

Lowy Institute Paper 08

# **permanent friends?**

HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE  
AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN ALLIANCE

**Peter Edwards**

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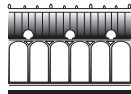
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**LOWY INSTITUTE**  
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# Executive summary

**Peter Edwards AM** is a consultant historian and writer, who has published on Australian defence and foreign policies, particularly Australian–American relations, for more than thirty years. He is the official historian of Australia’s involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts 1948–75 (Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam), for which he wrote the volumes dealing with strategy and diplomacy, *Crises and Commitments* (1992) and *A Nation at War* (1997). Dr Edwards is also the author of *Prime Ministers and Diplomats* (1983), the editor of *Australia Through American Eyes* (1977), a co-editor of *Facing North* (Vol. 2, 2003), and one of the founding editors of the series of *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*. He has held a number of senior positions and consultancies with universities and government agencies, including Executive Director of the Australian Centre for American Studies (1996–98). He is currently a Visiting Professor of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra.

This Lowy Institute Paper addresses the past, present and future of the Australian–American alliance. It reviews the history of the alliance, and of earlier attempts to establish a strong strategic relationship, over the last century. From this historical analysis the paper draws themes and conclusions relevant to the present and to the future.

The principal focus of the paper is on the benefits that Australian governments have sought from the alliance and the arguments that they have put before the Australian people for the maintenance of the alliance. It contends that all Australian governments, Coalition and Labor, have seen the benefits of the alliance in five major categories. One of these, the link between the alliance and improved access to American markets for Australian goods, is new. The others — the strategic guarantee, access to policy-makers, access to high-level intelligence, and access to advanced technology and defence science — have been presented in different forms, and with different degrees of emphasis, according to changes in domestic and international politics over half a century. Notwithstanding these variations, Australian governments have consistently seen the benefits as outweighing the costs and the dangers incurred by membership of the alliance.

The first chapter discusses the frankly racial motives underlying the Australian welcome to President Theodore Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet in 1908. It also examines the foundations of Australian strategic culture laid by Prime Ministers Alfred Deakin and W.M. Hughes,

establishing attitudes and principles that would much later be applied to the Australian–American alliance. The chapter also argues that the celebrated wartime relationship between Prime Minister John Curtin and General Douglas MacArthur was not the origin of an enduring alliance.

The second chapter examines the Australian government’s motives in securing the alliance through the ANZUS Treaty in 1951, and in managing the relationship through the 1950s and 1960s, culminating in the commitment to the Vietnam War. It emphasises the various ways in which Australian leaders sought to gain access to, and to influence, American strategic planning. The third chapter discusses Australian approaches to the alliance from the post-Vietnam reactions of the 1970s, through the revived Cold War tensions of the 1980s, to Australia’s contribution to the inauguration of the APEC leaders’ meetings in the early 1990s. It notes the varying emphases placed on the strategic guarantee, access to policy-makers, access to intelligence, and access to defence science and technology, according to changes in domestic and international politics. The chapter also discusses the Hawke Government’s effective campaign to ensure that the alliance survived the tensions imposed by the contrasting attitudes and policies of the left in Australia and the Republican right in the United States.

The fourth chapter examines the management of the alliance under the government of John Howard. It analyses the implications of policy decisions since the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, including the military commitments to Afghanistan and Iraq, the conclusion of the free-trade agreement with the United States, and major developments in the triangular relationship between Australia, the United States and China.

The conclusion acknowledges the strength of the current relationship between the Howard Government and the administration of President George W. Bush, but also suggests a number of foreseeable developments with the potential to place the alliance under severe, and possibly terminal, stress. It contends that any future Australian government will wish to maintain the alliance, requiring constant effort to convince the Australian electorate that the benefits continue to outweigh the

costs. Australian institutions need to work to ensure, and to assure the public, that the government is managing the alliance in a positive, even assertive, manner, in order to maximise the benefits to Australia. They could, for example, commission studies of issues with the potential to have a major effect on the relationship and conduct annual reviews of the ‘State of the Alliance’. These reviews could assess the five traditional categories of alliance benefits as if they were five separate, but related, investments of Australia’s political capital.

The paper presents the Australian–American relationship as a political institution in its own right, requiring constant management to ensure that it is adapting to meet new challenges.

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## Introduction

The alliance between Australia and the United States is now well into its second half-century. The treaty was formally invoked for the first time in the fateful month of September 2001, within days of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the treaty. Since then Australia has not only joined the American-led coalitions fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, but has also signed a free-trade agreement (FTA), which both governments have described as the most significant development in the bilateral relationship since the signing of the ANZUS Treaty. These events have prompted a new round in Australia's recurring debate about the costs and benefits of close ties, both military and economic, with the United States.<sup>1</sup> Have Australians made themselves subservient and dependent acolytes, the janissaries of the Western alliance? Is the FTA the best way 'to kill a country'?<sup>2</sup> Or has Australia astutely placed itself in a privileged position with the world's only remaining superpower, with large, potentially enormous, benefits to both our national security and our economic strength?

This is an appropriate time to stand back a little from the daily headlines and to place developments in, and arguments over, the alliance in a longer historical perspective. This is not just a matter of drawing on references to John Curtin and Douglas MacArthur, or discussing the similarities and differences between the commitments in Vietnam and Iraq. Historical analogies like these have their place, but greater value may be found in a more extended survey.

The Australian–American alliance is far more than just another bilateral relationship. Few alliances last fifty years or more, and even fewer have such widespread ramifications beyond the diplomatic and military into social, political, economic and cultural affairs. It has become a political institution in its own right, comparable with a political party or the monarchy. Those responsible for the management of such institutions face the constant challenge of assessing what elements must remain constant and what must be adapted to meet changing circumstances. In this case, they must ensure that the alliance retains the support of both governmental and public opinion in both countries. For most of the time since 1951 the American end, both official and public, has been secure (with the exception, to be noted below, of the Nixon Administration in the 1970s). Moreover Australian political leaders, irrespective of what they might have said when in opposition, have almost invariably wanted to keep the alliance when in office. They have consistently seen the benefits of the alliance as outweighing the military risks and political costs of any alleged subservience to the might of Washington. To the extent that there has been a question-mark over the durability of the alliance, it has been over Australian public opinion. That is why, for example, the then US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Paul Wolfowitz, told an Australian audience in 1984 that: ‘There is no task more fundamental to alliance management than the constant nurturing of public support.’ He phrased it diplomatically, but he was unmistakably sending a message to the Australian government about Australian public opinion.<sup>3</sup>

This paper therefore looks at the goals that Australian governments have sought in their operation of the role of junior partner to the world’s most powerful nation, and the ways in which they have ‘sold’ those benefits to the Australian public. It argues that successive Australian governments, both Labor and Coalition, have convinced themselves, and sought to persuade their public, that the benefits of the alliance come in five major categories. These are:

1. most obviously and importantly, the security guarantee — the American promises (including, but not confined to, that expressed

in the terms of the ANZUS Treaty) to come to Australia’s aid in the event of a major strategic threat;

2. exceptional access to high-level American policy-makers on political, diplomatic and military affairs;
3. privileged access to the fruits of the American intelligence agencies;
4. similarly privileged access to advanced science and technology, especially in defence-related areas; and
5. the economic benefits of special access to the American market under the FTA.

Every Australian government since 1951 has decided that these benefits outweigh the perceived costs of the alliance, including involvement in unpopular wars such as Vietnam; hosting defence-related facilities that made Australia a probable target in a nuclear war; and association with controversial American policies in political, military and economic affairs. But the relative importance given to these five categories of benefit from the alliance has varied considerably over time, and the last-named is new.

What needs to be done today, this paper suggests, is to monitor those five elements of the alliance, treating them as if they were five major assets in a diversified investment portfolio. Australia’s alliance managers need to find new ways to persuade their ‘investors’, the Australian public, that as many as possible of those five assets are delivering a positive return at any given time. Moreover, they must be able to assure their stakeholders that a temporary downturn in performance in any one area will be more than compensated by positive results from the other four. The paper suggests that an investment approach to the alliance, based on historical experience, would help Australian governments to maintain and to strengthen its popular support.



# Chapter 1

## From the Great White Fleet to the Second World War

### **From Deakin to Curtin, 1907–1941**

Historical discussions of the alliance generally start either with the signing of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951 or with John Curtin's famous statement that 'Australia turns to America' in December 1941. It would be better to start almost a century ago, in 1907, when Alfred Deakin risked the wrath of London by inviting President Theodore Roosevelt to include some Australian ports in the Pacific tour of the US Navy's 'Great White Fleet'. The visit in 1908 struck an amazingly strong chord in Australia. In Sydney alone about half a million people lined the harbour — far more than had celebrated Federation a few years earlier. The important point to note here is the overtly cultural, indeed frankly racial, terms in which Australians welcomed their American 'relatives'. In what one writer has called 'a plethora of verse and doggerel', Australians gave 'a joyous salutation to our kin from o'er the main'; they sang 'We've got a big brother in America / Uncle Sam, Uncle Sam!'; and they called upon their 'kin':

Not heedless of your high descent,  
 The grand old Anglo-Saxon race,  
 To check with stern unflinching mace  
 The swarming, hungry Orient.<sup>4</sup>

The ‘Great White Fleet’ may have gained its name from the colour of its paintwork, but it had an unmistakably racial resonance in Australia (and, for that matter, New Zealand).

This upsurge of Anglo–Saxon solidarity was partly inspired by the widespread fear of a resurgent Japan, which had stunned the world by defeating a European great power, Russia, in 1905. Australians and Americans alike were uneasy about the rise of this new strategic competitor, but their fears were magnified by the existence of the Anglo–Japanese Alliance. Australians could see that this might constrain Britain from defending the British Empire’s interests in the Pacific. The Americans, for their part, could imagine a conflict between Japan and the United States, in which the British Empire — including Australia — would be obliged to support its Asian ally. Consequently, while accepting the enthusiastic hospitality of the southern dominions, American naval officers from the Great White Fleet discreetly collected intelligence on the defences of the ports they visited, leading to the preparation of plans to attack Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Albany, and Fremantle and Perth.<sup>5</sup>

Too much should not be made of this covert underside to the hugely popular naval visit. It is a salutary reminder that strategies are driven by perceptions of national interests, not merely by sentiment. But defence planners are paid to make plans for all sorts of scenarios, and there is little to suggest that these plans were much more than ‘exercises to keep the junior officers busy’.<sup>6</sup> Far more important is the immensely strong sense, at least on the Australian side, of an assumed kinship with the United States. At a time when many in Britain, its self-governing dominions, the United States and elsewhere were unapologetic in proclaiming the solidarity of the ‘grand old Anglo–Saxon race’, this was a powerful sentiment underlying Australian

attitudes to national security and to the potential role of the United States in that security. In later decades, governments of consciously multi-ethnic countries would be much more circumspect in their language, speaking of their shared culture and values, rather than race, but these instincts have remained close to the surface and have occasionally broken that surface.

On the face of it, the three decades after the visit of the Great White Fleet contributed little to the development of the Australian–American alliance. For much of this period, Australia’s relations with its supposed ‘big brother in America’, like relations between Britain and the United States, were at best distant and often strained. Nevertheless, in another sense these decades were highly important. During this time, most clearly in the wartime and post-war years when W.M. Hughes was Prime Minister (1915–23), Australia developed a fundamental part of its strategic culture. Essentially, this took the form of an unwritten contract. Australia demonstrated its willingness to incur huge sacrifice in blood and treasure in the imperial cause, but in return it expected more than simply the blanket of imperial protection. Hughes expected — in fact, demanded — access and real influence at the centre of imperial policy-making. Australian leaders of this era accepted the doctrine that, in peace as in war, the British Empire of which they were a proud part spoke with one voice in international affairs. But they also wanted to be assured, and to assure their electorate, that the single imperial policy was designed to promote Australia’s national interests as effectively as those of ‘the mother country’ and the other constituent parts of the British Empire. (This had been the thrust of reforms that Alfred Deakin had pressed at the Colonial Conference of 1907.) Australia did not want to fight the United Kingdom’s wars, but was willing to fight the British Empire’s wars, on the understanding that Australia would contribute substantially to the Empire’s decisions on which wars to fight and how to fight them.

Thus it was that Hughes became a highly active and assertive member of the Imperial War Cabinet in London and the British Empire Delegation to the peace conference at Versailles. He saw no inconsistency in presenting Australia as both an independent nation

and a constituent member of the British Empire. Moreover, Hughes placed great emphasis on his expectation that all members of the Empire should link their trading, financial and intelligence relationships closely with their imperial security relationships. Australians today may regret a great deal of what Hughes said and did in those years, for he contributed substantially to those aspects of British policy which are now seen as short-sighted, leading to the disasters of the 1930s and 1940s. But the point here is that, in broad strategic terms, he was doing what Australians wanted then and have continued to seek. Australians would bear huge losses, such as 60,000 dead from a population of five million, provided they could be assured of both substantial assistance if and when necessary, and real influence on the highest levels of allied policy-making. To achieve this goal, Australia sought the closest possible integration of policy-making, intelligence, technological and economic resources, so that the collective policy would benefit not only the Empire's metropole but also its peripheral (and therefore most vulnerable) members, like Australia.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Australia's strategic culture had little to do with the United States. Although one historian was exaggerating when he described the relationship as 'enmity',<sup>7</sup> Australians (like Britons) did not greatly like or trust Americans at this time. Australians were determined to place all their strategic eggs in the imperial basket. The Ottawa Agreements showed that Australia looked to the British Empire to solve the economic crisis, just as it looked to the Singapore Strategy to secure its military defence. Administrative measures in foreign affairs, such as the appointment of R.G. Casey as the prime minister's 'liaison officer' in the British Cabinet Office and the attaching of Australian diplomats to British embassies, illustrated the constant effort to find mechanisms that would maximise Australian influence on the policies of the British Empire. The trade diversion episode of 1936 showed that, to meet real or assumed imperial needs, Australia was willing to alienate both its major strategic threat, Japan, and the only potential ally capable of meeting that threat, the United States. In general, Australia's policy-making in the 1920s and 1930s showed how much of the country's natural leadership had been destroyed in the carnage of Gallipoli and

the Western Front. All too often in those years, anyone who suggested that Australia might gain something by looking to American models or policies was regarded as almost a traitor, seeking to undermine the British Empire, Australia's only trustworthy source of security.

### **The Second World War and 'Australia looks to America'**

In the desperation of 1939–41 Australia was willing to look to the United States, but as a support for the British Empire, not as a substitute source of security. When the government led by R.G. Menzies sent Australia's first independent diplomatic representative to Washington, it chose Casey, the epitome of the Anglo–Australian, a man who would come to serve both the United Kingdom and Australian governments in both Cabinet and vice-regal positions. Much of Casey's skill in personal diplomacy was devoted to smoothing relations between leading Britons and Americans. Access to influential policy-makers was always high on Casey's agenda, even if he was often unsure how to use that access. The key question for Australians between late 1939 and late 1941 was how to persuade the United States to enter the war in support of the British Empire. The Japanese solved the problem by attacking Pearl Harbor.

The subsequent conquest by the Japanese of British colonial territories in what Britain called 'the Far East' and Menzies had called Australia's 'Near North' formed the background to the statement that is often portrayed as the genesis of the Australian–American alliance. Curtin famously stated:

Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pang as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.

The context is not well understood. The celebrated sentence was not a carefully considered expression of Australian strategic policy. It came in a New Year's message, largely drafted by Curtin's press secretary, D.K. Rodgers — a highly adept 'spin doctor' long before that term was

coined — and published on 27 December 1941. The full text of the statement placed as much attention to the need to place Australia on a war footing domestically as it did to its external strategy. On strategy, it gave as much attention to the prospects for support from Russia as to the need for American aid. It summarised Australia's external policy goals as 'obtaining Russian aid and working out, with the United States as the major factor, a plan of Pacific strategy, along with the British, Chinese and Dutch forces'. In dealing with 'the Pacific struggle', Curtin said that 'the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the Democracies' fighting plan'. The message pointed to the importance of Russian and American aid in what was not merely 'a phase of the struggle with the Axis Powers, but ... a new war'. In this new war, Australia could no longer rely on British power, and was therefore looking to new sources of strategic support. But the longstanding goal of seeking access to, and influence on, the centre of strategic policy-making now took the shape of a plea for 'the fullest say' in shaping the strategy of the prospective new, American-led, allied coalition.

The press statement of December 1941 would probably have been read one day and forgotten the next, had not one newspaper given front-page prominence to the tone of the references to Britain and the United States. These phrases, taken out of context, made Curtin seem much more anti-British and pro-American than he had probably intended. Curtin spent much of the rest of the war emphasising his loyalty to Britain and what he quaintly called 'the British-speaking race'. It has long been known that President Franklin D. Roosevelt disliked the terms of Curtin's statement, but the relationship that Curtin forged with the Commander-in-Chief of the Southwest Pacific Area, General Douglas MacArthur, has become a fundamental element of the mythology of the Australian-American relationship. Curtin's admirers said that this relationship made Curtin 'the saviour of Australia'; his critics said that he had surrendered control of Australian military forces to an American general.

Much less has been said about the blunt message that MacArthur gave to Curtin on 1 June 1942, the morning after Japanese midget submarines had penetrated Sydney Harbour.<sup>8</sup> In one of their many private meetings

MacArthur made what was evidently a carefully prepared statement on Australia's relations with the United States and Britain. Using phrases that effectively threw Curtin's statement back in his face, MacArthur said that the United States had not come to Australia out of any sense of kinship or special responsibility for Australian sovereignty. (MacArthur was also disavowing his own statement, soon after his arrival in Australia, that his presence was 'tangible evidence' of the 'indescribable consanguinity of race' between the two countries.<sup>9</sup>) The United States, he said, regarded Australia solely as 'a base from which to hit Japan'. If Australians wanted anything more, they must look, not to America, but to Britain, to which they were linked 'by ties of blood, sentiment and allegiance to the Crown'. The unambiguous message was that the United States saw Australia as no more than (to borrow a phrase from a later period) 'a suitable piece of real estate',<sup>10</sup> a conveniently located base from which it would soon move on without a backward glance.

This episode has generally been disregarded, or gravely underestimated, by politicians and historians. It does not fit easily into the rhetoric of either side of politics. Conservatives have generally endorsed and fostered the 'Coral Sea' image of Australian-American brotherhood forged in the darkest days of the Second World War, two nations standing side by side for democracy against its totalitarian and militaristic enemies. Many leaders of the Labor Party, faced with charges that their party is ambiguous or negative towards the alliance, have retorted: 'Of course we support the alliance — we invented it, when John Curtin was Prime Minister'. It is convenient to neither side of politics (nor their respective sympathisers among historians) to admit that Curtin's famous statement was at most a clumsy overture towards some form of security relationship with the United States, and that it was unequivocally rejected. Australian public opinion was still intensely pro-British and ambivalent towards the United States. Moreover, as MacArthur made brutally clear, those responsible for American strategic policy were interested in Australia only as a temporary logistic base, and had no intention of forming a lasting strategic commitment.

Curtin's actions and statements in 1941–42 suggest that he hoped, at least briefly, to see Australia established as a significant contributor to a

new, American-led coalition to fight what he regarded as a new war. When MacArthur came to Australia as the Commander-in-Chief of the South-West Pacific Area, Curtin created the Prime Minister's War Conference, in which he met privately with MacArthur and one trusted, civilian public servant. Curtin evidently hoped to establish a close and confidential relationship with MacArthur and thereby to gain access to the highest levels of strategic policy-making in Washington, equivalent to that which previous Australian prime ministers had sought in their relations with London. But it was in a meeting of the Prime Minister's War Conference that MacArthur delivered his blunt message of 1 June 1942.

Moreover, Australian efforts towards similar ends by creating new channels in Washington were similarly unsuccessful. Curtin and his Minister for External Affairs, Dr H.V. Evatt, sought the establishment of a Pacific War Council in Washington, with Australian representation. Initially they had to be satisfied with a London-based Pacific War Council, with the assurance that Australian views expressed there would be conveyed to Washington. When a Pacific War Council was established in Washington, its membership was wider than the Australians had hoped. It 'gave Australian representatives access to President Roosevelt', but 'it never made decisions of substance and remained purely advisory and consultative'.<sup>11</sup> The challenge of access was exacerbated by American reactions to Evatt's policies and diplomatic style. At times it seemed to Americans almost as if Australia had two approaches to strategy, foreign policy and Australian-American relations, one associated with the decent and cooperative Curtin and the other with the abrasive and untrustworthy Evatt.<sup>12</sup>

In any case it is unlikely that Roosevelt would ever have allowed Australia, or any other power of comparable size, to have the sort of influence to which the Australians aspired. The major strategic decisions for the Allies were taken by Roosevelt and Churchill, either in their confidential communications or in high-level strategic conferences, often with the Soviet and Chinese leaders. From the Atlantic Conference in 1941 through Casablanca, Moscow and Cairo in 1943 to Yalta in 1945, Australia was excluded from these conferences, even when matters directly affecting Australian security were at stake.

Little wonder, then, that for the rest of the war Curtin said little about the United States in his off-the-record briefings to a trusted circle of reporters. His few references displayed, not 'the veneration and gratitude of an Australian Prime Minister for a great and powerful friend' but 'a sort of wearied resignation about what must be ... [or] a sardonic emphasis on motivations and outcomes that borders on contempt'.<sup>13</sup> These were the sour reactions of a rejected suitor.

The United States came out of the Second World War with unmatched prestige, military power and economic strength. As soon became apparent, its only serious strategic competitor was the Soviet Union, together with its satellites and supporters. There was inevitably a long line of more or less democratic countries that hoped for the closest possible security relationship with Washington. For its part, the United States was understandably cautious about accepting overseas commitments. For example, the Australian government led by J.B. Chifley (1945-49), particularly Evatt who retained the External Affairs portfolio, was much criticised for its alleged failure to ensure that the United States maintained the wartime base that it had established on Manus Island in the Admiralty Islands, within the Australian mandated territory of New Guinea. This was probably unfair, for maintenance of the Manus Island base simply did not fit into the US Navy's global strategy after 1945. But the substance and style of Evatt's diplomacy, in peace as in war, did little to endear him to the Americans, and reduced whatever minimal chance there might have been for some form of strategic relationship.

Moreover, the existence of a small group of officers in Evatt's department who were leaking classified documents to the Soviet Union made it impossible for Australia to remain 'in the loop' of exchanges of intelligence, especially on matters affecting strategy in the emerging Cold War. This was a severe blow, for this was precisely the time when the huge wartime advances in intelligence techniques and operations were being translated into peacetime exchange arrangements between the United States and its new Cold War allies. The most important, and most trusted, of these was Britain, soon to be joined by Canada, but for the moment Australia was excluded from the inner circle of

this 'Anglosphere'. The Chifley Government established the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation to show that it could, and would, protect sensitive intelligence, but the United States remained unconvinced throughout the late 1940s. In neither war nor peace, therefore, could the Labor governments of the 1940s 'sell' an American alliance to the electorate on the basis of guaranteed strategic support, access to policy-makers, access to intelligence, or anything else. There was simply no alliance to sell.

## Chapter 2

### From ANZUS to Vietnam

#### **The creation of ANZUS and its early years**

In December 1949 the Liberal–Country Party Coalition led by R. G. (later Sir Robert) Menzies came to office, with Percy Spender as Minister for External Affairs. From the outset Spender was determined to upgrade Australia's relationship with the United States, and especially to secure some form of Pacific security pact. That aspiration had limited prospects until June 1950, when the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung made the strategic blunder of invading South Korea while the Soviet Union was boycotting the United Nations Security Council. The outbreak of the Korean War created an opening, a brief moment when Australia had an unusual degree of leverage with the United States in its search for a security agreement. The United States now needed allies in the Asia–Pacific region, and especially respectable allies who would support a 'soft' peace treaty with Japan. Spender skilfully maximised the opportunity by ensuring the prompt commitment of Australian forces from all three services, pressing his case for a security treaty with 'tremendous verve, sense of timing, elasticity, capacity to guide public opinion, and negotiatory skill'.<sup>14</sup> The 'Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America', soon to

become known as the ANZUS Treaty, was signed on 1 September 1951 and came into effect in April 1952.

At the time and in subsequent years most attention was focused on the security guarantee included in the ANZUS Treaty. Concern was expressed in some quarters that it was not as strong as the mutual commitment embodied in the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 that created NATO. But Spender always had other goals in mind. During the 1939–45 war, as Minister for the Army and then one of the Opposition's representatives on the Advisory War Council, Spender had seen how difficult it had been for Australia — as for many other small nations — to have any influence on higher strategic policy. Australia's resentment at being omitted from the major strategic conferences during the war reflected more than Evatt's ambition and egotism. It arose from the fundamental sense of many Australian political leaders that the country's service and sacrifice warranted a seat at the top table and a substantial voice in global decisions. Australia's exclusion from strategic influence seemed unfair.

Spender's eagerness to achieve a security treaty with the United States was therefore based on more than simply a fervent desire to gain a security guarantee. It also reflected his hope to create an avenue towards influence on American policy-makers and strategic planners, both civilian and military, while policy was still being formed. In particular, Spender and other Australians wanted to see a direct link between the Australian and American Chiefs of Staff. When this was raised during the treaty negotiations, the US Joint Chiefs vigorously rejected it, but this was conveyed so diplomatically to the Australians that their hopes persisted. In May 1952 Menzies and Spender, visiting Washington en route to London, sought a 'long heart-to-heart talk' with Truman and his Secretary of State, Dean Acheson. As Acheson later recorded, 'Menzies wanted to discuss some way in which Australia could participate in discussions of what he referred to as "global strategy", chiefly on the military side.' By this time the Australian desire for a permanent relationship between the Australian and American Chiefs of Staff was becoming 'a serious and embarrassing problem' for the United States. They postponed

the issue until the first meeting of the ANZUS Council in August 1952. There Acheson and the Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Command (CINCPAC), Admiral Arthur Radford, decided that (as Acheson reported to Truman) 'instead of starving the Australians and New Zealanders [of information] we would give them indigestion'. For two days the high-level delegation discussed political and military issues with the 'utmost frankness and fullness'. The result was that the Australians pronounced themselves satisfied with political liaison through the ANZUS Council and military consultation through the office of CINCPAC, located in Hawaii.<sup>15</sup>

Thus the pattern was set for the next several years. Casey, Spender's long-serving successor in External Affairs (1951–60), had a different diplomatic style but spoke privately of the benefits of ANZUS in similar terms. Casey was not unduly concerned by the terms of the security guarantee. It was sufficient to give any potential aggressor pause, he said, and to give the Australians the basis for an appeal for American aid. Casey, as ever, emphasised the value of access to political decision-makers, being suitably impressed by the time and effort that Acheson and other senior officials were willing to devote to frank discussion at ANZUS Council meetings. But Casey was, according to his biographer, 'dissembling' when he claimed similar access to American military planning. This remained a source of frustration for the Australians, who long held the view, probably based on a naïve view of the Pentagon's *modus operandi*, that they were being denied access to the heart of American military planning.

The 1950s and early 1960s did not, as is sometimes glibly stated, see a simple transfer of Australian alliance loyalty from Britain to the United States. In fact it was a time in which Australia saw strategic value in having, in Menzies's famous phrase, 'great and powerful friends'. The significance of the plural in that phrase has often been underestimated. In the early 1950s Menzies thought of other European powers, with interests in Australia's region, as actual or potential friends, but the processes of decolonisation removed them. France left after the humiliation of Dien Bien Phu; the Netherlands 'lost' most of their former East Indies in 1949 and West New Guinea in the early

1960s; and the reactionary nature of Portuguese rule in East Timor ensured that they could not be seen as useful allies. So the famous 'friends' came down to two, Britain and the United States.

With the benefits of hindsight, we can now see the two decades from 1945 to 1965 as a transition period in Australia's primary alliance relationship. The Menzies Government sought at times to use the British connection — or its broader manifestation, the Commonwealth — as a means of reaching the holy grail, access to American strategy. More typically, Menzies became adept in using Britain and the Commonwealth as restraints on American policy, especially in matters affecting China. When the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, made a dash to Washington during the Korean War to ensure that the Americans were not about to deploy nuclear weapons, the Australians were giving discreet support.<sup>16</sup> When the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, sought Australian membership of a coalition to take 'united action' against Chinese and Vietnamese communism in 1954, Australia used Britain's unsympathetic attitude, and the coincidence of an imminent election, to conceal its reluctance.<sup>17</sup> During the off-shore islands crisis of 1954–55 Menzies became, in effect, a spokesman for Britain and New Zealand as well as Australia in expressing the Commonwealth view that some tiny islands in the Taiwan Straits were not worth a world war.<sup>18</sup> Historians have fairly recently begun to explore the subtleties of Australian, British and American policies on atomic weapons. Australia's willingness to allow the Monte Bello islands and Maralinga as the location for British tests, for example, was part of a vision of a revived British Empire with a shared nuclear capacity.<sup>19</sup> This would ensure that the Western alliance did not have to rely entirely on the United States for its security in the worst-case scenario.

In 1956 Menzies believed himself to be in the inner councils of British imperial policy during the Suez crisis, although it remains entirely possible that his loyalty was exploited by the United Kingdom Prime Minister, Anthony Eden.<sup>20</sup> In this crisis Britain's policies, and therefore Australia's, were in conflict with those of the United States. Menzies strongly criticised the United States President, Dwight D.

Eisenhower, for pulling the rug from under Eden. But in the following year he announced that Australia would henceforth standardise its military equipment with the United States, instead of Britain. Even though Australian forces were at this time fighting alongside those from Britain and other Commonwealth countries in Malaya, and would do so again during the Indonesian Confrontation of Malaysia from 1963 to 1966, it was clear where the substantial military power lay. Beginning with guided missile destroyers for the Royal Australian Navy and F111 strike aircraft for the Royal Australian Air Force, purchases of major equipment from this time onwards were generally sourced from, and facilitated interoperability with, the United States.

By the late 1950s, therefore, the Australian government had for some years been seeking access to American strategic planning, and was starting to look towards a close association with American defence technology. But public discussions of the ANZUS alliance concentrated on the security guarantee and seldom mentioned these supposed benefits. The principal strategic threat was seen as emanating from communist, especially Chinese, aggression in Asia. The Australian response was the posture known as 'forward defence', which essentially meant that Australia would structure its forces and equipment to act alongside Britain and the United States in Southeast Asia. The great Australian fear was that either or both of these powers might withdraw from Southeast Asia, leaving Australia and other non-communist countries in the region exposed.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s Australian leaders gave at least as much attention to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), created by the Manila Pact of 1954, as to ANZUS. SEATO included both Britain and the United States, and Australia participated enthusiastically in SEATO's political and military planning institutions. These, it was hoped, might provide the long-sought access to American strategy. During the Laos crises between 1959 and 1962, Australia continued to place its strategic planning for Southeast Asia in a SEATO framework. This seemed the best way to lock the United States into military support for the non-communist countries of the region, but the Australians also recalled that, during



the Korean War, General MacArthur's advance to the Yalu River had brought the world dangerously close to all-out war with China, in which the Americans might have been tempted to use nuclear weapons. The multilateral framework of SEATO implied that, in the event of conflict, there would be more effective political constraints on an American military commander.<sup>21</sup>

For these reasons Australian political leaders continued to evoke SEATO at least as much as ANZUS, when they spoke of the value of the relationship with the United States in providing strategic support for Australia. This emphasis continued through the tension-filled years of the early 1960s, culminating in the main military commitment to Vietnam in 1965, even while it was becoming increasingly evident that SEATO had too many flaws to be a reliable basis for Australia's security. But official discussions and public rhetoric centred on the ability and willingness of Australia's two great and powerful allies to guarantee Australian security. Much less attention was given to what might be called the subsidiary or associated benefits of the alliance — access to strategic planning, access to intelligence, access to advanced equipment, and the like. In the early 1960s Australians believed that their national security was seriously threatened, and they wanted to know whether they could count on military support from their great and powerful friends.

### **The 1960s and the Vietnam War**

In 1962 Australia made its first military commitment, a 'training team' of 30 Army advisers, to the developing conflict in Vietnam.<sup>22</sup> Denis Warner, a leading journalist and foreign correspondent, explained the decision to the Australian public in a question-and-answer article:

Why is Australia getting involved in the Vietnam war?

Partly because we think a Communist victory there would threaten the rest of Southeast Asia and jeopardise our security and partly because of the need to convince the Americans that we are more than paper allies.

Amplifying the latter point, he added: 'It's a sort of life insurance cover we're taking out.'<sup>23</sup> Thus even this minuscule beginning to what would become Australia's third-largest military commitment was explained partly as Australia's premium for its strategic insurance, the promise of assistance included in the ANZUS Treaty. Three years later, when Australia committed its first battalion of combat troops to the war, one of the toughest realists in the region saw the commitment in similar terms. When advised by an Australian diplomat of the decision, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, said: 'Well, you know, you have to pay your premium for American protection; but, my word, the price is really rising.'<sup>24</sup> Ever since then, the 'insurance policy' concept has generally been advanced, especially but not solely by critics of the commitment, as its principal motive. As will be observed below, the well-worn arguments were iterated at the time of the Iraq commitment in 2003. Once again, it was asserted, Australia was involving itself in a highly risky, potentially disastrous, overseas conflict, not to defend its national interests but to ensure the favour of its powerful and protective ally.

Concern for the continuing health of the alliance was undoubtedly one of the principal forces behind Australia's commitment to Vietnam, but it was not the whole story. Australia's political leaders saw the crisis in Vietnam as directly affecting Australia's national and regional interests, as well as the credibility of its principal ally. Although much criticised at the time and since, the 'domino theory' had some force, provided it was expressed with some subtlety and nuance. As was implied in Denis Warner's succinct summary, Australian policy-makers genuinely thought that a communist victory in South Vietnam would 'threaten the rest of Southeast Asia and jeopardise [Australia's] security'. 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. This argument was deployed at the time and long afterwards, most notably by Lee and other Singaporeans.

There was, moreover, a regional aspect to alliance considerations at this time, which has too often been overlooked or underestimated. Australian policy-makers were by this time acutely conscious that, although the United States had global interests, it did not pay the same degree of attention to all regions of the world. It was now clear that the United States would not return to the general isolationism of the 1920s and 1930s, but would usually take much more of an interest in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and Northeast Asia than it would in the remainder of Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the South Pacific. Consequently Australian policy-makers, particularly Robert Menzies (Prime Minister 1949–66) and Paul Hasluck (Minister for External Affairs 1964–69), welcomed the fact that the United States had undertaken a major strategic commitment in Vietnam, giving Southeast Asia an unusual prominence in Washington's strategic agenda. The crucial goal for Australia, as it seemed to them, was to lock the United States into this region, which was far more significant strategically to Australia than to the superpower on the other side of the Pacific. That consideration overruled concerns that Vietnam was a highly risky battleground to choose for a 'hot' conflict in the Cold War. That was why Menzies told the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of Cabinet, in a crucial meeting on Vietnam, that 'We are looking for a way in, not a way out.'<sup>25</sup>

This Australian fear, not of a general American isolationism but of a selective disregard for certain parts of the world, also underpinned Australia's willingness to use its geographical location to lock the United States into involvement in the region, and especially for support for Australia. In the late 1950s Australian ministers had told Washington that they would do everything they could to meet any American request to place defence-related facilities in Australia. The first significant proposal of this nature was for a naval communications station at North-West Cape in Western Australia, to permit communications with US Navy vessels, particularly submarines, in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian waters. In the negotiations over this proposal the Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick, sought conditions for consultation on use of the station. Barwick's concerns for Australian

sovereignty were overruled by the Cabinet, which approved the proposal with minimal requirements for consultation, seeking little more than 'a form of words which ... will assist the Government in the public presentation of its decision.'<sup>26</sup>

The government thus decided, with both strategic and electoral considerations in mind, to give the United States a large degree of freedom to use Australian soil for defence-related facilities. It calculated that concerns over Australian sovereignty, and over the risk that Australia might become a target in a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union, were outweighed by the demonstration that Australia was playing its part in American global strategy, and thus paying its premium on its strategic insurance policy. The calculation proved spectacularly successful, when issues surrounding the North-West Cape station divided the Australian Labor Party Opposition and contributed to its defeat at the November 1963 general election. Later in the 1960s the Liberal–Country Party Coalition signed further agreements with the United States, providing for a 'joint defence space research facility' at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs, in 1966 and a 'joint defence space communications station' at Nurrungar, near Woomera, in 1969. The controversial 'joint facilities' were commonly called 'American bases' by their critics on the left of Australian politics, but the electorate seemed to accept, indeed to welcome, their presence as assurances of American strategic interest in Australia.

In the early and mid-1960s the fear of being isolated and exposed in a volatile region, without the support of great and powerful friends, was sharpened by the indications that the United Kingdom was increasingly determined to withdraw from its commitments 'east of Suez'. Moreover, that withdrawal was complicated by the Indonesian policy of 'Confrontation' of the new federation of Malaysia between 1963 and 1966. London was painting this threat to a Commonwealth partner in extreme terms, while trying to avoid anything more than a minimal commitment to Vietnam. Washington, by contrast, insisted that Confrontation was essentially a minor skirmish that the Commonwealth countries could handle relatively easily, while the decisive theatre for the future of Southeast Asia was the growing conflict in Vietnam.

The professional diplomats in the Department of External Affairs, for their part, were determined to shape and implement a policy that was framed by Australian national interests, 'refined but not defined' by alliance considerations.

Caught between these competing pressures, Australia's constant search for access and influence at the highest strategic levels took the form of seeking 'quadripartite talks' – that is to say, frank and confidential talks between the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, to co-ordinate their policies in Southeast Asia. For a time in the early 1960s, 'quadripartite talks' became the new holy grail for Australian diplomacy. There were in fact such talks, in February 1963, but Australia was represented only at official rather than ministerial level. In general the United States was reluctant to respond to the Australian pressure. As American officials told the Australians, Asian opinion would not be impressed by the sight of four predominantly Anglo-Saxon nations seeking to determine the fate of a large part of Asia.

Australia therefore turned to more traditional forms of diplomatic exchange to seek its alliance goals — a strong assurance of American support, both diplomatic and potentially military, in the face of a volatile and seemingly expansionist Indonesia. Australian ministers, moved by media and public concerns, wanted to be able to state publicly that ANZUS guarantees would apply if Australian and Indonesian forces came into conflict, either over Papua New Guinea (especially in 1962–63) or over Malaysia (from 1963 onwards). This was a principal theme of Australian–American talks when the American Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, visited Canberra in 1962 for the first ANZUS Council meeting to be held in Australia; when Rusk's deputy, Averell Harriman, visited Canberra in 1963, after the ANZUS Council met in Wellington; and when Menzies saw President John F. Kennedy and Rusk in Washington the same year. The culmination came in October 1963 when Kennedy, Rusk and Barwick agreed on a document that gave Australia the assurance it sought, but with a considerable number of restrictions and conditions.

In April 1964 Barwick told a press conference that ANZUS guarantees applied to Australian servicemen in Borneo, where some

had just been committed and more were likely to be sent. His tone was more confident than was warranted by the document of October 1963 or President Kennedy's known attitude. Immediately afterwards Barwick was appointed Chief Justice of the High Court, amid speculation that he was being chastised for his excessively confident interpretation of the alliance commitment. This was probably an oversimplification of the politics of Barwick's appointment, but within days Menzies was telling parliament that Australia's confidence in American support under ANZUS rested on 'the utmost goodwill', not on detailed and documented assurances.

The following month the United States approached its allies around the world, seeking 'more flags' in South Vietnam — that is, military and non-military assistance from as many countries as possible, to demonstrate that Vietnam was a concern for the whole 'free world', not just the United States. The Australian Embassy in Washington recommended a prompt and positive response, specifically linking it to the question of ANZUS and Confrontation and the limits imposed by the document of October 1963. Australia's aim, according to the embassy, was

to achieve such an habitual closeness of relations with the United States and sense of mutual alliance that in our time of need, after we have shown all reasonable restraint and good sense, the United States would have little option but to respond as we would want.<sup>27</sup>

This message picked up, not only the tenor of statements by Menzies and others, but also the implications of Harriman's broad hints, during his talks in Canberra, that American support for Australia in Confrontation would be greatly affected by the strength of Australian support for the United States in Vietnam.

To a substantial degree, therefore, the Australian commitment to Vietnam was influenced, not just by the general idea that Australia had to pay a premium for a strategic insurance policy, but by a more immediate and specific concern. The Australian government wanted

an assurance, and the ability to assure its electorate, that the American alliance would protect Australian servicemen in Borneo, if the small skirmishes there during Indonesia's Confrontation of Malaysia should escalate into more substantial conflict.

Closely associated with the change from Barwick to Hasluck as Minister for External Affairs was a pronounced change in Australian attitudes towards the substance and management of the Australian-American alliance. Barwick, an independently minded minister who had gained a formidable reputation as a barrister in Sydney before entering politics, established a close relationship with the senior officials in the Department of External Affairs. The diplomats had themselves developed considerably in capacity, confidence and professionalism, especially during the tenure of Arthur Tange as departmental secretary (1954–65). With their support, Barwick challenged what he saw as excessive American intrusions into Australian sovereignty through the 'joint facilities'; he subjected American officials, up to and including Rusk, to what amounted to a vigorous cross-examination on their policies, especially their determination to stand firmly in Southeast Asia; and he sought the greatest possible level of detail on the ANZUS guarantee and its application to Confrontation. As already noted, his public statements tended to paint the strength of American support under ANZUS in stronger colours than President Kennedy and some of his officials thought desirable. External Affairs officials, especially Tange, also emphasised that Australia needed to know in some detail what the United States would do and what it would expect Australia to do, especially in any potential conflict involving Indonesia, because this would influence Australian decisions about the size, structure and equipment of the armed services.

Hasluck, by contrast, always supported Menzies, who took the view that Australia would be wise not to press these matters too far in private, nor to make excessive claims in public. Pressure on the United States Government to define precisely what support it would provide in a given scenario would only lead to narrower, rather than broader, prescriptions. Menzies and Hasluck believed that American support for Australia would be maximised by speaking in general terms of goodwill

and mutual confidence, leaving the details to be decided if and when a crisis arose. In the meantime, Australia should respond promptly and positively to American requests for assistance in Vietnam and elsewhere, and facilitate the operation of the joint facilities, without imposing unreasonable demands for consultation or joint control. Although this was not made explicit, it seems that Menzies and Hasluck believed that these gestures, together with strong political and diplomatic support, would obscure how small a military contribution Australia was capable of making. Menzies and Hasluck thus aimed to create an atmosphere of goodwill in Washington, which they thought was more likely to generate American support in a crisis than a detailed document negotiated by a keen-minded and sharp-tongued barrister.

In these approaches to alliance management, Menzies and Hasluck were more typical of Australian leaders throughout the twentieth century than were Barwick and Tange. In another, however, Hasluck rejected the pattern. With Barwick's support, Tange created a Policy Planning Office in the Department of External Affairs, to give attention to longer-term issues. Rusk expressed support for the idea that this office might be in frequent contact with its counterparts in the US State Department, thus offering the Australians a major step towards their longstanding goal — access to developments in American strategic policies while policy formation was still fluid and open to influence. Hasluck, however, took an extraordinarily limited view of the role of officials in giving policy advice to ministers, especially in External Affairs. The whole idea of policy planning within External Affairs was anathema to him, and thus the opportunity was missed.

With this curious exception there remained, throughout all the tense and anxious alliance diplomacy of the early 1960s, a sense that Australia was still looking eagerly for a largely chimerical goal. Whether through meetings of the ANZUS and SEATO councils, through determined and sometimes aggressive questioning of senior Americans like Rusk and Harriman, through pressure for 'quadripartite talks', or through the standard, bilateral, diplomatic and military channels, Australians constantly sought access to what one Cabinet minute described as 'the inner political thinking and defence planning' of the United States.<sup>28</sup>

At times it almost seemed that Australian ministers believed that American strategic policy, at its highest level, emerged from some secret conclave, rather than being formed by a never-ending debate between the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress and its principal committees, and numerous other agencies and individuals. Australia had, in fact, better access than most countries to high level officials in the relevant agencies. President Lyndon B. Johnson's warmth towards Harold Holt, while soliciting Australian diplomatic and military support in Vietnam, led Holt to his foolish, off-the-cuff, reference to Johnson's campaign slogan, 'all the way with LBJ', a misleading and politically damaging rendering of the relationship. But Australians never gained the access to the 'inner political thinking and defence planning' that they sought, partly because there was no secret conclave to which access could be given or denied, and partly because Washington's most important political and military decision-makers, especially those in the Pentagon, were normally reluctant to share their plans with Australia, until those plans were decided and set. In the transactions on strategic policy, Australia was a price-taker, not a price-setter.

Many of these matters were discussed only by a small political and official class of strategic policy 'insiders'. Public discussion of the alliance was conducted in broad, not to say crude, terms. The commitment to Vietnam was often portrayed as the premium on Australia's strategic insurance, sometimes with particular reference to the effect of Indonesia on the general equation. The controversies associated with the Vietnam War, however, put these issues at the top of the Australian political agenda for many years. The broad questions in the Australian-American relationship — alliance *versus* independence, global allegiances *versus* regional commitments, dependence *versus* dignity — were not new, but were now debated with unprecedented vigour and emotion.

## Chapter 3

### The Challenges of the 1970s and 1980s

#### The post-Vietnam reassessment

The 1970s were the worst of times for the Americans and for supporters of the American alliance. The fall of Saigon in 1975 was widely seen as a strategic failure, and proponents of the alliance were placed on the defensive. From the left, critics alleged that the alliance linked Australia to American arrogance, strategic unwisdom, political immorality and military incompetence. On the right, other critics — fewer in number and less vocal — argued that the American failure to stay the course in Vietnam showed that the United States was not a reliable ally. This was a harsh assessment, after the United States had lost 58,000 lives and billions of dollars in the defence of South Vietnam, but it had some influence among Australian policy-makers.

Moreover, Vietnam seemed to be just the most public and costly manifestation of America's travails. The Watergate affair culminated in the humiliating resignation of President Richard M. Nixon in 1974. Congressional committees revealed damaging information about American intelligence and security agencies, most famously the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which were seen to have intervened illegally in the politics of both hostile and friendly countries. The counter-

culture developed such strength that some Americans talked seriously of the risk of a revolution. After 1945 the United States saw itself, and was widely seen by many around the world, as a symbol of strength in the support of democracy and freedom; after 1965, and especially after 1975, it was becoming a symbol of warped values and failure.

The Americans instigated their own post-Vietnam assessment some years before Saigon fell. In 1969 President Nixon, in what became known as ‘the Guam doctrine’ and later ‘the Nixon doctrine’, asserted that American allies must bear a greater share of their defence burden. They should expect the United States to intervene only in the case of severe, and especially nuclear, threats to their security. The doctrine, clearly a reaction to the enormous and seemingly unending cost of the Vietnam War, was directed particularly towards the Asia–Pacific region, and greatly troubled Australian policy-makers. The politics of the alliance in the early 1970s were related largely to the withdrawal of allied forces from Vietnam and the war’s ignominious end. To Australian eyes it seemed that the bitter experience of Vietnam was leading the United States to concentrate once more on its northern hemisphere interests, at the expense of regions closer to Australia.

Nor did the change of administration in Washington in 1977, when the Democrat Jimmy Carter succeeded the Republican Gerald R. Ford (who completed Nixon’s truncated term) in the White House, bring much joy to Australian policy-makers. At their first meeting in 1977, Carter told Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser of his support for the idea of making the Indian Ocean a demilitarised zone. The Australians were ‘flabbergasted’, taking the view that Carter had chosen ‘the most distant location from his own territory’ for this ‘experiment in disarmament’.<sup>29</sup> The value of American strategic support to an ally in the Southern Hemisphere was, it seemed, threatened as much by demilitarising Democrats as it had been by robust Republicans.

In the early 1970s the Labor Party, particularly its left wing, became increasingly critical of the joint facilities, especially those at Pine Gap and Nurrungar. Their operations were seen not only as infringements on Australian sovereignty but also as linking Australia to American military doctrines and strategies, which might lead to a threat to

Australian territory in the event of an American–Soviet nuclear exchange. Moreover, a suspicion grew that, under the cover of ‘defence space research’, these facilities might be directly linked to American intelligence agencies, especially the CIA. The Labor Party entered the 1972 election with a policy that opposed foreign facilities on Australian soil, especially if they detracted from Australian sovereignty. Its electoral victory in December and the formation of the first federal Labor government in 23 years coincided with the ‘Christmas bombing’, a severe campaign of American bombing in North Vietnam designed to force the Hanoi regime back to the negotiating table. Some newly appointed ministers in the new Labor government, who had led anti-war demonstrations when in Opposition, joined the worldwide outburst of anti-American protests, describing the Nixon Administration as maniacs, thugs and mass murderers. Nixon was furious at this reaction from a country that had for so long been a staunch and loyal ally, and let it be known that Australia ranked with anti-war Sweden as the two Western countries lowest in Washington’s esteem. The combination of issues arising from the Vietnam commitment and the joint facilities was placing the continued existence of the Australian–American alliance in jeopardy.

In this climate the new Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, sought to steer a course that allowed the alliance to continue, and the joint facilities to remain, while distancing his government from support for American policies in Vietnam and securing enough concessions for Australian sovereignty to pacify his own party. With a mixture of delicate and robust diplomacy, this was narrowly achieved, but left a legacy of intergovernmental tension and extreme suspicion of the Americans within the Labor Party. Tensions were exacerbated in 1973 when Nixon placed American military installations around the world on a higher state of alert, during the Yom Kippur conflict in the Middle East. North-West Cape was automatically included in the worldwide alert, and Whitlam protested that he had not been consulted beforehand.

The most severe tensions, however, arose from events in the last days of the Whitlam Government. The political crisis that led to Whitlam’s dismissal by the Governor-General happened to coincide with a security

crisis, precipitated when a journalist revealed information linking the Pine Gap facility with the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA reacted strongly, appearing to believe that the Labor government might be about to terminate the Pine Gap agreement. This combination of events led many in and around the Labor Party to believe that the CIA might have influenced the Governor-General's decision to dismiss the Whitlam Government on 11 November 1975. No 'smoking gun' was ever produced to give conclusive support for this theory, but some Labor supporters and left-wing journalists repeatedly revived the allegation in the late 1970s and the 1980s.

All these events, and the high degree of controversy and tension associated with them, made a major reassessment of Australian strategy, and of the place of the American alliance in that strategy, inevitable. Throughout the 1970s, under the Coalition governments led by John Gorton (1968–71) and William McMahon (1971–72), then under the Whitlam Labor Government (1972–75), and finally under Malcolm Fraser (1975–83), Australia worked towards a new, and largely bipartisan, approach to Australian defence. Part of that effort was devoted to a new definition of the role and value of the American alliance, that took account both of changing American attitudes to Australia and its region and of the strength of anti-American sentiment, especially but not solely on the left of the Labor Party. Amid a considerable amount of public debate, official definitions of the new approach emerged from a 'Defence Review' published in the last days of the McMahon Government, through several major strategic reviews in the Whitlam years, to the 1976 White Paper on defence, in the first year of the Fraser Government. 'Forward defence', the phrase commonly used to summarise Australia's defence posture in the 1950s and 1960s, was now regarded as obsolete. 'Fortress Australia' and 'continental defence' were rejected, but 'self-reliance' was henceforth to be the governing concept behind Australian strategy.

The concept of 'self-reliance' implied that Australia would no longer base its force structures, equipment and training on sending expeditionary forces to fight as part of American-led (or, of declining relevance since the 1960s, British-led) coalitions in conflicts at a considerable distance. Instead it would focus on the defence of the

Australian continent, its maritime approaches and the airspace above those approaches. The three armed services were brought into a single Australian Defence Force, directed by one minister for defence, commanded by one military chief and administered by one Defence Department (absorbing the separate ministers, departments and military boards for the Navy, Army and Air Force). This reflected the expectation that the Defence Force would henceforth take part in joint operations, involving two or three Australian services, rather than having elements from each service engaged in operations alongside its American (or British) counterparts. In keeping with the 'Nixon doctrine', and with the thinking of some Australian policy-makers since the late 1950s, Australia would expect to bear the major burden of any conflict in its immediate region. American support would not be sought or expected except in severe circumstances.

'Self-reliance', however, was not intended to imply isolationism or a complete break with the United States. Given the geographical scope of the continent and its surrounding waters, its small population, its limited industrial strength, and its high labour costs, Australia would have to rely on technologically advanced equipment from a reliable source. Although the term 'revolution in military affairs' was not commonly heard until the 1990s, it was already apparent that the United States was far ahead of any other nation in defence technology. Thus, rather paradoxically, 'self-reliance' meant that Australia would still rely heavily on ANZUS, but in a different way. In public discussions of the American alliance, less emphasis would be placed on the assurances of military aid when under direct threat (as in the early 1940s) or potential threat (as in the early 1960s), and more on its value as a continuing source of defence technology and science.

This new emphasis emerged in public statements by leading politicians and officials. In July 1978, for example, Sir Arthur Tange, Secretary of the Defence Department since 1970 and the public servant most esteemed by Malcolm Fraser, observed that the ANZUS Council meeting in Washington the previous month had supported an Australian proposal for closer supply and support arrangements. Tange said that public discussion of ANZUS had for too long been concerned with

the reliability of assurances of American military aid when Australia was under attack. Any such assistance, he said, would depend upon American strategic interests at the time of an attack and upon American assessments of Australia's own performance. Too little attention had been given, Tange contended, to the benefits Australia received from the continuing flow of high technology, from access to defence science, from realistic military exercises conducted with the United States, and (mentioned only in passing) from intelligence exchanges. These, he said, were the real benefits of the ANZUS Treaty.

Ideas like these 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. During the next twenty years, it would be increasingly common for political leaders to point out that ANZUS gave Australia a privileged position in access to American defence science and technology. Sometimes it was argued, or at least implied, that this was no less significant than the specific terms of any American security guarantee, whether in the ANZUS Treaty itself or in documents such as that obtained in 1963. In the 1970s and 1980s, few direct, military threats to Australian security could be foreseen. Consequently, it was argued, Australia's wisest course, to gain the maximum benefit from the ANZUS alliance, was to focus on technical co-operation, where the two countries already had a substantial network of agreements. The challenge for Australian policy-makers was, as Tange put it in 1978, to 'ensure that [these] understandings and arrangements between us and our American ally are closely nurtured and imaginatively developed'.

### **The new challenges of the 1980s**

The reassessment of the 1970s, especially the late 1970s, was based partly on the assumption that the world was entering a period of prolonged détente. In fact the 1980s saw a sharp renewal of the Cold War, after the United States had suffered humiliations at the hands of the North Vietnamese and the Iranians in the 1970s. Having moved into Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet Union deployed a new series of missiles in Europe. A new Republican President, Ronald W. Reagan, responded

with a clear determination to deploy whatever measures were necessary, including a controversial form of missile defence known officially as the Strategic Defense Initiative and colloquially as 'Star Wars', to ensure that the Soviets would not establish and maintain a strategic advantage. In later years Reagan's willingness to outspend Moscow on defence, which helped to expose and exacerbate the Soviet Union's structural weaknesses, was seen as crucial in ending both the Cold War and the Soviet Union itself. At the time, however, many in the West saw him as dangerously belligerent, and the Soviet-American tensions as bringing the world close to nuclear disaster. In a number of Western countries the peace movement, which always tended to blame the United States more than the Soviets for Cold War tensions, enjoyed a level of activity and support not seen since the height of the Vietnam War.

In Australia about 600,000 people marched in peace demonstrations on Palm Sunday 1984. A Nuclear Disarmament Party was formed and won a Senate seat in 1984. Peace activists, including many on the left wing of the Labor Party, demanded the removal of the 'American bases', as they continued to describe the joint facilities at North-West Cape, Pine Gap and Nurrungar. These, they argued, would make Australia an early target in any Soviet-American nuclear conflict. Many in the Labor Party, not only the left, were infuriated by an agreement, inherited from the previous Coalition government, that Australia should help the United States to monitor tests of a new long-range missile, the MX. Leftists, inside and outside the Labor Party, were encouraged by the example of the Labour government in New Zealand, elected in 1984. David Lange's Government in Wellington opposed the admission to New Zealand ports of nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered vessels, including those of the US Navy, to the point that the United States-New Zealand leg of the ANZUS relationship was officially suspended in 1986. To make matters more complex, some farmers' lobbies, angered by American trade policies, were demanding that Australia should evict the Americans from Pine Gap.

The Labor government led by Bob Hawke from March 1983 to December 1991 was determined not to follow the New Zealand path. Hawke was always an unequivocal supporter of the American alliance,



in the Cabinet room as in public debate. But the circumstances meant that, to retain the alliance including the joint facilities, he had to undertake a major campaign, particularly between 1983 and 1985, to convince a large section of his own party, and others on the left, that the benefits of ANZUS outweighed its costs. This challenge occupied a great deal of the time and energies of Hawke, Bill Hayden (Foreign Minister 1983–87) and Kim Beazley (Defence Minister 1984–90).

With the advantage of two decades' hindsight, this troika can be seen to have achieved their goal in two stages. They first neutralised the opposition to the joint facilities, then consolidated the alliance by presenting what they asserted was a new model for its operation, more consonant with Australian self-respect and national aspirations. In his first meeting with Reagan in 1983 Hawke raised both the joint facilities and the need for a review of ANZUS. Thereafter, in numerous appearances before their party and the general public, all three ministers sought to demystify the role of the joint facilities by removing much of the excessive secrecy, and implausible cover stories, on which the Americans had insisted. They argued, most importantly in a parliamentary statement by Hawke on 6 June 1984, that the joint facilities contributed to deterrence of nuclear war and to the monitoring of arms control agreements, by providing timely information on missile launches and nuclear tests.

At the same time, Hayden adopted policies that seemed at odds with those of the staunchly pro-alliance Hawke (who had supplanted Hayden as party leader just before the party's electoral victory). Hayden, for example, supported the establishment of a Peace Research Centre at the Australian National University, appointed an ambassador for disarmament, and ensured that his department played an active and highly visible role in pursuit of disarmament and arms control agreements. These measures gave Hayden a degree of credibility with the Labor left and the peace movement, which helped him to convince them that the joint facilities contributed to peace and disarmament, rather than threatening those goals. One of his department's publications contended, for example, that some arms control agreements might never have been completed, if Pine Gap and Nurrungar did not exist to monitor compliance.<sup>30</sup>

The Labor left and other critics of the 'American bases' were more prepared to accept contentions such as these from Hayden than from Hawke. In the exercise of 'selling' the alliance to a sceptical audience, their combined efforts achieved a remarkable success. Until this point, hosting the joint facilities had always been seen as part of the insurance premium for Australia's strategic insurance policy – a price too high for the left wing of Australian politics. The arguments of Hawke, Hayden and Beazley before numerous public and party forums placed the joint facilities among the benefits, not the costs, of the alliance. Whatever their reservations about the Americans in general and Reagan's policies in particular, peace activists found it hard to argue against measures that were contributing substantially to arms control and the prevention of nuclear war.

While the government was fighting difficult battles with some of its own supporters on these issues, Beazley was consolidating and developing the work initiated in the 1970s on 'self-reliance' in Australian defence. He commissioned Paul Dibb to prepare a major report in 1986 on the appropriate force structures. This became the basis of a White Paper in 1987. By this time the overall concept of Australian defence was being defined as 'self-reliance in an alliance context'. The qualification arose partly in response to American concerns, partly because it was clear that total self-sufficiency would impose heavier financial and social costs (possibly including those associated with conscription) than any government, especially a Labor government, would be prepared to pay. Beazley's support for the alliance, combined with his sense of Australia's strategic history and his love of the technical detail of defence matters, protected the government's right flank as effectively as Hayden did its left.

While driving this exercise and working with his ministers, Hawke took every opportunity to identify himself closely with his party's, and the country's, most admired Prime Minister, John Curtin. His approach and tone were captured in his 1994 memoirs, in which he began his long account of Australian–American relations under the Hawke Government by quoting Curtin's famous statement with the following preface: 'In January 1942 John Curtin had ushered in a new

era in Australia's international relations with the ringing declaration: "Without any inhibition of any kind..." As an earlier part of this paper has argued, the statement was not, and was not intended to be, a ringing declaration; it did not usher in a new era in Australia's international relations; and Hawke even had the date incorrect. But questionable history made brilliant politics. By evoking memories of Curtin, Hawke effectively countered the arguments of those who contended that an authentically Labor leader could not support an Australian-American alliance.

At the same time, Hawke responded to the feelings of many Australians, not confined to his own party, that conservative leaders had been too acquiescent in their approach to the alliance and too willing to accede to American pressures, such as those that had led to the Vietnam commitment. His government, Hawke asserted, would remain firmly in support of the alliance, but would also stand up robustly for Australian interests, especially on matters in Australia's region. If Australia disagreed with American policies, Washington would be made well aware of the difference. Hawke's record as a trade union advocate who retained the confidence of both workers and employers, and his high personal popularity for most of his term as Prime Minister, helped to convince Australians that he could achieve this balance, even when dealing with conservative Republicans. His personal relationship with George Shultz, Reagan's Secretary of State, was crucial when (as Beazley put it) the Americans 'let us off the hook' over the MX missile-testing program.<sup>31</sup> But Hawke's success in projecting this image of the Australian-American relationship raised the bar for future governments. The Australian electorate would henceforward have a stronger expectation of assurances, with supporting evidence, that the alliance was a genuinely reciprocal relationship, and not simply a matter of Canberra's being 'all the way' with the incumbent administration in Washington.

Gareth Evans, Hayden's successor as Foreign Minister (1988-96), said that the changes in Australian defence policy, especially the 1987 White Paper, had 'liberated Australian foreign policy'.<sup>32</sup> By this he meant that Australians now had greater freedom of manoeuvre

in international affairs, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, to take stances that were not necessarily identical with those of the United States. Although he was best known for leading a vigorous effort to bring a decent and reasonably democratic form of government to Cambodia, the range and extent of his activities were extraordinarily wide. Under both Hawke and Paul Keating (Prime Minister 1991-96), Evans was associated with a new emphasis on Australia's relationships with the region, unprecedented in its political and economic ambitions if not in its overall direction.

Paul Keating's term as Prime Minister was noted for his emphasis on 'engagement' with the Asia-Pacific region — he chose *Engagement* as the title for his memoirs — but he pressed the view that this did not conflict with Australia's position as an ally of the United States. He dismissed as obsolete the idea that Australia looked to the United States primarily as a source of security against a hostile Asia. To use one of Keating's favourite phrases, Australia sought security in Asia, not security from Asia.<sup>33</sup> In any case, in the post-Cold War era, the United States was placing more emphasis in its international relations on the so-called 'third agenda' — that is, matters other than military security or trade, such as health and the environment. This emphasis was particularly marked under the Democrat administration of Bill Clinton (1993-2001), with whom Keating had some meeting of minds.

In this context, the relative weights that Keating gave to the various benefits of the American alliance were different again from those of his predecessors. He respected American strength: as he put it, the United States was 'the biggest dog on the block' and he endorsed President Roosevelt's claim that it represented 'righteous might'. But Keating, who had entered parliament in 1969, just as the Vietnam commitment was becoming bitterly divisive, did not emphasise the security guarantee in the way that, in his view, conservative governments had in the 1950s and 1960s. The ANZUS guarantee might be weaker than that of NATO, but it remained 'a vital insurance policy for us, complicating the assessment of any potential enemy that may come along'. (Keating would probably not have welcomed the comparison, but as noted above Casey had spoken in broadly similar terms in the 1950s.) Moreover,

Keating repeated the now familiar assurance that the alliance ‘offers us access to technology, intelligence and training which we could neither afford nor develop on our own’. By this time the world was talking of the ‘revolution in military affairs’ that placed American technology far in advance of the rest of the world, but Keating drew more attention to the role of access to American intelligence as a ‘force-multiplier’. Keating’s principal argument, however, on the benefits of the alliance was firmly in a longstanding tradition:

At the end of the day, ANZUS’s main, and critical benefit may simply be this: it provides standing for us to have our voice heard in Washington, especially about developments in this part of the world.<sup>34</sup>

Many earlier prime ministers, both those whom Keating admired and others whom he loathed, would have understood his point perfectly.

Keating’s idea of Australia’s contribution to the alliance was also broadly consistent with his predecessors’ views. Australia, he said, should not simply be Washington’s ‘antipodean cheer squad’. Instead, the ‘best contribution we could make as an ally was to put our view in a lucid way, to offer the United States a framework and, above all, to be a source of ideas’.<sup>35</sup> The idea of which he remained proudest was that which he put to President George Bush senior on New Year’s Day 1992, within days of his becoming Prime Minister. Hawke had played a major role in the initiation of the Asia–Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum, which linked many of the major economies of the region, including the United States. Taking up an idea that officials had been preparing for Hawke, Keating proposed that APEC meetings be raised to head-of-government level. Bush’s reaction was not hostile. Thereafter Keating personally, with the strong support of colleagues and officials, pursued this goal to ultimate success.<sup>36</sup> Although ostensibly dedicated to economic matters, the APEC leaders’ meetings were, in his view, a ‘silent strategic sentinel’.<sup>37</sup> It could only be good to have, for example, the presidents of China and the United States in the same room, together with leaders of Japan, Indonesia and other regional countries — not least Australia.

Once again, therefore, a prime minister was concerned to use Australia’s principal alliance as a way of getting a seat at the top table, a voice in the highest councils of international strategy. It was a goal that every major prime minister since Deakin, whether Labor or non-Labor, in peace or in war, would have understood instinctively. While Keating was in The Lodge, Malcolm Fraser concluded an assessment of what had gone wrong in Vietnam by saying: ‘I would never want Australia committed [again] in support of any conflict unless we had a very senior person on the highest war council.’ But Keating was more inventive than most prime ministers, at least since Deakin and Hughes, in his efforts to create the top table at which Australia could find a seat. This top table would not exist solely in Washington, but wherever the APEC leaders chose to meet. Moreover, with the Cold War over and no comparable global threat yet visible, Keating’s concept of the premium to be paid for access to American leaders was not Australian blood on foreign battlefields, but ideas — creative thoughts on how world affairs might be managed by the country that was now the world’s only superpower. Just as the defence relationship was now seen as ‘self-reliance in an alliance context’, so Keating’s way of using and defending the American alliance might be seen as innovative within a traditional framework.

# Chapter 4

## The Howard Years

### **'Reinvigoration' in the late 1990s**

When the Liberal–National Coalition was returned to government in 1996, with John Howard as Prime Minister and Alexander Downer as Minister for Foreign Affairs, it promised to 'reinvigorate' the Australian–American relationship. For some years, however, the precise form of this intended reinvigoration remained unclear. Howard and Downer were reluctant to make speeches or statements that expressed, in broad but carefully developed terms, their approach to the aims and management of the Australian–American alliance. They evidently took the view that such 'big-picture' statements were characteristic of Paul Keating and Gareth Evans, whose legacy was to be rejected in style and substance. The Howard Government wanted to be seen as directing its attention to more 'practical' and 'realistic' manifestations of 'the national interest' (all favourite terms of the new government), rather than the conceptual phrase-making that had impressed the followers of Keating and Evans. Consequently debate on foreign policy in the early years of the Howard Government was directed principally to its ability to reconcile the supposedly 'reinvigorated' American alliance with its policy towards Asia, which it described (in supposed contrast with Keating's) as 'Asia

first, but not Asia only'. Observers had the impression that Howard and his ministers had taken a conscious decision to link Australia as closely as possible to the world's only remaining superpower, but were unsure how to promote or to express this priority in public debate.

Moreover, there appeared to be a disjunction between the conceptions of the alliance that prevailed in Washington and Canberra. The Howard Government seemed to be thinking principally of traditional strategic collaboration, to be expressed in military measures such as the repositioning of American forces or matériel on Australian soil. The Clinton Administration, however, displayed little interest in developing what it regarded as an already strong military relationship, and paid more attention to 'human security', embracing topics such as human rights, the environment and democratisation. At one point, for example, the American Ambassador to Australia made a major speech on the relationship that did not mention ANZUS and made only the briefest possible reference to military security.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile senior officials in the Clinton Administration, including the successive Secretaries of State, Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright, gave much more attention to issues arising in Europe and the Middle East than to those centred in Asia, at least until American relations with China came to dominate the world's agenda in the late 1990s.

After a session of the Australian–United States ministerial talks (AUSMIN, the bilateral successor to the ANZUS Council) in 1996, officials from the two countries issued what was known as the Sydney Statement, asserting that the alliance remained strong and relevant in the post-Cold War world, even in the absence of a defined threat. This came soon after a crisis over the Taiwan Straits, in which Australia gave prompt and strong diplomatic support for American naval manoeuvres intended to support Taiwan. China consequently interpreted the Sydney Statement as a manifestation of Australian involvement in an American policy of containment. Thus arose a major and enduring dilemma for Australian policy-makers — how to maintain good relations with both the United States and China, and especially how to avoid the 'nightmare scenario' of an American request for support in the event of a military confrontation between the established

superpower and the rising giant. The issue could not be neglected. In 1999 Richard Armitage, a former senior Pentagon official, said that 'if Washington found itself in conflict with China over Taiwan it would expect Australia's support. If it didn't get that support, that would mean the end of the US–Australia alliance'.<sup>39</sup>

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula suggested that there were other 'nightmare scenarios' in which Australia might be called upon to assist the United States in a major regional conflagration. Some voices in Washington, particularly in circles likely to influence a new Republican administration, began to question whether the United States' allies were pulling their weight, and whether they really needed American guarantees against hypothetical aggressors in the post-Cold War world. In this context the reciprocal guarantees embodied in the ANZUS Treaty were coming to appear as more of a cost than a benefit to Australia. Major statements by the Australian government, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper *In the National Interest*, consequently placed relatively little emphasis on global matters, such as strategic guarantees and the deterrence of aggression. Instead they argued, rather vaguely and defensively, that ANZUS's major function was to 'complement and reinforce Australia's policy of close engagement with East Asia' and to ensure 'a continuing constructive United States engagement with the region'. The importance of exchange arrangements in technology, intelligence and training was repeated in familiar terms, but the most distinctive element was the regional emphasis. ANZUS was, according to official statements, 'an important element in the post-Cold War strategic architecture in the Asia–Pacific region, helping to sustain US strategic engagement in the Western Pacific'.<sup>40</sup> This statement was a revised version of the argument, prominent in the early 1960s, that Australia had to ensure that the United States continued to take a close interest in the Asia–Pacific region.

The greatest test of attitudes to the relationship in these years arose from Australia's leadership of the International Force East Timor (INTERFET) coalition that made possible East Timor's independence from Indonesia in 1999. At some stages of the crisis some Australians expressed disappointment with the level and nature of American support,

especially when Howard called for American ‘boots on the ground’. It was clear from the outset that the United States was extremely reluctant to provide combat troops, but the absence of those boots enabled some critics to say that ANZUS was proving worthless to Australia at a time of need. Nevertheless, the United States produced strong diplomatic, intelligence and logistic support that proved vitally important to the success of the operation. Washington left Jakarta in no doubt of its support for INTERFET and, by implication, Australia. In the aftermath Australia’s performance in East Timor was held up by Washington as a model of how an ally should behave in a regional crisis. Much of the good was undone, however, when a journalist said that Howard now saw his role as being America’s ‘deputy sheriff’ in the region. Those words had not passed Howard’s lips, but he had not demurred when the journalist put them to him. Although Howard subsequently disavowed any such intention, the report was a gift to those, in Australia and in the region, who sought to portray him as uncritically loyal to the global superpower.

### **9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq**

The events of 11 September 2001 proved a defining moment for the Australian–American alliance as they did for many other aspects of American and world politics. The Republican administration led by President George W. Bush, who came into office in January, had signalled not only a more combative attitude towards regimes it regarded as hostile, but also a greater expectation of support from allies. From the outset it was clear that the forty-third President of the United States would take a more unilateralist approach than the forty-first, his father. Moreover, influential members of the new administration, including Vice-President Dick Cheney and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, clearly had Saddam Hussein in their sights even before taking office.

The Howard Government did not seem discomfited by the Republicans’ assertive stance. In September Howard visited Washington for talks to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the ANZUS Treaty. He met

the President at the White House on 10 September, and was scheduled the following day to visit the Pentagon, in which a corridor is dedicated to ANZUS. Howard was thus an exceptionally close witness to the events of 11 September. In subsequent years he frequently claimed that this gave him a greater insight than most Australians into the impact of these events on the thoughts and emotions of Americans, from the President and his senior officials to the broad electorate. Howard seemed to share many of those emotions, as he promised unqualified Australian support for the traumatised Americans. Within days Howard led the Australian parliament, with bipartisan support, formally to invoke the ANZUS Treaty. In fifty years of debate about the meaning of the ANZUS guarantee, and the extent of the ‘Pacific area’ to which the treaty referred, it is unlikely that anyone had foreseen that ANZUS would first be invoked in response to an attack, not by a nation-state but by a shadowy group of Islamic extremists, and not against Australia or New Zealand but against the United States, in particular the north-eastern corner of the American homeland, far from its Pacific shore.

Australia thus became one of America’s closest allies in what was called ‘the global war on terror’. This description of the subsequent campaign was open to severe criticism. The events of 11 September, and those in subsequent years in Bali, Madrid, London and elsewhere, would have been better portrayed as vicious crimes, acts of mass murder rather than acts of war. The campaign was directed not against ‘terror’ or ‘terrorism’ but against a particular, if elusive, set of exponents of terrorist tactics, Islamic extremists or jihadists known as al Qa’ida and their admirers and emulators. But it was certainly global. While the ‘global war on terror’ posed difficult and sensitive challenges for Australia, it also provided the sort of strategic justification and direction for the alliance that the Howard Government had evidently been seeking since coming to office in 1996. Much was said of the increasingly close relationship between Bush and Howard. It was claimed that this enabled Howard to advise Bush on American diplomacy at the United Nations. If this were true (and it is likely that British advice was far more significant) Australian advice was evidently confined to tactics, not to the overall strategy. No hint ever emerged that Australia had

quietly warned the United States that its attempt to install democracy in Iraq was an extremely risky venture that, if unsuccessful, would have damaging repercussions on American prestige and power, and thus on the credibility of American alliances, including that with Australia.

When Australia despatched forces to Afghanistan in 2001–02, as part of the immediate reaction to the 11 September attacks, only a few voices were raised in protest, even though Afghanistan was outside most definitions of Australia's region of strategic interest. Far more controversial was the subsequent commitment to the small, American-led coalition that invaded Iraq in 2003 and toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. Unlike the intervention in Afghanistan, this commitment did not have the support of either the United Nations Security Council or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The intervention followed President Bush's categorisation of Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an 'axis of evil', a description of three very different and disunited 'rogue states' that confounded anyone familiar with the 'Rome–Berlin axis' of the 1930s and 1940s or the 'Beijing–Jakarta axis' of the 1960s. The actions and rhetoric of the Bush Administration between 2001 and 2004 served to divide America's friends and to unite its enemies, contravening one basic test of good strategy.

Amid the intense, world-wide controversy that surrounded the Iraq commitment, the Howard Government chose to stand resolutely with the Bush Administration, citing the need to maintain the alliance while endorsing Washington's claim that Saddam was closely linked to al Qa'ida and that he possessed weapons of mass destruction. It was a politically risky stand, publicly challenged not only by the Labor Party but also by a number of former military chiefs, senior diplomats and defence officials. The rhetoric surrounding the alliance and its place in foreign policy also changed. The previous emphasis on a regional approach to the 'defence of Australia' (meaning the continent and its environs) was replaced by the concept of 'the defence of Australian interests and values', such as liberal democracy, wherever those interests and values might be under threat. Official accounts of the Australian–American alliance gave much less emphasis to the 'strategic architecture' of the Asia–Pacific region. Instead, in the Howard Government's view,

Australians were standing with Americans and other like-minded allies to defend Western democratic values, wherever they might be challenged — New York or Bali or Madrid or London, and potentially Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra.

The fact that the three principal allies in Iraq were the United States, Britain and Australia led to some discussion of an 'Anglosphere'. In its strongest form, the proposal was that the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada and a few other English-speaking countries were so close in values and culture that they should explicitly acknowledge that they formed a *de facto* alliance.<sup>41</sup> The idea had some resonance in Australia. A Defence Department publication on *The Australian Approach to Warfare* in 2002 included, in its discussion of Australian values and culture, a reference to 'Australia's strong affiliation with Anglo-Saxon cultural, diplomatic and military norms'.<sup>42</sup> The concept of an 'Anglosphere' was a significant reminder of the emotional power that had lain behind the appeals to 'the grand old Anglo-Saxon race' for almost one hundred years, since the Great White Fleet was feted in Australian ports.

Nevertheless, the creation of a formal, explicitly Anglo–Saxon alliance was not a viable proposition in the early twenty-first century, not least because of the multi-ethnic nature of the relevant countries, including at elite levels. The second Bush Administration, for example, has an African–American Secretary of State and a Hispanic–American Attorney–General, while two of the most prominent generals in the Iraq campaign were respectively of Arab–American and Hispanic–American descent. Moreover, all the countries of the putative 'Anglosphere' have substantial Muslim minorities whose allegiance must not be surrendered to the jihadists. Consequently the countries of the supposed 'Anglosphere' prefer to speak generally of upholding freedom, democracy and other liberal ideals, while avoiding references to a heritage of Anglo–Saxon ethnicity or Judaeo–Christian values.

Controversial comparisons with the Vietnam commitment were raised over Australian support for American intervention in Afghanistan in 2001–02 to remove the Taliban, but became much more prominent after the 2003 intervention in Iraq. One point of similarity between the

Vietnam and Iraq commitments was the extensive, worldwide debate that divided the United States' friends and allies before the intervention was made. In 2003, as in 1965, the Australian prime minister at first insisted that he was committing Australian forces because there was an external threat to Australian national interests; then, under pressure, conceded that one of his motives was to ensure the strength of the Australian–American alliance. Thus the debate over the American alliance had, in some ways, returned to a familiar theme. How far, critics asked, did Australia have to go in support of risky American military interventions, in order to ensure that Australia continued to receive all the benefits of the ANZUS alliance? But there were major differences between the factors influencing Australian policy. In 2003 there was no simultaneous crisis over Indonesia, as the independence of East Timor had been successfully established. Moreover, it could be argued that Vietnam was in Australia's region, but even the broadest definitions of that region did not stretch as far as Iraq. While Howard understandably deprecated the Vietnam analogy, his actions suggested that he had learnt some of the major lessons of that earlier experience, including the much-discussed importance of an 'exit strategy'. The Vietnam commitment did not lose majority support until about four years had passed. In Iraq Howard ensured that Australian forces were withdrawn quickly after initial operations that, by a mixture of professional skill and good luck, proved free of casualties.

While the world was watching and debating the American-led intervention in Iraq, the question of the strategic challenge from China did not disappear. Richard Armitage, who had outlined the 'nightmare scenario' while out of office, reiterated his point as Deputy Secretary of State. For much of the latter part of the twentieth century, Australian foreign policy had been dominated by the triangle formed by Australia, the United States and Indonesia. Now the Australia–United States–China triangle was an ever-present concern. In the new century, the Howard government handled this with some dexterity, enabling Australian firms to sign lucrative contracts to meet the huge Chinese demand for natural gas and other commodities, without arousing the ire of American critics of China's record on human rights and its presumed

strategic ambitions. In a testament to Australian management of this triangular relationship, the presidents of the United States and China addressed the Australian parliament on successive days in October 2003. But continuing Australian awareness of the dangerous 'nightmare scenario' was apparent in awkward statements by Downer in late 2004 and early 2005, evidently designed to separate Australia's commitments under ANZUS from any future crisis over Taiwan.

By the middle of 2005, Howard and Downer were taking every opportunity to claim success in the challenge of simultaneously strengthening Australia's relations with both the United States and China. At one point the authoritative commentator Paul Kelly asserted that:

As a conservative Australian leader enjoying the closest personal relationship with a US president, who invoked the ANZUS Treaty in defence of the US and who fought with US forces in Iraq, Howard has obtained political immunity in Washington for his Asian diplomacy.<sup>43</sup>

This claim was a significant new development in the history of the assertions made by Australian governments of the benefits the country received from the American alliance. For much of the late twentieth century, the alliance had been seen as Australia's bulwark against an allegedly aggressive and expansionist China. Now, it was claimed, Australia's commitment to the alliance gave Australia the diplomatic leverage to profit from China's enormous development boom, without being compromised by Sino–American strategic rivalry. It was a bold claim, which the government used to counter its critics' longstanding allegation that the American alliance compromised Australia's relations with major Asian powers.

At much the same time, another new element in the Australian–American relationship was taking shape. While the world was debating American motives and actions in Iraq, Australia and the United States negotiated and concluded a free-trade agreement (FTA). Officials from both sides lauded its potential, although expert opinion was deeply



divided as to whether the terms were in Australia's best interests. Critics alleged that its provisions excluded some Australian products (notably sugar) from privileged access to the American market, delayed market access for other products for up to 18 years, and exposed Australian culture to excessive degrees of American influence. Most relevant to the themes of this paper is the way in which the FTA was sold to the Australian and American publics. Public presentations by Americans in both legislative and executive posts presented the FTA as a boon to the Australian economy, a concession that Washington granted at least partly as a reward for diplomatic and military loyalty and support. This was a major break with tradition. For the first 50 years of the ANZUS alliance, trade and security had been kept carefully apart. Australian farmers had been bluntly rebuffed in the 1980s, for example, when they had tried to use Pine Gap to gain leverage over American agricultural imports. Now the alliance was being presented as a source of American goodwill that would, in turn, promote Australian national prosperity by allowing Australia improved access to the American market.

## Conclusion

### **The present and the future**

In July 2005 John Howard's role in strengthening the Australian-American alliance was feted in Washington by a chorus of American admirers, led by President Bush and Rupert Murdoch. On the face of it, the conservative side of politics in both countries had every reason to be pleased with the military, diplomatic and economic dimensions of the relationship. Howard, Bush and their supporters pointed with pride to the formal invocation of the ANZUS Treaty, the sight of Australian forces fighting alongside the Americans in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the conclusion of the FTA. The personal rapport between the President and the Prime Minister was unmistakable, and fortified by Howard's chairmanship of the International Democratic Union, an international body that encouraged co-operation between centre-right parties. Amid much discussion of the influence of Christian groups on conservative politics in both countries, the well-publicised image of John and Janette Howard attending church in Washington with George and Laura Bush, in the president's traditional pew, bestowed an additional suggestion of ecclesiastical blessing on the relationship.

Nevertheless, there are many reasons why the alliance should not be seen as totally secure in the esteem of governments and public opinion in both countries for the foreseeable future. Australian public opinion remains the most vulnerable element in that chain. Most public opinion

polls show strong support for the alliance, but some possible threats are also evident. The Lowy Institute Poll in 2005 indicated that 70 per cent of respondents saw the alliance as ‘very important’ or ‘fairly important’ to Australia, but 68 per cent thought that Australia took too much notice of the United States in its foreign policy; a surprisingly low 59 per cent said they held positive feelings towards the United States; American foreign policies were listed remarkably high on a list of potential threats to Australia; and Australians were evenly divided on whether the FTA would be good or bad for Australia.<sup>44</sup> Many of these responses probably reflected an immediate reaction to the policies of the first George W. Bush Administration, and especially the intervention in Iraq. Indications that, in its second term, the administration will pursue a less unilateralist and uncompromisingly assertive policy may help to assuage Australian fears. Similarly, the vehement denunciation of the alliance in Mark Latham’s diaries as ‘the last manifestation of the White Australia mentality’ is not likely to have a lasting, detrimental effect on the standing of the alliance.<sup>45</sup> Although, as this paper has argued, there may well be a lingering element of Anglo-Saxon solidarity among some supporters of the alliance, it is absurd to dismiss the contemporary alliance in this way. The crude expression of Latham’s views was probably counter-productive. Nevertheless, these are all signs of a visceral, anti-American sentiment that is currently restricted to a small section of Australian public opinion, but which has the potential to spread if the political environment should prove favourable.

Several scenarios can be envisaged that could, in one way or another, place the Australian–American alliance under severe strain. The most immediately obvious arise from the ‘war on terror’. Despite the conduct of elections in both Afghanistan and Iraq, developments in both countries continue to inspire negative reports. Growing signs of strain are appearing in the coalition that committed forces to Iraq. Even Republicans who supported the 2003 commitment are now debating whether, when and under what circumstances the United States and its allies might withdraw from Iraq. The insurgents in Iraq, more disparate in nature than the enemy the Americans faced in Vietnam, do not have a Ho Chi Minh or a Vo Nguyen Giap to give

coherence to their political and military strategies. Nevertheless, all the insurgents in Iraq have the example of Vietnam to encourage the view that the United States does not have the stomach for long, counter-insurgency campaigns. Great damage has already been done to the image of American military might, with severe implications for American diplomatic and political credibility.

If the Americans were forced to leave Iraq without establishing a coherent and credibly democratic regime, embarrassing comparisons with the fall of Saigon in 1975 might well be followed by a ‘post-Iraq syndrome’. Once again the United States, its military and political prestige battered, would be reluctant to enter commitments outside its most immediate areas of strategic concern. An increased number of Australians would take the view that the alliance was a source not of strength and support but of costly entanglements. A similar failure to establish a viable, democratic regime in Afghanistan would have a less severe impact on public opinion, since the commitment there was undertaken with much wider international support, but it would still have some influence. As noted earlier, Howard sought to limit Australian exposure to these risks by committing forces quickly and then withdrawing them quickly. This tactic has had to be abandoned, however, as Australian forces have once more been committed to both theatres of conflict. These forces are small in number, but they still pose a substantial political risk. The days have long since passed when the Australian public would support huge losses in return for assurances of security. Even a small casualty list in Afghanistan or Iraq would probably have a severe effect on Australian public opinion towards the American alliance.

Nor is it certain that the Australian government will be able to manage the United States–China–Australia triangle without major difficulties. Here, as so often in the past, Australia is in effect a participant in an ongoing debate over a central aspect of American foreign policy. For several years, both before and after September 2001, powerful forces in Washington have been debating whether the United States should see China as a strategic competitor or as a strategic partner. The outcome of that debate has enormous implications for Australian military and

economic security. Taiwan is the most obvious, but certainly not the only, issue with the potential to create a ‘nightmare scenario’, posing hugely difficult choices for Australia. The situation on the Korean Peninsula, which allowed the negotiation of the ANZUS Treaty more than 50 years ago, still remains delicate, with many of the crucial diplomatic cards in Chinese hands. Human rights issues also have the potential to create dangerous tensions. There are, in short, numerous ways in which Australia might be faced with excruciatingly difficult decisions involving the United States and China, with possible implications for the very existence of the Australian–American alliance.

The contents of the FTA, and more especially the way in which it was presented to the public of both countries, have made it more difficult to keep security, trade and cultural issues in separate compartments. There is therefore a greater risk that tension in any one aspect of the Australian–American relationship could have a deleterious effect on the alliance. Officials from both countries point out that the FTA includes mechanisms to handle trade disputes before they can affect the wider relationship, but the fact that they are now linked in the public mind will make it harder to keep problems isolated.

In the challenge of keeping the United States government, the American people, the Australian government and the Australian people all on the same track, Australian public opinion is not the only vulnerable point. It would be rash to assume that future leaders in Washington and Canberra at any given time will possess the degree of personal, ideological and geostrategic compatibility currently displayed by George W. Bush and John Howard. Official opinion in Washington might well turn against military alliances, especially those with small countries far from the principal foci of American strategic interest. If a ‘post-Iraq syndrome’ were to develop, comparable with the ‘post-Vietnam syndrome’ of the late 1970s, a Democrat administration not unlike that of Jimmy Carter might reduce its exposure to military commitments in faraway regions, such as the Southwest Pacific. Alternatively there might be a resurgence of a view that has already been expressed on the right of American politics, that ‘the United States should end its security guarantees for populous and prosperous states, including Australia.’<sup>46</sup>

Any one of the possibilities outlined in the preceding paragraphs might not, by itself, pose insuperable problems for the future of the alliance. But history offers numerous examples of occasions when difficulties arise simultaneously in domestic and international politics, or in economic and political and social and cultural spheres. Some combination of the scenarios outlined above could place the alliance in jeopardy. Without descending into alarmism, prudence suggests that measures should be taken with the aim of obviating or minimising threats to the continued health of the alliance.

The history recounted in this paper suggests that, for the foreseeable future, Australian governments will continue to see the benefits of the Australian–American alliance as outweighing the costs. The Australian public is likely to endorse this view, provided it can be assured that its government is taking an active rather than a passive attitude towards the management of the alliance. Australians, it seems fair to say, want to be assured that their politicians and officials are constantly working to ensure that the country receives the maximum possible benefit from its relationship with the world’s only superpower, and is not simply taken for granted as an unquestioning acolyte. What is remarkable, given the way in which Australia conducts its public affairs, is that no institution exists that is dedicated towards such a vision of the alliance. In the 1990s Australian universities competed vigorously to establish research institutes devoted to Asia and Australian–Asian relations. By contrast, the only academic institute studying Australian–American relations, the Australian Centre for American Studies, was allowed to disappear for lack of support. Similarly, Australian governments have founded several institutes and councils devoted to Australia’s bilateral relations with major Asian nations, but none has taken a similar step to support the Australian–American relationship. Privately funded bodies, such as the Australian American Leadership Dialogue, the Australian–American Chamber of Commerce, or the Australian–American Association, perform useful functions, but each has a limited role or scope of attention. The existence of the Leadership Dialogue has become widely publicised in recent years but it is, as its name implies, a forum in which a small, elite group of representatives from the two countries meets for confidential discussions.

It would be helpful if an existing organisation expanded its role, or a new body were established, to undertake the task of examining the Australian–American relationship in all its aspects. Two particular activities would be valuable and constructive. The first would be to commission, and to promote public debate on, studies of issues or potential issues affecting the Australian–American relationship, to foresee and as far as possible to forestall difficulties. (A model would be *Will China Divide Australia and the US?* and the other Relationship Studies sponsored by the Australian Centre for American Studies in the 1990s.<sup>47</sup>) The other would be to organise an annual review of the ‘State of the Alliance’ that would discuss and debate the past, current and future challenges faced by the alliance. This review might be compared with the annual shareholders’ meeting of a major corporation. Representatives of the government of the day, as the managers of the alliance, would report to their ‘shareholders’, the electorate (or the portion that takes an interest in such matters), on the performance of the political capital that has been invested in the alliance. The benefits to which governments have traditionally pointed might be presented as if they were five distinct, if related, areas of investment in an increasingly diversified portfolio. This approach would permit the government of the day to argue that, if one ‘investment’ is encountering difficulties, the others are still paying good dividends. At the same time, it would acknowledge that governments have a duty to manage and to monitor each of the areas, to ensure that it is providing the best possible return on investment. It would also require governments to do more to publicise those returns to the shareholders, the Australian public, to maintain a high degree of confidence in the investment.

Each of the five areas requires careful attention. On the most fundamental part of the alliance, the reciprocal security guarantee, Australian governments need constantly to make public as much as is diplomatically possible about the constant interplay between Washington and Canberra on major strategic issues. This is no easy matter. For at least 50 years Australian policy-makers have recognised that there is a delicate balance to be struck between revealing differences of opinion, to demonstrate Australian independence of mind, and concealing those

differences, to avoid handing weapons to our enemies. Nevertheless, that balance has to be struck, and developments in recent decades have encouraged the public to demand, and to expect, increasing openness. Public comment since the commitment to Vietnam indicates that Australians need to be reassured that their government is not following Washington uncritically and even obsequiously. Australians increasingly expect public evidence that their senior policy-makers are constantly subjecting American policies and proposals to independent assessment, and are pressing Australian viewpoints in Washington assiduously and effectively. They will expect not merely assertions but evidence that the strategic alliance is a source of diplomatic strength in Australia’s relations with important Asian countries.

Closely related to this, Australian governments should do more to educate the public on the extent to which they have succeeded in gaining, and using, access to policy-makers and planners. Much has in fact been achieved in this sphere. The American Secretaries of State and Defense, for example, plan their days in fifteen-minute segments, and literally hundreds of ambassadors and officials of comparable status in Washington would sacrifice much for one of those fifteen-minute sessions. To have unrestricted access to both Secretaries and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for an entire day, as Australians have at the regular AUSMIN talks, is an extraordinary boon. Some Australian diplomats, including Michael Thawley (ambassador in Washington 2000–05), seem to have gained exceptional access to the highest levels of government, contributing substantially to the negotiation of the FTA and collaboration in the ‘war against terror’. But there has long been a suspicion among some well-placed observers that, during the last 50 years, access has been treated too often as an end in itself and too seldom as a means towards achieving policy ends. Australian representatives must not only get into the right offices, but must have something useful to say when they do so. The most obvious requirement at present is to influence American policy towards China. Australia clearly has a distinct view on this subject. The government must allow it to be known that it is pressing this view not only publicly (as Howard recently did in a speech to the Asia Society in New York) but also in the relevant offices in Washington.

Access and influence react to exposure like houseplants to sunlight — a little is essential, a little more can be stimulating, but too much can easily be fatal. The same principle applies even more strongly to intelligence exchanges. Accurate, timely and disinterested intelligence assessments have always been crucial in war, but their importance has become better understood and more widely discussed in recent years. The events of 11 September 2001 and the intervention in Iraq prompted controversies and major inquiries into intelligence agencies in the United States, Britain and Australia, generally revolving around the relationship between agencies responsible for collecting intelligence, for assessing intelligence, and for taking policy decisions. Similar concerns in Australia, arising from the 1999 commitment in East Timor and the suicide of an Australian intelligence officer serving as a liaison officer in Washington, have led to public allegations of a ‘pro-Jakarta lobby’ allegedly influencing intelligence assessments on Indonesian affairs. It is now inevitable that intelligence agencies will be less protected from public scrutiny than in the past. No longer will it be possible to say, in the words of a Second World War slogan, ‘those who talk don’t know, those who know don’t talk’. Governments will need to report more frankly, especially to parliamentary committees, about the performance of the agencies responsible for intelligence collection and assessment, not least in their relationships with American and other allied agencies.

A recent report has stated that President Bush has upgraded Australian access to American intelligence to the highest level.<sup>48</sup> This is, on the face of it, to be welcomed, but enthusiasm must be qualified by noting the ambiguous reputation of the American intelligence community. The official inquiry into the 11 September attacks was highly critical of the performance of those agencies, especially the destructively competitive rivalry between the CIA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Australian authorities will therefore need to take great care to ensure that the intelligence to which they are given access is untainted by either policy influences or inter-agency rivalries.

Defence science and technology are less prominent in public discussion now than they were in the 1990s, but the public needs to be kept up to date on the state of the ‘revolution in military affairs’ (if,

indeed, that term is still considered relevant and useful). How difficult is it for Australia to maintain a credible level of advanced technology, even in carefully selected niche areas? Is there an ever-widening gap between American and Australian capacities? If so, is it increasingly difficult to achieve ‘interoperability’ with American forces? What are the implications for the recurring debates over Australian strategic doctrine, force structures, and military equipment? Can Australia afford the weapons platforms, weapons systems and other equipment necessary to sustain a role in global as well as regional strategic affairs? These are matters that should be discussed in open debate among all those interested in the general state of the alliance, not only those with a professional or commercial interest.

Similarly the public will need reassurance, with substantial evidence, that the relationship is working in Australia’s trade interests. This reassurance will be required at several levels. Evidence will be expected to show that the FTA, as a bilateral trade agreement, is giving Australian industries greater access to American markets, as promised. The government will need to substantiate its more generic claims that the FTA will lift Australia’s profile in the United States as a trading partner, leading to considerable benefits that may be difficult to quantify. Moreover, Australians will need assurance that trade and security issues are not allowed to interfere with each other, to the detriment of Australian interests. And achieving these goals will be made more difficult by the fact that China is in many respects a natural, and highly profitable, trading partner for Australia, while the United States is a natural competitor in several fields. Continuing to balance trade, security and human rights interests in Australia’s relations with Washington and Beijing will be no easy matter.

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For more than fifty years, the Australian public has invested a great deal of political capital in the ANZUS alliance and the broader Australian–American relationship. Australian governments, whether Coalition or Labor, have consistently sought to maintain the alliance but have deployed, in varying versions and with varying degrees of

emphasis, at least five different arguments to defend that stance. Those five arguments remain sound reasons for seeking to maintain the alliance. At present the most important are the diplomatic leverage, especially *vis-à-vis* China, that Australia receives from the strategic relationship, and the central role of intelligence in the ‘war on terror’. Australian governments are likely to deploy these arguments, with the form and emphasis adjusted to meet changing circumstances, for many years to come. Following New Zealand’s example is not likely to gain majority support.

It would be timely now for Australians to give formal recognition to the idea that the Australian–American relationship is an important institution in its own right, requiring constant attention to ensure that it delivers positive returns on the political capital invested. As the junior partner in the relationship, it falls upon Australia to undertake much of the effort to ensure that the relationship continues to operate in the interests of both nations. Australian institutions, public and private, should seek to ensure that the Australian public can continue to be assured that its government is taking an active and positive, but not sycophantic or unduly deferential, attitude towards the maintenance of the security alliance and all the other dimensions of the relationship. To do so offers the best prospect for a healthy and beneficial relationship, in Australia’s national interests, for the next fifty years.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Among the more significant recent treatments of these issues are Bruce Grant, *Fatal Attraction: Reflections on the Alliance with the United States*. Black Inc., Melbourne, 2004; Owen Harries, *Benign or Imperial? Reflections on American Hegemony*. ABC Books, Sydney, 2004; Robert Garran, *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush and the American alliance*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004.
- <sup>2</sup> Linda Weiss, Elizabeth Thurbon & John Mathews, *How to Kill a Country: Australia’s Devastating Trade Deal with the United States*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004.
- <sup>3</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, The ANZUS Treaty: Alliance Management. *Australian Outlook*, Vol 38, No 3, December 1984, pp 148–52.
- <sup>4</sup> Neville Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–14*. Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, pp 168–9; James R. Reckner, “A sea of troubles”: the Great White Fleet’s 1908 war plans for Australia and New Zealand, in David Stevens and John Reeve (eds), *Southern Trident: Strategy, History and the Rise of Australian Naval Power*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001, p 182.
- <sup>5</sup> Reckner, “A sea of troubles”. pp 174–96.
- <sup>6</sup> Reckner, “A sea of troubles”. p 195.
- <sup>7</sup> Raymond A. Esthus, *From Enmity to Alliance: U.S.–Australian Relations, 1931–1941*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965.
- <sup>8</sup> The following passage is based on Peter Edwards, Another look at Curtin and MacArthur. Paper presented at an Australian War Memorial conference

- in 2002; available at <http://www.awm.gov.au/events/conference/2002/edwards.htm> [cited 4 November 2005]. See also Peter Edwards, Curtin, MacArthur and the “surrender of sovereignty”. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 55, No 2, July 2001, pp 175–86, and the sources discussed therein.
- <sup>9</sup> David Day, *John Curtin: a life*. HarperCollins, Sydney, 1999, p 463.
- <sup>10</sup> This phrase, referring to the location of the joint facilities discussed later in this paper, was used as the title of Desmond Ball, *A suitable piece of real estate: American installations in Australia*. Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1980.
- <sup>11</sup> David Lowe, Australia in the world, in Joan Beaumont (ed), *Australia’s War: 1939–45*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, p 169.
- <sup>12</sup> P.G. Edwards, *Prime Ministers and Diplomats*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1983, pp 154–62; P.G. Edwards, Evatt and the Americans. *Historical Studies*, xviii, 1979, pp 546–60.
- <sup>13</sup> Clem Lloyd and Richard Hall (eds), *Backroom Briefings: John Curtin’s War*. National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1997, pp 13–14, 31–5.
- <sup>14</sup> J.G. Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965, p 27.
- <sup>15</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*. Norton, New York, 1969, pp 637, 688–9.
- <sup>16</sup> Robert O’Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53*, Vol. I, *Strategy and Diplomacy*. Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981, pp 144–8.
- <sup>17</sup> Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia’s Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1965*. Allen & Unwin (in association with the Australian War Memorial), Sydney, 1992, Ch 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Garry Woodard, Australian Foreign Policy on the Offshore Islands Crisis of 1954–55 and Recognition of China. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 45, No 2, November 1991, pp 242–63.
- <sup>19</sup> Wayne Reynolds, *Australia’s Bid for the Atomic Bomb*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000.
- <sup>20</sup> W.J. Hudson, *Blind Loyalty*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1989.
- <sup>21</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*. Ch 12.
- <sup>22</sup> This section is based largely on the relevant chapters of Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*.
- <sup>23</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne), 12 May 1962, cited in Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*. p 249.
- <sup>24</sup> Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965–1975*. Allen & Unwin (in association with the Australian War Memorial), Sydney, 1997, p 31.
- <sup>25</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*. p 362.
- <sup>26</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*. p 240.
- <sup>27</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*. p 298.
- <sup>28</sup> Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*. p 237.
- <sup>29</sup> Henry S. Albinski, *The Australian-American Security Relationship: A Regional and International Perspective*. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1982, p 224; Arthur Tange, *Defence Policy-Making* (a memoir currently being prepared for publication). Ch 3.
- <sup>30</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs (authorised by Bill Hayden as Minister 4 July 1984), *Uranium, the Joint Facilities, Disarmament and Peace*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1984, p 17. See also Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australia and Disarmament: steps in the right direction*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986.
- <sup>31</sup> Peter FitzSimons, *Beazley: A biography*. HarperCollins, Sydney, 1998, p 237.
- <sup>32</sup> Keith Scott, *Gareth Evans*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp 247–8.
- <sup>33</sup> Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia faces the Asia-Pacific*. Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2000, pp 41, 43.
- <sup>34</sup> Keating, *Engagement*. Ch 2; quotations from pp 25, 42, 43.
- <sup>35</sup> Keating, *Engagement*. p 28.
- <sup>36</sup> Developing Regional Architecture: The APEC Leaders’ Meetings, in Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley, *Making Australian Foreign Policy*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2003, pp 114–20.
- <sup>37</sup> Keating, Pacific’s champion for trade liberalisation: APEC. *Financial Times* (London), 16 October 2001; cited in Peter Edwards and David Goldsworthy (eds), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia 1970s to 2000*. Vol 2, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, p 32.

- <sup>38</sup> The speech was made by Ambassador Genta Hawkins Holmes on 11 June 1997.
- <sup>39</sup> Mohan Malik, Australia and China, in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), *The National Interest in a Global Era: Australia in World Affairs 1996–2000*. Oxford University Press (in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs), Melbourne, 2001, p 119.
- <sup>40</sup> Quotations from *In the National Interest* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997) and *Australia's Strategic Policy* (Department of Defence, 1997), cited in William T. Tow, Australia and the United States, in Cotton and Ravenhill (eds), *The National Interest in a Global Era*. pp 171–92 at p 177.
- <sup>41</sup> See The Anglosphere Illusion in Harries, *Benign or Imperial?* pp 118–32.
- <sup>42</sup> Michael Evans, *The Tyranny of Dissonance: Australia's Strategic Culture and Way of War 1901–2005*. Study Paper No 306, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, ACT, 2005, p 2.
- <sup>43</sup> Paul Kelly, Poised between giants. *Weekend Australian*, 23–24 July 2005.
- <sup>44</sup> *Australians Speak 2005*. Lowy Institute Poll.
- <sup>45</sup> Mark Latham, *The Latham Diaries*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2005, p 393.
- <sup>46</sup> Doug Bandow, Updating the Alliance for a New Era, in Doug Bandow, Dan Blumenthal, Kurt M. Campbell & Peter Brookes, *Alliance: The View from America*. Occasional Paper 96, Centre for Independent Studies, Sydney, 2005, p 12.
- <sup>47</sup> Stuart Harris, *Will China Divide Australia and the US?* The Australian Centre for American Studies, Sydney, 1998.
- <sup>48</sup> Greg Sheridan, New ranking lets us share in US secrets. *Australian*, 1 September 2005.

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