The Australia-United States Alliance and the Management of Elite Opinion

An Institutional Analysis of the Australian American Leadership Dialogue

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

21 June, 2016
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A2/AD</td>
<td>Anti-Access/Area-Denial</td>
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<td>AALD</td>
<td>Australian American Leadership Dialogue</td>
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<td>ACRI</td>
<td>Australia-China Relations Institute</td>
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<td>ADF</td>
<td>Australian Defence Force</td>
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<td>AILF</td>
<td>Australia Israel Leadership Forum</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANZAM</td>
<td>Anglo, New Zealand, Australia, Malaya Area</td>
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<td>ANZUS</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ASIC</td>
<td>Australian Security and Investments Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASIO</td>
<td>Australian Security Intelligence Organisation</td>
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<td>ASIS</td>
<td>Australian Secret Intelligence Service</td>
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<td>ASPI</td>
<td>Australian Strategic Policy Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUSFTA</td>
<td>Australia United States Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>AUSMIN</td>
<td>Australia United States Ministerial Consultations</td>
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<td>AWD</td>
<td>Air-Warfare Destroyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWU</td>
<td>Australian Workers Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Committee on Public Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSIS</td>
<td>Centre for Strategic and International Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOA</td>
<td>Defence of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPRK</td>
<td>Democratic People’s Republic of Korea</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRS</td>
<td>Internal Revenue Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
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<td>IVLP</td>
<td>International Visitor Leadership Program</td>
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<td>IVP</td>
<td>International Visitor Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAM-GC</td>
<td>Joint Concept for Access and Manoeuvre in the Global Commons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHD</td>
<td>Landing Helicopter Dock</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIC</td>
<td>Newly Industrialised Country</td>
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<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCAP</td>
<td>Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEATO</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Track One Diplomacy</td>
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<td>T2</td>
<td>Track Two/Second Track Diplomacy</td>
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<td>T3</td>
<td>Track Three Diplomacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToDs</td>
<td>Tracks of Diplomacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIDIR</td>
<td>United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>USIA</td>
<td>United States Information Agency</td>
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<td>USSC</td>
<td>United States Studies Centre</td>
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<td>WWI</td>
<td>World War I</td>
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<td>WWII</td>
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<td>YLD</td>
<td>Young Leadership Dialogue</td>
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Abstract

This thesis has two main objectives. The first is to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy that holds the Australia-US alliance is a “special relationship” driven by mutual security interests and shared values. Traditional security anxieties and common cultural influences continue to drive the relationship. However, this thesis argues that support for the current alliance at the elite level primarily derives from the desire to sustain western control over regional and international affairs and extend Australia’s influence abroad.

The second objective is to provide the first comprehensive critical analysis of the role of the AALD in preserving alliance orthodoxy in Australia. Based in part on interviews with current and former participants, and informed by the literature on lobby groups, informal diplomacy and public diplomacy, this thesis identifies three main ways the AALD influences elite opinion. First, it carefully frames discussion and debate about the value of the alliance to Australia. Second, it facilitates the socialisation of Australian elites into alliance orthodoxy. Finally, it serves as a “gatekeeper” of the status quo and a litmus test on the alliance loyalty of potential future leaders.
INTRODUCTION

Understanding Australia’s Alliance-Reliance Mentality

The Australia-US alliance¹ is somewhat unusual when compared to other bilateral security relationships. Typically, alliances exist to confront an external threat or contain or balance one or more rival powers.² In contrast, the Australia-US alliance did not dissolve when the major threats offered as justification for its creation – Japanese militarism and Soviet/Chinese communist aggression – were no longer officially a concern. Australia’s enthusiastic embrace of the alliance continued into the post-Cold War era despite the security pay-offs becoming increasingly unclear and the costs remaining high.³

The conventional threat-centric explanations for the existence of the alliance are problematic. Japan, the Soviet Union and the PRC did not represent a credible direct threat to Australia during the Cold War. Other potential regional threats, such as Indonesia, lacked both the intent and the capability to launch a serious attack on mainland Australia. Although presented as a direct threat in public, communism was privately understood as a threat to western interests as a whole and not to Australia directly. Today, strategic concerns with respect to China’s rise are primarily about the potential threat Beijing poses to US primacy in Asia rather than any specific threat to Australia.⁴

¹ “The Australia-US alliance”, “the US alliance” and simply “the alliance” are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.
Nevertheless, conventional wisdom maintains that the alliance is indispensable as a deterrent against attack and, more importantly, for maintaining Australia’s self-reliant defence capability against all levels of potential threat. Indirectly, the alliance is seen to underpin Australia’s favourable regional security environment via its contribution to the American-led system of bilateral alliances in Asia. According to Australia’s 2016 Defence White Paper, American primacy is indispensable for ensuring a peaceful, prosperous and stable Asia-Pacific and a “rules-based global order”\(^5\). Additionally, the majority of Australian “strategic elites” today view US hegemony as preferable to any other system of regional security.\(^6\)

The apparent central importance of the alliance to Australia is reinforced by the “special relationship” narrative which holds that the alliance is built on a historical foundation of mutual security interests and shared values first forged in the joint blood sacrifices of WWII. Australia and American officials frequently assert that evidence of the special relationship can be found in the enduring joint commitment of both countries to promote peace, stability, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Chapter One of this thesis debunks the special relationship myth and demonstrates that the overriding guiding principle of the alliance is the maintenance of American hegemony and the favourable strategic and economic order it presides over. The commitment by Canberra and Washington to uphold the “rules-based global order” conveniently ignores the fact that the US largely sets the rules, ensuring the benefits of the international system primarily accrue to itself and that of its allies.\(^7\)

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expense of regional peace and stability, as well as the apparent shared commitments to freedom, human rights and the other so-called “foundational values” of the alliance.

Australia has a long tradition of relying on a powerful ally for its security despite the absence of any direct threats. For obvious historical and cultural reasons, Australia held fast to strategic dependence on Britain from the time of European colonisation through to WWII. Australians harboured a keen sense of vulnerability to the prospect of attack and yet, in the words of the Colonial Defence Committee in London in the late-nineteenth century, “there is no British territory so little liable to aggression as that of Australia”. There was no credible German threat to Australia during WWI and, although confronted by Japanese imperialism during WWII, there was no planned Japanese invasion of Australia.

Critics of the alliance have typically focused on Australia’s traditional security anxieties and other ideological and psychological predispositions to explain the contradiction between the remoteness of actual threats to Australia and the inability of elites in Canberra to kick the habit of dependency on “great and powerful friends”. Following from Australia’s dependence on Britain, this line of reasoning was initially employed as a means to explain Australia’s enthusiastic but misguided support for failed US military interventions during the Cold War – notably in Vietnam – and reiterated by supporters and critical observers since to explain the endurance of the alliance in the post-Cold War era.

The notion of Australian dependence, and even subservience, to the US was injected with new life during the particularly intimate relations that developed during the years of the John Howard and George W. Bush administrations, and, in

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particular, in the years following Australia’s participation in America’s bungled invasion of Iraq.  

Most recently, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott’s resurrection of the importance of the “Anglosphere” in international affairs prompted critics to question whether, in constructivist terms, “ideational factors and historical path dependency” are the most likely explanations for Australia’s enthusiastic embrace of the alliance.

The origins and nature of Australia’s enduring fear of invasion are well documented and explored in detail in Chapter Two. In sum, they derive from two main historical sources. The first is Australia’s relative powerlessness and geographic isolation from “natural” strategic partners in Europe and North America. Combined with deep and abiding cultural connections to the Anglosphere, Australia’s perception of its strategic vulnerability led to dependence on Britain, and later the US, as a means to ensure its security.

Popular theories of racial hierarchy that pervaded nineteenth and early-twentieth century Australia constitutes the second source of Australia’s security anxieties. Blinded by sentiments of white superiority and irrational fears of Asia, Australia maintained a strict immigration policy and held fast to alliances with the great Anglo-Saxon powers in order to ensure the survival of white Australia. The experience of Japanese imperialism during WWII solidified long-standing fears about the prospect of an Asian invasion, while the advent of the Cold War merged old fears about Asia with new fears about “international communism”.

While undoubtedly playing a significant role, irrational fears and cultural attachments alone do not provide an adequate explanation for the endurance of Australia’s alliance with the US. The notion that policy makers have consistently

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overlooked Australia’s unthreatening strategic environment for over sixty years in their alliance management calculations warrants scrutiny. As one discerning scholar points out:

When policies such as the ANZUS alliance have been pursued for so long (and at times at great cost) they cannot be considered as simply the result of mistaken perceptions of the world or personal failings of political will. They point to structural determinants of policy not enunciated in liberal or postmodern approaches.\(^\text{13}\)

Reliance on irrational security anxieties as an explanation for the alliance raises further questions; for example, why have Australian military contributions to American wars consistently been small in size and mostly symbolic? Far from reflecting deeply embedded paranoia, Australia’s alliance management politics indicates a shrewd calculation of the perceived national interest.\(^\text{14}\)

**Australia and the British Imperial Order in Asia**

While acknowledging the influence of security anxieties in Australian strategic culture, Chapter Two of this thesis also highlights the existence of an equally influential “imperialist spirit” that is connected to, but nevertheless distinct from, the traditional fear of invasion. Australians harboured fervently expansionist ambitions in the Southwest Pacific during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries – albeit a kind of sub-imperialism within the British Empire – founded on a mix of strategic, economic and nationalist motivations.

This imperialist spirit continued into the post-WWII period under the guise of Australia’s “special responsibilities” as a “metropolitan power” and a custodian of


\(^{14}\) For an insightful discussion on the problematic nature of the insurance rational as an explanation for Australia’s alliance with the US, see David McLean, Australia in the Cold War: A Historiographical Review, *The International History Review*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2001, pp. 299-321.
the British Empire in the Asia-Pacific. It manifested prominently in Australia’s ruling conservative parties in the 1950s and 1960s that were firmly opposed to self-determination for the peoples of Asia. Today, Australia’s neo-imperial mindset can be seen in its self-identification as a leading “middle power” holding obligations on behalf of the western-security community.

Chapter Two also highlights the politico-economic dimension to Australia’s alliance-reliance mentality. It argues that Australia’s security anxieties cannot be separated from the fact that Australia’s prosperity relied on the continuation of the British imperial project both at home and abroad. Although technically a part of the colonised world, Australia was able to break into the ranks of industrialised nations largely as a result of its privileged position within the British Empire and the global system of exploitation that sustained it.

One of the implications of Australia’s vested strategic and economic interests in the British Empire was the unqualified support for British imperialism to the furthest reaches of the globe; Australia upholding a special responsibility for bolstering Britain’s imperial position in the Middle East. Defending the Empire consisted of helping to thwart attempts by rival imperial powers to acquire British colonial possessions and quash popular indigenous movements seeking freedom and democracy from colonialism. The “loss” of any imperial possessions, it was reasoned – either by conquest or revolt – “would mean the denial of a source of British power which could be marshalled to defend Australia either directly or on a distant perimeter”.

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16 For an insightful account of how Australian forces were used in the service of British imperialism to crush a popular uprising in Egypt in 1919, and the atrocities committed by Australian soldiers in both Egypt and Syria during WWI, see Suzanne Brugger, *Australians and Egypt, 1914-1919*, Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1980.
In the context of Australia’s geostrategic position as a “status quo” power, risk-averse to changes “which could degrade its position of comfort and privilege”, far-fetched security justifications appear more like rationalisations for the continuing dominance of its great power ally than the result of cultural attachments or mistaken security perceptions. This remained the case even after WWII when Australia emerged as more or less a sovereign and independent nation. Australia’s central policy objective in the two decades after 1945 was to restore the British Empire and the wider European-imperial order in the Far East after it was disrupted by Japanese imperialism.

Australia’s major security commitments in the 1950s and 1960s were to the British-coordinated ANZAM area of strategic interest and the US-led SEATO. Ostensibly, these defence arrangements were primarily driven by the threat of communist aggression. However, it has since been recognised that the perceived threat was mostly illusory. A number of critics have thus pointed to Australia’s “strategic dependence” on both Britain and the US – underpinned by traditional security anxieties and cultural attachments to the Anglosphere – as an explanation for wrong-headed policies such as involvement in the Vietnam War.

Chapter Three of this thesis proposes that there is a more plausible explanation for the unwillingness of Australian policy makers to accept the fallacy of “international communism” despite clear evidence to the contrary. Their failure to recognise communist movements in Southeast Asia as indigenous, nationalist and mostly benign to Australian security was a necessary illusion to justify the objective of reasserting western control over Asia. The US alliance assumed exceptional importance in this context because Canberra’s regional objective of restoring British prestige in the Far East was not possible without America’s support. Coincidentally, this objective aligned with Washington’s own interim plans and long-term vision of a US-led capitalist world order.

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19 For a critical review of the literature on the theme of strategic dependence during the Cold War, see McLean, *Australia in the Cold War*. 
Australia’s so-called strategic dependence on the US during the 1950s and 1960s was therefore not the result of subservience, but rather calculated decision making, driven less by genuine security concerns than deeper imperial motives. The Australia-US alliance and the strategic doctrine of “forward defence” – particularly as it pertained to Vietnam – was a political rather than a defence strategy; one whose aim was to lock the US into the region as a means of restoring the western-imperial order after the Japanese interregnum.20

**US Hegemony and Australia’s “Middle Power” Ambitions**

While firmly committed to the restoration and preservation of the British Empire in Southeast Asia in the two decades after WWII, it was also evident to Australian policy makers that British power in the Far East was in rapid decline. Concomitantly, Australia willingly integrated into America’s neo-imperial regional order that replaced the old colonial powers; henceforth developing an interest in the preservation and extension of American global capitalism. While in the past, Australia’s strategic outlook was shaped primarily by Empire interests, by the mid-1960s, it was clear to those inside the US State Department that Australia had increasingly come to view “the world in much the same terms as does the US. She seeks the same general objectives and would fashion her role in Asia as a microcosm of the American role around the world”.21

This new strategic outlook was not the result of simply replacing strategic dependence on Britain with that of the US. Rather, it came about because of a general alignment of interests, particularly with respect to preserving western dominance in Asia and extending Australia’s regional influence. Although Australia relied on its “great and powerful friends” to ensure its security in the 1950s and

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1960s – no matter how distant the threat – thereafter, Australia began to take greater responsibility for its own direct security and wider regional interests as a strategically independent power. However, it remained dependent on the US to preserve the “stability” of the wider regional and global order.

Beginning in the 1970s, and in accordance with Australia’s newfound independence, the primary purpose of the US alliance underwent a gradual transformation from guaranteeing Australia’s security to bolstering its military and intelligence capabilities for defending the nation independently, despite the persistence of Australia’s non-threatening security environment. However, the new DOA and “self-reliance” doctrines, as they were called, quickly evolved from a focus on defending the continent and its immediate surrounds to promoting Australia’s wider interests abroad as a significant regional power.

It is in this context that Chapter Four argues that the current US alliance can be more readily understood in terms of bolstering Australia’s capacity for regional influence and control than defending the Australian continent. Although allying with the global hegemon undoubtedly provides some security benefits, in the face of a persistently benign security environment and Australia’s enduring “middle power” ambitions, the alliance has far greater relevance as a means for force-projection. Significantly, official accounts and realist arguments in favour of the alliance frequently emphasise its utility in enhancing Australia’s status as an “Asia-Pacific power”.

Liberal and constructivist critics of the alliance have continued to insist that traditional security anxieties and cultural attachments are the primary drivers of Australia’s dependence on the US. According to critical approaches to international security studies, Australia’s strategic dependence on the US is presumably not surprising because “states have historically been anxious about

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23 For a useful summary of liberal, constructivist and post-modernist critiques of the alliance in this manner, see Pietsch, *Australia’s Military Intervention in East Timor*, pp. 14-17.
security – so much so that they have encoded it into their fundamental structure of being”.  

However, in the case of the Australia-US alliance, the primary consideration is not defence and security but credibility and influence. Although couched in doctrinaire notions of “security” and “stability”, realist accounts which focus on structural factors, rather than the personal or psychological, offer greater clarity about the fundamental driving influences of the alliance than critics who stress the importance of the traditional “fear of security”. Furthermore, one could argue that it is not the desire for security that lies at the core of the modern nation-state system but rather the drive on the part of political elites to amass and project power, and to enjoy all of the benefits that coercion evidently confers.

Australia’s connection to a “great and powerful friend” was long ago understood to provide it with a larger voice in international diplomacy. Writing on the concept of the Anglosphere in 1929, former Prime Minister Billy Hughes observed that:

The Dominions as part of the Empire are listened to by foreign nations with interest, for the influence of a great world power lends weight to their lightest word . . . In themselves, although potentially great nations . . . they do not count for much; as part of an Empire that has behind it great riches and organised force, the world pays them the tribute it always gives to wealth and power.

In the past, Australians certainly believed that participation in faraway British wars could be used as a means to gain leverage over London in the event Australia’s

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25 Burke, *Fear of Security*.
interests in the Pacific were threatened.28 Today, the Australia-US alliance is understood to “enhance Australia’s standing in the region in a way that would not otherwise be possible”.29

There is interplay between Australia’s traditional security anxieties, cultural connections to the Anglosphere and desire to extend its influence abroad. They constitute mutually reinforcing factors that serve to drive Australia’s alliance with the US. Nevertheless, the remoteness of threats to Australia’s security, and its relatively large defence expenditures and ever-strengthening alliance with the US, can be more readily reconciled in terms of the unsentimental realism of power politics. In short, the alliance primarily serves the objective of bolstering Australia’s status as a “middle power” that can favourably shape its regional strategic environment and assume a larger role in international diplomacy.30

The AALD and the Management of Elite Opinion

The central argument proposed in Part One of this thesis is that structural rather than personal or psychological factors provide the greatest clarity in explaining the endurance of the alliance. However, its existence is not solely determined by this fact. Australia’s fundamental geostrategic position as a status-quo power within a US-led capitalist world order does not guarantee the alliance’s persistence.31

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28 O’Lincoln, The Neighbour From Hell, pp. 15-18.
30 Significantly, this point has also been argued with respect to Singapore, the only other country in the immediate region apart from Australia whose armed forces are externally oriented. According to Lee, given that any immediate threat to Singapore’s sovereignty is “far-fetched”, its formidable defence capability and its cultivation of defence relationships with great powers is best understood as a means to augment its non-military instruments of power – particularly diplomatic and economic – thereby increasing its regional and international influence. Yi-Jin Lee, Singapore’s Defence Policy: Essential or Excessive, Master’s Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, June 2010.
31 This contrasts with the view of at least one Marxist account which argues that Australia will continue to support the status quo in international affairs unless there is a collapse of the current capitalist world order or profound internal social transformation takes place. Pietsch, Australia’s Military Intervention in East Timor, p. 24.
Despite the high degree of elite and public support for the alliance, concerns about its strength, and even its existence into the future, has resulted in efforts to see it further institutionalised by various interests. While their importance is often exaggerated, private initiatives launched over recent decades with the objective of managing elite and public opinion in Australia have played more than an incidental role in helping to preserve orthodox thinking about the alliance and insulate it from potential challenges. Critically evaluating what is arguably the most prominent and successful of these – the AALD – constitutes the second part of this thesis, detailed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

As the cornerstone of Australia’s defence and foreign policies, the Australia-US alliance assumes exceptional importance in both public and elite circles. A strong belief in the alliance is held by key foreign policy elites in both major parties in Australia, senior figures in the bureaucracy and influential non-government organisations. At the popular level, the alliance has consistently enjoyed high levels of support. So deep is public commitment, it is argued, that no government that wishes to be elected “would challenge the centrality of the US alliance to Australia’s defence and foreign policies”. Strong public opinion, electoral politics and elite preferences combine to underpin what one scholar has described as the “Canberra consensus”: the belief “that a very strong military relationship with the USA is necessary for Australia’s well-being”.

More than a security pact, the alliance has penetrated Australia’s diplomatic, military, social, political, economic and cultural spheres. Accordingly, writes Australian historian Peter Edwards, the alliance is “far more than just another bilateral relationship . . . it has become a political institution in its own right,

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34 Bisley, An Ally For All The Years To Come, p. 410.
comparable with a political party or the monarchy”.

One consequence of the institutionalisation of the alliance is the unquestioning commitment of Australian political leaders to pursue an ever-closer relationship with the US. Even strong supporters of the alliance argue that it has perhaps risen to the level of an “ideology” or “an article of faith” in Australian politics.

Although there is broad support for the alliance, there is much room for interpretation of national surveys that also appear to indicate the majority of Australians would like a more independent foreign policy from the US. Recent foreign policy decisions either made in accordance with Australia’s alliance obligations, or undertaken in order to strengthen the alliance, have been deeply unpopular. The recent Afghanistan and Iraq wars, and the 2005 Australia-US Free Trade Agreement, are cases in point.

Moreover, a gap has long existed between the Australian public and officialdom when envisaging the role and purpose of the alliance. As the noted Australian strategic and defence studies expert, Desmond Ball, has pointed out, “there are significant differences between the positions articulated in official policy statements and public opinion” about the role of the alliance in Australia. Ball highlights that in elite circles:

Since the 1980s, the important aspects of the alliance have been the preferential access to US defence technology, which has been important in maintaining the high-technology focus of Australian


defence strategy; the intelligence cooperation and exchange arrangements; and the access to the most senior strategic councils in Washington.39

“On the other hand”, Ball continues, “the media and the general public tend to view the importance of the alliance very much in traditional terms – that is, whether or not it provides a US security guarantee in the event of attack on Australia.”40

The difference in official and popular interpretations of the alliance can be traced to its origins.41 Australians were understandably anxious about the possibility of attack by a resurgent Japan in the aftermath of WWII. However, in negotiations with Washington regarding a Pacific defence pact, the primary objective of the then Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, was not to gain assurance of US support to defend Australia. Australian policy makers understood that there were no foreseeable or credible direct threats to their country. Spender’s central objective was to gain access and influence over high-level strategic planning in Washington. The ANZUS Pact served the political purpose of appeasing unfounded public fears of an invasion, making it possible for the Australian government to justify the deployment of forces in the Middle East in line with Anglo-American war plans.42

Among the general public, a deep understanding of the alliance and the full implications for Australian defence and foreign policies remains absent. According to a 2007 national survey, of the 61 per cent of Australians who had read or heard of the ANZUS Treaty, 63 per cent did not know the US was a member.43 Many

39 Ball, p. 246.
40 Ball, p. 245.
41 The following account of these differences is largely based on a reading of Philip Dorling, The Origins of the ANZUS Treaty: A Reconsideration, South Australia: Flinders Politics Monographs, Flinders University, 1989.
42 A cynic might retort that not much has changed in this respect in the intervening six or so decades.
Australians are ignorant of the fact that the Treaty does not constitute a guarantee the US will come to Australia’s aid in the event of an attack, but merely stipulates an obligation for each state to “consult” and act “in accordance with its constitutional processes.” 44 While a majority of Australians are in favour of US forces and bases in Australia, few believe Australia should offer support to any US military action in Asia were a conflict to develop, for example, between China and Japan, despite the fact that America’s presence is likely to implicate Australia in any future US-Sino war.45

Although elites typically express a high degree of confidence about the strength of the Australia-US alliance, it is also recognised that the relationship requires careful management and nurturing to ensure its continued success. In the past, there have been concerns about the possible weakening of both public and elite opinion toward the US, with the suggestion that “measures should be taken with the aim of obviating or minimising threats to the continued health of the alliance”. 46 When a national opinion poll revealed that a majority of Australians held some unfavourable opinions of the US during the administration of George W. Bush, a new research institute was established at the University of Sydney – The United States Studies Centre – with the explicit objective of supporting and promoting Australia’s relationship with the United States.47

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46 Edwards, Permanent Friends?, pp. 53-61, quote p. 57. Significantly, Edwards cites the AALD as a positive example in redressing this problem, albeit solely focused on elite opinion.
More recently, there have been concerns raised about a potentially worrying trend in public opinion polls regarding the depth of the public commitment to ANZUS.48 To head off this possibility, Brendan Taylor argues:

[Alliance] managers might be wise to introduce a series of new education programs (conceivably in schools and universities) to ensure that the public remains well informed as to the benefits (as well as the costs and risks) associated with the ANZUS alliance.49

While the Australia-US relationship “is arguably in its best ever shape”, with “every prospect that it will continue to both broaden and deepen into the foreseeable future”, it is always necessary to “guard against complacency”.50

The growth of private institutions dedicated to strengthening Australia’s relationship with the US over the past two decades has been duly noted. Arguably, the most prominent and successful of these institutions – with specific focus on managing elite opinion – has been the AALD.51 Writing in 2011, prominent political commentator, Paul Kelly, pointed out that “through the decade, Australia’s institutional bonds with the US surged with . . . stronger private networks typified by the [United States] Studies Centre, the Australian American Leadership Dialogue and the Lowy Institute [for International Policy]”.52

Similarly, political and international editor of the Sydney Morning Herald, Peter Hartcher, observes that the Australia-US relationship is buttressed by three structures:

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49 Taylor, p. 83.
50 Taylor, pp. 75, 82.
51 According to Bisley, the AALD and the United States Studies Centre are “the two most prominent . . . non-governmental efforts to reinforce the centrality of the alliance for Australian foreign policy”. Bisley, An Ally For All The Years To Come, p. 412.
The economic structure is the [Australia-US free] trade agreement. The military-industrial structure is the big defence procurement investments and . . . the personal contact structure is the Australian American Leadership Dialogue . . . which over 10 years has created a new infrastructure of personal relationships between leading figures in the two countries.  

The AALD is widely lauded as “arguably the most valuable private-sector foreign policy initiative ever undertaken in Australia”, “a central institution in the US-Australia relationship” and “the most important of all non-government organisations dedicated to the strengthening of the Australia-US alliance in all its manifestations; civil, political and commercial”. Paradoxically, the AALD is also largely unknown beyond a small group of interested participants and observers. Supporters of the AALD concede that it is a “vital but largely invisible part of the alliance infrastructure” and a “semi-secret of the alliance”.  

While there has been much debate surrounding the success of the AALD in influencing policy outcomes, there has been no detailed critical analysis of AALD’s agenda to preserve and strengthen the Australia-US alliance. The only academic inquiry into the AALD to date is limited to evaluating its success as an exercise in informal diplomacy, failing to question the self-declared objective of the AALD to reinforce and recreate policy orthodoxies. One of the objectives of this thesis is to

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help to redress a gap in the study of Australian-American relations by critically evaluating the AALD’s role in managing Australia’s alliance with the US.

Anyone wishing to subject the AALD to critical analysis is immediately faced with a number of constraints. Only a select few are invited to attend AALD discussions which are also governed by a strict non-disclosure convention. This prevents any comments from being publicly repeated without the express permission of the participant. The AALD also produces little by way of official publications. A request by the author to the board of the AALD to distribute a questionnaire to participants was rejected, as was permission for the author to attend an AALD event.\footnote{Both requests were made in June 2011 to the then chairman of the Australian board of the AALD, Mehrdad Baghai.}

Instead of citing AALD discussions directly, some one hundred and twenty interview requests were emailed to current and former participants of the AALD. Of the sixty-five who responded, forty accepted the invitation to be interviewed. The founder of the AALD, Phillip Scanlan, initially agreed to respond to a series of written questions via email. However, answers to the questions were not forthcoming, despite repeated follow-up requests.\footnote{In May 2011, Scanlan, who was the then Australian Consul-General in New York, agreed via his assistant to respond to the author’s questions. However, answers to the questions were not forthcoming, despite a series of follow-up calls and emails to the Consulate-General in August, September 2011, and March, April, May 2012.}

In-depth face-to-face and phone interviews were conducted by the author in 2011 and 2012. Interviewees were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to the AALD’s origins, objectives, organisational structure and management, selection process, personal and institutional value, influence on Australia-US relations, flaws, challenges, success, reputation, relevance and long-term viability. Interviewees were also asked about the nature and degree of their involvement with AALD, their opinion on the diversity of views and the general nature of discussion and debate, and the impact of the AALD on their opinion of the alliance.
Interviewees represent a wide range of participants with varying degrees of experience and involvement with the AALD, including founding members, current and former board members, Liberal and Labor Party MPs, public servants, prominent academics, key journalists and senior representatives from business. Together with material publicly available about the AALD, these sources provide the basis for the argument that follows.62

The main contention of this thesis is that the AALD exists to sustain the prevailing orthodoxy, detailed in Chapter One, that views the Australia-US alliance as a “special relationship” driven by mutual security interests and shared values. The AALD emerged within the context of elite fears about the strength of the alliance going into the future and sought to insulate it from potential challenges. The AALD fulfils its central objective to preserve the status quo in three main ways. First, it carefully frames discussion and debate about the value of the alliance to Australia. Second, it facilitates the socialisation of Australian elites into the alliance orthodoxy. Finally, it serves as a “gatekeeper” of the status quo and a litmus test on the alliance loyalty of potential future leaders.63

Thesis Objectives, Structure and Contribution

This thesis has two main objectives; addressed respectively in Parts One and Two. The first is to challenge the alliance orthodoxy, or “special relationship” narrative, that prevails in official and elite academic circles. The second is to critically evaluate the role of the AALD in sustaining the alliance orthodoxy at the elite level in Australia. The focus of this thesis with respect to the AALD is on the Australian context, given the asymmetrical nature of the relationship, and the facts that the initiative for its establishment came from Australia and its agenda reflects an Australian context and ambition.

62 This includes an analysis of over 1500 news items published about, or with reference to, the AALD as of December 2015, sourced from Dow Jones Factiva and the Australian Financial Review.
In Part One, two conventionally held beliefs about the alliance are identified and critiqued. The first, addressed in Chapter One, is that the strength of the alliance derives from shared values forged by a joint commitment to liberal ideals such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law; and relatedly, that a common interest in both Canberra and Washington is the maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. The second orthodoxy, addressed in Chapters Three and Four, is that the central purpose of the alliance is to ensure Australian security, both in terms of protecting Australia against attack and in maintaining a safe regional security environment. To contextualise the origins of these orthodoxies, Chapter Two provides the historical development of Australia’s strategic culture that has informed Canberra’s traditional alliance-reliance mentality.

Part One argues that the fundamental purpose of the alliance has been to preserve a regional and global strategic and economic order favourable to both American and Australian interests and, relatedly, to fulfil an ambition on the part of elites in Canberra to exercise an independent regional influence as a leading “middle power”. Chapters Three and Four specifically illustrate the evolution of Australia’s “strategic dependence” on the US in the 1950s and 1960s – undertaken with the objective of restoring western influence in Asia – through to Australia’s emergence as a strategically independent “middle power” fully integrated into the US-led capitalist world order from the 1970s onwards.

Part Two of the thesis investigates how the orthodoxies of the alliance detailed in Part One are reinforced at the elite level by the AALD. Chapter Five provides the historical background, operation and objectives of the AALD. It reveals that, motivated by the fear that the alliance was at risk in the hands of the next generation of leaders who were not steeped in the “special relationship” narrative, the AALD set out to strengthen the personal foundations of the alliance at the elite level in order to preserve the status quo. Chapter Five also identifies the significance of the AALD as an elite institution backed by large corporate interests, and led by Phillip Scanlan, a committed alliance loyalist and neoliberal ideologue.
Chapter Six provides a conceptual framework for critically evaluating the AALD. The AALD is purportedly an exercise in “track two” diplomacy that brings officials and non-officials together from both countries to discuss matters of mutual interest and facilitate mutual understanding. In fact, the AALD functions more like a pro-American lobby group that serves to preserve the alliance orthodoxy in the minds of Australian elites. Drawing on the literature of informal diplomacy, Chapter Six demonstrates how the AALD departs from other major T2 initiatives as it seeks to preserve rather than challenge official policy perspectives and eschews critical discussion and debate.

Chapter Seven investigates the socialisation function of the AALD and its role in alliance management. Drawing on the literature of public diplomacy, and specifically US foreign leader exchange programs, this chapter demonstrates how the AALD socialises elites by providing a number of important material and psychological inducements to remain committed to the status quo. Chapter Seven also explains the AALD’s “gatekeeping” function to prevent adverse changes to orthodox government policymaking on the alliance by acting as a litmus test for measuring the alliance loyalty of future leaders.

This thesis makes a number of important intellectual contributions. First, it provides a new critique of the conventional understanding of the Australia-US alliance beyond the typical realist, liberal and constructivist approaches. Second, it helps to fill a gap in the existing literature on informal diplomacy by critically evaluating the role of the AALD as a smaller, bilateral T2 dialogue otherwise neglected in scholarship. Third, it provides insight into the ways in which both informal and public diplomacy combine to manage elite opinion. Finally, it constitutes the first major academic study of the AALD since its establishment more than two decades ago. The scrutiny this thesis applies to the AALD is particularly important given the almost total absence of critical attention it has received by the media and in scholarship.
PART I: THE AUSTRALIA-US ALLIANCE

CHAPTER ONE

Myth and Reality in Australia’s “Special Relationship” with the US

Challenging the Myth of the “Special Relationship”

Australia and the US enjoy a remarkably firm and enduring relationship. For more than sixty years, Australia has remained a stalwart ally and a stable element in Washington’s system of bilateral relationships in Asia, serving to boost US diplomatic, strategic and economic engagement in the region.¹ Conversely, the alliance is widely understood to constitute the cornerstone of Australia’s entire foreign and strategic policy since the 1950s.² All current indicators suggest the bilateral relationship will continue to grow in strength, particularly as Australia’s geopolitical value to the US increases amidst the rise of the “Indo-Pacific”.³

The unusual strength, persistence and intimacy of the alliance are commonly taken to denote a “special relationship” between both countries. Although common interests and shared values are ordinarily taken to form the basis of the relationship, emphasis is often placed on the latter. Officialdom in both countries assert that it is the existence of “shared values” and a “natural friendship between our peoples” that forms “the foundation” of the relationship. The deep level of cooperation and the intimacy of leader-to-leader interactions are taken as evidence of a special affinity between both nations.

Former Prime Minister John Howard did more than any other Australian leader before or since to promote the notion of a special relationship. According to officials in Canberra who were present during his time in office, Howard successfully elevated Australia’s alliance with the US to an unprecedented level. Speaking in 2015, Howard reiterated his belief that:

Nothing that I experienced when I was prime minister, and nothing that I have experienced since, has altered my view that the things that bind nations together more tightly than anything else are shared values and shared philosophies. On that basis it is self-evident that the relationship between Australia and the United States, based on common values, common beliefs, shared experiences in war and

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7 As noted at the time, “In official circles in Canberra, the view is firmly held that the Australian-US security relationship is probably in the best shape in its history”. While other factors were at play, “Australia’s renewed engagement with its Western alliance partner owes much to the position of Prime Minister Howard in the domestic political milieu”. Rod Lyon and William T. Tow, The Future of the Australia-US Security Relationship, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1 December 2003, pp. 13, 15.
peace . . . is as tight as any bilateral relationship anywhere in the world can be.”

For Howard and other ardent believers in the special relationship, the implication is that the alliance transcends strategic interests that typify other bilateral alliances. While the “enduring power” of the alliance “does derive from shared interests and mutual benefits”, writes noted foreign policy commentator Greg Sheridan, “at the deepest levels it derives from the fact that for all our differences, the values we share as nations are so great”.

Australia and the US evidently share similarities when it comes to political institutions, language, culture and values. Australians have long admired the US as a leader and sought to emulate many of its political, economic and cultural innovations. From as early as the 1830s, a popular theme in political life was the notion of Australia as a “future America”. A century later, leading Australian figures were still proudly assuring Americans, “What we are, you were; and what you are, we hope to be”. The inclination to look to America for inspiration accelerated in the post-WWII period when, like other western nations, Australia was subjected to the global phenomenon of “Americanisation”, and its political, economic and cultural development was heavily influenced by American models.

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Notwithstanding the long and intimate ties Australia shares with the US, the language of a special relationship papers over what are in fact complex and contradictory histories. Australia, unlike the US, did not experience revolution or civil war, nor did it sever its strong and influential ties to the British monarchy, events that profoundly shaped American attitudes and institutions. Divergent historical experiences, in fact, led to significant differences in cultures, values and even languages that belie the notion of a “natural” or inevitable friendship.13

The origin of the special relationship is frequently traced back to the “watershed” moment in 1908 when the then Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, in an act of defiance toward Britain, invited America’s “Great White Fleet” to visit Australia as part of a US tour of the Pacific.14 Australians were decidedly frenzied about the prospect of a visit by their powerful white cousins, the event itself drawing bigger and more enthusiastic crowds than anything in Australian history, including the inauguration of the Commonwealth in January 1901.15

Although the event captured the nation, it did not mark the beginning of an “enduring bond” between both nations. It is pertinent to recall that while Australians were preoccupied with attending to the everyday needs of their guests, the Americans used the opportunity to secretly gather intelligence for contingency plans to invade Australia and capture its major cities in the event of hostilities breaking out between the US and British-allied Japan. This anecdote is an apt reflection of the dictum that states in the international system have no permanent friends, only permanent interests.16

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13 For an in-depth critique of the widely held view that Australia and the US share similar historical influences, cultures, values and languages, see Phillips, Ambivalent Allies.
WWII has similarly been mythologised as a defining historical moment in the development of the Australia-US alliance. According to the orthodoxy, Australia’s special relationship with the US was “forged by our shared sacrifice during the Second World War” and “in the defining battles of the past century”. Fuelling this narrative is the persistent myth that the US helped to prevent a Japanese invasion of Australia during WWII. In reality, the conquest of Australia was explicitly ruled out by Japan’s military leaders, a fact revealed by US communication intercepts as early as April 1942 and accepted at the highest levels of the Australian government by mid-1942.

America’s decision to reinforce Australia’s strategic position and establish General MacArthur’s Southwest Pacific command in early 1942 was due not to an inviolable commitment to Australia’s defence and freedom but the result of strategic necessity; Australia was no more than a suitable base from which to hit Japan. The myth of a Japanese invasion of Australia deterred by American intervention has “been used by conservatives ever since as a legitimising narrative for Australian adherence to the US alliance”.

WWII is frequently depicted as a decisive turning point in Australia’s foreign relations, marking the end of strategic dependence on the UK and the beginning of a new dependent relationship with the US. Prime Minister John Curtin’s infamous speech in 1941, when he declared that “Australia looks to America, free of the

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17 AUSMIN Consultations 2011 Joint Communique.
20 Burke, Fear of Security, p. 74.
pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom”, is offered as evidence of this fact.\textsuperscript{21}

The quote, however, is taken out of context, making “Curtin seem much more anti-British and pro-American than he had probably intended”.\textsuperscript{22} While Curtin was looking to promote immediate and substantial strategic support from the US during a critical phase of the war, his loyalty remained firmly attached to Britain. His government did not consider Australia as “anything but an integral part of the British empire”.\textsuperscript{23}

Frequently missing from the popular wartime narrative is the fact that Australia and the US entertained major disputes over strategic and economic objectives, notably Canberra’s opposition to the Anglo-American “Hitler first” strategy and Washington’s attempts to challenge Australia’s protectionist trade policies.\textsuperscript{24} Australia and New Zealand evinced fervent opposition from Washington when they jointly signed the 1944 Australia-New Zealand Agreement, or ANZAC Pact, in an attempt to preserve their spheres of influence in the South Pacific and check American expansionism.\textsuperscript{25} Examining these and other divergent interests between the US and Australia in detail, Roger Bell, in his major study of the period, came to the following conclusion concerning the wartime alliance:

[It] did not constitute a decisive turning-point as has often been implied. No special or enduring bilateral political, security or economic relationship developed as a result of effective

\textsuperscript{21} Fraser, for example, fuels the myth that Curtin’s speech was the moment when “Australia transferred its dependence to America”. Malcolm Fraser with Cain Roberts, \textit{Dangerous Allies}, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2014, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{22} Edwards, \textit{Permanent Friends?}, p. 10
\textsuperscript{24} Other disagreements included the Anglo-American opposition to Canberra’s decision to relocate its last remaining division in the Middle East to Australia for continental defence, and disagreements with Washington over the extent of Australian and British participation in the counter-offensive against Japan. See Bell, \textit{Unequal Allies}.
collaboration against Japan. Nor was Australia’s wartime alliance with the US unusual or unique.26

Australia and the US remained mutually ambivalent about their relationship in the immediate post-war period. While keen to see the US commit to upholding regional security, Ben Chifley’s Labor government remained concerned about American economic imperialism and potential US interference in what was considered Australia’s local sphere of influence.27 American hegemony was a major concern for Australia, anxious about the capacity of Washington “to exert political and economic pressure on virtually every other country in the capitalist world”.28

In the case of the US, Washington was entirely uninterested in formalising the wartime alliance with Australia after the common enemy, Japan, was defeated. The Australian Labor government attempted, and failed, on numerous occasions to entice the US into a Pacific security arrangement. This was despite fierce and persistent lobbying on the part of External Affairs Minister, H. V. Evatt, including efforts to utilise the American base on Manus Island as a bargaining chip. The US was simply not interested in any security pact or any Australian representation in US defence planning circles.29

Evatt’s conservative successor, Sir Percy Spender, was more amenable to Washington but also faced the same intransigence. It was only the exigencies of the Cold War that finally persuaded the US to accede to Australian pressure, resulting in the 1951 ANZUS Treaty and delivering success to Spender’s adept negotiating

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26 Roger J. Bell, Unequal Allies, pp. 226-227.
28 Capling, p. 21.
tactics. Even so, the US refused to provide a security arrangement on a par with NATO or the access to strategic decision making that Australia had sought.

Australia’s decision to strategically align itself more closely to the US in the aftermath of WWII was a reflection of changes in geopolitics, not sentiment. Historian Norman Harper noted in 1947 that the effective decline of British influence in the Far East indicated to Australia that the UK “will be unable to play a permanent and major role in the balance of Pacific power”. The US, on the other hand, had emerged as the “greatest military and industrial world power” whose desire for overseas markets made it “perfectly clear that America in policy has become an expanding imperial state with every intention of playing a major role in Far Eastern affairs”.

Although Australian leaders recognised a shift was taking place in the regional balance of power, there was no significant transference of loyalty or change in strategic planning. When the ANZUS Treaty came into force on 29 April 1952, Australian Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, declared that the treaty “will not in any way weaken or diminish the close ties of kinship and cooperation which bind Australia to the other members of the British Commonwealth”. Rather, it was his “hope” that the treaty would “add an important and intimate association” with the US.

30 Siracusa, The ANZUS Treaty Revisited. More recent scholarship reveals that Washington was in fact more amenable to a Pacific alliance system from 1949-50 than previously assumed, albeit not due to sentiments of American “goodwill” toward Australia; it was derived from a reassessment of the benefits a Pacific security system would provide to Washington’s Cold War strategy in Asia. David McLean, Anzus Origins: A Reassessment, Australian Historical Studies, vol. 24, no. 94, 1990, pp. 64-82.
31 Wayne Reynolds, Loyal to the End: The Fourth British Empire, Australia and the Bomb, 1943–57, Australian Historical Studies, vol. 33, no. 119, 2002, pp. 42-44. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly opposed an equal partnership with Australia with respect to global, or even Pacific, military planning and made sure that any language in the draft treaties of ANZUS that alluded to this was removed. Pemberton, All the Way, pp. 27-31.
Regional defence planning in the first two decades of the post-war era proceeded to be primarily coordinated with the British and other Commonwealth nations.\textsuperscript{34} Australia fought twice in Southeast Asia, not under ANZUS, but in support of its Commonwealth partners during the Malayan “Emergency” (1948-1960) and the Indonesian-Malaysian “Konfrontasi” (1963-1966). When the interests of its two great power allies conflicted during the 1956 Suez crisis, Australia firmly sided with the UK against the US (and virtually the rest of the world), clearly demonstrating the conservative Menzies government’s continuing loyalty to British imperial interests.\textsuperscript{35}

It was London’s decision to withdraw “east of Suez” in 1967, foreshadowed many years earlier, that marked a significant shift in Australia’s prior reliance on the UK as the basis of its regional defence planning.\textsuperscript{36} Simultaneously, Australia entered a peak period of dependence on the US, Canberra having made a major commitment to America’s war in Vietnam – a war in which Britain did not participate. The period from 1945 to the mid-1960s was a transition phase where Australia saw value in supporting for as long as possible the declining British Empire as well as the reigning American one.\textsuperscript{37}

Australian and American forces have fought together in every significant conflict since WWI. Officially, this reflects the enduring strength of the alliance as well as

\textsuperscript{34} Peter Edwards, seminar on the ANZUS Alliance presented to the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Canberra, 11 August 1997, pp. 10-18.
\textsuperscript{37} The steps by which Australia came to rely primarily on Washington for its security are glossed by McLean. “Between 1957 and 1963 Australia standardised its military equipment with the US, adopted American military organisational practices, entered into close cooperation with America in the exchange of information and in other defence-related areas, and agreed to the establishment of the North West Cape naval communications station on terms which surrendered all Australian rights to a say in the operation of the base. The dispatch of Australian troops to support US military involvement in Vietnam – a war in which Britain did not participate – highlighted the extent of the transformation of Australia’s strategic relations since the formation of ANZUS”. David McLean, From British Colony to American Satellite? Australia and the USA during the Cold War, \textit{Australian Journal of Politics and History}, vol. 52, no. 1, 2006, p. 66.
the common values and shared interests between both countries. A more realistic interpretation is that Australia, as the substantially weaker power, has felt obligated to fight alongside the US in order to maintain Washington’s allegiance. In either case, it is a clear rebuke of the special relationship that on those rare occasions when Australian and American strategic interests have failed to converge, Australia’s long record of loyalty to the US has counted for very little.

A particularly instructive example occurred in the early 1960s when, after twenty years of being a loyal and dependable ally, Australia was unable to sway the US to oppose Indonesia’s claims over West New Guinea. Australia faced the prospect of becoming entangled in a war with Jakarta without the support of a major ally. Placating Sukarno in order to prevent the “loss” of Indonesia to communism ultimately proved of far greater importance to the US than Australia’s security concerns. It was a “sobering” lesson for Canberra, Pemberton writes, that “in the most dangerous international crisis Australia had faced since the [Second World] War, the US alliance was of little value as an instrument of Australian diplomacy because of the conflict in Australian-US interests”.

A more recent incident occurred when US President Bill Clinton rebuffed Australia’s request for American troops to support the 1999 intervention into East Timor. The Clinton administration’s reasoning was that Indonesia, a populous and mineral-rich nation, was of far greater strategic importance than the tiny, impoverished territory of East Timor. After intense lobbying by both Australia and Portugal, along with significant pressure emanating from Congress, Washington belatedly decided to act


39 As two prominent strategic experts recently put it, “Australian decision-makers have seen involvement in conflict as a premium that needs to be paid for the security guarantee and other benefits Australia accrues from its relationship with the US”. Nick Bisley and Brendan Taylor, Conflict in the East China Sea: Would ANZUS Apply? Australia-China Relations Institute (ACRI), Ultimo, NSW, 2014, p.25.


and provide the political, logistical and intelligence support necessary to make the
nonetheless taken aback and intensely disappointed at America’s refusal to provide
“boots on the ground”, believing it was a “violation of the alliance’s spirit” after so

The gravest and most revealing variance in Australia’s relationship with the US
occurred in the early to mid-1970s, when the progressive Whitlam government
attempted to shake off Australia’s client status after two decades of unadulterated
conservative support for the alliance. The Whitlam government’s public criticism of
US foreign policy in Indochina, dissent over the operation of US intelligence facilities
and Whitlam’s personally contentious relationship with Australian and American
intelligence communities raised grave concerns in Washington.\footnote{The concerns were perhaps so great that Washington sought to have Whitlam removed. Although there is no conclusive evidence, there are many unanswered questions about the CIA’s involvement in the dismissal of Whitlam on 11 November 1975. Certainly, the CIA was intricately tied to the events that led to it. See Brian Toohey and Marian Wilkinson, \textit{The Book of Leaks: Exposes in Defence of the Public’s Right to Know}, North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1987, pp. 81-109; John Pilger, \textit{A Secret Country}, Great Britain: Vintage, 1989, pp. 187-238.} Whitlam was in
fact mostly posturing and never intended to seriously threaten the permanence of
American bases or the foundations of the ANZUS alliance, although that was not
always clear to American intelligence officials.\footnote{Theodore Shackley, head of the CIA’s East Asia division, was apparently convinced Whitlam was a threat to the Western security alliance and wanted to shut down the US surveillance facility at Pine Gap in North Australia. Brian Toohey and William Pinwill, \textit{Oyster: The Story of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service}, Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1989, p. 179.}

Whitlam’s agenda to pursue a more independent foreign policy within the alliance
was perhaps most notably reflected in his government’s attempts at “resources
and help Australian corporations “go multinational”, transforming Australia into a
regional sub-metropolitan power. While the goal was to avoid satellite status,
resources diplomacy was crucially dependent upon the continuation of American power in the region. Whitlam thus sought to create a more balanced Australia-US relationship while maintaining Australia’s increasingly important role as a beneficiary and protector of America’s regional security and economic order.47

Although Whitlam never advocated abandoning the alliance, only to make it work better in Australia’s interests, this proved almost too much to bear for Washington which was accustomed “to the client-patron relationship that earlier Liberal-Country Party governments had maintained”.48 It was a revealing moment in the history of the so-called special relationship that the US responded to Australia’s most significant attempt to inject greater balance into the relationship by actively considering to abandon the alliance altogether.49

There has been a considerable level of bipartisanship with respect to the alliance since the end of the Whitlam administration in the mid-1970s, and particularly since the advent of the notoriously pro-American Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Paul Keating’s project for greater engagement with Asia during the 1990s ostensibly indicated a shift to redefine Australian identity away from the West and more toward Asia. In reality, his push merely reflected a desire to take advantage of regional economic opportunities while remaining strategically tied to the US.50

The persistence of strong bipartisanship on the question of the alliance, and a belief in the notion of a special relationship, has fostered an exaggerated sense of self-

47 Nowhere was this more apparent than with respect to Indonesia where the Whitlam government moved immediately to strengthen Suharto’s New Order regime to the benefit of western strategic and economic interests; expanding economic and military aid, assisting in the rapid expansion of trade and investment, forging strong diplomatic relations and praising Suharto’s achievements while whitewashing his crimes. See Burke, Fear of Security, pp. 128-131, 134-136.

48 These were the words Brent Scowcroft used when he advised US President Gerald Ford on the newly elected Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser. James Curran, Unholy Fury: Whitlam and Nixon at War, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015, p. 306.

49 Curran, Unholy Fury.

importance among Australian political leaders who are often overcome by their connection to, and admiration for, American power. After having accompanied numerous Australian prime ministers to the US as a senior Australian diplomat, Richard Woolcott reflects that many risked “suffering the delusion that Australia is more important to the United States than is really the case”.

The added danger is that Australian political and bureaucratic elites, after having internalised the narrative of the special relationship, assume the national interests of both countries have always converged and will continue to do so in the future. When asked by a Senate Committee in August 1999 how future conflicts of interest between Australia and the United States might be resolved, former defence official Paul Dibb stated:

I find it hard to imagine situations, given the ANZUS alliance, given our shared values and interests and given the closeness that we have, where there would be dramatic differences in the national interest.

The inability or unwillingness to understand that America’s interests as a global power do not always align with those of Australia may have significant repercussions in the future as Canberra finds itself increasingly pulled in opposite directions by its most important strategic relationship with the US and its primary trading partner, China. As discussed below, Canberra’s current trajectory is

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entangling Australia in Washington’s plans for preserving its leadership status in Asia, a strategy that could drive a wedge between Canberra and Beijing, and potentially drag Australia into a US-Sino war.\(^5^5\)

**Preserving American Hegemony at All Costs**

One of the most prevalent misconceptions embodied in the special relationship narrative is the notion that Australia and the US are bound together by their joint commitment to promote liberal values abroad. One of the central objectives of the alliance, it is officially stated, is to “advance and support human rights, democracy, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms around the world”.\(^5^6\) While Australian foreign policy is generally less self-consciously idealistic than in the US, it is still conventional to adopt America’s depiction of itself as an exceptional nation, driven by an enlightened foreign policy and a special historical sense of mission to spread freedom and democracy globally.\(^5^7\)

Relatedly, it has been “an article of faith” in both Australian and American scholarly and policy circles that the US is a “benign hegemon”, responsible for maintaining international peace and stability, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, since the end of WWII.\(^5^8\) The typical formulation among leading Australian defence experts is that

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\(^{5^5}\) Admittedly, the chance of a conflict between the US and China is remote. However, as a number of experts on the topic have recently warned, tensions are increasing and war is no longer in the realm of fantasy. See, for example, Bonnie S. Glasser, Armed Clash in the South China Sea, Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 14, Council on Foreign Relations, April 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/world/armed-clash-south-china-sea/p27883>, accessed 15 April 2016.


“for the past sixty years, the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific have been underwritten by the benign hegemony of the US” which has “allowed countries in the region to prosper and grow at a prodigious rate”. 59 Moreover, it is insisted, “What keeps the US engaged in the region today is its peculiar sense of mission to lead the free world, a sense borne of the notion of *exceptionalism*”. 60

In reality, US foreign policy has not been fundamentally different to that of the imperial powers that preceded it, perhaps especially so in the Asia-Pacific. In the decades prior to the outbreak of WWII, the US had emerged, like Japan, as an expansionist Pacific imperial power. 61 Although rejecting the trappings of formal empire, by the end of WWII, Washington had assumed effective control in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and the entire Pacific Ocean. While rhetorically supporting the process of decolonisation, Washington’s objective was to dismantle the exclusive trading blocs of the European imperial powers that obstructed its plans for an integrated global economic order that facilitated American corporate interests. In any case, the US eventually moved to assist European colonial powers in their attempts to regain their former colonial possessions as it became clear this was necessary to ensure the rapid reconstruction of Europe. 62

America’s support for reinstating European colonialism dovetailed with Australia’s own vision for the post-war regional order. Like the US, Australia spoke of liberating

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60 Davies and Thompson, p. 11. Emphasis in original.


Asia during WWII. In reality, Canberra was only interested in liberating Asia from Japanese imperialism, which in many respects, was no different to that of Western colonialism. As a proud member of the British Empire, Australia was a strong supporter of British imperialism and the European-imperial order more generally, as well as being a colonial power in its own right with no intention of relinquishing control of its territorial possessions. With respect to Dutch rule in Indonesia, Minister for External Affairs, H. V. Evatt, stated frankly in October 1943 that “We visualise the restoration of the former sovereignty”.

Australian support for European colonialism was most forcefully expressed in the conservative Liberal-Country Coalition led by Robert Menzies. From opposition during the mid-to-late 1940s, Menzies had supported the European imperial powers in their struggles to quash Asian independence movements – the British in Southeast Asia, the French in Indochina and the Dutch in the East Indies – and he continued to endorse the virtues of empire throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Australia’s primary military commitments in Malaya and Vietnam, initiated by the

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63 After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, declared, “We are at war with Japan . . . because our vital interests are imperilled and because the rights of free people in the whole Pacific are assailed”. Tom O’Lincoln, *Australia’s Pacific War: Challenging a National Myth*, Australia: Interventions Publishers, 2011, p. 34.


65 Australia’s major colony being Papua/New Guinea.

66 O’Lincoln, *Australia’s Pacific War*, p. 53. Accordingly, when WWII ended, Australian troops provided assistance for the restoration of Dutch control in Indonesia. Later, Australia played a more constructive role in supporting the Indonesian liberation struggle. However, this was largely because it saw independence as an inevitable outcome that it could better shape in a direction conducive to its interests. O’Lincoln, pp. 48-49, 52-53.

Menzies government, contributed to the broader efforts of British and American power to crush the anti-colonial movements that were then sweeping across Asia.68

American and Australian opposition to independence movements in the decades following WWII contradicts the popular rhetoric today that generations of Americans and Australians died in Asia to defend freedom and democracy.69 Equally striking is the claim that American military engagement in the Asia-Pacific has been responsible for underpinning regional peace and stability. The US, after all, was the principle protagonist in Asia’s two bloodiest conflicts in North Korea and Vietnam, wars that were prosecuted with a litany of human rights abuses and war crimes.70 Since WWII, US air power in Asia alone has been responsible for millions of deaths and the vast destruction of civilian infrastructure in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.71

Throughout the Cold War, the US used the pretext of maintaining stability to support and enhance the repressive capacities of authoritarian regimes that maintained pro-Western loyalties and interests. A direct line can be drawn between US military assistance and the extreme repression that emerged in much of the third world during the Cold War. As Andrew McCoy observes:

Much of the abuse synonymous with the era of authoritarian rule in Asia and Latin America seems to have originated with the United States. While dictatorships in those regions would no doubt have tortured on their own, US training programs provided sophisticated

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techniques, up-to-date equipment, and moral legitimacy for the practice, producing a clear correlation between US Cold War policy and the extreme state violence of the authoritarian age.\footnote{Alfred W. McCoy, A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006, p 11.}

Under the guise of defeating communism, Washington propped up countless “national security states” throughout the third world, particularly in Asia and Central and South America, overthrowing democratically elected governments and undermining progressively-based mass social movements.\footnote{Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism: The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume 1, Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980; Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology: The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume 2, Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1979; Chalmers Johnson, Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004.} Where the US did support democratic reform, it was in the form of a “polyarchy” rather than genuine democracy, ensuring decision making was confined to a small group of elites who preserved US strategic and economic interests.\footnote{The US stepped in to promote “democracy”, i.e. polyarchy, where it had formerly supported dictatorship in places such as Marcos’s Philippines, Pinochet’s Chile and Duvalier’s Haiti as a means to stave off more radical, mass-based popular democratic movements. William I. Robinson, Promoting Polyarchy: Globalisation, US Intervention, and Hegemony, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.}

With few exceptions, Australia enthusiastically defended the actions of the US during the Cold War, apologising for American-allied dictators that were pro-western and stable including the Shah in Iran, Marcos in the Philippines, Suharto in Indonesia and a string of dictators in South Vietnam and South Korea.\footnote{For numerous examples, see George J. Munster and Richard Walsh, Secrets of State: A Detailed Assessment of the Book They Banned, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1982. Australia continued to take a soft stand on human rights abuses in Southeast Asia in the 1990s, often under the guise of “cultural relativism” and the need to maintain political stability and economic growth. See Erik Paul, Australia and Southeast Asia: Regionalisation, Democracy and Conflict, Journal of Contemporary Asia, vol. 29, no. 3, 1999, pp. 285-308.} The portrayal of Marcos in official circles as “the last hope for democracy” just months before martial law was declared in September 1972 was typical of Canberra’s
approach to western-allied dictators generally. 76 Three years and 50,000 political prisoners later, the Australian foreign affairs department continued to downplay the repression of the Marcos regime, arguing that “‘martial law’ in the Philippines is of a different, milder variety from its European archetype”, and that there was no serious political opposition to the government. 77

Australia did more than just provide diplomatic cover to odious regimes. Along with directly participating in America’s two major wars in Asia, 78 Canberra provided direct economic and military assistance for Southeast Asian military regimes such as those in South Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, much of it under the guise of the Colombo Plan. Ostensibly a humanitarian program, the Colombo Plan was ultimately employed by Canberra as a psychological warfare campaign to prevent revolutionary political change in Asia and extend western influence in the region. It included ASIO training military regimes throughout Asia in police and security methods, and intelligence officers in counter-subversion techniques. 79

ASIS also cooperated closely with its Anglo-American counterparts in several parts of the third world during the Cold War, particularly Southeast and Northeast Asia, engaging in covert operations to support numerous pro-western regimes and undermine their political opponents. ASIS aided the CIA’s covert operations in Indonesia in support of Sukarno’s political opponents in the late 1950s and 1960s, maintained a close working relationship with the secret police in the Philippines when that country was under martial law in the 1970s, and participated, to an

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76 This was the characterisation made at the time by Ambassador James Ingram, quoted in Toohey and Pinwill, Oyster, p. 125.
77 Munster and Walsh, Secrets of State, pp. 111-116.
78 For a rare examination of Australian atrocities during the Vietnam War, see Alex Carey, Australian Atrocities in Vietnam, Sydney: Comment Publishing Company, 1968.
unknown extent, in the CIA’s efforts to overthrow Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia in 1970 and Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973.\textsuperscript{80}

More recently, America’s “war on terror”, with enthusiastic Australian participation, has been widely recognised as a catastrophic strategic failure and a human rights disaster, resulting in mass civilian casualties, the widespread use of torture and the destabilisation of the wider Middle East and North African regions. America’s long history of intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq has been a major factor in generating the political, economic and social chaos that plagues these countries today.\textsuperscript{81}

The rapid rise and success of international jihadi terrorism can be explained, to a significant degree, by the actions of the US and its allies, particularly with respect to the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq.\textsuperscript{82} Australia’s participation in the war on terror, although small in military terms, nonetheless helped to undermine the rule of law as well as implicate leading Australian political and military leaders in potential war crimes.\textsuperscript{83}

The hypocrisy of the US-led “war on terror” is obscured in mainstream international relations accounts that employ a narrow definition of terrorism that excludes the actions of states. During the Cold War, the term “terrorism” was rarely applied to the atrocities committed by America’s extreme right-wing satellites in Central and

\textsuperscript{80} At one time or another during the Cold War, ASIS had operatives in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile and China. For details, see Camilleri, \textit{Australian-American Relations}, pp. 123-126; Toohey and Pinwill, \textit{Oyster}; Toohey and Wilkinson, \textit{The Book of Leaks}.


South America.\textsuperscript{84} Today, America’s global drone-strike assassination program, crucially supported by US intelligence and communications bases on Australian soil, is a classic example of the modern use of state terror.\textsuperscript{85} If state terrorism was not excluded from the international relations literature, the US would be recognised as one of the most consistent perpetrators and supporters of terrorism since WWII.\textsuperscript{86}

Like terrorism, the term “stability” confers a narrow meaning that often obscures America’s destabilising role in the world. In is conventional in realist international relations and strategic studies accounts of Asia-Pacific regional affairs to equate stability and the “balance of power” with the prevailing distribution of power or the status quo; an interpretation that conveniently translates into support for US hegemony.\textsuperscript{87} While there have been no major wars in Asia for some time, there is a contradiction that appears to be lost on most Australian strategic commentators who regularly assert that US domination simultaneously provides “balance” to the region.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{84} Edward S. Herman, \textit{The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda}, Boston: South End Press, 1982.


Unconstrained US power has had numerous destabilising effects in the Asia-Pacific, not least of which is the way it has continued to undermine regional integration. Observers have long noted that accommodation between some or all of the great powers of Asia would undermine the western alliance system. Mark Beeson points out that American strategic involvement in the region “is expressly designed to keep East Asia divided and its security orientation firmly oriented toward Washington”. Quoting an international relations expert, Michael Mastanduno, Beeson argues that keeping the region divided has been a key element of America’s overall grand strategy:

since the United States does not want to encourage a balancing coalition against its dominant position, it is not clear that it has a strategic interest in the full resolution of differences between, say, Japan and China or Russia and China. Some level of tension among these states reinforces their individual need for a special relationship with the United States.

While US hegemony has arguably contributed to the absence of a great power war in Asia since the late 1970s, Washington also maintains a vested interest in the

89 "Although an accommodation between Japan and China would clearly be preferable", writes Dibb, "it would not be to the benefit of the Western alliance system if it involved a strategic partnership between Asia’s two greatest powers". The same would be true, Dibb continues, if a “triple entente” emerged between China, Russia and India. Paul Dibb, “The Strategic Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region” in Robert D. Blackwell and Paul Dibb (eds), America’s Asian Alliances, pp. 6-7.
92 Hugh White frequently makes this argument, writing that since the time President Richard Nixon went to China in 1972, uncontested US primacy has kept the peace in Asia, suppressing conflict by or between the major powers. While White is broadly correct when he points out that “no major military power has used significant force in Asia since China attacked Vietnam in 1979”, he is plainly engaged in hyperbole when he describes this era as Asia’s “golden age” and a result of the “calming
various regional disputes that keeps Japan, South Korea and other US allies dependent on America. As Gavan McCormack writes:

If relations between Japan and North Korea, or even between North and South Korea, were ever normalised, the tension would drain from them and the comprehensive incorporation of Japan within the American hegemonic project would become correspondingly more difficult to justify. In other words, if peace broke out in East Asia, the justification for the sprawling US military base presence in South Korea and Japan would disappear.  

The bilateral hub-and-spokes system of alliances the US established in Asia after WWII was designed to prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon that might threaten US security and ensure regional compliance and continued American leadership. Washington’s objective was to “exert maximum control over [its] smaller ally’s actions” and “amplify US control and minimise any collusion among its alliance partners.”  The hub-and-spokes system served America’s dual geopolitical objectives in the region of preventing the emergence of a “peer competitor” and an indigenous regional grouping that might exclude the US.

Believers in the benevolence of American “leadership” in Asia are quick to attribute credit to the US for the phenomenal economic growth in the region in the post-WWII era, largely on account of the strategic stability and economic liberalisation

policies sustained by American primacy.\textsuperscript{96} In actuality, American-style globalisation and insecurity evince “a disturbing positive correlation in East Asia”.\textsuperscript{97}

East Asia’s economic growth during the “miracle years” – occurring variously from the 1950s to the 1990s – was achieved by development models that were otherwise vehemently opposed by the US.\textsuperscript{98} It was not happenstance that while East Asia continued to boom under various forms of the “infant industry” development model that defied the orthodox economic theories advocated by Washington, America’s poster-child neoliberal economies in Latin America crashed spectacularly during the “lost decade” of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{99}

As with America’s Marshall Plan for Europe in the aftermath of WWII, Washington’s tolerance for the alternative development models adopted by its Asian allies was driven by the long-term objective of thwarting indigenous communist and left-socialist political forces that threatened America’s global economic dominance.\textsuperscript{100} Access to the massive domestic American market, provision of foreign aid and corporate penetration were used by Washington across the third world as a means to moderate radical nationalism in a strategy of “developmental containment”.\textsuperscript{101}

In return for America’s apparent economic largesse, third-world elites were required to pledge political obedience to Washington’s Cold War strategic objectives. Unsurprisingly, the rapid national economic growth of the peripheral

\textsuperscript{96} For two illustrations of this conventional view see Wesley, \textit{There Goes the Neighbourhood and Shearer, Unchartered Waters}.


\textsuperscript{98} According to Chang, “Despite some lingering disagreements, there is now a broad consensus that the spectacular growth of [post-war Japan and the East Asian NICs], with the exception of Hong Kong, is fundamentally due to activist, industrial, trade and technology (ITT) policies by the state”. Ha-Joon Chang, \textit{Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective}, London: Anthem Press, 2003, p. 49.


capitalist states of East and Southeast Asia was accompanied by pronounced political repression – a kind of “repressive developmentalism” – justified under the guise of maintaining stability and in accordance with traditional “Asian values”.  

When the geopolitical value of America’s Asian allies lapsed at the end of the Cold War, they came under increasing pressure from the US to adopt the prevailing economic orthodoxy or “Washington consensus”. Australia was at the forefront of promoting the neoliberal model of development in the region that proved so beneficial for Australian and western business interests and local Asian elites but severely damaging to the poor, the environment, and political and economic stability in the region. The rapid trade and capital market liberalisation policies that were the hallmark of the neoliberal project – pushed through multilateral economic forums such as the Australian-initiated APEC – led to instability and economic collapse, epitomised by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and exacerbated by the economic prescriptions imposed by the US-controlled IMF in its aftermath.  

Turning to current times, it has become patently clear, even within mainstream political and scholarly circles, that US primacy may not be the anchor of regional stability it once claimed to be. The rapid rise of China and its increasing ability and willingness to challenge Washington’s insistence on dictating the “rules” of the regional order undermines the fundamental premise of orthodox accounts of regional stability that claim US primacy is critical for suppressing conflict between the great powers.


America’s refusal to cede any strategic space to the PRC amidst its growing national power is steadily increasing the risk of a major destabilising regional conflict. While the US insists its military posture toward Beijing is geared solely toward upholding common goods such as freedom of navigation, its overriding objective is to preserve its hegemony, especially the capacity to project military power as close inshore to China as possible.\textsuperscript{105}

America’s grand strategy with respect to the PRC has always been to prevent its emergence as a “powerful, autonomous, self-determining nation asserting its right to formulate the rules along with other great powers”.\textsuperscript{106} During the Cold War, Washington’s strategy was to contain and isolate China until the rest of Asia was sufficiently brought under US influence. Recognition and normalisation of relations occurred only after the threat of regional national liberation movements were defeated, requiring China to adapt to the new Asia that had painfully emerged after the end of the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{107} US foreign policy has since oscillated between “constructive engagement” and containment, but with the same objective of ensuring China remains incorporated into the “norms” and “rules” of the US-led international strategic and economic order.\textsuperscript{108}

While Australia continues to insist that regional stability is of the utmost importance, it is simultaneously positioning itself as a central part of America’s strategy to contain the rise of China,\textsuperscript{109} risking a major confrontation that could


\textsuperscript{107} Peck, \textit{Washington’s China}.

\textsuperscript{108} Peck, \textit{Ideal Illusions}, pp. 133-139.

\textsuperscript{109} US strategy toward China is perhaps more accurately described as “dissuasion” rather than containment. The goal is not to slow the rate of growth of China’s military power but match it, and thereby preserve America’s military advantage. Together with strengthening its web of defence relationships in Asia, the US aims to shape Beijing’s choices and discourage it from challenging US primacy. Nina Silove, The Pivot before the Pivot: US Strategy to Preserve the Power Balance in Asia, \textit{International Security}, vol. 40, no. 4, Spring 2016, pp. 45-88.
cross the nuclear threshold and drag Australia into a US-Sino war.\footnote{Robert Ayson and Desmond Ball, Can a Sino-Japanese War be Controlled?, \textit{Survival: Global Politics and Strategy}, vol. 56, issue 6, 2014, pp. 135-166; Bisley and Taylor, \textit{Conflict in the East China Sea}.} The prospect of China providing a potential countervailing force to balance the preponderant power of the US is interpreted by Canberra as a threat that must be contained.\footnote{As Hardy writes, “By associating regional stability with . . . unchallenged US primacy, Australia perceives the possible rise of a multipolar Asia as a threat”. John Hardy, Ending Ambivalence: Australian Perspectives on Stability in Asia, \textit{18th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia}, Adelaide, 5-8 July 2010, p. 2.}


Australia and the US undoubtedly share similar interests and values, particularly with respect to the contours of the regional and global order. However, as even a cursory review of the historical record makes clear, they are not the enlightened self-interests or lofty liberal values typically reflected in political rhetoric and within dominant international relations and strategic studies accounts. The overriding joint principle of the Australia-US alliance has been the maintenance of American hegemony and the favourable global strategic and economic order it presides over, even as this has frequently undermined the professed commitment to liberal values and international peace and security.
CHAPTER TWO

Australian Strategic Culture

Race Fears, Dependence and Militarism

Australian history is replete with fears of unrealistic threats. Two noted strategic experts write that “It is commonplace to assert in every era that Australia faces complex, uncertain and potentially dangerous strategic circumstances”.¹ In reality, the absence of current and future threats is probably the most striking historic feature of Australia’s strategic environment. Although it is rarely stated explicitly, the fact of the matter is that “for more than seventy years, the defining feature of Australia’s strategic environment has been the absence of a threat against which to plan its defence”.² Contrary to the traditional myth of Australia’s indefensibility, its relative geographic isolation makes it “arguably more naturally secure than any other part of the planet”.³

One might expect that such a historically benign security environment would result in a global outlook marked by national confidence, self-assurance and a fiercely independent and peaceful foreign policy. To the contrary, Australia’s defence and foreign policy tradition has reflected that of an insecure, dependent and militaristic nation. The major features of Australia’s strategic culture – its salient and enduring

² Raoul Heinrichs, China’s Defence White Paper is Historic for Australia, And Not in a Good Way, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute for International Policy, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2015/06/03/Chinas-defence-white-paper-is-historic-for-Australia-and-not-in-a-good-way.aspx>, accessed 5 April 2016. Dibb and Brabin-Smith also write that “Despite major changes in Australia’s circumstances, we have been free from threat of major military attack since the end of World War II”. Dibb and Brabin-Smith, Australian Defence, p. 51.
beliefs, values and habits – are an elevated sense of vulnerability and insecurity and a resort to militarism and alliances to ensure its security.⁴

Australia’s strategic culture is both a logical consequence of, and reinforcement for, the realist paradigm that has historically dominated the mindset of Australian policy makers and strategic thinkers.⁵ From the perspective of realism, Australia’s pursuit of great power allies is understood as the solution to an enduring security dilemma derived from its relative powerlessness and geographic isolation from cultural and strategic partners in Europe and North America. Fearful of their defencelessness against an attack by a large and hostile power – irrespective of how remote that threat may be – Australians have traditionally sought alliances with “great and powerful friends” to guarantee their security.⁶

Australia’s enthusiastic support for its Anglo-American allies can be partly explained by its historic apprehension of being abandoned in a time of need.⁷ According to orthodox alliance theory, asymmetrical alliances are afflicted by the dual fears of abandonment and entrapment:

[If] a state feels highly dependent on its ally, directly or indirectly, if it perceives the ally as less dependent, if the alliance commitment is vague, and if the ally’s recent behaviour suggests doubtful loyalty,

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⁵ Wesley writes that concerns about powerlessness, isolation and cultural difference have produced a particular variant of realism in Australia that has dominated International Relations scholarship since the 1920s. Michael Wesley, The Rich Tradition of Australian Realism, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2009, pp. 324-334.


the state will fear abandonment more than entrapment. It will therefore tend to reassure the ally of its commitment, support him in specific confrontations with the opponent, and avoid conciliating the opponent. The reverse conditions will tend to induce opposite strategies.8

Australia’s traditional fear of abandonment has been accompanied by an enthusiasm for waging war far from its borders and in support of its Anglo-American allies. As a number of historians have noted, one the ironies of the historical fear of invasion is that Australia has remained virtually untouched by foreign invaders while successive governments have “displayed a bloodthirsty enthusiasm for despatching troops to invade the territory of others, at the behest of either Britain or America”.9

Since 1885, Australia’s alliance-reliance mentality has led it to invade “the Sudan, South Africa, Somaliland, Egypt, Palestine, Turkey, various European countries, several Pacific islands, Korea and Vietnam”.10 Afghanistan, Iraq ( thrice) and Syria have since been added to that impressive list. Launching wars in support of its great and powerful allies is now a mythologised source of Australia’s national identity.11

The roots of Australia’s security anxieties and alliance-reliance mentality can be traced to the time of European colonisation when they became deeply embedded

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10 Thompson, Lake and Cottle, p. 189.
in the national psyche.\textsuperscript{12} For Australia’s early white colonisers, who were relatively small in number and far from their cultural homelands in Europe, densely populated Asia was perceived and depicted as a dire security threat to the sparsely populated continent they came to occupy.

The perceived threats to Australia’s security were mostly illusory and, particularly in the case of Asia, entirely racial. The whole of white Australia during the course of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was effectively seized by the blind determination to create a nation of the “higher” races, eliciting extreme and irrational fears of the “lower” oriental races who it appeared were determined, and perhaps destined, to inundate the more advanced white race they outnumbered.

Race fears behind Australia’s alliance-reliance mentality were inseparable from prevailing sentiments of British race patriotism. Australians felt part of the British whole, and together with the rising power of the US, were hopeful that the “Anglosphere” could retain its dominance in world affairs. This sentiment was captured by the “Father of Australian Federation”, Sir Henry Parkes, when he declared that:

[These] great states that are forming here will hold out their hands to the states of America and these two great countries will stretch out their hands again to the mother country and will unite one and all in one great empire to govern the world.\textsuperscript{13}

It is not an unrelated fact that during the late-nineteenth century, when race-based fears of foreign invasion were arguably at their peak, the internal “threat” posed by Aborigines was considered an even greater concern, at least in the areas where Aboriginal resistance persisted. In 1879, a correspondent to \textit{The Queenslander}


\textsuperscript{13} Philip Bell and Roger Bell, \textit{Implicated: The United States in Australia}, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 56.
argued that the community had “not grudged a large outlay on national defence with but a very doubtful prospect of foreign attack”, but asked why was the government not willing to spend as much for the “repression of the enemy within our gates”. On another occasion in 1887, a writer to *The Queenslander* observed:

there are thousands, that can be spent in Defence Forces, to protect the inhabitants of this country from the invisible, perhaps imaginary, but for certain distant enemies; but we cannot afford to keep an efficient body of police to keep in check the enemy we have at our door, the enemy of everyday, the one that slowly but surely robs and impoverishes us.

Concerns about threats to Australia from abroad were inextricably linked to the frontier wars white colonisers were waging against the Aboriginal population at home. Widespread fears in the early-twentieth century of the “empty north” being invaded by a populous Asian nation arose from the experience of European colonisers who, after having dispossessed the Aborigines, now feared they too might be “aboriginalised”. In a speech at the laying of the foundation stone for Parliament House in Canberra in 1913, the then Attorney General Billy Hughes made the link between the two explicit, exhorting that Australia and America were:

[Two] nations that have always had their way, for they killed everybody else to get it. I declare to you that in no other way shall we be able to come to our own except by preparing to hold that which we have now. [Cheers.] We are here as visible signs of a continent. We have a great future before us . . . The first historic event in the history of the Commonwealth we are engaged in today [is being taken] without the slightest trace of that race we have banished from the face of the earth. We must not be too proud lest

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15 Reynolds, p. 79.  
we should, too, in time disappear. We must take steps to safeguard that foothold we now have. [Cheers.]  

Such race fears constituted a major driving force behind Australia’s defence preparations in the lead up to WWI. A force of 100,000 men was envisioned by Australian policy makers to defend the continent against an aggressive Japan who, it was thought, would launch a racial war against Australia to forcibly allow its citizens to freely enter the country and overturn the “white Australia policy”. Germany, on the other hand, was a secondary concern, viewed primarily as a threat to Great Britain and its colonial possessions. The British skilfully played on the irrational fear of Japan as a means to encourage Australians to mobilise for war, all the while correctly anticipating that Australians would rush to serve British interests anywhere in the world once war came. 

Much of the fear of Japan leading up to WWII was similarly based not on sound strategic assessments but an “almost racially-based dogma” that saw Japan as a threat to “white Australia”. When Japanese militarism did emerge as a genuine security threat between 1941 and 1945, it appeared to vindicate Australia’s fears of Asia and reinforced its alliance-reliance mentality, even as Britain proved incapable of coming to Australia’s aid. When Japanese expansion toppled the British garrison at Singapore and most Western colonial governments in Asia by 1942, the experience became burned into Australia’s strategic memory, influencing defence

20 Despite the early warning signals, most Australian government officials and defence experts in the 1920s and 1930s believed British assurances that necessary reinforcements to defend Singapore against an expansionist Japan would be forthcoming. Malcolm Murfett, “The Singapore Strategy” in Carl Bridge and Bernard Attard (eds), *Between Empire and Nation*. 

policy for at least the next three decades, particularly as the advent of the Cold War merged old fears about Asia with new fears about “international communism”.  

The Political Economy of Australia’s Alliance-Reliance Mentality

The emergence of Australia’s race-based security anxieties and alliance-reliance mentality cannot be separated from the fact that the nation’s prosperity relied on the continuation of the British imperial project both at home and abroad. Typically, fear of the “other” was utilised by European empires as a rationalisation for imperialism. In the case of the British Empire, concerns about race survival and belief in popular theories of racial hierarchy provided a form of ideological legitimisation for Britain’s awesome power and control over vast swathes of the world’s population:

The physical, political and to some extent cultural usurpation of so many people demanded justification. Many indigenous people were exploited, oppressed and even killed in the process of colonisation, and conscientious Britons needed to rationalise this profitable, but morally ambiguous conduct.

Similarly, race fears served to legitimise Australia’s support for the British Empire and the colonial project to which it owed significant economic benefits. The

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22 As Goldsworthy writes, “Having material stakes in Britain’s empire helped to create in Australia a mindset that was strongly supportive of the imperial status quo”. David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain’s Empire*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002, p. 5.
23 For the classic text on western depictions of the “other” as a derivative of, and justification for, the will to dominate, see Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
abundance of natural resources that were the source of Australia’s wealth and economic development were inevitably acquired by displacing and dispossessing the indigenous population. The extraction, development and export of those natural resources were highly dependent on British investment and the global trading system, underpinned to a substantial degree by UK naval power.²⁶ Australia’s economic prosperity was thus inextricably tied to the fate of the British Empire and the continued exploitation of those colonised countries which, under significant duress, were made to restructure their economies in ways that complemented the industrial needs of the west.

In some ways, Australia’s status as a colony of Britain served as a hindrance to economic development, particularly given the national economy was dependent on British investors who were reluctant to provide capital for investment in industries and technology other than those that satisfied the needs of the British market. Eventually, however, on accord of Australia’s status as a white-settler nation, and its privileged position within the Empire’s division of labour, the City of London came to sanction Australia’s industrial development.

Permitted to develop behind protectionist trade barriers and engage in massive state-funded infrastructure projects, Australia managed to break into the ranks of the industrialised world. Other colonies of European powers, by contrast, were brutally forced into becoming sources of cheap raw materials and foodstuffs, the imposition of “free trade” policies effectively “kicking away the ladder” to development that Australia and other industrialised states had used to climb to prosperity.²⁷

²⁶ Membership in the British Empire had perhaps doubled Australian trade by World War I. Mclean, p. 165-170.
The political economy of Australian foreign policy after WWII continued to lend itself to the waning global imperial order, particularly in Southeast Asia, where Australia held direct and indirect economic interests.\(^{28}\) The continued subordination of the region to the old colonial powers was considered necessary to safeguard the economic strength of Europe and the imperial preferential trading system which Australia remained heavily dependent on. The paramount importance of Malaya’s economy to the Commonwealth, for example, provided the incentive on the part of Britain, and arguably Australia, to crush the revolutionary nationalist-communist movement that gained strength there in the years after WWII.\(^ {29}\)

Canberra’s plans for the post-WWII regional economic order aligned, more or less, with that of its allies in London and Washington. This was made evident by Spender’s Colombo Plan that hinged on the objective of restoring and developing Southeast Asia’s capacity for exporting food and raw materials to the UK and continental Europe. Southeast Asia was also deemed important as an outlet for Australia’s secondary products and for supplying Australia with desperately needed dollar earnings. The Colombo Plan could only succeed, however, with massive American economic investment and other forms of support. Significantly, this dovetailed with Washington’s own agenda for defeating revolutionary movements in Asia.\(^ {30}\)

As British power continued to decline in the two decades after 1945, Australia was gradually integrated into America’s neo-imperial order that came to replace the old colonial powers in Asia. This shift required both the growing influence of American

\(^{28}\) For a summary of Australia’s direct economic interests in the Southwest Pacific and Southeast Asia during the 1950s and 1960s, see Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket*, pp. 29-30. Of course, these interests were far less important to Australia’s prosperity than existing trade and investment links with the UK and Europe.

\(^{29}\) Malaya’s rubber and tin mining industries were the biggest dollar earners in the Commonwealth. Malaya was thus described by a British Lord in 1952 as the “greatest material prize in South-East Asia”. Mark Curtis, *Web of Deceit: Britain’s Real Role in the World*, London: Vintage Press, 2003, p. 335.

corporations over the Australian economy and a regional division of labour that saw Australia play an important second-tier role in the subordination of Southeast Asia to joint American-Japanese economic domination.

In a process largely completed by the mid-1960s, Australian trade policy was reoriented away from dependence on Britain and Western Europe to economic integration with the Asia-Pacific region and within the broader framework of the US-led multilateral global trading system. Australia’s traditional defence of the British Empire was thus superseded by its support for America’s “informal empire”, with its unique capacity to maintain and extend a global strategic and economic order favourable to western-capitalist interests.

Australia’s “Imperialist Spirit” and “Middle Power” Ambitions

A closer look at Australia’s early colonial history reveals what can only be described as an “imperialist spirit”, linked to, but distinct from, traditional security anxieties. To the degree that the colonies, and later, a federated Australia, had a foreign policy toward surrounding Pacific neighbours during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, it was mostly coloured by varying levels of enthusiasm for imperialist expansion. Australia’s “Monroe Doctrine” of preventing nearby territories falling into the hands of rival European imperial powers often

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underpinned the drive for colonial conquest. However, security concerns did not always dominate. Australia’s desire for expansion was driven in no small part by the interests of Australian capital and the substantial economic benefits derived from dominating trade and investment in the region.

From as early as the 1820s, when the desire for imperialist expansion into the Southwest Pacific first emerged in the colonies, there was little or no concern that claims to surrounding Pacific territories from foreign imperial powers might threaten Australia’s security. For over a half century, the desire for expansion was primarily justified by the objective to secure commercial and Christian missionary interests. From the 1880s onwards, fears of expansionist European powers were presented as the primary, although not only, justification for colonial conquest. Queensland’s attempt to annex East New Guinea in 1883 was one notable exception, largely motivated by the desire to preserve it as a labour recruiting ground for Queensland’s sugar industry.

After federation, nationalist pride in the nascent power of the new nation injected great fervour into Australia’s ambition for its own colonial project in the Southwest Pacific. The liberal Adelaide Advertiser reflected the imperialist hopes of a unified Australia when it declared that, in contrast to the 1880s, now “we have the machinery for bringing the concentrated opinion of Australia to bear upon matters affecting our continental interests”. The “numberless islands” that surround

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37 East New Guinea, due to its closeness to Australia, was an exception. Still, when moves to annex it first emerged in the 1870s, defence and economic benefits were considered equally important.
38 In order to justify his actions and present it as *fait accompli*, Queensland Premier Thomas McIlwraith fabricated a threat of imminent German annexation. Britain, however, disallowed the annexation. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism*, pp. 51-65.
Australia’s waters, “whatever allegiance they may now own – we still regard as . . . preordained, at however remote a date, to be our heritage”.  

Informed by the imperial sentiment of the day that linked nationhood to imperial status, and combined with a belief in racial superiority, hegemony in the Southwest Pacific was viewed as part of Australia’s destiny as a white power. This pro-imperial spirit was most notably expressed with respect to Australia’s sustained desire to annex the New Hebrides. There were no conceivable security threats to justify Australia’s pursuit of annexation. Rather, Australia’s imperial quest was a matter of “national honour” and prestige.

Australia’s imperialist spirit was on full display in the lead up to WWI when secret preparations were undertaken for an expeditionary force of 20,000 men to engage in colonial conquest in the Pacific and for wider use in service of the British Empire. The plans for offensive action were stunningly broad. A long list was proposed to seize the colonies of Germany, Holland, Portugal and France in the East Indian Archipelago and the Pacific. “There were few places within four thousand miles of Australia”, notes one Australian historian, “for which a case for conquest could not be made.”

Although race fears featured significantly in Australia’s desire for expansion, the outbreak of WWI also presented an opportunity for Australia to extend its political sovereignty in the Pacific. The successful takeover of New Guinea from the Germans was advocated by The Age with the following justification on 12 August 1914:

39 Thompson, p. 158.
40 Significantly, even intervention in regional public health was envisioned as a means to fulfil Australian dreams of hegemony in the Pacific Islands. Alexander Cameron-Smith, Australian Imperialism and International Health in the Pacific Islands, Australian Historical Studies, vol. 41, no. 1, 2010, pp. 57-74.
41 Since 1903 when Britain offered, and, in 1904, secretly drafted, a convention to establish a joint Anglo-French protectorate over the New Hebrides, thereby preserving its demilitarisation, any possibility of a threat to Australia was effectively neutralised. Successive Australian leaders, however, continued to push for annexation as a matter of national prestige. Thompson, Australian Imperialism, pp. 173-203.
42 Newton, Hell-Bent, p. 47.
CHAPTER TWO

We have long since realised that we have a Pacific Ocean destiny . . . By virtue of the European war an unexpected path has been opened to the furtherance of our ambition [to lay down] the foundations of a solid Australian sub-empire in the Pacific Ocean.43

For most parliamentarians, the territory of New Guinea was “rightfully” Australian; it belonged to Australia “as Tasmania does”.44 At the war’s conclusion, Prime Minister Hughes argued at the League of Nations for outright annexation of New Guinea. Although security grounds were presented as the primary concern, the desire to exploit its natural resources also featured prominently in parliamentary debates. When it came to the push for control over Nauru, there was no doubt that the desire to exploit its considerable phosphate deposits was of prime concern.45

Australia’s expansionist stance continued into WWII. At the 1944 ANZAC Conference, Australian Minister for External Affairs, H. V. Evatt, looked to secure Australian control over wide areas of the Pacific, including sovereignty over the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides and Fiji.46 Washington reacted to the Australia-New Zealand Agreement (ANZAC Pact) by claiming Australia was attempting to establish a “Monroe Doctrine” and a “co-prosperity sphere” covering most of the Pacific islands south of the equator; a policy dubbed “ANZAC imperialism”.47 That policy would, Harper notes, “of course be a revival of Australian Pacific ambitions more than half a century earlier”.48

After WWII, Australian elites continued to envision their country as an “outpost”, “bastion” and “custodian” of the British Empire in the Asia-Pacific. However, they now viewed themselves on an equal footing with London and to have a new and more independent role in the world. Evatt, Spender, Casey and other prominent

45 Thompson, Australian Imperialism, pp. 211-12.
46 O’Lincoln, Australia’s Pacific War, p. 59.
post-WWII planners argued that Australia was a Commonwealth nation as well as a “middle power” and “metropolitan power” with special rights and responsibilities in the region.\textsuperscript{49}

From the end of WWII, the Australian Labor government pushed to take leadership of Empire interests in the region and expand Australia’s military and political role south of the equator. Crucially, a reassertion of British imperialism was recognised as necessary for Australia to achieve its regional leadership goals.\textsuperscript{50} According to Bell, this was the central objective of Australian’s foreign policy during this time. He observes that:

\begin{quote}
Increased Dominion diplomatic and military independence, combined with active support for a reassertion of British power and influence in the Far East under Australian leadership, was the principal feature of Australian policy during 1944-6.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Post-WWII conservatives carried the flame of Australia’s imperialist spirit into the 1950s and 1960s. The Liberal-Country Coalition, led by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, seriously considered the expansion of Australia’s empire in the South Pacific throughout the 1950s, while successive conservative governments “stood against the tide” of rapid decolonisation that was occurring in European colonies during the 1960s.\textsuperscript{52} Menzies and his colleagues were strong supporters of the continuation of British prestige and wider European imperialism in the Far East, viewing all of the European powers, with the exception of Russia, “to be worthy of support, since all, in their varying ways, could be seen as bearers of European influence in the non-Western parts of the globe”.\textsuperscript{53}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{51} Bell, p. 171.
\textsuperscript{53} David Goldsworthy, Australian External Policy and the End of Britain’s Empire, \textit{Australian Journal of Politics and History}, vol. 51, no. 1, 2005, p. 18. Accordingly, Menzies endorsed the attempts by the
\end{footnotesize}
Australia’s self-identification as a “middle power” has continued to be a central theme in Australian foreign policy discourse up to the present.54 Although typically associated with the liberal internationalism of Labor leaders such as H. V. Evatt, Gareth Evans and Kevin Rudd, Australia’s middle power activism is consistent with classical realist interpretations that emphasise the pursuit of self-interest via the exercise of power and influence.55 In fact, the dominant stream in Australian middle power imagining is grounded in empire and imperialism, not liberal internationalism. Moreover, the middle power concept should be understood, at least in part, as a continuation of Australia’s imperialist spirit first forged in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.56

Australia’s middle power ambitions have always been undertaken within the ambit of its great power alliances. As demonstrated in the chapters that follow, the primary role of the US alliance in Australian defence and foreign policies evolved with Australia’s increasing independence, growing strategic ambitions and changes in the regional distribution of power. Although initially conceived of in security terms, the alliance played its most important role as an expression of Australia’s interests in restoring and preserving the western-imperial order in Asia. As the old colonial order receded, and Australia’s strategic independence grew, the alliance took on greater relevance for bolstering Australia’s status as a leading middle power within the US-led global strategic and economic order.

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54 As Ungerer writes, Australia’s self-identification as a middle power is “one of the most enduring themes in Australian foreign policy discourse for over sixty years”. Carl Ungerer, The “Middle Power” Concept in Australian Foreign Policy, Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol. 53, no. 4, 2007, p. 551.
55 Ungerer, p. 540.
CHAPTER THREE

The Australia-US Alliance and Defending the Imperial Order in Asia

Threat Perceptions in the 1950s and 1960s

The formal defence treaty signed by Australia, New Zealand and the US in 1951 (ANZUS) was carefully worded, on the insistence of the Americans, to avoid any binding obligations to come to one another’s aid.¹ Australian leaders at the time publicly presented ANZUS as a defence treaty identical to that of NATO.² Unlike NATO, however, the treaty does not consider “an armed attack against one . . . shall be considered an attack against them all”. Rather, ANZUS merely stipulates that in the event of an attack each country will “act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes”.³ Australia nonetheless took the alliance to be a security blanket so long as certain obligations were fulfilled, particularly support for US foreign military interventions and the hosting of US bases on Australian soil.⁴

Apart from guaranteeing protection in the event of an attack, Australian policy makers saw the alliance as crucial for forestalling the emergence of threats to Australia in its immediate strategic environment. In the context of the early period of the Cold War during the 1950s and 1960s, the primary concern was Soviet and/or

² Foreign Minister Richard Casey, for example, remarked to the Australian parliament in July 1951 that, like NATO, the “intension” of the ANZUS Treaty “is that an attack on one should be regarded as an attack on all”. Gary Brown, Breaking the American Alliance: An Independent National Security Policy for Australia, Canberra: Australian National University, 1989, p. 62.
⁴ In practice, given the reality of Australia’s strategic environment, the ANZUS Treaty was of little value to Australia in providing protection against a direct attack. As Sissons wrote in 1952, “It seems certain, almost beyond reasonable doubt, that circumstances under which Australia may invoke American assistance under the Pact will not arise”. D.C.S. Sissons, The Pacific Pact, Australian Outlook, vol. 6, no. 1, 1952, p. 21.
Chinese communist infiltration into Southeast Asia from which an attack on Australia might have been mounted. Consequently, the alliance played a central role in Australia’s strategic doctrine of “forward defence”. A memorandum concerning Australian security submitted by the Defence Committee in January 1962, stated:

[Protection against communist expansion] can be best achieved by a forward defence strategy which involves the containment of enemy forces as far from our immediate environs as possible. The adoption of this forward defence strategy extends our strategic interests to Southeast Asia as the centre and closest part of the Allied defence line extending from Pakistan to Japan, and as the area most immediately threatened. While Southeast Asia is held, defence in depth is provided for Australia.5

As the memorandum suggests, the doctrine dictated sending Australian forces, in cooperation with its allies, to confront communism as far forward of Australia as possible in order to maintain “defence in depth”. By continuing to support America’s involvement in the region, it was reasoned, the US would be more likely to retain a significant military presence in Southeast Asia and come to Australia’s aid in a time of need.6

Although the threat of communist aggression took centre stage during the Cold War, the process of decolonisation and the rise of independent Asian nationalism were of greater concern to Australian policy makers. Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Sir Alan Watt, revealed in March 1951 that “Australia wanted an American security guarantee for three reasons: against a rearmed Japan, against communist imperialism in Asia, and against Asian expansionism generally”. It was

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the third reason Watt believed to be “the strongest” although this “could not . . . be 
made public”.7

Australian policy makers acknowledged on a number of occasions that not all Asian nationalist movements were communist. Richard Casey, for example, conceded this very point at a lecture at Michigan State University in the late 1950s. However, “he warned, making it quite clear he was referring to Indonesia, non-Communist extreme anti-Western nationalist forces in Asia could pose as great a danger as Communism”.8 Casey’s concerns reflected Australia’s official strategic assessments which, by the late 1950s, began to “recognise decolonisation and the establishment of new, independent countries in Asia as a separate strategic concern from the Cold War . . . and then replace the latter as the main focus of Australia’s defence policy”.9

Although allying itself to the greatest power in world history undoubtedly provided a level of protection to Australia that was otherwise unavailable, the actual defence benefits the alliance provided against realistic threat scenarios were minimal. The dual threats of potential Japanese militarism and Soviet/Chinese communism that led to the establishment of the ANZUS Treaty and formed the primary defence justification for the alliance in the 1950s and 1960s were far less significant than was, and continues to be, typically presented. When the term “threat” was used in official Australian strategic assessments, “it often meant the contribution to allied action in support of wider interests, rather than a direct possibility of harm to Australia itself”.10

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7 These comments were made during private discussions with New Zealand on the ANZUS Treaty. See Roger Holdich, Vivianne Johnson and Pamela Andre (eds), Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: The ANZUS Treaty 1951, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001, fn 3, p. 130. Minister for External Affairs, Richard Casey, also made the point in his private notes that ANZUS “protects us against Com Russia, Asian aggression, Indonesia (Dutch) – as well as Japan”. David McLean, Anzus Origins: A Reassessment, Australian Historical Studies, vol. 24, no. 94, 1990, pp. 78-79. Emphasis in original.
8 Pemberton, All the Way, p. 79.
10 Fruhling, fn 4, p. 2.
The retention of American forces and bases in Japan virtually eliminated any potential threat from that country.\(^{11}\) Although Australia’s Minister for External Affairs, and self-declared “father” of the ANZUS Treaty, Sir Percy Spender, required some convincing, he and most members of Cabinet eventually came to accept that a Japanese threat to Australian security was remote.\(^{12}\) In line with US thinking, the Australian government increasingly came to view Japan as a bulwark against communist aggression and, as early as November 1946, “fell into line with the prevailing geopolitical position that Japan should be treated as a loyal ally within the changing strategic balance, rather than too harshly as defeated enemy”.\(^{13}\)

In the case of communism, from as early as 1947, high-level strategic planning assessments concluded that there was no direct threat to Australia from the Soviet Union and, from 1949, added that communist control over the Chinese mainland, and any further extension of communist influence in Asia “would not materially affect Australia’s comparatively secure strategic position in the short to medium term”.\(^{14}\)

The outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula in 1950 did not fundamentally change these assessments.\(^{15}\) After the attack on South Korea by the DPRK, Menzies reiterated that “International Communism” did not possess great naval power and that “the principal purpose of an Australian Army is not to repel a land invasion, but to cooperate with other democratic forces in those theatres of war where the fate of mankind may be fought out”.\(^{16}\)

\(^{11}\) As Wood writes, “the overwhelming US presence in Japan, the exceptional powers exercised by McArthur as SCAP [Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers]... inadequacy of the proposition that Japan could constitute a threat to Australia”. James Wood, “Australian Aims During the Occupation of Japan 1945-1952: From Occupier to Protector” in Christine De Matos and Robin Gerster (eds), Occupying the “Other”: Australia and Military Occupations From Japan to Iraq, Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2009, p. 38.


\(^{13}\) Wood, “Australian Aims During the Occupation of Japan”, p. 38.


\(^{15}\) Dorling, pp. 44-68.

\(^{16}\) Dorling, p. 64.
The ANZUS Treaty was not understood by Spender primarily as a defence pact to protect Australia in the event of a direct attack but rather as a means to secure Australian access and influence over American global strategic planning. In October 1950, American diplomat, George Perkins, wrote in a memorandum to US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, that, while Spender’s initial concern was to gain assurance that the US would defend Australia, it was “no longer important in Spender’s or other Australian eyes”. Although Spender “is still interested in the Pacific Pact, what he really wants is closer participation in all stages of high-level Washington planning which might later involve the disposition of Australian forces or material”, likely in the Middle East, to assist the UK in the event of global war.\(^\text{17}\) Spender later addressed the House of Representatives expressing the same concerns and desires.\(^\text{18}\)

As Australia became increasingly concerned with instability in Southeast Asia, the ANZAM area of strategic interest came to serve as the basis of Australia’s defence policy throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Ostensibly, the purpose of ANZAM was to provide for the common defence of Australia, New Zealand and Malaya against the threat from Soviet or Chinese communism. However, as Australian military historian, Greg Lockhart, points out, the ANZAM concept “was based on the absence of an external threat to those places”. Both high-level Australian and British assessments confirmed there was “no possible land threat to the mainland of Australia” and “the external threat to Malaya from Chinese armies operating over long and difficult lines of communications is not likely to be very great”.\(^\text{19}\)

Even in the case of Indonesia, with whom relations were significantly strained over the question of Dutch New Guinea and the establishment of the Malaysian Federation, the official assessment from 1950 onwards was that there was “no immediate threat of external aggression”. Indonesia was identified as posing a

\(^{17}\) Dorling, p. 82.

\(^{18}\) Dorling, pp. 85-87.

potential direct threat to Australia in a slightly revised assessment in October 1964, however, its capacity to attack Australia was still acknowledged to be negligible.20

Despite frequent public pronouncements by Australian conservative governments throughout the 1950s and 1960s of the need for a great power alliance to protect Australia against communist aggression from the North, official but classified strategic assessments – although deficient and exaggerated – continued to present the likelihood of high-level threats to Australia as remote.21 Evidence that Australia’s secure position was understood by policy makers at the time can be deduced from defence outlays and ADF manpower statistics which were not high and thus not indicative of a nation that was seriously concerned with a high-level threat.22

In sum, while Australia’s involvement in Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s is commonly portrayed as a response to genuinely perceived military threats from Asia, and the ANZUS Treaty the “bolt on the back door” to those threats, in reality, “low defence budgets confirmed what the electorate and the Australian Chiefs of Staff well knew: that Japan was pacifist, China did not have a navy, Indonesia was also too poor to invade, and there was never any sign of a Viet Cong Pacific armada”.23


21 Brown, Breaking the American Alliance, pp. 24-25.


Strategic Dependence

During WWII, Australia unmistakably surrendered its sovereignty to the US, partly out of strategic necessity, but also to an extent that was probably unnecessary.24 After the war, Australia emerged as more or less an independent nation, although it retained substantial political, economic and cultural links to the British Empire. Under the direction of Minister of External Affairs, H. V. Evatt, Australia assumed an unprecedented degree of independence from the major powers, evidenced by Evatt’s advocacy on behalf of smaller nations at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, and Australia’s early independent position on the first major dispute in the Cold War concerning the Korean peninsula.25

Evatt was fiercely committed to securing an equal partnership with the US that entailed full consultation on all matters of common interest. In May 1949, the US chargé in Canberra, Andrew B. Foster, expressed his belief that the Labor government on the whole was “extremely jealous of the independent position of Australia, suspicious of what it regards as American economic imperialism, and determined not to be pushed around”.26

The Liberal-Country opposition, on the other hand, was far more predisposed to ensuring the interests of the “Anglosphere” were front and centre in Australia’s foreign policy. In December 1949, the US State Department warmly welcomed Menzies’ electoral victory, advising that while Evatt tended to “subordinate” United

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25 On Evatt’s advocacy at the San Francisco Conference, formally the United Nations Conference on International Organisation, see Roger J. Bell, *Unequal Allies: Australian-American Relations and the Pacific War*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977, pp. 183-6. In the case of Korea, Australia initially remained firmly opposed to supporting any action that might further divide the country, including separate elections in the south, despite intense lobbying from Washington. Australia also privately condemned the American occupation in South Korea for entrenching power in the hands of extreme rightists, labelling all opponents of Rhee’s regime as “communist”, and suppressing dissent through “police state” machinery. By late 1948, however, with the deepening Cold War atmosphere and external pressure from western intelligence and security agencies, the ALP shifted its position in full support of the US. Gavan McCormack, *Cold War Hot War: An Australian Perspective of the Korean War*, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983, pp. 19-21, 40-58.
States-Australian relations to the United Nations, the Menzies administration made them “a cardinal point of Australian foreign policy”.  

Menzies readily accepted America’s Cold War perceptions of the communist threat at home and abroad. Post-war conservatives in Australia as a whole held disparaging views of communists, considering them to be “human vermin”, “the scourge of Satan”, a “fifth column” and “un-Australian”. Any communist association or participation in any peace organisation in Australia was taken to be evidence of communist subversion, influence and control.

Like their US counterparts, Australian conservative leaders took communist movements worldwide to be part of a monolithic bloc, headquartered in Moscow and Beijing, whose purpose was global domination. For two decades, Eisenhower’s 1954 “domino theory” laid the basis for both American and Australian security policies. Menzies’ rationale for sending military forces into Malaya in 1955, as part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, was in case “of an overt Chinese offensive into the region”. Ten years later, Menzies provided the following justification for sending a combat battalion to Vietnam in April 1965:

The takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and South East Asia. It must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

In reality, communist movements in Southeast Asia were not satellites of the Soviet Union or Red China. The communist guerrilla movement in Malaya, which sparked

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the Malayan “Emergency” in 1948, was a revolt against colonial rule arising primarily from domestic political, industrial and communal grievances; “international communism” had little to do with it.\(^{32}\) In Vietnam, the conflict was not a case of the Sino-Soviet controlled communist North instigating war against the South, as commonly depicted at the time. After 1954, the conflict “was essentially a struggle between a radicalised Vietnamese patriotism, embodied in the Communist Party, and the United States and its wholly dependent local allies”.\(^{33}\)

While assuming the mantle of communism, the radical social movements that swept across Southeast Asia and much of the third world from 1945 to the 1960s were first and foremost revolutionary nationalist movements seeking to free their countries from European colonisation and American domination. Distinction between the two was critical for accurately assessing any potential security threat; and yet, “Western colonial powers often described anti-colonial movements as ‘communist’, whether they were in fact directed by communists or non-communists”. For western policy makers, including in Australia, it was “almost inconceivable” that revolutionary movements could be both communist and nationalist: “it was assumed they had to be one or the other”.\(^{34}\)

Throughout the period when Canberra’s Vietnam policy was being decided, numerous Western observers called attention to the extensive and freely available evidence contrary to Australia’s perception of events; and yet, this evidence was persistently ignored and no serious attempt was made to ascertain the facts. The ignorance was so great that “Canberra could, as late as 1963, convince itself and state openly that the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem enjoyed popular support” and that it...

\(^{32}\) Edwards with Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments*, pp. 26-30. Chin Peng, long-time leader of the Malayan Communist Party, including the period of the Emergency, writes, “We were never aided financially by the USSR; neither did Moscow ever order us which path to take. Medical aid for our TB patients was all we got from China until 1961 when the struggle took another form in line with Mao’s reading of world revolution”. Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*, Singapore, Media Master, 2003, pp. 115-116.


\(^{34}\) Edwards with Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments*, p. 37.
was “impossible for the South Vietnamese to support the pro-communist South Vietnamese National Liberation Front rather than the Government in Saigon”. 35

Despite the unreality of these beliefs, it has long been maintained that the fear of Chinese communist “aggression” and domination over Southeast Asia, and the apparent direct security threat this posed to Australia, must be assumed to be sincere. Thus, Gregory Clarke asks, as early as 1967, how can “the claim to believe in such a threat be genuine . . . when it appears to be based on such a distorted interpretation of China’s behaviour?” 36 The answer, Clarke believed, lay in the “ideological and psychological outlook” of Australian policy makers. A fervent belief in the inherent evil of Soviet communism and, above all, the traditional fear of the threat to Australia as a European outpost on the edge of Asia, sufficiently explained the inability of policy makers to accurately interpret the behaviour of communist China or even conceive of China as a normal state. 37

In a similar vein, Renouf argued over a decade later, in 1979, that ideology and deeply embedded irrational fears of invasion best explained the inability of Australian policy makers to distinguish between national liberation movements and communist aggression which led, for example, to Australia’s strategic blunder in Vietnam. “Had Australian governments not been blinded by political ideology and misled by fear”, writes Renouf, “they would not have made such a bad error”. 38 Australia’s “baffling irrational consistency” to see the threat of communism everywhere was the result of the “traditional fear of invasion to the North”. 39

Later critical accounts have broadly followed this line of argument, stressing the fact of Australia’s “strategic dependence” on the US as an explanation for Canberra’s

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36 Clark, p. 172.
37 Clark, pp. 184-191.
39 Renouf, pp. 276-277.
enthusiastic support of America’s Cold War objectives. According to one interpretation, Australia’s distorted view of the communist threat was to a large extent the result of Canberra’s uncritical embrace of the American alliance and a wholehearted adoption of Washington’s characterisation of regional events.

Others have argued that although Australia was strategically dependent on the US, Canberra’s threat assessments were more or less the result of an independent reading of the regional security environment, and those assessments, as subsequently revealed, had some veracity. While, with the benefit of hindsight, it clearly lacked nuance and subtlety, Canberra’s perception of the communist threat was understandable given the events of the period.

In either case, whether the perceived threat was conceived independently or not, the actions taken by elites in Canberra, no matter how misguided, are primarily understood in terms of advancing Australia’s national security interests. Certainly, the desire for security – rooted in deeply embedded themes of fear and dependence – played a role in driving Australia’s regional defence policy and its strategic dependence on the US during the Cold War. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the decolonisation movement that swept across Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s posed little actual threat to the security of Australia and this needs to be contextualised in terms of the broader UK and US imperialist agendas of the time.

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40 For a critical review of the literature on the theme of strategic dependence during the Cold War, see McLean, Australia in the Cold War. Following on from the work of Gregory Clark and others, McLean argues that Australia’s distorted view of the communist threat was the result of “cultural predispositions”, stressing the point that Canberra’s polices and perceptions were not formed in Washington or London but rather a combination of traditional fears of Asia and Australia’s particular regional circumstances.


Recognising the fact of Australia’s rather benign security environment is important because, as Lockhart points out, “while reality is the historian’s hedge against fantasy, beliefs are subject to political manipulation”. It would be unwise to discount the actual remoteness of threats to Australia’s security and focus solely on the beliefs of policy makers as a means to understand their actions. Perceptions, even when held with conviction, do not always present the full story. The leaders of imperial Japan, after all, viewed their mission to conquer Asia as deriving from a similar set of sincere beliefs to bring liberty, stability and prosperity to the region.

What’s missing from conventional accounts of Australian policies and perceptions during the 1950s and 1960s is the fact that revolutionary nationalist movements, while posing little threat to Australian security, did pose a real and significant threat to the European-imperial order in Asia and, in the long-term, Washington’s vision of a US-led capitalist global order. As a status quo power heavily invested in the continuation of the British Empire, and increasingly integrated into America’s regional political and economic order, Australia had clear interests in the defeat of revolutionary nationalism and the preservation of Anglo-American dominance in Asia.

Defending the Imperial Order in Asia

Australia’s Cold War perceptions, rooted in the concepts of the “domino theory” and “monolithic communism”, were shared throughout the western world to a greater or lesser extent. Unlike in Australia, however, there has been extensive critical scholarship, particularly with respect to US foreign policy, that challenges

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44 As Dower writes, imperial Japan’s rulers and planners “were, in their own eyes, moral and rational men. That the nation’s actions, and their own, so often belied their words did not trouble them or even register upon them”. John W. Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc, 2010, pp. 99-100. Elsewhere, Dower writes that even after Japan’s defeat, none of the war crimes trials defendants accepted that they had been engaged in a conspiracy to wage wars of aggression. “On the contrary, they believed to the end with all apparent sincerity that their policies, however disastrous in outcome, had been motivated by legitimate concerns for Japan’s essential rights and interests on the Asian continent”. John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II*, London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999, p. 468.
the notion that misperceptions led to unwise policies and erroneous doctrines. According to this scholarship, rather than misjudging the communist threat, the tendency of US planners to see communist aggression everywhere was largely an act of self-delusion, necessitated by the challenge that decolonisation and revolutionary movements posed to their global strategy – already largely formulated before the conclusion of WWII – to expand and restructure the international capitalist system under US leadership.45

The US emerged from WWII determined to sustain its position of unprecedented global wealth and power in a world devastated by war.46 In order to preserve its leadership position, US national security planners sought to eradicate the existing system of closed trading blocs and develop in their place a global economy open to US capital, just as the UK had sustained an open world trading system during its period of ascendency in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century.

While initially intending to displace the existing system of European imperialism with American globalism, the US later helped to reconstruct parts of the colonial order as a temporary measure for funding the rapid reconstruction of Europe and

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46 This point is aptly illustrated by frequently quoted memorandum of George Kennan (Head of the US State Department Policy Planning Staff): “We have about 50 per cent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 per cent of its population . . . In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming . . . We should cease to talk about vague and – for the Far East – unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratisation. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.” George Kennan, *Review of Current Trends, US Foreign Policy, Policy Planning Staff, PPS No. 23, 28 February 1948.*
supporting European governments in their efforts to quash third-world revolutionary movements that sought an independent path to political and economic development.

The military power of the Soviet Union and Communist China posed the only serious obstacles to Washington’s plans for the creation of a new world economic order. While the Soviet Union checked American penetration into Eastern Europe, it was independent nationalism that posed the greatest threat to Washington’s plans for reducing the third world to part of its own economic system. Much like the French Mission Civilisatrice, the US needed a persuasive ideological ethos of worldwide significance to provide a context for their actions and justification for their means. Anti-communism was the perfect fit because “seeing the dangers of Communism everywhere was a way of seeing American global interests everywhere.”

While the conventional wisdom, including in Australia, is that institutionalised paranoia and ignorance largely explain the persistence of American officials in mistakenly viewing wars for national liberation as part of a Red Chinese or Soviet orchestrated conspiracy, this does not account for the consistency of this error across time and place. As Chomsky explains:

Why were policy makers always subject to the same form of ignorance and irrationality? Why was there such systematic error in the delusional systems constructed by post-war ideologists? Mere ignorance or foolishness would lead to random error, not to regular and systematic distortion: unwavering adherence to the principle that whatever the facts may be, the cause of international conflict is

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47 That the primary consideration was American dominance and not Soviet containment was made clear in the 1950 National Security Council master document on the strategy of containment, NSC-68, which stated that the “overall policy at the present time may be described as one designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish . . . a policy which we would probably pursue even if there were no Soviet threat”. Panitch and Gindin, The Making of Global Capitalism, p. 95.
48 Peck, Ideal Illusions, p. 23.
the behaviour of the Communist powers, and all revolutionary
movements within the United States system are sponsored by the
Soviet Union, China or both . . . Ignorance and stupidity can surely
lead to error, but hardly to such systematic error or such certainty in
error.49

Chomsky does not suggest that US policy makers did not believe their doctrines.
What they may have believed, rather, is less relevant for understanding US foreign
policy than the functionality of those beliefs. He writes:

The fact that policy makers may be caught up in the fantasies they
spin to disguise imperial intervention, and may sometimes even find
themselves trapped by them, should not prevent us from asking
what function these ideological constructions fulfil – why this
particular system of mystification is consistently expounded in place
of some alternative. Similarly, one should not be misled by the fact
that the delusional system presents a faint reflection of reality. It
must, after all, carry some conviction. But this should not prevent us
from proceeding to disentangle motive from myth.50

Australian policy makers are said to have “shared the mistakes made by their
counterparts in Washington”, carrying out the same fundamental error with respect
to the threat of “international communism” despite clear evidence to the
contrary.51 However, as is the case with the US, the “baffling irrational consistency”
of Australian policy makers to view anti-colonial movements everywhere in Asia as
a security threat raises important questions that are insufficiently accounted for by
resort to psychological explanations rooted in fear and ignorance.

49 Chomsky, For Reasons of State, p. 53.
50 Chomsky, pp. 54-55. Emphasis in original.
Primarily, if Australia’s persistent eagerness to participate in mistaken and foolhardy US foreign wars had been driven by irrational fears, why were Australia’s military contributions consistently calculated and measured to ensure the minimal amount required to secure American goodwill? If the basis of such mistaken policies were genuine and deeply held but erroneous security anxieties, would not successive Australian governments have been eager to militarily contribute to a degree that matched the dreaded threat? In the case of Vietnam, Renouf points out:

There was an inconsistency in Australia’s attitude that was not lost to the US. While Australia continually talked of the tremendous historical, world-wide significance of Vietnam, her governments never acted as if they believed their own statements. If they did believe this, why was it so difficult to get anything from them for South Vietnam except words and money? This inconsistency was obvious to [senior US presidential advisor] Clark Clifford when he visited Canberra in 1967. Talking with the Government he realised that the forward defence strategy meant that it was principally the US which should defend Australia in Asia, not Australia herself.52

The reluctance on the part of Canberra to commit to a military effort that matched its rhetoric during the Vietnam War is not an isolated occurrence. When it comes to Australian support for US military interventions abroad, “Australia’s alliance habit is towards big rhetoric while sending a small force . . . minimising the military and political burden”.53 The “US alliance management equation” of announcing firm loyalty to Washington while making as small a military contribution as possible is

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one “that Canberra has followed with remarkable consistency through five wars since World War II – Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan”.54

Contrary to earlier theories of dependence which stressed Australia’s subordination to US interests, later scholarship confirms that Australia was not, and is not, so much a follower of the US as an enthusiastic partner; and policy makers in Canberra often more hawkish in their advocacy for defeating communism, or other equally dubious threats, than their American counterparts.55 Australian governments have not displayed helpless dependence and irrationality so much as shrewdness in paying the minimum premium required to “lock the US into the region” against the possibility of a future threat.56

The nature of that threat throughout the 1950s and 1960s, however, could not have been in the form of a direct attack. High-level strategic assessments stated at the time that Australia was not under serious threat of external aggression in the foreseeable future, communist or otherwise. The “threat” of national independence on the other hand, was an accurately identified and genuinely held concern because those liberation movements compromised British colonial interests in Asia, to which Australia was still aligned.

In the context of the actual threat that nationalist liberation movements posed to colonialism, Australia’s otherwise “baffling irrational consistency” in mistaking communism everywhere in Asia as a security threat to Australia is more readily explainable as a rationalisation for propping up the imperial order in Asia. As Lockhart explains:

56 Edwards, Permanent Friends?
By building on an apparition of earlier Japanese expansion, Menzies had constructed the threat to the imperial position in Malaya as an imagined Chinese invasion. Arguably, this move better enabled him to manage politically and psychologically what he really feared: the threat that the local forces of radical Asian nationalism did pose to the British Empire in Asia after the Japanese interregnum.57

The suppression of radical Asian nationalism and the preservation of the British Empire could only succeed with the full support of Washington which shared both of these objectives, albeit for slightly different reasons. Australia’s strategic dependence on the US and its enthusiastic support for American intervention in Southeast Asia, including the small and mostly symbolic force sent to Vietnam, can thus be explained as a political strategy to lock the US into the region as a means to preserve western dominance in Asia.

While Canberra’s security perceptions were built on deep-seated race fears of Asia, the desire to see the European-imperial order maintained cannot be reduced to these fears alone. As noted in Chapter Two, traditional invasion anxieties are just one part of Australia’s strategic culture that underpinned the support for imperialism. The fact remains that Australia held a deeply embedded imperialist spirit, along with vested interests, in the continuation of British power in the Far East, and in the emerging American neo-imperial order in Asia. These were linked to, but nevertheless distinct from, any perceived security concerns.

Understood from this perspective, Australia’s strategic dependence on the US in the 1950s and 1960s was not the result of uncritical deference to US foreign policy objectives or a flawed assessment of Australia’s own independent security interests. While deep-seated security anxieties manifestly fuelled Australia’s alliance-reliance mentality, strategic dependence was a decision less informed by genuine security

57 Lockhart, p. 11.
concerns than the enduring desire to see Asia subordinated to western strategic and economic interests.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Australia-US Alliance: from Strategic Dependence to Independent “Middle Power”

Threat Perceptions from the 1970s

By the early 1970s, a major shift in Australia’s strategic environment and defence relationships had already taken place. The old colonial system in Southeast Asia, which Australia fought hard to preserve in the 1950s and 1960s, collapsed far earlier than expected. Divergent influences remained, where even as the “threat” of communist and radical nationalist movements was, for the most part, successfully thwarted, British interests were largely preserved for some time thereafter. The US largely replaced the old colonial system in Asia with its own form of neo-imperialism, reorienting the political and economic life of the region according to its global agenda of an integrated world trading system open to American corporate interests.

While the UK was displaced by the US as Australia’s primary strategic and economic partner, the foreshadowed departure of America’s military presence from Indochina created the catalyst for Australia to take greater responsibility for its own security. Beginning in the early to mid-1970s, forward defence gradually receded as the basis of Australia’s defence policy in favour of the DOA and “self-reliance” doctrines, although these concepts were not entirely new and continued to remain “conceptually and operationally inchoate” until the mid-to-late 1980s.

1 The notion that Australia needed to develop an independent force to defend itself first arose in the early 1960s as policy makers began to acknowledge that Australia’s security interests would not always coincide with that of the US, particularly over Indonesia. However, it was not until the 1970s that the idea of operations independent from allies transformed from a credible contingency to deliberate policy. Stephan Fruhling, A History of Australian Strategic Policy Since 1945, Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, Department of Defence, 2009, p. 44.

2 Desmond Ball, The Strategic Essence, Australian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 55, no. 2, 2001, p. 235. While the Whitlam government entered office with the determination to implement a more self-reliant approach to defence, the overall structure of Australia’s defence forces and defence equipment acquisition programs continued to reflect earlier decisions and priorities to project Australian military strength beyond the continental boundaries in order to support the security of its neighbours in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Graeme Cheeseman, From Forward Defence
Together, DOA and self-reliance shifted the focus of Australia’s defence strategy from expeditionary combat to the protection of the homeland, placing primary importance on the ability of the armed forces to independently defend the northern air and maritime approaches to Australia from which an attack would most likely be mounted. The change in strategic doctrine reflected an official acknowledgment in Australia that it could not, and should not, rely on the US to guarantee its security. Australia henceforth emerged as a more strategically independent nation.

The catalyst for the shift from strategic dependence to self-reliance was the announcement of President Richard Nixon’s “Guam doctrine”, requiring allies like Australia to take on more of the “burden sharing” for regional security. While the Cold War continued to dominate Australian threat perceptions, the détente between the superpowers, the discrediting of the “domino theory” and monolithic communism in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, and the resumption of diplomatic ties with the PRC severely undermined the perceived threat of communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

As assurances of American military aid were downgraded, and in the light of Australia’s changing strategic environment, greater attention was placed on the

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3 The Guam doctrine was merely a tactical change on the part of Washington. The US fully intended to remain dominant in the region, only now its allies – backed by American aid and technology – would have to assume a greater proportion of the costs in both lives and treasure. See Virginia Brodine and Mark Selden (eds), *Open Secret: The Kissinger-Nixon Doctrine in Asia. Why We Are Never Leaving*, New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
benefits the US alliance provided Australia in terms of access to advanced defence technology, intelligence cooperation, defence science and military training.\(^6\) While in the past, the primary justification for the alliance was viewed in terms of a guarantee of protection against attack and its contribution to the global strategic balance, by the mid-1980s this had changed. As Desmond Ball observes:

> [The] importance of the US alliance derived from entirely different grounds – that only the United States could provide Australia with the intelligence, defence technology and professional military expertise which would enable Australia to independently handle regional threats.\(^7\)

Specifically, these benefits were deemed critical for ensuring Australia could defend itself against more likely, but low-level, threat scenarios, while remaining prepared to meet the potential challenge of a serious, albeit remote, high-level attack.\(^8\) In the latter scenario, advanced strategic intelligence capabilities required to determine foreign military strength and hostile intent were deemed crucial for ensuring an adequate lead time for force expansion.\(^9\) The qualitative lead in military and intelligence capabilities – or regional “edge” – derived from the alliance has continued to be understood for the last forty years as a solution to mitigate both the disparity in Australia’s landmass and maritime patrol zones and the relative small size and capacity of its defence forces.\(^10\)

Although the benefits derived from the alliance undoubtedly bolstered Australia’s self-reliant defence posture, their actual value can only be properly evaluated in the

\(^6\) As Edwards notes, greater attention to these benefits “had been gaining support in political and official circles for some years, but from the late 1970s they would be deployed more frequently in public debate”. Edwards, *Permanent Friends?*, p. 34.

\(^7\) Ball, *The Strategic Essence*, p. 236.


context of Australia’s continuing non-threatening strategic environment. While fear and threat inflation frequently dominated political rhetoric during the 1970s and 1980s, official strategic assessments confirmed the low probability of contingencies that might arise concerning the defence of Australia.  

The potential value of the alliance in providing for Australia’s defence was carefully appraised by Paul Dibb in his 1986 report, *Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities*. Dibb pointed out that the deterrence capacity of the alliance in the “remote” and “improbable” case of a high-level threat emerging, while still valuable, was not particularly relevant given strategic realities. Apart from its “obligations” under the ANZUS Treaty, the dramatic change in regional circumstances that would likely precipitate such a threat emerging would impinge on core US interests – specifically America’s “own supremacy in the region” – that would automatically elicit a countervailing American response.

In the “very improbable” case of sustained conventional global war between the superpowers, Dibb deemed the chance of a direct Soviet threat as “limited” given the remoteness of Australia. In any case, during global war, “both the United States and its European allies would give first priority to their own military needs. We could not assume that they would give any priority to our military requirements.”

Given that a general war between the superpowers would in all likelihood quickly escalate into an all-out nuclear exchange, special importance was placed on the need to maintain an effective nuclear deterrence strategy. However, contrary to Dibb’s assertion in his 1986 report, the early warning and verification capacities of

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12 Dibb, *Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities*.  
13 Dibb, pp. 1, 7, 175.  
14 Dibb, pp. 31-32.
the Australia-US “joint-facilities” did not necessarily serve to protect Australia against the threat of nuclear war.¹⁵

In many ways, the “joint-facilities” served to undermine the strategic nuclear balance between the superpowers as well as make Australia a high-level Soviet nuclear target.¹⁶ Technical developments and changes in the global nuclear order since the end of the Cold War have further undermined the apparent contribution of these facilities to global nuclear stability.¹⁷

The most significant contribution of the alliance to Australia’s direct security identified by Dibb were the “practical benefits” that augmented the ADF’s defence capabilities. These were deemed important particularly against more credible, but less serious, threat contingencies, such as small-scale harassments and raids through to substantial conventional military action, albeit well below the level of invasion.¹⁸

These benefits were specifically identified and quantified as access to US intelligence resources, which contributed to the “potential effectiveness” of the ADF in combat; logistical support that provided Australia with “some assurance” of military supplies during conflict; and “considerable” access to advanced US military

¹⁵ Dibb, p. 31.
¹⁸ While small-scale harassments and raids were deemed within the current military capabilities of regional powers, more substantial conventional military action such as lodging and maintaining substantial forces in Australia would require a significant and detectable military build-up over many years. Dibb, Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities, pp. 5, 53-55.
technology that contributed to Australia’s efforts at maintaining a clear technological advantage over potential regional adversaries. 19

It is important to note that the Dibb report emphasised the fact that no conflict at any level of threat was considered likely in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the more credible low-level threat scenarios for which the alliance was deemed of most benefit were still conditioned on a then unforeseeable and substantial deterioration in strategic circumstances. All of the threat assessments “simply represented judgements of what might be possible, given potential military capacities, should conflict arise”. 20

The end of the Cold War virtually eliminated the threat of communism and global nuclear war that provided the primary justification for the alliance since the 1950s. Ceased to be bound together by a common threat, the importance of the alliance as an anchor for regional stability subsequently took on greater prominence in the post-Cold War era. 21 In Northeast Asia, there was the apparent prospect of regional tensions erupting into outright conflict in the absence of the “balancing” effect of America’s dominating military presence. 22

Closer to home, in Southeast Asia, Australian defence planners, it was argued, were confronted by a “bewildering array of momentous change”, “profound uncertainty” and “extraordinary volatility”, particularly as a result of developments such as the Asian Financial Crisis, the collapse of President Suharto’s regime in Indonesia and

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19 Dibb, p. 46. Although Dibb rather cautiously valued the practical benefits of the alliance in his 1986 report, subsequent government policy statements and speeches were less equivocal, asserting that self-reliance was only achievable with the benefits the alliance provided. See Graeme Cheese man and Michael McKinley, Moments Lost: Promise, Disappointment and Contradictions in the Australian-United States Defence Relationship, Australian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992, p. 208. More recently, Dibb has argued that Australia’s self-reliant defence posture is “immeasurably strengthened” as a result of the practical benefits the alliance provides. Paul Dibb, US-Australia Alliance Relations: An Australian View, Strategic Forum, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University, no. 216, August 2005, p. 1.

20 Dibb, Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities, p. 54.


22 The typical formulation in the post-Cold War era has been that US military presence caps Japanese militarism, balances Chinese power and deters North Korea.
the independence of East Timor. This “rapid strategic change” had consequently “brought into relief the complacent attitude towards the US alliance and the [sic] defence spending”.23

Despite these apparent dramatic changes in Australia’s regional environment, the transition into the post-Cold War era did not bring about a major shift in Australia’s strategic outlook. Rather, as had been the case since the 1970s, Australia continued to live in a “non-specific threat environment”.24 Concerns that emerged in the late 1990s and 2000s about the so-called “arc of instability” to Australia’s north reflected an unwarranted “securitisation” of the region.25 How such instability might translate into an actual high-level threat to Australia remained unexplained in realistic terms.26 No Southeast Asian nation then, or since, has possessed the requisite military capability or hostile intent to threaten Australia in the foreseeable future.27

In the 2000s, fear of regional instability merged with fears of the threat of terrorism, the latter skilfully utilised by the conservative Howard government to justify Australia’s participation in America’s “war on terror”.28 The extraordinary rise and military success of ISIS in recent years has refocused the political debate on the threat of international terrorism and Australian involvement in the Middle East. In reality, the threat of terrorism to Australia since the terrorist attacks against the US

on 11 September 2001 has remained marginal, its prominence more a reflection of domestic politics than genuine security concerns.

The enduring absence of identifiable threats in Australian defence planning was summed up by Desmond Ball at the turn of the twenty-first century. Threats to Australia’s national security, he pointed out, had for many decades played no role in the maintenance of the US alliance. In Ball’s words:

[Since] the 1970s, when “forward defence” was replaced by the policy of “defence of Australia”, official assessments have reiterated that Australia faces no foreseeable threats, and threat scenarios have played no part in the development of Australia’s defence capabilities. The vitality of the alliance has been “threat insensitive”.

The general thrust of Ball’s assessment remains true today. Admittedly, the rise of China and the transformation of major power relations in the Asia Pacific have emerged as Australia’s central strategic considerations for the foreseeable future. In all likelihood, the “unipolar” era of American dominance is a state of affairs that will continue well into the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, the potential destabilising effects of China’s rise, and the need to hedge against it, has taken on primary importance in Australian defence planning.

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30 Ball, *The Strategic Essence*, p. 245.


32 This has been the case since the release of the 2009 Defence White Paper. As a number of strategic commentators argued at the time, the rise of China and the transformation of major power relations in the Asia-Pacific have been accepted by Canberra “as a fact requiring an Australian response in the form of an unprecedented military build-up over 20 years”. John Langmore, Calum Logan and Stewart Firth, *The 2009 Australian Defence White Paper: Analysis and Alternatives*, Austral Policy Forum 10-01A, Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 15 September 2010, pp. 10-11, <http://nautilus.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/langmore-logan-firth.pdf>, accessed 5 April 2016.
Whatever the long-term consequences of the changing power relations in Asia may be, Australia faces the least strategic challenge from the rise of China of any regional power. China lacks the requisite military capability and hostile intent to present a realistic threat scenario to Australia now or in the foreseeable future. Australia’s latest Defence White Paper, while stressing the uncertainty inherent in the wider strategic environment of the Indo-Pacific, nevertheless reiterates that “there is no more than a remote prospect of a military attack by another country on Australian territory in the foreseeable future”. The fear of an invasion by China, or any other state for that matter, remains “close to fantasy”.

Australia’s growing economic dependence on China may pose greater problems, but here too, concerns are exaggerated. While China’s rise has resurfaced long-standing but erroneous fears about Australia’s apparent economic vulnerability to the disruption of international trade, in reality, it is extremely unlikely China would attempt to shut down the free flow of trade in the South China Sea, an act that would irreparably damage Beijing’s interests. As has been the case since

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36 While China is Australia’s largest two-way trading partner in goods and services, the economic relationship is rather one-dimensional. Exports to China consist mostly of commodities and imports of cheaply manufactured consumer goods. This fact, together with the dynamic nature of the international commodities market, means that China’s capacity to punish Australia economically is, in practice, “almost non-existent”. Nick Bisley, An Ally For All The Years To Come: Why Australia Is Not A Conflicted US Ally, Australian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 67, no. 4, 2013, p. 414.


WWII, the fundamental strategic reality is that Australia remains a relatively secure country now and for the foreseeable future.

**Self-Reliance and Australia’s Expansionist Defence Policy**

With the threat of radical nationalism in Southeast Asia effectively “inoculated” by the Vietnam War, Australia was empowered to take greater responsibility for its own security as a more strategically independent nation, even as it remained dependent on the US to maintain overall “stability” in East Asia. The decision to focus on Australia’s direct security needs, reflected in the 1986 Dibb report, immediately provoked criticism from American officials, the Australian military and conservative commentators. These critics charged that the report proposed a defence posture that was too isolationist and failed to take into consideration Australia’s responsibilities for maintaining regional security in accordance with the US alliance.

While Dibb did prioritise the defence of the continent, Australia’s “direct” and “primary” spheres of military interest were deemed to be ten per cent and twenty per cent of the earth’s surface respectively – hardly isolationist – and expeditionary combat in support of Australia’s allies was to continue, albeit with a reduced focus. In any case, if there were any hint of a “fortress Australia” mentality in defence thinking, it was well and truly abandoned by the Department of Defence’s November 1989 report, *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*. That report unambiguously declared Australia’s defence strategy “goes beyond the defence of  

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39 As Edwards writes, “It remains the case that the strongest argument to be raised in favour of the commitment by the United States and its allies is that it delayed the communist victory in South Vietnam by ten years, from 1965 to 1975, thereby giving several potential Southeast Asian ‘dominoes’, such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, time to strengthen themselves economically, politically and socially”. Edwards, *Permanent Friends?*, p. 21.


the nation against direct attack to include the promotion of our security interests”.

The planning document summarised how Australia’s strategic policy evolved from dependence on allies to defending the homeland independently and finally “to a positive acceptance of both self-reliance and our need to help shape our regional strategic environment, in which we are a substantial power.” Under the heading “Promoting Our Strategic Interests”, the document argued that Australia “should see itself as a substantial regional power exerting considerable influence on the rate, direction and outcomes of strategic change”. Among the reasons cited was “the fact that we are a substantial regional military power” and “our alliance with the US”.

Australia’s new strategic doctrine of prioritising the defence of the continent and its immediate surrounds thus faded almost as soon as it was announced, overcome by Australia’s deeply embedded expeditionary mindset and desire to establish its own “Pax-Australiana”. As a number of critical scholars argued throughout the 1990s, the post-Dibb defence strategy reflected a “new Australian militarism” that conceived of Australia’s substantial regional military power as a diplomatic instrument to further the nation’s interests abroad and enhance Australia’s international status. In the words of former Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, the more self-reliant defence posture that had emerged since the 1980s “liberated” Australia so that it could pursue a much broader security agenda in line with the nation’s “middle power” status.

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43 *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, p. 3.
44 *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, pp. 42-43.
45 Cheeseman and McKinley, p. 203.
As in previous decades, the post-Cold War era saw Australia continue to support America’s efforts at maintaining its global hegemony and contribute to major US military interventions around the world. However, the difficulty in balancing these two objectives – to advance Australia’s ability to shape its own regional strategic environment and support its ally globally – proved to be significantly contentious. This became particularly evident during the conservative administration of Prime Minister John Howard, especially after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, which had the effect of rallying Australian political opinion in support of the US-led “war on terror”.

Although the Howard government continued to place importance on the notion of Australia as a “middle power” – or, in the preferred terminology, a “pivotal”, “considerable” and “significant” power – it advocated moving beyond regionalism to advancing Australia’s interests on the global stage in concert with its major ally.48 The decision by the Howard government to focus the ADF on distant operations in support of the US, as well as regional operations in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, was characterised by critics of the alliance “as clear a statement as any could be that Australia had officially returned to a policy of forward defence”.49

Concerned that Australia’s priorities under the Howard government had tilted too far in favour of expeditionary combat missions in support of allies, noted strategic commentators urged Australia to concentrate on developing Australia’s capacity to defend the continent and project credible force into the region, with the focus on the latter.50 Professor Hugh White, for example, argued Australia should “build and

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48 Alexander Downer, Should Australia Think Big or Small in Foreign Policy, speech to the Centre for Independent Studies: The Policymakers Forum, 10 July 2006.
sustain military capabilities that will give it strategic weight as a regional power”, capable of independently protecting its interests as far offshore as possible.  

Similarly, former US ambassador, Michael Thawley, argued Australia should not be content to become “progressively more of a strategic price-taker as others around us grow”, but instead work toward becoming more of a “strategic price-setter”. Thawley advocated that Australia increase “the size of our defence force and develop more significant force projection capabilities” so that it could aim to “shift the balance in any potential conflict in our region”.  

The advent of Kevin Rudd’s Labor government brought new hopes for realising these ambitious goals. The 2009 Defence White Paper proposed the acquisition of major force projection capabilities well out of proportion to Australia’s security needs, including doubling the size of the submarine fleet to twelve, acquiring three Air Warfare Destroyers, a new class of eight frigates, one hundred fifth-generation combat aircraft and around 1,100 armoured combat vehicles.  

The intention was to acquire the necessary military capabilities for making a significant contribution to the “balance of power” in the region; an objective that was recognised as an evolution, not a revolution, in Australian strategic thinking. Controversially, the Rudd government appeared to be preparing the ADF to support the US in a major regional war, China being the obvious target.  

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51 White, pp. ix-x, 56.  
52 Michael Thawley, More Power to Australia, address to the Sir Robert Menzies Lecture Trust, Melbourne, Parliament House, 4 November 2005.  
By the end of Rudd’s term in office, Australia had undergone a significant expansion in military power. Over the two decades to the year 2010, successive defence funding increases saw Australia achieve the tenth largest military spending in the world, all the while continuing to outspend all of its Southeast Asian neighbours by a considerable margin. Construction had begun on two new Landing Helicopter Docks, first envisioned by the Howard government in 2000, capable of deploying over 2,000 troops and associated weapons, vehicles and aircraft. Altogether, in the words of White, the ADF had acquired key air and naval assets that reinforced Australia’s status as “the most significant air and naval power in the region south of China and east of India”.

The notion of Australia as an influential actor requiring high-end military capabilities to bolster its regional influence continued to be advocated by Rudd’s successor, Julia Gillard. In 2013, the Gillard government published Australia’s first National Security Strategy, declaring that one of Australia’s central objectives or “ends” was “to influence and shape our regional and global environment to be conducive to advancing Australia’s interests and values”. In particular, “strengthening our position as an influential regional actor” was deemed “a focus of our foreign policy”. The maintenance of “credible high-end capabilities” was considered necessary to “act decisively when required”, deter potential threats, and “strengthen our regional influence”.

The Gillard government released a new Defence White Paper in 2013, reaffirming the intention to deliver the “core capabilities” identified in Rudd’s 2009 white paper. However, plans for a large military build-up in the short term were

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59 *Strong and Secure*, p. 23.
60 *Strong and Secure*, p. 17.
effectively deferred due to “fiscal realities” and subsequent cuts to defence spending – a decision that evoked hysterical commentary in Australia and from key officials in Washington – despite the fact that the US had also planned future defence cuts. Nevertheless, Australia managed to maintain its rank as the 10th largest defence spender in the world in 2013, and continued its significant lead in defence spending in Southeast Asia.

Although the 2013 Defence White Paper toned down the alarmist rhetoric toward Beijing, the identification of China as a potential threat continued as a major theme. The decision taken by the subsequent conservative Abbott government to purchase a large number of fifth-generation fighter jets, and the intention to spend up to $40 billion on twelve new submarines, added real impetus to the objective of preparing Australia for a future war with China.

As defence experts have noted, the only significant strategic function for purchasing the submarines is their “symbolic political contribution to maintaining alliance credit through a niche role in US naval operations against China.” Similarly, the unique capability of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter “to conduct deep strike missions

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65 The Abbott government committed Australia to purchasing 58 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets, bringing Australia’s total to 72.

against a sophisticated integrated air defence system on Day 1 of a conflict” only has relevance in a US-led war against China.67

Meanwhile, strategic elites advocated Australia boost its “hard” and “soft” power, including “a more capable military”, so as to “protect the full breadth of our interests”.68 For example, Rory Medcalf argued in 2015 that current realities:

[Compel] us to think about security interests in broad terms. The expansive version of national security today includes maintaining the kind of international, transnational and domestic order that serves our interests as a middle power.69

At the very minimum, as a “top 20 nation”, Australia has been urged to “seek the capacity to substantially shape the security environment of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia” while playing a more limited role in wider East Asia, “where it can matter”, such as imposing a “distant blockade” on China in any future US-Sino war.70 Others insist that Australia go further, aiming to play a decisive role in East Asia and equipping the ADF with the military capabilities to inflict serious damage in any potential future conflict with China.71

It fell upon the government of Malcolm Turnbull to act on these hawkish aspirations and deliver the significant military build-up first envisioned by Rudd, but never

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properly funded. Turnbull’s 2016 Defence White Paper boasted that it was the first to be “fully costed” in order to “match our strategy and capability plans with appropriate resources”, pledging to lift defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP by 2020-2021, and invest an unprecedented $195 billion into the military over ten years.72

The 2016 White Paper put credibility behind previous plans to acquire twelve new “regionally superior” submarines and a fleet of new fifth-generation fighter jets to conduct offensive strike operations “as far from Australia as possible”.73 Other big ticket items reaffirmed in the 2016 White Paper include twelve new major surface vessels (three AWDs and nine frigates) that can “project force into the region and beyond”.74

The three core priorities identified by the 2016 Defence White Paper are defending Australia, securing Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific and ensuring a stable Indo-Pacific and a “rules-based global order”.75 In a departure from previous white papers, all three are accorded equal weight in the design and development of the ADF.76 Peter Jennings, who led the expert panel advising the government’s white paper, has written that the most important strategic defence interest identified in the white paper is to secure Australia’s wider regional interests, the new design of the ADF ensuring Australia can “take the fight into maritime Southeast Asia”.77 Elsewhere, Jennings observes that the 2016 White Paper:

73 2016 Defence White Paper, pp. 90, 94.
75 Otherwise referred to as Australia’s “Strategic Defence Interests” and “Strategic Defence Objectives”. 2016 Defence White Paper, p. 68.
[Can] be seen as the concluding verse to the generation-long saga of the Defence of Australia (DOA) strategy. “DOA” is now fully effected in a maritime strategy focused on Southeast Asia and the Pacific.  

Since the emergence of the self-reliance and DOA doctrines, there has been a clear expansionist evolution in Australia’s defence strategy. An increasingly central objective of the ADF has been to project force as a substantial regional power and promote Australia’s “national interests”, right up to and including the global level. Australia has also gradually stepped back from the concept of self-reliance, returning to an earlier assumption that Australia will always be fighting alongside the US and that the key role of the ADF is to support its ally’s actions. The implication of this development for Australia’s relationship with the US, detailed below, has transformed the fundamental purpose of the alliance from helping to defend Australia to enhancing Australia’s capacity for regional influence and control.

The Australia-US Alliance and Australia’s “Middle Power” Ambitions

Notwithstanding Australia’s growing strategic ambitions, the fundamental role of the US alliance has ostensibly remained the same since the 1970s, namely, to provide regional and global “stability” and ensure Australia has access to the defence technology and intelligence benefits deemed crucial for defending the nation independently. The latest Defence White Paper reiterates that Australia’s security is underpinned by the ANZUS Treaty and America’s regional presence, and that the ADF’s persistent technology, intelligence and capability superiority would be beyond Australia’s capacity without the US alliance.

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However, as illustrated above, the central defence planning concepts of “self-reliance” and DOA are clearly no longer about ensuring the ADF has the capacity to defend the continent without the assistance of major allies. The continued use of these terms thus obscures rather than elucidates Australia’s current defence policy and the role of the alliance within it. In the context of Australia’s enduring benign security environment and growing “middle power” ambitions, the alliance assumes far greater relevance in terms of bolstering Australia’s capacity for regional influence and control.

At the elite level, “being a middle power has been at the heart of how Australian politicians have framed and conceived of their nation’s role in international affairs, and they have done so with an enthusiasm beyond any other comparable country”. As noted in Chapter Two, Australia’s self-identification as a middle power is a significant and long-standing part Australia’s strategic culture and can be traced back to the country’s imperialist imaginings of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

Although there is no consensus on the definition of a “middle power”, possessing sufficient capability to influence regional and global affairs lies at the core of the concept. Australia, by and large, fulfils the criteria of a middle power by any of the typical measures, including possessing substantial military and economic power, a history of diplomatic activism on the regional and global stage and self-identification. Indeed, Australia is understood in the relevant scholarship to constitute the ideal or definitive model of a middle power.

The importance of the Australia-US relationship to Australia’s middle-power status is frequently highlighted by strategic elites and ardent alliance supporters, including political and defence officials. Although the core of the alliance is defined in security

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81 Fruhling, Australian Defence Policy.
84 Carr, Winning the Peace, pp. 6-7.
terms, its more tangible value to Australia in said to be its “force multiplier” effect – not only militarily but economically and diplomatically – enhancing Australia’s “freedom of action” and bolstering its regional status as a “middle power” and an “Asia-Pacific power” that can “punch above its weight” in the region and beyond.85

Paul Dibb is perhaps the most cogent exponent of the argument that the alliance is of central importance for bolstering Australia’s status as a significant regional power. In an edited collection published in 2007, dedicated to the theme of “Australia as an Asia-Pacific Regional Power”, Dibb argued that:

Australia’s alliance with the United States in many ways underpins its status as an Asia-Pacific power . . . As it is, Australia’s closeness to America and its influence in Washington transforms Australia’s regional status: it allows Australia to punch above its weight in regional and, indeed, international security organisations.86

While Dibb maintains that the “core” of the alliance is the protection of a great and powerful friend, the benefits of the relationship ultimately derive from access to the corridors of power in Washington, irreplaceable US intelligence, cooperation in defence science and technology and advanced US military weapons that together bolster “Australia’s strategic influence in regional affairs and its reputation for military strength”.87

86 Dibb, “Australia-United States” in Brendan Taylor (ed), Australia as an Asia Pacific Regional Power, p. 33.
87 Dibb, p. 37.
The post-Cold War strategic context of Australia’s middle power status and the US alliance are perhaps best articulated in a seminar Dibb presented on the ANZUS alliance to the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in the late 1990s. Dibb warned that the growing economic might of ASEAN implied Australia would have to work harder in the future to maintain its position as “the leading middle power in Southeast Asia”, remain relevant “in terms of the capacity to defend Australia”, “show leadership in the region” and “shape the regional strategic environment to our advantage as an important middle power”.

Crucially, Dibb pointed out that threats to Australia in the post-Cold War strategic environment are not primarily about the potential for a direct attack, but rather the threat to Australia’s position as a middle power. He argues, “greater strategic complexity and uncertainty” in the region is not about:

[Defining] a clear and imminent direct military threat . . . it is about the balance of power and balance of influence and our survival as an independent middle power strongly allied with the United States and not subordinate to some external—or externally lodged—Asian great power.

In an argument that has taken on greater relevance today in light of China’s rise, Dibb presciently warned that the major concern for Australia in the future is the end of the “Vasco da Gama period” – or the end of western dominance in the region for the first time in 500 years – as great Asian powers increase their ability to shape the regional strategic environment. That will not occur, Dibb predicts

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88 Paul Dibb, The Asia-Pacific Region Post Cold War, seminar presented to the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on the ANZUS Alliance, Canberra, 11 August 1997.
89 Dibb.
90 Dibb.
reassuringly, as long as the US stays engaged so that the “balance of influence” (a more honest term than the conventional “balance of power”) remains firmly with the West. Dibb sums up his strategic assessment in the following terms:

*There are no clear military threats to Australia,* but, increasingly, as a middle power in a shifting balance of power, we will need to shape our own regional strategic environment. As the balance of power changes, which undoubtedly it will, *our survival as an independent middle power becomes a first order issue for us.* As new powers emerge and as Australia’s relative strategic mass declines, then it will become more important—not less important—that we retain our alliance with the United States in good repair and that we do what we can to keep US interests in the region engaged. That may well mean doing more with the United States and carrying more of the alliance burden, not less.  

The rapid rise of China and its willingness to test US primacy in recent years, particularly in the East and South China Seas, has brought the issue of Australia’s alliance with the US and the changing balance of regional power relations into sharp focus.  

The latest Defence White Paper identifies the relationship between the US and China as fundamental to Australia’s future strategic circumstances. It places strong emphasis on supporting America’s regional military presence and the strategic “rebalance” in order to maintain a stable Indo-Pacific and “rules-based global order” – a phrase mentioned 48 times. The potential threats to stability identified include “major powers trying to promote their interests outside of the established

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92 Dibb, *The Asia-Pacific Region Post Cold War.* Author’s emphasis.
rules”95 – that is, outside of the rules largely crafted by the US to ensure the benefits of the international system accrue primarily to itself and its allies.96

Significantly, there is disagreement about whether Australia’s middle power status is enhanced or circumscribed by its alliance with the US. For subscribers to the “idealist” view, which define middle powers in terms of how they ought to act, the US alliance is seen to constrain Australia’s independence and therefore its credibility as a middle power, reducing its scope for acting as a “good international citizen”. According to this view, Australia’s long-standing commitment to employ middle power diplomacy in pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation has been compromised by its alliance obligations to host key US bases integral to America’s nuclear war fighting capacity, as well as Australia’s unwavering diplomatic support of Israel, despite its status as an undeclared nuclear power.97

Similarly, idealists have argued in the past that the middle power “dreams” of both the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments were left unrealised because of a lack of “credibility” in regional and international forums as a result of aligning too closely with the position of the US.98 Although the fulfilment of Australia’s middle power ambitions did not require an abandonment of the alliance, “a greater degree of independence within an alliance framework” was seen to be a necessary condition.99 Most recently, Canberra’s decision to align itself with the US in its strategic rivalry with China is considered evidence that the alliance constrains

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96 Michael Beckley, China’s Century? Why America’s Edge Will Endure, International Security, vol. 36, no. 3, 2011, pp. 48-50. While projecting an image of judicial equality between states, the reality is that the international system of law is very much an American system, especially when it comes to global rules on trade and investment. It was through the “rule of law” that the US realised its vision for global capitalism, restructuring domestic and international economic policies along neoliberal lines. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire, London: Verso, 2012, pp. 223-234.
Australian foreign policy in an area where one assumes a middle power could exercise greater freedom of action.\textsuperscript{100}

In reality, idealists have placed too much emphasis on the “moral” behaviour of middle powers when there is little empirical evidence to support this.\textsuperscript{101} While Australia’s alliance commitments may constrain its scope for acting as “a good international citizen”, this has not been Australia’s overriding foreign policy consideration or a central element of its middle power ambitions. Despite the rhetoric, Australia’s “default” strategic culture has in fact been to further its interests irrespective of international law or institutions.\textsuperscript{102} As one recent review of Australia’s response to repressive military regimes in the Asia-Pacific concluded, Canberra’s actions have “ultimately arise[n] from calculations of Australian national security, strategic interests, alliance maintenance and power potential, but tend to be obscured by the universalist rhetoric of promoting democracy and protecting human rights”.\textsuperscript{103}

It is no surprise that Australian policy makers have continued to find no contradiction between Australia’s middle power ambitions and its alliance obligations. To the contrary, “the Australian government has consistently argued that the country’s strong alliance relationship with the United States supports its capacity to be a globally influential middle power”, viewing its connection to a large power “as an unqualified benefit to the nation’s influence”.\textsuperscript{104}

In this context, the value of the alliance in providing advanced US military technology and intelligence benefits critical for ensuring Australia’s regional military superiority, despite the absence of any threats, makes sense. Combined with

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Carr, \textit{Winning the Peace}, pp. 7-8.
\end{footnotes}
patronage from Washington in regional and global diplomatic forums, the alliance provides Australia, at least in the eyes of elites in Canberra, with “a military and diplomatic heft it could not afford otherwise” or achieve independently.\textsuperscript{105}

Significantly, the bolstering effect of the alliance on Australia’s national power has mutual benefits by ensuring Canberra is a more effective or credible ally in undertaking its regional “burden sharing” responsibilities on behalf of the US-led western security community. This is an explicit requirement of the alliance since the US announced the Guam doctrine in 1969, but it has gradually taken on increasing importance as Australia’s national power has grown. Australia, wrote Paul Dibb in the mid-2000s, “has a significant role to play in securing American interests, as well as its own, in the Asia-Pacific region”, largely as a result of its growing “geopolitical clout in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific”.\textsuperscript{106}

Conversely, the ability and willingness of Australia to launch successful military interventions in the region, particularly in its own “patch” in the South Pacific, is understood by Canberra as essential for maintaining and bolstering Australia’s “credibility” as a middle power in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Patronage by the US in the regional and global diplomatic arena, critical to Australia’s middle power ambitions, is dependent upon Australia meeting its alliance obligations to uphold stability in its own region. Recent Australian interventions in the region spanning two decades, including in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon Islands, have been undertaken with the primary, although not sole, objective of maintaining Australia’s credibility in Washington’s eyes.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{105} Wesley, \textit{There Goes the Neighbourhood}, p. 165.

\textsuperscript{106} Dibb, \textit{US-Australia Alliance Relations}, p. 5. Washington’s expectations of Australia in this regard were spelled out most recently by Denis Blair, former commander of US forces in the Pacific region, when he suggested that “Washington counts on Canberra to keep close watch on Southeast Asia and Oceania, to develop policy responses to crises that arise, confident they will be policies and responses that the US will share and support”. Mark Beeson, Issues in Australian Foreign Policy July to December 2013, \textit{Australian Journal of Politics and History}, vol. 60, no. 2, 2014, p. 272.

\textsuperscript{107} Firth, Australia’s Policy Towards Coup-Prone and Military Regimes, pp. 363, 369; Dan Halvorson, Reputation and Responsibility in Australia’s 2003 Intervention in the Solomon Islands, \textit{Australian Journal of International Affairs}, vol. 67, no. 4, 2013, pp. 439-455; Charles Hawksley, Australia’s Aid Diplomacy and the Pacific Islands: Change and Continuity in Middle Power Foreign Policy, \textit{Global Change, Peace & Security}, vol. 21, no. 1, 2009, pp. 115-130; Kristian Lasslett, State Crime by Proxy:
Historically, Australia’s primary utility to the US has been viewed in terms of its geostrategic position as a “suitable piece of real estate” for hosting US intelligence facilities which, in recent years, have undergone the most dramatic expansion in size and scope since the end of the Cold War.\(^{108}\) In the mid-1960s, according to a declassified study for the US State Department, Australia’s value was judged by its potential to become a “credible power” that could exert sufficient regional influence and perhaps “eventually be an alternative to the British”.\(^{109}\) Significantly, that assessment was not only accurate but prescient. Today, the Washington-based strategic community views Australia as a geographic “sweet spot” for basing US forces targeted at China and, like the UK in the twentieth century, as a “means to preserve US influence and military reach across the Indo-Pacific”.\(^{110}\)

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PART II: THE AUSTRALIAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE

CHAPTER FIVE

Preserving the Status Quo

Origins

A spectacular fireworks display over Sydney Harbour welcomed the long-awaited arrival of President George H. W. Bush on New Year’s Eve, 1991. It was 25 years since a sitting American president had made a state visit to Australia, the last being Lyndon B. Johnson in October 1966 at the height of the Vietnam War. The visit was secured by former Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, at a black-tie dinner event in the White House on 27 June 1989. The President had responded immediately to the request by Hawke whom he considered to be his close and personal friend.¹

The official meeting between the two heads of state, however, was not to be. While Bush had planned to make the trip in early 1991, he was delayed until the end of the year by which time Paul Keating was Prime Minister. The President’s decision to continue as planned was somewhat awkward for Keating, whose uncordial relationship with Bush was well publicised. In keeping with expectations, Hawke received a warm and friendly embrace from Bush upon his arrival, while the President’s encounter with Keating was far more formal; the latter noticeably nervous and tense.²

The aloofness in the personal relationship between the President and the new Prime Minister reflected broader concerns regarding the strength of the Australia-US relationship. While Keating declared he would be just as committed to the US

¹ Author interview with Mel Sembler, 21 March 2012. It was Mel Sembler, US ambassador to Australia at the time, who passed on Prime Minister Hawke’s request to President Bush. Also, see Appendix C for photograph.
alliance as Hawke, he also promised more “relative independence”. The US had kept a close eye on the possibility of a leadership challenge in Australia because of this attitude and what it indicated about Keating’s commitment to US foreign policy interests. In reality, Keating’s comments were primarily for domestic consumption and the left-wing members of the ALP. Nonetheless, Keating’s rhetoric and the President’s visit resurfaced doubts about the utility of the alliance in a post-Cold War world.

Specifically, there was significant concern and speculation in Australia regarding the possibility of US disengagement from Asia and a weakening of the “hub-and-spokes” alliance system in the Asia-Pacific. The ALP’s attempts at “self-reliance within the alliance” in the late 1980s only heightened these concerns as it implied the possibility of greater detachment from the US.

The Australia-US alliance was considered the cornerstone of Australia’s foreign policy, but since the Soviet Union had disappeared, it was feared, so too had “the strongest bond holding the US and Australian alliance together, the threat to world peace from Soviet Communism”. Furthermore, in the post-Cold War era, as Stephen Mills asked in the *Australian Financial Review* of 3 January 1992, what “does the Australia-United States relationship mean for both countries, for the Asia-Pacific region, and for the broader global community?” While the ANZUS Pact was sure to remain, “what does it mean and what will it do?”

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4 Clark.
6 Lyon, p. 5.
Responding to this apprehension about the role of the US in the new world order, President Bush sought to reassure his Australian friends by declaring that America was “going to stay totally involved in this part of the world . . . right up to the very end of eternity”.9 Despite these remarks, doubts lingered about the commitment of future US presidents, particularly given the personal bonds between leaders in both nations were believed to be fading with time. As a veteran of the war in the Pacific, President Bush was recognised as “one of the last of the generation of American leaders with that kind of connection to Australia”.10

Distinguished business leader Phillip Scanlan, then managing director of Coca-Cola Amatil’s global beverages operations, shared these concerns. Scanlan held a particular interest in the US and its relationship to Australia, cultivated, in part, by the time he had spent as a postgraduate student at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and, more personally, by his American-born wife. Scanlan would later assume the prestigious diplomatic post of Australian Consul-General in New York from 2009-2012.

Scanlan held a deep-seated fear that he “would wake up one morning and find that the US has declared independence from Australia”.11 Coincidentally, Scanlan was presented with a unique opportunity to express his concerns at a level where it counted. That occurred when Scanlan received an invitation from his old friend, Nick Greiner, then premier of NSW, to attend a New Year’s Day cruise on Sydney Harbour, held in honour of President Bush’s visit. Greiner had first met Scanlan in the late 1970s when the latter was chief of staff to NSW Liberal opposition leader Peter Coleman. After Scanlan took up his position at Amatil, the former political colleagues remained friends. They were of similar age, held similar attitudes and lived near each other at the time.12

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12 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.
Scanlan hoped that, at best, he might have the opportunity to meet Bush and introduce his American-born wife, Julie Scanlan. When the occasion arrived and Scanlan and his wife came to take their seats, both were surprised to find themselves sitting at the same table with the President. Along with a number of other Australian and American dignitaries, a conversation inevitably arose about the state of the relationship between the two countries. President Bush eventually turned to Scanlan and asked his thoughts on the matter.

Scanlan obliged, expressing his concerns about the forthcoming difficulties in preserving the Australian-American relationship after the shared memories of sacrifice in World War II passed and a new generation of leaders arose. Scanlan feared that diminishing personal bonds between the leaders of both nations would create a distance neither wanted, but may occur as each nation took the other for granted.

The President listened with approval and was encouraged by Scanlan’s idea of forming a new group of Australian and American leaders to cultivate fresh ties and preserve the centrality of the relationship into the future. Two nights later, Brent Scowcroft, the President’s national security advisor, told Scanlan “We’ve spoken to people. We’ve checked you out. The President wants you to go ahead”. Less than eighteen months later, the inaugural AALD took place in Washington in June 1993.

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13 Note that Greiner did not plan or organise for Scanlan to be seated at the same table with himself and the President. Apparently, it was happenstance that someone in Greiner’s office had arranged the seating placements in this way. Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.

14 Others at the table are reported to have included the President’s wife, Barbara Bush, Nick Greiner and his wife, Kathryn Greiner, US Secretary of State, James Baker, and US National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft.


16 Paul Kelly, The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2010, p. 163. According to Gerard Henderson, Scanlan had been “speaking about these matters to some people privately” for one or two years before his encounter with President Bush. The visit by Bush “gave him the opportunity to do something about it”. Author interview with Gerard Henderson, 7 March 2012.
In order to bring the idea of the AALD\textsuperscript{17} into being, Scanlan took a break from his corporate career and tapped into his extensive Australian and American political contacts. Scowcroft had agreed to become a chief recruiter on the Republican side of American politics, along with Mel Sembler, who was the then US Ambassador to Australia. Philip Lader, who went on to become President Bill Clinton’s Deputy Chief of Staff and US Ambassador to the UK, was enlisted to recruit Democrats; as was Thomas J. Schneider, a close friend of President Clinton and who later came to serve on the management board of the AALD.

Anne Wexler, one of Washington’s most influential lobbyists, and her husband, Joe Duffey, Director of the USIA from 1993 to 1999, became important Democratic members of the AALD soon after its establishment. Wexler in particular is credited with being “instrumental” in the establishment and success of the AALD.\textsuperscript{18} According to the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, Wexler “brought a range of influential Democratic figures” into the AALD, some of whom went on to become “senior officials in the Obama Administration”.\textsuperscript{19}

The AALD also attracted strong support from the political establishment in Australia. According to the then Labor senator, Nick Bolkus, recently ousted Prime Minister Bob Hawke was “fairly intricately involved” in putting the AALD together, a key member in organising the Australian side, and fundamental to “the foundations of the Dialogue”.\textsuperscript{20} Prime Minister Keating was also in full support of the AALD while his wife, Annita van Iersel, helped to financially support it in her role as General Manager of United Airlines Australia. According to Don Russell, Australia’s ambassador to the US at the time, the AALD had the backing of the Australian embassy, with Russell happy to lend his good name to assist in its establishment.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} Note that the terms “AALD”, “Leadership Dialogue” and simply “the Dialogue” are often used interchangeably by observers to describe the Australian American Leadership Dialogue.
\textsuperscript{18} Author interview with Mel Sembler, 21 March 2012.
\textsuperscript{20} Author interview with Nick Bolkus, 6 September 2011. It was Hawke who had personally invited Bolkus to be one of the twenty or so Australian delegates who participated in the inaugural AALD event in Washington in 1993.
\textsuperscript{21} Author interview with Don Russell, 21 December 2012.
Although the idea for the AALD was Scanlan’s alone, he received considerable support for its establishment. Former Australian diplomat, Richard Woolcott, assisted Scanlan in the early stages of the AALD’s development.\(^{22}\) So did Scanlan’s long-time friend and professional business associate, Stephen Loosley, who helped to “put a framework around the idea”.\(^{23}\) Loosley supported the AALD for many years, initially as a NSW Labor senator and subsequently as a serving member on the Australian board of the AALD from 1999-2010.

Scanlan used his political contacts to attract high-level participation from both major political parties in Australia.\(^{24}\) Former Liberal MP, David Kemp, a personal friend of Scanlan’s, encouraged ministers of the Coalition shadow ministry to take an interest in the AALD after its establishment.\(^{25}\) Nick Greiner also helped to gather delegates from the Liberal Party and, although defeated at the 1992 state election, went on to attend the AALD for the next ten years as a private citizen.\(^{26}\) Kim Beazley, a close personal friend of Scanlan,\(^{27}\) agreed to become the “standard bearer” for the ALP and subsequently became a long-standing supporter and AALD participant.\(^{28}\)

Despite these cumulative efforts, the success of the AALD was the result of the personal initiative, sacrifice and determination of its founder, Phillip Scanlan. David Kemp’s remarks are representative of many AALD participants interviewed by the author when he claims “very few people would either have the motivation or the capacity or the linkages” to achieve the high-level commitment and quality of discussion that is the distinguishing marker of the AALD’s success.\(^{29}\) Scanlan remained chairman of the AALD until April 2009, when he was appointed Australian

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\(^{22}\) Author interview with Richard Woolcott, 22 March 2011.

\(^{23}\) Author interview with Stephen Loosley, 11 January 2012.


\(^{25}\) Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.

\(^{26}\) Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.

\(^{27}\) Beazley was best man at Scanlan’s wedding.

\(^{28}\) Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 163.

\(^{29}\) Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
Consul-General in New York in recognition of his services and commitment to the alliance. Although no longer chairman, Scanlan remains on the board of the AALD and exerts a powerful influence over its operation and objectives.\textsuperscript{30}

**Operation, Objectives and Success**

For well over twenty years, the AALD has brought together a select group of high-level politicians, government officials, business people, journalists, academics and other influential leaders from both countries for an annual private forum on designated matters of mutual interest. Alternating between Washington and various Australian cities each year, the AALD takes place between June and August over a 2-3 day period. The forum comprises formal key-note addresses and chaired discussion sessions.\textsuperscript{31}

The first AALD event on 11-12 June 1993 in Washington was attended by thirty-five prominent but mainly out-of-office political representatives and business leaders.\textsuperscript{32} Since that time, the AALD has grown to attract an ever increasing number of delegates, with participation of up to 150 people at each event.\textsuperscript{33} Without access to

\textsuperscript{30} As one former board member, who chose to remain anonymous, confirms, the Australian board is largely responsible for administrative functions, the selection process being “very much in the gift of the chairman”. Even after Scanlan formally abdicated his role as chairman in 2009, according to Andrew Robb, “he still keeps a weather eye on all things, including the invitation list”. Author interview with Andrew Robb, 15 July 2011.

\textsuperscript{31} On occasion, the AALD also convenes other events, such a special address by a distinguished guest. For example, in 2007, the AALD organised an address by former US Vice President, Dick Cheney, to 300 invited guests in Sydney after he met with a select group from the Dialogue. Tony Walker, Cheney, Rudd to Discuss Alliance, *Australian Financial Review*, 19 February 2007. On another occasion, during the 2011 Dialogue event in Perth, a pre-conference tour was organised to the Pilbara to showcase mining and energy operations for delegates.

\textsuperscript{32} Those participants were Richard L. Armitage, Judith Hippler Bello, Sandra Yates, Richard Woolcott, Stephen Bollenback, Dick Cheney, Patricia Ann Turner, Warwick L. Smith, James S. Gorelick, David D. Hale, Gregory Paul Sheridan, Emery Severin, Robert D. Hormats, Philip Lader, Phil Scanlan, Kevin Michael Rudd, Franklin L. Lavin, Jim Leach, Irene Kwong Moss, David Kemp, Winston Lord, Paul London, Steve Howard, Jill L. N. Hickson, Kevin G. Nealer, Douglas H. Paal, Carolyn Hewsen, Nicholas F. Greiner, Karl C. Rove, Thomas J. Schneider, Ros Gregory Garnaut, Robert B. Zoellick, Nick Bolkus, Peter Cook and Paul D. Wolfowitz. Official copy of the list of participants held by the author. Also, see Appendix B for photographs.

official records, the total number of AALD attendees over its lifetime is impossible to verify.34

One estimate, provided by Brian Toohey of the *Australian Financial Review*, reported that, between 1993 and 2008, approximately 360 delegates had attended the Dialogue’s meetings.35 Toohey names 55 Australian and 11 American participants. Research conducted by the author, based on public sources, identifies 253 participants from 1993-2011, many of them regular attendees.36 Of these, 151 (60%) were Australian delegates and 102 (40%) American.

Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the percentage of Australian and American delegates by occupation. While the numbers compiled are incomplete, the data size is significant enough to indicate that the AALD has been fairly successful in penetrating both major Australian political parties and, over the years, increasingly engaged a significant number Australian and American political and business elites and key opinion makers in the media.

The AALD has expanded its operations by establishing numerous other regular dialogue events in addition to the central mid-year forum.37 There is far less publicly available information about these additional dialogues. They typically attract smaller numbers of delegates than the central Dialogue and, consequently, less media attention.38 The focus of this thesis is on the central Dialogue event which is the largest and most influential.

34 The author attempted on numerous occasions to secure an interview with Phillip Scanlan – who no doubt has access to these records – to no avail.
35 Toohey, The Dialogue Box.
36 See Appendix A.
38 A Dow Jones Factiva database search for “West Coast Leadership Dialogue” returned only 20 unique results in December 2015. A similar search for “Young Leadership Dialogue” and “Honolulu Leadership Dialogue” returned seven and one unique results respectively.
* Note that the percentages depicted include some participants who fall into more than one category. For example, participants may attend as a political delegate in one year and, having retired from politics, a business delegate in the next. Note that the politics category includes politicians, public officials and ex-officials. “Other” includes union representatives and non-affiliated individuals.
Themes discussed at the AALD include economics and trade, defence and security, foreign policy, domestic politics, innovation and technology, energy and climate, education, health and social inclusion. Although the scope for discussion is wide, the focus surrounding each AALD event is often topical. Examples of major issues discussed includes the 1997 East Asian financial crisis; the “war on terror” and the 2003 invasion of Iraq; the 2008 Global Financial Crisis; climate change; Australia’s National Broadband Network; the ongoing threat posed by Iran and North Korea; the regional implications of the rise of China and the Obama administration’s “Pivot” to Asia.

AALD sessions are exclusively for invited guests. Although the AALD is managed by an Australian and American board, by all accounts, Scanlan plays the decisive role in the section of invitees. Discussions at the AALD operate under a strict non-disclosure convention that is often inaccurately described as the Chatham House Rule, but is, in fact, more narrow. The AALD’s rules prevent participants from disclosing the content of any comment, even where the identity of the participant is not revealed. Participants are permitted only to disclose their own attendance at AALD events and comments they themselves have made. There is strict loyalty to the non-disclosure convention, evidenced by the fact that there have been very few leaks since the AALD’s establishment.

The broad objectives of the AALD were set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Division at the time of its establishment. This document stipulates the role of the AALD is to:

39 The vast majority of AALD participants interviewed by the author were personally invited by Scanlan.
40 The Chatham House Rule is an international convention that any forum may choose to invoke as a means to ensure free and frank discussion. It permits participants to use or reveal any comments made at the forum as long as the identity of all participants, bar your own, is not disclosed. For the definition of the Chatham House Rule, see Chatham House, Chatham House Rule, Royal Institute of International Affairs, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chathamhouserule>, accessed 3 April 2016.
1. foster better relations between Australia and the United States of America whether they are of a business, economic, political, educational, or cultural nature;
2. establish a platform to maintain and develop peace and prosperity in the future in the Asia/Pacific region;
3. provide a forum to bring together leaders of policy and opinion in Australia and the United States of America;
4. focus on matters of global and regional security, international trade and economics, education, health, issues pertaining to women, management of multi-cultural societies and domestic renewal;
5. oversee the management and encourage the development of programs which endeavour to develop closer links between Australia and the United States of America.

Further indication of the AALD’s objectives is provided on the official website of the Dialogue which states that its mission “is to broaden and deepen mutual understanding between Australian and American leaders and to enhance the framework for regional security”. The AALD claims to operate according to the “principles of bilateral interest, bipartisanship, voluntarism and leadership in the service of others, frank exchange, intergenerational perspectives, mutual tolerance and personal courtesy”.42

In the words of Australia’s former ambassador to the US and original AALD participant, Don Russell, the Dialogue was established as “a way of cementing the notion that [the US relationship] was a cornerstone of Australia’s overall foreign policy”.43 In order to achieve that objective, Scanlan made the decision to focus the AALD exclusively on those in positions of power and influence rather than the

41 Australian American Education Leadership Foundation Limited, Memorandum and Articles of Association, 29 April 1993, p. 22. Note that the constitution was amended in 2006 and the description of these official purposes were deleted and not replaced.
43 Author interview with Don Russell, 21 December 2012.
CHAPTER FIVE

general public. The “initial spur to set up the Dialogue”, states Hugh White, “was to ensure a deeper body of support [for the alliance] amongst informed and elite opinion” in both Australia and the US.44

As noted above, the AALD emerged in the context of widespread concern about the future of the alliance in the post-Cold War era, and a belief that the next generation of leaders did not have the same degree of emotional attachment and personal commitment to the alliance as those in the past. As President Bush conveyed in a letter to Scanlan prior to the inaugural AALD event in May 1993:

The ties between the United States and Australia resulting from our shared experiences in the Pacific War were and are real . . . You have correctly identified the challenge before us – to engineer a smooth passing of the baton in American/Australian relations from the generation which forged the alliance in the presence of war to the generations which must work together for a permanent, productive, and prosperous peace.45

Founding member David Kemp recalls that “Scanlan believed . . . there was no foundation of personal relationships which could provide links into the future”, and so he sought to “develop a whole series of networks between Australians and Americans at the leadership level that would build on and expand the relationships which had come out of the [Second World] War”. This perception, Kemp adds, “was widely shared and one he [Scanlan] generated” about the purpose of the Dialogue.46 This goal is described on the AALD’s website as “relationship management between current and likely future leaders from both countries”.47

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44 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
46 Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
Apart from instilling the importance of the alliance into the next generation of elites, discussions at AALD events, and personal relationships cultivated there, are intended to create tangible benefits for both countries. This is articulated on the AALD’s website as “leveraging Australian access in the United States, and American access in Australia, into real influence on matters of respective and designated mutual interest”. From an Australian perspective, Scanlan states the “primary aim” of the AALD is as follows:

[To] help ensure that Australian policy makers and leaders in the broader community have knowledge of United States decision makers and real time understanding of their views on issues that we, as Australians, determine to be most important for Australia’s national interests.

A core purpose of the AALD, according to a current board member, is to “keep us both informed – keep both societies informed – on what the other’s thinking about so they can more best calibrate their own policy settings”. The intent is that information exchange will lead to greater cooperation in pursuing commonly agreed strategies in the world. According to the AALD’s website, the “high-calibre of discussion and debate” at Dialogue events “leads to the formation of support for strategic policy in both countries”.

The objectives of “relationship management” and “translating access into influence” are accompanied by a third objective of the AALD which is to provide an open forum for critical discussion and debate. Ostensibly, as a private diplomatic initiative operating in an unofficial capacity, the AALD provides a forum where non-official perspectives on the relationship can be introduced and debated. The views

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48 Australian American Leadership Dialogue, Home Page.
49 Phillip Scanlan, Australia and the United States, Towards a Deeper Relationship, speech to the Australian Institute of International Affairs (WA Branch), 26 July 2005.
50 Author interview with Professor Andrew MacIntyre, 28 June 2011.
of The Australian’s foreign affair’s editor, Greg Sheridan, are typical, although not universal, when he claims that discussions at the Dialogue are “frank, fearless, friendly, fierce and intense, with every assertion challengeable and contested”.  

Accordingly, AALD board member, Professor Andrew MacIntyre, states that participants at the Dialogue “come in with just an incredible range of views . . . there’s been some of the hardest questioning of different areas where we’ve got interests that I’ve witnessed anywhere”. When asked if the AALD offered the opportunity for serious discussion and debate about Australia-US relations and the nature of US foreign policy, journalist Paul Kelly replied, “that’s certainly my view”.

However, on rare occasions, the AALD has been publicly criticised for failing to live up to this expectation or apply an adequate degree of scrutiny to the alliance and American foreign policy. Scanlan strenuously denies the allegation that the AALD is a “cheer squad for American foreign policy” or that dissenting viewpoints are pushed out. These views are “just plain dumb”, he maintains. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, there is ample evidence to suggest the AALD works assiduously to frame discussion and debate within narrow bounds.

The AALD is widely lauded as “arguably the most valuable private sector foreign policy initiative ever undertaken in Australia”, “a central institution in the US-Australia relationship” and “the most important of all non-government

53 Author interview with Professor Andrew MacIntyre, 28 June 2011.
54 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.
56 Quoted in Flitton.
organisations dedicated to the strengthening of the Australia-US alliance in all its manifestations; civil, political and commercial”. Veteran Australian diplomat, Richard Woolcott, says that of all the private diplomatic initiatives he has participated in over the decades, none are comparable to the AALD, which is “far and away the most successful” of them all. Former American diplomat, Mel Sembler, agrees, stating that the AALD is “admired by many other countries” who aim to replicate its success.

There is no precise method for measuring the impact of the AALD or, for that matter, the success of any private diplomatic initiative. Certainly, AALD participants are almost unanimous in declaring its extraordinary achievement in helping to both strengthen personal relationships and reinforce existing sentiments of shared values and interests. Nevertheless, the AALD’s impact in relationship management should not be exaggerated given it operates in the context of already strong, widespread and long-standing feelings of goodwill and friendship between leaders in both countries.

The claim that the AALD has made a substantial impact at the policy level generates far more controversy than its apparent success at relationship management. Former Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, argues that while the Dialogue “is a good opportunity for networking . . . you can’t seriously say it has influenced policy. They sort of sit around and shoot the breeze”. Another former Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, holds a similar view. While “strongly in favour” of private diplomatic initiatives, and acknowledging the importance of the “substantive discussion” that takes place within the AALD, Evans ultimately views it as a “fairly marginal enterprise in the scheme of things”.

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60 Author interview with Richard Woolcott, 22 March 2011.
61 Author interview with Mel Sembler, 21 March 2012.
62 This point is explored in greater detail in Chapter Six.
63 Quoted in Toohey, The Dialogue Box.
64 Author interview with Gareth Evans, 10 April 2012.
On the other hand, strong advocates and long-standing participants of the AALD, such as Peter Hartcher and Paul Kelly, claim it has played a direct role in diplomacy. Two often quoted examples are the AALD’s apparent success in helping to convince leaders in Washington to back Australia’s 1999 intervention into East Timor and, secondly, its role in facilitating the emergence of the 2005 AUSFTA.65 In general terms, Kelly argues that if the AALD “had never existed then I think things [between Australia and the US] would have been diminished. I’ve got no doubt about that”.66

Those who are more detached from the AALD tend to hold a different opinion. When asked to identify which issues the Dialogue has played a significant role in impacting either Australian or US policies, the answer, according to Hugh White, is “none”. Since its establishment, there has been “no outcome that has occurred which wouldn’t have occurred without the Dialogue”.67 In a similar vein, Paul Dibb asks rhetorically, “Is the Dialogue all that influential? Is it really all that powerful? Or is it a figment of the imaginations of Scanlan and indeed, influential journalists like Sheridan and Kelly?” In the final analysis, Dibb argues, the AALD has not substantially altered “the importance, shape and direction of the relationship”.68

Undoubtedly, the AALD is one small part of a much larger and long-standing established network of close and extensive relationships at the government, military, intelligence and economic levels that ultimately determine the course of the alliance. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to dismiss the impact of the AALD entirely. Chapter Seven demonstrates that the AALD’s singular success has been in reinforcing and deepening support for the alliance; an achievement which may be limited in scope but is nonetheless highly effective in ensuring the preservation of the status quo.

66 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.
67 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
68 On the two journalists in question, Dibb adds, “One of whom I’ve got great regard for, that is Kelly, and the other one I don’t”. Author interview with Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb, 13 September 2011.
Preserving the Orthodoxy

Although the AALD is singularly dedicated to strengthening the Australia-US relationship, it claims not to advocate any particular agenda or embody a singular, monolithic view of the alliance. Alexander Downer speaks for a number of participants when he says the AALD “is not an organisation with a point of view. It’s a whole lot of different points of view”.69 Former board member and participant Sam Lipski concurs that “You can’t talk about the Dialogue as if it has a kind of completely united and coherent view. It’s not a person. It’s not a monolithic organisation. Far from it”.70

The officially sanctioned view of the AALD is that it merely provides a forum for discussion and debate between both countries on matters of mutual interest. As Greg Sheridan writes, “at Scanlan’s insistence and with the enthusiastic endorsement of all its participants, the Dialogue takes no position on any issue beyond the utility of the US-Australia relationship”.71 Much depends, however, on what is inferred by the “utility” of the alliance. In the eyes of former participant, Hugh White, the AALD’s outlook is based on questionable assumptions:

[It] embodied from the outset a certain view about what makes the alliance and the relationship strong, what makes it valuable to Australia and what might pose a threat to those strengths and values. It would also be fair to say . . . I think the accounts of those things are contestable and quite possibly wrong.72

While the AALD claims its goal is to merely strengthen the Australia-US relationship in the interests of both countries, in reality, it functions to sustain an orthodox conception of the alliance. As one recent study declared, the AALD “was founded as

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69 Author interview with Alexander Downer, 14 September 2011.
70 Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.
71 Sheridan, Power Talking.
72 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
a means of sustaining an existing historical narrative of alliance”. As detailed in Chapter One, this narrative subscribes to a view of the alliance as a “special relationship” rooted in shared values and common security interests, first forged in the mutual sacrifices suffered by both nations during WWII and solidified in every major conflict fought together thereafter. Once again, in the words of Hugh White:

[The AALD] exposed emerging political leaders to a view of the alliance as something that transcended politics and even policy. It encouraged the view that the alliance was rooted in, and was indeed essential to, Australia’s national identity.

As the driving force behind the AALD, Scanlan is steadfast in his belief that “alliances with depth are driven by common and shared values”, and it is those “values which today are the glue that binds the US and Australia as strongly as ever”. This semi-mystical belief in the importance of values to the Australia-US alliance underpins the central objective of the AALD: to strengthen the personal relationships between leaders of both countries and consequently their commitment to the alliance.

Many current and former participants echo the words of founding member, Nick Bolkus, when he states that the purpose of the AALD is to facilitate relationship building where leaders from both countries can “get to know each other and develop strong personal understandings” and “form strong bonds based on common values and interests”. For many AALD participants interviewed by the author, the personal connections it facilitates are what make it such a valuable and effective institution. According to journalist and long-standing AALD participant, Peter Hartcher, the Dialogue helps to “strengthen relationships and therefore

74 Hugh White, Strategic Overreach, American Review, 17 August 2014, p. 12.  
76 Author interview with Nick Bolkus, 6 September 2011.
strengthen the alliance”, specifically by “creating familiarity and thickening those [personal] bonds”.77

Apart from embodying a values-based understanding of the Australia-US relationship, the AALD adheres to the orthodoxy that the alliance is driven by mutual security interests, and specifically, that it is necessary for Australia’s defence. Scanlan has repeatedly argued that the alliance underwrites the security of Australia and, moreover, that the “defence subsidy” it provides is often unacknowledged and unappreciated78 – a belief restated on the AALD’s website.79 Australia’s national interests, Scanlan wrote in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, “are fundamentally unchanged: to cement the alliance with the US in order to underwrite the sustained security of Australian citizens”.80

Scanlan also adheres to the conventional wisdom that US hegemony, facilitated in part through the Australia-US alliance, is vital to the security, stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific. Scanlan writes:

[The] Asia-Pacific is a region rich in economic potential and, without a working security network, full of crises waiting to happen. Australia cannot pursue its aspirations in the absence of a comprehensive, multi-layered US strategic engagement across the Asia-Pacific.81

These beliefs and perceptions were embedded into the objectives of the AALD on its establishment. As a founding member of the Dialogue, Nick Greiner, explains that the “overriding objective, from an Australian point of view, was to ensure the

77 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
78 Scanlan, More Than Just Brothers In Arms; Phillip Scanlan, New World Disorder, Australian Financial Review, 3 July 2003; Phillip Scanlan, Australia and the United States, Towards a Deeper Relationship; Phillip Scanlan, Australia Must Learn How to Benefit from the US Alliance, The Age, 30 January 2007.
80 Scanlan, More Than Just Brothers In Arms.
81 Scanlan. Also see President’s Departure Sets Legacy Deadline, Australian Financial Review, 2 January 2007.
continuing positive engagement of the United States in the Pacific. Australia was, in a sense, a subset of that. That was undoubtedly the overriding purpose”.82 Another founding member of the Dialogue, David Kemp, agrees that one of the objectives was to “keep the American leadership on both sides focussed on the Pacific and East Asia” and to “influence the American strategy” by persuading the US to “stabilise the East Asia region”.83

The importance of maintaining US engagement in the region remains a consistent theme at the AALD. At the third Dialogue event in 1995, one of the key messages presented to the Americans from the Australian delegation was the following imperative:

Don’t retreat from the region. There is a great and overriding need – strategically, militarily and politically – to continue the US military presence throughout the region. In a post-Cold War world, the maintenance of a forward military presence is a stabilising factor. The visibility of the West, as led by the United States, is critical.84

Ten years later, Scanlan reiterated that “confirmation of US engagement in Asia has always been a regular part” of what is described as “the menu at the Leadership Dialogue”.85 Today, the official website of the AALD states that its mission is to “enhance the framework for regional security in a manner that underwrites economic and cultural prosperity for Australian and American citizens”.86

More recently, the AALD has focused on recreating the policy orthodoxies of the alliance to fit the new geopolitical realities emerging from China’s growing power. From a regional perspective, the AALD is considered to be a “willing camp follower”

82 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.
83 Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
85 Scanlan, Australia and the United States, Towards a Deeper Relationship.
in America’s strategy to hedge against the emergence of an undesirable multilateral regional order.\textsuperscript{87} According to White, the AALD’s “ethos” today is that American primacy can and should be sustained in the face of the Chinese challenge and that Australia’s best interests are in supporting them doing so.\textsuperscript{88}

When considered as a whole, the agenda of the AALD is not surprising given it accords with the long-standing bipartisan commitment among Australian foreign policy makers and strategic elites to preserve the alliance, regional security and economic framework underpinned by US hegemony. The salient point is that the AALD’s overriding objective is not to challenge this traditional thinking but to protect, strengthen and legitimise it.

**Corporate Influence**

Part of the AALD’s objective of preserving the alliance orthodoxy has been a commitment to accelerating the neoliberal economic order strongly promoted by both Australia and the US in the post-Cold War era. There are mutual interests between Australia’s national security elite and corporate leadership regarding America’s place as the world’s dominant power “on the grounds that it provides the hegemonic stability necessary to maintain a global neoliberal economic order that is favourable to Western economic interests”.\textsuperscript{89}

Some tension has emerged in recent times between the defence establishment, the intelligence community and those sections of Australia’s corporate elite with large business interests in China.\textsuperscript{90} Some business leaders have voiced concerns about the fact that Australia’s growing strategic relationship with the US appears to be

\textsuperscript{88} Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
increasingly directed at containing China. Nevertheless, this tension has not fundamentally altered Canberra’s commitment, or the AALD’s enthusiasm, for supporting American regional hegemony and the US “Pivot” to Asia. As Nick Bisley points out, Australia is “doubling down on American primacy”:

> Although scholarly and public debates have traversed a wide range of policy options, Canberra has made a very clear decision about its strategic future: it will cleave very closely to its alliance with the United States and to the vision of regional order which depends on continued American primacy.  

When the AALD first emerged in the early 1990s, one of the key messages stressed to the Americans was to immediately “strengthen APEC” and take steps to ensure the “acceleration of the free trade regime”. Today, David Kemp plainly declares that “the Dialogue is free trade. There’s no doubt about that. It would be more [pro-] free trade than the Australian political system as a whole or the American political system as a whole”. The most conspicuous example of the AALD’s neoliberal agenda is the advocacy role in played in bringing about the 2005 AUSFTA.

Advocates of the AALD frequently point to its role in facilitating the emergence of AUSFTA as evidence of its real impact at the policy level, although this claim has not

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93 Wolpe, A Message to Clinton.
94 Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
gone uncontested.96 Speaking in retrospect, Scanlan maintains the AALD “made a significant contribution” in facilitating AUSFTA.97 Many participants of the AALD from both countries concur with Scanlan’s claim.98 In his in-depth account of the behind-the-scenes lobbying that went on during AUSFTA negotiations, the Australian Financial Review’s Mark Davis described the AALD as an “important locus for the unfolding FTA debate” where key American officials strongly promoted the trade agreement.99

Whatever the actual impact the AALD had on the emergence of AUSFTA, Scanlan was certainly a fierce supporter of the agreement. He urged the then Prime Minister, John Howard, to broaden Australia’s push for wider economic integration with the US. He candidly stated that the AALD would put the subject on its own agenda and “strongly advocate” for FTA acceptance at official levels.100

Scanlan praised AUSFTA as an “act of strategic engagement by Australia that is long overdue”, dismissing concerns that it might damage Australia’s sugar and diary industries, labelling them “uncompetitive” and in need of “transformation”. Opposition to the agreement by the Labor Party was, in Scanlan’s words, merely

96 Alexander Downer, Australia’s foreign minister when AUSFTA was being negotiated, states categorically that the AALD didn’t have “any influence over it one way or another”. Author interview with Alexander Downer, 14 September 2011. On the other hand, a number of other AALD participants interviewed by the author refute Downer’s claims, dismissing it as an attempt to take all of the credit for the trade agreement.
97 Quoted in Toohey, The Dialogue Box.
98 John W. H. Denton says the Dialogue created the “environment” to make AUSFTA possible. Author interview with John W. H. Denton, 15 February 2012. Stephen Loosley believes “Australia’s position was strengthened” because of the work of Dialogue participants. Author interview with Stephen Loosley, 11 January 2012. Sam Lipski argues the Dialogue was a “big factor” during AUSFTA, particularly as a testing ground for anticipating the wider debate in both countries. Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011. David Kemp contends that the negotiation of AUSFTA was “one of the instances you could say where the Dialogue actually played a direct role in diplomacy”. Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011. On the American side, Robert Zoellick reportedly said that AUSFTA was “really an outgrowth of what the Dialogue was doing”. Peter Hartcher, Howard Sets the Trap for a Younger Player, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June 2004, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/06/17/1087245040341.html>, accessed 5 April 2016.
“political point scoring”. Accordingly, Scanlan “applauded” the Howard government “for pursing FTA talks with the United States” and called on the opposition to “support a comprehensive US FTA”.

The most significant private advocate of AUSFTA from the US side of the AALD was the late Anne Wexler. As noted above, Wexler was a pivotal influencer in the AALD. Former AALD board member, Sam Lipski, refers to Wexler as the “anchor person” or the “Phil Scanlan at the Washington end”. When Wexler died in 2009, a tribute was placed on the home page of the AALD’s website. Commemorating her role as a serving member on the board for fifteen years, she was described as “one of our own” and a “key player . . . in the development of the Leadership Dialogue.”

Wexler was one of Washington’s key power brokers, dubbed part of the “superlobbyist” elite in Washington and “easily the most influential female lobbyist in a world still dominated by men”. She was introduced to the AALD early in its development by her husband, Joseph Duffey, director of the USIA at the time; she later became a board member of the Dialogue.

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102 Phillip Scanlan, submission to the Secretary, Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, 3 January 2004. Interestingly, Scanlan opposed earlier moves by Australia to join NAFTA on the grounds that Australia would be unlikely to get real economic gains in the long run, that the agreement might distort the global trading environment, send the wrong signals to East Asia and undermine Australia’s sovereignty. Geoffrey Barker, Scanlan Against NAFTA Bid, *Australian Financial Review*, 12 August 1997.

103 Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.

104 Wexler was also made an Honorary Officer of the Order of Australia by the Australian Government for her work on AUSFTA and the AALD. Note that the tribute to Wexler has since been removed from the AALD’s website.


According to the former president and secretary of the American board of the AALD, Alan Dunn, Wexler was “thrilled and captivated” by her first Dialogue event and subsequently agreed to serve as Treasurer on the board. She proceeded to use her “influence” and “convening power as this uber-lobbyist in Washington to bring people in to participate”. 107 Robert Walker, a former Republican congressman and later chairman of the American board of the Dialogue, became a partner in Wexler’s lobbying firm, still known today as Wexler and Walker Public Policy Associates. Robert Cramer, a former Democrat congressman and Dialogue board member, also joined the lobbying firm in 2009.

After Australia announced its ambition to pursue a FTA with the US in late 2000, Wexler was commissioned by big business to fund a lobbying effort on Capitol Hill. The Wexler Group had previously represented the pro-NAFTA business coalition of Fortune 500 companies in the early 1990s and, together with her husband’s efforts at the USIA, employed a sophisticated propaganda campaign to sell the trade agreement to the American public and a reluctant Mexico and Canada. 108 Wexler proceeded to launch the American-Australian FTA Coalition in mid-2001 as the prime US lobbying vehicle in pursuit of AUSFTA. The coalition consisted of over 300 corporations and business associations including AALD supporters such as Boeing, ALCOA, Coca-Cola, ExxonMobil and Visy Industries. 109

There was some disagreement about the benefits of multilateral versus bilateral trade agreements within the AALD. However, there was not “plenty of vigorous debate” on the “merits” of AUSFTA as Scanlan has claimed. Toohey writes that “apparently, no one in the AALD raised the incongruity of including a highly protectionist measure on intellectual property in the FTA”. That is, the extension of

107 Author interview with Alan Dunn, 23 November 2011.
109 A similar pro-FTA lobby group was set up in Australia – the AUSTA coalition – and included ALCOA, BHP Steel, Bonlac Foods, Cargill Caterpillar, CBA, IBM, Mobil Oil Australia, News Limited, Southcorp, Telstra, Visy Industries, Western Holdings and Western Mining as well as a number of industry groups including the Australian Industry Group and the Business Council of Australia. Mark Davis, Forging a New Trade Route, Australian Financial Review, 5 January 2005; Davis, Quick Dealing at the Business End of Trade.
copyright protection from 50 to 70 years, which “had nothing to do with trade liberalisation and everything to do with providing a windfall gain for corporations owning a back catalogue of movies, music and books”.  

According to Mark Latham, who was leader of the opposition when AUSFTA was enacted, the role of the AALD was:

[To] just stamp this as approved. They didn’t want anyone to question it or amend it as we ultimately did. So they are a voice for American foreign investment and free trade which they are entitled to be but it’s partly funded by the commercial proceeds of that agenda.  

As Latham alludes, the AALD’s explicit “free trade” agenda is underscored by its extensive links to the corporate world, including as the major source of its funding. After its founding in 1993, Scanlan established two parent organisations to secure funds, enlist participants and coordinate each AALD event and associated programs. The Australian American Education Leadership Foundation was established to manage the Dialogue’s interests in Australia, and its counterpart, the American Australian Education Leadership Foundation, was to manage those operations relating to the US. Both organisations are entirely funded from private sources and declared as non-for-profit educational institutions with tax deductible status in their respective host nations.

Although board members have changed with time, a significant proportion of current and former board members of both the Australian and American foundations have consisted of corporate executives and lobbyists. Contributors to the AALD are mostly confidential. However, the author was able to source a

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100 Toohey, The Dialogue Box.
110 Author interview with Mark Latham, 22 November 2011.
112 Hereafter, the Australian American Foundation and vice versa.
113 These include Amanda Johnston-Pell, Anne Wexler, Fleur Harlan, Heather Podesta, Hugh Morgan, Julie Singer Scanlan, Kevin Nealer, Mehrdad Baghai, Martin Adams, Phillip Scanlan, Richard Pratt, Robert Cramer, Robert Walker, Thomas J. Schneider and Warwick Smith.
partial list from financial reports submitted to ASIC in Australia and the IRS in the United States, illustrated in Figures 3, 4 and 5 below.

**Figure 3: Total Fiscal Year Contributions***

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**Figure 4: American Australian Education Leadership Foundation Contributors***

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**Figure 5: Australian American Education Leadership Foundation Contributors***

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* All amounts in USD. Data for FY1997-2000 sourced from Form 990 (FY2001) submitted by American-Australian Foundation to IRS. Data for FY2008-2011 sourced from Form 990 (FY2009-2012) submitted by ALCOA Foundation to the IRS.
<table>
<thead>
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* Note all amounts in AUD. Data for FY1993-96 sourced from financial returns submitted by the Australian-American Foundation to ASIC. Data on Pratt Foundation is an estimate provided to the author by Sam Lipski (Chief Executive).  

The information obtained is limited due to the lack of voluntary disclosure. Nonetheless, it provides a reasonable indication of both the sources and amounts of private funding. As might be expected, it is large Australian or American businesses with interests or subsidiaries in each respective country that dominate.

Further confirmation about the corporate backing of the AALD can be gleaned from a brochure celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Dialogue in 2012. “Supporters” are listed as Qantas, Australia Post, NAB, Visy Industries, Chevron,  

114 Lipski estimates the Pratt Foundation contributed approximately $55,000 p.a. for twelve or thirteen years and, after a small break, returned with a renewed commitment under the leadership of Anthony Pratt in 2011 for $100,000 p.a. for at least two years.
Visy Industries, cited as a “key supporter” in the brochure, has been a central sponsor of the AALD since its early foundation years. Alan Dunn states that the late Richard Pratt played a key role:

[He] played a very, very important function. He hosted us. He gave us venues where we could get together. . . he used what he had a lot of, which was resources and money, to sponsor us. It takes money to make the Dialogue run and he was a generous contributor.116

Sam Lipski, a close personal friend of Pratt and Chief Executive of the charitable Pratt Foundation, recalls that Pratt wanted to get involved in the AALD early on because of his many connections with the US and he “was then very much involved in getting the Visy Industries business off the ground in the United States”.117

Unsurprisingly, big business takes full advantage of their sponsorship and presence at the AALD to pursue their interests. The primary motivation is to gain access to government thinking on issues that may affect their interests and also make representations to government officials on behalf of those interests.118 The representative of one Australian transnational corporate donor, who wished to remain anonymous, provided the following reasons for the corporation’s long-
standing commitment to the AALD. These are: to support Australia’s national interests, to benefit the profile and reputation of the company and, in particular, in order to help understand the environment in which the company operates. According to this senior executive, understanding “what risks are out there, what trends, what debates”, and “being able to hear from the US administration, White House level people and, in Australia, from ministers”, is “pretty useful” for any company that operates internationally.\footnote{Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.}

Alan Dunn concurs, arguing that business leaders who attend the AALD “get to see who’s making policies. They get to hear who’s making decisions and what they’re thinking about and what the key issues are.”\footnote{Author interview with Alan Dunn, 23 November 2011.} When he was an executive at BHP Billiton, Tom Harley brought the company back into the AALD after it had been absent for some years in order to reenergise its US relationships:

[BHP Billiton] had under baked its US relationships. It had relationships with different communities in the US where it had investments and so on but it had very little engagement with the policy makers . . . It enabled us to talk to a whole lot of people that we weren’t talking to before . . .\footnote{Author interview with Tom Harley, 2 November 2011.}

While a large company like BHP has no trouble getting access to policy makers, the AALD has the advantage of bringing them altogether in one room, providing the opportunity for multiple meetings in one trip and in one place that would otherwise take weeks to organise and conduct. Moreover, it is not the access per se which is important but the access to policy makers in context. In this way, Harley states, business can “see the way these people operate”. Rather than just “having a single point meeting and coming away”, you’re able to have “interaction with them that is broader.” By watching political leaders interact with others, business leaders are able to make better judgements about them. Again, in Harely’s words:

\footnote{Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.}
I want to have context. I want to know what motivates people. I want to know how consistent they are and how they adapt to different circumstances. You can be more predictive of their behaviours.\textsuperscript{122}

While the desire of the AALD to cultivate and represent the interests of big business is entirely legitimate, the interests and concerns of workers are not equally represented. The only union invited to attend the AALD is the right-wing AWU, first represented by Bill Shorten, and later, his successor, Paul Howes. “Bill was the first ever union official involved. I’m still the only union official there”, Howes declared in 2011. Apart from the fact that Shorten and Scanlan know each well on a personal level, the AWU’s sole presence, says Howes, “probably reflects” the fact that:

\begin{quote}
[The AWU] has always had a very pro-US outlook on foreign policy issues. It goes back to the Cold War. We were the leading anti-Communist union in Australia . . . So in the Australian labour movement it’s always been well known that the AWU is a pro-US alliance union.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

It is unsurprising that the AALD holds a bias toward the interests of big business given the founder and driving force of the Dialogue, Phillip Scanlan, is an accomplished corporate executive with a history of activism as a neoliberal ideologue. Prior to his position as managing director of Coca Cola Amatil, Scanlan was the Manager of Corporate Relations and Public Affairs at Amatil (W.D. & H.O. Wills)\textsuperscript{124} in the early to mid-1980s. Scanlan assumed a significant public role as defender of the tobacco industry’s efforts to delegitimise the link between cigarette smoking and cancer and to thwart a ban on the advertising of tobacco products in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{122} Author interview with Tom Harley, 2 November 2011.  \\
\textsuperscript{123} Author interview with Paul Howes, 5 August 2011.  \\
\textsuperscript{124} W.D. & H.O. Wills was the tobacco manufacturing subsidiary of Amatil, Australia’s largest soft drink and second largest food manufacturer. In May 1989, a major corporate reorganisation saw Amatil sell its tobacco subsidiary to British American Tobacco (BAT). At the same time, BAT sold its 41% interest in Amatil to the Coca-Cola Company.
\end{flushright}
Australia. In his defence of the right to advertise tobacco products, Scanlan liked to invoke free market principles:

There is a relationship between competition in the marketplace, enhancement of the principal of consumer sovereignty, freedom of the press no less and civil liberties overall . . . people who propose anti-competitive measures such as advertising bans tend to encourage market monopoly and the first loser in monopoly situations is always the consumer.

Scanlan has also been associated with what has been coined the “radical neo-liberal movement” from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s. The movement was characterised by a loose network of right-wing parliamentarians, businessmen, academics, journalists and other influential sympathisers to the neoliberal economic ideology that was then taking hold in the US, but was still at the margins of political debate in Australia.

As part of the movement, a number of corporate funded think tanks and groups were established in an attempt to restructure the Australian economy away from a Keynesian/welfare type state into a neoliberal one. By the 1990s, the movement had successfully contributed to a shift in Australian political discourse. Neoliberalism was now elite orthodoxy and, with the election of the Howard

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125 In 1983, Scanlan declared on national television that the tobacco industry believed smoking did not constitute a health risk. Robin Powell, Pressures Are Mounting to Curb Cigarette Advertising Down Under, Advertising Age, 12 September 1983. Scanlan also declared on national radio that “the industry believes there is no evidence to substantiate that it [nicotine] is addictive”. Phillip Scanlan, interview with Jane Singleton, City Extra, ABC, 18 June 1984. In an opinion piece in The Australian in 1984, Scanlan wrote that proposed legislation to ban tobacco advertising denied the basic right of any citizen to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Phillip Scanlan, Rights Threatened, The Australian, 14 May 1984. A year later, Scanlan wrote in the Australian Financial Review that a proposed bill to ban tobacco advertising breached Australians’ individual rights and was in direct contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Phillip Scanlan, Tobacco and a Bill of Rights, Australian Financial Review, 6 May 1985.

126 Scanlan in interview with Singleton, ABC City Extra.

government in 1996, the movement had become “an established part of the political landscape with the ear of a sympathetic government”.  

One of the organisational backbones of the movement was the Crossroads Group, established by Liberal Dry MPs John Hyde and Jim Carlton. Phillip Scanlan was one of its 40 members. It met secretly from 1980-1986 in order to form strategies to intervene in key areas of public policy and related activities such as placing articles sympathetic to the neoliberal cause in major Australian newspapers. The organisation even conspired to create a cover story to conceal the true nature of its actions in the event of unintended public disclosure. Some activists in this movement subsequently moved into positions of influence in many high profile corporations; these included Scanlan, who became managing director of Coca-Cola Amatil’s beverages division.

Damien Cahill, who undertook an in-depth study of the movement, has characterised the Crossroads Group as an important development in the history of the radical neoliberal movement:

> It brought together radical neo-liberals from academia, politics and business and facilitated dialogue between individuals from different movement organisations at a crucial time in the movement’s development. It thus helped to cohere the movement. That it met secretly, and that its existence was deliberately hidden from the public, allowed activists to strategise and debate free from scrutiny.  

Shortly after the demise of the Crossroads Group, Scanlan was invited to join the board of yet another radical neoliberal institution, the Institute of Public Affairs

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128 Cahill, p. 108.
130 Cahill, *The Radical Neo-liberal Movement*, p. 117.
(IPA) in NSW, as deputy president in March 1988. When the IPA (NSW) decided to close and reopen operations as the conservative think tank, The Sydney Institute, in April 1989, Scanlan became the inaugural chairman where he played an important role in the early years of its establishment until 1993. The Sydney Institute’s executive chairman, to this day, is Gerard Henderson, also a member of the now defunct Crossroads Group.\textsuperscript{131}

Significantly, the AALD prides itself as an independent private institution able to maintain itself at arms-length from government, operating in the absence of direct government management and funding. The “mantra” that the AALD “be at arms-length from government has been fundamental”, says former Australian Prime Minister and long-term Dialogue participant, Kevin Rudd.\textsuperscript{132} However, the extensive corporate connections and foundations of the AALD, including its dependence on private sources of funding, undermine its claim to be entirely independent and neutral.

That is not to say that corporate interests have hijacked the agenda of the AALD. The financial and physical presence of big business is more likely a reflection of the fact that the alliance orthodoxy embodied by the AALD and Australia’s political establishment closely aligns with large corporate interests and therefore attracts their support. Evidently, big business has used the opportunities provided by the AALD to their full advantage.

\textsuperscript{131} Author interview with Gerard Henderson, 7 March 2012; Gerard Henderson, Correspondence: Robert Macklin and The Sydney Institute, \textit{The Sydney Institute Quarterly}, issue 31, September 2007, pp. 15-16.
\textsuperscript{132} Sheridan, \textit{Power Talking}. 
CHAPTER SIX

Conceptualising the AALD: T2 Diplomacy or Pro-American Lobby Group?

Conceptualising the AALD

The AALD cannot be readily conceptualised or categorised. Ostensibly, as a dialogue-based, semi-official diplomatic process that brings together elites to discuss ideas with the purpose of relationship building grounded in mutual understanding, the AALD comfortably sits within the broad definition of track two (T2) diplomacy. Indeed, the Dialogue has been publicly lauded as the most successful example of T2 diplomacy to emerge from Australia.¹

On the other hand, virtually all prominent T2 dialogues in the Asia-Pacific are dedicated to conflict management and/or multilateral cooperation building, whereas the focus of the AALD is on the management of bilateral relations between two long-standing allies.² Any attempt to study the AALD as an exercise in T2 diplomacy must therefore “address T2 in the absence of conflict and stress long-term consensus-building and friendship engagement”.³

The problem of using T2 as a conceptual framework for understanding and evaluating the AALD is that it ignores one of the core objectives of T2, explored in detail below, which is to challenge official government thinking by generating dissent. One of the major reasons for involving non-officials in discussions with officials is to inject new and unorthodox approaches at the decision making level. The goal of the AALD, on the other hand, is to preserve orthodox thinking and

² There is an acknowledged gap in the literature on the numerous smaller and bilateral type T2 initiatives such as the AALD. See Desmond Ball, Anthony Milner and Brendan Taylor, Track 2 Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific: Reflections and Future Directions, Asian Security, vol. 2, no. 3, 2006, p. 184.
eschew dissenting perspectives. In this important respect, the AALD departs from other T2 initiatives to function more like a lobby group.

There is a clear distinction made in the literature between T2 initiatives and lobby groups. As “epistemic communities”, T2 networks will ostensibly revise their beliefs in light of new or changing evidence. Unlike lobby groups, they do not attempt to define the terms of political debate to ensure only their preferred policy appears legitimate, but rather are committed to articulating expert and policy-relevant advice.⁴ The AALD, in contrast, aims explicitly to “help review and refine the parameters of the Australian-American bilateral relationship”⁵ and views with disdain any opinion outside of the orthodoxy. As demonstrated below, critics of the alliance are not invited to attend the AALD and even strong alliance supporters are shunned when perceived as a threat to the status quo.

By drawing exclusively and carefully from elite circles that subscribe to conventional thinking, the AALD serves as a legitimising platform for existing government objectives. At first glance, this outcome appears consistent with other T2 initiatives that are bedevilled by what is referred to as the “autonomy dilemma”, or the tendency of elites to fall into line with official perspectives.⁶ However, this criticism does not strictly apply to the AALD given that the objective is not “policy change” but “policy continuity”; the aim being to strengthen and renew the already “relatively stable nature of the ideas and values surrounding the alliance”.⁷

Evidently, the AALD is not a traditional interest group or “issue public” that targets participants in the policy process with a set of specific policy objectives and on

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behalf of a particular constituency. Rather, the term should be applied to the AALD more loosely to describe what amounts to a group of influential pro-American Australians, along with influential Americans, who are devoted to preserving and promoting an orthodox conception of the Australia-US alliance and shaping Australian foreign policy in a pro-American direction.

Rather than engage in direct efforts to persuade elected officials, the AALD brings together leaders in both countries who believe in its alliance orthodoxy in an attempt to mutually reinforce their pre-existing beliefs. The AALD does not “lobby” elites so much as socialise them by facilitating the process whereby its conception of the alliance can be voluntarily accepted or strengthened. While many traditional lobby groups are motivated to shift government policy in their favour, others operate in a “policy watchdog” capacity to prevent adverse changes. The AALD falls into the latter category, acting as a “gatekeeper” for orthodox government policymaking on the alliance.

Although not a direct comparison, the AALD resembles parts of the US-based “Israel lobby” which consists of individuals and groups that actively work to preserve America’s “special relationship” with Israel but do not always engage in formal lobbying activities. Although not the focus of this paper, it is noteworthy that the AALD’s most successful spin-off is the Australia Israel Leadership Forum which, according to its critics, engages in “the uncritical boosterism of which Scanlan’s group gets accused in some circles”. Another relevant comparison is the Australia-

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9 Gyngell and Wesley, *Making Australian Foreign Policy*, p. 166.
10 The socialisation and “gatekeeping” functions of the AALD, briefly touched on here, are explored in detail in Chapter Seven.
based “Jakarta lobby”, a loose group of academics, bureaucrats and journalists who, in the past, worked to protect Australia’s relationship with Indonesia.\footnote{Scott Burchill, The Jakarta Lobby: Mea Culpa?, \textit{The Age}, 4 March 1999.}


The AALD should be understood along these same lines. It is one small element of what has been described as the “Washington lobby”, or those groups that promote the alignment of US and Australian foreign policy and a regional and global order that protects and enhances western strategic and economic interests.\footnote{Fernandes, \textit{Reluctant Saviour}, p. 24.}

**Purposes, Benefits and Shortcomings of T2 Diplomacy**

Due to systemic changes in the international system flowing from globalisation and the end of the bi-polar world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union, diplomatic practice somewhat shifted from the traditional domain of states to include non-state actors as well. Concomitantly, new concepts arose to take into
account these developments. One of these is the concept of “tracked” diplomacy or Tracks of Diplomacy (ToDs), a tri-level framework for categorising various forms of diplomacy by their official or non-official status, and by the mix and characteristics of the participants involved.

T1 refers to government-led diplomacy undertaken exclusively by policy makers who work through official channels. T1 encompasses the traditional notion of diplomacy as the “management of peaceful relations between states principally through negotiations between their accredited representatives”. This form of diplomatic practice includes typical bilateral negotiations among high-level officials to large multilateral initiatives such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, two of the largest and most established multilateral T1 initiatives in the Asia Pacific.

Both T2 and T3 are encapsulated in the more flexible and less state-centric definition of diplomacy that includes the participation and interests of non-state actors. In contrast to T1, tracks two and three are often referred to as a type of unofficial diplomacy or “diplomacy without diplomats”. While T3 largely comprises of civil society organisations and is more or less synonymous with transnational advocacy movements, T2 can be more accurately described as a form

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19 An alternative concept which uses nine tracks to categorise various official and unofficial diplomatic activities – coined “multi-track diplomacy” – has been developed by Louise Diamond and John McDonald. The concept, however, is primarily used by the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy. This study, like much of the scholarship on ToDs, utilises the basic tri-level concept. See James Notter and Louise Diamond, Building Peace and Transforming Conflict: Multi-Track Diplomacy in Practice, Occasional Paper No. 7, Washington: Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, October 1996, pp. 5-6, accessed 5 April 2016. Also see Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, What is Multi-Track Diplomacy?, accessed 5 April 2016.

20 Kraft, Track Three Diplomacy and Human Rights, p. 50.

of “semi-official interaction” given it includes a significant number of both official and non-official participants drawn from elite or influential circles.\(^\text{22}\)

The term T2 is generally attributed to Joseph V. Montville, a US Foreign Service Officer who, along with his co-researcher, psychiatrist William D. Davidson, conceived of it as a tool of “political psychology” that could be utilised to break down the human barriers between conflicting parties such as the Israelis and Palestinians.\(^\text{23}\) Montville defined T2 as follows:

> [The] unofficial, informal interaction among members of adversarial groups or nations with the goals of developing strategies, influencing public opinion, and organising human and material resources in ways that might help resolve the conflict.\(^\text{24}\)

Today, T2 is still largely conceived of in these terms.\(^\text{25}\) As Peter Jones notes, “the great bulk of research and writing on track two is about resolving specific conflicts between (usually) two parties” and typically resides within the various schools of “conflict resolution”.\(^\text{26}\)

Although Montville and Davidson were focused on resolving differences between hostile states, they also recognised that T2 “need not be limited to enemies” and could prove useful “between firm but contentious friends, such as the United States

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\(^\text{26}\) Jones, Filling a Critical Gap, p. 4.
and France.  

Today, T2 can also be understood more widely as a cooperation building exercise to help frame discussion between elites and establish alternative norms of behaviour. Such exercises are referred to as “soft” T2 and are more about facilitating cooperation via mutual exchange and understanding as opposed to simply finding solutions to established problems that characterise the “hard” T2 variety. According to Kaye, the objective of this type of T2 is:

[Usually] not formal conflict resolution through contributions to a peace settlement, but rather conflict management, tension reduction, confidence-building and the formation of sub-regional identities that allow actors to frame and approach problems in similar and preferably cooperative way.

The “soft” interpretation of T2 is considered a useful mechanism for “region building” and “identity formation”, and need not be limited to security interactions but also economic, social or other potential forms of cooperation. In the Asia-Pacific in particular, multilateral policy dialogues and exchanges aimed at regional cooperation building have burgeoned over the last decade and a half.

T2 dialogues are often viewed as synonymous with “epistemic communities” and evaluated accordingly. Typically, an epistemic community is defined as “a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain

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27 Davidson and Montville, Foreign Policy According to Freud, p.156.  
28 Kaye, Rethinking Track Two Diplomacy, p. 3.  
and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area”. The function of epistemic communities is to “discuss specific issues, set agendas, and formulate policy alternatives outside the formal bureaucratic channels” while serving as “brokers for admitting new ideas into decision-making circles of bureaucrats and elected officials”. Under favourable conditions, epistemic communities claim to be capable of not only framing issues or defining interests but even setting the agenda of policy makers.

Scholarly opinion is divided on the actual influence of T2 at the policy level. In the zero-sum world of realism, unofficial dialogues and multilateral institutions tend to be viewed as “talking shops” that are either detrimental or irrelevant to policymaking, or else tightly constrained by the structural distribution of international power. Liberals and constructivists, on the other hand, argue that T2 initiatives have played a distinctly positive role in state-to-state cooperation building, principally through the creation of new norms of behaviour. Realists dismiss the impact of discourse in framing state behaviour and argue instead that “norms are essentially what states, pursuing their strategic self-interest, make of them”.

There have been very few empirical studies conducted to measure the success of unofficial diplomatic initiatives. This is largely because most of the benefits of T2 are intangible and therefore unquantifiable, making any attempt to gauge their

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31 Haas, Introduction: Epistemic Communities, p. 3. However, as Acharya points out, T2 participants are not always endowed with the authoritative knowledge that is considered to be one of the key characteristics of epistemic communities. Acharya, Engagement or Entrapment?, p. 13.
32 Haas, Introduction: Epistemic Communities, p. 31.
33 Simon, Evaluating Track II Approaches, p. 171.
37 Jones and Smith, Making Process, Not Progress, p. 150.
38 For one notable exception see Bohmelt, The Effectiveness of Tracks of Diplomacy.
success at the policy level “highly problematic.” According to constructivist accounts, the proper measure of success when it comes to T2 dialogues is at the perceptive or ideational level. As Job phrases it, the relevant test is whether T2 has “altered the manner in which states perceive their security interests and formulate their grand strategies.” The difficulty is that when discourse is taken as the object of analysis, and interpretation and persuasion as the source of policy change, the “causal path between ideas and policy” is acknowledged to be a “muddy” one.

Advocates claim that one of the major advantages T2 holds over T1 is its capacity for discussing and proposing ideas that would otherwise be “too sensitive or controversial” at the official level. Given T2 requires less protocol and is “free of the constraints of official or national positions”, there exists greater opportunity to explore “unconventional options” and “challenge current strategies and provide new solutions”. In theory, the objective of T2 is to use this greater latitude to critically examine policy options in an “academic fashion” and to challenge “traditional thinking” on security matters rather than simply recite government policy.

Accordingly, one of the key ways T2 claims to have an impact at the policy level is by “generat[ing] dissent” which might “not be to the liking of policymakers” but nonetheless “alerts them to alternative ideas and approaches” against which “their own preferences will be benchmarked and assessed”. The rationale of the major T2 initiatives in the Asia-Pacific has been to challenge the status quo and traditional

44 Job, “Track 2 Diplomacy”, p. 146.
45 Acharya, Engagement or Entrapment?, p. 13.
state conceptions of security, including the encouragement of “mutuality rather than power balancing or hegemony”\(^\text{46}\). 

While challenging official positions and providing alternative perspectives is a fundamental objective and claimed benefit of T2, the failure to live up to this expectation has also been one of its perennial problems, noted in the literature as the “autonomy dilemma”.\(^\text{47}\) The autonomy dilemma largely derives from the fact that T2 participants are drawn from elite circles, closely intertwined with government and generally holding similar backgrounds and perspectives apart from the rest of civil society. Alternative views are often marginalised because T2 selects “groups and individuals discussing security issues that concern governing elites”. By drawing on these elite circles with common worldviews, a kind of “group think” can develop – reinforced through “gatekeeping” – whereby favoured participants are continually reinvited back into the “club” while others remain excluded.\(^\text{48}\)

The increased intimacy between T2 and T1 is considered by some to be “not an altogether negative development” given that it provides T2 with a direct channel of influence into official circles.\(^\text{49}\) Nevertheless, there is a real concern that the more T2 ingratiates itself with those in power, the more likely is the potential for it to “simply reinforce conventional, politically acceptable approaches”.\(^\text{50}\) The notion that T2 provides a forum for “thinking the unthinkable” is, it has been argued, an equivocal claim at best, as “non-official diplomatic discourse seems almost always to gravitate to official positions”.\(^\text{51}\) T2 more often than not functions in a “cheerleading” capacity on behalf of state interests by marginalising dissident

\(^{46}\) Simon, Evaluating Track II Approaches, p.171.  
\(^{47}\) Kraft, The Autonomy Dilemma. Kraft has since updated his view on the autonomy dilemma, acknowledging that after a decade since first identifying the phenomena, it continues to operate in the Asia-Pacific, and is perhaps something T2 “must necessarily live with and accommodate the effects of”. See Herman Joseph S. Kraft, “The Autonomy Dilemma of Track 2 Diplomacy in Southeast Asia” in Desmond Ball and Kwa Chong Guan (eds), Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region, p. 176.  
\(^{50}\) Simon, Evaluating Track II Approaches, p. 194.  
\(^{51}\) See Seng Tan, Non-official Diplomacy in Southeast Asia: “Civil Society” or “Civil Service”?, Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol. 27, no. 3, 2005, p. 375.
perspectives and accommodating “discourses that support a state-centred ontology” and “which aim to maintain the regional status quo”.52

The AALD: Framing Discussion and Debate

Although lauded as Australia’s most successful effort in T2 diplomacy, there are clear problems in categorising and evaluating the AALD in these terms. The core objective of the AALD is quite different from other major T2 initiatives. As noted, fearing the alliance might weaken with the loss of personal bonds between the next generation of rising leaders in both countries, the AALD was established to cement the long-standing orthodoxy that the Australia-US alliance is a “special relationship” rooted in shared values and common security interests. In other words, unlike other T2 initiatives, the overriding objective of the AALD has been to preserve the status quo.

The “autonomy dilemma” provides important insights into how the AALD operates to legitimise official perspectives on the alliance. By drawing exclusively and carefully from elite circles that subscribe to conventional thinking, the AALD performs the role of a “cheer squad” for the alliance orthodoxy and all that entails for Australian and American foreign policy. On the other hand, as it currently exists in T2 dialogues, the autonomy dilemma cannot be strictly applied to the AALD given its objective is to reproduce, not challenge, orthodox thinking. By possessing a pre-existing agenda that eschews dissenting perspectives, the AALD can be more readily characterised as a pro-American lobby group.

Scanlan has explicitly rejected allegations that the AALD is a “pro-American lobby group”53 or a “cheer squad for American foreign policy”.54 As noted in the previous chapter, many supporters and participants of the AALD reject the label on the basis

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52 Tan, p. 379.
that the Dialogue has no specific agenda or monolithic view, and discussion is open to robust criticism and debate on all matters pertaining to the Australia-US relationship. Contrary to these claims, however, there is ample evidence to suggest the AALD is structured in a way to carefully frame discussion and debate within narrow bounds.

Given the AALD is targeted to those who possess, or are likely to possess, a considerable degree of influence over the direction of the Australia-US relationship, participation is largely constrained in political terms to the two major parties. Consequently, criticism at the AALD is limited to that within the politically acceptable mainstream where it is typical to express unquestioning loyalty to the alliance. As Liberal MP, Andrew Robb, explains, “Often there is not a lot of disagreement on some of the foreign policy issues between Labor and Liberal so there’s often an Australian perspective [at the AALD] . . . but not always”.

Founding member Nick Greiner concurs, stating that:

[To] some extent, it would be true that while [the AALD] was fiercely bi-partisan, where issues were bi-partisan, which in the United States they often are, and indeed in Australia in foreign policy they often are, the contingents would tend to reflect that.

While Greiner believes discussion at the AALD “was certainly wide open”, at the same time, dominant perspectives are rarely if ever challenged because “in many ways it just reflects the prevailing views in both countries in the inner circle”.

While one of the official foundational “values” of the AALD is a commitment to “bipartisanship”, the AALD appears to attract those from the right and centre-

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55 Author interview with Andrew Robb, 15 July 2011.
56 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.
57 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.
right of politics, particularly with respect to defence and foreign affairs. Carmen Lawrence, former premier of Western Australia and part of the left-faction of the Labor Party, although never invited to the Dialogue, got the distinct impression during her time in office that “left-wingers were typically not invited”. This is partly because “those from the left tended to have more domestic, social portfolios or opposition spokespeople positions”, whereas those in foreign affairs and defence were “typically from the right and very strong on the US alliance”.59

When it comes to the Labor left, Nick Bolkus believes that Scanlan would probably “rather have them inside the tent”. However, Bolkus adds, “the broader left is another thing”.60 Indeed, a number of AALD delegates expressed the view that participation from those on the broader left would only serve to “spoil” the Dialogue.61 Certainly, no member of the Australian Greens has ever been invited to attend, even though there may be some interest to participate.62 According to AALD board member Richard Woolcott, “I can’t speak for Scanlan and the board but I think they’d generally take the view that the Greens really were a bit too far outside what you might call the normal Australian attitude”.63

The overriding objective of the AALD is not to facilitate critical discussion and debate but rather to foster an environment for building and maintaining friendships among elites in order to preserve and strengthen the alliance. The cordial environment means that, whatever opportunities there may be for serious criticism of the Australia-US relationship and US foreign policy, participants do not take it very often. According to journalist Peter Hartcher, “Many years, people are far too polite”.64 Even on those occasions when participants do hold seriously critical

59 Author interview with Carmen Lawrence, 14 November 2011.
60 Author interview with Nick Bolkus, 6 September 2011.
61 Author interview with Nick Bolus. David Kemp speculated that Scanlan would be unlikely to invite anyone from the Greens unless he had “formed the view that there was amongst them someone who was more or less rational. He would be concerned they would take up too much time with their unconstructive projections of ideology”. Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
63 Author interview with Richard Woolcott, 22 March 2011.
64 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
opinions, Hugh White argues “the blush of good companionship at the Dialogue means they’re reluctant” to express them.65

Vice-President of the Liberal Party, Tom Harley, feels that “everyone is terribly polite to each other [at the AALD]. It’s all a kind of group hug . . . There isn’t a diversity of views . . . It’s all about getting on which means agreement”. Given the notable absence of those who are constructively critical of US foreign policy, the discussion “between Australia and the US [is] almost slavish”, Harley adds.66 Former chairman of the American board of the AALD, Alan Dunn, naturally disagrees with the idea that Australians are “slavish” to the US point of view. Nonetheless, he concedes their criticism is “soft”. The Australians are, in his words, “sensitive hosts”.67

While he would not describe it as a “cheer squad”, Glenn Milne, a columnist for The Australian, concedes that “you’re not there as a critic”. Particularly when it comes to international and geostrategic concerns, the main function of the AALD is innovative information exchange. Milne claims, “I don’t think that precludes criticism or questioning but it’s not really what you’re there for. You’re there to get a deeper understanding of policy direction in Washington mostly”.68

A number of participants share this view that it is misplaced to assume the AALD is a forum for critical debate. As one former Labor MP and AALD participant explains:

> I would have been surprised if there was serious criticism of Australia or America at the Dialogue . . . I don’t think anyone’s said it’s an independent and objective look at American or Australian politics. To view it as something where there should be an independent critique of American defence plans in Iraq or whatever misses the point . . . It is of likeminded people. Sort of the US faction, if you like . . . It’s to

65 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
66 Author interview with Tom Harley, 2 November 2011.
67 Author interview with Alan Dunn, 23 November 2011.
68 Author interview with Glenn Milne, 9 November 2011.
promote the positive aspects of it not for us to critique their world view.  

Peter Hartcher, a long-time AALD participant, states that while there have been “junctures” in which “very real disagreement and very robust exchange” has occurred, “radicals or opponents or critics probably don’t get invited to join. I haven’t noticed any turning up”. Nevertheless, Hartcher hastens to add, it is not valid to criticise the AALD for excluding critics because the objective of the Dialogue “is not to have robust discussion and debate about whether we should have an alliance. It’s to have robust discussion and debate about how to make the alliance work better and work in the national interest”.  

Accordingly, the claim that the AALD facilitates robust and critical debate comes with an important qualification. As former head of the AWU, Paul Howes, argues, while the AALD is “one of those forums where you’re encouraged to challenge the orthodoxy and speak your mind freely without retribution”, at the same time, “It’s not a forum for critiques of the US relationship; for being an anti-American forum. There are plenty of those forums. It’s called the United Nations”.  

In a similar vein, Professor Andrew MacIntyre, who assumed a position on the Australian board of the AALD in December 2009, does not share the characterisation of the Dialogue as a “cheer squad” for the alliance and American foreign policy. “My experience of it is there’s been some of the hardest questioning . . . that I’ve witnessed anywhere”, at least between “people who really knew what they were talking about and whose opinions were significant”. There are limits to the range of opinion, MacIntyre concedes, with most delegates believing that both Australia and the US are “force[s] for good in the world”. Yet “within that range, you get vigorous debate”.  

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69 Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.  
70 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.  
71 Author interview with Paul Howes, 5 August 2011.  
72 Author interview with Professor Andrew MacIntyre, 28 June 2011. MacIntyre was first sought by Scanlan to attend the AALD in 1997 - all expenses paid - to share his thoughts as a specialist on
Certainly, as Hartcher points out, given the AALD is a “private exercise in second track diplomacy” and not a “tax payer funded public institution”, there is no “responsibility to invite the full spectrum of views”. Nevertheless, the dangers of repudiating a questioning or critical agenda ought to be apparent. As Carmen Lawrence notes, by facilitating such an environment:

You create an echo chamber and you hear people saying what confirms your existing views and prejudices. You don’t get to hear other voices that might question the conclusions you’ve reached. In the case of the US-Australia alliance . . . that’s led to some pretty bloody outcomes.

Indeed, some former participants of the AALD feel that because it is something of a “cheer squad” for the alliance, there was not a lot of opposition before the invasion of Iraq.

More recently, the AALD has been criticised for failing to raise important but difficult questions regarding the Australia-US alliance in the face of changing power relations in the Asia-Pacific. When asked how the AALD might respond to his opinion of late that US primacy may be bad for regional stability, White says “I can answer . . . very plainly. I don’t think it would go down at all well which probably explains why I haven’t been invited for quite a long time”. The dynamics of the Dialogue over the last decade in particular, White goes on to say, have resulted in an effort to “conceal, perhaps even to evade, rather than to identify and address”

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73 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
74 Author interview with Carmen Lawrence, 14 November 2011.
the core questions facing the Australia-US relationship. “For that reason”, White concludes, “I think the Dialogue ends up being bad for the alliance”.76

White’s status as a prominent thinker who has departed from the status quo regarding the utility of the Australia-US alliance and US primacy in the Asia-Pacific has raised significant controversy in elite circles in Australia and the US.77 Noted foreign policy commentator and long-time AALD participant, Greg Sheridan, instantly denounced White’s thesis on the alliance and the rise of China as “distorted”, “stupid”, “weird” and “positively insane”.78 In one instance, White’s name was scrubbed from the invitation list of a prestigious gathering of American and Australian elites on account of his “sin” of leading the public debate in Australia “in a direction the superpower didn’t like”.79

In the case of the AALD, Lipski states that he does not “ever recall a conversation with anybody that I overheard in which the conversation went along the lines of we can’t have [Hugh White]”’. Although Lipski doesn’t discount the possibility entirely: “I never remember a conversation where either Phil . . . but maybe he did. Phil’s not a child. He’s a seasoned political operator and maybe . . . Ask him. Ask him directly.”.80 Another former board member was equally ambiguous: “He [Hugh

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76 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
80 Lipski was a board member of the AALD from 2004-2009. Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011. Note that Phillip Scanlan refused multiple requests to be interviewed or to respond to the author’s questions about the AALD via email.
White] could be right” about being dropped off the list. “Who would know? Because there isn’t a way to test it”.81

Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb is also of the view that the AALD sidelines dissenting views. The central problem of the Dialogue, according to Dibb, is that Scanlan does not tolerate even mild criticism:

In my experience . . . if you make even the slightest of criticisms of the United States you’re not invited again. That’s not just my experience . . . my colleague Hugh White . . . he would have the same view. As would former secretaries of defence and chiefs of defence force who I know have been to those occasions and would agree you have to watch what you say. Frankly, I think that is unacceptable. It is a serious problem of an effectively one-man band who determines who will be invited and who won’t and who doesn’t tolerate criticism.82

In Dibb’s eyes, the claim by some supporters of the AALD that it holds no particular agenda for how the Australia-US relationship ought to evolve is “bullshit”. In his experience, “That’s not the way it feels to be there. It is all carefully orchestrated. It is all carefully controlled. It is not an open and frank Dialogue. The good part of it is proselytising”. While Dibb believes the US alliance is the “most important single security relationship we have by a huge margin”, and that Australia receives “enormous benefits from the alliance”, the problem he has with the Dialogue “is the way in which this exclusive club is run as a non-critical shop”.83

Of course, the AALD has many supporters who deny these criticisms. Former board member, Stephen Loosley, for example, maintains that “The Dialogue is concerned with keeping the relationship with the Americans very healthy, contemporary and

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81 Author interview with participant and former AALD board member who chose to remain anonymous.
82 Author interview with Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb, 13 September 2011.
83 Author interview with Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb, 13 September 2011.
strong. Beyond that, it doesn’t have any particular ideological or philosophical flavour”. Others are less unequivocal. When asked if the AALD sidelines dissenting viewpoints, Nick Greiner responded with qualified uncertainty:

Well I think that’s right and I think Phil exerted . . . I mean the truth is Phil was the only one running it. I mean he had some help. And yes, I think that’s true. Would he have turned down some foreign affairs critic of the Iraq war if they wanted to come? You’d have to ask him. I don’t know. Look that’s broadly right. It’s not an open slather.85

Certainly, the AALD attracts a lot of private criticism regarding the selection process and what is widely perceived as Scanlan’s overbearing personality and excessive control over the invitation list. Even among strong supporters of the AALD, there are numerous complaints of the Dialogue being too “top-down driven”, while Scanlan himself is described by various participants as a “monomaniac”, “comrade-leader” and a “one-man band” – none willing to say so on the record. While the success of the AALD is, in part, widely attributed to Scanlan’s extraordinary personal contacts and capacity to network,86 the unfortunate consequence, according to a number of participants, is that the AALD is more or less a gathering of Scanlan and his “mates”.87

Unsurprisingly, there is an element of convergence between Scanlan’s friendship circle and the prevalence of orthodox alliance loyalists at the AALD. When one former senior Australian diplomat and AALD participant was asked if he thought the Dialogue was a cheer squad for American foreign policy, he responded by stating “there is a bit of that”. He goes onto explain:

84 Author interview with Stephen Loosley, 11 January 2012.
85 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.
87 As one former board member, who chose to remain anonymous, phrases it, “There’s favourites and there are non-favourites”.

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If I were to guess, Scanlan would be very much of the type to not get people on who rocked the boat as he would see it. He sees it as a dialogue with people he knows; right thinking people who are in favour of the Australian-American relationship. Anybody who questions aspects of it he wouldn’t favour.88

Former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans agrees, stating that during his time at the AALD, Scanlan had a suspicion of anyone “other than those who fell over themselves to demonstrate passion and affection for the US”. The “measuring stick applied” was “not just are you a friend of the US but are you a devotee”. Consequently, continues Evans, the AALD is very much a “cheer squad” and a “love-in”, not “an environment in which it’s comfortable for people to be critical, certainly on any fundamental issues”.89

Ostensibly, the inclusion of journalists at the AALD ensures greater critical debate is injected into discussions, and important revelations about the inner workings of Australia-US relationship are conveyed to the public. Although it is “not really attempting to influence public opinion”, Paul Kelly argues, by inviting media representatives and key opinion makers into discussions, the AALD has nonetheless indirectly impacted the “the media debate, coverage, analysis and commentary about the relationship” by making it “more intensive” and “sophisticated”.90

Similarly, Fairfax journalist Peter Hartcher argues that the AALD helps to frame public debate surrounding the alliance, notwithstanding the strict non-disclosure convention of the Dialogue. Specifically, the participation of journalists is crucial for salvaging important disclosures that would otherwise remain private:

From a journalist’s point of view there’s only one question: Is it better that journalists are invited and have the opportunity to try to

88 Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.
89 Author interview with Gareth Evans, 10 April 2012.
90 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.
disclose some of the content or is it better that we are not? It’s my view that it’s better if we are invited which gives us at least the opportunity to bring some of that to the public and that’s exactly what I’ve done.91

Hartcher recalls an instance during the 2011 Dialogue in Perth, when an interesting discussion erupted regarding clashing interests between the US and China in the South China Sea. “Because of the rules of the game”, Hartcher says, “I’m in the room on the condition that I don’t rush out and put the whole damn thing in the paper. So I accept the rules and all the journalists there do”. After the session was over, Hartcher approached the main American representative, Kurt Campbell, and asked him to state on the record what “the main thrust of the US’s concerns” were. Hartcher believes that “What I’m trying to do, and I think succeeding, is bringing those core concerns and arguments and difficulties that go on inside the relationship and inside the alliance and bringing them to the wider Australian public”.92

While certainly important, conveying the concerns of decision makers to the public can come at the risk acting as a mere scribe or transmitter for official policy perspectives.93 In any case, the public would also benefit from greater critical analysis of the role of the AALD in managing Australia’s relationship with the US. Research conducted by the author found that of the more than 1500 news items published with reference to the AALD since its establishment in 1993 to December 2015, less than a handful critically addressed its role in shaping the Australia-US alliance.

The key journalists who are invited to participate in the AALD are generally in agreement with, or are unquestioning of, the alliance orthodoxy that the AALD

91 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
92 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
93 Indeed, this appears to be what most of the “revelations” from inside the AALD actually are. Key American officials such as Richard Armitage have often used the AALD to relay messages through inside journalists, applying public pressure on Australia to conform to US interests on everything from increasing defence spending to supporting American strategic objectives vis-à-vis China.
serves to protect and promote. Paul Kelly and Peter Hartcher are cases in point. Hartcher sees the AALD as a “national asset”, while Kelly characterises it as “a distinct and positive force for good”. Unsurprisingly, Kelly and Hartcher have been chosen by Scanlan to present an analysis of Australian politics each year to delegates at the AALD.

Foreign editor of *The Australian*, and prominent alliance loyalist, Greg Sheridan, is the other key journalist in attendance at the AALD. In his 2006 book, *The Partnership*, which examines the Australia-US alliance during the Bush-Howard years, Sheridan devotes a small section to praising the successes of the AALD, labelling it “the most significant exercise in private diplomacy ever undertaken in Australian history”. Sheridan was the only journalist invited to attend the inaugural AALD event in 1993, and has been to most, if not all, events since. Former AALD board member, Sam Lipski, argues that “of all the people at the Australian end”, Sheridan has been one of the most intimately involved Dialogue participants and, in some ways, is “the public chronicler of it”.

One of the few investigative articles published about the role of the AALD in managing Australia’s relationship with the US was written by Fairfax journalist Brian Toohey in 2008. Toohey, who has never been invited to the AALD, characterises the Dialogue as “basically another lobby group for boosting the US-Australia relationship”. From the perspective of the AALD, the participation of journalists has the advantage of subjecting them “to what are basically views all in favour of the alliance”. Accordingly, Toohey holds some concerns about those journalists who are keen to be heavily involved:

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94 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
95 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.
97 As Sheridan declares in his book, “I was the only journalist at that first meeting”. Sheridan, *The Partnership*, p. 313.
98 Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.
99 Toohey, *The Dialogue Box*.
100 Author interview with Brian Toohey, 28 November 2011.
I do find it a little bit odd that journalists want to be a member of an organisation as dedicated to a political goal such as strengthening the alliance. I would have thought if you were writing about foreign policy or defence you should be a little bit more neutral about these things. Of course, if you are writing an opinion piece you can have an opinion but . . . [not those journalists involved in] news analysis and so forth.\textsuperscript{101}

While Toohey acknowledges that there are benefits for journalists attending the AALD, he also recognises the costs:

I can see why journalists want to go. It gives them an inside view of what’s happening. I can’t see that it’s informed many of the journalists who are present to be more critical about things. If anything, I think some of the journalists were probably misled about the value of going into Iraq.\textsuperscript{102}

In his investigative report for the \textit{Australian Financial Review}, Toohey discovered the 2002 Dialogue event in the White House – attended by a number of high-level US administration officials – had the “advantage of letting Australians know a war was coming”. However, because of the closed nature of the meeting, no journalist revealed to the public what had been said. Nor did anyone query Washington’s wisdom of invading Iraq and deposing a secular regime. According to AALD participant and then Fairfax director of Corporate Affairs, Bruce Wolpe, “It was not really that sort of occasion - it was about presenting and listening.”\textsuperscript{103}

In his book, \textit{The Partnership}, Sheridan mentions the private White House meeting in 2002 where Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Condoleezza Rice, Karl Rove and a number of other administration figures conducted half-hour sessions with AALD members;

\footnotesize{101 Author interview with Brian Toohey, 28 November 2011.  
102 Author interview with Brian Toohey, 28 November 2011.  
103 Toohey, The Dialogue Box.}
one after another. According to Sheridan, the sessions provided “an opportunity to hear American views from the top, and to express Australian views back into the process” in the lead-up to the Iraq war. He does not, however, mention the fact that no one from the Australian delegation spoke out against the war as reported by Toohey.

There are clearly powerful incentives for journalists to attend the AALD. Most participating journalists view it as a “great gig”, in the words of former journalist Maxine McKew, providing the opportunity to negotiate on-the-record interviews with key decision makers. It is also “very flattering to be mingling with the people who are in these powerful positions”, says Fairfax journalist Hamish McDonald. “Some people really get off on that.”

For one instructive example of how the AALD appeals to the inflated sensibilities of some journalists, witness Greg Sheridan boast about his high-level connections and exclusive access to its “secret” discussions:

I was seated opposite Dick Cheney and at right angles to Paul Wolfowitz, now US Vice-President and Deputy Secretary of Defence. . . The Dialogue lunched informally in the hotel’s little back garden. There I shared a table with Brent Scowcroft, who had been the elder George Bush’s national security adviser, and Bob Zoellick, who would become George W. Bush’s trade representative. At the next table was Karl Rove, now Bush’s most intimate adviser, and Rich Armitage, now the Deputy Secretary of State. I can’t tell you what was said because it was all off the record.

According to independent author and journalist, Antony Loewenstein, “it is obvious why” journalists refuse to challenge the AALD’s agenda: “Being close to top officials

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105 Margaret Simons, Agent of Influence, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November 2003.
106 Author interview with Hamish McDonald, 15 November 2011.
and politicians makes them feel connected and important. Being an insider is many
reporters’ ideal position. Independence is secondary to receiving sanctioned links
and elevated status in a globalised world”.\textsuperscript{108}

The reason more broadly, however, derives from the fact that support for the AALD
flows from the wider loyalty the US alliance enjoys as an entrenched part of
Australia’s elite political culture. Consequently, there are pressures on journalists to
conform to the mainstream consensus about Australia’s relationship with the US,
not least of which is the fear of being marginalised. McDonald notes that for those
journalists who work for a mainstream newspaper, as he does:

\begin{quote}
If you don’t conform you can find yourself on the outside, not getting
access to anyone for a long time. Questioning those current
paradigms can be a very lonely experience. You might find yourself
not in touch with people in the institutions of power but with people
on the fringes.\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}

Relatedly, there are many inducements for journalists who conform – study tours,
fellowships, grants and so forth – which can quickly vanish for those who depart
from the status quo. As McDonald points out, “There is a lot of money for people
who produce work that reinforces what powerful people want to hear”.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{108} Antony Loewenstein, Wikileaks Challenges Journalism-Politics Partnership, The Drum, ABC, 10
December 2010, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-12-10/wikileaks_challenges_journalism-
\textsuperscript{109} Author interview with Hamish McDonald, 15 November 2011.
\textsuperscript{110} Author interview with Hamish McDonald, 15 November 2011.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Alliance Management and the Socialisation of Elites

Socialisation, Cooption and Propaganda

The evidence provided in Chapter Six strongly suggests that the AALD works assiduously to avoid entertaining perspectives outside the orthodoxy and that challenge the “special relationship” narrative. This chapter illustrates how the AALD frames discussion and debate and functions to socialise elites – inculcating orthodox attitudes about the alliance – by providing a number of important material and psychological inducements to remain committed to the status quo.

In this respect, a parallel can be drawn between the AALD and public diplomacy. Specifically, the AALD’s socialisation function resembles that of US foreign leader and exchange programs which aim to coopt elites in the hope of strengthening America’s relationships with its closest allies. This socialisation function is a subtle but highly effective process that lays the groundwork for the engineering of consent and, in the case of the AALD, for preserving and strengthening the orthodox conception of the alliance in the minds of Australian elites.

Part of the stated mission of the AALD is to “broaden and deepen mutual understanding between Australian and American leaders”. Otherwise known as socialisation, this objective is understood as an important benefit and positive outcome of T2 which contributes to the development of shared understandings between participants. Indeed, of all the claimed benefits of T2, “virtually all participants and analysts . . . cite its most important role as a socialisation mechanism”. In the context of conflict resolution and conflict management,

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socialisation is a valuable tool for helping to reduce tensions and increase cooperation, including by transmitting alternative norms into the policymaking process.\(^4\)

The socialisation function of T2, however, is very different to that of the AALD which operates to preserve and strengthen personal relationships between two long-standing allies and is grounded in an historical orthodox narrative of alliance. With this goal in mind, socialisation is not so much about developing shared understandings but rather inculcating orthodox attitudes about the Australia-US relationship. As one recent study points out:

> The AALD represents a distinctive kind of leadership over the long term to instil a common faith in the alliance among new generations of policy leaders. The task is consensus-building, norm construction, the filtering and reassemblage of ideas, and the socialisation of elites.\(^5\)

There is some acknowledgment in the literature on T2 and epistemic communities of the potential for participants to become “entrapped” or “coopted” by governments because of a fear of losing access and influence.\(^6\) However, when it comes to alliance management, the more important and relevant insights into the process of socialisation, as a conscious mechanism of cooption, can be found in the

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international relations field of public diplomacy and, specifically, the long-standing and very successful American practice of foreign leader and exchange programs. 

T2 and public diplomacy do share a number of characteristics. Although typically studied as two distinct fields, the connections between them are acknowledged in the literature, and practitioners often speak of both with similar goals in mind. According to Cull, the fields of T2 and public diplomacy constitute overlapping circles, the exact boundaries between them unclear. The absence of a clear distinction between the two fields stems partly from the fact that there is no singular definition of public diplomacy, with much scholarly debate about its exact meaning and function. In its simplest and arguably most common interpretation, public diplomacy is defined as “an international actor’s attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics”. 

Typically, public diplomacy consists of one-directional information campaigns distributed to mass audiences via news, film, TV and radio broadcasts. It also commonly includes bidirectional activities such as education and cultural exchanges and foreign leader visitor programs that ostensibly operate on the basis of a

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reciprocal exchange of ideas and information or “mutual understanding”.\textsuperscript{12} It is these kinds of bidirectional activities, sometimes referred to as “dialogue-based public diplomacy”,\textsuperscript{13} that are most often categorised as a subset of T2. Indeed, when the original term “track two diplomacy” was coined by Montville, “scientific and cultural exchanges” were included as examples.\textsuperscript{14}

While the focus of T2 is typically conflict resolution and conflict management, the primary objective of foreign leader and exchange programs is almost exclusively on alliance management and the preservation and strengthening of existing relationships. America’s premier International Visitor Leader Program (IVLP)\textsuperscript{15} has been extraordinarily successful in solidifying support for American foreign policy objectives among US allies. In his landmark study of the IVLP, Scott-Smith demonstrates that the program had its greatest impact in binding European states to the American transatlantic alliance during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{16}

The primary target audiences of foreign leader and exchange programs are foreign elites and what is referred to as the “successor generation” of up-and-coming leaders. The IVLP alone attracts more than 5000 international visitors annually and has engaged more than 200 000 people since its establishment in 1940, including over 330 current or former Chiefs of State or Heads of Government. Notable

\textsuperscript{12} The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, which provided the legislative authority for the Fulbright Program and other exchange and leader programs in the US, declared that the purpose of these activities was “to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries . . . and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations, between the United States and other countries of the world”. Officially the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. Cited in Nancy Snow, Propaganda, Inc. Selling America’s Culture to the World, 3rd edition, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2010, p.88.


\textsuperscript{14} William D. Davidson and Joseph V. Montville, Foreign Policy According to Freud, Foreign Policy, no. 45, winter, 1981-82, p. 155. Also see Kaye, Rethinking Track Two Diplomacy, pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{15} Prior to 2004, the IVLP was known as the International Visitor Program (IVP).

\textsuperscript{16} Giles Scott-Smith, Networks of Empire: The US State Department’s Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France, and Britain 1950-70, Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008.
Australian participants include Tony Abbott, Julia Gillard, Quentin Brice, Paul Keating, William Hayden, Malcolm Fraser and Gough Whitlam.17

Significantly, the same fear arising from the passing of the WWII generation of leaders in Australia and America that drove Scanlan to create the AALD also drove US foreign leader and exchange programs to focus more on the successor generation of leaders in Western Europe. As a former US Public Affairs Counsellor explains in relation to US-German relations:

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, both Americans and Germans concerned with US-German relations began to recognise a problem posed by the gradual passing from positions of power and influence of a generation of Germans and Americans, many of whom had formed a network of human relationships linking the two nations since World War II . . . The generation taking their places had no similar formative experiences . . . This gap of knowledge and understanding was perceived as posing a danger to the future cohesion of the German-American relationship.18

Although exchange programs are predicated on mutual understanding, their approach to socialising elites is more akin to cooption. While socialisation can consist of a mutual transference or two-way exchange of ideas, values and norms, as Ikenberry and Kupchan point out, when relating to a hegemonic power, socialisation can also result in a “process through which national leaders internalise the norms and value orientations espoused by the hegemon” and which are


consistent with its notion of international order. One of the mechanisms by which this occurs is “normative persuasion”. That is, where norms are transferred and subsequently internalised through various forms of direct contact with elites in a target state. Ikenberry and Kupchan identify diplomatic channels, cultural exchanges and foreign study as instruments of normative persuasion.19

Scott-Smith details the specifics of the socialisation process employed by the IVLP to bond US allies to American hegemony, describing how the program entices participants to voluntarily accept a pre-laid pathway via the provision of a number of psychological and material inducements. These include bestowing a sense of self-importance; facilitating personal affinities giving the impression everyone is on the same side; providing access to the corridors of power and assisting in the development of high-level contacts which create opportunities for career enhancement.20

As a result, participants are left with a taste of the benefits they can reap by assuming an attitude consistent with the interests of the hegemon and in accordance with their own personal interests and beliefs. As a voluntary and participatory form of persuasion, Scott-Smith describes the IVLP as engaged not so much in the “engineering of consent than the creation of circumstances for its realisation, and it is often highly effective”.21

There is a long-standing debate about whether or not public diplomacy equates to propaganda, with attempts to distinguish the so-called “white” or truthful propaganda activities of official public diplomacy with the more deceitful “grey” and “black” varieties.22 In practice, however, public diplomacy has frequently been used as a euphemism for propaganda. The USIA, the premier public relations agency of the US, until its demise in 1999, worked closely with the CIA on numerous covert

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20 Scott-Smith, Searching for the Successor Generation.
21 Scott-Smith, p. 233.
warfare operations throughout the Cold War, thereafter morphing from an anti-
Communist outfit into an instrument of corporate propaganda.

Even the so-called non-propagandistic subset of US foreign leader and exchange programs have been subjected to politicisation. In an apparent attempt to secure their independence, exchange programs were made administratively separate from the USIA when it was first established in 1953. Senator James William Fulbright in particular worked hard to ensure the program which bore his name remained a part of the US State Department, which it did until 1978, never to be conducted as propaganda. He believed “the value of such exchanges was in the opportunity for expansion of knowledge, wisdom, and empathy”. His efforts, however, were not entirely successful, with both the Fulbright Program and the IVLP explicitly connected to US foreign policy objectives, including as a means to secure troops for America’s war against Vietnam.

Although not propaganda per se, the main techniques that lie behind US foreign leader and exchange programs today derive from research into propaganda and psychological warfare studies in the post-WWI and early post-WWII eras. In particular, it was the idea of targeting elites and opinion makers, that originated in the work of Walter Lippmann, Edward Bernays and Harold D. Lasswell, and subsequently revolutionised by social psychologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld, that laid the basis of all future US information campaigns, including education and cultural exchanges. Further research and subsequent practice into the political effectiveness

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23 Cull, The Cold War and the United States Information Agency. A sample of the USIA’s more nefarious covert propaganda activities include participation in the US counterinsurgency campaign in the Philippines in the 1950s, the overthrow of Mohammad Mosadegh in Iran and Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala in 1953, the US invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965 and the US invasion of Grenada in 1983.

24 Snow, Propaganda, Inc.


of exchanges revealed that they were most effective, not in converting critics, but in solidifying the opinions of those who already held positive predispositions toward the US.

Lippmann’s keystone texts, *Public Opinion* (1922)\(^{27}\) and *The Phantom Public* (1925),\(^{28}\) were both largely based on his wartime propaganda experiences with the Committee on Public Information (CPI), the organisation responsible for all aspects of American propaganda at home and abroad during WWI. Lippmann’s key contribution was his theory that public opinion could be controlled through the manipulation of symbols implanted into the public mind by those recognised in society to be authoritative figures.\(^{29}\) Lippmann’s work was reinforced by Edward Bernays, the so-called “Father of Public Relations”, who argued in his seminal work on propaganda in 1928 that “If you can influence the leaders, either with or without their conscious cooperation, you automatically influence the group which they sway”.\(^{30}\)

Like Lippmann, Lasswell viewed propaganda as the “control of opinion by significant symbols”.\(^{31}\) The focus of his dissertation was on the practice of propaganda during WWI. Lasswell aimed to uncover the techniques of American, British, French and German wartime propaganda, not only in demoralising and mobilising hate against the enemy, but also preserving the friendship of allies and neutrals. It was his revelations on the latter that provided the crucial insight into the importance of personal interaction in shaping the minds of elites.

In concluding his assessment on the use of inter-allied propaganda, Lasswell discerned that “among all the means to be exploited, the use of personal

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29 According to Lippmann, authoritative individuals who possessed the power to give meaning and importance to such symbols; chosen “by birth, inheritance, conquest or election, they and their organised following administer human affairs”. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, p. 144.
influencing is peculiarly important”.32 This was particularly true when it came to London’s propaganda efforts aimed at drawing the US into WWI. Rather than preaching entrance into the war directly, the British established myriad associations with influential and eminent Americans. As Lasswell describes it:

> Behind the scenes, and behind the news and pictures and speeches, there flows a mighty stream of personal influencing. The war was more debated in private than public. The doubters were won by friendship or flattery, logic or shame, to fuse their enthusiasm in the rising wave of Allied sentiment.33

Lasswell characterises these institutionalised personal connections as “the social lobby”, where the “personal conversation, and the casual brush . . . forged the strongest chain between America and Britain”. The power of the social lobby came from “The sheer radiation of aristocratic distinction [which] was enough to warm the cockles of many a staunch Republican heart, and to evoke enthusiasm for the country which could produce such dignity, elegance and affability”.34 Lasswell was describing what the British referred to as “duchessing” as a subtle but effective means of propaganda.35

Although Lippmann, Bernays and Lasswell made important contributions, it was the founder and director of the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Colombia University, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, who revolutionised the importance of personal influence in mass communication.36 While the conventional wisdom held that

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32 Lasswell, p. 160.
33 Lasswell, p. 157.
34 Lasswell, p. 157.
media messages influenced the public directly, Lazarsfeld hypothesised a “two-step flow of communication” whereby “opinion leaders” mediated the information that came from the mass media. His findings were first published in 1944, in the book, *The People’s Choice*, and updated after further research in his landmark study with Elihu Katz in 1955, *Personal Influence*.

The development of the personal influence or two-step model had a profound impact on the practice of public diplomacy. The concept suggested that the key to any information campaign required the successful targeting of local opinion leaders who could serve as the principle channels of influence to the public and provide a multiplier effect into their specific social and professional networks. These and other similar state-of-the-art techniques were all introduced into official American public diplomacy efforts, including foreign leader and exchange programs.

One of the most important discoveries to emerge from behaviourist socio-scientific research on the political effectiveness of foreign leader and exchange programs in securing American foreign policy objectives during the 1950s was their utility in alliance management. Specifically, it was revealed that “instead of converting critics or opponents to a different way of thinking, the most value came from reinforcing existing perceptions”. The greatest success was realised in exchanges whose “conviction, motivation, and capacity to act in accordance with the viewpoint fostered by the program were intensified by the exchange experience”.

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37 The dominant theory of mass communication at the time was the Hypodermic Needle Model or “magic bullet” theory which suggested that media messages were “injected” or “shot” straight into a passive audience.
41 Scott-Smith, p. 179. Emphasis in original.
Although US exchanges have at times been employed to convert hostile participants, the early research, and subsequent practice, made it clear that in international relations, “exchanges are primarily a potent weapon for sustaining the status quo rather than changing it”, and are most successful “if a certain level of curiosity about cultural affinity with the host country already exists”. While participants may not become “converts”, nonetheless, a “reorientation in outlook takes place that is all the more subtle, cohesive, and defensible because it is partly driven by individual interests”.

Although conventionally portrayed as a product of civilian research, the evolution of the “personal influence” concept from its germination in 1944 to its maturation in the 1950s – and the general development of the area of mass communications studies – grew largely out of US government and military funded research into propaganda. Innovations such as the “opinion leader” phenomena, although labelled communications research, could just as easily be categorised as psychological warfare studies. As one leading scholar of communications studies points out, “Either description is accurate; the distinction between the two is that the former term tends to downplay the social context that gave birth to the work in the first place”.

**Deepening Support for the Status Quo**

Like US foreign leader and exchange programs, the central function of the AALD is alliance management through socialisation. The founding objective of the Dialogue was to preserve the strong and intimate relationship between Australia and the US, inculcating the next generation of elites with a common faith in the “special relationship”.

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42 Snow writes that during her time working with the IVLP in the mid-1990s most participants had a predisposition to support the US, although some were specifically chosen for their strong anti-American feelings. *Snow, Propaganda, Inc*, p. 96.
43 Scott-Smith, Mapping the Undefinable, p. 180.
44 Scott-Smith, p. 182.
46 Simpson, p. 71.
Critics, commenting from the outside, have speculated that Americans use the AALD to socialise or “duchess” Australian leaders into believing American interests and values are always the same as Australian ones. While this certainly occurs, it is also important to note that the AALD is first and foremost an Australian-driven exercise. The result is the rather peculiar situation whereby a group of pro-American Australians facilitate the socialisation of other Australians into acquiescing or reinforcing American hegemonic interests.

According to founding AALD participant and former Liberal MP, David Kemp, it should not be surprising that the Dialogue functions to deepen support for the alliance among less enthusiastic or even hostile participants. Kemp believes there is a conscious and targeted effort on the part of the AALD to coopt the anti-American elements in Australian politics. Scanlan, he argues:

[Captured] in the Dialogue, the very strong pro-Americans and immersed in their company the people who’ve got a less intuitive liking for the United States. He’s provided a forum through which the [pro-]Americans can duchess the anti-Americans and show them they’re not so bad after all. It’s been highly successful.

Moreover, Kemp argues, there exists a kind of hidden objective of the AALD to target the left-faction of the Labor Party:

In a way, if the Dialogue was more focussed on the Labor Party that’s probably one of its main jobs. I suspect Phil wouldn’t articulate that. He might. But to concede the work of the Dialogue is more directed

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48 Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
to the Labor Party than it is to the Liberals is quite a big concession. And I don’t think there would ever be an official concession to that effect.\textsuperscript{49}

While he doesn’t characterise it as the result of conscious intent, Andrew Robb also identifies the “somewhat anti-American” component of the Labor Party as one where the AALD has played an important role in helping to remind participants of the value of Australia-US relationship. Commenting specifically on former Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s public emergence as an ardent supporter of the US alliance, Robb argues that, while he “wouldn’t just put it down to the Dialogue . . . it was certainly a significant contributor”.\textsuperscript{50}

Despite these observations, it is highly unlikely that the AALD functions to convert “anti-American” critics. As already noted, serious critics of the AALD are not invited to participate, so there are none to convert. In the words of journalist and long-time AALD participant, Peter Hartcher, “I can’t think of critics that have been brought in and converted . . . I don’t think critics are invited . . . I just don’t know that it works like that. Maybe they’d like it to but I just don’t think it’s had that effect”.\textsuperscript{51}

The same can be said of mild critics of Australia’s relationship with the US, specifically those in the left-faction of the Labor Party, primarily because they also do not attend the AALD. Their absence is not proof of a specific exclusion policy, but rather more likely due to the fact that those in the Labor Party who inhabit defence and foreign affairs positions are generally from the pro-American right faction. As journalist and AALD participant Glenn Milne points out, “the aim of the Dialogue is to pick future leaders which means, by the nature of ALP internal politics, broadly disqualifies most of the left”.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} Kemp qualifies his remarks by stating, “In any case, that is just a point of view I am expressing, not something I have ever gleaned from Dialogue organisers or from Phil”. Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.

\textsuperscript{50} Author interview with Andrew Robb, 15 July 2011.

\textsuperscript{51} Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.

\textsuperscript{52} Author interview with Glenn Milne, 9 November 2011.
To some extent, the AALD does “preach to the converted”, in the words of one former Labor MP and Dialogue participant, “The people who go are the ones who are very interested in the relationship anyway. There is an element of it being self-serving to that extent”.53 Nevertheless, it would be wrong to dismiss the impact of the AALD entirely on account of this fact, as some critics appear to do. Professor Hugh White, for example, although critical of the role the AALD plays in managing Australia’s relationship with the US, believes that the lack of diverse opinion among participants should not be taken too seriously:

It’s just a group of people who are getting together to have a chat. It’s perfectly reasonable they should choose people they want to talk to. All of us are a bit inclined to prefer to talk to people whom we agree with. In a sense it misses the point and kind of buys the Dialogue’s own puffery to think there’s some requirement that it be representative.54

White’s indifference to the lack of diversity at the AALD is premised on the assumption that it has no real influence in directing the course of the relationship. He claims, “If I thought that it had a significant impact on the management of the relationship I’d take a different view, but I don’t, so I don’t worry about it”.55

Certainly, there is no evidence to suggest the AALD has a transformative impact on the nature or direction of the Australia-US relationship. The most one could say is that some participants are prodded into taking further steps in a trajectory they were already on. While it may be “subtle”, a former Labor MP explains, the AALD “does nudge you a little bit in that [pro-American] direction if you’re not already there”.56 When asked if he believed the AALD was useful in encouraging those who may be less enthusiastic about the US alliance to “come over”, Richard Woolcott,

53 Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.
54 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
55 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
56 Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.
while careful not to exaggerate its influence, replied, “Yes I think so. Particularly people who haven’t been deeply involved in foreign policy”.  

At the very least, many participants attest to the fact that their views have been consolidated by the AALD. The remarks by Liberal MP, Kelly O’Dwyer, are typical in this regard when she states that “through the discussions that we had there, my views have become even more solid on just how important that relationship is. Although it did start from a very high base”. This experience is not universal. Former Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, concedes that the AALD might hold the potential for shaping participants’ perceptions or opening their minds to the US. However, “it didn’t have that effect on me”, Downer adds, “but I knew a lot about America before I ever went to the Dialogue”.

Contrary to those who dismiss the relevance of the AALD, it does have a real impact in managing Australia’s relationship with the US, primarily by reinforcing existing perceptions among current elites and reproducing alliance orthodoxies in the minds of the “successor generation”. As demonstrated below, the AALD achieves this by providing many of the same material and psychological inducements that have proven so successful in American foreign leader and exchange programs to socialise participants and bind them to the US hegemonic system.

**Socialisation and the Successor Generation**

One of the primary mechanisms for socialisation identified in foreign leader and exchange programs is the sense of self-importance bestowed upon participants simply for being invited into an elite and prestigious program. While the AALD certainly has its critics, it too is generally held in high-esteem in elite circles. Australians who participate in the AALD, says Kemp, “don’t just say, oh well it was

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57 Author interview with Richard Woolcott, 22 March 2011.
58 Author interview with Kelly O’Dwyer, 21 October 2011.
59 Author interview with Alexander Downer, 14 September 2011.
good. They say it was fantastic; magnificent; irreplaceable”. Consequently, Paul Howes adds, “it’s the type of thing you don’t say no to”.  

According to current board member, Andrew MacIntyre, “demand exceeds supply”. Stephen Loosley, founding member of the AALD and board member from 1999-2010, confirms that:

[The] Dialogue always has far more applications for delegate status than we’re able to accommodate from very senior people. When you’ve got a queue of people knocking at the door to be involved, that’s the best test of how relevant and significant the organisation is perceived to be or actually happens to be.

The potential to be overcome by the sheer stature of the event has been duly noted. Although not a participant herself, former premier of Western Australia, Carmen Lawrence, states that during her time as a politician, “I certainly remember that a lot of comments made suggested to me that [Dialogue participants] felt this was a really a big treat”.

More tellingly, a former senior Australian diplomat and AALD participant observes:

[By] being invited Australians feel a bit privileged. Being let into the inner sanctum and hearing for a couple of days a group of highly articulate and intelligent Americans captures them. And they do become very pro-American. But I don’t think it’s a conspiracy it’s just the way it happens.

The impact of the AALD alone in duchessing Australian elites should not be exaggerated. American leaders are renowned for taking every opportunity to

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60 Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
61 Author interview with Paul Howes, 5 August 2011.
62 Author interview with Professor Andrew MacIntyre, 28 June 2011.
63 Author interview with Stephen Loosley, 11 January 2012.
64 Author interview with Carmen Lawrence, 14 November 2011.
65 Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.
promulgate the notion of America’s “special relationship” with Australia and do so in a number of different forums. Nevertheless, the effect of the AALD is far from incidental, particularly for those who are not used to witnessing American power first hand. As Sam Lipski notes:

You come [to the AALD in Washington] and it’s big. It’s the State Department. It’s the centre of world power. The Americans do things in impressive ways. There’s no question that the Washington end of the Dialogue for Australian participants, the Rudds and the Julias of this world being examples . . . it’s heavy stuff.\(^{66}\)

One former ALP parliamentarian, who was a relatively junior person at the time of his first and only AALD event, recalls that:

[As a] political figure you like to be at the centre of the action so to speak. Even if that’s a bit of an unconscious sort of thing. Because of the long period the Dialogue’s been around, that it’s established, that it’s well reputed amongst high officials, I think attendance at that and being part of that does add to your positive view of the alliance . . . Everyone who goes basks in the glory of it. I don’t mean it literally like that. Everyone who goes there I noticed felt like I’m at the Australia-US Dialogue. It had a degree of cachet in attending . . . I think that adds a lot to what people feel about the alliance and so on.\(^{67}\)

In the ALP generally, according Mark Latham, receiving an invitation to attend the AALD is considered to be a necessary ticket for rising through party ranks:

Sometimes there is a feeling in politics that you want to belong.
People coming through the ranks might think [sic] oh I’ve made it

\(^{66}\) Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.
\(^{67}\) Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.
now that I’ve been invited to this club. When I first became a Shadow Minister in 1996, shortly thereafter, people like Gareth Evans, Kim Beazley, Arch Bevis and few others were being whisked off to Washington for a big conference and there were high expectations about it beforehand. Then you wonder, [sic] gee, what do I have to do to be invited to that level of seniority in the system? . . . For those who do get lulled into it there’s that feeling of I’ve made it now. So it’s the peak body for this.68

Although White is unperturbed by what he views as the otherwise incidental impact of the AALD in managing Australia’s relationship with the US, he does concede that, “for a young parliamentarian . . . an invitation to the Leadership Dialogue is a pretty hefty thing. . . this can be quite formative in developing the views of people who are coming into leadership positions”. Given that the AALD embodies a values-based conception of the alliance and refuses to confront core questions regarding its future utility, White acknowledges that “it does make it harder for future leaders thus influenced to understand the alliance effectively . . . And to that extent its influence has been unfortunate”.69

The creation of personal affinities, and the accompanying sentiment that everyone is on the same side, is another important aspect of socialisation identified in US foreign leader and exchange programs. Similarly, one of the core functions of the AALD is to create a friendly atmosphere where relationship building can take place. The objective is to solidify the alliance by reinforcing notions of shared values and interests. While Australia is certainly viewed as politically and strategically important to America, many political participants of the AALD share the sentiments of this former Labor MP and Dialogue participant:

Over my twenty years in parliament, state and federal, I’ve met a lot of US officials and citizens. I’ve always detected a strong element of

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68 Author interview with Mark Latham, 22 November 2011.
69 Author interview with Professor Hugh White.
goodwill and friendship towards Australia which exceeds our importance to them in many ways, if one was strictly objective about it . . . [The Americans] keep coming back [to the AALD] because they quite like us and there are personal relationships.  

Although the AALD is not responsible for creating this attitude, it certainly plays a part in reinforcing it. AALD participants today are almost unanimous in declaring that one of the major achievements of the AALD over the years has been, in Andrew Robb’s words, to “constantly reinforce the things we’ve got in common and the history of our relationship and the value of maintaining it going forward”.  

Reminiscent of Lasswell’s concept of the “social lobby”, there exists a number of US “movers and shakers” at the AALD whose job it is to reinforce this view, persistently emphasising the apparent fact of America’s “special relationship” with Australia. Over the lifetime of the AALD, the key Americans responsible for cultivating the relationship in this way have been Kurt Campbell, Stanley Roth, Robert Zoellick and, above all, Richard Armitage. It is the business of such people, Alan Ramsey writes in the Sydney Morning Herald, “in changing political perceptions of Washington’s national interest”. Describing the atmosphere at the AALD, Ramsey provides his own interpretation of the way the “social lobby” functions:

What do they do? Well, along with the American ‘participants’, they have dinners, get squired around the place, meet all the top people, and generally get schmoozed if not duchessed as they hold private talk-fests, among themselves and with members of the US Administration.  

Armitage, who received an Order of Australia in 2010 for furthering the relationship between Australian and American defence forces and intelligence services, is

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70 Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.  
71 Author interview with Andrew Robb, 15 July 2011.  
72 Ramsey, The Sermon Bush Wants to Hear.  
73 Ramsey, The Sermon Bush Wants to Hear.
particularly effective in projecting the illusion that the Australia-US relationship is grounded in shared values forged in joint sacrifice. As one astute journalist observed during the 2003 AALD event, Armitage “knows how to make his pitch believable. He is direct, and there is enough candour and humour in it to make him very persuasive”.74

Armitage likes to advertise the fact that his attendance at the AALD comes at his own expense, “not because the State Department wouldn’t send me, of course they would, to an important ally like Australia, but because I believe in this”.75 Many Australians, such as journalist Greg Sheridan, believe him at his word: “The fact Armitage, as Deputy Secretary of State, one of the busiest men in the world, makes the effort to travel to Australia to attend a private talkfest is evidence” of America’s commitment to Australia.76

It is this kind of sentiment fostered by the AALD that Professor Hugh White finds particularly troubling. “It is very easy to slip into the illusion – which of course the Americans are always willing to project to Australians, partly for their own reasons — that this is a relationship that transcends interests and goes to values”.77 In the case of Armitage, White explains that:

[He]fairly famously has often spoken of the relationship very much in terms of the shared blood sacrifice and all that sort of stuff. That what really matters is that Australians and Americans have bled together in every war since World War I . . . I’m not one of those who dismisses that sort of stuff. I just don’t think that’s the basis on which

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we can either judge the present value of the relationship or ensure its future strength.78

The impact of people like Armitage, and the entire AALD enterprise, is greatest on those up-and-coming leaders who generally possess a positive pre-disposition toward the alliance but are yet to consolidate their views. This is consistent with the research and practice of US foreign leader and exchange programs which evolved to target with greater focus the “successor generation” specifically because they were more likely to be successfully influenced.

The AALD was established, in Scanlan’s words, with the intention that it would become “an institution of influence over the next generation”.79 It has since become renowned for its uncanny ability to successfully target future leaders in both countries.80 Andrew Robb recalls that, in the early years, the AALD did choose “people who were likely to be future leaders . . . And many of the people that they did invite within seven or eight years were leaders. Either in opposition or in government”.81

The drive to engage the younger generation remains crucial to the strategy of the AALD today. Paul Howes, no doubt a targeted future leader himself, believes that engaging the younger generation “probably plays more of a role than [engaging] current leaders. I think Phil is really driven on that because he does put a lot of effort on the next generation”. Reflecting on his own participation at the AALD since 2007, Howes recalls, “When you look through the Dialogue, when you look at the young participants, you see five future Prime Ministers sitting there, ten future foreign affairs people”.82

78 Author interview with Professor Hugh White, 2 September 2011.
81 Author interview with Andrew Robb, 15 July 2011.
82 Author interview with Paul Howes, 5 August 2011.
The desire to reach even further into the next generation of emerging leaders drove the establishment of the Young Leadership Dialogue (YLD) in 2007.83 According the AALD’s website, the purpose of the YLD is to “to secure the long term future of the AALD mission of mutual understanding between Australian and American leaders through a consistently flowing pipeline of young leaders”.84 John W. H. Denton, Partner and Chief Executive Officer of Corrs Chambers Westgrath and Dialogue participant, sees both the AALD and the YLD as an exercise in what he refers to as “succession planning”. That is, “seeking to deepen the generational succession for the relationship”. In that regard, the YLD has been an “important policy innovation in the organisation itself”.85

One often quoted example of a well-targeted leader is former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. He is “such a striking example that the others seem to pale by comparison”, declares Sam Lipski.86 Paul Kelly agrees that Rudd “is a really conspicuous example” of how the AALD has had an influence over the next generation of leaders.87 Rudd was one of the initial attendees invited to participate in the first AALD event in 1993 “long before anyone had heard of him”, Nick Greiner recalls.88

As a young Queensland bureaucrat, Rudd was unfamiliar with the US and, according to Paul Kelly, “became educated in American ways and built his US networks virtually entirely from the Dialogue”.89 As Rudd has himself acknowledged, “The truth is, I’d never even visited the US before the first Dialogue, so concentrated an Asianist had I become”.90

83 Noteworthy political participants of the YLD have included Liberal MPs Jamie Briggs and Kelly O’Dwyer, Labor MPs Chris Bowen and Amanda Rishworth and former head of the AWU, Paul Howes.  
85 Author interview with John W. H. Denton, 15 February 2012.  
86 Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.  
87 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.  
88 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.  
89 Kelly, The March of Patriots, p. 163.  
90 Sheridan, Power Talking.
Rudd is a good example of what is perhaps the greatest single contributing factor to the process of socialisation; the access provided to high-level officials and all that entails for career advancement. Rudd used the extensive networking opportunities afforded by the AALD to advance his political career. As Sam Lipski notes:

Everyone knows that Rudd, from the moment he smelt power in Washington, assiduously cultivated every link and network created by the Dialogue. He didn’t just cultivate, he poured water and seed and growth and he just couldn’t get enough of it. It became quite important in his growing ambition to become Prime Minister. Look at his relationship with [Hillary] Clinton . . . All those doors were opened for him by the Dialogue.  

Rudd later evolved into one of Labor’s strongest supporters of the alliance and a committed participant at almost every AALD event since its establishment. At the fifteenth annual Dialogue in 2007, Rudd gave an emphatic speech about the importance of the US alliance, where his enthusiasm for American exceptionalism and US hegemony was on full display:

America is an overwhelming force for good in the world. It is time we sang that from the worlds’ rooftops . . . let there be no retreat of America from the world. Let there be no retreat of America from the Asia-Pacific region. Let there be no retreat of America from our region.  

Two years later, in 2009, addressing the AALD for the first time as Prime Minister, Rudd continued in the same vein, declaring that “US global and regional leadership” is something “which we, in this country, Australia, are proud to support, and we intend to be your partners for the future”. Rudd concluded his speech in reverence

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91 Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.
of the AALD, exclaiming “I salute this Dialogue. I salute each and every one of you who have been participants in it”. For Rudd, and indeed his wife Therese, the Dialogue was more than just “an important informal network” to help strengthen the relationship, but also a place where American participants “have become part of our wider family”. Significantly, it was Rudd who appointed his long-time friend, Phillip Scanlan, to the position of Consul-General in New York in 2008.

While the impact of the AALD in shaping Rudd’s thinking is impossible to measure precisely, the fact that it had an impact is difficult to deny. As someone who held a positive pre-disposition toward the US, but did not have any personal links, nor had visited America, the AALD opened many doors. Consequently, Rudd was able to forge close connections with, and make himself known to, the US political elite. The primary factor behind the development of Rudd’s strong relationship with the US was his ambition. The role of the AALD was to help facilitate the realisation of that ambition. The AALD socialisation mechanism was the path laid before him, with no obligations but plenty of benefits, as an inducement to remain committed to the status quo.

Rudd’s experience with the AALD has parallels with that of UK Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and their experiences with the IVLP. Blair and Brown were ambitious young Labour MPs in the 1980s with very little connection to the US. Brown, like Rudd, had never been to the US, nor did he have any personal links with Americans prior to his experience with the IVLP. Blair was also introduced to the Washington elite through the IVLP when he was still relatively unknown in US circles. The experience had a profound impact on the belief systems of both men and, consequently, helped to realign their party’s international stance in accordance with American interests.94

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93 Kevin Rudd, speech to the Australian American Leadership Dialogue, Melbourne, 15 August 2009.
94 Scott-Smith, Searching for the Successor Generation.
Gatekeeping

The socialisation function of the AALD is one part of its “gatekeeping” role to prevent adverse changes to orthodox government policymaking on the alliance. In addition, entry and performance at the AALD is often used as a benchmark for earning the equivalent of a stamp of approval, or disapproval, on the ability of Australian political leaders to manage the US alliance. This function appears to be limited to the Labor Party where accusations of “immaturity” or “weakness” on defence matters, and the inability to “responsibly manage” the US alliance, are generally directed. The experience of former opposition leader, Mark Latham, and former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, are two prominent examples.

Latham was quickly identified as a danger to the alliance orthodoxy after his first major foreign policy speech as opposition leader, when he implied the Australia-US relationship was an unequal partnership. Consequently, the then Prime Minister, John Howard, characterised Latham as “indifferent” toward the alliance and a threat to its existence. Similarly, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer argued that Latham “should not be debating the US alliance in the midst of the war on terrorism” and that his behaviour gave the impression he was “anti-American”. Experts in Australian strategic studies identified Latham’s position on the alliance as

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a threat to the long-term bipartisan commitment of the security relationship that Bob Hawke and Kim Beazley had extended during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{99}

Although Latham had declared Labor’s support for the core aspects of the alliance,\textsuperscript{100} his position on both the Iraq War and AUSFTA were of serious concern to orthodox alliance loyalists. Paul Kelly and Peter Hartcher wrote in their respective broadsheets that should Latham be elected prime minister, his position on Iraq would likely harm the relationship.\textsuperscript{101} When it came to AUSFTA, Paul Kelly argued that, as the most “vital decision on the US relationship for years”, support for the agreement, despite all its “defects”, was a “test of Labor’s ability to have a successful relationship with the US”, and of Latham’s “maturity” to rise above the “anti-Americanism” that infects the ALP.\textsuperscript{102}

It is revealing that support for both of these policies was considered a benchmark of Latham’s ability to manage the alliance given that Australia’s participation in the invasion of Iraq was technically contrary to the ANZUS Treaty and opposed by the vast majority of Australians.\textsuperscript{103} Moreover, as the occupation of Iraq dragged on, it became increasingly unpopular.\textsuperscript{104} On AUSFTA too, public opinion steadily declined


\textsuperscript{100} Latham declared that “Labor believes in the value of the alliance not only to Australia and to the United States, but to the international community as a whole”, singling out the “importance of the intelligence relationship, based on the joint management and control of facilities in Australia”. Latham, Labor and the World.


\textsuperscript{102} Paul Kelly, If Push Comes to Shove, \textit{The Australian}, 10 July 2004.

\textsuperscript{103} Keeping in mind the invasion of Iraq violated the UN Charter and international humanitarian law, Article I of the ANZUS Treaty states that the parties “undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means . . . and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations”. Article VI states that the treaty “does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of the Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security”. 1951 Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States (ANZUS), reproduced at Australian Politics, ANZUS Treaty, <http://australianpolitics.com/topics/foreign-policy/anzus-treaty-text>, accessed 5 April 2016.

\textsuperscript{104} Public opposition to Australian participation of an invasion of Iraq, in the absence of UN approval, was consistently high during the 7-8 months prior to the war, but more evenly split in the case UN approval was received. After the invasion began, a majority of Australians shifted to supporting the
from 65 per cent in support of the agreement, when negotiations started, to 35 per cent when the deal was concluded in 2004.\textsuperscript{105} Lacking popular support, the Australian government was instead driven to support AUSFTA by the lobbying efforts of certain Australian and American corporate groups who perceived benefits from the FTA.\textsuperscript{106}

In response to the “flak” Latham received for his departure from the status quo regarding the alliance, Scanlan warned that the Australia-US relationship needed “hard work and constant nurturing” and that “every Australian political leader needs to develop his or her own understanding of the depth and the breadth of the alliance with the US”. Scanlan proceeded to “warmly welcome” Latham to the upcoming AALD event in 2004 which, he proclaimed, was about “achieving mutual understanding between leaders, not merely consensus”.\textsuperscript{107}

While Latham initially accepted the invitation to attend the AALD, he later retracted his decision for fear of being embarrassed politically on account of his views on the alliance.\textsuperscript{108} As Robert Manne wrote at the time, “among this elite group Latham was by now almost the only important dissident on the question of the American alliance”.\textsuperscript{109} In conversation with the author, Latham added that the presence of pro-alliance journalists at the AALD was another reason for his decision to withdraw. As Latham rhetorically asks,
Who wants to rub up against dozens of Sheridan, Kelly and Hartcher articles bagging you for your foreign policy views if you’re trying to make your way through the system? Who wants to take on the press establishment in Australia? . . . Where would you end up in the system if you took them on?110

Alexander Downer responded to Latham’s withdrawal from the AALD by arguing that it illustrated his decision to “cut and run from the US relationship”, and that he should have gone and “demonstrated his credentials to manage the relationship in a mature fashion”.111 Similarly, on the American side, Armitage “expressed regret” that Latham had cancelled his planned trip to the AALD in Washington, professing that it would have been an occasion for him to “get exposure to the length, the breadth, the depth of this relationship”. Armitage had “made plain that he thought Mr Latham neither understood nor appreciated the alliance”.112 According to Richard Woolcott:

The Americans [at the AALD] probably wanted to influence [Latham] in a more pro-American direction, and I suppose some other Australian members of the Dialogue wanted to see him more committed to the alliance. But that never happened so in a sense, that’s hypothetical.113

When Kevin Rudd assumed the position of leader of the Labor Party in December 2006, participation at the AALD was once again viewed as a litmus test for indicating the necessary maturity to manage the relationship. Rudd was “strongly urged to attend” the upcoming AALD in January 2007 by other members of his party as a

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110 Author interview with Mark Latham, 22 November 2011.
symbol reaffirming Labor’s rejection of Latham’s attitude toward the alliance.  

Similarly, Bob Carr’s long-standing attendance at the AALD was widely cited in the media as evidence of his capacity to responsibly manage the alliance after he was appointed foreign minister in the Gillard government in 2012.

While Latham illustrates how the AALD operates to censure those who depart from the status quo, Julia Gillard demonstrates what is required to gain approval.

Gillard’s performance at the 2008 Dialogue event, where she gave her first foreign policy address as deputy Prime Minister, was carefully watched and assessed in elite circles. Gillard looked to reassure her audience of 300 Australian and American elites that the alliance transcended the power of any single leader or party; a subtle reference to both Latham’s ambivalence toward the alliance and the dangers posed by George W. Bush’s immense unpopularity. Gillard reassured her audience that the alliance was “bigger than any person, bigger than any party, bigger than any government, bigger than any period in our history together”. The AALD, Gillard added, is “full of committed advocates, of true believers”, in the Australia-US relationship.

Gillard’s address to the AALD was recognised as “one of the most, not strident, but positive statements of the value of the alliance that anyone has given on either side of politics.” According to Mel Sembler, former US ambassador to Australia, Gillard “wowed the Americans” with her content and presentation and “everybody loved it”. Peter Hartcher, reporting on the event for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, wrote

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117 Author interview with Andrew Robb, 15 July 2011.

118 Hartcher, Curtin Call and Excellent Debut.
that propositions such as Australia and the US working together “to help build a
world where civilisation will persist”, as Gillard phrased it, was “music to American
ears”. Hartcher concluded his assessment of Gillard’s performance at the AALD by stating:

Julia Gillard has come a long way since the Victorian Socialist Left. She has made a sophisticated and successful international debut, and moved herself credibly into a new category of leadership . . . In doing so, she has reaffirmed Australia’s place as America’s uniquely reliable ally.119

The specific role played by the AALD in assisting Gillard’s elevation to leadership material in the eyes of the establishment is perhaps best articulated by Kelly, who, immediately after the 2008 AALD event, wrote:

Coming from the Labor Left and once a loyal supporter of the anti-American Mark Latham, Gillard has been inducted into the political culture and rituals of the alliance. This is a prime function of the dialogue. She has become a true believer.120

Later, in conversation with the author, Kelly elaborates on what he meant, pointing out that Gillard’s address to the AALD “was in the Benjamin Franklin room at the State Department. He added, “It’s a very special event, in a very special forum, in a very special room. That’s what I meant when I talked about Gillard being inducted into the rituals of the relationship”.121

In other words, according to Kelly, Gillard had both been assisted and affirmatively judged by the AALD on her transition as an orthodox alliance loyalist. Any question over her commitment to the status quo arising from her affiliation with the left

119 Hartcher.
121 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.
could be laid to rest now that she had been unreservedly accepted by the AALD. Journalist Hamish McDonald believes that Kelly’s remarks are “astonishingly frank as an admission or almost a boast” that showed how the AALD welcomed Gillard into “the inner priesthood of the highest strategic circles”; and as such, “Pretty stunning”.\textsuperscript{122}

Upon assuming the prime ministership, Gillard’s performance at the AALD was once again recalled and heralded as evidence of her maturity to manage the alliance relationship. Sheridan wrote that Gillard had moved her “national security identity bang in[to] the middle of the mainstream”. The evidence provided was her attendance for several years at the AALD and her speech at the 2008 Dialogue event where she was “clear and declarative about her attachment to the US alliance”.\textsuperscript{123}

The \textit{Australian Financial Review} wrote Gillard was careful to indicate that her government would be a “safe transition”, promising to honour Australia’s alliance with the US, and that she had “impressed [by] taking part in such forums as the Australian American Leadership Dialogue and the Australia-Israel forum”.\textsuperscript{124} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}’s editorial on Gillard’s foreign policy agenda claimed it promised little change “as the former campus radical has made the transition to the safe mainstream consensus without a ripple”. The editorial concluded by stating:

[Gillard] has been a participant in the second-track diplomacy effort known as the Australian-American Leadership Dialogue, and in the newer Australia-Israel forum set up last year. In these two sensitive areas, where politicians are carefully watched for deviation by powerful lobbies, she has flagged her adherence to the norm.\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{122} Author interview with Hamish McDonald, 15 November 2011.
\item\textsuperscript{123} Greg Sheridan, Leader to Stay True on Foreign Affairs, \textit{The Australian}, 25 June 2010.
\end{enumerate}
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Australian elite circles and the American establishment carefully watch future Australian leaders at the AALD for adherence to the status quo. The AALD is “almost an American veto on who is acceptable to be a political leader in this country and who’s not”, argues Mark Latham. “You can be absolutely assured”, Latham continues, that if Gillard hadn’t proven herself at the Dialogue “she wouldn’t have been a candidate for the leadership . . . that got rid of Rudd”.126

Certainly, a number of leaked diplomatic cables revealed by WikiLeaks suggest that the US embassy viewed acceptance at the AALD as an important indicator of Gillard’s commitment to the status quo. A cable sent on 13 June 2008, under the sub-heading, “Gillard the Pro-American”, describes how previous concerns about Gillard’s apparent “ambivalent” feelings toward the alliance were assuaged since she became the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party and indicated “an understanding of its importance”. Apart from going “out of her way to assist the [US] embassy”, the other evidence provided was her attendance and performance at the AALD where, it was noted, she “is now a regular attendee . . . and will be the principal government representative to the AALD meeting in Washington at the end of June”.127

A comment added to the end of the cable by a US diplomatic staff member reveals reservations about the authenticity of Gillard’s alliance loyalty: “it’s unclear whether this change in attitude reflects a mellowing of her views or an understanding of what she needs to do to become leader of the ALP. It is likely a combination of the two”. However, a year later, after a lengthy character assessment of Gillard recorded in a cable sent on 10 June 2009, these reservations became irrelevant as the embassy felt confident her “pragmatism” would ensure compliance to the alliance orthodoxy. In a cable sub-headed, “A Left-Winger Now a Pragmatist”,

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126 Author interview with Mark Latham, 22 November 2011.
Gillard’s performance at the 2008 AALD event was once again highlighted as evidence of this fact.128

While performance at the AALD was certainly viewed as an important indicator of Gillard’s alliance loyalty, the degree to which it also influenced her transition into a “true believer” of the alliance is a more difficult question to answer. Citing the influence of the AALD and US political exchange programs, Mark Latham credited Washington for Gillard’s transformation into an orthodox alliance loyalist:

You have to hand it to those guys in Washington, they have a way of making lefties like Gillard change their minds on foreign policy. Within the space of two years, they converted her from a highly cynical critic of all matters American into yet another political sycophant. The poor woman has been brainwashed.129

While Gillard might have formally placed herself in the left faction of the Labor Party, there’s no indication that she actually subscribed to that ideological position, particularly on foreign policy issues. Gillard famously declared in 2010 that she did “not have a passion for foreign affairs”, and it was not foreign policy that caused her “to get active in the labour movement”.130 Even Kelly concedes that he would not use the word “transformative” to characterise the AALD’s impact on Gillard, although, in his mind, there was not “any doubt at all that the Dialogue influenced Gillard’s attitude toward the alliance and facilitated her own involvement with the alliance and with the United States”.131 It appears as though, at most, being a part of the culture and rituals of the AALD helped Gillard to “learn the foreign policy game”132 that requires strict adherence to the orthodox view of the alliance.

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131 Author interview with Paul Kelly, 20 January 2012.
132 In the words of one former senior Australian diplomat who chose to remain anonymous.
Whatever impact the AALD might have had on Gillard’s attitude toward the alliance, it was certainly utilised by her as a tool to demonstrate publicly her acceptance of its orthodoxy. As Hartcher argues, “it wasn’t the Dialogue that persuaded Gillard to embrace the alliance or move to the right. That was the journey that Gillard was on. The Dialogue gave her the opportunity to parade her credentials and to, if you like, seal the deal”. The AALD helped Gillard to demonstrate that she was not a “left-winger or a Lathamite or a Victorian”, as Paul Howes observes, but instead that she held “a very mature calibre of opinion on the understanding and nature” of the Australia-US relationship.

The AALD is perfectly suited to help current and future leaders refute those critics who might cast doubt upon their alliance loyalty. Writing in *The Australian* after Gillard had been elevated to prime minister, Sheridan wrote that the right-faction of the Labor Party had, until recently, placed a veto on her desire to lead. However, as he notes:

> From at least the time she became deputy leader, Gillard shrewdly and effectively set about removing that veto on herself. She did this in part by attending the Australian American Leadership Dialogue and another similar dialogue with Israel. On a couple of occasions at the Australian American dialogue she was the senior Australian politician present, and she was fulsome in her endorsement of the US alliance.

John W. H. Denton explains what participation in the Dialogue projects to establishment forces as follows:

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133 Author interview with Peter Hartcher, 29 October 2011.
134 Author interview with Paul Howes, 5 August 2011.
Continuous participation in the Dialogue is a clear manifestation of your support for the prime role of America in Australian foreign policy concerns. It puts you mainstream in foreign policy thinking . . . [The mainstream thinking] with the US is the primacy of the ANZUS relationship to Australia’s defence and geo-strategic concerns . . . Gillard has been able to position herself in the mainstream by affiliating herself with the Dialogue . . . It’s like, well that’s fact. You can’t say I’m anti-American. I participate in the Australian American Leadership Dialogue . . . So you’re able to position yourself, therefore, clearly and unmistakably in the middle of mainstream Australian foreign policy thinking. It also sets mainstream thinking about foreign policy.136

The case of Mark Latham suggests that the AALD is not always successful as a socialisation mechanism. One of its central objectives, after all, is to strengthen the importance of the alliance in the minds of the next generation. Latham, however, represented “a younger strand of ALP opinion that, surprisingly, is not steeped in the alliance”.137 Although Latham was “unsteepable”, in the words of Sam Lipski,138 the AALD played an important role by censuring his insistence on departing from the status quo. For a “pragmatist” like Gillard, on the other hand, the prime function of the AALD was to provide an endorsement of her transition into the mainstream consensus and her induction into the alliance orthodoxy.

Significantly, neither Latham nor Gillard ever posed a serious threat to the alliance. While Latham held a critical position on the alliance that was atypical in modern Australian politics, the reality was that he continued to support its core elements. Latham was also surrounded by pro-alliance loyalists who would not have permitted him to depart very far from the status quo if he were prime minister. Indeed, just three months after his first foreign policy address questioning Australia’s

136 Author interview with John W. H. Denton, 15 February 2012.
137 Kelly, If Push Comes To Shove.
138 Author interview with Sam Lipski, 25 October 2011.
dependence on the US, Latham began to soften his position, particularly with regard to Australia’s involvement in Iraq. Although Latham delivered the new position, Kim Beazley revealed that “the policy is based on discussions with me and Kevin Rudd”. 139

After Latham retired from politics and revealed in his memoirs that he believed the Australia-US relationship was “just another form of neo-colonialism”, and questioned the “the long-term need” of the alliance, the Labor Party quickly distanced themselves. 140 Then opposition defence spokesman, Robert McClelland, claimed that Latham would have been “rolled” if these attitudes were known at the time. 141 When Rudd became opposition leader, he chose McClelland for his replacement as shadow foreign minister because he was considered “a safe pair of hands on the alliance”. 142 McClelland is also a participant of the AALD.

In an interview with the author, Australian columnist, Glenn Milne, argues that although the AALD has not faced a formidable challenge thus far in terms of dissident political elites in Australia, it “will have to start muscling up” and really “prove its worth” if, in the future, there were to arise any “high level questioning of the value of the relationship and the place of the United States in the Pacific”. 143 Given the high degree of alliance loyalty professed at the elite level in Australia, the AALD is unlikely to have to seriously prove itself anytime soon.

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139 Latham’s softened policy, along with his decision to elevate the solidly pro-American Beazley to shadow defence spokesman, was hailed as evidence the alliance was back in safe hands. Peter Hartcher, Big Kim a Sturdy Bridge to the US, Sydney Morning Herald, 16 July 2004.
140 Latham, The Latham Diaries, p. 393.
142 Banham, US Meeting May Provide A Potent Symbol for Rudd.
143 Author interview with Glenn Milne, 9 November 2011.
CONCLUSION

The Australia-US Alliance: Who Benefits?

From the perspective of traditional international relations theory, there is no “special relationship” between Australia and the US. According to the dominant realist school, “international relations are dominated by national interests and . . . talk of shared values and moral causes is simply how politicians sell wars and interventions abroad.”¹ Notwithstanding the cultural familiarity that exists between the five English-speaking nations of the Anglosphere, realists “counsel against confusing the fellow feeling that individuals and families share with the calculations of states”.²

Constructivists, in contrast, argue that state behaviour does indeed go beyond the mere calculation of national interests as understood by realists, and moves into the realm of identify formation. Missing from the picture painted by realists is “racism, nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, and other macro-historical processes, which imply that sovereign states are also historical and cultural nations bound by all kinds of discourses, institutions and practices”.³ According to this perspective, there is something unique and significant about the Anglosphere nations, rooted in a historical and collective racialised identity that endures to the present.⁴

In dismissing the conventional values-oriented understanding of Australia’s alliance with the US, this thesis broadly concurs with the unsentimental realism of power politics, albeit with the crucial distinction that elite interests and not “national

² MacDonald and O’Connor, p. 8.
⁴ Vucetic.
CONCLUSION

"interests" primarily determine state behaviour.\(^5\) There is no qualitative distinction between the so-called special relationships of the Anglosphere and many of Washington’s other significant bilateral relationships.\(^6\) Australia and the UK aside, the US has at one time or another applied the term “special relationship” to Israel, Brazil, pre-communist China and the Federal Republic of Germany, among others, and has described no less than Israel, Japan, Canada, France and India as its best friend or strongest ally.\(^7\)

While broadly correct, realists go too far in dismissing the notion of the Anglosphere as simply an illusion. Political elites in both Britain and Australia have at times bought into the “special relationship” mythology, making its existence “more a delusion than an illusion; delusional in the over-confidence and self-importance it at times gives these states individually and collectively”.\(^8\) Moreover, when it comes to Washington’s alliance management calculations, mutual interests are less relevant than the capacity to deliver benefits. It is “usefulness” that is the primary glue that binds America’s most important alliances together.

The quintessential special relationship between the US and the UK is a case in point. As others have argued,\(^9\) the post-WWII relationship between the UK and the US assumed its special importance primarily on account of Britain’s continued, albeit diminished, role as a world power. From Washington’s perspective, the UK’s special value derived from its willingness to use its significant military and intelligence capacities and traditional influence in the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia in

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\(^5\) Contrary to realist claims, there are very few monolithic “national interests” to defend. The term is often used by political leaders as a euphemism for serving the interests of state power, closely aligned with the interests of concentrated private economic power. Scott Burchill, *Australia’s International Relations: Particular, Common and Universal Interests*, East Melbourne: Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1994.


\(^8\) MacDonald and O’Connor, p. 9.

ways that more or less complemented America’s vision for global order. The UK also played a pivotal role in Europe where its significant military capacities were utilised to lead the way in the containment of the Soviet Union.

Conversely, British leaders understood that their waning global influence was dependent on US patronage and military superiority, especially with respect to preserving Britain’s stronghold in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{10} The UK thus opted to become a junior partner in an American-led global world order provided British interests were protected. As the UK’s power began to erode from the 1960s, so too did its usefulness as a credible partner to the US.\textsuperscript{11} Nevertheless, London continued to view its special relationship with Washington as one important factor in preserving its unilateral ability to influence the world.\textsuperscript{12}

This thesis has taken a similar approach with respect to the Australia-US alliance, critically evaluating the relationship from the perspective of who benefits. Typically, the usefulness of the alliance to Australia is portrayed in terms of its defence value. The alliance has variously been understood as an insurance policy or deterrent against attack, essential for maintaining regional and global stability and, since the 1970s, crucial to Australia’s self-reliant defence posture. Conversely, from America’s perspective, Australia has been a reliable long-standing ally and an enthusiastic supporter of Washington’s diplomatic, strategic and economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Much more than just providing for the defence of Australia, elites have long emphasised the benefits of the alliance in bolstering Australia’s regional status as a “leading middle power” and an “Asia-Pacific power” that can “punch above its

\textsuperscript{10} As Anthony Eden expressed in 1952, when it came to defence organisations in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, “Our aim should be to persuade the United States to assume the real burdens in such organisations, while retaining for ourselves as much political control – and hence prestige and world influence – as we can”. James Peck, \textit{Washington’s China: The National Security World, the Cold War, and the Origins of Globalism}, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006, fn 98, p. 282.

\textsuperscript{11} As the Kennedy administration bluntly expressed, Washington regarded London as its “lieutenant (the fashionable word is partner)”. Curtis, \textit{The Great Deception}, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{12} On this point, see David Goldsworthy, Australian External Policy and the End of Britain’s Empire, \textit{Australian Journal of Politics and History}, vol. 51, no. 1, 2005, p. 23.
weight”. By ensuring Australia maintains an “edge” over Southeast Asia in military and intelligence capabilities, and elevating Canberra’s status in regional and global governance regimes, the alliance is seen to augment Australia’s capacity to favourably shape its strategic and economic environment.

Although allying to the global hegemon undoubtedly provides some defence benefits, this thesis has argued that the alliance makes far more sense in terms of bolstering Australia’s power-projection capabilities than it does in ensuring Australian security, particularly given the enduring absence of actual or potential threats. While increasing Australia’s defence capabilities and enhancing Australia’s regional power are potentially complementary objectives, they are also quite distinct. The primary value of the alliance today, this thesis has argued, is on the latter.

Ostensibly, Australia’s desire to play a regional leadership role is motivated by a long-standing commitment to maintaining peace and stability. In reality, this thesis has argued, Australia has consistently acted in concert with the US in ways that undermine security and stability but preserve American hegemony. The desire to see the continuation of US hegemony at all costs has served two complementary objectives: to ensure the capacity for shaping the strategic and economic outlook of the Asia-Pacific remains with the West, and that Australia’s position as the leading middle power in Southeast Asia remains secure.

This thesis has challenged the liberal and constructivist critiques of Australia’s alliance with the US and the notion that traditional security anxieties and cultural attachments to the Anglosphere are the primary reasons for its endurance. Although undoubtedly a significant driving force behind Canberra’s alliance-reliance mentality, Australia’s strategic culture consists of racialised security anxieties and an equally enduring, and arguably more powerful, imperialist spirit that favours western predominance, including a greater Australian influence, over Asia’s strategic and economic affairs. Far from acting irrationally, policy makers have
exhibited a shrewd understanding of Australia’s national interests as understood by strategic elites when conducting their alliance management calculations.

Highlighting the imperialist motivations behind Australia’s alliance-reliance mentality does not preclude an acknowledgement of genuine security fears. Australia’s sense of strategic vulnerability, cultural attachments to the Anglosphere and imperialist spirit (later “middle power” dreaming) have interacted in mutually constitutive ways. Australian imperialism during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, for example, did have a quasi-defensive aspect as part of the cycle of rivalry between the British Empire and other expansionist European powers.13

During the Cold War, Australia’s desire to restore and expand the western-imperial order in Asia played out within the very real and dangerous great power competition between the US and the Soviet Union. However, the conventional view that Australia’s security was bound to the outcome of a global conflict between western democracy and communist totalitarianism was deeply flawed. The objective of checking Soviet/Chinese aggression played only a minor role in US foreign policy during the Cold War. The much larger game was the extension of American capitalism and the efforts to crush those nationalist independence movements that threatened Washington’s influence in the third world.14

The major security threats to Australia in the post-WWII era have, somewhat paradoxically, resulted from Australia’s alliance with the US.15 The threat of direct nuclear attack during the Cold War was a consequence of hosting sensitive American intelligence facilities, notably Pine Gap. The threat of a terrorist attack in

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14 While the conventional view of the Cold War, including some sharply critical variants, contends that it was primarily a confrontation between two superpowers, the historical record demonstrates that the central dynamic was, for the Soviet Union, a war against its satellites, and for the US, a war against the third world. See Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy*, London: Vintage Books, 1992, especially pp. 9-68.
15 As Beeson writes, “For a country with no obvious enemies, the main threats to Australian security since World War II have, paradoxically enough, actually resulted from its US alliance”. Mark Beeson, *American Hegemony: The View from Australia*, SAIS Review, vol. 23, no. 2, 2003, p. 117.
Australia after 11 September 2001 was greatly exacerbated as a result of Australia’s participation in America’s “war on terror”. Today, there is the possibility of Australia being drawn into a wider US-Sino conflagration as Canberra ties itself to Washington’s vision for retaining hegemony in Asia.

The costs of the US alliance have been considerable, and yet it has been a long-standing convention among strategic elites in Australia to argue they are far outweighed by the benefits. Part of the miscalculation is due to elite and state-centred approaches to “national security” which “too often achieve[s] security at the expense of other states and communities, making security meaningless”. The only meaningful approach is to “focus security on human beings, to see it as a process of emancipation from injustice and hardship rather than a defence against abstract threats to national integrity”.

Apart from wilfully ignoring the pernicious consequences of US foreign policy to others, the “special relationship” narrative has served to skew the cost-benefit analysis in favour of the alliance by projecting the illusion that it remains indispensable to Australian security and reflective of core Australian values. The true “value” of the alliance, this thesis has argued, derives from its contribution to maximising state power, an objective pursued irrespective of the costs to the “human security” of Australia, the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

**Managing Elite Opinion**

Despite the overwhelming support for the alliance at both the public and elite levels, there is nothing inevitable about its centrality to Australian defence and foreign policies into the future. Public opinion can swing quickly with events, and

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strategic elites are always cognisant of the possibility of an “ultra-left wing Labor government” emerging that might decide to follow the “New Zealand model” of the mid-1980s and effectively withdraw Australia from the ANZUS Treaty.\textsuperscript{18}

Partly in response to these concerns, a number of private initiatives were established in the 1990s and 2000s with the objective of strengthening the Australia-US relationship and insulating it from change in the post-Cold War world. Primary among these was the AALD, established explicitly to preserve the centrality of the Australia-US relationship into the future at a time when personal relationships between elites in both countries were perceived to be at risk.

The spawning of the idea for the establishment of the AALD in 1992 was timely. In the aftermath of the Cold War, a number of critical scholars on the fringes of the intellectual milieu in international relations recognised that the time was ripe for challenging the orthodoxy in Australia’s security thinking and the “institutionalised habits of mind” that posed an obstacle to reform.\textsuperscript{19} The AALD’s objective, on the other hand, was precisely the opposite: to entrench the alliance orthodoxy in the minds of elites and prevent any change to the status quo. The AALD was the embodiment of Australia’s elitist approach to regionalism in the 1990s, operating on the “assumption that economic and military security . . . is best pursued through a dialogue of elite officials and academics”.\textsuperscript{20}

The AALD’s agenda was somewhat obscured by its self-identification as an effort in T2 diplomacy, ostensibly dedicated to the benign objectives of relationship building and mutual understanding. However, it was not difficult to hazard a guess at what the outcome might be from a gathering of carefully selected participants drawn from elite circles discussing mutual concerns behind closed doors in an institution.


dedicated to preserving the status quo. Upon its establishment, critics of the alliance presciently warned that the AALD could turn into “another instance of Australia trying to ingratiate itself with the United States, instead of trying to form a genuinely independent foreign policy”.21

Much later, external critics speculated that the private and exclusive nature of the discussions at the AALD, and the sense of prestige associated with privileged access to powerful American policy makers, bred an unhealthy and uncritical relationship on Australia’s part. According to this critique, the AALD operated as a mechanism for “duchessing” Australian leaders into behaving as if American interests were the same as Australian interests, much in the same way the British had achieved in the past.

In the absence of any serious critical investigation into the AALD, this thesis set out to address these competing claims and to critically evaluate the AALD’s role in managing Australia’s relationship with the US. The existing literature on T2 diplomacy provided important insights into the institutional structures inherent in the AALD, and other T2 dialogues, that lead it to eschew critical debate and adopt official or orthodox policy positions. Nevertheless, the T2 literature ultimately proved limited in providing an adequate explanatory framework for a bilateral private initiative dedicated to alliance management.

Instead, this thesis turned to the literature on lobby groups. Lobby groups are distinguishable from T2 by their pre-existing agenda to define the terms of political debate in ways that suit their own preferred policy outcomes. In the case of the AALD, the agenda is to preserve the notion of Australia’s “special relationship” with the US, dictating an ever-closer alignment of foreign policies. In effect, the AALD functions in a “policy watchdog” capacity to prevent changes to the status quo. However, unlike traditional interest groups, the AALD preserves and promotes the

21 Dennis Phillips, then lecturer in American history and politics at Macquarie University, quoted in Kate Cole-Adams, Born Again Allies, *Time*, 7 June 1993.
alliance orthodoxy not by lobbying decision makers directly but facilitating the
socialisation of elites.

The socialisation role of the AALD is supported by the evidence presented in this
thesis, drawn from numerous interviews with present and former participants.
While a number of critical voices affirm this view, others have dismissed the idea as
“rubbish”. Australian leaders, defenders of the AALD argue, possess a great deal of
experience in dealing with American rhetoric, and they are highly unlikely to be
swayed by what is essentially a few days of discussion and debate.

However, the “social lobby”, identified long-ago by propaganda theorist Harold D.
Lasswell, can and does act as a subtle but powerful tool of persuasion. It is far more
sophisticated than mere duchessing and was developed over decades of research
into communications studies and public diplomacy practice. The AALD, although a
uniquely private initiative, exhibits many of the same material and psychological
inducements identified in scholarship as being successfully employed to preserve
America’s alliance relationships.

It is not the contention of this thesis, advocated by some critics of the AALD, that
the US has effectively hijacked Australian foreign policy by convincing political elites
to defend American strategic and economic interests that Australia does not
share. Critics of the alliance are not converted at the AALD into “true believers”.
The reality is far more limited and subtle. The AALD functions to solidify a set of
orthodox ideas which elites from both countries have long shared. Although limited
in scope, the AALD does have a real impact in shaping the preferences of Australian
elites who already hold a predisposition toward the alliance orthodoxy.

The findings of this thesis are limited by a number of research constraints. The
author was denied permission to participate in the AALD and compelled to

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22 Author interview with Nick Greiner, 6 July 2011.
23 See, for example, David Day, Bowing to Duchess Diplomacy, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 June 2012,
investigate it as an outsider. There was no opportunity to directly question the founder and driving force behind the AALD, Phillip Scanlan, who was unresponsive to repeated interview requests. A comprehensive review of the AALD was impeded by the lack of access to official documents, including a complete list of participants. Interviews were limited to participants identified from public sources and willing to cooperate. The strict non-disclosure convention of the AALD made some interviewees reluctant to speak forthrightly and others to entirely refuse participation.\textsuperscript{24}

The American perspective on the AALD is largely absent from this thesis. The focus is on the Australian perspective given the initiative for the AALD’s establishment came from Australia and its agenda reflects an Australian context and ambition. Nevertheless, the requirement to evaluate the impact of the AALD in the American context is noted. So too is the need to evaluate the role of other AALD initiatives such as the West Coast Leadership Dialogue, the Honolulu Leadership Dialogue, the New York Leadership Dialogue and the Leadership Dialogue Scholar. Given limited time and space, the focus of this thesis was restricted to the central AALD event.

This thesis provides a number of avenues for further research. The framework developed for this research project can be used to critically evaluate other private diplomatic initiatives that function to preserve orthodoxy. The Australia Israel Leadership Forum (AILF), established in 2009 by property developer Albert Dadon, is an obvious candidate for an academic inquiry along these lines because it was specifically modelled on the AALD.\textsuperscript{25} Although Dadon, like Scanlan, claims he holds no particular agenda,\textsuperscript{26} the AILF appears to function in similar capacity to the AALD,

\textsuperscript{24} A number of participants who declined to be interviewed by the author cited the strict non-disclosure convention of the AALD as the reason. For example, journalist Daniel Flitton justified his decision not to be interviewed on the grounds that the AALD is “not a Chatham House Rule event but off-record”. Consequently, “as a working journalist . . . trust from others that when I agree something is off-the-record that it remains off-record is crucial to my job”. Correspondence with Daniel Flitton, senior correspondent for The Age, 14 August 2011.


performing the role of a lobby group27 and a “gatekeeper”28 with respect to preserving Australia’s “special relationship” with Israel.

As already noted, the AALD is only one small element of what has been described as the much larger “Washington lobby”. Non-government institutions engaged in Australian foreign policy activism, such as the United States Studies Centre and the Lowy Institute for International Policy, play an important role in managing elite and public opinion in Australia. Similar to the AALD, the role of these institutions, and other elite sectors of academia and the media, argues Professor Clinton Fernandes, is to “establish the consensus out of which no viable candidate for foreign minister can be expected to diverge.”29 Building on the findings of this thesis, further investigation into the role and impact of the “Washington lobby” in Australian foreign policy making is warranted.

Turning to the future, one of the indicators of success of the AALD, according to supporters, is its longevity, expansion and capacity to attract increasing numbers of elites in both countries. Ironically, notwithstanding its phenomenal endurance and growth, one of the perennial questions hanging over the AALD has been its future viability. Given the success of the Dialogue is largely attributed to the personal dedication and energy of its founder, Phillip Scanlan, some participants have raised questions about its long-term survival. The AALD, Kemp believes, “has depended very heavily on Scanlan and I think in my own mind there’s always been a question of whether the Dialogue would survive [Scanlan’s departure]”.30

28 Like the AALD, with respect to Julia Gillard’s loyalty to the US alliance, participation in the AILF was cited by leaked US embassy cables, among other things, as evidence that Gillard had “thrown off the baggage of being from what one analyst called the ‘notoriously anti-Israel faction’ of the ALP”. US Embassy Canberra, “Pro-Israel”, cable #1074, 10 June 2009, reproduced at The Age, <http://images.theage.com.au/file/2010/12/15/2096934/Cables.htm?rand=1292396653979>, accessed 5 April 2016.
29 McDonald, World’s A Stage for Softly, Softly Diplomats.
30 Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.
On the other hand, because Scanlan’s centralised management style evinces criticism among some participants, his eventual departure is also viewed as a potentially positive development. In particular, there is the perception among some members of the Liberal Party that Scanlan holds a bias toward the Labor Party.\(^{31}\) In one instance, an influential Liberal Party figure threatened to discourage members of the Party from attending the AALD unless a strict protocol of bipartisanship was implemented.\(^{32}\)

More recently, Scanlan’s perceived partisanship has fuelled speculation about the AALD’s demise,\(^{33}\) a charge strongly refuted by Scanlan who insists the Dialogue’s trajectory “remains onward and upward”.\(^{34}\) Interestingly, in early 2016, there was an apparent split with the American board of the AALD, the official reason being “the Americans want to build a broader and more independent institution so senior political and business figures can strengthen the US-Australia alliance outside of Scanlan’s orbit”.\(^{35}\) The newly established American Australian Council consists of numerous high-profile strategic and corporate elites, and is chaired by one of America’s most powerful lobbyists, Tony Podesta.

Management issues aside, the prospects for genuine reform of the AALD in ways that address the major concerns raised in this thesis are slim. Genuine dialogue requires not just a commitment to mutual understanding but “spirited debate” and the willingness on the part of Washington (and Canberra) to “consider the real

\(^{31}\) According to Kemp, many in the Liberal Party believe Scanlan is “closer to people like [Kim] Beazley and the other Labor pro-Americans”, even though Scanlan himself probably “identifies as a Liberal.” Author interview with David Kemp, 31 August 2011.

\(^{32}\) Although Scanlan eventually relented, according to this senior Liberal figure, he did so while “spitting chips and raving and foaming at the mouth”. Author interview with participant who chose to remain anonymous.


CONCLUSION

possibility that its thinking, policies, and actions might be wrong”.36 Even so, the hope that fundamental change might occur by “speaking truth to power” is doubtful and wrongheaded.37 As critics of American public diplomacy argue, “to imagine that significant pillars of American foreign policy . . . will be modified through engagement is, in practice, a fantasy”.38

Significantly, in the case of T2, scholars have suggested potential remedies to the “autonomy dilemma” so that perspectives outside of the politically acceptable mainstream might be seriously entertained. Specifically, greater collaboration with T3 initiatives, or grassroots civil society organisations, has been offered as a means to break the monopoly of elite views and interests at the official level.39 Unlike T1 and T2, discussions at the T3 level, Herman J. S. Kraft explains:

[Are] often based on a critical perspective that tends to oppose mainstream government policies. They question the hierarchy of priorities and the assumptions that underlie the framework behind these policies.40

However, attempts to utilise T2 as a bridge between T1 and T3 have ended in failure, partly because elites have proven unforthcoming in their expressions for a genuine dialogue with civil society.41 In the case of the AALD, although nominally an

38 Comor and Bean, p. 213.
41 Alan Collins, A People-Oriented ASEAN: A Door Ajar or Closed for Civil Society Organisations?, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2008; Katherine Marie G. Hernandez, Bridging Officials
exercise in T2 diplomacy, the fact that it exists solely to sustain the alliance orthodoxy means there is little hope of reform along the lines suggested in existing scholarship.

Finally, there is the larger question of whether the AALD is a benign or malign force in the management of Australia’s relationship with the US. The answer to that question largely depends on one’s belief in the value of the alliance and its role in the world. For orthodox alliance loyalists who hold the “special relationship” sacrosanct, the AALD plays a crucial role in supporting the infrastructure of personal relationships that helps to keep it strong. On the other hand, for those who adopt a critical approach along the lines this thesis has taken – and are deeply concerned about the many pernicious impacts of the alliance as it has historically functioned – the AALD has not served the interests of Australians well.

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Anonymous, Australian Liberal Party MP, interview with author.

Anonymous, former Australian diplomat, interview with author.

Anonymous, former ALP MP, interview with author.

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Dibb, Paul, interview with author, 13 September 2011.

Downer, Alexander, interview with author, 14 September 2011.

Dunn, Alan, interview with author, 23 November 2011.

Evans, Gareth, interview with author, 10 April 2012.

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Greiner, Nick, interview with author, 6 July 2011.

Haigh, Bruce, interview with author, 22 November 2011.

Harley, Tom, interview with author, 2 November 2011.

Harris, Stuart, interview with author, 15 November 2011.

Hartcher, Peter, interview with author, 29 October 2011.

Hawke, Allan, interview with author, 29 December 2011.

Henderson, Gerard, interview with author, 7 March 2012.

Howes, Paul, interview with author, 5 August 2011.

Hughes, Anthony, interview with author, 21 December 2011.


Kemp, David, interview with author, 31 August 2011.
Latham, Mark, interview with author, 22 November 2011.

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MacIntyre, Andrew, interview with author, 28 June 2011.

McDonald, Hamish, interview with author, 15 November 2011.

Milne, Glenn, interview with author, 9 November 2011.

O’Dwyer, Kelly, interview with author, 21 October 2011.


Rhiannon, Lee, interview with author, 31 August 2011.

Robb, Andrew, interview with author, 15 July 2011.

Russell, Don, interview with author, 21 December 2012.

Sembler, Mel, interview with author, 21 March 2012.

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Toohey, Brian, interview with author, 28 November 2011.

Turnbull, Malcolm, interview with author, 20 April 2012.
White, Hugh, interview with author, 2 September 2011.

Woodroffe, Thom, interview with author, 21 July 2011.

Appendix A: AALD Participants List, 1993-2011 (Unofficial)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<td>1    Admiral Chris Barrie</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>2    Alan Dunn</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>3    Albert Dadon</td>
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<td>4    Alcee Hastings</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>5    Alexander Downer</td>
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<td>6    Allan Fels</td>
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<td>7    Allan Hawke</td>
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<td>8    Amanda Johnston-Pel</td>
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<td>9    Andrew Liveris</td>
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<td>10   Andrew MacIntyre</td>
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<td>11   Andrew Peacock</td>
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<td>12   Andrew Robb</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>13   Anne Keating</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>14   Anne Wexler</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>15   Anne-Marie Slaughter</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>16   Anthony Hughes</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>17   Arthur Sinodinos</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>18   Barack Obama</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>19   Barrie Cassidy</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>20   Barry Jackson</td>
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<td>21   Benjamin Gray</td>
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<td>22   Bill Shorten</td>
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<td>23   Bob Carr</td>
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<td>26   Brendan Nelson</td>
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<td>27   Brent Scowcroft</td>
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<td>Eliot Cohen</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>Emery Severin</td>
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*Source: Author research based on news articles, websites and interviews.*
Appendix B: Inaugural AALD, Washington, 1993 (Various Photos)
Appendix C: George H. W. Bush and Bob Hawke, with Mel Sembler, White House, 27 June 1989