States.[84]

It was at this point that Japan, for the first and only time, considered the possibility of invading and occupying Australia. Japanese naval officers favoured an invasion of Australia, with Admiral Yamamoto, the commander of the Japanese strike against Pearl Harbor, arguing that an expeditionary force should be landed on Australia's undefended northern coast to terrorise the continent. He was supported by General Yamashita, the conqueror of Singapore, who felt that it would be feasible to land one division at Darwin and advance down an axis through Alice Springs toward Adelaide and Melbourne. This would be supported by a second division which could leap-frog down the east coast toward Sydney.[85]

However, the Army General Staff rejected this option because of the formidable geographical and logistic problems which would have to be overcome, and because a Japanese invasion force would almost certainly face fierce resistance from the Australian population. The Army General Staff estimated that it would require 12 infantry divisions and 1,500,000 tons of shipping for the Army alone, and that given her existing commitments, 'to suddenly invade Australia, which lies 4,000 nautical miles away, would be a reckless venture, and is beyond Japan's capability'.[86] It was decided therefore, that the most

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the interrogation of more than 700 Japanese military, government, and industrial officers.

84 ibid., pp.3-4. The expanded Phase 1 also involved amphibious attacks against Midway Island and the western Aleutians.

85 D. Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy: How Emperor Hirohito Led Japan into War against the West* (Fletcher and Son, Norwich, 1971), pp.898-899.

86 Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Threats to Australia's Security: Their Nature and Probability* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981), Annex C, p.62. After reviewing the contending arguments, Emperor Hirohito

effective strategy would be to harass and isolate Australia, in the hope that the island continent could be neutralised and perhaps even compelled to sue for peace.[87]

Although Japan suffered an unexpected reverse in the Coral Sea, Japanese strategic assessments continued to express confidence that allied resistance was on the verge of crumbling and that direct military pressure could be maintained on the Australian mainland.[88] However, in the decisive battle of the Pacific War near the island of Midway, the Japanese Navy sustained major losses from which it never recovered. Thereafter, the threat to Australia diminished rapidly, although there was a significant lag in public perceptions of the improvement in Australia's strategic circumstances.

The Search for Regional Security

Despite Japan's comprehensive defeat in 1945, Australians remained obsessed, in the immediate post-war period, by the prospect of a resurgent Japan. While Japan had been defeated, it was clear that Britain would never again rule the seas, as she had done since Captain Phillip first sailed into Botany Bay. For the Chifley Government, the pre-eminent strategic problem was how to obtain a regional pact for the Pacific which would provide the kind of security guarantee once provided by the British Navy. Such an arrangement would clearly have to include the United States as the major Pacific and world power.[89] In order to entice the Americans into a regional security system, Minister for External Affairs Evatt pursued a typically aggressive and forceful approach to the question of military bases in the Pacific, offering Washington joint use of the base on the Australian

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decided to postpone any consideration of invading Australia until after the conquest of Burma. Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, p.899.

87   Jennings,'Coral Sea: The Balancing Act', p.37.
88   United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p.58.
89   See speech by Dr H.V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, 13 March 1946. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.519.

mandate of Manus Island in return for reciprocal Australian access to United States military facilities in the Pacific.[90]

However, the United States refused to be drawn into a multi-lateral defence pact of the kind desired by Evatt, preferring a series of bilateral arrangements with individual countries in the Asia-Pacific region.[91] Britain, on the other hand, was more sympathetic. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in 1946, Australia pressed for a role in planning the defence of the Southwest Pacific and Southeast Asian areas against external attack.[92] Britain acknowledged Australia's concerns by agreeing to give Canberra and Wellington a major role in defence of the so-called ANZAAM region, defined as 'the Australia and New Zealand homelands, the British territories in Malaya and Borneo, together with the adjacent sea areas'.[93]

The new Liberal-Country Party (LCP) Government of Robert Menzies, elected in December 1949, was similarly preoccupied with the notion of a Pacific security pact and equally determined to avert a 'new threat to Australia from the renaissance of a rearmed Japan'.[94] In a major speech on foreign policy, the Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, canvassed the need for a 'regional pact for common defence', noting its historical precedents and the misperceptions which had developed about the meaning and purpose of such a pact.[95] Spender envisaged 'a defensive military arrangement having as its basis a firm agreement between countries that have a vital interest in

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90   ibid., p.519. See also Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, pp.150-154 for a detailed analysis of the issue of allied military bases in the Pacific.

91   Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p.152.

92   Cited in R.J. O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*, vol.1: *Strategy and Diplomacy* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981), p.39.

93   Cited in A. Watt, *Australian Defence Policy, 1951-63: Major International Aspects*, Working Paper No.4 (Department of International Relations, Australian National University, Canberra, 1964), p.53.

94   Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p.150.

95   Speech by P. C. Spender, Minister for External Affairs, 9 March 1950. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.565.

the stability of Asia and the Pacific'.[96]   Spender considered United States participation to be essential, and emphasised that a satisfactory solution of the Japanese problem was of the 'highest importance to Australia'.[97]

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[96]   ibid.

[97]   ibid., p.564.

CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL CONFLICTS:
THE MENACE OF COMMUNISM

By the end of the decade, a new threat had emerged which was to relegate Australia's traditional fear of Japan to the background and provide a major stimulus to Australia's search for a regional security arrangement anchored by the military, economic and political power of the United States. The global competition between the two superpowers of the post-war era, the Soviet Union and the United States, had already impacted on Europe, ushering in a new set of menacing and destabilising politico-strategic tensions. What was even more unsettling, from a Western and Australian global viewpoint, was the militant nature of the communist ideology espoused by the Soviet Union and its allies, which appeared to challenge the very basis of democratic order and the norms of international conduct to which Australia adhered.

The Chifley Labor Government considered communist imperialism to be a growing danger, but avoided holding communism exclusively responsible for the instability and unrest which seemed to be threatening the Far East as well as Europe.[1] Evatt, while still Minister for External Affairs, questioned whether a communist victory would automatically place China under Soviet domination, and argued that it would be an unfortunate and counter-productive policy to ostracise a communist regime in Beijing, which ought to be encouraged to play a constructive role domestically and internationally.[2]

In this area, the Labor Government's assessment was at variance with that of the United States and the LCP. A State Department evaluation of Australian foreign policy, in June 1949, noted disapprovingly that Australia still adhered to the notion that the principal threat to its security came from Japan rather than the Soviet

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[1] See speech by Dr H. V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, 21 June 1949, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.554.

[2] ibid., pp.554-555.

Union, despite 'expanding Soviet influence in Asia and ... on the direct approaches to Australia through Indonesia and Japan'.[3] Menzies also held a less benign view of communism and the Soviet Union than the Labor Government, a view shared to a certain extent by Spender. From Spender's perspective, the communist victory in China fundamentally altered 'the whole picture in Asia'[4] and highlighted the global dimension of communism. Like Evatt, Spender still harboured hope that democracy and communism might be able to coexist peacefully, but this hope was rudely shattered by the outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950.[5]

The Impact of the Korean War

The Korean War had a number of immediate effects on the external policies of the Menzies Government. First, it convinced Menzies himself, who by sentiment and conviction was Eurocentric in his outlook, that there was a need to focus more on developments in Asia and the Pacific, and to be cognisant of the dangers posed by Asian-sponsored communist movements.[6] Second, it galvanised Spender into pressing for a regional defence pact with the United States, which he regarded as absolutely vital to Australia's future security. Third, the Korean War, in the words of Coral Bell, 'substantially decided the issue of Australian adhesion to US purposes in Asia for twenty two years',[7] and signalled the end of the Japanese threat and its replacement by a seemingly more insidious menace - that of global communism.

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3   American State Department draft evaluation, 6 June 1949, ibid., p.553.
4   Speech by P. C. Spender, Minister for External Affairs, 9 March 1950, ibid., p.559.
5   ibid.
6   Spender later claimed that Menzies did not share his view that Asia was then the area of potential danger, but that events in Korea 'sharpened our views of possible threats to the Pacific area'. Sir Percy Spender, *Exercises in Diplomacy* (Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1969), p.54.
7   C. Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988), p.45.

On 26 June 1950, Spender underlined the importance of Korea to the security of the region:

> ... if southern Korea falls under the domination of Communist imperialism, the strategic picture of Asia as it affects Japan and the whole of the area of the North-West Pacific will undergo a radical change and will increase the dangers to the whole of South and South East Asia.[8]

The following day Menzies elaborated, portraying communist political and military gains as antithetical to Australia's interests and a direct threat to national security. 'The Korean incident', he said, 'cannot be looked at in isolation, nor can we in Australia regard it as remote from our own interests and safety'. Referring to the Indochina conflict and the operations of communist guerrillas in Malaya, Menzies proclaimed that these developments were evidence of 'Communist aggression in Asia, an aggression which is full of menace for us'.[9]

The Assessments of the Department of Defence

While Australian politicians, particularly those of conservative ilk, were inclined towards expansive and often alarmist rhetoric in their warnings about the perils of communist imperialism, official Defence Department assessments presented a significantly calmer and more measured view of international developments and their implications for Australia. Immediately after the war, the Department of Defence adopted the practice of periodically examining Australia's strategic environment in order to provide guidance for the development of the nation's defence force structure and to identify its international objectives.[10] These periodic reviews were based on the formulae first developed in a coherent way at the 1937 Imperial

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8   *Current Notes*, vol.21, no.6, June 1950, p.420. (Hereafter cited as *CN*).

9   ibid., p.421.

10   Submission by the Department of Defence to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, 17 February 1987, vol.II, p.1. (Hereafter cited as Defence Submission to JCFAD).

Conference, and included detailed assessments of notional threats as well as contingency plans for dealing with potential adversaries.

Arguably the most important document produced was what came to be known as the Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, described as 'the genesis of all significant defence decisions'.[11] The Strategic Basis Papers are 'designed to advise government on how threats to Australia might arise' and the implications of these threats for Australia's security.[12] They are endorsed by the Defence Committee, which was described in 1983, by Attorney-General Gareth Evans, as consisting of:

> the most senior and experienced of the Australian Government's advisers in the field of national security. It is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Defence and comprises the Chief of Defence Force Staff, the Chiefs of the three Services and the Secretaries of the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury and Foreign Affairs. The Committee subsequently presents to the Minister for Defence - and he, when he is satisfied, to Cabinet ...[13]

The first of the strategic basis documents for the post-war period was produced in 1946, when the Chifley Government ordered the Defence Committee to review Australia's strategic circumstances. The 1946 Defence Review assessed that Australia was far removed from the potential theatres of war, and emphasised the need for Australia to fulfil its role within the framework of empire cooperation.[14]

Four years later, on the eve of the Korean War, the Department of Defence was less sanguine about the international situation and

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11 Cited in D. Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia: The Strategic Background', Reference Paper No.93 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, April, 1979), p.5. Used with permission of the author.

12 Statement to Parliament by the Attorney General, Senator Gareth Evans, on 10 May,1984. *AFAR*, vol.55, 1984, p.502.

13 ibid.

14 Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.3.

wary of the intentions of the Soviet Union. On 8 and 15 June 1950, the Defence Committee considered a major report entitled 'The Basic Objectives of British Commonwealth Defence Policy and General Strategy'. One of its principal conclusions was that Soviet policy posed a threat to all non-communist nations, which thereby stood in danger of being subjugated one by one, and that if the Soviet Union persisted in this policy, it would lead inevitably to a clash.[15] Any major war in the foreseeable future, the Committee argued, would be global, and the fate of Australia would depend upon the result of conflicts in Europe and the Middle East.[16]

On a more reassuring note, the Committee assessed that Australia was unlikely to be an objective of high strategic priority in Soviet plans and that, provided a line including Malaya and the Philippines was held, no serious air attack could be made on Australia. It also saw no likelihood of an invasion of the mainland, nor did it believe that an increase in subversive activity in Southeast Asia would directly affect Australia's security.[17] Finally, the Defence Committee recommended that contingency plans be drawn up to provide for deployments to the Middle East (at British urging) and Malaya.

Australia's ambivalence about the priorities to be given to the Middle East and Malaya persisted well into the 1950s[18] and was further complicated by the need to respond militarily to the Korean War, which broke out ten days after the Defence Committee's deliberations. This lack of clear strategic priorities, combined with understandable anxiety about over-committing Australia's extremely limited defence resources, partly explains Canberra's initial reluctance to be drawn into the Korean conflict.

However, Spender was quick to realise that the decision by the United States to engage communist forces in Korea presented a unique opportunity to lock Washington into a regional defence arrangement.[19] By first supporting the United States position in the United Nations and then, in Menzies' absence overseas, engineering an announcement

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15   O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*, p.41.

16   ibid.

17   ibid., p.42.

18   ibid.

19   ibid., p.53.

that Australia would commit military forces to Korea,[20] Spender earned considerable gratitude from the Truman administration. The diplomatic and political capital accrued was later cleverly converted by Spender into a down-payment on his most prized diplomatic objective - a United States security guarantee against attacks on Australia's territory.[21]

ANZUS: The Prize

On 14 February 1951, John Foster Dulles arrived in Australia as the principal United States negotiator to discuss the terms of the Japanese Peace Treaty with Australia and New Zealand.   In the negotiations that followed,[22] Spender took the position that Australia could not support the moderate treaty proposed by the United States without first receiving specific guarantees of Australia's security. Spender's persistence paid off and the United States guarantee was delivered in the form of the ANZUS Treaty, the key provision being Article 4. As described by Dulles to General Douglas MacArthur, then Supreme Commander for Allied Powers, Article 4 was seen as

> ... the meat of the treaty. The language is drawn from the Monroe declaration. While it commits each party to take action (presumably go to war) it does not commit any nation to action in any particular part of the world. In other words, the United States can discharge its obligations by action against the common enemy in any way and in any area that it sees fit.[23]

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20   ibid., pp.75-76.
21   Australia's Korean War commitment had bi-partisan political support, and was approved of by 70 per cent of Australians. G. McCormack, *Cold War Hot War: An Australian Perspective on the Korean War* (Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1983), pp.105-106.
22   See Spender's own account in *Exercises in Diplomacy*; and McCormack, *Cold War Hot War*, Chapter 13.
23   Message, classified Top Secret, from J.F. Dulles, the Consultant to the US Secretary of State, to the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (MacArthur), 2 March 1951. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.586.

From the Australian point of view, ANZUS effectively laid to rest the spectre of Japanese militarism,[24] and brought to a close a period of over four decades in which Japan occupied the dominant position in Australia's threat demonology. In its place, however, was the brooding and intimidating presence of Stalin's Russia, espousing the evangelism of a communist ideology which the Menzies Government regarded with ill-concealed anxiety, believing that Australia's own region was at risk.

The Threat of Chinese Communism

By the mid-1950s, Australian concerns about the spread of communism had reached fever pitch, driven by the rhetoric and apparent iconoclasm of the other communist superpower, China. The old fears of Asian threats to the Australian polity reasserted themselves, and there was considerable public speculation about the possibility of Chinese attacks on Malaya, via Indochina and Thailand.[25] Australian strategic assessments in September 1951 dismissed the possibility of any Chinese invasion of Southeast Asia,[26] but worried about Chinese-assisted insurgent movements.

From mid-1952 onward, Australia came to regard 'the security of Malaya as Australia's chief strategic concern'.[27] The 1952 Strategic Basis Paper reflected Australia's new concerns about regional threats, particularly that posed by an aggressive communist China.[28] The Korean War was seen as part of the communist Cold War strategy, 'designed to wreck the morale and economy of the democratic nations',[29] and the Strategic Basis Paper concluded that Southeast Asia

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24 Although it should be noted that there was little enthusiasm in Australia for the mutual security pact. See Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p.198.

25 O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*, p.229.

26 See the recommendations of the Defence Committee, in ibid., p.233.

27 ibid., p.331.

28 1952 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, p.6.

29 ibid., p.11.

must be given priority over the Middle East.[30] This conclusion was endorsed by the Department of External Affairs.[31] The paper also recommended that all practical political and economic assistance should be given to the French to bolster the security of Indochina, because a French-held Indochina was regarded as providing defence in depth for Australia and New Zealand.[32] Another key conclusion was that, if Malaya fell to the communists,

> Australia would be confronted in due course by hostile land and air forces within 500 miles of the Northern Territory and ... that practically the whole of Australia would be within range of enemy bombers.[33]

In October 1953, the Defence Committee met conjointly with the British and New Zealand Chiefs-of-Staff, and identified possible Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia as a genuine danger. The Committee agreed that China wished to eliminate Western influence in Southeast Asia and to bring the region under communist control. Foreshadowing the arguments of the 'domino theory', the members foresaw the gradual erosion of Western influence, with Southeast Asian countries falling one by one to communism: the loss of Indochina would expose Thailand and Burma, and their collapse would then enable the communists to threaten Malaya directly from outside as well as from within.[34] As a result, a decision was taken to strengthen ANZAM 'by adding to its functions the defence of Malaya by land'.[35]

Australia demonstrated a certain ambivalence towards China throughout the 1950s. While China was perceived as being responsible for the 'subversive movements' which jeopardised Australian and Western interests in Asia, Canberra was more concerned about the projection of Chinese political power, and the concomitant potential for regional destabilisation represented by the Chinese brand of

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30   ibid., p.12.

31   O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*, pp.336-337. See also Defence Submission to JCFAD, pp.4-5.

32   Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.4.

33   1952 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, p.12.

34   O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War, 1950-1953*, p.346.

35   ibid., p.347.

revolution, than about Beijing's capacity for direct armed intervention in the region. In response, the government also began to portray ANZUS as a shield against communism imperialism. At the ANZUS Council meeting in November 1953, Richard Casey, who had replaced Spender as Minister for External Affairs, sought to 'dispel any mis-understandings as to the purpose of ANZUS'. Casey said:

> It is true that ANZUS was negotiated with the United States at the same time as the Japanese Peace Treaty - but the purpose of ANZUS is not solely to provide a safeguard against a resurgence of Japanese aggression. ANZUS from the outset has had an even wider significance. It was intended to contribute to our common security against aggression from wherever it may arise. The real threat to the peace of Asia and the Pacific today does not come from Japan, but from communist imperialism based on the mainland of China.[36]

SEATO: Protecting the Neighbourhood

Casey himself was keenly aware that Australia must become more involved in Asia and the Pacific, and he took immediate steps to open several diplomatic posts in the region in order to facilitate his goal of a more independent and informed Australian foreign policy. Casey also believed that Australia needed the aegis of a regional security pact which would assist Asian neighbours and to repel the advances of communism. While Casey did not share the view of the United States that the Viet Minh were mere puppets of the Chinese,[37] or that the French position in Indochina should be supported by Western military action,[38] he and Menzies were both anxious to ensure that the United States did not 'lose its new interest in the mainland of

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36   R.G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs, 27 November 1953, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.593.

37   ibid., p.607.

38   T.B. Millar (ed.), *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R.G. Casey, 1951-60*, cited in Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.609.

South East Asia'.[39] The Australian Government therefore agreed to take part in discussions, initiated by Washington, for a Southeast Asian defence organisation. The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty was duly signed in Manila on 8 September 1954.

Casey defended the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) against Labor Party criticism by playing on widespread public unease and concern over developments in Indochina and Malaya. In presenting the bill for ratification to the House of Representatives, Casey developed three themes. First, Australia could no longer seek security by virtue of its isolation from the main currents of international events, because 'Australia was on the verge of the most unsettled region of the world'.[40] Second, it was 'no longer possible for any country to rely for its security on its own strength and resources'.[41] Third, SEATO filled a gap in Southeast Asia (despite ANZUS),[42] and was specifically designed to combat communism in the region.[43]

ANZAM: Securing the Front Door

In early 1955, Menzies returned from an overseas tour during which he discussed with British and American leaders, 'communist aggression' in Southeast Asia and the internal security situation in Malaya. Raising the prospect of an Asian, communist presence 'at the very threshold' of Australia, Menzies declared Malaya to be 'vital' to Australia's defence and announced his intention to commit Australian military forces to a strategic reserve for the Australia, New Zealand and Malaya (ANZAM) area. This reserve was to be formed as soon as practicable, in conjunction with the United Kingdom and New

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39 Watt, *Australian Defence Policy, 1951-63*, p.37.

40 *CPD*, House of Representatives, vol.5, p.2382.

41 ibid.

42 During the ANZUS debate, Casey said that the Australian Government did not regard ANZUS as a complete and final answer to the problem of security in the Pacific. *CN*, vol.22, 1951. p.403.

43 *CPD*, House of Representatives, vol.5, p.2387.

Zealand, and with the blessing of the United States.[44] Menzies also declared a policy which was to determine Australia's strategic posture for the next decade and a half - that of forward defence.

> I call upon all Australians to realise the basic truth ...
> that if there is to be a war for our existence, it should
> be carried on by us as far from our soil as possible.[45]

The decision to station Australian troops in Malaya was, as observed by Norman Harper, 'a revolutionary switch in Australian policy'.[46] It marked the end of any notion that European affairs should take precedence over Australia's immediate neighbourhood, with Britain finally conceding that Malaya should take priority in Australian strategic thinking over the Middle East. In addition, for the first time, Australian troops were to be deployed, in peacetime, outside Australia's own territorial limits along with elements of the Royal Australian Air Force.[47]

These changes were reflected in the 1956 Strategic Basis Paper which argued that priority should be given to 'cold war activities' and preparations for 'limited wars,' over 'measures directed solely for preparedness for global war'.[48] SEATO was seen as the first line of defence against communism, but if Indochina were to fall, contingency plans were to be implemented to defend a position on the border of Malaya. Significantly, the 1956 Strategic Basis Paper recognised implicitly that in some potential military situations in Australia's 'area of primary strategic interest' direct allied assistance might not be forthcoming.[49]

In an appendix entitled 'The Threat to Australia', the paper assessed that the greatest danger to the nation was from communist penetration or overthrow of the governments in Malaya and Indonesia

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44   Prime Minister R.G. Menzies, April 1955. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.616.

45   ibid.

46   N. Harper in G. Greenwood and N. Harper (eds), *Australia in World Affairs, 1956-60* (F.W. Cheshire for the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Melbourne, 1963), p.189.

47   ibid.

48   Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.5.

49   ibid., p.6.

which could make Australia vulnerable to air strikes from bases in these countries. However, the paper noted that attacks by medium bombers were likely to be sporadic and the development of an invasion force by a potential enemy would be a lengthy process, and only a remote contingency.[50]

Conflict with Indonesia over West New Guinea

In 1957, a speech by Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio, at the United Nations, foreshadowed the emergence of a far more immediate and direct threat to Australia's national security interests, than the amorphous danger represented by relatively distant communist insurgencies in other parts of Asia. In seeking the inscription of West New Guinea (which at that time was still administered by the Netherlands) on the agenda for the 12th United Nations session Subandrio, in effect, threatened to take direct action to resolve the dispute in Indonesia's favour should the United Nations register another adverse vote.

At the same time, the Indonesians also began to mount a campaign to 'liberate' West New Guinea, which was aimed at destabilising the Dutch colony and preparing the way for an Indonesian takeover. These were developments which Australia could not ignore. Indeed, as early as 1950, Spender had opposed Indonesia's claim to West New Guinea on the grounds that, geographically and racially, New Guinea could not be considered an integral part of Indonesia. Underlying Spender's concern was his fear that Indonesia might later push its claim further to include 'the Trust Territory of Australian New Guinea and its people'.[51]

There were two other important aspects of Australia's opposition to Indonesia's incorporation of West New Guinea. New

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50 1956 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, Appendix C to Annex A, p.2.

51 P.C. Spender, Minister for External Affairs, in a statement at the Hague on 29 August 1950. Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.639-40.

Guinea was considered vital to Australia's defence,[52] a lesson which had been burned into the collective Australian consciousness by the Japanese advance through the island during the Second World War. The Dutch presence in West New Guinea was a reassuring one, whereas the prospect of an Indonesian Irian Jaya alarmed Australian politicians of all political persuasions because of the perceived unpredictability of the Sukarno regime.[53] The other factor was a belief that the departure of the Dutch would present opportunities for communist exploitation of the indigenous people of New Guinea.[54]

The Subandrio-Casey meeting, in February 1959, briefly defused tensions. In the subsequent communique, Australia made an important concession: 'that if any agreement were reached between the Netherlands and Indonesia ... arrived at by peaceful processes and in accordance with internationally accepted principles, Australia would not oppose such an agreement'.[55] However, rather than refraining from hostile actions against the Netherlands, Indonesia began to infiltrate forces into West New Guinea and, in early 1960, the Indonesian Chief of Staff, General Nasution, visited the Soviet Union and secured an agreement for the supply of military equipment and arms estimated to be worth $US40 million.[56] The Soviet arms were regarded as significantly strengthening the capabilities of the Indonesian armed forces, and although Indonesia was assessed as having only a low potential to mount and sustain an invasion of West

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52   Spender, for example, regarded New Guinea as an 'absolutely essential link in the chain of Australian defence';   Sir Percy Spender, *Politics and a Man*, (Collins, Sydney, 1972), p.290.

53   G. Greenwood and N. Harper (eds), *Australia in World Affairs, 1961-65*, p.86.

54   Bruce Grant cited in ibid., p.88.

55   Joint Announcement on 15 February 1959, by R.N. Casey, Minister for External Affairs, and Dr Subandrio, Indonesian Foreign Minister. Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.641.

56   R. Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959-1965* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1974), p.187.

New Guinea,[57] the Australian government became increasingly alarmed about Sukarno's intentions.

Given these developments, it is not surprising that the potential for conflict in Australia's near neighbourhood was a major concern of the 1959 Strategic Basis Paper, regarded by Australia's Defence Minister in 1985, Kim Beazley, as the 'most prescient if most ignored advice delivered to a Minister'.[58] The 1959 paper assessed that Australia could face a number of situations in which its military forces might have to operate independently of its allies,[59] including a conflict with Indonesia over West New Guinea.[60] It also anticipated the defence posture of later years by observing that it might be necessary to defend the northwestern approaches to Australia by independent efforts.[61] In regard to Indonesia, the 1959 paper argued that Indonesia posed a significant threat to West New Guinea and 'a small threat' to northern Australia and to Cocos and Christmas Islands. It did not, however, present a significant threat to the Australian mainland. The paper went on to note that Indonesia could 'provide bases from which external communist forces could operate against Australia and other neighbouring countries and communications within the area: in particular, an air and submarine threat could develop very quickly'.[62]

In the end Menzies acquiesced in Indonesia's incorporation of West New Guinea,[63] principally because he was unable to secure the

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57 See N. Viviani, 'Australian Attitudes and Policies Towards Indonesia, 1950 to 1965', (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1973), p.204.

58 Speech by Minister for Defence to the National Press Club, Canberra, 12 June 1985. *AFAR*, vol.56, no.6, p.506.

59 This judgement was rejected by the Menzies Government. See Cabinet Decision No.522, 9 November 1959. Declassified.

60 1959 Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, p.7.

61 ibid.

62 ibid., p.3.

63 Opposition leader A. Calwell vehemently opposed Indonesia's absorption of West New Guinea, which he said would be a 'blatant act of aggression'. Calwell also implied that Menzies was guilty of appeasement, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 1962, cited in Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.647.

backing of either of his major allies, the United States and Britain, for military intervention in support of the Dutch against Jakarta. Without this support it was clear that unilateral Australian action by Canberra to secure its objective of keeping Indonesia out of West New Guinea was 'outside the scope of Australia's diplomatic and military power'.[64]

Conflict with Indonesia over Malaysia

Just as Australia was coming to terms with the West New Guinea outcome a new source of tension threatened to jeopardise Australia's relations with Indonesia. In November 1961, Malaya and Singapore had joined together in a wider federation known as Malaysia, a development approved of by the Australian Government and Garfield Barwick, Casey's successor as Minister for External Affairs.[65] There was little apparent Indonesian opposition to Malaysia until the Brunei revolt of 8 December 1962, in which Indonesia was implicated. Shortly thereafter, Indonesia announced a policy of confrontation against Malaysia.

By 1963, Australia seemed to face danger on all fronts. In Greenwood's words, 'areas of tension and conflict, both communist and nationalist inspired, had moved closer to Australia',[66] fuelling the well-developed national neurosis about external threats. Menzies spoke repeatedly of the need for great and powerful friends, decrying Australia's vulnerability, the inadequacy of its defence resources and the folly of attempting to defend the continent without the support of the United States and Britain.[67]

Australia's dismay at Indonesia's rejection of Malaysia and of a continuing British presence in the region, both keystones of Australian defence and foreign policies, was overshadowed by a more ominous development: the possibility of a Beijing-Jakarta axis,[68] as contacts between the two Asian governments became more frequent

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64   Viviani, 'Australian Attitudes and Policies Towards Indonesia, 1950 to 1965', p.211.
65   *CPD*, House of Representatives, 28 March 1963, vol.38, p.196.
66   Greenwood and Harper, *Australia in World Affairs, 1961-65*, p.30.
67   *CPD*, House of Representatives, 29 March 1962, vol.34, p.1164.
68   Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.667.

and effusive. In retrospect, it is not difficult to understand the fears of the Menzies Government, given its conservative ideological leanings and the rhetoric emanating almost daily from Beijing and Jakarta. As Coral Bell has noted,

> This was the period of President Sukarno's doctrine of the 'new emerging forces', which were allegedly predestined to sweep away the 'old established forces' (defined to include more or less all Western positions of power in Asia, including the remaining British hold in Malaysia) ... This was also the period in China of the development of the doctrine ... of 'the countryside of the world' (the underdeveloped countries) eventually surrounding and swallowing up 'the cities of the world' (the advanced industrial powers). That doctrine was interpreted at the time as a statement of revolutionary-expansionist Chinese intentions.[69]

While there was general agreement in the Government, by early 1963, that Jakarta was following an undesirable course in opposing Malaysia and courting China, there was by no means consensus about the extent and nature of the Indonesian threat. At the Cabinet meeting of 5 March 1963, convened to determine policy on Indonesia's confrontation with Malaysia, one part of the Cabinet argued that Indonesia 'was a potential threat to Australian interests in the region', and was probably bent on expanding 'its hegemony, if not its territory' at the expense of Malaysia. Others believed, however, that 'it was by no means certain that Indonesian policy was set on a military course, although this possibility had to be kept in mind'.[70]

The policy dilemma for Menzies and Barwick was how to support Malaysia and Australia's other strategic and foreign policy objectives in the region, virtually all of which were anathema to Sukarno, while preserving good relations with Indonesia or at least a semblance of a *modus vivendi*. Australia opted for a policy of 'graduated response', agreeing to provide military assistance to Malaysia 'in defence of Malaysia's territorial integrity and political

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69   Bell, *Dependent Ally*, p.80.
70   Viviani, 'Australian Attitudes and Policies Towards Indonesia, 1950 to 1965', p.215.

independence'[71] only after Sukarno launched his 'Crush Malaysia' campaign on 16 September 1963.

Unlike the West New Guinea dispute, where Australia had been isolated from its 'great and powerful friends', Britain played a major role in opposing Sukarno's Crush Malaysia campaign because of British defence and colonial ties with Malaysia. The United States, on the other hand, was reluctant to become involved in the dispute.[72] It shared the same policy goals as Australia in its desire to prevent confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia from escalating into a major new theatre of war in Southeast Asia. And like Australia, the United States was opposed to the spread of communism in the Asia-Pacific region. But the Americans were still optimistic that the dispute could be resolved by negotiations (the State Department adamantly opposed deploying US military forces to the region) at a time when both Britain and Australia felt that military conflict was unavoidable.[73]

The Menzies Government did not actually commit troops to Borneo, where they would be directly confronting Indonesian troops, until February 1964, by which time it had declared that these forces were covered by the ANZUS umbrella. In fact the United States at no time gave a categorical assurance on this point, and the State Department was taken aback by Barwick's assertion in the House of Representatives in April 1964 that:

> The ANZUS treaty does not give rise to any ambiguity or question. An attack on the armed forces of a party is within the treaty if the attack takes place within the treaty area. Borneo is in the treaty area. On this point there is no difference whatever between the American view and our view.[74]

71 Menzies, *CPD*, House of Representatives, 25 September 1963, vol.40, p.1334.
72 Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, p.308.
73 ibid., pp.306-309.
74 G. Barwick, Minister for External Affairs, Statement to the House of Representatives, cited in ibid., p.310.

Vietnam: Another Threat and Another Commitment

The year 1965 proved to be a seminal year in Australian defence and foreign policy. While the Australian Army was clashing with Indonesian soldiers in the jungles of Borneo, the nation was soon to be embroiled in a military and political conflict of a different kind and in a more distant arena. Two months after the first Australian battalion arrived in Borneo, a second battalion was despatched to South Vietnam, because the Menzies Government believed that the defence of that country against communism was 'of crucial importance to the security of Australia itself'and 'to the integrity and stability of the whole South West Pacific'.[75]

Australian anxieties about the situation in Indochina were relatively long standing and dated back to the Viet Minh challenge to the reimposition of French colonial rule after the Second World War. While Casey, as the Minister for External Affairs, took a close interest in Indochina affairs, Australia was largely a spectator until the 1954 Geneva settlement. After the signing of SEATO, Casey declared that if Indochina fell to the communists then Thailand, Malaya and Singapore would be threatened, and the communists would be able 'to dominate the northern approaches to Australia' and cut Australia's 'lifelines with Europe'.[76]

Australia's attention was diverted away from Indochina until the early 1960s by a largely stalemated military situation in South Vietnam and the government's preoccupation with more pressing affairs closer to home. However, by 1962 the deteriorating position of the Diem Government in South Vietnam had moved Indochina to the forefront of United States foreign policy concerns. The Kennedy Administration suggested to Australia's Ambassador in Washington on 17 November 1961 that Australian military assistance in the form of equipment and advisors would be a welcome demonstration of anti-communist solidarity.[77]

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75 W. McMahon, Minister for Labour and National Service, *CPD*, 22 March 1966, vol.50, p.437.

76 *CPD*, 27 October 1954, vol.5, p.2383.

77 Harper, *A Great and Powerful Friend*, pp.314-315.

Menzies was well aware of the kudos he stood to gain with Washington by acceding to the American request. On 24 May 1962, the Government announced that it was to provide 30 'military instructors' to South Vietnam. Despite references to SEATO, and the need to support the Diem Government against communist insurgency, the principal reason for the initial deployment of Australian military personnel to South Vietnam was clearly a desire to support Australia's major ally, the United States.[78] It is significant that 'no specific request was received from Saigon until 25 May', the day after the public announcement by the Minister for Defence.[79]

Despite the presence of combat advisors in South Vietnam, it was not until early 1964 that Canberra really began to focus on the Indochina conflict from a policy point of view. By that time Diem had been assassinated, the strategic hamlet program had begun to disintegrate and United States involvement had substantially increased. This was the period when Australia's sense of insecurity was felt most keenly, certainly by the Government, and probably by a majority of the Australian people.[80] Both Menzies and Hasluck believed that absolute priority had to be given to maintaining and supporting a United States presence in the region and, as has already been noted, to obtaining a United States commitment that ANZUS would be extended to cover Australian troops fighting against Indonesia in Borneo. In this respect, Australia's early Vietnam policy was shaped by its conflict with Indonesia. However, after the cessation of hostilities with Indonesia and Sukarno's demise in 1965, Indochina came to dominate Australian foreign policy and to divide the Australian community to a degree unparalleled before or since.

Perhaps the best and most authoritative account of the reasons for Australia's involvement in Vietnam can be found in a report prepared by Robert Neale at the behest of Prime Minister Gough

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78 Later in the war, Australia consistently sought to encourage the United States to maintain, and even increase, its involvement in Vietnam. See M.Sexton, *War For The Asking: Australia's Vietnam Secrets* (Penguin, Melbourne, 1981), pp.89-107 and 136-172.

79 ibid., p.315.

80 See, for example, the Gallup polls taken at the time when Australian troops were first committed to Borneo and Vietnam. Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.666 and 695.

Whitlam in 1975. Neale, who had access to diplomatic documents in the archives of the Department of Foreign Affairs,[81] concluded that:

> The basic concept behind the Australian action was that of forward defence. This rested in turn on a belief in the fundamental strategic importance in Australia's defence of the South East Asia area, and on the necessity to prevent the spread of communism and political instability in the area. Given Australia's military weakness, this policy had to depend for success upon membership of ANZUS and SEATO, and above all upon the presence of the United States in the area. To this end it was Australia's aim to ensure that the United States did not waver in its commitment to South East Asia and to support the American presence politically, diplomatically and if necessary, militarily. It was believed that only by these methods could real meaning be given to the ANZUS Agreement and Australia's defence be assured.[82]

An Underlying Fear of China

Underlying Australia's involvement in Vietnam, and a consistent theme of the government's security assessments and political rhetoric throughout the 1950s and 1960s, was fear of China, a fear articulated most passionately and forcefully by Paul Hasluck, Barwick's successor as Minister for External Affairs. Behind the global threat of communism, and the regional conflicts which engaged Australian foreign and defence policy in the 1960s, in Hasluck's words, loomed 'the threat of China'. Furthermore, declared Hasluck:

> The doctrines and intentions declared by its Communist Government, its invasion of Tibet and

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81 The report was entitled, 'Australia's Military Commitment to Vietnam', and was tabled in Parliament on 13 May 1975. Robert Neale was at that time the official editor of the Australian diplomatic documents.

82 'Australia's Military Commitment to Vietnam', cited in Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.671.

India and its political activities throughout Asia today are all plain to read. The fear of China is the dominant element in much that happens in the region, and the fear is well founded.[83]

Australia had been suspicious of Beijing's intentions since the early 1950s, seeing the various Southeast Asian communist insurgent movements as surrogates of the Chinese. However, the early 1960s marked a considerable hardening in Australian attitudes towards China, culminating in the extreme anti-Chinese statements of Menzies and his senior colleagues in the mid-1960s, in which China was accused of attempting to dominate Asia[84] and even the world.[85] Whereas Casey believed that the Viet Minh acted with a degree of independence from China,[86] Defence Minister Fairhall declared, in March 1966, that the 'North Vietnamese are puppets of the Chinese',[87] while Menzies argued that the attempted communist takeover of South Vietnam 'must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans'.[88]

Australia's attitudes towards China in this period were conditioned by an amalgam of domestic and external factors, including the historical stereotypes which had developed during the latter half of the nineteenth century and had remained essentially frozen in time since then. In the 1940s, China was typically seen as a large, populous, strife-ridden nation of traders and rice farmers dominating the Asian landmass. As result of shared hostility and opposition towards Japan, by the end of the Second World War there existed in Australia a somewhat detached but generally positive feeling towards China, and

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83   P. Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs, in 'Foreign Affairs', October 1964, ibid., p.667.

84   Minister for External Affairs, P. Hasluck, *CPD*, 10 March 1966, vol.50, p.173.

85   Minister for Defence, A. Fairhall, *CPD*, 15 March 1966, vol.62, p.247.

86   R.G. Casey, Minister for External Affairs, in T. B. Millar (ed.), *Australian Foreign Minister: The Diaries of R. G.Casey, 1951-60*, cited in Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.607.

87   Minister for Defence, A. Fairhall, *CPD*, 15 March 1966, vol.62, p.247.

88   Prime Minister R. Menzies, *CN*, vol.36, 1965, p.179.

a recognition that a 'strong, united and fully democratic' China would be beneficial to Australia's security and that of the region.[89]

The Chifley Labor Government was less than enamoured with the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek, as its corruption became more evident, and viewed without serious concern the prospect of the Chiang regime's demise.[90] However, against the backdrop of communist-led union militancy in Australia, the beginning of the Cold War, and LCP anti-communist rhetoric, Chifley felt obliged to adopt a more critical policy towards the Chinese communists, which Menzies strengthened further in the first few years of his government.

There is some dispute about the extent to which the Menzies Government was committed to a trenchantly anti-Beijing line in the early years of its administration,[91] but it is clear that Australia was already opposed to recognition of Mao's communists as the legitimate government of China before the Korean War broke out. The Korean War set Australia on a path of increasingly hard-line opposition to Beijing,because the Chinese involvement in Korea was seen as proof of a calculated strategy to foster anti-democratic and anti-Western revolutionary movements throughout Asia,[92] a strategy which directly imperilled Australia's own security. Between 1959 and 1962, a sequence of conflicts involving China seemed to confirm the menacing and expansionist image of China in many Australian minds. Beijing's suppression of Tibet in 1959 was followed in quick succession by the Laotian crisis of 1961-62, the escalation of communist insurgency in South Vietnam, and the Sino-Indian border dispute. In each of these conflicts, China was generally regarded by Australians as the aggressor and clearly at fault.

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89   *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January 1946, cited in H. Albinski, *Australian Policies and Attitudes Toward China* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1965), p.5.

90   Fung and Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship*, pp.18-19.

91   See, for example, ibid., p.22 and Albinski, *Australian Policies and Attitudes Toward China*, p.69.

92   Albinski, *Australian Policies and Attitudes Toward China*, pp.70 and 132.

Moreover, as argued persuasively by Gregory Clarke, 'it was assumed that these events were related: that taken together they indicated a new aggressive phase in Chinese foreign policy'.[93] This assessment seemed to be confirmed by the excesses and polemics of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the series of Chinese nuclear test explosions which began in 1964, and the Sino-Soviet dispute, which Clarke contends strongly influenced Canberra's attitude towards China:

> it was argued that China's extremism and aggressiveness had reached the point where even the Russians were forced to break and denounce the Chinese as war-mongers, then clearly the remainder of China's neighbours should be even more seriously alarmed.[94]

The anti-Beijing predisposition of the Menzies Government was reinforced by the growing hostility of the United States to the Chinese communists. In a mutually reinforcing pattern, the more Australia believed that China represented a threat, the more reliant it became on the protection offered by the United States alliance and the more infected it became by the uncompromising United States opposition to Beijing.[95]

An equally important domestic influence was the attitude of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), which was vehemently anti-communist and hostile towards China. The DLP occupied a pivotal position in Australian domestic politics during the 1960s and was critical to the LCP's electoral successes, particularly in 1961 and 1963.[96] The DLP's stance on China encouraged the LCP to exaggerate the Chinese communist threat for domestic political purposes and

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93 G. Clark, *In Fear of China* (Cresset Press, London, 1967), p.167.

94 ibid., p.168.

95 S. Fitzgerald, *Talking With China: The Australian Labor Party Visit and Peking's Foreign Policy*, Contemporary China Papers No.4 (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1972), p.4.

96 H. Bull in G. Greenwood and N.Harper (eds), *Australia in World Affairs, 1966-70*, p.335; see also Bell, *Dependent Ally*, p.194 and Fung and Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship*, p.35.

provided little incentive for the Menzies Government to moderate its own hard-line policy.

In fact the only countervailing force in the government favouring some form of accommodation with Beijing was the Country Party (CP), which had a vested interest in seeing the continuation of bilateral trade, mainly in wool and wheat. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the CP, under the able and pragmatic stewardship of John McEwen, was able substantially to increase Australia's trade with Beijing in what were euphemistically referred to as non-strategic items.[97] Indeed by 1964, at a time when Australia's Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, was proclaiming that China constituted 'the greatest threat to the security of the region in which we live',[98] Beijing had become Australia's fifth largest market.[99]

Position of the Labor Party

The Government's view of China, was not shared by the Opposition Labor Party, nor were the Government's policies on Vietnam. Labor leader, Arthur Calwell, denounced the Government's decision to send troops to Vietnam. He also questioned the assumptions that the Vietnam imbroglio was a straightforward case of aggression from North Vietnam, aided by China, against an independent and popularly supported regime in the South, and that China represented a military threat to the region. Calwell asserted that the situation was far more complicated, that the Saigon regime had 'no basis of popular support', and that the Viet Cong represented a

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97   These were exports of goods which were supposedly of non-military significance. This apparent contradiction in government policy was criticised by the DLP, which deplored trading with 'the enemy' and argued that it was morally indefensible for the government to trade with China and make a profit when it purported to be fighting in Vietnam in order to stop Chinese communist aggression. Fung and Mackerras, *From Fear to Friendship*, p.91.

98   Cited in Albinski, *Australian Attitudes and Policies Towards China*, p.174.

99   Greenwood, *Approaches to Asia*, p.237.

significant body of indigenous South Vietnamese opinion. He acknowledged that there was a threat from China but believed that the true nature of the threat was 'not military invasion but political subversion'.[100]

As the Indochina conflict dragged on, divisions widened in Australia over the extent and nature of the threat represented by Chinese and Vietnamese communism, and the Labor Party's position under Calwell hardened. In 1967, the ALP Federal Conference passed a resolution on Vietnam which stated, *inter alia*, that the 'war in Vietnam ... does not assist the Vietnamese people to determine their own affairs', and that there was 'no threat to Australian security from China'.[101] A year later, the deputy opposition leader, Gough Whitlam, savaged the government's attitude towards China. Referring to one of Menzies's more evocative, negative images of China, Whitlam lambasted the idea of a downwards thrusting China, describing it as a 'fallacious theory', and the basis for 'one of the most disastrously superficial theories on which the foreign policy of a nation has ever been based'.[102]

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100 Speech by A. Calwell, leader of the ALP, 4 May 1965, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.684.

101 E.G. Whitlam, 'Beyond Vietnam - Australia's Regional Responsibility'. Speech at the Australian Institute of International Affairs (North Queensland Branch) Seminar, Townsville University College, 13 July 1968, p.22.

102 ibid., p.5.

CHAPTER 4

THE MODERN ERA: NO MAJOR THREATS

The Winds of Change

By 1968, there was clear evidence that Australia was entering a new era in international affairs. A year earlier, Britain had served notice of its intention to withdraw its forces from east of Suez, with Australia left to fill the unaccustomed role of principal ally to Malaysia and Singapore, 'and not as an adjunct to British power'.[1] The 1968 Strategic Basis Paper still identified Communist China as the greatest threat to Australia's long-term strategic interests, with the threat taking many forms, from insurrection abroad supported by Beijing and Hanoi to more indigenous developments, deriving from communalism, ethnic and religious divisions and popular disaffection - developments which, it was contended, China would not refrain from exploiting.[2]

The other source of concern to Australian defence planners was Indonesia, in both a geographical and substantive sense, because it was the area from, or through, which 'the possibility of hostile action against Australia or its territories was thought most likely to arise'.[3] The paper also reflected on the strategic significance for Australia of the British withdrawal from Asia and assessed, with some foresight, that the United States experience in Vietnam was likely to bring about 'important modifications in its attitudes and policies', one of which would be a call for the countries of Southeast Asia to do more to contribute to their own and regional security.[4]

In May 1968, Defence Minister Fairhall emphasised the need for greater independence in defence planning,[5] and this theme was pursued by his successor, Malcolm Fraser.[6] In response to President

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1   Millar, *Australia's Defence*, p.2.
2   Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.28.
3   ibid., p.18.
4   Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.9.
5   *CPD*, 2 May 1968, vol.58, p.1084.
6   *CPD*, 7 April 1970, vol.66, p.758.

Richard Nixon's speech on the Pacific island of Guam, in which Nixon proclaimed that in future countries in the Asian region would have to undertake greater responsibility for their own defence,[7]   Minister for External Affairs, Gordon Freeth, made a major and, at the time, controversial speech.[8] In it he examined the implications for Australia of the Guam declaration and the changing international strategic environment. Repeating the major themes of this speech in New York, Freeth said:

> there is a widespread feeling that in Asia and the Pacific old patterns are breaking up and new ones emerging; and that Australia's own relationship with the region may be entering a period of change and readjustment.[9]

In regard to China, Freeth noted that in some respects Australia had maintained closer relations with China than many other countries, and he hoped that Beijing would rejoin the international community. But he still saw no sign of any willingness on the part of the Chinese to 'abandon their hostility towards their neighbours or to reach an accommodation with them that would provide a basis for peaceful cooperation'.   Freeth also repeated his view, which had earlier attracted criticism from the more conservative elements in his own party, that while Soviet activities had to be watched, there was 'no need to panic whenever a Russian appears',[10] although Freeth was careful to append several important qualifications to this unremarkable observation, in deference to his critics.

The importance of the Freeth assessment, as noted by Hedley Bull, 'was that it helped Australian policy-making to break free of the

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7   Speech by President R. Nixon at Guam, 25 July 1969, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.707.   The one exception, according to Nixon, was in cases of confrontations with a major power involving nuclear weapons.

8   Mainly for his comments on the Soviet Union, see *CN*, vol.40, 1969, p.414.

9   Address by G. Freeth, Minister for External Affairs, to the American-Australian Association in New York on 18 September 1969, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.708.

10   ibid.

strait-jacket of doctrinaire hostility to all communist powers which was obstructing the consideration of interests that Australia had in common with them'.[11] By 1971, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nigel Bowen, saw a real prospect that China would join the United Nations and could state, without incurring the wrath of his right wing, that Australia was seeking to broaden its relations with the Soviet Union and normalize its relations with China.[12]

In a sense, the LCP was dragged, kicking and struggling, into the new era. Extensive ideological rear-guard actions were fought by senior LCP ministers and Prime Ministers Gorton and McMahon, in defence of Australia's commitment to Vietnam and the need for vigilance about Chinese-sponsored subversion in Asia and Soviet penetration of the Indian Ocean.[13] A kind of muted resentment, even hostility, towards the United States was not uncommon in the LCP at this time, because of Washington's decision to reduce its presence in Asia and to pursue a more conciliatory approach to its former communist enemies. Even as late as 1973, there was widespread residual fear, or at least apprehension, in the LCP about the 'communist threat'.[14]

On the other hand, Labor leaders welcomed these developments unreservedly, and saw in them confirmation that the ideological assumptions which had governed Australian foreign and defence policy for two decades, and which they had consistently opposed, had been proved erroneous.[15] Labor had always believed that the communist 'menace' in Asia and the aggressive intentions of China had been exaggerated, and had rejected the government's argument that Vietnamese communism represented a direct threat to

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11 H. Bull in Greenwood and Harper, *Australia in World Affairs, 1966-70*, p.345.

12 Speech by N. Bowen, Minister for External Affairs, 18 August 1971, Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.718-9.

13 W. J. Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75* (George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1980), p.165.

14 See O.Mendelsohn's study of parliamentarians' attitudes towards foreign aid, cited in H. Albinski, *Australian External Policy Under Labor* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1977), p.79.

15 Hudson, *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, p.164.

Australian security interests.[16]   The ALP had also long opposed the forward defence strategy, which had been the central strategic concept underlying the LCP's defence posture since the early years of the Cold War period.

A New Strategic Framework

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Gorton and McMahon governments began to explore several alternative strategic concepts to forward defence. Gorton and his Defence Minister, Malcolm Fraser, stressed the need for Australia to develop an independent defence capability, and to rely more on its own resources, with Fraser advocating force structures appropriate to the defence of Australia.[17] McMahon, on the other hand, was more inclined to seek assurances from the Americans as to the continuing validity of ANZUS and to 'keep intact the familiar framework of Australian defence and foreign policy'.[18]

The most vexing problem for the government, in attempting to determine a new strategic framework in the relatively benign international environment which Australia faced, was the obvious absence of any visible, major threat to national security. With the end of the Vietnam War, the general Western opening to China, and growing detente between the United States and the Soviet Union, the old communist threat appeared decidedly less menacing and, in domestic terms, a spent political and polemical asset.   Moreover, Indonesia under President Suharto seemed a model of stability and rationality compared with the Sukarno days, and bilateral relations were generally warm and conflict-free.

The Gorton Government decided to recognise the new realities, and from 1969 began to issue statements to the effect that Australia faced no immediate or obvious threat.[19] This view was refined further in the 1971 Strategic Basis Paper, one of the most

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16   Greenwood and Harper, *Australia in World Affairs,1966-70*, p.43.

17   ibid., pp.77-78. See also Bell, *Dependent Ally*, p.94.

18   Hudson, *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, p.165.

19   See, for example, Minister for Defence A. Fairhall, *CPD*, 26 August 1969, vol.64, p.665.

important ever produced. Unlike almost all its post-1945 predecessors, the 1971 paper articulated a uniquely Australian strategic perspective, eschewing traditional notions of dependence on allies and downplaying Australia's global security role.

This seminal paper developed, for the first time, a coherent conceptual framework for the structure and deployment of Australia's defence forces in the absence of major direct threats to Australia 'outside the unlikely contingent of general war'.[20] It also recognised that the Asia-Pacific region was of primary importance to Australia's security and that greater attention should be devoted to the protection of sea lines of communications. Any substantial military threat was thought most likely to emanate from, or through, the sea and air gap between Australia and Indonesia. In a major departure from previous assessments, the authors of the 1971 paper advocated a more responsible role for China and proposed that greater 'emphasis should be given to the fundamental obligations of continental defence',[21] although overseas deployment in support of regional security was not ruled out.

Gorton and some of his senior ministers also began to make public statements affirming the Government's no threat assessment and even specifying a 10-year time frame,[22] although this view was not shared by all Gorton's colleagues.[23] Significantly, in terms of the later debate about the so-called '15-year no threat assessment', the LCP Government also endorsed an important corollary or addendum to this judgement: that there was another category of threats which required consideration - that of peacetime and low-level contingencies,

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20 Ball, The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.29.

21 Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.10.

22 Prime Minister Gorton stated, in June 1971, that he did not believe that there was 'any prospect of an attack on the mainland of Australia within the next decade'. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 21 June 1971, cited in Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.29.

23 According to Albinski, one former LCP minister said that the government 'proceeded within a three or four year forecast period, not ten years', while another former minister discounted the validity or usefulness of specifying a time frame at all. Albinski, *Australian External Policy Under Labor*, p.30.

such as harassment of shipping, raids on Australian territory and challenges to Australian sovereignty, smuggling and illegal fishing.

These low-level contingencies were discussed in more detail in another strategic document produced by the Department of Defence in 1971, entitled 'The Environment of Future Australian Military Operations (EFAMO)'.[24] EFAMO was intended to identify 'in terms of their probability, importance and timing, the range and significance of circumstances in which Australia's Defence Forces may be required in the next twenty years'.[25] The specific purpose of EFAMO, 'was to fill in the gap between the general review of the environment and the more particular requirements of the Services with respect to force structure planning'.[26]

The Strategic Judgements of the Whitlam Labor Government

In December 1972 the ALP, led by Gough Whitlam, was elected to office. Labor at last had the chance to put into practice the policies it had espoused for the 23 years that it had wandered in the political wilderness of opposition, and foreign and defence policy was high on Whitlam's personal agenda. One of the first acts of the new Prime Minister was to initiate a reassessment of Australia's foreign policy and to take a number of immediate and highly symbolic decisions, which were meant to signify Labor's complete break with the assumptions underlying the conduct of foreign policy under the previous LCP administrations. Among these were the establishment of 'normal relations' with China, and the termination of 'the last vestiges' of Australia's military commitment to Vietnam.[27] While acknowledging the continued relevance of ANZUS, as a keystone of Australian security, Whitlam went to some lengths to explain that ANZUS was only one of Australia's many interests and links with the United States.[28]

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24 Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.33.
25 ibid., p.16.
26 ibid.
27 Prime Minister G. Whitlam, Address to the National Press Club in Washington, 30 July 1973, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.748.
28 ibid., p.749.

Whitlam also dwelt on Australia's 'past mistakes in its international dealings' which he attributed to a 'vague and generalised fear of our own environment, the feeling of being alien in our own continent and our own region'.[29] Consistent with Labor's ideological predispositions and the party's strong conviction that Australia must nurture and develop a much broader network of regional links, the Whitlam Government proposed a new consultative forum for the Asia-Pacific region which would:

> give all the countries of the area, irrespective of their ideological differences, a forum in which to talk informally together and promote greater understanding and cooperation.[30]

The concept was never particularly well defined and failed to attract regional support, partly because of the caution displayed by many of its potential members about Whitlam's references to freeing the region of great power involvement and influence.[31]   The proposal's real import lay in the fact that it signified a further evolution of Australia's foreign policy, away from dependence on London and Washington towards a more assertive and regionally orientated posture.   The forum proposal reflected Labor's determination to downplay the efficacy of military instruments and the primacy of strategic considerations in the future conduct of Australia's foreign policy. It was also in keeping with traditional ALP idealism and the considerable reduction in global tensions following President Nixon's rapprochement with his counterparts in Moscow and Beijing.

However many of these changes, which at the time appeared substantial and often quite dramatic, were more in the area of what Coral Bell has referred to as 'declaratory policies',[32] and were the

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29 ibid., p.750.

30 J. Knight, 'Australia and Proposals for Regional Consultation and Cooperation in the Asian and Pacific Area', *Australian Outlook*, December 1974, p.262.

31 ibid.   The idea was later further developed by Minister for Foreign Affairs Willesee, who talked about a 'system of collective economic security', ibid., p.272.

32 Bell, *Dependent Ally*, p.122.

culmination of attitudinal changes which had begun several years earlier under the Gorton, and later McMahon, LCP governments. The essential continuity in foreign policy between the Labor Government and those of Gorton and McMahon was even more marked in this area. Whitlam announced, in May 1973, that the Government accepted the assessment of its predecessors, formulated in the 1971 Strategic Basis Paper, that there was 'no foreseeable international conflict of major proportions directly involving Australia', a state of affairs which was likely to prevail for 10 years.[33] The Government also called for a full review of the 1971 Strategic Basis Paper.

The key judgements of the 1973 Strategic Basis Paper were similar, in most important respects, to those reached two years earlier. The 1973 paper noted that increasing economic and political stability in the Asia-Pacific region, combined with the reduced threat of insurgency, had reinforced Australia's strategic prospects, making it one of 'the more secure countries in the world', and there was little indication of 'any significant likelihood of a threat of armed attack upon Australia'.[34] Along with the new emphasis on defence self-reliance, and in the absence of identifiable, major, direct threats to Australia, the 1973 paper focused on 'low-level contingencies'[35] and recommended a comprehensive study of continental defence.[36]

However the most important conclusion of the 1973 Strategic Basis Paper, in terms of the political debate that followed, was the Defence Committee's extension of the time frame (from 10 years to 15 years) in which it was assessed that Australia was unlikely to face a major threat.[37] Although this forecast was heavily qualified in the actual Strategic Basis Paper, it was later distorted and caricatured in the ensuing political furore, and placed the Whitlam Government in the curious position of having to defend a strategic judgement which was little different in substance from that advanced by the LCP in

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[33] Speech by Prime Minister G. Whitlam to Parliament, 24 May 1973, Meaney, *Documentary History*, p.743.

[34] Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.28.

[35] ibid., p.33.

[36] Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.12.

[37] The phrase 'up to 15 years', was used and parodied by the Government's critics into 'no threat for 15 years'. See Albinski, *Australian External Policy Under Labor*, p.83.

1971. This was all the more remarkable considering the fact that the LCP Opposition did not really question the fundamental assumption that there was no foreseeable threat of significance to national security. Criticism of Labor's strategic prognosis focused more on semantics and interpretation of the assessment, with both sides engaging in debate which became 'obscured by turgid rhetoric, semantic acrobatics and imputations of outright dishonesty'.[38]

There were three main points of disagreement. One concerned what actually constituted a threat. The Opposition alleged that Labor had purposely downplayed the considerable space devoted in the 1973 Strategic Basis Paper to low- and medium-level contingencies (considered much more likely than major assaults), because these scenarios did not suit the Government's sanguine international outlook. The second point of contention related to the degree of threat expected, and the third to the actual period of the forecast, with the Opposition claiming that it was completely unrealistic to predicate Australia's defences on such tentative and tenuous forecasting.[39]

A more objective examination of the threat assessments made by the Department of Defence shows that there were a number of important caveats attached to the basically optimistic forecasts of this period. First, there was the question of receiving warning times about major changes in Australia's strategic environment[40] - if adequate early warning was not provided by an effective intelligence system, then there would be a corresponding weakening in the degree of certainty and confidence attached to the estimates. Second, the official assessments gave considerable emphasis to the unpredictability of Australia's threat environment. For example, in 1973, the Director of the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) observed that because there was no imminent or identifiable threat it did not necessarily follow that Australia faced 'a more relaxed and comfortable world'.[41]

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38   ibid., p.81.

39   See ibid., pp.81-83, for an informative account of this debate. Also R. O'Neill in Hudson, *Australia in World Affairs,1971-75*, pp.15-16.

40   Defence Submission to JCFAD, p.12.

41   Cited in Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.31.

Unsurprisingly, a great deal of attention was still devoted to the capabilities and intentions of states which had been perceived historically as threats to national security. In 1973, three countries were identified by the Secretary of the Department of Defence as having 'contingency hostile capabilities likely to have the greatest implications' for Australia - they were Japan, China and Indonesia.[42] Of these, Indonesia was still regarded as the most likely future protagonist, notwithstanding the cordial state of relations at the time.

The Timor Crisis

The caveats attached to the official assessments were in a sense borne out by the sudden deterioration in Australian-Indonesian relations precipitated by the Timor crisis of 1975. When Labor came to power in 1972, the Whitlam Government (for reasons other than the traditional security preoccupations of the previous LCP governments) regarded relations with Indonesia as fundamental to Australia's foreign policy. Labor saw Indonesia as the gateway to Asia, and Whitlam himself was committed to broadening links with Australia's most populous and significant neighbour. Whitlam made a point of establishing a warm personal rapport with President Suharto, and a number of significant initiatives were taken to improve bilateral relations with Indonesia, such as the signing of an agreement on the sea-bed boundary between Australia and Indonesian Timor in October 1972,[43] and the resolution of the Papua New Guinea - Irian Jaya border in February 1973.[44]

By the time of the coup against the Salazar Government in Portugal, in April 1974, there was broad consensus on both the right and left of Australian politics that the maintenance of friendly and cooperative relations with the Suharto Government should be a central tenet of Australia's foreign policy. As the new Portugese government began to implement its decolonisation policy, and Indonesian expressions of concern about the future of the Portugese colony in

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42 Minute from Sir Arthur Tange to L. Barnard, Minister for Defence, 25 January 1973, cited in ibid., p.34.

43 J. Ingleson in Hudson, *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, p.28.

44 ibid.

Timor became more vocal, the Whitlam Government made it quite clear that it would not become responsible for the decolonisation of East Timor and that its favoured solution was a union of the Portugese colony with Indonesia through an 'internationally acceptable act of self-determination'.[45]

After fighting broke out between pro- and anti-independence groups in East Timor, Whitlam stated in Parliament, in August 1975, that his Government remained 'opposed to Australian military involvement' and 'did not regard itself as a party principal' in East Timor. He acknowledged 'Indonesia's predominant interest' in the future of the territory and rejected the argument that Australia had any national obligation or interest which would compel it to become 'reinvolved in colonial or postcolonial affairs' in East Timor.[46]

In retrospect, it is not surprising that the dictates of 'realpolitik' proved decisive in Canberra's decision to accede to Indonesia's forced incorporation of East Timor. For a brief period during and immediately after the Second World War, Timor did occupy a prominent position in Australia's strategic priorities, and was considered so vital that Australian troops were committed to the island in an attempt to deny it as a base from which Japan could launch attacks against the northern part of the continent. However by the 1970s, East Timor had 'drifted back to the obscurity of the last century'[47] while, as already noted, the whole thrust and momentum of government policy in the areas of foreign affairs and defence was directed at maintaining good relations with Indonesia.

Moreover, the professional advice from the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence was firmly in favour of acceding to Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor. Australia's Ambassador to Jakarta, Richard Woolcott, argued that Australian domestic criticism of Indonesia's East Timor policy, and criticism by the Government itself, could and should be contained in order to preserve the 'long-term

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45   Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed*, p.81.
46   Speech by Prime Minister G. Whitlam to Parliament, 26 August 1975, Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.775-776.
47   Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed*, p.136.

national interest'.[48] Woolcott also suggested that it would be desirable to negotiate an offshore minerals regime with the Indonesian Government (along the unresolved sea-bed boundary between East Timor and Australia) rather than with Portugal or an independent East Timor state.[49]

The underlying dynamic of Australian policy on East Timor, however, was the long-established fear that a deterioration in relations with Indonesia could directly threaten Australia's security interests in its own backyard. In October 1975, these security concerns were clearly and forcefully presented to the Government by the Department of Defence in an internal Minute authored by Bill Pritchett, who was then head of the Department's Strategic and International Policy Division. Pritchett argued that:

> what is ultimately, and most importantly, at stake in relations with Indonesia is the defence interest ... A secure, united and well disposed Indonesia is therefore a basic and enduring desideratum of our strategic policy. At the same time, Indonesia is the country most favourably placed to attack Australia. It would already be capable of low-level harassment that would create difficult defence problems ... Assessments over the years have rated military threat from Indonesia as improbable, and this is still the assessment. The assessment rests heavily, however, on the continuation of the friendly and cooperative

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48 Cited in B. Toohey and M. Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks* (Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1987), p.187.

49 Cable from R. Woolcott, Ambassador to Indonesia, to A. Renouf, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, 17 August 1975. J. Walsh and G. Munster *Documents on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1968-1975* (J.R. Walsh and G.J. Munster, Hong Kong, 1980). This book was barred from distribution as the result of an injunction taken out by the Commonwealth Government in the High Court. Munster subsequently published a summary of the key documents contained in the banned book together with his own commentary in a later book entitled, *Secrets of State: A Detailed Assessment of the Book They Banned* (Angus and Robertson, Sydney,1982), p.79.

relations that have prevailed for most of the period since the foundation of the Republic.[50]

On 7 December 1975, only days before the fall of the Whitlam Government, Indonesian troops assaulted the Timorese capital of Dili.[51] By then, however, Australia had effectively acquiesced to the Indonesian invasion, despite the Government's public condemnation of Indonesia's action.[52] The incoming LCP Government, led by Malcolm Fraser, had already indicated that its *de facto* policy on Timor would be little different from that of the outgoing Government.

The Fraser Government: The Cold War Revisited

Malcolm Fraser, who probably dominated his Government's foreign policy more than any other Australian Prime Minister since Hughes, had a distinctly different world view to that of Whitlam. Whereas Whitlam had been essentially optimistic and internationalist in his outlook, and a firm supporter of detente, Fraser was a pessimist and very much in the traditional, 'realist' mould of Australian conservative politicians, albeit with some aberrations in regard to China and South Africa.[53] While the foreign policy of the Fraser Government was, on the whole, not radically different from that of its

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50 Minute from First Assistant Secretary, W. Pritchett, to Minister for Defence, W. Morrison, 9 October 1975. Cited in Toohey and Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks*, p.184. The Department of Defence was also concerned that a Fretilin regime would be of the revolutionary variety, comparable with Frelimo in Mozambique, which could spread communism and anti-Western influence in the region, particularly in Papua New Guinea.

51 Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed*, p.282.

52 Ingleson in Hudson, *Australia in World Affairs, 1971-75*, p.290.

53 At one stage, Fraser appeared eager to enlist China in a kind of quadrilateral alliance with the United States, Japan and Australia to contain Soviet power in the Indo-Pacific region. See the transcripts of Fraser's meeting with Chinese Premier, Hua Kuo-feng, on 20 June 1976, cited in Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.787-788.

Labor predecessor, the one area in which Fraser did diverge significantly was in his attitude and approach to the Soviet Union.

In his first major foreign policy speech,[54] Fraser criticised the Whitlam Government for its lack of realism in international affairs, and extended that criticism to those who placed undue faith in detente between the United States and the Soviet Union, which in Fraser's eyes had not brought the promised era of peace and security. The most striking aspect of Fraser's speech was his vilification of the Soviet Union, which he held primarily responsible for the increase in international tensions and therefore the 'deeply disturbing world environment' which countries like Australia faced. More pointedly, the Prime Minister observed that:

> Reasonable people can ... reasonably conclude that the Soviet Union still seeks to expand its influence throughout the world in order to achieve Soviet primacy ... Its actions all too often appear inconsistent with the aim of reducing world tension.[55]

Alan Renouf, the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs under Gough Whitlam, and Fraser's Ambassador to the United States, later made some interesting observations about this particular speech and Fraser's generally anti-Soviet stance. The first draft of the speech, which Renouf felt was even more antagonistic towards Moscow than the final text, was apparently written by Fraser himself and his personal staff. Renouf felt that:

> had the original text been pronounced, it is highly likely that there would have been a violent reaction from the Soviet Union, possibly even a breach of diplomatic relations.[56]

While Renouf's characterisation of the Australian Prime Minister's speech may have been a little overdrawn, there is little doubt that Fraser had a deep-seated, emotional and ideological distrust of the

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54 Speech by Prime Minister M. Fraser to Parliament, 1 June 1976, *CN*, vol.47, 1976.

55 ibid., p.304.

56 A. Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser and Foreign Policy* (Australian Professional Publications, Sydney, 1986), p.84.

Soviet Union,[57] and believed that Moscow harboured global ambitions which were aggressively expansionist and a threat to Australia's own security interests.

So after a brief interregnum, in which both major political parties accepted that Australia faced no direct threat to its sovereignty and well-being, the nation appeared to be confronted by a resurgent and dangerous former enemy, the Soviet Union. The rest of the Government followed the Prime Minister's lead, although there were different degrees of emphasis as to the extent of the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock, for example, took a relatively moderate line, while Minister for Defence Jim Killen was responsible for the most extreme statement on the Soviet threat, from which he later resiled.[58]

In its first year in office, the Fraser Government had a major credibility problem in reconciling its hard-line views on the Soviet Union with the assessments of its own strategic and intelligence advisers. The 1975 Strategic Basis Paper had recognised the potential for Soviet penetration of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, but considered that the strategic and political opportunities open to the Soviet Union would not provide a 'sufficient basis for any significant challenge to the strategic position of the United States in the Pacific' or, by association, Australia's interests as an ally of the United States. The 1975 paper also recognised that Moscow had legitimate interests of its own in the area, and continued to affirm that:

> there was no present likelihood of major strategic pressure or major military threat against Australia, its territories, maritime resources, zones or lines of communication.[59]

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57   According to Renouf, dating back at least to the Cuban missile crisis; ibid., pp.41-42.

58   Killen claimed, on 30 June 1976, that the Soviet military build-up posed a direct threat to Australia. Cited in Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.35.

59   Defence Committee Minute, No. 11/1975, 3 October 1975, published in the *Bulletin*, 12 June 1976. Meaney, *Documentary History*, pp.778-780.

The Fraser solution was two-fold. Like Whitlam before him he ordered a rewrite of the inherited Strategic Basis Paper, justifying it on the grounds that it was not an adequate basis for formulating defence policy.[60] The 1976 Strategic Basis Paper, entitled 'Australia's Strategic Analysis and Defence Policy Objectives (ASADPO)', was preceded by the 'International Strategic Outlook (ISO)'; a broad-raging intelligence analysis of significant regional and global developments, prepared by JIO for the National Intelligence Committee.[61] ASADPO found that Australia shared with its allies 'a basic community of interests in strategic opposition to the USSR'.[62] It focused much more closely on the Soviet Union, both regionally and globally, than its three predecessors, and also addressed in some detail the issue of possible Soviet nuclear strikes against United States military and intelligence facilities in Australia.[63]

Armed with documentation more sympathetic to the Government's position on the Soviet Union, although probably not to the extent that the Prime Minister or Defence Minister Killen would have liked, Fraser also reinterpreted the basic 'no major threat' assessment in a way which emphasised the uncertainties and caveats which had always been attached to the internal Defence Department papers upon which this judgement had been based. In September 1976, Prime Minister Fraser delivered the Roy Milne Lecture, in which he said:

> A statement that there is no 'direct threat' to Australia does not mean that there are no foreseeable problems or dangers in our international environment. It simply means that there is no country foreseeably prepared to launch an assault on Australia. Yet in the recent past we have seen the claim that 'there is no

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60 Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', p.11.

61 ibid., p.12.

62 Toohey and Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks*, p.224.

63 The possibility of a nuclear attack from the Soviet Union was first canvassed in the 1973 Strategic Basis Paper, which assessed the threat to Australia from a Soviet nuclear strike as a 'remote contingency'. See Ball, 'The Politics of Defence Decision Making in Australia', pp.35-36. These themes were reflected in the 1976 Defence White Paper.

direct threat to Australia' now, or for the next fifteen years, taken to mean that there are no risks or dangers in the international environment - that our defence capacity can be run down without any adverse consequences for our security, and that our foreign policy can largely ignore issues of security.[64]

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, in 1979, taken in conjunction with other Soviet military initiatives in Africa and the expansion of the Soviet air and naval facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang in Vietnam, seemed to lend plausibility to Fraser's thesis that the Soviet Union was an aggressively expansionist power. Following a whirlwind tour of Paris, Bonn, London and Washington, in which he discussed the Afghanistan issue with his hosts,[65] in February 1980 Fraser made his second major speech on foreign policy to Parliament, in which he condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in harsh and unforgiving terms.

Fraser argued that the world was 'facing probably its most dangerous crisis since World War 2'[66] and that the Afghanistan crisis had changed 'substantially for the worse the strategic order underpinning Australia's security'.[67] Fraser went on to list the major strategic implications for Australia. First, there was an increased threat to Australia's major oil supply route from the Middle East. Second, Southern Asia was menaced on both its western and eastern flanks by the Soviet Union, or its proxies. In the case of the eastern flank, Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia was accomplished with the 'active and massive support of the Soviet Union'. Third, the Soviet Union was likely to seek to 'enhance its strategic posture in the West Pacific, possibly in areas which directly affect Australia's security'.[68] Finally, Fraser declared that 'the age of detente' was over.[69]

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64   *CN*, vol.47, 1976, p. 476.

65   Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser and Foreign Policy*, p.91.

66   Speech to Parliament by Prime Minister M. Fraser, 19 February 1980, *AFAR*, vol.51, 1980, p.16.

67   ibid., p.23.

68   ibid., p.24.

69   ibid., p.28.

Anti-Soviet rhetoric continued to characterise the Government's declaratory policies in foreign affairs and defence for the remainder of its period in office, but the assessments provided by its professional advisers were, for the most part, significantly less alarmist and more circumspect in their evaluation of the Soviet threat. While the 1976 and 1979 Strategic Basis Papers certainly devoted more attention to the Soviet Union, the basic thrust of their judgements was that the prospect of major, direct assault on Australia, was 'remote and improbable',[70] and that the Soviet Union was highly unlikely to militarily threaten Australia or its territories.[71]

The official assessments also portray a more hard-headed recognition of the formidable strategic, logistic and political constraints on would-be attackers.[72] Even a superpower like the Soviet Union could not easily mount a serious, non-nuclear attack against Australia; while closer to home, there were also significant limitations on the strategic capabilities of Indonesia, despite its substantial armed forces. The 1976 Strategic Basis Paper considered that a 'major threat would be beyond Indonesia's own capability for at least a decade, and probably longer', and that even its capacity for medium-level threat would continue to be limited for many years.[73] Significantly, the paper concluded that the East Timor issue did not impact directly on Australia's security interests, although it 'had strained Australia's political relations with Indonesia'.[74] Then followed the blunt assertion that the defense interest favoured 'acceptance of Indonesia's fait accompli in East Timor, and cessation of political criticism of Indonesia about self-determination'.[75]

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70 See, for example, the testimony by Defence Minister J. Killen at the Sub-Committee Hearing of the JCFAD, on 18 March 1981. JCFAD, *Threats to Australia's Security*, p.38.

71 ibid., p.32.

72 These were reflected in statements by Defence Minister Killen. See his speech to Parliament on 29 March 1979, *CN*, vol.50, 1979, p.189.

73 Indonesian military pressure against Papua New Guinea was considered, but dismissed as unlikely. Toohey and Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks*, p.239.

74 ibid., p.237.

75 ibid.

Space was also devoted to China and Japan. Military attack on Australia was considered 'most unlikely to become a Chinese objective for the foreseeable future'. China's military posture was 'one of national defence' and it neither 'threatened nor supported' other powers of direct defence concern to Australia. In the longer term, however, China 'could in time establish a primary status in the region that would be of substantial political and strategic consequence for Australia'.[76] In regard to Japan, the 1976 paper observed that:

> until memories of the Japan of the 1930s and 1940s have died away, fear of Japan as a potential threat some time in the future is likely to persist in Australian public perceptions ... however, assessments have repeatedly found Japan uninterested in large scale military development.[77]

A cautionary caveat was appended to the effect that, because of Japan's potential to destabilise global equilibrium, it was in Australia's interests to limit Japan's military capabilities.[78]

The relatively sanguine judgements of the Strategic Basis Papers were not shared by the general population. Although a vocal minority of Australians rejected the Government's anti-Soviet stance and were sceptical of Fraser's claims that the Soviet Union was a dangerously aggressive power, the public generally accepted the Government's view. For example, when Fraser was elected to office, some 43 per cent of Australians questioned in a Morgan Gallup poll felt that the country faced a security threat from other countries. By 1980, this figure had dramatically increased to 63 per cent.[79]

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76 ibid., p.229.

77 ibid., p.230.

78 ibid.

79 N.Meaney, T. Matthews, and S. Encel, *The Japanese Connection: A Survey of Australia's Leaders' Attitudes Towards Japan and the Australian-Japan Relationship* (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1988), p.48. The full poll results are shown at Annex B. See also the analysis written by T. Matthews and J. Ravenhill, 'ANZUS, The American Alliance and External Threats: Australian Elite Attitudes', *Australian Outlook*, vol.41, no.3, December 1987, pp.161-171.

Of those countries identified as representing the greatest threat to Australia, the Soviet Union was singled out as the most likely source of threat by 12 per cent of those sampled in 1975, 20 per cent in 1976, and a massive 40 per cent in 1980.[80] In the wake of the Timor crisis there was also a considerable increase in the number of people who saw Indonesia as the principal danger to Australia. In a Gallup poll conducted in 1975, 7 per cent of respondents identified Indonesia as the main threat to national security. That figure had doubled to 14 per cent by 1978; comparable with China, but less than the percentage for the Soviet Union.[81]

The Hawke Government: Pragmatism and Moderation

The anti-Soviet atmospherics of Australian foreign policy continued in the first year of the Hawke Labor Government, which was elected in 1983. Much of this had to do with Hawke's own innate suspicion of the Soviet Union, going back to his trade union days, and his determination not to repeat the perceived mistakes of the Whitlam Government which gained a reputation for its iconoclastic and quirkish pursuit of foreign policy causes which were widely interpreted as anti-American and capitalised on, to considerable effect, by the Opposition. Hawke's anxiety to establish the pro-Western and pragmatic credentials of his Government was heightened by the Combe-Ivanov affair, in which a KGB officer at the Soviet Mission in Canberra was alleged to have been well on the way to recruiting David Combe, a former Federal Secretary of the ALP.

In his first statement on foreign policy, Foreign Minister Bill Hayden took considerable care to reaffirm Australia's alliance with the United States, which he viewed 'as fundamental to Australia's national

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80 Campbell, *Australian Public Opinion on National Security Issues*, p.27. See also R. Sunderland, *Australia's Changing Threat Perceptions*, Working Paper No. 78 (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1984) p.3, and Annex C.

81 Campbell, *Australian Public Opinion on National Security Issues*, p.27.

security and foreign and defence policies'.[82] Prime Minister Hawke was critical of the Soviet Union, although in less vitriolic and extreme terms than Malcolm Fraser. He also adhered to the view that the build-up of Soviet facilities at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, warranted monitoring and was of concern, because these facilities provided the Soviet Union with 'a unique opportunity to extend surveillance activities into areas adjacent to Australia's trade routes and in our area of security concern'.[83] However, there was no suggestion, as during the Fraser years, that the activities of the Soviet Union had direct implications for Australia's security interests, or that there was 'in any immediate sense, a threat of aggression'.[84] The Hawke Government also maintained that its threat assessment was the same 'as for the previous Government ... that in the foreseeable future we are not confronted by any likely regional threat'.[85]

The 1983 Strategic Basis Paper developed many of the themes already enunciated by Hawke and Foreign Minister Bill Hayden. The Office of National Assessments (ONA), which had been established in 1977 after the Hope Inquiry into Australia's intelligence community and was directly answerable to Hawke through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, had assumed principal carriage for assessing Australia's international security environment in a document known as the Australian Security Outlook (ASO).[86] The substantive judgements of the ASO, which formed the nucleus of the 1983 Strategic Basis Paper, differed little from those produced during the Fraser period. A Soviet nuclear strike on the joint United States-

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82   Speech to Parliament by W. Hayden, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 15 September 1983, *AFAR*, vol.54., 1983, p.512.

83   Interview of Prime Minister R. Hawke, 'US News and World Report', 20 June 1983, p.58. Cited in R. Sunderland, *Australia's Changing Threat Perceptions*, p.10.

84   ibid.

85   Speech to Parliament by W. Hayden, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 15 September, 1983. *AFAR*, vol.54, 1983, p.516.

86   The ASO was written by ONA in conjunction with JIO and was the intelligence assessment from which the Strategic Basis Paper was formulated. It was, in effect, a renamed ISO, previously prepared by JIO. See Statement to Parliament by Attorney-General, G. Evans, 10 May 1983, *AFAR*, vol.55, 1984, p.502.

Australian defence-related facilities was considered unlikely in any situation short of global nuclear war, and the risks were considered to be warranted as the United State's nuclear deterrent was regarded as a major factor in reducing the risk of nuclear conflict.[87]

In general terms, the risks and uncertainties faced by Australia appeared to be no greater than they were when the previous Strategic Basis Paper was prepared in 1979,[88] and Australia's strategic circumstances seemed 'favourable for the foreseeable future'.[89]   In regard to Indonesia, which was considered to represent the most likely threat to Australia's security interests, the 1983 Strategic Basis Paper asserted that Australia's 'enduring strategic interest' was 'to avoid significant Indonesian attack against, or foreign occupation of Papua New Guinea[90] ... Implicit in Australia's defence of Papua New Guinea against attack from Indonesia [was the] risk of attack against Australia itself'.[91]   However, Indonesia was thought unlikely to develop a capacity 'to sustain intensive joint operations against Australia [for] at least 10 years'.[92]

The one area in which the 1983 Strategic Basis Paper was noticeably different from its immediate predecessors was the tone of its presentation.   Written in blunt, 'power politics' terms, the document would arguably have been more appropriately the handmaiden of Malcolm Fraser's strategic world view, rather than that of a traditional Australian Labor government. Considerable attention was given to the broader international environment dominated, in the paper's view, by the dynamics of the central balance and the strategic and political rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union. There

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87   Toohey and Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks*, pp.247-248.

88   Statement vo Parliament by Attorney-General G. Evans, 10 May 1983, *AFAR*, vol.55, 1984, p.504.

89   ibid.

90   Toohey and Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks*, p.264.

91   ibid., p.263.

92   ibid., p.265. Indonesia was assessed as being able to deploy, in 1983, an 'attacking force of some seven lightly equipped battalions on to nearby Australian mainland territory', but this force would have been highly vulnerable to Australian counter-attack, and was not considered to be a realistic prospect. ibid., p.262.

was also a great deal of scepticism expressed about the intentions of the Soviet Union and anxiety about its military capabilities. The conclusion that enhanced Soviet access to the Southwest Pacific would be inimical to Australia's interests[93] was one of which the Fraser Government would have undoubtedly approved.

Australia's Benign International Outlook

As the Hawke Government grew in confidence, it began to resile from some of its earlier criticisms of the Soviet Union and to encourage the development of a more congenial and broadly based bilateral relationship. This was probably partly attributable to the influence of Foreign Minister Bill Hayden, who as a former leader of the ALP carried more political clout in the Party and Government than probably any Foreign Minister since Paul Hasluck in the Menzies Government. Mikhail Gorbachev's assumption to power, ushering in a new era of openness and reform in the Soviet Union, also made it easier for the Labor Government to deal with Moscow and to contain and deflect criticism from the conservative spectrum of Australian politics, in a way that the Whitlam Government had never been able to successfully manage.

In terms of Australia's changing threat perceptions, the elevation of Kim Beazley to the Defence portfolio was of considerable consequence. Beazley brought to the position an unusual combination of political skills and enthusiasm for strategic and international affairs, based on significant academic prowess in the area, and he immediately began to grapple with the central dilemma of Australian defence policy: how to develop a coherent Australian defence strategy and force structure, in the absence of identifiable threats. Beazley commissioned Paul Dibb, a defence academic and former Deputy Director of JIO, to conduct a thorough review of Australia's defence capabilities. In his Review,[94] Dibb examined the key judgements

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93   ibid., p.259.
94   P. Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence, March 1986 (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986).

made by the official strategic guidance since the early 1970s and arrived at the following conclusions:

- Australia faced no specific military threat, and substantial threat would take many years to emerge.

- Nowhere did Australia's military forces face the forces of another power and there were no major issues of territorial sovereignty which could involve Australia in large-scale conflict.

- Indonesia had neither the motive nor capability to threaten Australia with substantial military assault.

- Other potential regional adversaries such as China, Vietnam and Japan were preoccupied with strategic problems in their own areas of principal security concern, and had little or no motivation to threaten Australia, and limited capability to do so.

- Were a potentially hostile power to gain access to military bases in the South Pacific (particularly in Papua New Guinea) this would have direct and important implications for Australia's security interests. Nevertheless, the air and sea gap to Australia's east would be a formidable problem and any notional enemy would have to protect long and vulnerable lines of communication.

- Even the Soviet Union had only limited, distant amphibious-assault capacities and experience, and any Soviet adventurism in the South Pacific would be opposed by the powerful maritime forces of the United States.

- It would take at least ten years for the development of a regional capacity to threaten Australia with substantial assault, although lower levels of conflict could arise within shorter warning times.[95]

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95 My summary of the judgements made by Dibb in ibid., pp.32-34.

These conclusions were endorsed by Beazley and the Government in the White Paper on Defence which followed shortly after,[96] as was Dibb's formulation of the concept of warning time, which was critical to Beazley's resolution of the policy dilemma referred to earlier.

As noted by Dibb, the idea of warning time and its related threat recognition models had been a central element in Australian defence planning since the 1970s. In 1983, after a decade of internal debate, the Department of Defence attempted to construct a threat recognition model, incorporating the concept of warning time, which it hoped to develop further as an analytical or policy tool for predicting the nature, extent and immediacy of potential threats.[97] The model's originators made some useful observations about the relationship of threats to the national interest, and analysed in considerable detail the specific national interests which were thought to be involved in some 36 case studies of conflicts which occurred between 1938 and 1973.[98]

However, the Department considered the model to be analytically unsound and its predictive capacity to be problematical at best. The failure of this approach did not invalidate the concept of warning time in the eyes of the departmental hierarchy or Minister Beazley, who later refined, codified and publicised the concept in a way which enabled him to overcome the strategic and political difficulties associated with the formulation of a defence policy in the absence of visible major threats. As defined by Beazley:

> the Australian concept of warning time is about calculating the possibilities for a major attack on us by placing limits on what is physically possible in terms of the forces and equipment available to a putative enemy, and the time that would be required to improve them ... It is not sensible to think of warning time as a finite period in which we will not be faced

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96 Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987), Chapter 2, particularly p.22.

97 See A.T. Ross, 'Threat Recognition and Response', CSE Note 53, vol.1, August 1986 (Central Studies Establishment, Department of Defence, Canberra, 1986).

98 ibid., p.5.

with military threat of any kind. Rather the concept provides a basis on which we can assess our own priorities for defence preparation and the time scales for our own defence effort.[99]

Concomitant with warning time, Beazley also gave greater emphasis to what had previously been known as low-level contingencies, but in the jargon of the day were referred to as low-level and escalated low-level conflicts.[100] The Hawke Government was thus able to effectively rebut the arguments of its critics that its threat assessments were unrealistically optimistic and flawed. It did so by acknowledging the need to defend against lesser but more credible contingencies,[101] while defending the strategic legacy of the Whitlam Government, premised on the subsequently much parodied, 'no threat for 15 years assessment'.

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[99] Statement to Parliament by K. Beazley, Minister for Defence, 1 March 1989, *CPD*, vol.165, pp.220 and 222.

[100] Ministerial statement by G. Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia's Regional Security* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, December 1989), p.16.

[101] See Answer to a Question in the Parliament by K.Beazley, Minister for Defence, 2 June 1986, *AFAR*, vol.57, 1986, p.507. Beazley said, 'there is a second element which hardly ever gets any mention. What about the situation that occurs of threats less than those to our territorial integrity but, nevertheless, to substantial national interests ... we would agree that this has not had a sufficient degree of emphasis in the force structure planning under the previous Government'.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

While there has been no shortage of public and popular pronouncements about the identity of would-be attackers, it has been left primarily to the official assessments to elaborate detailed scenarios about the precise nature or form a notional danger might take. The central concerns of Australia's defence planners and military men may be summarised as follows:

1. In the colonial period, the prevailing orthodoxy was that Britain's European competitors, through their territorial acquisitions in the Southwest Pacific, could jeopardise British political, strategic and commercial supremacy in the region, thereby threatening Australia's security.

2. European and Asian powers could carry out raids or make lodgements on Australia's northern coast, as well as threaten Australia's trade and sea lines of communications. The object of these attacks would be to extract territorial, commercial, financial or political concessions from Australia.

3. Japan and China could seek to dominate Australia's region either through the projection of superior naval and military force, by subversive means, or a combination of both.

4. From the late 1960s onwards, discussion of threats has increasingly focussed on low-level and escalated low-level contingencies, and the associated concept of warning time.

Are We a Vulnerable Country?

A nation's perception of the origin, nature and level of potential external threats is fundamental to its sense of security and well-being. Most states, at one time or another, have felt threatened or

have actually been threatened by external powers, but there is no apparent correlation between the ability of states to defend themselves and their perception of vulnerability. For example, small and weak countries, such as Denmark and Costa Rica, arguably feel less threatened than the world's two most powerful military nations, the Soviet Union and the United States. Drawing on the analogy by Arnold Wolfers,[1] if one were to construct a scale measuring national insecurity, Australia would stand close to the pole indicating a high level of insecurity and anxiety about external threats.

This sense of vulnerability sits rather oddly with the relatively benign geostrategic environment which Australia has experienced for most of its history. In fact it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Australia is one of the safest places on earth in which to live by virtue of its geopolitical isolation from the centres of world conflict, the substantial sea and air gap which separates it from its neighbours, its sheer size, and the enormous logistical, transport and communication problems which a potential enemy would face in attempting to launch a substantial military assault against the Australian mainland. On the one occasion when the nation faced a major threat to its security, from the formidable imperial Japanese Army in 1942, the Japanese General Staff rejected an invasion of Australia largely because of the geographical and logistical obstacles Japan would have encountered.[2]

Why then has Australian foreign policy been so dominated by security issues, and the nation so fearful of external threats for most of its history?

Australia's sense of vulnerability can be linked directly to the circumstances in which the colonies were first established at the end of the eighteenth century. Like other European enclaves transplanted to the furthest reaches of empire, Australians continued to identify with the metropolitan power, in this case Britain, long after London had divested itself of its colonial obligations and most of its formal links. The strong attachment to British values and institutions seriously

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1   A. Wolfers, 'National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol', *Political Science Quarterly,* (vol.LXV11, no.4), December, 1952, p.492.

2   Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Threats to Australia's Security: Their Nature and Probability* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981), p.62.

impeded the integration of Australia into the region of which she was geographically a part, and discouraged Australians from attempting to understand and familiarise themselves with the vastly different Asian and Pacific societies which inhabited Australia's immediate neighbourhood. The sense of alienation felt by the colonists was heightened by the great distance which separated Australia from the 'mother country' and by a growing belief that the sparsely populated continent, with its abundant resources, made it an attractive prize for Britain's European rivals, and Asian powers such as Japan and China.

The arrival of significant numbers of Chinese and Japanese in the latter half of the nineteenth century challenged the racial and cultural homogeneity of the colonies, and gave rise to the stereotypes, encapsulated in phrases such as the 'yellow peril', which were to dominate Australia's view of Asia for over a century. These xenophobic images were powerful evocations which fuelled and reinforced the nation's security neurosis. Rather than seeing Australia's remoteness as a strategic asset, the colonists regarded their isolation from Britain as a positive disadvantage and one that could only be overcome by ensuring that Britain retained substantial and diverse interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The notion of Britain as a protector of Australia's national security increased rather than diminished after Federation, as Australians became uncomfortably aware of the growth in Japanese economic and military power and their own limited defence resources.

After the Second World War, when Britain was clearly unable and unwilling to maintain its hegemony in a region distant from its own primary area of strategic interest, protector status was transferred to another 'white power', the United States, a nation perceived as having similar values, speaking the same language and sharing a political and colonial heritage bequeathed by Britain. While psychologically reassuring, the close security attachment to the United States further delayed Australia's assimilation into the region and did nothing to encourage the nation to break down the old stereotypes associated with Asian threats.

Concerns about external threats were by no means uniformly held. A significant minority of Australians have disputed the conventional wisdom about particular dangers to national security, whether from nineteenth century French imperialism, Japanese

expansionism in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Chinese communism in the 1950s and 1960s, or Soviet adventurism in the 1970s and 1980s. For most of its history, however, Australians have displayed something of a siege mentality and a perception of external threats which has been clearly disproportionate to the realities of Australia's international situation.

The Official Assessments: How Accurate?

An important question which must be asked is how well have Australia's professional strategic and intelligence analysts served the nation in accurately predicting the true nature and extent of external threats?

There is no doubt that the official threat assessments have been considerably more balanced, informed and circumspect than the comparable political and public rhetoric of the day. Prior to the Second World War, the relatively few assessments which were commissioned by Australian governments were heavily influenced by the attitudes of the British defence establishment and were largely dependent on British intelligence judgements and strategic estimates. Nevertheless, men like Hutton and Creswell, even without the advantage of a national intelligence capability, were able to make reasonably informed and accurate forecasts about Australia's threat environment. They concluded that invasion was unlikely, and that the major threats to be guarded against were raids and the interdiction of Australia's sea lines of communication and trade routes. These judgements were borne out by the abortive raids initiated by the German Pacific Fleet Commander in the first few months of the First World War. All the early assessments also argued for greater self-reliance in defence matters, and pointed to the dangers of over-reliance on the British Navy.

Perhaps the most serious error of judgement, with potentially grave consequences, was the failure to provide adequate warning of Japan's surprise southward advance in 1941, and to prepare for the possibility of a substantial Japanese attack against northern Australia. Defence planners, for the most part, had only vaguely conceived notions as to how a Pacific war might actually be fought, imagining that it would take place along the so-called 'Malay barrier', although it

was accepted that surface, air and submarine raids might take place against coastal shipping, and include small-scale lodgements on the mainland. Only a minority believed that the front line would actually be established in the Pacific islands proximate to Australia or on the continent itself.[3]

There were, however, mitigating circumstances. Australia was well aware of the possibility that war with Japan could break out at any time, as evidenced by the close questioning of Britain's intelligence estimates and war plans at the 1937 Imperial Conference and in the immediate pre-war years. However, the British were able to successfully placate the Australians whenever they expressed doubts about British strategic assessments or the efficacy of the Singapore strategy. Moreover, as already noted, Canberra's capacity for independent judgements and actions was limited, especially once its military forces and war plans were subsumed in the overall Commonwealth war strategy, which remained focused on Europe rather than the Pacific, even after Japan's entry into the war.

In 1942, fear that Japan might invade Australia infected the whole nation, although Australian assessments consistently concluded that it was unlikely that Japan would seek to occupy the southeastern rump of the mainland. They were, nevertheless, more pessimistic than the American and British intelligence estimates of the time; perhaps understandably so, given the speed of Japan's advance and the trauma induced by the first attacks against Australian soil by Japanese bombers.

During the Cold War, the Strategic Basis Papers were primarily concerned with the vulnerability of the newly emerging nations of Southeast Asia to communism. The great failure of these assessments was the inability of the authors to comprehend that communism was not a monolithic movement, directed in Asia by an omnipotent, malevolent and recidivist China. The fact that regional communist parties were all infused with an element of genuine nationalist sentiment was similarly overlooked, and the capacity and

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3   C. Hartley Grattan, 'The United States and the Southwest Pacific', cited in W. McMahon Ball, *Australia and Japan: Documents and Readings in Australian History* (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1969), p.67.

desire of China to challenge Western and Australian political and security interests in Southeast Asia was generally overestimated.

The 1976 Strategic Basis Paper accurately summed up the anxieties and preoccupations of this era, noting that in the post-war decades:

> Australian strategic policy was strongly influenced by anxiety that a substantial external power would come to dominate South East Asia and hence be favourably placed to exert pressure, or ultimately military threat, against Australia. China was the focus of concern. This perception was strongly influenced by the experience of Japan's expansion in the 1940s. The prevailing view of China, under its new communist regime, was of an aggressive power bent on thrusting southward. Another influence was uncertainty regarding the political character of the post-colonial regimes, and the apparent weakness of the nascent nation states in the face of heightened communist pressures.[4]

In unmistakeable disapproval of these earlier judgements, the 1976 paper concluded that:

> It seems necessary to rid Australian policy of the perceptions and preoccupations of that era.[5]

Despite their failings, in comparison with many of the statements emanating from government during the 1950s and 1960s the Strategic Basis Papers were far more moderate in tone and consistently downplayed the threat of direct military attack on Australia. Even during the West New Guinea dispute with Indonesia, and the subsequent crisis in relations generated by Sukarno's Confrontation with Malaysia, the Strategic Basis Papers were careful to note that any military conflict with Indonesia was unlikely to be prolonged, and that Indonesia had an extremely limited ability to pose a serious threat to Australia itself.

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4   Toohey and Wilkinson, *The Book of Leaks*, p.232.
5   ibid.

Since the early 1970s, the accuracy, perspicacity and profundity of the official estimates has improved significantly, for a number of reasons. These include general acceptance of the proposition that there are no major threats in prospect (despite a brief return to the atmospherics of the Cold War by the Fraser Government), the development of a more mature, independent and multi-dimensional foreign policy, and Australia's deepening ties with the Asia-Pacific region. All these factors have indirectly enhanced Australia's capacity for making informed judgements about its strategic environment without the ideological baggage and cultural rigidities which for so long have distorted Australia's view of the world and its sense of vulnerability to external threats.

What Australia has still not fully come to terms with is the increasing probability that the greatest threats to national security in the future may come not from military invasion or ideological subversion, but from what Gareth Evans has characterised as 'non-military factors'.[6] These include the effects of environmental degradation, international health problems like AIDS, the international narcotics trade, unregulated population flows and a host of other issues not normally associated with national security. Perhaps our strategic planners and analysts need to take more account of these factors in developing their contingency plans and forecasts of Australia's future threat environment.

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6   See Ministerial Statement by Senator G. Evans, *Australia's Regional Security*, pp.33-35.

ANNEX A: AUSTRALIA'S OFFICIAL THREAT ASSESSMENTS - A LIST OF SIGNIFICANT DOCUMENTS

Date Produced	Author	Title
1877	Sir William Jervois	Preliminary Report on Defence, New South Wales
1902	Major General E.T. Hutton, First Commandant of Australia's Military Forces	Minute Upon the Defence of Australia, 7 April 1902
1907	Captain W.R. Cresswell, Director of Naval Forces	Considerations Affecting the Naval Defence of the Commonwealth
1910	Field Marshal Viscount Kitchener	Memorandum on the Defence of Australia, 12 February 1910
1919	Viscount Jellicoe, Admiral of the British Fleet	Report of Admiral of the Fleet, Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia
1920	Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, Chairman of the Conference of Senior Military Officers	The Report of the Conference of Senior Officers to the Minister for Defence
1936/37	Department of Defence	Series of Memoranda prepared for the 1937 Imperial Conference. In terms of assessing the threat to Australia, the most important were those entitled: a. The Political and Strategical Considerations Relating to Imperial and Local Defence b. The German Colonies: Unoccupied Islands in the Pacific c. The Strategical Importance of the Pacific Islands d. Problems Relating to the Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1946	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1947	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1950	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	The Basic Objectives of British Commonwealth Defence Policy and General Strategy
1952	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	A Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1956	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1959	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1962	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1964	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1967	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1968	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1971	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy

Date Produced	Author	Title
1971	National Intelligence Committee (NIC)	The Environment of the 1980s
1971	Department of Defence (Policy Planning Branch)	Environment of Future Australian Military Operations (EFAMO)
1973	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1975	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1976	Department of Defence	The Defence of Australia 1976
1976	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1979	Office of National Assessments (ONA)	Australia's Security Outlook (ASO)
1979	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Australia's Strategic Analysis and Defence Policy Objectives (ASADPO)
1981	Department of Defence	Defence Force Capabilities Review (DFC-81)
1981	Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (JCFA&D)	Threats to Australia's Security: Their Nature and Probability
1983	Department of Defence (Defence Committee)	Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy
1986	Dr Paul Dibb, Ministerial Consultant	Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities
1987	Department of Defence	The Defence of Australia 1987
1989	Department of Defence	Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s (ASP-90)
1989	Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Australia's Regional Security

ANNEX B:
PERCENTAGE OF AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC PERCEIVING
COUNTRIES AS THREATS TO AUSTRALIA'S SECURITY
(BY YEAR)

	1967	1968	1969	1970	1976	1978	1980	1982
Some countries threaten Australia	52	52	51	54	43	46	63	51
No country threatens Australia	34	34	36	36	46	42	34	37
Not sure	14	14	13	10	11	12	3	12

Source: N. Meaney, T. Matthews, J. Encel, *The Japanese Connection: A Survey of Australia's Leaders' Attitudes Towards Japan and the Australian-Japan Relationship* (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1988), p.48.

ANNEX C:
POLL DATA ON AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC THREAT PERCEPTIONS

Do you believe the Western countries and Russia can continue to live peacefully together, or is there bound to be a major war sooner or later?

Date	Peace	War	Other	Pollster	Sample
1960	41	34	25	A	N/A
1961	43	37	20	A1581	1650
1963	58	26	16	A1689	1900

In your opinion are there any countries which are a threat to Australia's security?

Date	Agree	Disagree	Other	Pollster	Sample
1968	52	34	14	A2056	2000
1969	51	36	13	A203	N/A
*1975	58	29	13	M216	1905
1976	43	46	11	M	N/A
1978	46	42	12	M	N/A
1980	63	34	3	M	N/A
1982	51	37	12	M	N/A
1983	57	31	12	M1064	N/A

(* The 1975 question referred to 'menace' rather than threat, and specified 'in the next 10 years, requiring more spending on defence'.)

Those who responded that there was a threat to Australia's security, specified the following countries as the source of that threat:

Date	China	Russia	Vietnam	Indonesia	Japan	America
1968	32	11	14	6	5	3
1969	30	16	9	8	7	3
1967-69	31	14	11	7	6	2
1975	21	12	13	7	6	-
1976	17	20	2	10	7	4
1978	14	16	8	14	9	3
1980	14	40	7	11	6	7
1982	7	26	2	17	5	6
1983	13	37	7	15	6	5

Pollsters: A2056, A203, AGE, M216, AGE, AGE, AGE, M, M1064.
Source: D. Campbell, *Australian Public Opinion on National Security Issues*, Working Paper No.1 (Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1986), p.27.

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