

**Strategic Culture, Identity and the Shaping of Security Policy:**

**A Comparative Study of Australia and New Zealand**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to explain the roots of security thinking in Australia and New Zealand and what it argues has been a gradual divergence in the two countries' approaches to defence issues. Drawing upon constructivist international relations theory, it highlights the importance of ideational rather than material influences on policy formulation. It focuses on two key variables: strategic culture and identity, arguing that they provide significant clues as to the varying threat perceptions, policy preferences and the domestic values that underpin thinking on security matters in these two countries. By tracing the evolution of Australian and New Zealand defence policies over a long historical timeframe, the study identifies persistent cultural norms and preferences that explain policies seemingly difficult to reconcile with a materialist understanding of world politics. After providing a detailed comparison of the influences on defence thinking in each country, the study compares Australian and New Zealand perspectives on regional security in the Pacific and the rationales given for participating in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003. The thesis concludes that compared to a materialist approach, an examination which includes ideational variables such as strategic culture and identity better explains why the two countries have pursued divergent security paths and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the logic shaping thinking on defence issues in these two states.

# **Strategic Culture, Identity and the Shaping of Security Policy:**

## **A Comparative Study of Australia and New Zealand**

Australia and New Zealand are two similar neighbours situated in the Asia-Pacific region. They share a British colonial history, a common language and adherence to Western political principles. For many decades they have also had similar foreign policies and defence strategies. Yet in the second half of the twentieth century the two countries' security policies have noticeably diverged, revealing a difference in worldviews and policy preferences. Different threat perceptions have become apparent, along with distinct approaches to security matters. Australia considers itself more vulnerable in the region than New Zealand, and has given emphasis to a traditional security approach that stresses the need for military might and maintaining a strong relationship with a powerful ally – currently the United States. Australia has been consistently increasing its military capabilities, in part because of fear of the growing military might of its Asian neighbours.<sup>1</sup> New Zealand, on the other hand, despite facing a relatively similar environment, has for decades been downgrading its military capabilities, in the belief that the country is not directly threatened and that problems in the Asia-Pacific region require a less forceful approach. In contrast to Canberra, Wellington does not perceive an alliance with the United States as essential to its security. The differences between the Australian and New Zealand approach to defence have led to questions over the strength of their alliance and their ability to promote a shared security agenda.<sup>2</sup>

Why has this divergence in security matters taken place, and how can it be explained? What are the key influences on the development of Australia's and New Zealand's defence policies? Traditionally, dominant explanations for state behaviour in International

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2000), p. 24

<sup>2</sup> Guy Wilson-Roberts (ed.), *Australia and New Zealand: The Defence Policy Gulf*, Strategic Briefing Papers, Vol. 4, Part 2, November 2000, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, p. 2

Relations have focused on the distribution of material power or the balance of threat.<sup>3</sup> This thesis argues that such theories can't adequately explain the differences in New Zealand's and Australia's defence approaches and their responses to regional instability in the Pacific. Instead, the study focuses on the importance of ideational variables, which it argues can help to explain the origins of security interests and provide greater insights into policy formation. Specifically, I argue that the gradual development and consolidation of very different strategic cultures and state identities in Australia and New Zealand has had a significant impact on their respective national security interests and priorities. These ideational factors, including culture, identity and domestic values, provide a framework for the consideration of what are deemed to be "appropriate" strategic options and policy choices. Despite changes in governments on both sides of the Tasman, I argue they have consistently defined Australian and New Zealand interests. While my analysis does not ignore the place of material factors in influencing foreign policy, the thesis argues that it is the *interpretation* of material factors, the way they are seen through a lens of values and shared meanings that explains why Wellington and Canberra have such different threat perceptions and why they have developed such different approaches to security in the Pacific.

The study begins with the assumption that the way countries perceive their security largely depends on their cultural values and sense of identity.<sup>4</sup> These ideational factors underpin their assessment of their regional environment and what constitutes a threat or threatening behaviour. In each country's case foreign policy is influenced and determined by both internal and external factors. However, it is the former which shape the interpretation of external factors and the way international conditions are perceived. How material factors, such as the level of military capabilities in regional countries, are viewed depends on

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1979) and Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987)

<sup>4</sup> See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security', in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 1-32

a cultural and social context of a country's policymaking environment. Material power therefore, may or may not be viewed as inherently threatening. As will be argued, adopting strategic culture and identity as independent variables influencing state behaviour, reveals the way threats are socially constructed and uncovers the guiding values and beliefs that drive security thinking in each country. Despite strategic assessments across the Tasman indicating that both Australia and New Zealand remain unlikely targets of military invasion, the former has historically adopted a *realpolitik* attitude, maintaining large and sophisticated levels of military capabilities designed for conventional warfare in securing the country. I attempt to show the roots of such behaviour, by pointing to the role of ideational influences and identity on Australia's security policy. Adopting a historical approach, the study traces the general divergence in attitudes between the two nations and the emergence of distinct strategic cultures and identities, which provide each country with a set of persistent guiding ideas, beliefs and policy preferences.

The thesis is in five chapters. Chapter 1 provides a theoretical introduction, making the case for the use of a social constructivist approach over the dominant materialist theories of International Relations. Chapter 2 provides a study of historical patterns in Australia's defence approaches and policy preferences, demonstrating a consistency of a politics of fear, a culture of realist thinking on security and dependency on a great power protector. A comparative assessment of New Zealand's defence posture follows in Chapter 3. It examines New Zealand's emerging sense of strategic culture and identity since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In both case studies I trace the influence of ideational factors on state policies through a historical analysis of bipartisan political discourse, defence policy documents and public opinion data. While showing direct causal linkages between ideational variables and policy outcomes is never simple the study aims to highlight the influence of strategic culture and identity on state behaviour, by contrasting ideational explanations with the materialist predictions of neorealism. I find a striking dissimilarity in policy responses between the two

neighbours even when they are faced with similar situations in terms of strategic geography and the regional distribution of power.

Chapter 4 tests this larger claim by looking in detail at one case – the rationales given by Australia and New Zealand for their participation in the regional peacekeeping mission to the Solomon Islands in 2003. Despite their differences, both countries have frequently participated in shared initiatives, particularly in the Asia-Pacific. Yet, while both countries had the ultimate objective of bringing security to the region and stopping the violence in the Solomon Islands, their justifications for involvement in this cause were strikingly different. I argue these different rationales provide significant clues as to the ideational factors that underpin both countries' security policies. A comparative assessment reveals how the two countries frame regional security in the Pacific in different ways and offers insights as to the ideas and values that dominate political thinking on security in Australia and New Zealand.

Finally Chapter 5 provides a comparative assessment of the two countries' broad security approaches and summarises the argument made here. It includes a critical evaluation of the usefulness of strategic culture and identity as explanatory variables in the study of state behaviour. The thesis closes with some concluding remarks as to challenges for future research on the security policies of states.

## Chapter 1

### **Explaining the Security Interests of States:**

#### **A Theoretical Overview**

In the last few decades the study of international relations has centred on two dominant theoretical approaches: neorealism and neoliberalism. Both share a common materialist ontology and a rational choice methodology. While these two conceptual frameworks diverge in their assumptions about the possibility of co-operation between actors, they share the belief that states have fixed interests, which are formed exogenous to interaction. They therefore share the supposition that states are undifferentiated, self-interested actors.

In accordance with their materialist ontology, neorealism and neoliberalism also assume that anarchy is the central feature of the international system and that power, largely defined in military capabilities, is the determining influence on state behaviour. However, while neorealists are pessimistic as to whether states can work together, viewing interaction as a zero-sum game, neoliberals take a more optimistic view that states can achieve absolute gains by the use of co-operative mechanisms, such as regimes and institutions. Neoliberals believe that states may freely choose to create norms and institutions to promote co-operation, knowing that it is likely to benefit their long-term interests.<sup>5</sup> Neorealists differ on this point with neoliberals, preferring a more Hobbesian view of anarchy, and viewing relations between states as inherently competitive, since “a state cannot be sure that today’s friend will not be tomorrow’s enemy”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Barnett, ‘Social Constructivism’, in John Bayliss and Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 253

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Waltz, ‘Structural Realism after the Cold War’, *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2000, p. 10

This section focuses on examining Kenneth Waltz's version of structural neorealism, largely because of its dominance as an international relations theory and importance in explaining the security objectives of states.<sup>7</sup> Of particular interest to this study is a determination of the causes of Australia's and New Zealand's differing approaches towards their defence interests and policies, as well as their diverging outlooks concerning regional security. Given neorealism's traditional dominance in security studies, my objective is to briefly assess its explanatory potential with specific reference to the two countries under examination.

Neorealism has been the dominant international relations theory of the second half of the twentieth century and arguably, still remains as one of the most prevailing approaches used to explain world politics. It is based on the idea that the structure of the international system is the key factor that influences state policies. According to Kenneth Waltz, three basic factors influence world politics: first the international system is an anarchy; second that the units (states) are alike and pursue policies of self-help; and third, that the distribution of power capabilities determines state behaviour. Of greatest significance to neorealists is the distribution of capabilities between states, something that is usually understood as military resources. Neorealists assert that it is the quantity and distribution of this power, which determines the foreign policies of states. Because the international system is an anarchy, states face an ever-present security dilemma, leading them to respond to the acquisition of military power by another state by adopting a worst case scenario interpretation of that actor's objectives.<sup>8</sup> In order for states to survive, they must maximise their interests by adopting a policy of self-help.

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<sup>7</sup> See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1979), Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Political Structures', in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 70-97, Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Structural Realism after the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 2000, pp. 5-41

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Wheeler and Ken Booth, 'The Security Dilemma', in John Baylis and Nicholas Rengger (eds.), *Dilemmas of World Politics. International Issues in a Changing World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 30



According to Waltz, all states share similar goals and the internal character of each state is irrelevant in explaining state relations or policy choices. He argues that “[s]tates are alike in the tasks that they face, though not in their abilities to perform them.”<sup>9</sup> This assumes that states possess a universally predetermined set of policy preferences. Neorealists do not believe that a state’s interest can change through interaction and reject the importance of domestic variables, including the social setting where policymaking takes place. Waltz is dismissive of the possible influence of ideational factors on state interaction, arguing that “state behaviour [...] varies more with differences of power than differences of ideology, internal structure of property relations, or in governmental form.”<sup>10</sup> The problem with this approach however is that it fails to show how power acquires meaning. It also has difficulty accounting for cases where countries specifically choose not to pursue possible power maximising strategies. For instance, the theory fails to explain why Germany and Japan have deliberately chosen not to pursue possible power maximising strategies, despite having the resources to do so.<sup>11</sup>

While Waltz’s pessimistic view of international relations may have resonance with some parts of the world, where self-help strategies dominate, the logic behind such action lies in process, rather than structure.<sup>12</sup> Neorealists are wrong to assume that self-help follows unavoidably from the anarchical structure of the international system. For instance, neorealism fails to explain why the United States views North Korea’s five nuclear weapons as more threatening than 200 British nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup> This is because power and threats

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<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 96

<sup>10</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 329

<sup>11</sup> Thomas U. Berger, ‘Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 317-318

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics’, *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 394-395

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Constructing International Politics’, *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Summer 1995, p. 73. In his article published in 1995 Wendt refers to the presence of 500 British nuclear weapons, however as of 2008 the number of nuclear weapons estimated to be in British possession is 200 – an updated figure I have added to replace the original estimate, retaining the overall point made by Wendt.

are not automatically linked and in this case the British are friends of the United States, while the North Koreans are not, which determines how their respective material capabilities are interpreted.<sup>14</sup> As we will see, constructivists argue that *realpolitik* and self-interested behaviour is part of the *social* structure of international relations, rather than its *material* structure. Where neorealists assume the distribution of power has led to competition between states, constructivists argue it is the result of a culturally and identity-based system of hostile interaction. Paul Schroeder, who studied the usefulness of neorealism in accounting for international relations during the Westphalia era from 1648 to 1945, came to the conclusion that the theory “[...] gets the motives, the process, the patterns, and the broad outcomes of international history wrong [...]”.<sup>15</sup> He argues that this theory, which aims to prescribe and predict a determinate order for history, fails when it is checked against the historical record.<sup>16</sup> Its rationalism and materialist ontology contributes to its crucial shortfalls in explaining how states define their interests and which factors influence state interaction and the development of foreign policies.

This thesis considers this critique of neorealism by exploring the security approaches taken by Australia and New Zealand. While both countries historically had a similar approach to security, I argue that the divergence in their attitudes and policies that has taken place in the past several decades cannot be explained by simply focusing on the international structure of the state system or on their respective military capabilities. Despite facing a relatively similar environment and objectively low levels of military threat, both countries have developed divergent threat perceptions; have different objectives for achieving national security, and different ideas about what constitutes adequate responses to security challenges.

What is the cause of this divergence in attitudes? While at first glance Australia appears to exhibit typical “*realpolitik*” behaviour in accordance with neorealist predictions,

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<sup>14</sup> Wendt, ‘Constructing International Politics’, p. 73

<sup>15</sup> Paul Schroeder, ‘Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory’, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Summer 1994, p. 147

<sup>16</sup> Schroeder, ‘Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory’, p. 147

I argue that its sources do not lie in the structure of the international system, but in the country's domestic cultural milieu. The social context of Australia's policymaking suggests the nation has consistently acted towards its Asia-Pacific neighbours on the basis of a culture of fear. This sense of vulnerability and threat, however, is hard to reconcile or relate to any material military threat. For example, material explanations fail to provide an explanation for the fragile relationship between Australia and Indonesia and the former's constant sense of fear of the latter, despite Indonesia's lack of military capabilities. Simon Philpott makes a strong case that Australia has had this fearful relationship, much in the same way it has based its relationship with the materially unmatched United States on the basis of trust.<sup>17</sup> Neorealism is not equipped to account for influences that are outside of a materialist framework. It is incapable of grasping how threats exist independent of material capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

Neorealism also fails when applied to New Zealand's defence policies and attitudes towards regional security. Waltz suggests that for states to survive and maintain their security in an anarchic system, they must pursue self-help either by acquiring military might, or sustaining a strong alliance.<sup>19</sup> This is why he believes that balance of power is a reoccurring pattern in international relations.<sup>20</sup> However, New Zealand's determination to pursue an independent stance in world affairs and security matters, rather than a close military relationship with the United States seems at odds with neorealist predictions. Moreover, the theory is further challenged by New Zealand's reluctance to acquire greater military capabilities. Indeed, New Zealand's attitude towards defence may be characterised by a decades-long reluctance to acquire large military capabilities and a rejection of the adoption of an aggressive, pre-emptive posture in regional security matters.

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<sup>17</sup> Simon Philpott, 'Fear of the Dark: Indonesia and the Australian National Imagination', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2001, p. 371

<sup>18</sup> Anthony D. Lott, *Creating Insecurity: Realism, Constructivism, and US Security Policy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), p. 26

<sup>19</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 118

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Structural Realism after the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Summer 2000, p. 27

Over the last decade scholars have increasingly shifted their attention to non-material variables that may help explain international relations. In particular, researchers have increasingly been turning to theories that highlight the influence of ideational variables, at both the domestic and international level, on the foreign policies of states. Broadly lumped under the umbrella of “constructivism” there has been a proliferation of approaches that have gained prominence in seeking to explain international relations and how states approach the issue of security. An increasingly vibrant debate has been taking place among scholars concerning the inadequacies of neorealism in explaining the field of national security studies and the potential of ideational approaches and social variables in accounting for changing state interests and preferences. Neorealists have struggled to defend their theory without incorporating non-material variables, leading Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik to conclude that neorealists have abandoned the essence of the theory.<sup>21</sup>

In his assessment of neorealism and neoliberalism in the post-Cold War era, the prominent neoliberal, Robert O. Keohane admits that neither of these two theories have the power to predict state interests or explain their evolution.<sup>22</sup> He also acknowledges that “[w]ithout a theory of interests, which requires analysis of domestic politics, no theory of international relations can be fully adequate.”<sup>23</sup> Recognising that an adequate explanation of the formation of state security policies requires consideration of ideational variables and the domestic context where interests and policies are formed, the following section turns to constructivist theory.

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<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, ‘Is Anybody Still a Realist?’, *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 1999, p. 6

<sup>22</sup> Robert O. Keohane, ‘Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War’, in David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 285

<sup>23</sup> Keohane, ‘Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War’, p. 294

## Constructivism and Ideational Influences

Constructivism's focus is on ideational, as opposed to solely material factors in accounting for state interests, behaviour and interaction. It is concerned with how variables such as identities, culture, norms and ideas shape international relations. Therefore, it provides a wider set of explanatory tools than neorealism. Constructivism is also a social theory, which argues that relationships between states are not formed by egoistic states on the basis of the international system's material structure, but instead are rooted in the social meanings that states assign to each other through interaction. The father of modern constructivism, Alexander Wendt, believes that it is necessary to observe the formation of social relationships between states in terms of "[...] the intersubjective understandings and expectations, and the 'distribution of knowledge', that constitute their conceptions of self and other."<sup>24</sup> This helps to explain why a state may prefer to co-operate with one actor or community, while forming a more difficult, or even hostile, relationship with another, irrespective of the distribution of material power.

By adopting a sociological approach to international politics, constructivism suggests that actors act towards each other on the basis of the meanings that the other has to them.<sup>25</sup> While material factors continue to matter in world affairs, how states respond and interpret them depends on the social fabric of international relations. In the language of security "[s]ocial threats are constructed, not natural."<sup>26</sup> For example, as will be discussed in the following chapter in more detail, Australia assigns the idea of a threatening "other" to Indonesia, while viewing the United States as a close friend, despite the fact that materially the US has a much greater ability to inflict harm on Australia.

Another constructivist insight, which may better explain divergences in states' foreign

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<sup>24</sup> Wendt, 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics', p. 397

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pp. 396-397

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 405

policies, is that interests are formed endogenous to interaction. Wendt to a limited extent accepts the rationalist assumption that states share some similar objectives. He argues that actors possess a corporate identity, which generates interests such as physical security and the desire for predictability in relationships.<sup>27</sup> He says, “these corporate interests provide motivational energy for engaging in action at all and, to that extent, are prior to interaction [...]”.<sup>28</sup> However, he argues that “[a]ctors do not have a “portfolio” of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations.”<sup>29</sup> How a situation is defined and interests formed, largely depends on the social identity of the state. Identities may be regarded as “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self”, and are considered to be “inherently relational”.<sup>30</sup> An identity may encompass a number of variables such as the ideas, ideology, history, culture and norms that constitute a state’s sense of self. It is simultaneously shaped by both the domestic and international environment. It is identity that is the basis of interest formation, as actors are often incapable of determining what constitute their interests prior to knowing “who they are”.<sup>31</sup> By informing an actor “who it is”, identities set out a set of preferences with regard to options for action and with respect to particular actors.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, treating identity as a variable requires caution, as states can possess multiple identities, which may complicate study. As Peter Katzenstein admits the process of constructing a nation’s sense of self is usually overtly political and sets in opposition

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<sup>27</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Identity and Structural Change in International Politics’, in Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds.), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), p. 51

<sup>28</sup> Wendt, ‘Identity and Structural Change in International Politics’, p. 51

<sup>29</sup> Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what states make of it’, p. 398

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 397

<sup>31</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 59

<sup>32</sup> Ted Hopf, ‘The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory’, *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Summer 1998, p. 175

conflicting viewpoints against each other.<sup>33</sup> However, there is usually a dominant identity, which a state propels onto the world stage, and that is often discursively reproduced by politicians and policy-makers.

While constructivists do not reject the neorealist claim that the international system is one of anarchy, they believe that “anarchy is what states make of it” and argue that anarchy does not inevitably lead states to pursue self-help strategies.<sup>34</sup> How states behave, act and identify with each other, is influenced by the social structure of the international system. According to Wendt “there is no “logic” of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process.”<sup>35</sup> It is collective meanings, which shape the nature of the system under anarchy, and a security dilemma is by no means an essential feature of this condition. In fact, Wendt argues that sovereignty and the socialisation of states into obeying various international norms have created a world that more resembles a Lockean, rather than a Hobbesian nature of affairs.<sup>36</sup> Hostility in international relations and relationships based on distrust are not an inevitable characteristic of the international system, but a reflection of the social structure of international politics and culturally constructed inter-state relations.

This focus on the ideational foundation of the national security policies of states is relevant to this study’s goal of accounting for the diverging approaches to defence of Australia and New Zealand. According to constructivist logic, there are three layers to the international environment where national security policies are created.<sup>37</sup> They include formal

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<sup>33</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 6

<sup>34</sup> Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what states make of it’, p. 396

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pp. 394-395

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 415

<sup>37</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 34



institutions or security regimes, world political culture including international law, and “international patterns of amity and enmity”.<sup>38</sup> It is in particular the last layer that helps to shed light on Australia’s and New Zealand’s diverging conceptions of threat.

Why Australia views its environment as more threatening than New Zealand cannot be simply narrowed down to a materialist variable like the geographical position of the country. Instead, it is necessary to understand the ideational influences, including established beliefs and values, which impact on their respective regional assessments. Specifically, why does Australia explicitly uphold the idea that the Pacific region represents a threat to its national security, because, as it claims, weak or collapsing states in the country’s proximate “arc of instability” may be used for terrorist activity, while New Zealand does not prioritise such an argument to pursue its security objectives? Similarly, why does Australia seem acutely sensitive to any shifts in the military capabilities of its Asian neighbours, stressing the need to maintain a competitive edge over other regional powers? As I will show later, this pessimistic interpretation of the environment is not matched in New Zealand’s threat assessments and formulation of security policies. As Lott points out, the sources of insecurity are found in cultural ideas, rather than material capabilities.<sup>39</sup>

David Campbell argues that security marks “the ethical boundaries of identity rather than the territorial borders of the state.”<sup>40</sup> I apply this view to the two countries under consideration, concluding that New Zealand is more comfortable seeing itself as part of the Pacific region than Australia, while the latter has also struggled to build a shared regional identity with its northern Asian neighbours.<sup>41</sup> There are different ways of exploring the

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<sup>38</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security’, p. 34

<sup>39</sup> Lott, *Creating Insecurity: Realism, Constructivism, and US Security Policy*, p. 57

<sup>40</sup> David Campbell, *Writing security: United States foreign policy and the politics of identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 156

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Paulo Gorjão, ‘Australia’s dilemma between geography and history: how consolidated is engagement with Asia?’, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, August 2003, pp. 179-196, Kim Beng Phar, ‘Excluded from the club: Why Australia is not yet a part of East Asia’, *Harvard Asia Pacific Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 43-44, Simon Dalby, ‘Continent Adrift?: Dissident Security Discourse and the Australian Geopolitical Imagination’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1996, pp. 59-75



construction of identity but one variable that seems to provide insights about why Australia and New Zealand have exhibited different behaviour and ideas concerning security, is the notion of “strategic culture”.

### **The Variable of Strategic Culture**

“Strategic culture” refers to “a nation’s traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force.”<sup>42</sup> It provides a context for the development of policymaking, acting as a background to how states perceive their surroundings, how threats are framed and interpreted and what behaviour prevails in the nation or political community under study. It points to a collective’s values, fears, beliefs, traditions and biases and is influenced by factors such as the country’s geopolitical setting and interpretation of past historical experiences. As such, it is an ideational variable that can help explain certain patterns of behaviour and policy choices, which materialist theories fail to account for.

Although the concept of “strategic culture” is relatively new and under-theorised, there is a large literature suggesting it can provide theoretical and empirical insights in world politics. Strategic culture was introduced and first applied to explain the United States-Soviet Union relationship in the 1970s. Jack Snyder coined the term in a 1977 research report for the RAND Corporation, in which he was critical of the United States’ confidence that a rational analysis could predict Soviet behaviour towards limiting its use of nuclear weapons. He warned of the dangers in assuming that the Soviet Union would likely abide by American notions of restraint and adopt its notion of strategic rationality.<sup>43</sup> Instead, Snyder argued that it

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<sup>42</sup> Ken Booth, ‘The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed’, in Carl G. Jacobsen (ed.), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1990), p. 121

<sup>43</sup> Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation Report R-2154-AF, September 1977), p. v

was necessary to examine the Soviet approach and thinking by referring to its “strategic culture”.<sup>44</sup> He defined this as “the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation.”<sup>45</sup> His argument was that as a result of socialisation into a particular Soviet way of thinking, “a set of general beliefs, attitudes and behavioral patterns with regard to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semipermanence that places them on the level of ‘culture’ rather than mere ‘policy’.”<sup>46</sup> Snyder claimed that strategic culture grew out of the Soviet historical experience, persisted over generations of policy-making and continued to be the basis of how issues were interpreted and framed. He argued strategic culture was a variable with predictive power.

Writing around the same time, Ken Booth was also critical of the rationalist approach, instead stressing the need to incorporate the cultural variable in any analysis of international relations. Booth’s 1979 book *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, shared with Snyder the idea that strategic culture has a significant influence on the behaviour and policies of states. It warns of the problems of ethnocentrism, viewing and interpreting other actors’ intentions via one’s own cultural system of values and analysis of events. Instead, Booth called for the replacement of the “rational Strategic Man” with a shift towards ““strategy with a human face””.<sup>47</sup> He modified Snyder’s definition of strategic culture, opting for “nation” to replace the reference to “national strategic community” and broadening its applicability from “nuclear strategy” to “the threat or use of force”.<sup>48</sup> Booth’s work provides a valuable expansion of the term “strategic culture”, bringing it closer to a universally applicable notion.

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<sup>44</sup> Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, p. v

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 8

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. v

<sup>47</sup> Ken Booth, *Strategy of Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), pp. 17-18

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War: An Historical Overview* (New York: Routledge, 2006) p. 126

Subsequently scholars have sought to add greater theoretical rigour to the concept. Colin Gray notes that strategy encompasses several dimensions; one of which is cultural.<sup>49</sup> He believes that culture includes ideas and certain models of behaviour.<sup>50</sup> He cautions about the explanatory power of the variable, however, asserting that “strategic culture offers context, not reliable causality.”<sup>51</sup> In a similar vein, Michael O’Keefe maintains that the concept “describes the context within which policy is developed and decisions made, but this does not mean that it determines decisions and outcomes.”<sup>52</sup> Despite these reservations Gray, along with other scholars, accepts that strategic culture guides action.<sup>53</sup>

There is disagreement, however, as to the precise nature of the link between strategic culture and state behaviour. In contrast to Gray’s assertion that all behaviour is affected by strategic culture<sup>54</sup>, Alastair Iain Johnston argues that behaviour is an independent variable, allowing for the conceptual possibility that it may be explained independently of strategic culture.<sup>55</sup> Johnston seeks a concept of strategic culture that is “falsifiable, or at least distinguishable from non-strategic cultural variables.”<sup>56</sup> At the same time he claims that strategic culture can offer policymakers “a uniquely ordered set of strategic choices from which we can derive predictions about behavior; that can be observed in strategic cultural objects<sup>57</sup>; and whose transmission across time can be traced.”<sup>58</sup> He defines strategic culture as an “integrated system of symbols (e.g. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long lasting preferences by formulating

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<sup>49</sup> Colin S. Gray, ‘Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue 1, January 1999, p. 51

<sup>50</sup> Gray, ‘Strategic Culture as Context’, p. 52

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 62

<sup>52</sup> Michael O’Keefe, ‘Australian Intervention in Its Neighbourhood: Sheriff and Humanitarian?’, in Tony Coady and Michael O’Keefe (eds.), *Righteous Violence: The Ethics and Politics of Military Intervention* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2005), p.80

<sup>53</sup> Gray, ‘Strategic Culture as Context’, pp. 62-68

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 59

<sup>55</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘Strategic culture revisited: reply to Colin Gray’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, 1999, p. 523

<sup>56</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture’, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Spring 1995, p. 45

<sup>57</sup> By ‘strategic cultural objects’ Johnston refers to empirical referents such as texts, documents and doctrines

<sup>58</sup> Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture’, p. 46

concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs.”<sup>59</sup> At the most general level, therefore, strategic culture offers “the existence of a perceptual lens or milieu through which information is received, mediated and processed into appropriate responses.”<sup>60</sup>

In terms of permanence, scholars generally agree that while strategic culture is persistent, its content “is not cast in concrete for all time.”<sup>61</sup> However, as O’Keefe argues “the influence of strategic culture transcends the politicking of a particular government - governments come and go but the background influence of strategic culture is enduring.”<sup>62</sup> Still, there is lack of theoretical clarity when it comes to identifying the factors that determine a fundamental change in a country’s strategic culture. Booth seems cautious about the impact of material circumstances on a nation, stating that the durability of strategic culture or its cultural elements “tend to outlast all but major changes in military technology, domestic arrangements or the international environment.”<sup>63</sup> Gray, on the other hand, opts for a more social explanation, stating that strategic culture “[c]an change over time, as new experience is absorbed, coded, and culturally translated.”<sup>64</sup> More recently, Kerry Longhurst notes that while strategic culture is “persistent over time [...] although it is not permanent or static” it “can alter, either fundamentally or piecemeal, at critical junctures in that collective’s experiences.”<sup>65</sup>

The impact of strategic culture on policymaking has both restrictive and prescriptive values. In other words, it can rule out certain political options, while pushing to the forefront other alternatives and policies. Snyder noticed how due to strategic culture, thoughts and debates are framed a certain way, establishing a vocabulary and conceptual boundary of

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<sup>59</sup> Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture’, p. 46

<sup>60</sup> Stuart Poore, ‘Strategic Culture’, in John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore (eds.), *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), p.50

<sup>61</sup> Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, p. 40

<sup>62</sup> O’Keefe, ‘Australian Intervention in Its Neighbourhood: Sheriff and Humanitarian?’, p. 80

<sup>63</sup> Ken Booth, ‘The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed’, in Carl G. Jacobsen (ed.), *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1990), p. 121

<sup>64</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 131

<sup>65</sup> Kerry Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force: The Evolution of German Security Policy 1990-2003* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 17-18

strategic debate.<sup>66</sup> Johnston, in a similar vein, argues that a strategic culture “is an ideational milieu which limits behavioral choices”.<sup>67</sup>

These arguments have been incorporated into a growing body of scholarship, which highlights the limits of neorealism and explores the usefulness of culture as an explanatory variable. John Duffield and Thomas Berger have demonstrated that the domestic culture of Germany since 1945 has significantly contributed to the country’s antimilitarist stance and tendency to prefer multilateral avenues and co-operation for resolving international matters.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Peter Katzenstein argues ideational approaches provide an explanation for Japan’s post-World War II reluctance to acquire military might, while opting instead for influence by economic means.<sup>69</sup> Proponents of strategic culture aim to demonstrate that elites or policymakers in every country will be socialised into their strategic culture, which may result in a choice of different options even if the situation being faced is comparable. Ulrich Krotz found this to be the case, when he adapted role conception theory to explain why France and Germany, despite being similar in many respects and sharing a similar environment, have significant differences in their foreign policies. While Krotz’s use of role theory differs from the approach used here, he admits that his approach shares much with other cultural explanations, within a broad constructivist research program.<sup>70</sup>

The one scholar who has undertaken a lengthy historical study of strategic culture is Alastair Iain Johnston, whose work focuses on China’s strategic traditions and what he calls “cultural realism”. Johnston believes that “structure cannot account for Chinese realpolitik”.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, p. 9

<sup>67</sup> Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture’, p. 46

<sup>68</sup> John Duffield, ‘Political Culture and State Behaviour: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism’, *International Organisation*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 1999 and Thomas Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

<sup>69</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Post-War Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 207

<sup>70</sup> Ulrich Krotz, ‘National Role Conceptions and Foreign Policies: France and Germany Compared’, Program for the Study of Germany and Europe, Working Paper 02.1p. 6, available online at <http://www.ces.fas.harvard.edu/publications/docs/pdfs/Krotz.pdf> (version current at 13/05/07)

<sup>71</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, ‘Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 218

Instead, he points to the explanation offered by strategic culture, stating that “China’s realpolitik behavior is ideationally rooted.”<sup>72</sup> He argues that the Chinese predisposition to view the world and security in a realist fashion is not caused by outside influences like the material distribution of power and structure of the state system. Rather, it is influenced by long-held domestic values and sets of beliefs that can be traced throughout the country’s history.

Strategic culture’s emergence during Cold War assessments of nuclear ambitions and superpower relations meant the idea was mostly confined to assessing military manoeuvring between states. However, recent scholarship considers the variable in broad terms, applying the concept of strategic culture not just to the military domain, but to various national policy areas.<sup>73</sup> Although states possess a “statist military logic”, which refers to the nearly universal logic of state survival and maintenance of some form of military capability, they also acquire “national strategic traditions”, where strategic culture plays an important part.<sup>74</sup> As this thesis will argue in the following chapters, the notion of ‘strategic culture’ can explain the difference and continued divergence between Australia’s and New Zealand’s defence postures and their views on regional security in the Asia-Pacific.

## Methodology

How then do we go about demonstrating the influence of strategic culture? This study offers a historical survey of patterns in security thinking, attitudes and behaviour by using strategic culture and identity as independent variables. The main objects of textual analysis

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<sup>72</sup> Johnston, ‘Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China’, p. 221

<sup>73</sup> John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore (eds.), *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), p. 9

<sup>74</sup> Allan Macmillan, Ken Booth and Russell Trood, ‘Strategic Culture’, in Ken Booth and Russell Trood (eds.), *Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 13-14

for the study include official defence policy documents and strategic assessments issued by the governments of the two countries. The use of these primary documents will be supported by a study of political discourse, with particular attention paid to speeches given by Prime Ministers, Ministers for Defence and Ministers for Foreign Affairs. My study also benefits from interviews carried out with officials based in the Pacific.

This thesis will largely adopt Johnston's approach to strategic culture with the aim of demonstrating its apparent effect on behaviour and policy outcomes.<sup>75</sup> Despite the practical difficulty in studying a state's strategic culture and the complexity of an ideational approach, it is a task that can be empirically undertaken and, which I argue should not be discarded to due its complexity. Johnston sets out a methodology that identifies the existence of a particular strategic culture by identifying a central paradigm, in which different strategic cultures may be located along a continuum according to their characteristics. Depending on their assumptions about the strategic environment and view of conflict (e.g. if it is viewed as inevitable or an aberration), their outlook on the nature of the adversary (zero-sum or variable sum) and approach towards the role and value of force in international affairs; states may range from possessing a "hard realpolitik" version of strategic culture at the one end, to a moderate "soft idealpolitik" at the other end.<sup>76</sup> The study uses cognitive mapping and symbolic analysis to analyse strategic culture. The first involves a study of the content of documents in terms of the cause-effect statements, looking for underlying causal arguments.<sup>77</sup> The second method involves symbolic analysis, which can include a study of the frequency of use of certain phrases and idioms, key words or analogies, which become embedded as valid descriptions of a strategic environment.<sup>78</sup> Depending on the initial interpretation of the environment, states will adapt different assumptions and choices as the operational level, ranging from offensive strategies to more moderate diplomatic means. Johnston points to the

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<sup>75</sup> Johnston, 'Thinking about Strategic Culture', pp. 46-47

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, pp. 46-47

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 51

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 52



usefulness of studying symbols in the analysis of political discourse, such as “frequently used idioms or phrases, which are axiomatically accepted as valid descriptions of a strategic content (e.g. “if you want peace, prepare for war”).”<sup>79</sup>

This kind of analysis should provide a noticeable pattern of political thinking and behaviour, despite the likely existence of competing discursive narratives and ideas. Scholars studying strategic culture agree that one dominant type of strategic culture prevails in a polity, and because it is deeply embedded, it is difficult to challenge it. By examining ranked preferences of strategic choice it is possible to test the consistency of a strategic culture. For example Johnston maintains that the existence and persistence of a strategic culture can be proven if rankings of preference are continuous across analysed objects over a long period of time.<sup>80</sup> Political discourse will simultaneously be analysed with reference to policy outcomes, in order to confirm a consistency in argumentation.

Another way this study will identify the existence and content of Australia’s strategic culture will be by examining the attitudes, prevailing values and fears of its population. As Lantis points out “[p]ublic opinion is an important part of the ideational milieu that defines strategic culture, and it must help to shape the broad parameters of acceptable state behavior.”<sup>81</sup> This argument is particularly relevant for a parliamentary democracy, because of the government’s need for domestic support. As will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, public opinion poll data on security matters prove helpful in explaining the divergence between Australia and New Zealand. Therefore, the methodology adopted combines discourse analysis with an assessment of public opinion reflected in a variety of surveys. Opinion poll data should provide some confirmation of the ideational factors identified in the discourse analysis of key texts.

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<sup>79</sup> Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture’, p.52

<sup>80</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 38

<sup>81</sup> Jeffrey S. Lantis, ‘Strategic Culture and National Security Policy’, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, Fall 2002, p. 109



The second independent variable examined is that of state identity. Due to the complexity and difficulty in operationalising such a fluid concept, the study will be limited to a general assessment of the prevailing themes that link identity with the security interests of each country. Specifically, I examine statements and policy papers issued by the two countries, where reference is made to identity, a sense of self and other and to regional obligations. I argue this reveals how policymakers perceive their respective nation's identity, interests and role in the Pacific. In addition, the study will include other states' views of Australia and New Zealand, which should provide a more complete profile of the two countries' identities. Combined with my analysis of strategic culture, identity and identity change, these variable should help explain the reasons underlying defence policy formulation in Australia and New Zealand, how they view regional security and how they understand their role in the region. I begin with a detailed examination of the ideational influences that have guided Australia's approach to defence.

## Chapter 2

### Defending Australia: Securing a “Frightened Country”<sup>82</sup>

*“[...] at some time in the future armed force could be used against us and [...] we need to be prepared to meet it.”<sup>83</sup>*

*“At present Australia does not face any conventional military threat to our territory nor, on current trends, is this likely in the foreseeable future. But we cannot be complacent.”<sup>84</sup>*

Australia's approach to defence represents a challenge to traditional materialist explanations of state behaviour. Despite the rise of economic interdependence in regional relationships and a decline in the function of military capabilities in contemporary international relations, the country has not dramatically changed its defence objectives in the post-Cold War environment. Australia has been steadily increasing its military might, investing millions of dollars in high-tech hardware and training exercises. As Hugh White observes, this preoccupation with maintaining armed forces designed for engaging in traditional warfare reflects an unusual stance for a state in the contemporary era, when most countries have rearranged their priorities to stress such tasks as peacekeeping and border control.<sup>85</sup> Why then has Australia pursued this kind of approach to defence? Is it justified by the material threats present in the region? What are the driving factors that shape the way Australia views its security?

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<sup>82</sup> Cited in Alan Renouf, *The Frightened Country* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979)

<sup>83</sup> Department of Defence, *Defending Australia Defence White Paper 1994* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994), p. 4

<sup>84</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: A Defence Update 2007* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2007), p. 13

<sup>85</sup> Hugh White, 'Australian defence policy and the possibility of war', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2002, p. 253

A central aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that there are certain ideational characteristics pertinent to Australia's defence strategy which have historically guided the course of policymaking, and are likely to remain important in the future. Central to understanding the Australian approach towards defence is its strategic culture, which forms the basis from which policies emerge. As will be demonstrated in the sections that follow, the strategic culture that has shaped Australia's approach to security has been based on a historical sense of isolation, vulnerability and fear of invasion from some form of an "other", a culture of realist thinking on security, as well as a reliance on the protection of a great and powerful friend.

### **A History of Fear: Insecurity, Vulnerability and the Threatening "Other"**

Since colonial times, Australia has perceived its surrounding region as threatening. It has viewed itself as an anomaly - a European colony of Great Britain, situated in a culturally foreign environment and close to large, populous northern Asian neighbours. This sense of alienation, combined with a small Australian population, led the country to develop a strong sense of vulnerability and insecurity, which has not escaped Australian culture and thinking to the present day.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia was acutely wary of foreign players present in the region as well as its surrounding neighbours. Great Britain's European competitors in the region France, Germany and Russia, were seen as posing a significant threat. For instance, the Australian settlers were wary of French expansionism in the Pacific and felt deeply concerned when Paris was granted a protectorate over Tahiti in 1844 and annexed New Caledonia in 1853.<sup>86</sup> In addition, fear of Asia during this time was based on the belief that Australia was a

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<sup>86</sup> T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations Since 1788*, Second Ed. (Botany: Australian National University Press, 1991), p. 10

sparsely populated colonial outpost incapable of defending itself against a threat from culturally and racially different, and possibly threatening Asian neighbours.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, it was not only a racial fear of the Asian “other”, but also anxiety over colonial competitors in the region, which contributed to Australia’s insecurity.

Australia’s invasion anxiety was soon fuelled by an increase in Asian migrants to the continent. In mid-nineteenth century the self-governing Crown Colonies<sup>88</sup> witnessed the influx of Chinese immigrants, who were attracted to the land by the prospect of discovering gold. In 1888 New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes expressed his fear that “[...] very probably it might be the design of a considerable number of Chinese to form a settlement in some remote part of the Australian territory [...].”<sup>89</sup> Drawing on the prevalent fears and attitudes of the time, he asserted that “[...] they might become strong enough to form, in the

course of time, a kind of Chinese colony.”<sup>90</sup> Fear of the “yellow peril”, or Asian expansionism, by the end of the nineteenth century was so severe, that all the colonies adopted restrictive legislation, forbidding further immigration by the Chinese. Invasion narratives at the time often drew on the analogy between the fate of the Aborigines and white Australians: warning that the sparsely settled population could easily witness Asia “Aboriginalise” the Australian population.<sup>91</sup> While Australians were not alone in their fear of the north, there was a much greater fear of Asians in Australia than in New Zealand.<sup>92</sup>

This was further evident in Australia’s adoption in 1901 of the Immigration Restriction Act, commonly referred to as the “White Australia Policy”, which racially

<sup>87</sup> Michael O’Keefe, ‘Australia and the Fragile States in the Pacific’, in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds.), *Trading on Alliance Security: Australia in World Affairs 2001-2005* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 147

<sup>88</sup> The Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901.

<sup>89</sup> New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes, ‘Protecting Australia against the Chinese peril’, New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly*, 1887-1888 Session, Vol. XXXII, p. 3787, 3 April 1888, reproduced in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), p. 94

<sup>90</sup> Parkes, ‘Protecting Australia against the Chinese peril’, p. 94

<sup>91</sup> David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 9

<sup>92</sup> David Campbell, *The domestic sources of New Zealand security policy in comparative perspective*, Working Paper No. 16 (Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies, February 1987), p. 9

restricted non-white immigration to the country. It was the first Act passed by the newly formed Commonwealth Parliament and, with bipartisan support continued to be in force until the mid-1960s. The maintenance of a unified white society was viewed as an important element in keeping the nation secure. Minister for External Affairs and Industry, J. G. Latham, warned in 1928 that “[t]he problems which confront [Australia], complex and difficult as they are, would be indefinitely multiplied and aggravated by racial heterogeneity within the continent.”<sup>93</sup> The White Australia policy also had internal ramifications for Australia’s indigenous inhabitants, the Aborigines, resulting in their political marginalisation from the construction of Australian nationality. For instance, it was only in 1967 that Aboriginal Australians were permitted to be included in official census data. In sum, from the onset, Australia’s nation-building process revealed a predisposition to confrontation with Asia as the country aimed for a cohesive, white society and nationalism that was based on racial exclusion.<sup>94</sup>

While China was initially feared because its large population seemed threatening to the inhabitants of poorly defended and isolated colonies, the sense of threat gradually shifted to Japan’s military might. Following a Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 and the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, fear of this country reached an apogee in Australia. Its concerns were well founded. After sustaining the only military attack on its soil with Japanese air raids on Darwin in 1942, Australia developed an even greater sense of anxiety over possible invasions from the North. During the bombing of Darwin 243 Australians were killed and over 400 were wounded. Along with other attacks on Darwin there were Japanese raids on Sydney and Newcastle in May and June 1942. However, it is necessary to underline that the continent was not invaded, largely because of the overwhelming geographical and logistical obstacles Japan

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<sup>93</sup> J. G. Latham, ‘Foreword’, in P. D. Phillips and G. L. Wood (eds.), *The Peopling of Australia* (Melbourne: Macmillan in association with Melbourne University Press, 1928), p. vi

<sup>94</sup> Erik Paul, *Little America: Australia, the 51<sup>st</sup> State* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p. 180

would have encountered.<sup>95</sup> Still, the memory of this direct attack on Australia has significantly reinforced the main elements of the country's strategic culture.<sup>96</sup> The build up and maintenance of large military capabilities was viewed as absolutely essential to Australia's survival. This theme continues to influence contemporary defence policies, which assume that while a major attack on Australia remains a remote possibility, defence planning must not dismiss the possibility that an attack may occur.<sup>97</sup>

As political circumstances in the region shifted, so too did Australia's threat perceptions, with fear of Communist China and the possibility of governments being overtaken in Malaya and Indonesia subsequently replacing the sense of threat from Japan. Simon Philpott notices that Australia may be perceived as having an "anxious history" and that while the prevailing fear has always been of a possible invasion, the shape of that fear has changed with conditions.<sup>98</sup> Under the Menzies coalition government, Australia's security was framed as being primarily under threat from "Imperialist Communism". In 1964 Paul Hasluck, Australia's Minister for External Affairs highlighted the threat posed by China, by stating that the "doctrines and intentions declared by its Communist Government, its invasion of Tibet and India and its political activities throughout Asia today are all plain to read. The fear of China is the dominant element in much that happens in the region, and the fear is well founded."<sup>99</sup> In a similar vein, Australia's Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies saw the spread of communism as "an imminent danger" and stressed that Australia had "not a minute more than three years at the very best" to prepare itself for war.<sup>100</sup> During this time the

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<sup>95</sup> Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Threats to Australia's Security: Their Nature and Probability* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981), p. 62

<sup>96</sup> Robert Ayson, 'Australian Perspectives on East Asian Security', in N. S. Sisodia and G. V. C. Naidu, *Changing Security Dynamic in Eastern Asia: Focus on Japan* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and Promilla & Co, 2005), p. 421

<sup>97</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 2000), p. 23

<sup>98</sup> Simon Philpott, 'Fear of the Dark: Indonesia and the Australian National Imagination', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2001, p. 372

<sup>99</sup> Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs, 'Resisting the 'Southward move of Mainland China'', October 1964, in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), p.667

<sup>100</sup> Robert Menzies, House of Representatives, Debates 1950-1951, Vol. 212, pp. 78-81

Democratic Labor Party's stance on China provided the Liberal Coalition Party with confidence to exaggerate the Chinese communist threat for domestic political gains, and provided little incentive for the Menzies Government to moderate its hard-line policy on the matter.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, both parties played on the values of fear and Australia's sense of indefensibility when dealing with security matters.

Subsequent attempts at engagement with Asia have continued to be complicated by Australia's cultural fear of its region. As Anthony Burke notes, although the White Australia policy was officially abandoned in 1973 and rhetoric of a new approach to Asia was promoted in the 1970s and 1980s, the discursive structure of security, with its emphasis on "the Other" continued.<sup>102</sup> Malcolm Fraser, Australia's Prime Minister who held office from 1975-1983, was more concerned with the "Soviet threat" rather than that of China. Following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 in a statement issued to parliament two months later Fraser warned of an imminent danger to Australia's security. He stressed that the world was "facing probably its most dangerous international crisis since World War II" and that the Soviet invasion could spark a chain of events that might ultimately lead the USSR "to enhance its strategic posture in the West Pacific in areas which directly affect Australia's security."<sup>103</sup> Although the 1976 *Strategic Basis* document downplayed the threat posed by the Soviet Union, the government continued its hard military response in line with its policy of "forward defence". Rapprochement with China during the period of the Fraser Government's tenure was motivated largely by the perceived need to contain the USSR. Fear of "falling dominoes" and of the expansion of communism following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan became the main preoccupation in Australian defence thinking. Therefore, the once enduring fear of Asian invasion, and the racial "other" manifested in the idea of "yellow hordes" was replaced with "red" communist fears.

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<sup>101</sup> Alan Dupont, *Australia's Threat Perceptions: A Search For Security*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 82, 1991, p. 62

<sup>102</sup> Anthony Burke, *In Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2001), p. xli

<sup>103</sup> Malcolm Fraser, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 19 February 1980, p. 17, pp. 23-24

In the post-Cold War era while fear of communist expansion has subsided, Australia shifted attention to the rise in power of Asian countries and the need of maintaining a capability edge over regional players, as well as the threat posed by international terrorist activity.<sup>104</sup> One way of understanding the enduring anxiety over Australia's neighbourhood is to uncover the pattern of realist predispositions in the country's security thinking, which combines historical attitudes of fear and vulnerability with realist calculations about power relativities. Regardless of the shifts in the domestic political environment, a realist ideological framework has prevailed as the dominant lens through which Australian security has been assessed and advanced.

### **Australia: A Culture of Realism**

Evidence of an Australian worldview that is analogous to what Alastair Iain Johnston calls "cultural realism"<sup>105</sup> can be found in successive Defence White Papers, as well as official political discourse. The cultural construction of Australia's environment as inherently hostile and threatening has been driven by a belief held by much of the Australian policy elite and public, which sees the country's region in pessimistic, inherently uncertain terms. This realist strain of thought is evident in political discourse and the country's security policies over time, regardless of the political leaning of the government in power.

Australia's approach to defence has always stressed the centrality of military capabilities in safeguarding the country from attack, regardless of the likelihood of such a scenario. Despite Paul Dibb's 1986 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, which argued that "Australia faces no identifiable direct military threat and there is every prospect

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<sup>104</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force*, p. 12, p. 55

<sup>105</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China', in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 216-268



that [its] favourable security circumstances will continue”<sup>106</sup>, the country’s successive defence policies continued to be framed in terms of ever-present, potential threats. All of Australia’s Defence White Papers reflect a similar line of argument to the one present in *The Defence of Australia 1987*, which argues that the advancement of military capabilities lies at the heart of securing Australia.<sup>107</sup> Gareth Evans, Australia’s Foreign Minister in 1989 declared that “possession of military power will always remain of major importance in international affairs.”<sup>108</sup> Shortly following the end of the Cold War, Robert Ray, Minister for Defence in a similar vein warned his countrymen that, ““peace breaking out” does not mean that we require less defence.”<sup>109</sup> This kind of thinking is very much alive in the present day.

Over a decade after the end of the Cold War, Australia continues to view the use of force as a natural and essential component of its defence planning, stressing the absolute necessity of furthering the country’s military power and enhancing its technological sophistication. The *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force* White Paper argues that “[a]rmed force will remain a key factor in international affairs. While resort to force will continue to be constrained by many aspects of the international system, governments cannot dismiss the possibility of major conflict between states.”<sup>110</sup> According to this document, while Australia does not consider an attack on its territory to be a likely scenario in the near future, and openly admits to treating it as a “remote possibility” it stresses the need for defence planning to be ready for any possible threat that may arise.<sup>111</sup>

Australia’s definition of security is understood primarily in a narrow sense of protection from military attack, although the need for countering terrorism has also gained

<sup>106</sup> Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia’s Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, March 1986), p. 1

<sup>107</sup> Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), p. vii

<sup>108</sup> Gareth Evans, Ministerial Statement, ‘Australia’s Regional Security’, December 1989, Section II, para 49, reproduced in Greg Fry, *Australia’s Regional Security* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), p.181

<sup>109</sup> Robert Ray, Minister for Defence, ‘Outbreak of peace isn’t a signal to relax’, *The Australian*, May 18, 1990

<sup>110</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force*, p. viii

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23

prominence in recent times. Despite the acknowledgement of the latter threat to Australia's security, the country's military force continues to be structured predominantly for the purpose of fighting conventional war. *Defence 2000* outlines that "Australia's most important long-term strategic objective is to be able to defend [Australian] territory from direct *military* attack."<sup>112</sup> These views are manifested despite successive post-World War II strategic reviews confirming that in the near future Australia is unlikely to face any attacks.<sup>113</sup>

When it comes to defence, there is a general bipartisan agreement on Australian military priorities. In 2001 as Chairman of the Australian Labor Party's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Policy, Kevin Rudd put forward the view that "Australia's security in East Asia is in large part contingent on it maintaining a significant technological gap over other military assets in the region."<sup>114</sup> He expressed the view that the ANZUS alliance provides Australia with the best opportunity of retaining the highest competitive edge in the region.<sup>115</sup> This perspective was in line with that of the Howard government, which in 2004 introduced a cruise missile program, designed to give Australia the "most lethal capacity" for strike combat capability in the region. Therefore, both major political parties shared the view that advancing traditional military capabilities is central to defending Australia. In essence, the debate on defence policy in Australia focuses on the balance between expeditionary missions and continental defence, rather than on non-traditional operations or changes in the character of warfare.<sup>116</sup>

Australia's defence strategy continues to emphasise the importance of a sophisticated military, with the 2007 Defence Update arguing that "[a] credible and capable military

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<sup>112</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Australia's Defence Policy*, p. 30, emphasis added

<sup>113</sup> Graeme Cheeseman, 'Australia: the White Experience of Fear and Dependence', in Ken Booth and Russell Trood (eds.), *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific* (New York: St Martin's Press Inc, 1999), p. 275

<sup>114</sup> Kevin Rudd, 'ANZUS and the 21<sup>st</sup> century', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, July 2001, p. 311

<sup>115</sup> Rudd, 'ANZUS and the 21<sup>st</sup> century', p. 311

<sup>116</sup> Zhivan Jared Alach, *Facing New Challenges: Adapting The NZDF And ADF To The Post-Cold War Security Environment*, A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Studies, The University of Auckland, 2006, p. 405

remains a crucial complement to what some call ‘soft power’: diplomacy, aid, cultural ties, people-to-people contacts, trade, and institution building.”<sup>117</sup> Adopting a realist take about the anarchic state of international relations, it warns that “there is always the possibility of strategic miscalculation” and that regional power shifts may contribute to conflict.<sup>118</sup> For this reason, Australian policy-makers have been eager to participate in the revolution in military affairs (RMA), that allows for intelligence, high-technology and sophisticated military capabilities to carry out operations with extreme efficiency and low levels of danger. This is despite the fact that, as Desmond Ball highlights, the RMA is of little relevance to current important issues in the Asia-Pacific region such as drug trafficking, environmental issues and illegal immigration.<sup>119</sup> Rather, the key drivers of Australia’s force structure have been and continue to be the goal of maintaining control over the sea/air gap, which mainly comprises the Arafura and Coral Seas, defeating enemies that may attack Australia.<sup>120</sup>

Australia’s defence policies have also been based on a fear of a regional arms race and a perceived rapid growth in the quantity of military capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. Australian governments have been concerned with relative power gains of regional countries, often viewing these developments in zero-sum terms. In 1988 Defence Minister Kim Beazley expressed his worry that Asian countries were increasing their military power as well as advancing their technological capabilities. He believed that eventually these states will compete for influence and allegiance of regionally weaker countries including Australia.<sup>121</sup> He argued, that to “assume that no external power will penetrate the South West Pacific [...] may be valid for the next five years [...] it is quite invalid for the next twenty-five years.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update 2007*, p. 16

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18

<sup>119</sup> Desmond Ball, ‘The strategic essence’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, July 2001, p. 245

<sup>120</sup> Allan Behm, ‘Defence and Security Across the Tasman’, in Arthur Grimes, Lydia Wevers and Ginny Sullivan (eds.), *States of Mind: Australia and New Zealand 1901-2001* (Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, 2002), p. 97

<sup>121</sup> Kim Beazley, ‘New Zealand Press Club Speech’, 6 December 1988, p.7, as cited in Richard Bolt, ‘The New Australian Militarism’, in Graeme Cheeseman and St John Kettle (eds.), *The New Australian Militarism: Undermining Our Future Security* (Leichhardt: Pluto Press, 1990), p. 42

<sup>122</sup> Beazley, ‘New Zealand Press Club Speech’, p. 42

The following year, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans explained his government's defence approach, by stating that defence planning and capability development "is based on the enduring features of our strategic environment and the broad range of capabilities that could realistically be projected against Australia."<sup>123</sup> This outlook continued in successive policies, including *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994* and *Australia's Strategic Policy*, with the latter warning of regional arms modernisation programs in East Asia and the shifting balance between the region's major powers.<sup>124</sup>

More recently stress has been given to the growing military might of Asian states. In May 2002 Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, stressed that "[t]he Asia-Pacific region is home to the world's six largest armies (China, the US, Russia, India, North Korea and South Korea) and, after the Middle East, the world's three most volatile flashpoints – the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula and Kashmir."<sup>125</sup> Stressing material capabilities in this speech, Downer played on the enduring Australian fear of invasion, stating that "we must not fool ourselves that terrorism has somehow erased the other daunting concerns in our region."<sup>126</sup> The belief that a conventional military attack on Australia is of necessity a serious threat to the country's security is deceptive, as the only power capable of deploying a sustained military force and undertaking such a huge task is the United States.<sup>127</sup> Yet, Australia is concerned about keeping up with the relative advancements of regional countries. For this reason, defence spending is scheduled to continue increasing in the next ten years at an average rise of three per cent per annum.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Evans, 'Australia's Regional Security', p. 185

<sup>124</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1997), pp. 14-16

<sup>125</sup> The Hon Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge', speech given at the National Press Club, Canberra, 7 May 2002

<sup>126</sup> Downer, 'Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge'

<sup>127</sup> Alan Dupont, 'Transformation or stagnation? Rethinking Australia's defence', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 1, 2003, p. 59

<sup>128</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2000), p. xvii

Tied with the anxiety over growing military capabilities in the region is Australia's desire of maintaining the United States' power predominance. It views the commitment of the US in acting as a key player in the architecture of the Asia-Pacific as crucial to the region's stability.<sup>129</sup> Australia is wary of power shifts in the proximate area, particularly if they are to threaten the status quo of US-led alignments. In 2001, Alexander Downer emphasised the significance of the United States' presence in regional engagement, stating that "the US plays a particularly important role in balancing and containing potential rivalries in the region."<sup>130</sup> He argued that "[a]n Asia Pacific region without a US presence would be a much more unstable and dangerous place."<sup>131</sup> Moreover, the Labor party shares this view, as is evident in Kevin Rudd's comment that "it is in Australia's national security interests to continue to argue for a sustained US strategic presence in East Asia and the West Pacific."<sup>132</sup> In terms of protecting not only regional but also global security, Australia's rhetoric highlights the necessity of maintaining the political influence of the US on world affairs. Australia believes it has "strategic interests in the effectiveness of the UN *and the US* upholding an international system that deters or counters aggression and works against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."<sup>133</sup> Robert Patman extends this argument, arguing that Australia views globalisation as being centred on the United States, in contrast to New Zealand's belief that it reduces the influence of traditional power in the international system and creates a more level playing field for smaller states.<sup>134</sup> This ties in with Australia's conviction on the inefficiency of multilateral ventures in international relations.

<sup>129</sup> Alexander Downer, Foreign Minister, E and OE, 'Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge', Speech at the National Press Club, Canberra, 7 May 2002

<sup>130</sup> Downer, 'Australian Foreign Policy – a Liberal Perspective', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2001, p. 340

<sup>131</sup> Downer, 'Australian Foreign Policy – a Liberal Perspective', p. 340

<sup>132</sup> Kevin Rudd, 'ANZUS and the 21<sup>st</sup> century', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2001, p. 308

<sup>133</sup> Department of Defence, 'Foreword', *Defence Review 2000 – Our Future Defence Force*, A Public Discussion Paper, June 2000, emphasis added, p. 16

<sup>134</sup> Robert G. Patman, 'Globalisation and Trans-Tasman Relations: Integration or Divergence?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2001, p. 399

The prevalence of realist thinking on Australia's defence is also manifested in pessimism concerning the efficacy and potential of multilateral avenues in advancing the country's security. Chris Reus-Smit points out Australia's reluctance to advance multilateral co-operation in non-economic issue areas, when this requires international legal rules to overtake domestic sovereign rights of the country, as is the case in such areas as environmental protection or refugee law.<sup>135</sup> Its long-held reluctance to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, which was finally signed by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in December 2007, reveals, for instance, how the country's self-interest has largely dominated over considerations on international security, ignoring the significant repercussions for the security of regional low-lying atoll Pacific states that have been suffering from climate-related rising sea levels. Australia has also been hesitant in committing to regional security initiatives. After lengthy delays in signing a non-aggression pact with Asian nations, the country finally became a signatory to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2005, when presented with this condition for participating in the East Asian Summit.<sup>136</sup>

Australia views international institutions and organisations as playing a secondary role to the advancement of bilateral ties and agreements. During his role as Foreign Minister Downer pointed to the need for Australia to pursue "practical bilateralism", among which the most important is a strong relationship with the US, even if this has negative implications for Australia's Asian relationships. Preference for bilateral agreements is underpinned by Australia's pessimistic world-view on co-operation and relative power gains.

Australia's attitude towards multilateralism was summed up in 2003 by Downer, who stated that "[s]ome multilateral institutions will remain important to [Australia's] interests. But increasingly multilateralism is a synonym for an ineffective and unfocused policy

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<sup>135</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, 'Lost at sea: Australia in the turbulence of world politics', Working Paper 2002/4 (Canberra: Department of International Relations: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, July 2002), p. 7

<sup>136</sup> Rob Taylor and Ron Corben, 'Australia to sign ASEAN treaty', *The Age*, July 27, 2005



involving internationalism of the lowest common denominator.”<sup>137</sup> Instead, it is possible to identify three key policies of Australia’s approach to regional security and they include the strengthening of its relationship with the United States, furthering and affirming the importance of bilateral relations and a limited emphasis on multilateral co-operation.<sup>138</sup> As to this last aspect, Gerald Henderson concludes that “[...] Australian multilateralism has expressed itself in support for alliances.”<sup>139</sup> It is therefore the realist perspective that dominates security choices over an internationalist outlook.

While elements of liberal thinking are certainly present in Australia’s policies, such as the promotion of a liberal economic environment, international organisations, regimes and laws; this has frequently been overtaken by realist considerations. For instance, the country bypassed the UN in 2003 when it became involved in the US-led war in Iraq. Australia is not reluctant to highlight that the United Nations is an organisation with limited powers. The country’s 1997 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper entitled *In the National Interest*, bluntly warns that “Australia must be realistic about what multilateral institutions such as the United Nations system can deliver. International organisations can only accomplish what their member states enable them to accomplish.”<sup>140</sup> While this may be seen as a general observation that points to the inherent limits of international organisations and multilateralism, it is rare for a state to publicly voice this kind of pessimistic outlook. In Australia’s case, however this framing corresponds with domestic attitudes and the enduring strategic beliefs about the uncertainty of the international environment and selfishness of states.

Studies indicate that the Australian people tend to be even more pessimistic about the

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<sup>137</sup> Alexander Downer, ‘Security in an Unstable World’, Speech at the National Press Club, 26 June 2003

<sup>138</sup> Nick Bisley, ‘The ‘New Security Environment’ in the Asia-Pacific: An Australian Perspective’, in Derek McDougall, and Peter Shearman (eds.), *Australian Security After 9/11: New and Old Agendas* (Burlington: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2006), p. 81

<sup>139</sup> Gerald Henderson, ‘Australia’s Security: A Consistent Approach’, *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 29, Issue 1, January-February 2004, p. 11

<sup>140</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *In the National Interest: Australia’s Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, 1997 (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1997), pp. iii-iv

level of threats to their country's security than their government. For instance, in 1987, despite a conservative Fraser Government holding office, 50 per cent of respondents still believed that not enough political concern was shown towards national security.<sup>141</sup> Polls also indicated that Australians were not confident that the country could defend itself. There has consistently been strong public support in Australia for increasing the level of military spending in the country.<sup>142</sup> Analysing a range of various public polls on defence spending, Campbell found that all indicated that majorities were in clear favour of an increase in military funding.<sup>143</sup>

The dominant construction of security in Australian political discourse and policies, with its emphasis on strengthening the alliance with the US and continued advancement of military capabilities, is not limited to politicians of conservative leanings, and can be found in attitudes of both Liberal-led and Labor-led governments. Some scholars argue that the realist thinking in Australia is a direct result of predominantly Liberal governments holding power in the country.<sup>144</sup> However, this is not an accurate assessment, as this perception of the world is in fact deeply embedded in Australian thinking and reflected in bipartisan views on defence, even if political rhetoric may sometimes diverge. Analysing defence policy in the years 1976-1980 Hugh Smith found that the differences between the major political parties were in practice not as large as rhetoric suggested.<sup>145</sup> There is in fact deep bipartisan convergence on how to approach the topic of defending Australia. Both major political parties stress their goal of significant military spending. In 1987 the Labor Foreign Minister, Kim Beazley, was keen to highlight the defence spending of his government, stating that he had contributed to

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<sup>141</sup> David Campbell, *The Social Basis of Australian and New Zealand Security Policy* (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1989), p. 10

<sup>142</sup> Department of Defence, *Australian Perspectives on Defence: Report of the Community Consultation Team* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, September 2000) p. 1, p. 25

<sup>143</sup> Campbell, *The Social Basis of Australian and New Zealand Security Policy*, p. 10

<sup>144</sup> See for instance Gary Smith and David Lowe, 'Howard, Downer and the Liberals' realist tradition', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 51. No. 3, September 2005, pp. 459-473 and David McCraw, 'The Defence Debate in Australia and New Zealand', *Defence Studies*, Vol. 7, Issue 1, March 2007, pp. 90-110

<sup>145</sup> Hugh Smith, 'Defence Policy', in P. J. Boyce and J. R. Angel, *Independence and Alliance: Australia in World Affairs 1976-80* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 43



“the largest defence capital investment in Australia’s peacetime history.”<sup>146</sup> Beazley was also not hesitant in highlighting that Australia’s security policy “does not preclude the use of offensive tactics to achieve a defensive goal.”<sup>147</sup> A similar train of thought was evident in the Howard Government’s argument concerning the possibility of Australian pre-emptive strikes on suspected terrorist bases in regional countries.

This cultural predisposition to realist thinking coupled with a constant fear of Asian “others” and a possible invasion from the North, has led to the general belief in Australia that in order to defend the country, it must look towards a powerful ally for protection. This brings us to another enduring feature of Australia’s strategic culture - the reliance on the protection of a great and powerful friend.

### **Security through Alliances: The Dependency on Great Power Protection**

Constant perceptions of insecurity that have been present throughout Australia’s history, have led to the general belief among Australians and their political elites on both sides of the political spectrum, that the country requires alignment with a powerful ally in order to protect and enhance the nation’s security. As the government stressed in its 1976 White Paper on Defence, there is a need to “display to the world Australia’s close defence association with the US” in order to deter potential aggressors, and send a serious message to the world that “[Australia’s] military capabilities and competence should command respect.”<sup>148</sup> This conviction is central to Australian strategic culture and constitutes a perceived vital base for the development of the country’s defence policies. Specifically, Australia has historically aligned itself with two superpowers that share the

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<sup>146</sup> Beazley ‘Preface’, Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia 1987: Presented to Parliament by the Minister for Defence, Kim C. Beazley, March 1987* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), p. ii

<sup>147</sup> Kim Beazley ‘Response’, in Graeme Cheeseman and St John Kettle (eds.), *The New Australian Militarism: Undermining Our Future Security* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1990), p. 210

<sup>148</sup> Hon D.J. Killen, *Australian Defence*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976), p. 12

country's cultural values. This dependency for safeguarding Australia's security has been reflected in the country's history of its first 150 years relying on Great Britain, and subsequently, around the last 60 years dependency on the United States.<sup>149</sup>

Reflecting its colonial origins, early in its history Australia along with New Zealand forged a strong relationship with their Mother Country, Great Britain. When World War I commenced, Australia assured Britain of its commitment, dispatching nearly 330 000 troops abroad, of whom 59 000 perished. In the spirit of the ANZAC tradition with New Zealand, such a large sacrifice of its population was followed with a participation of nearly 1 million Australians in World War II. On the one hand, during the first forty years of the twentieth century, Australia followed a foreign policy basically formulated in London and had its interests promoted by British diplomatic missions.<sup>150</sup> Yet while early twentieth century Australian foreign policy continued to reflect British interests and led the country to participate in defence initiatives far from any direct security concerns to its territory; it is possible to identify an emergent pattern in Australia's independent security thinking. Reflecting anxiety over the country's indefensibility, and drawing on its British cultural roots, Australia forged a tendency of looking towards a "great and powerful friend" for the maintenance of its defence, even if this would involve its participation in distant conflicts.

The security dependence on Great Britain, however, came into question in the 1940s. As G. M. Brown points out, London's failure of to defend its Southeast Asian colonies in 1942, together with its inability to protect Australia from the threat of Japanese invasion, marked the end of the Australian reliance on its Mother Country as its vital guarantor of security.<sup>151</sup> In a New Year message for 1942 on the implications of the Pacific War for Australian defence and foreign policy, Prime Minister John Curtin declared that

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<sup>149</sup> Paul Dibb, 'Is strategic geography relevant to Australia's current defence policy?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 2, June 2006, p. 248

<sup>150</sup> Michael K. Connors, 'Australia in the Asia-Pacific', in Michael K. Connors, Rémy Davison and Jörn Dosch (eds.) *The New Global Politics of the Asia-Pacific* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 89

<sup>151</sup> G. M. Brown, 'Attitudes to an Invasion of Australia in 1942', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Defence Studies*, 1977, p. 27

“Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.”<sup>152</sup> Conceived as a guarantee against the threat of resurgent Japanese militarism, in 1951 a trilateral security agreement between the United States, Australia and New Zealand was established, known as the ANZUS Treaty.

However, even when the security relationship with Great Britain proved to be no longer effective, the country continued to maintain strong links with London. In 1950, at a time of fear of Chinese Communism, Australia’s Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies of the Liberal Party, offered Australian territory for Great Britain’s nuclear testing programme. This policy was justified largely on the grounds of shared interests with the Mother Country. Jacques Hymans argues that this loyalty highlights the inadequacies of “realist” arguments about the primacy of national sovereignty above other matters.<sup>153</sup> In 1967 Britain decided to abandon its role East of Suez, leaving Australia under less protection. Yet, despite these setbacks, which pointed to the limitation of British power and highlighted its shortcomings as Australia’s security protector, traces of dependency on the relationship with the UK only faded slowly. The continuing rationale for this type of relationship says something of Australia’s shared identity with Britain and consequently, its perception of mutual interests. It appears that Australia’s strategic culture promoted the view that limited military protection from Britain, albeit no longer as effective as previously, should continue to take precedence over the importance of the preservation of sovereignty in security matters.

After considering its options for the formation of an independent nuclear defence system, and facing unbearable economic costs for such an initiative, Australia decided that the best option for its security was a nuclear alliance with the US. China’s nuclear test in October 1964 spurred debate in Australia about the possibility of developing independent nuclear deterrents. Under Prime Minister Menzies, Australia had to that point in time pursued nuclear

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<sup>152</sup> Prime Minister John Curtin, *Herald*, 27 December 1941, as reproduced in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), p. 473

<sup>153</sup> Jacques E. C. Hymans, ‘Isotopes and Identity: Australia and the Nuclear Weapons Option, 1949-1999’, *The Nonproliferation Review*, Spring 2000, p. 4

guarantees and not nuclear proliferation.<sup>154</sup> It is interesting to note, however that during this time rather than viewing its location as an asset that diminished the risk of threats, Australia's geographical isolation was seen as a burden that reduced the country's ability to respond to a nuclear attack.<sup>155</sup> Ultimately, the United States was granted the right to host elements of its nuclear defence system in Australia, and the possibility of an Australian nuclear capability diminished. Despite increasing its risk of being a Soviet target, Australia placed absolute primacy on aligning its survival with the power of the US. This kind of reliance continues to the present day. The *Defence 2000 – Our Future Defence Force* policy outline stresses that “Australia relies on the extended nuclear deterrence provided by US nuclear forces to deter the remote possibility of any nuclear attack on Australia.”<sup>156</sup> Likewise, from the time that US President Ronald Reagan launched the Strategic Defense Initiative (also known as “Star Wars”) program in 1983, Australia has been actively involved in US ballistic missile defence programs by hosting missile launch detection systems and relevant information facilities.<sup>157</sup>

For the sake of maintaining its security alliances, Australia has often participated in initiatives far away from home. As Graeme Cheeseman points out, in the 1950s and 1960s Australia's involvement in conflicts in Southeast Asia, alongside Great Britain and the United States, was justified by discourses of danger that took advantage of Australians' fears of Asia and necessity of maintaining protection from a greater power.<sup>158</sup> Australian participation in joint military initiatives abroad, first with the UK, and later the US, were interpreted as promoting common interests and safeguarding the power of Australia's defender. Minister for Defence, Shane Paltridge declared in 1965, that “Australian defence policy must be world wide because our security is threatened by any blow at the United Kingdom, the United States or any other of the countries in the defensive alliances that have been formed in

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<sup>154</sup> Hymans, ‘Isotopes and Identity: Australia and the Nuclear Weapons Option, 1949-1999’, p. 5

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 8

<sup>156</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 – Our Future Defence Force*, p. 36

<sup>157</sup> Ball, ‘The strategic essence’, p. 241

<sup>158</sup> Graeme Cheeseman, ‘Australia: a fractured cosmopolitan’, in *Forces for Good: Cosmopolitan militaries in the twenty-first century*, p. 219

the free world.”<sup>159</sup> Australia’s participation in the Vietnam war, under the Menzies government was not only rationalised as backing an ANZUS ally, but also carried out in the belief that due to this support, the US would be more likely to aid Australia with regard to Indonesia.<sup>160</sup>

During the period of “forward defence” Australia participated in conflicts which were not directly threatening to the country’s security, but which required the country’s participation primarily for the sake of alliance preservation. While some of these involvements concerned joining the United Nations response, others were centered around the interests of Australia’s main allies. These included the Korean War (1950-1953), the Malaya Emergency (1950-1960), The Indonesian Confrontation (1963-66), the Vietnam War (1962-72) and the Gulf War (1990-91) and most recently, the War in Iraq (2003-). Changes in the international environment from the 1970s, including the defeat of Western forces in Indo-China, withdrawal of American focus away from Asia and the end of the Cold War have caused Australia’s policymakers to change their approach.<sup>161</sup> Increasingly emphasis is placed on security initiatives that are of more direct relevance to Australia, although as the case of Iraq demonstrates, the fulfilment of alliance commitments in the form of sending combat troops to distant conflicts involving the US, continue to have importance.

Greater emphasis on defence self-reliance has been apparent in Australia since the 1970s. During this period, Great Britain was more concerned with maintaining its interests in Europe and President Nixon’s 1969 “Guam Doctrine” stressed that America was no longer willing to act as a security guarantor in the region. Attempts were made in the 1970s to promote greater engagement with Asia. By the 1980s, security assessments concluded that the country was not directly threatened. Promoting defence self-reliance was among the key

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<sup>159</sup> Shane Paltridge, ‘Australia’s Defence Policy’, *Survival*, January 1966, p. 17

<sup>160</sup> Henderson, ‘Australia’s Security: a consistent approach’, p. 12

<sup>161</sup> Graeme Cheeseman, ‘Australia: a fractured cosmopolitan’, in Lorraine Elliott and Graeme Cheeseman (eds.), *Forces for Good: Cosmopolitan militaries in the twenty-first century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 219

arguments of the *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* (also known as the Dibb Report) released in 1986 by Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley. The Dibb Report stressed that “*Australia is one of the most secure countries in the world*” and that it “*faces no identifiable direct military threat and there is every prospect that our favourable security circumstances will continue.*”<sup>162</sup> In terms of Australia's contribution to its alliance with the US, the report suggested that “*there is no requirement for Australia to become involved in United States contingency planning for global war.*”<sup>163</sup> Canberra was urged to focus more on its immediate regional environment, rather than fight in distant conflicts of its allies.

However even when Australia stresses the need for independence in its security policies, the sense of autonomy in defence matters remains firmly embedded within a broader relationship of reliance with the United States. Support for the alliance continues, despite changes to the political environment, calls for greater independence in Australian security policies and domestic protests relating to American-led security initiatives. For example, there was no shift in position on the relationship in the 1980s, when considerable change was taking place due to New Zealand's rejection of US nuclear powered vessels visits. Despite protests by peace and anti-nuclear groups, Australia has not witnessed the same degree of outcry on this issue as New Zealand. ANZUS, and especially the Australia-US leg of this agreement, remains fundamental to Australian security interests. In fact, it is so embedded in the country's thinking that, as Gerald Henderson notices, “no major political party in Australia has ever contemplated life without the alliance.”<sup>164</sup> The only area where political ideas have diverged concerns the extent to which Australia should manifest its independence *within* this alliance. This is despite the fact that the ANZUS treaty does not in practice guarantee Australia that the US would automatically come to its rescue if needed.

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<sup>162</sup> Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986), italics in original, p. 1

<sup>163</sup> Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, italics in original, p. 4

<sup>164</sup> Henderson, ‘Australia's Security: a consistent approach’, p. 12

Australia's defence interests are framed within the rhetoric of alliance as a central component of self-reliance. In its 1976 Defence White Paper the country declared it was committed to pursuing self-reliance in its defence; a theme that has continued in subsequent 1987, 1994 and 2000 Defence White Papers.<sup>165</sup> *The Defence of Australia - Defence White Paper 1987* states that self-reliance needs to be "set firmly within the framework of our alliances and regional associations."<sup>166</sup> Similarly in 1988 Kim Beazley was careful in describing Australia's sense of independence in defence matters, saying that "Australia cannot sustain a self reliant defence posture [...] our alliance is literally essential to our self-reliance."<sup>167</sup> This conviction has restricted Australia's freedom to voice political disagreement over the policies of its ally. When differences of opinion do happen, as David Campbell notes, "Australian opposition to US policies has never been constructed as a threat to the ANZUS Treaty or the overall relationship with the United States."<sup>168</sup> This idea of self-reliance that is inherently formed in accordance with the value of accommodating the need for dependence with the United States has continued to the present day. On the one hand, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force* states that "[t]he Government has reaffirmed that the primary priority for the ADF [Australian Defence Force] is to maintain the capability to defend Australian territory from any credible attack, without relying on the combat forces of any other country."<sup>169</sup> On the other hand, however, the policy outline stresses that "the US-Australia alliance is as important to both parties today as it has ever been."<sup>170</sup>

Politicians on both sides of the political spectrum acknowledge the importance of the US relationship for Australia's security and there exists almost a political rivalry over which

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<sup>165</sup> Major David Caldwell, 'Reflections on Defence Self-Reliance and the Australian-American Alliance', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol.11, No. 1, p. 215

<sup>166</sup> Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia-Defence White Paper 1987*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), p. vii

<sup>167</sup> Hon Kim C. Beazley, 'Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region: A Strategy of Self-Reliance and Alliance', Address to the Washington Centre of the Asia Society, Washington, 30 June 1988, p. 14

<sup>168</sup> Campbell, *The Social Basis of Australian and New Zealand Security Policy*, p. 12

<sup>169</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force*, p. 46

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34



party can claim credit for the origins of the alliance. Allan Gyngell notes that both major political parties can claim ownership for the emergence of the security alliance, with Labor's involvement in the wartime alliance and the Liberal Party's subsequent success in forming a defence agreement in the form of the ANZUS treaty.<sup>171</sup> As leader of the Labor party, Kevin Rudd, was keen to highlight that "[t]he ANZUS alliance is therefore the construction of *both* the Labor and Liberal parties."<sup>172</sup> When the main Australian political parties differ on the relationship with the US, there has been only disagreement as to the *extent* of this alliance, with the Labor party offering greater scepticism as to its importance, refusing for instance to support the Australian government's Vietnam policy. Still, the Labor party is of the same view as the Liberal, that alliance with the US "is one of the key pillars of Australia's national security system."<sup>173</sup> Public opinion is also strongly in favour of keeping the US as a security protector. The 1996 Australian Election Study survey revealed that the respondents viewed the superpower as the most important country for Australia's defence and security relations; with 95 percent viewing the US as either "very important" (60 per cent) or "fairly important" (30 per cent).<sup>174</sup> However, the overall strong belief in the vital importance of Australia's relationship with the United States, has led to a prioritisation of the country's regional strategic relationships. For instance, Australia's *Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force* White Paper appears to downplay the significance of New Zealand as a strategic partner; in a chapter entitled "Australia's International Strategic Relationships" New Zealand is not mentioned in the first 47 paragraphs.<sup>175</sup>

The primacy of security guarantees over domestic sovereignty is evident in the current Australian relationship with the United States, where the latter has been granted Australian

<sup>171</sup> Allan Gyngell, 'Australia's Emerging Global Role', *Current History*, March 2005, p. 100

<sup>172</sup> Rudd, 'ANZUS and the 21<sup>st</sup> century', emphasis in original, p. 314

<sup>173</sup> Laurie Brereton, 'The outlook for Australian foreign policy: a Labor perspective', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2001, p. 347

<sup>174</sup> 1996 Australian Election Study, Table 2, in Ian McAllister and John Ravenhill, 'Australian attitudes towards closer engagement with Asia', *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1998 p. 127

<sup>175</sup> Emmet McElhatton, 'Australia and New Zealand: like-minded defence partner?', *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 31, Issue 4, July-August 2006, p. 18



permission to its territory to base strategic facilities in Pine Gap, North West Cape and Nurrungar. From the 1960s onwards, the US has retained in Australia numerous intelligence collecting facilities, such as seismic stations that monitor underground nuclear detonations and communication, satellite tracking and navigation systems. Australian governments from both sides of the political spectrum have argued that the continuing presence of the “joint facilities” is, on the whole, a positive step towards Australia’s security.<sup>176</sup> While the United States’ defence facilities on Australian soil are not a requirement of the ANZUS Treaty the country has willingly offered its logistical assistance for the benefit of US-led strategic operations and a perceived sense of greater security.

Perhaps then Australia’s reliance on the US for its security represents a rational attempt at maximising the country’s interests? While the perceived need for a security alliance has dominated Australian thinking since almost the country’s founding; it arguably does not necessarily represent the best means of promoting the country’s defence interests. On the one hand, a close relationship with the most powerful country offers economic and political advantages that provide a rationale for pursuing such a relationship. For instance, as Alexander Downer points out, due to its relationship with the US, Australia “will carry substantially more weight in Washington in regional affairs-and beyond-than would otherwise be the case.”<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, however, and perhaps more importantly in terms of security benefits, this close alliance has more likely reduced Australia’s security. For instance in 2004 experts, including FBI’s executive assistant director of counter terrorism John Pistole and Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty, predicted that the country has become a greater target for attacks since participating in the US-led war in Iraq.<sup>178</sup>

This raises yet another important question, why has Australia continued its dependency on the US alliance? The relationship between Australia and the United States

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<sup>176</sup> Ball, ‘The strategic essence’, p. 238

<sup>177</sup> Downer, ‘Australian Foreign Policy – a Liberal Perspective’, p. 340

<sup>178</sup> ‘Terrorist attack on Australia inevitable, warns FBI expert’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 16, 2004

poses a challenge to realist assumptions about the longevity and character of security alliances. For instance, realists would expect to see the dissolution of an alliance in the wake of a decline in the levels of threat faced by its members.<sup>179</sup> However, Desmond Bell notes that ANZUS has remained “threat insensitive”.<sup>180</sup> Throughout Australia’s history there was only one six month period when the country was in any realistic direct military danger – from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 to the US defeat of Japan’s naval air power at the battles of the Coral Sea in 1942.<sup>181</sup> The origin of Australia’s alliance with the United States was based on a possibility of Japan’s post-war military resurgence. However, this threat soon diminished; thus removing the initial security incentive for the continuance to the alliance. Instead, during the Cold War Australia viewed the ANZUS alliance as protection from Japan and later from the threat of Communist expansionism. In the contemporary era it provides, what Alexander Downer called “a bedrock of certainty and security” in “an era in which threats come from uncertainty”.<sup>182</sup> It appears that the construction of a threatening environment to Australia’s security remains an enduring element of the justification for continuing the alliance, even if an assessment of reality may indicate that this enduring relationship may have in fact increased Australia’s chances of being a target of terrorism, due to its close association with the US. For instance, since November 2001 Osama bin Laden has repeatedly mentioned Australia as a target for attacks by al-Qaeda, signalling the first time that the country had been singled out by a large and operationally capable terrorist network.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>179</sup> William T. Tow, ‘Alliances and Coalitions’, in Marianne Hanson and William T. Tow (ed.), *International Relations in the New Century: An Australian Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 21

<sup>180</sup> Ball, ‘The strategic essence’, p. 245

<sup>181</sup> Simon Dalby, ‘Security Discourse, the ANZUS Alliance and Australian identity’, in *Discourse of Danger and Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking After the Cold War* (Canberra: Allen & Unwin in association with the Department of International Relations and the Peace Research Centre, 1996), p. 115

<sup>182</sup> Hon Alexander Downer, ‘Australia’s Alliance with the United States: Maintaining the “Fabric of Peace”’, Speech given at the University of Sydney conference, *The Australia-United States Alliance and East Asian Security*, Sydney, 29 June 2001

<sup>183</sup> Hugh White, ‘Security, Defence, and Terrorism’, in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds.), *Trading on Alliance Security: Australia in World Affairs 2001-2005* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 176

An explanation that points to a psychological feeling of dependency and vulnerability offers a more compelling explanation for the endurance of the United States-Australia security relationship than a realist calculation of interests. In studying patterns of reliance in post-war Australian foreign policy, Richard Leaver concludes, “[d]ependence, in so far as it existed, was [...] voluntary rather than structural.”<sup>184</sup> Stephen Walt has found that an alliance may persist despite the absence of its original rationale when there is ideological solidarity between its members, a shared sense of political values, a substantial asymmetry of power between them, as well as when the relationship has a high degree of institutionalisation.<sup>185</sup> He believes that “alliances will be especially durable when relations among the member-states have brought about a strong sense of common identity, but this sort of transformation is extremely rare.”<sup>186</sup> Australia’s defence policy, however, promotes the idea of a shared cultural identity, arguing that a “renewed vigour of the US-Australia alliance is founded on enduring shared values, interests and outlook, as well as common sacrifices that extend back almost a century.”<sup>187</sup> Hence the continuing rationale for this alliance has a significant cultural component, with the argument about shared identity reflected in alleged mutual interests.

History suggests that Australia is likely to continue relying on the US for its security. According to Downer, “The Australia-United States alliance will continue to be fundamental to the success of Australia’s security and economic objectives.”<sup>188</sup> The Department of Defence projects the view that “[r]egardless of how expensive [Australia’s] defence activities with the United States become, this bedrock of supporting sustained US engagement in the Asia Pacific region will endure.”<sup>189</sup> However, while public support for the alliance has remained strong despite historical shifts, attention is likely to increasingly turn to significant

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<sup>184</sup> Richard Leaver, ‘Patterns of dependence in post-war Australian foreign policy’, in Richard Leaver and Dave Cox (eds.), *Middling, Meddling, Muddling: Issues in Australian foreign policy* (Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 73

<sup>185</sup> Stephen M. Walt, ‘Why Alliances Endure or Collapse’, *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 168-170

<sup>186</sup> Walt, ‘Why Alliances Endure or Collapse’, p. 170

<sup>187</sup> Department of Defence, *Defence 2000- Our Future Defence Force*, p. 34

<sup>188</sup> Alexander Downer, ‘Australian Foreign Policy – a Liberal Perspective’, p. 340

<sup>189</sup> Department of Defence, ‘Founded in History, Forging Ahead’, p. 4

social, economic, and environmental concerns.<sup>190</sup> Still, it seems likely that in terms of military security, the Australian-United States relationship will continue to occupy centrality in defence planning for the foreseeable future.

In sum, Australia has always viewed its defence as best served when its proximate region is under the control of its great power protector. Following the British withdrawal from the Asia-Pacific, the US-Australia objective of maintaining favourable balance and stability in the region informed the country's strategic security objectives. Accordingly, following the demise of a "Pax Britannica" alliance, Australia turned towards the "American Lake" rationale for its security. Australian reliance on the US for its security is so deeply held and persistent that it is highly unlikely it will be challenged in defence policies of the foreseeable future.

### **Constructing Insecurity: Terrorism, War and Refugees**

Australia's fear of its region has been intensified in recent times in the wake of perceived instability and disorder in neighbouring Pacific Island states. Fear of its regional neighbours, which Australian politicians and officials have described as an "arc of instability" has been linked with anxiety over the possibility of terrorist activity. Australia's use of this metaphor that is broadly applied to the Asia-Pacific region, and refers to so-called "failed states", draws heavily on the country's sense of fear and vulnerability. The use of this political rhetoric will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, where I will examine Australia's rationale for participation in the 2003 intervention to the Solomon Islands and how the country has framed threats to regional security. However, this section examines how Australia constructs a culture of fear and national security interests, by linking refugees as well as

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<sup>190</sup> Ball, 'The strategic essence', p.245.

participation in the war in Iraq with the threat of terrorism. While terrorism appears to be a highly significant security topic following the attacks of 11 September 2001, it is important to point out that the Australian fear that terrorist activity might be occurring in the Pacific region is not that new. For instance, in a 1987 ANOP poll 20 per cent of respondents identified Libya as a danger to Australia's security, due to its presence in the South Pacific and possible terrorist threat. This was at a time when the Australian Government closed the diplomatic post of the Libyan People's Bureau in Canberra.<sup>191</sup>

More recently, in constructing a culture of insecurity, the Howard Government played on domestic fears, linking the problem of terrorism with Australia's security and characterising it as an ever-present danger to the country. In 2003, during a nation-wide campaign, Australian residents received from the government anti-terrorism kits entitled *Let's Look out for Australia: Protecting Our Way of Life from a Possible Terrorist Threat*. It was part of the Howard government's A\$15 million campaign entitled "National Security Public Information Campaign", an idea that was introduced two months after the Bali terrorist attack of October 2002. The distribution of the kits was aimed at explaining what the government has been doing, what the public can do to enhance their security and how to identify potential threatening terrorist activity. The anti-terrorism kit framed the issue of terrorism as an imminent and omnipresent threat to Australians.<sup>192</sup> Howard urged his countrymen to "be alert, but not alarmed" and to report any suspicious activity. In discussing what the government was doing to combat the threat of terrorism, the kit underlined the need to turn to military tools for enhancing Australia's security, with Howard arguing that moves towards the strengthening of Australia's military capacity were "necessary steps to

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<sup>191</sup> Campbell, *The Social Basis of Australian and New Zealand Security Policy*, p. 9

<sup>192</sup> Matt McDonald, 'Be Alarmed? Australia's Anti-terrorism Kit and the Politics of Security', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 2005, p.171

protect ourselves.”<sup>193</sup> A similar logic drove the reform of Australian laws relating to the nation’s security.

Strict anti-terrorism legislation was introduced in 2002 and 2003, which included the Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill. Despite these bills being greeted by unfavourable opinions of the Senate Committee responsible for overseeing the legislation, both bills, following amendments, became laws.<sup>194</sup> This anti-terrorism legislation, including the subsequent introduction in 2005 of the Australian Anti-Terrorism Act, had drawn heated criticism from legal experts and civil society groups, who argued that fundamental democratic rights and freedoms were impaired.<sup>195</sup> The somewhat draconian steps taken by the Howard government, including comments concerning the possibility of pre-emptive action on suspected terrorist bases in neighbouring countries, have led to criticism, particularly from Muslim Asian nations. For instance, Malaysia’s Prime Minister, went so far as to issue a travel warning to fellow Muslim Malaysians intending to visit Australia, stating that it was a destination “particularly unsafe for Muslims because they are likely to have their houses raided.”<sup>196</sup>

The Australian government has followed the argument that terrorism is a major threat to a country’s security and that pre-emptive action is a suitable method for combating it. On the one hand, Australia’s fear of terrorism and the controversial steps taken to address it may be explained by its recent experiences. The terrorist bombing in Bali on October 12, 2002 claimed the lives of 88 Australians; the greatest single loss of Australian lives since the

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<sup>193</sup> John Howard, ‘Preamble’, in Eric Abetz, *Let’s Look out for Australia: Protecting Our Way of Life from a Possible Terrorist Threat* (North Ryde: PMP Print, 2003), cited in McDonald, ‘Be Alarmed? Australia’s Anti-terrorism Kit and the Politics of Security’, p. 178

<sup>194</sup> Christopher Michaelsen, ‘Antiterrorism Legislation in Australia: A Proportionate Response to the Terrorist Threat?’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 28, Issue 4, July 2005, p. 322, p. 325

<sup>195</sup> Michael Pelly, Tony Stephens and Marian Wilkinson, ‘Former leaders call for debate’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 25, 2005

<sup>196</sup> Cited in Jim Dickens, ‘Malaysian PM Issues Australia Travel Alert’, *Courier Mail*, 7 November 2002, p. 10

bombing of Darwin in 1942 by Japan.<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, however, the country's response to international terrorism has not been based on an assessment of the nature and origins of this threat. Instead, as Joseph Camilleri points out, domestic political considerations and "a preconceived determination to align Australia firmly with US priorities and strategies" drove the policy response.<sup>198</sup> Likewise, the Australian rationale for participating in the US-led war in Iraq simultaneously followed the Bush administration's logic and drew on Australia's experiences of terrorism to justify the cause.

Despite a lack of correlation between the two, Australia accepted the US argument that war in Iraq was an essential component in the "war against terror". In 2003 Prime Minister John Howard stated that "we lost 88 Australians in Bali because of a wilful act of international terrorism [...] I will, amongst other things, be asking Australian people to bear those circumstances in mind if we become involved in military contact with Iraq."<sup>199</sup> Howard was in Washington the day of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, which is likely to have strengthened his convictions about the shared cause of combating terrorism. In terms of Australia's participation in the war in Iraq, following the failure of the defensive realism argument concerning the dangers of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) that were allegedly in possession of Saddam Hussein's regime, the Australian government turned towards another rationale for justification – the ANZAC theme – in an attempt to draw upon nationalist symbols and persuade public opinion.<sup>200</sup>

Under the Howard government Australia had also continued to base its security policies on discourses of danger, portraying asylum-seekers and refugees as potential national

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<sup>197</sup> Michael Evans, 'Australia's Approach to the Revolution in Military Affairs, 1994-2004', in Emily Goldman and Thomas G. Mahnken (ed.), *The Information Revolution in Military Affairs in Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 23

<sup>198</sup> Joseph A. Camilleri, 'A leap into the past – in the name of the 'national interest'', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3, November 2003, p. 439

<sup>199</sup> Cited in Mark Riley, Lee Glendinning and Ellen Connolly, 'PM Unrepentant on Bali Link', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 2003, p. 9

<sup>200</sup> Gary Smith and David Lowe, 'Howard, Downer and the Liberals' realist tradition', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 51, No. 3, September 2005, p. 469-471



security threats. In August 2001 the country refused entry to a boatload of asylum-seekers on the Norwegian-rescued *Tampa* vessel, demonstrating that Australia extends its fear and enemy rhetoric to refugees. The Australian government framed the asylum-seekers as not only security threats to Australia, but also as threatening Australia's sovereignty – a key realist concern. Although the “Tampa crisis” captured mass news media attention, sparking interest in Australian policies towards asylum-seekers, the tough stance taken did not represent any divergence in attitudes from previous similar incidents. As Don McMaster notices, with the exclusion of Australia's treatment of Vietnamese asylum-seekers in the 1970s, the country's response to refugee seekers “has rarely been sympathetic.”<sup>201</sup> For instance, shipwreck survivors of a boat of 150 refugees who were rescued in 1979 on their way to Darwin by the Shell tanker *Entalina* were refused entry to Australia.<sup>202</sup> By not allowing the *Tampa* vessel access into Australian waters, the government prevented the Migration Act from being invoked and the refugees chasing their claims on Australia's territory.

The Australian refusal to allow the *Tampa* asylum-seekers entry was viewed as unlawful by legal experts and condemned by the international community. The Federal Court ruled that the removal of the asylum-seekers from Australia was illegal. By refusing the refugees entry, the country violated the 1951 refugee convention and sparked widespread international condemnation from the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) also expressed its concern about Australia's reluctance to take a leadership role in solving the problem.<sup>203</sup> Subsequent instances of Australian refusal of entry

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<sup>201</sup> Don McMaster, ‘Asylum-seekers and the insecurity of a nation’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2002, p. 280

<sup>202</sup> David Marr and Marian Wilkinson, *Dark Victory* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003), p. 36

<sup>203</sup> UNHCR Press Releases, ‘UNHCR voices growing concern over ship saga’, 29 August 2001, available online at <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/3b8df96d2.html> (version current at 29/08/2007)



to asylum-seekers have also drawn criticism. For instance, the UNHCR expressed criticism over Australia's towing away of 14 boat people from Australian waters in November 2003.<sup>204</sup>

Despite Australia's refusal to allow the *Tampa* entry being labelled as illegal; there was strong domestic support for the firm stance of the Howard Government. There was a general bipartisan agreement and public support for keeping the *Tampa* out by any means necessary. A Herald-AC Nielsen public poll, which was published in the 4 September, 2001 edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, revealed that 77 per cent of respondents were in favour of the Howard government's stance to refuse asylum-seekers entry to Australia.<sup>205</sup> A comparable 71 per cent of Australians that took part in this poll believed in the idea that refugees should be kept in indefinite detention.<sup>206</sup> Likewise, this level of esteem in the government's handling of the issue seemed to correlate with Howard's boosting of confidence by the public, evident in a 11 per cent rise in the leadership approval rating and 5 per cent rise in the preferred Prime Minister rating.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, a clear majority of Australians approved the Prime Minister's decision to reject the *Tampa* and his rating subsequently rocketed to the highest level since he entered office: 57 per cent.<sup>208</sup>

The high levels of public support in rejecting asylum-seekers from Australian territory and the government's political handling of refugees is best understood when taking into account the country's cultural fear of the North, realist pessimism about the anarchical nature of international relations and an ever-present anxiety of invasion. Richard Devetak argues that by depicting asylum-seekers as possible threats to the country, the Australian government was taking advantage of "a persistent fear, perhaps paranoia, in Australia's national psyche – one that extends from the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 to the *Border Protection Act*

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<sup>204</sup> UNHCR News Stores, 'UNHCR criticises Australia for turning boat people away', 11 November 2003, available online at <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/3fb119524.html> (version current at 24/08/2007)

<sup>205</sup> Michelle Grattan, Hamish McDonald and Andrew Clennell, 'Howard's Tampa-led Recovery', *Sydney Morning Herald*, News and Features, 4 September 2001

<sup>206</sup> Grattan, McDonald and Clennell, 'Howard's Tampa-led Recovery'

<sup>207</sup> Ibid

<sup>208</sup> Richard Devetak, 'In Fear of Refugees: The Politics of Border Protection in Australia', *International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 2004, p. 107

of 2001.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, the construction of the image of asylum seekers as constituting a problem, representing deviance and constituting a threat to Australia has also been present in the dominant news media discourses surrounding refugees in the Australian press.<sup>210</sup> The prevalent discourse in Australian news media demonises asylum-seekers as no better than criminals, deviants.<sup>211</sup> The argument concerning a possible flood of refugees reaching the continent's shores from the North remains a central component of the sense of fear, although it is unjustified when compared with reality, including statistics on immigration and the number of arriving asylum-seekers.

Polls taken before and after the *Tampa* incident also indicate that Australians feel threatened about the level of immigration to the country. The 1996 Australian Electoral Survey found that the public was uneasy about the level of immigrants to the country, with 64 per cent of the view that immigration had gone too far and 30 per cent having indicated that they perceived the government's policies as "about right".<sup>212</sup> Following the *Tampa* incident, polls conducted by AC Nielson in September 2001 found that 41 per cent of Australians believed that immigration levels were too high.<sup>213</sup> More importantly, studies have shown that Australians over-emphasise the number of refugees arriving to the country by as much as 70 per cent, and ignore the statistics on migration. The level of asylum-seekers intending to reach Australian shores represents a small number when compared to the number of refugees seeking asylum in other Western nations, such as those in Europe. In addition, there is no mention in Australia's security discourse on the problem of European immigrants who constitute, by far the largest group of "illegal immigrants" due to their status as over-stayers. It is the "trickle" of asylum-seekers from the North that due to Australia's strategic culture

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<sup>209</sup> Devetak, 'In Fear of Refugees: The Politics of Border Protection in Australia', p. 107

<sup>210</sup> Sharon Pickering, 'Common Sense and Original Deviancy: News Discourses and Asylum Seekers in Australia', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2001, pp. 169-186

<sup>211</sup> Pickering, 'Common Sense and Original Deviancy: News Discourse and Asylum Seekers in Australia', pp. 169-86

<sup>212</sup> 1996 Australian Election Study, in McAllister and Ravenhill, 'Australian attitudes towards closer engagement with Asia', p. 139

<sup>213</sup> Devetak, 'In Fear of Refugees: The Politics of Border Protection in Australia', p. 103

and discourses on security takes precedence in security concerns. Successive Australian governments, however, have used these sentiments, and aside from pointing out the possibility of terrorist undertakings, argue that high levels of migration are potentially dangerous for the cohesion and social stability of the nation, and therefore decrease the country's security.

For this reason Australia introduced strict measures designed to discourage potential asylum-seekers. Sharon Pickering and Caroline Lambert note that Australia's refugee policy is based on the idea of deterrence.<sup>214</sup> The steps adopted to avoid having refugees enter Australia are multifaceted. Devetak highlights that despite quite a few countries having now established detention centres "Australia remains the only country to detain automatically *all* onshore arrivals."<sup>215</sup> The country also introduced legislation on 27 September 2001 and amendments to the Commonwealth Migration Act of 1958, which among several asylum-detering policies, extended Australia's powers of interception, and increased the areas excluded from Australia's migration zone. These policies have continued under both Liberal and Labor-led governments.<sup>216</sup> The idea of mandatory detention of asylum-seekers appears to also have substantial popularity in Australia. Almost a decade before the *Tampa* incident a public opinion poll taken in 1993 revealed great support for this policy, with 44 per cent of the view that *all* boat people should be rejected from staying in Australia.<sup>217</sup>

Tied with the policy of mandatory detention of all incoming asylum-seekers, was Australia's "Pacific Solution", dubbed by some as Guantanamo Bay in the South Pacific. The policy involved detaining refugees outside of Australia, in facilities on unpopulated Pacific Islands, such as Nauru, Manus Island and Christmas Island, in the exchange for aid.

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<sup>214</sup> Sharon Pickering and Caroline Lambert, 'Deterrence: Australia's Refugee Policy', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2002, pp. 65-86

<sup>215</sup> Devetak, 'In Fear of Refugees: The Politics of Border Protection in Australia', p. 105

<sup>216</sup> Pickering and Lambert, 'Deterrence: Australia's Refugee Policy', p. 65

<sup>217</sup> Katharine Betts, 'Boat People and Public Opinion in Australia', *People and Places*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 2001, p. 41

As Michael O’Keefe points out, this policy clearly demonstrates that despite the façade of humanitarianism, Australia has remained “[...] a self-interested sheriff motivated by domestic politicking rather than by a benign concern for the region.”<sup>218</sup> Apart from the human costs, the financial burden of this policy is staggering. In the six years following the *Tampa* controversy Australians have spent more than \$1 billion to process fewer than 1,700 asylum seekers in offshore facilities, which equates to more than half a million dollars per person.<sup>219</sup>

With the election of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister in 2007, his government has sought to put an end to the controversial “Pacific Solution” policy, whilst retaining a tough stance on border security. On 8 February 2008 the last asylum seekers on Nauru, 21 Sri Lankan refugees left the detention camp and moved to live in Australia. However, Australia will continue to use a processing centre for unauthorised asylum seekers, mainly those who arrive without a visa and typically by boat, on Christmas Island, which constitutes Australian territory but is removed from Australia’s migration zone.

Despite its geographical isolation from troubled regions Canberra is likely to continue pursuing a course of action that is driven by its traditions and suppositions. Constructing asylum seekers as threats to Australian security, whether in the context of terrorism or as a challenge to the nation’s cohesiveness, has been a policy based on well-established Australian fears. As Hugh White reminds us, strategic culture reflects a broadly shared set of ideas within the policy community and public about the assumptions underpinning the Australian national outlook, and it is based in anxieties, prejudices and expectations that form the country’s approach to defence matters.<sup>220</sup> Despite a lack of connection between asylum-seekers and terrorism, the rationale on offer plays on core aspects of Australia’s strategic culture, and is unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future.

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<sup>218</sup> O’Keefe, ‘Australia and the Fragile States in the Pacific’, p. 148

<sup>219</sup> Kazimierz Bem, Nina Field, Nic Maclellan, Sarah Meyer, Dr. Tony Morris, *A Price to High: The Cost of Australia’s Approach to Asylum Seekers*, Research Project funded by A Just Australia, Oxfam Australia and Oxfam Novib, August 2007 p. 3

<sup>220</sup> White, ‘Australian defence policy and the possibility of war’, p. 256

## The Identity Component

Australia's identity as a Western, English-speaking and predominantly white nation has significantly influenced the country's defence posture and regional relationships. Apart from its early sense of alienation from the Asia-Pacific region and fear of the "others" surrounding the continent, Australia has historically turned towards culturally similar powers in the belief of promoting shared security interests. Strong identification with Great Britain and the United States largely dictated Australia's security interests. However, as Australian policymakers became increasingly more aware and concerned about the need to accept the geographical situation of the country and economic relations with Asian neighbours became ever more important, a policy of engagement with the northern neighbours was initiated in the hope of promoting Australia's interests.

Australia's attempts at deepening security relations with Asia have remained limited in their success, largely due to a lack of a shared identity. In the 1970s Gough Whitlam's Labor government stressed engagement with the Asian region, rather than against it.<sup>221</sup> David Martin Jones believes that this change in foreign policy contributed to "the birth of an illusion" and "reflected a rationalist attempt both to engineer a self-consciously Australian identity and to renegotiate Australia's place in the 'East Asian hemisphere' and the world."<sup>222</sup> However, he argues that this supposed transformation in foreign relations was not found in any concrete achievements, but only in suggestions of a new identity.<sup>223</sup> The move therefore, did not result in any concrete changes to Australia's defence strategy. Domestic public opinion did not support political discourse that stressed Asian engagement and there was no apparent shift in security policy orientation. Therefore, this supposed transformation in foreign relations was

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<sup>221</sup> Jones, 'Regional Illusion and Its Aftermath', p. 38

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p. 38

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p. 39

not found in any concrete achievements, but only in suggestions of a new identity.<sup>224</sup> The failure of the “enmeshment with Asia” idea rested on several factors, among them being an attempt to fundamentally reshape Australia’s identity without widespread public support, differences in values and the lack of assent from Asian countries.<sup>225</sup> Asian perceptions of Australia did not change, as regional countries did not share the Australian argument about its destiny being in Asia, while China and Indonesia, with whom Australia was said to have its most important relationships, did not reciprocate in viewing Australia with such significance.<sup>226</sup> There was little recognition by outside actors of this sudden shift in Australia’s security approach. Therefore, as Bruce Vaughn argues, Prime Minister Keating was forced to abandon the Asian engagement strategy, as it ignored the fact that a nation’s posture must be based on domestic values of most Australians, who are fearful of advanced engagement with the Asian neighbours.<sup>227</sup> The endurance of these ideational variables has therefore greatly restricted the policy options that Australia may undertake.

However, Australia has pursued another identity for itself in the Asia-Pacific; viewing itself as a middle power that has some capability and characteristics of a major power, at least in its region. It considers itself to be a natural leader in regional affairs and of having the duty to initiate policies as it sees fit. Central to the need for Australia to project an image of itself as a regional great power is the promotion of advanced military capabilities. In 2003 Foreign Minister Alexander Downer projected his nation’s confident identity, stating that “Australia is not just a “middle power””, that the country is “a strong commonwealth with about the 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world” and “one of the most successful, peaceful and well-governed democracies in history.”<sup>228</sup> He stressed that “[r]ather than a middling nation, [Australia is] a

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<sup>224</sup> Jones, ‘Regional Illusion and Its Aftermath’, p. 39

<sup>225</sup> Bruce R. Vaughn, ‘Australia’s Strategic Identity Post-September 11 in Context: Implications for the War Against Terror in Southeast Asia’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2004, p. 97

<sup>226</sup> Alison Broinowski, *About face: Asian accounts of Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2003), p. 220

<sup>227</sup> Vaughn, ‘Australia’s Strategic Identity Post-September 11 in Context: Implications for the War Against Terror in Southeast Asia’, p. 111

<sup>228</sup> Alexander Downer, “This ‘little nation’ packs a mighty wallop”, *The Australian*, 26 November 2003

considerable power [...].”<sup>229</sup> Australia views itself as a “security leader” that needs to actively “lead, shape and engage”.<sup>230</sup> However both Asian and Pacific Island nations have at times perceived Australia’s role as regional leader in negative terms, viewing the country as a hegemon and self-interested regional policeman.

Australia has frequently been accused of acting as a regional “deputy sheriff” to the United States. Singaporean leader Lee Kuan Yew initially coined this label for Australia in the 1960s.<sup>231</sup> Decades later, Howard’s mention of the possibility of pre-emptive strikes against terrorist networks in Southeast Asia prompted outrage from Southeast Asian states.<sup>232</sup> Australia’s image in the region has frequently suffered criticism from Asian states that claim that the country exemplifies Western racism and maintains colonial attitudes.<sup>233</sup> Pacific Island countries have also criticised the country for what they see is hegemonic and self-interested leadership in the region. Despite reassurances to the contrary, Australia largely dismissed the issues particularly pertinent to Pacific Islanders, such as the need to combat climate change and rising sea levels. In opting to pursue a more self-interested regional security agenda, Australia has often gone against the “Pacific Way” of working with fellow Pacific Island Forum (PIF) members in reaching consensus on regional security matters. This was the case, for example in 1997, when during the 27<sup>th</sup> PIF meeting Australia refused to accept binding targets for greenhouse gas reductions; thus forcing Pacific states to accept the Australian stance. Tuvalu Prime Minister Bikenibeu Paeniu at the time was so frustrated with this outcome that he bitterly stated, “Australia dominated us so much in this region. For once we would have liked to have got some respect.”<sup>234</sup> Arguably, the appointment of an Australian, Greg Urwin to the position of Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, a position

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<sup>229</sup> Downer, “This ‘little nation’ packs a mighty wallop”

<sup>230</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update 2007*, p. 31

<sup>231</sup> Coral Bell, ‘Twenty years of danger’, *The Age*, 11 December 1979

<sup>232</sup> See for instance Craig A. Snyder, ‘Southeast Asian Perceptions of Australia’s Foreign Policy’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2006, pp. 322-340; Catherine McGrath, ‘PM supports action through pre-emptive strikes’, available online at [www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s738657.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s738657.htm) (version current at 16/01/2007)

<sup>233</sup> See Broinowski, *About face: Asian accounts of Australia*

<sup>234</sup> As cited in Bernadette Hussein, ‘The big retreat’, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, November 1997, p. 11



previously assumed by Pacific Islanders, has not eased in changing Australia's image as a domineering regional power. When his candidacy for this top bureaucratic job was made public, there was concern from smaller Pacific Island states and from former Secretary-General, Noel Levi that Australia has sought too much control and this top position should remain in the hands of a Pacific Islander.<sup>235</sup> This demonstrates that while Australia views itself as not having to choose between its history and geography when conducting international relations, its identity continues to constitute a barrier in building regional relationships. Its predominant identity of a white Western nation, situated in an alien region, has remained the key driving force in its security relationships and defence objectives.

This sense of self and lack of identification with the wider region is also the base on which Australia forms threat assessments and in particular, views Indonesia as an inherently possible threat to Australia. One aspect that has remained fairly constant and ever-present in Australian thinking and the country's defence policies has been a sense of alarm and worry over a possible security threat emanating from Indonesia. This fear however has been socially constructed, rather than natural. Australia has historically worried for its security due to the close proximity of Indonesia and has always felt uneasy about having this largest Muslim country in the world, with a population of 225 million, as its neighbour. This is despite the fact that the Indonesian military is primarily concerned with maintaining internal cohesion and public order. As of 2007 the Indonesian military has approximately 398 000 personnel, with a budget of Rp 33 trillion (US\$3.6 billion), which is 0.9 percent of Indonesia's gross domestic product.<sup>236</sup> However, as Bob Lowry points out, while at first glance the army seems large, it is in essence an infantry force as two-thirds of it is concerned with internal security.<sup>237</sup> The general belief of Indonesia's military elite is that the major threats to the

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<sup>235</sup> 'It Might Not Be Warm After All For Greg Urwin. There's opposition to his Forum secretary-general candidacy', *Pacific Magazine*, September 1, 2002

<sup>236</sup> Desy Nurhayati, 'Official renews calls for increased defense budget', *The Jakarta Post*, 11 February 2007

<sup>237</sup> Bob Lowry, 'Indonesia', in Gary Klintworth (ed.), *Asia-Pacific Security: Less Uncertainty, New Opportunities?* (Melbourne: Longan, 1996), p. 106



country's national security are of an internal nature, in the form of secessionist movements, religious radicalism and activities that contribute to class conflicts.<sup>238</sup> Alan Dupont further points out that "weak states, like Indonesia [...] pose security problems of an altogether different kind in the form of internal instability and the proliferation of low intensity conflicts that may spill over and draw in Australians as peace makers and peace keepers."<sup>239</sup>

It is therefore internal instability in Indonesia that is more likely to involve Australian troops, as opposed to a military attack on Australia. However, experts predict that despite internal crises, Indonesia will not collapse as a nation.<sup>240</sup> Despite this Canberra has tended to ignore the nature of the problem and turned a blind eye as to assessments that indicate low levels of threat, maintaining the desire to pursue a traditional war-fighting capable military. Examples of this include the signing of the Joint Strike Fighter Production, Sustainment and Follow-on Development Memorandum of Understanding by Australia in 2006, which is an agreement that provides a framework for the acquisition of new F-35s cruise missiles, and the acquisition of twenty-four F/A-18 F Model Super Hornet warplanes in 2007. For this reason, it is possible that Australia's preoccupation with a traditional security agenda may hinder the promotion of security in the region, as the country's militaristic approach is inadequate at addressing and resolving regional tensions. Australia has been so preoccupied with acquiring new warfighting capabilities, that the country's leading defence budget expert, Mark Thomson notes that as of March 2007 more than \$31 billion of additional funding to defence had been committed, which exceeds the \$28.5 billion as set out in the 2000 White Paper.<sup>241</sup>

Fear of Indonesia has been so prevalent in the Australian psyche that it did not subside even when a bilateral security agreement was reached between the two countries. A 1996

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<sup>238</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'Indonesia: Domestic Priorities Define National Security', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 477-478

<sup>239</sup> Alan Dupont, 'Transformation or stagnation? Rethinking Australia's defence', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 1, 2003, p. 61

<sup>240</sup> Peter Lewis Young, "'Arc of instability' rings alarm bells in Australia", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 2001, p. 42

<sup>241</sup> Patrick Walters and Cameron Stewart, 'Six billion flight of fancy', *The Australian*, March 8, 2007

Australian Election Study survey, which was conducted three months after Australia signed a security agreement with Indonesia, found that nearly 60 per cent of respondents perceived Indonesia as posing either a “very likely” or “fairly likely” threat to Australia’s security.<sup>242</sup> Likewise, more than 60 per cent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “[t]he security agreement between Australia and Indonesia means that we can trust Indonesia never to be a military threat”.<sup>243</sup> A similar pattern of attitudes was found in relation to China as a potential threat, with voters leaning slightly more towards the “fairly likely” scenario of the country posing a threat to Australia, as opposed to the “very likely” perception.<sup>244</sup> The public opinion data reflects the anxiety and fear of Australian people when developing the country’s defence policies. Fear has continued as a comprising aspect of relations with Indonesia in a similar manner that trust has remained a lasting characteristic of Australia’s relations with the United States.<sup>245</sup> This worry is not grounded in an objective assessment of material threat, but rather requires an ideational approach that takes into account how security is constructed, linking signs of “otherness” such as race, religion and lack of democracy with fear.

It appears that regardless of the state of stability and power in Indonesia; Australians will continue to be fearful of their northern neighbour and remain on alert. It is interesting to note that when Indonesia attained a level of greatest stability Australia’s fear of this country reached a new high. Simon Philpott notices that Australia was most fearful of Indonesia when the New Order was at its height and the country’s economic and social prospects looked promising, thus indicating a lasting negative outlook among the white Australian culture.<sup>246</sup> Anxiety was also not eased by the fact that the Indonesian Suharto regime exhibited

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<sup>242</sup> 1996 Australian Election Study (Table 1) in Ian McAllister and John Ravenhill, ‘Australian attitudes towards closer engagement with Asia’, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1998, p. 124

<sup>243</sup> 1996 Australian Election Study, in McAllister and Ravenhill, ‘Australian attitudes towards closer engagement with Asia’, p. 125

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, p. 124

<sup>245</sup> Philpott, ‘Fear of the Dark: Indonesia and the Australian National Imagination’, p. 371

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, p. 380

friendliness towards alignment with the US and Great Britain, Australian alliance partners.<sup>247</sup>

It appears that regardless of the structural situation of the regional environment and Indonesia's material power, Australian defence policy-makers will remain fearful of their large, alien neighbour.

## Conclusion

An assessment of the regional environment and military threats does not explain Australia's defence policy over time. Despite various changes to the structure of the international system and the nature of regional security threats, Australia's defence policy has remained largely consistent and centred on the pursuit of traditional military capabilities. An explanation focused solely on material variables would suggest that the country's military power and technological sophistication, relative to other states to its north, such as Indonesia, remains uncontested. The only country that has the capabilities to militarily threaten Australia is the United States and from a strict calculation of power relativities, this is the country, which should be viewed as the greatest threat and not the closest defence ally. Australians also have a natural defence barrier - their geographical isolation - which restricts access to the continent and greatly reduces the possibility of invasion.

However, Australia's defence policy has been based on a continuous desire to advance military capabilities over its Asian neighbours, while viewing the country with the largest power, the US, as not threatening to its security. Instead, Washington is seen as a crucial partner for Canberra in defending the country. It interprets its geographical isolation as a burden, rather than a benefit and actively seeks to maintain an army that is designed to fight traditional warfare. Materialist explanations therefore fail to explain the logic behind Australia's defence policies.

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<sup>247</sup> Philpott, 'Fear of the Dark: Indonesia and the Australian National Imagination', p. 380

So what is the source of Australian security policy? It's security approach needs to be explained by examining the influence of ideas and preferences guiding policy formulation which include an ever-present fear and distrust of the regional environment, a culture of realist predisposition when dealing with defence and a dependency on a great and powerful friend for security. The country's sense of fear of its region has been culturally constructed and not natural or imposed by the regional power structure. Instead, the sense of anxiety has its origins in Australian strategic culture and its identity as a Western outpost in a foreign environment.

An early sense of vulnerability, anxiety over its isolation and alienation from regional neighbours that had developed during the colonial era has persisted throughout time and contributed to a sustained and lasting sense of fear that has remained remarkably consistent and influenced the country's perspectives on defence. Arguably, this ever-present sense of threats surrounding the nation has led to the prevalence of a culture of realist thinking among Australian policymakers and the general population. Australia's strategic culture reflects a socially constructed realist understanding of international relations, that with bipartisan support, stresses the necessity of military capabilities in safeguarding the country's security and assesses the political environment in pessimistic, Hobbesian terms. While the concept of security is always contested in any given country, the realist view has been the prevailing ideological framework throughout Australian history. Combined with a culture of reliance on a great power protector for its security, Australia has long maintained a relationship with Indonesia that is based on uncertainty, even though assessments indicate that this large populous country represents no danger to the well-being of Australians. The chapter also explored Australia's construction of insecurity in the era following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the US, and how the politics of fear have been employed to address the topics of terrorism, war and asylum-seekers. The preceding analysis indicates that the characteristics of Australia's strategic culture and identity provide an ideational explanation of

the country's behaviour, offering an insightful justification for its long-lasting, hard headed and militaristic approach towards defence.

### **In Defence of New Zealand:**

#### **The Search for Independence and Collective Security**

Throughout most of its history New Zealand largely shared Australia's security concerns and adopted a defence approach that was in line with that of its larger neighbour. In the first half of the twentieth century both countries relied on Great Britain for protection and followed the logic of forward defence, deploying their forces to conflicts in Europe, Asia and elsewhere. Subsequently, the two turned towards a security alliance with the United States. In recent decades however, New Zealand and Australia have taken different paths in their defence strategies and objectives, with the former moving away from a traditional military force structure, preferring to focus its armed capabilities towards maintaining readily deployable peacekeeping forces. The divergence was most clearly evident in the 1980s, when in contrast to neorealist predictions; New Zealand pursued its anti-nuclear stance, even at the cost of its suspension from ANZUS and the loss of the alliance relationship with the United States. New Zealand leaders have described the strategic environment as being "exceptionally benign"<sup>248</sup>. This chapter explores the cause of this divergence in defence thinking and the factors that have been shaping New Zealand's perspective on security.

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<sup>248</sup> In 2000 Prime Minister Helen Clark stated that "We are very lucky to live in an exceptionally benign strategic environment" (Debate—Urgent Public Matter—Cancellation of F16 Contract, *Hansard*, 21 March 2000). In 2003 she made it clear that this comment refers to traditional security concerns, stating that 'In terms of state-on state conflict, of course it is a benign environment.' (cited in Tracy Watkins, 'Security review warns of 'real threats', *Dominion Post*, 27 February 2003, Edition 2, p. 2). Defence Minister Phil Goff appears to have distanced himself from the use of this rhetoric when referring to the Government's Defence Policy Framework of 2000, stating that 'While identifying no country as being of direct threat to New Zealand, it did not however assume that we lived in a benign security environment.' (Address by Phil Goff to the visiting class of the Australian Defence College, Australian High Commission, Wellington, 3 September 2007)

The sections that follow trace the evolution of New Zealand thinking towards maintaining its security, identifying ideational influences and preferences that have shaped the country's distinct approach to defence. Rather than focusing solely on material factors, such as geographical location, size or wealth, the chapter argues that a study of New Zealand's approach to defence can best be explained by looking at how feelings of distinctiveness and identity have come play a highly influential role in the country's security policies. I argue that while New Zealand is geographically more isolated than Australia, with fewer military resources at its disposal and a smaller territory to protect; these facts alone do not provide an adequate explanation for the country's defence approach and its increasing divergence from Australia.

While New Zealand's approach to defence has undergone more substantial shifts than Australia's, it is possible to identify certain characteristics or preferences that have consistently underpinned security thinking in the country, and which may better explain the divergence. For this purpose the study incorporates a long historical timeframe, ranging from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the present. The chapter begins with an exploration of New Zealand attitudes towards Federation with Australia and how the decision not to federate impacted on the country's security thinking. It then examines the relationship with Great Britain, followed by the turn towards the United States. A summary of New Zealand's strategic culture is offered, before turning towards an assessment of the country's contemporary defence policy and the impact of identity on security interests.

### **Striving for Independence: Early Attitudes towards Federation with Australia**

New Zealand and Australia are in many respects similar countries, in terms of shared origins, similar societies, common history and values. Their bilateral relations in a wide array of fields, ranging from security co-operation, economic relations, cultural and sporting links



and people exchanges are among the most developed anywhere. Yet despite these similarities, New Zealand has long been proud of remaining an independent entity. This was manifested in the decision not to federate with the Australian colonies in 1901.

While the underlying reasons for this choice reflect both economic and political factors; a significant determining influence on this outcome was the sense of individuality and independence that New Zealand strived to maintain for itself. Following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 between the British Crown and Maori chiefs, New Zealand separated from New South Wales in 1842, becoming a self-governing territory. Michael King believes that by the time of the Boer War of 1899-1902, when for the first time troops were sent abroad to fight and represent the country, New Zealanders had begun to develop a nascent nationalism, wanting to not only manifest their continuous loyalty to Britain, but also to establish traditions and precedents that were unique to New Zealand.<sup>249</sup> He notes that some historians saw this event as a first stirring of nationalism, which greatly contributed to stopping New Zealand federating with Australia in 1901.<sup>250</sup> The decision not to federate with Australia was a significant step for an isolated colony and signalled that despite commonalities, New Zealand would pursue an independent path to that of its larger neighbour. A study of the attitudes, which prevailed at the time, sheds light as to the factors that guided New Zealand security thinking and interests at that time.

While economic considerations played an important role in New Zealand's decision not to federate with the Commonwealth of Australia<sup>251</sup>, a greater influence was the lack of interest of the New Zealand population and politicians in such an option and the idea that their

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<sup>249</sup> Michael King, *New Zealanders at War* (Auckland: Penguin, 2003), p. 75

<sup>250</sup> King, *New Zealanders at War*, p. 92

<sup>251</sup> 'Union with the Commonwealth of Australia: The Case Against, 1901' (*The Federation Commission report, 13 May 1901, gives reasons why New Zealand should not enter a union with the newly formed Australian Federation*), in W. David McIntyre and W. J. Gardner (eds.), *Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 266, p. 268

colony should not surrender its independence and self-governing powers.<sup>252</sup> During the late 19th century, no New Zealand newspaper, with the exception of the *Evening Post*, campaigned in favour of federation, and this was coupled with the fact that, in contrast to Australia, there was no political leader in New Zealand who firmly argued in favour of federation.<sup>253</sup> In his study of parliamentary debates for the period of 1884-1900 on the topic of joining in a federation with Australia, Keith Sinclair found that over 60 per cent of politicians were opposed to the idea, while a third were absent during the main parliamentary debates.<sup>254</sup>

These attitudes were a marked change in opinion. During an address on New Zealand's defence in 1884, referring to a possible union with the Australian colonies, Governor Jervois claimed that "[s]o far as defence is concerned, New Zealand is probably more interested than any other Australasian Colony in the question of federation."<sup>255</sup> Less than two decades later, he was proven wrong as New Zealand remained reluctant to seriously consider this option. The Federation Commission report "[...] found that the question had been but little considered by the people of New Zealand."<sup>256</sup>

The reluctance to federate with Australia and widespread ignorance of the issue among the New Zealand population can't simply be explained by its geographical remoteness, as some colonies within the Australian continent were divided by even greater distances. Moreover, the idea of New Zealand becoming part of Australia was not a novel one, as it already had been experienced early in the previous century. The fact the lack of interest on the

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<sup>252</sup> See for instance 'The Reasons Why New Zealand Did Not Join the Australian Federation. 1890' (Speech by Russell in Record of the Proceeding and Debates of the Australian Federation Conference, pp. 41-3 [Melbourne, 1890]), reproduced in C. M. H. Clark (ed.), *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950), p. 477

<sup>253</sup> Keith Sinclair, 'Why New Zealanders Are Not Australians: New Zealand and the Australian Federal Movement, 1881-1901', in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), pp. 93-94

<sup>254</sup> Sinclair, 'Why New Zealanders Are Not Australians: New Zealand and the Australian Federal Movement, 1881-1901', p. 94

<sup>255</sup> Excellency Sir W.F.D. Jervois, *The Defence of New Zealand: An Address. Delivered to the Members of the New Zealand Institute, at the Anniversary Meeting, held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1884* (Wellington: George Didsbury, Government Printer, 1884), p. 6

<sup>256</sup> 'Union with the Commonwealth of Australia: The Case Against, 1901' (*The Federation Commission report, 13 May 1901, gives reasons why New Zealand should not enter a union with the newly formed Australian Federation*), in McIntyre and Gardner (eds.), *Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History*, p. 265

part of New Zealand in the idea of federation with Australia was widely noticed at the Colonial Conferences. Sir John Hall, former Premier and a delegate to the 1890 Federation Conference that took place in Melbourne, stated that the “1200 miles between New Zealand and Australia were 1200 good reasons why New Zealand would not join the Australian federation.”<sup>257</sup> Behind the façade of distance, however another influence on the decision was the growth of a distinct New Zealand identity that had developed in relation and opposition to Australia. Referring to New Zealand’s decision not to federate with Australia, R. F. Irvine and O. T. J. Alpers noted in 1902 that “Hers [New Zealand’s] is too strong an individuality to be absorbed in any federation short of the Imperial.”<sup>258</sup>

Scholars who have attempted to explain New Zealand’s decision not to join the Federation disagree as to the main factors for the course of action taken. According to F. L. W. Wood, it was the influence of Prime Minister Richard Seddon that played the key role in the outcome not to federate, as under his leadership New Zealand “developed a sudden spurt of native nationalism which had an element of lunatic imperialistic aspirations in the Pacific, but which much more significantly involved special relationships with Britain.”<sup>259</sup> Miles Fairburn, in contrast, argues that “the key to New Zealand’s aloofness from federation was apathy and not, as Wood argues, Seddon.”<sup>260</sup> While opinion fluctuated in the years leading to the decision, New Zealanders did not seriously believe that the outcome of the Colonial Conferences would be a federation that would include their colony. In addition, the country’s isolation appeared to diminish any sense of urgency in issues concerning

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<sup>257</sup> Quoted in Denis McLean, ‘Australia and New Zealand: two hearts not beating as one’, *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, January/February 2001, p. 3

<sup>258</sup> R.F. Irvine, and O.T.J Alpers, *The Progress of New Zealand in the Century* (Toronto: Linscott, 1902), p. 432

<sup>259</sup> F. L. W. Wood, ‘Why did New Zealand not join the Australian Commonwealth in 1900-1901?’, *The New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, October 1968, p. 129

<sup>260</sup> Miles Fairburn, ‘New Zealand and Australasian Federation, 1883-1901’, *The New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 4, No.2, October 1970, p. 149

foreign relations.<sup>261</sup> It seems therefore, that from early colonial days, New Zealand was more content with its strategic isolation than Australia.

While it is difficult to point to a single reason for New Zealand's reluctance to join the Australian colonies in federation, it appears that a growing sense of nationhood, distinctiveness and aspirations for autonomy may have played an influential and determining role. As Ged Martin puts it; "There is something of a chicken-and-egg conundrum here: was there already a distinct New Zealand identity that explains the rejection of federation, or was it something that emerged as a consequence of a decision to stay aloof which had been taken for other reasons?"<sup>262</sup> While it would be too simplistic to point to the identity variable as the sole defining component of the decision not to federate with Australia, it was nevertheless frequently referred to. In addition, New Zealand's close relationship with Great Britain at that time, and the security umbrella that the Imperial connection provided, helped its confidence in remaining an independent colony.

### **The loyal Dominion and the Pursuit of an Independent Foreign Policy**

While New Zealand felt the need to remain independent from Australia, it stayed loyal and firmly linked its "Mother Country", Great Britain. One influence on New Zealand's reluctance to seriously consider a union with Australia may have been the close relationship with London and its heavy reliance on the Motherland for providing regional stability. When it came to security, the Federation Commission concluded that "so long as Great Britain holds command of the sea, New Zealand is quite able to undertake her own land defence."<sup>263</sup> In case

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<sup>261</sup> Sir Keith Hancock, *Imperial Federation: A study of New Zealand Policy and Opinion, 1880-1914* (London: Athlone Press, 1955), p. 23

<sup>262</sup> Ged Martin, *Australia, New Zealand and Federation, 1883-1901* (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2001), p. 120

<sup>263</sup> 'Union with the Commonwealth of Australia: The Case Against, 1901' (*The Federation Commission report, 13 May 1901, gives reasons why New Zealand should not enter a union with the newly formed Australian Federation*), in McIntyre and Gardner (eds.), *Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History*, p. 266

of hostilities breaking out, the Commissioners were of the conviction that “as a separate colony New Zealand would render to Australia all possible assistance in war-time; and similar assistance would be given by Australia to New Zealand [...]”<sup>264</sup> Most importantly, New Zealand had the assurance that in any event the British Empire would protect its safety.

Until the mid-twentieth century, New Zealand’s security interests, alongside those of Australia, were largely those of Great Britain and the Commonwealth. Imperial defence remained central to New Zealand’s defence strategy. As Ian MacGibbon puts it, New Zealand’s defence policy in the first hundred years of its self-governing existence was in essence “forward in emphasis, conceived and executed in a British framework, and European in orientation.”<sup>265</sup> New Zealand’s early strategic culture revolved around the loyal service to the initiatives of its security guarantor and the necessary sacrifices that would need to be made. In 1885 New Zealand established overseas expeditionary forces and two years later subsidised Royal Navy cruisers being stationed in New Zealand waters.<sup>266</sup> An emotional connection to the British Empire remained very strong.

New Zealanders retained their attachment to Great Britain longer than Australians. As one form of evidence of a greater sentiment to their “Mother Country”, Sinclair reveals that in 1866, around 220 000 New Zealanders sent 1 000 000 letters to the United Kingdom, compared with 630 000 Victorians sending 1 100 000 and 430 000 Welshmen sending 550 000 letters.<sup>267</sup> This stronger attachment may be explained by the fact that New Zealand had been settled relatively more recently than Australia, it had a lower proportion of Irish inhabitants, and therefore, less anti-English sentiment.<sup>268</sup> Writing at the beginning of the

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<sup>264</sup> ‘Union with the Commonwealth of Australia: The Case Against, 1901’, p. 266

<sup>265</sup> Ian MacGibbon, ‘History of New Zealand Defence’, in Erik Olssen and Bill Webb (eds.), *New Zealand Foreign Policy and Defence, 12-15 May, 1977* (Dunedin: Dept. of University Extension, University of Otago, 1977), p. 19

<sup>266</sup> David Filer, ‘British Section 2: Rise & Fall of Defence’, *New Zealand International Review*, January/February 1979, p. 16

<sup>267</sup> *Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly of Victoria*, 1867, IV, no. 45, p. 26, cited in Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand’s Search for National Identity* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin in association with the Port Nicholson Press, 1986), p. 96

<sup>268</sup> Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand’s Search for National Identity*, p. 96

twentieth century, Irvine and Alpers reached a similar observation, noting that “New Zealanders have so far remained more distinctly English than, perhaps, is the case in some of the larger colonies.”<sup>269</sup>

As a sign of this identification with the British, in 1899 Premier Seddon called for New Zealanders to accept their obligation “as Englishmen” to contribute in the British Empire’s military venture in South Africa.<sup>270</sup> The New Zealand Parliament was the first among all the self-governing colonies at the time to offer troops for this cause, and it had widespread and popular support.<sup>271</sup> During the dispatch of the New Zealand contingent from Wellington, Premier Seddon proudly proclaimed that New Zealanders “would fight for one flag, one Queen, one tongue, and for one country – Britain.”<sup>272</sup> At the same time, participation in the Anglo-Boer war<sup>273</sup>, the first conflict abroad that involved New Zealand troops signalled that although New Zealand and Australia were willing participants in the British Empire’s expeditions, their forces would not combine to form a single Australasian contingent. In fact Seddon fought hard to make sure there was a separate New Zealand contingent.

By 1914, while Australia stressed its goal of naval independence as a sign of a deepening sense of nationhood, New Zealand instead opted to remain loyal and dependent on Britain’s view of naval defence.<sup>274</sup> With the outbreak of World War I, New Zealand and Australia swiftly offered their assistance to London. They worked together in the Gallipoli campaign, remaining largely under British command and forging a co-operation bond that continues to be commonly referred to as the “ANZAC” spirit (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps). While the ANZAC bond cemented a mutual respect, it also turned the shared

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<sup>269</sup> Irvine and Alpers., *The Progress of New Zealand in the Century*, p. 429

<sup>270</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD)*, Vol. 110, 28 September 1899, p. 76, Quoted in Ian McGibbon, ‘The Origins of New Zealand’s South African War Contribution’, in John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (eds.), *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire and the South African War 1899-1902* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), p. 2

<sup>271</sup> Irvine and Alpers., *The Progress of New Zealand in the Century*, p. 432

<sup>272</sup> Ian McGibbon (ed., with the assistance of Paul Goldstone ), *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 59

<sup>273</sup> Also referred to as the Second Boer War

<sup>274</sup> F. L. W. Wood, *New Zealand in the World* (Wellington: Dept. of Internal Affairs, 1940), p. 80



experience into a celebration of proud separate nationhood.<sup>275</sup> In 1922 New Zealand accepted Great Britain's request for assistance in the Chanak crisis, which in the end did not require the dispatch of New Zealand troops.<sup>276</sup>

During the interwar period New Zealand began to pursue a more independent foreign policy. Independence in New Zealand's international relations is often credited to the election of the first Labour government in 1935, which gave a moral element to the country's foreign policies that was characterised by the pursuit of the ideals of collective security, international law and multilateralism; values that continue to be emphasised to the present day. The first Labour Government pursued a pioneering foreign policy based on the promotion of the League of Nations and collective security.<sup>277</sup> New Zealand preferred to adopt a moral, principled approach to international relations rather than the balance-of-power model. Instead, in the spirit of international arbitration and the peaceful resolution of disputes, Labour Party Prime Minister Peter Fraser called for the League of Nations to assist in the Chanak dispute between the Allies and Turkey, so that a settlement could be reached. Despite reservations in London, New Zealand vigorously campaigned in support of the League and the notion of collective security, as was exemplified in its vocal condemnation of aggression in Abyssinia, Spain and Manchuria in the 1930s.

In essence, the New Zealand Labour Party gave rise to a sense of nationalism and distinctiveness in its outlook on the world, which had a particularly powerful impact on the country's sense of identity and interests. As G. A. Wood and Chris Rudd point out, "In a colonial setting, nationalism tended to be a cause of the left and this has certainly been the trend in New Zealand."<sup>278</sup> However, it is worth noticing that Labour in New Zealand had a

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<sup>275</sup> McLean, 'Australia and New Zealand: two hearts not beating as one', p. 4

<sup>276</sup> Zara S. Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 116

<sup>277</sup> Bruce S. Bennett, *New Zealand's Moral Foreign Policy 1935-1939: The Promotion of Collective Security Through the League of Nations* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1988), p. 1

<sup>278</sup> G. A. Wood and Chris Rudd (eds.), *The Politics and Government of New Zealand: Robust, Innovative and Challenged* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004), p. 27



greater impact on the country's foreign policies than was the case with its counterpart in neighbouring Australia. The Australian Labour Party during this time was the only labor party among the Anglo-Saxon world that was not enthusiastic about collective security.<sup>279</sup> In contrast, New Zealand became proud of its tradition of being a good international citizen by pursuing security via the League of Nations and in voicing its moral opposition to the actions of larger states, when their policies were seen to go against the spirit of collective security. However, while New Zealand increasingly fought for an independent voice in pursuing its foreign policies, even if this meant disagreeing with its ally, its defence interests remained firmly linked to those of her security protector.

Loyalty to Great Britain continued to remain strong and with the outbreak of World War II, New Zealand, alongside Australia again declared their allegiance to the British side and swiftly send their troops overseas. During this time, the two countries were involved in the Singapore Strategy, a British tactic of maintaining a defensive naval base in Singapore to counter a possible threat from Japan, the third largest naval power at that time. Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, New Zealand's loyalty to Great Britain was expressed by Prime Minister Savage, who proclaimed;

Both with gratitude for the past and with confidence in the future we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes we go. Where she stands we stand. We are only a small and young nation, but we are one and all a band of brothers, and we march forward with a union of hearts and will towards a common destiny.<sup>280</sup>

As a result, New Zealand decided to fight alongside Britain in Italy, Greece, Crete, Maleme, Galas, North Africa and Yugoslavia, while in the first few years of the war Australia focused its expeditionary force in the Middle East, Mediterranean Sea and North Africa. In 1941, as

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<sup>279</sup> C. Hartley Grattan, *The United States and the Southwest Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 148

<sup>280</sup> Text of Savage's address broadcast from his sickbed, 5 September 1939, *Dominion*, 6 September 1939, reproduced in Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), p. 33

war with Japan loomed and a Pacific War appeared inevitable, Australia decided to bring back its troops and to focus on its immediate region.

World War II highlighted the priorities of New Zealand and Australian strategic security thinking, testing how the two countries would react when the perils of war reached the Pacific area. Australians moved more rapidly away from Great Britain; breaking away from the British strategy that was centred on the Middle East and Europe and withdrawing all of their troops from the Middle East following Japanese advances in 1942.<sup>281</sup> Out of concern for its security Australia opted to bring its forces back to its immediate region, while New Zealand was comfortable with its troops remaining in the Middle East.<sup>282</sup>

This move highlighted a growing divergence between the Australian and New Zealand strategies, with the former becoming more preoccupied with the defence of the homeland, while the latter remained committed to a defence strategy that was based on the advancement of British-led initiatives. New Zealand remained always more willing than Australia in fulfilling Britain's requests of help in the Middle East and South East Asia.<sup>283</sup> During World War II New Zealand contributed in the Mediterranean theatre and it was only in 1941 that 400 New Zealanders were sent to Southeast Asia.<sup>284</sup> In the meantime, Australia fought alongside Great Britain and the United States in the Battle of Malaya and Battle of Singapore. On 15 February 1942 the British Army suffered their largest ever single defeat when Lieutenant General Percival was forced to surrender Singapore to the invading Japanese forces under General Tomoyuki Yamashita and the total number of British casualties was put at 138,708, of whom over 130,000 were taken prisoner of war and over one third later died in

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<sup>281</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, 'Two Countries: the Same but Very Different', in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), p. 329

<sup>282</sup> James Rolfe, 'Australia-New Zealand Relations: Allies, Friends, Rivals', in Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, *Special Assessment. Asia's Bilateral Relations* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, October 2004), p. 3

<sup>283</sup> W. David McIntyre, 'A Review of the Commonwealth factor in Foreign Policy Making', in Ann Trotter (ed.), *Fifty Years of New Zealand Foreign Policy Making: Papers from the Twenty-Eighth Foreign Policy School, 1993* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press in association with University Extension, 1993), p. 43

<sup>284</sup> Ian McGibbon, 'The Defence Dimension' in Anthony L. Smith (ed.), *Southeast Asia and New Zealand: A History of Regional and Bilateral Relations* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs in association with Victoria University Press, 2005), p. 9

the appalling conditions in the POW camps.<sup>285</sup> The fall of Singapore signalled a dramatic change to New Zealand and Australian security arrangements, undermining their confidence that their “Mother Country” could serve as a security protector in the Asia-Pacific.

Following the fall of Singapore and British withdrawal from the region, New Zealand and Australia joined forces to form a defence arrangement in 1944; the Australia-New Zealand Agreement (ANZAC), more commonly referred to as the Canberra Pact. According to J. C. Beaglehole the agreement was significant as it signified a greater sense of independence and New Zealand’s desire to form a policy in the Pacific that is “intelligible in terms not of subordination to British hesitations and abstraction, but of the strategic needs, enlightened self-interest, and duty to Polynesian peoples of a quite independent power.”<sup>286</sup> While the Canberra Pact is not a military alliance, it is designed to allow for closer security co-operation. Prime Minister Peter Fraser made it clear however, that this defence arrangement would not hinder New Zealand’s independence, stating that “Although both countries cordially agreed to closer collaboration and the utmost co-operation [...] there is no sinking or subordination of one to the other, or discarding the opinions of either country.”<sup>287</sup> The Canberra Pact did not fit well with the interests of Great Britain and the United States, however, and there were tensions with Washington in particular over a future role of the US in the Pacific.

Following the end of World War II the interests of the major powers became less important to New Zealand. It gave greater emphasis to multilateralism, attempted to introduce compulsory jurisdiction in the statute establishing the International Court of Justice and argued for the exclusion of veto power in the UN Security Council. While great power interests crushed these proposals, the attempts nevertheless demonstrated the country was

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<sup>285</sup> Australian Government, Department of Defence, ‘The Fall of Singapore 15 February 1942’, available online at <http://www.defence.gov.au/ARMY/AHU/HISTORY/Battles/Singapore.htm> (version current at 7/12/07)

<sup>286</sup> J. C. Beaglehole, ‘The Development of New Zealand Nationality’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 2, 1954-55, p. 118

<sup>287</sup> The Canberra Pact, 1944, The Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, speaks in the House of Representatives, 29 March 1944, in McIntyre and Gardner (eds.), *Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History*, p. 377

striving for leadership in advancing a rules-based international order that would protect small states, and signalled a growing sense of a distinct perspective on security. Subsequently, while fulfilling its first term on the UN Security Council from 1954-55, New Zealand promoted international law over great power interests. This was evident in its support for the urgent convening of the Council in the case of Guatemala. In June 1954 this small central American country issued a complaint over an alleged invasion by armed mercenary forces, emanating from Honduras and Nicaragua, which were in essence organised and financed by the United States.<sup>288</sup> In this case, as well as various other subsequent instances, New Zealand's stance was frequently at odds with both that of the United States and Great Britain.

However, when it came to defence arrangements it was continuity that prevailed. Following the end of World War II Australia and New Zealand continued to believe in the importance of an effective security relationship with Britain, as was demonstrated in their participation in various Commonwealth defence arrangements, designed primarily to counter the expansion of communism. In 1949 New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain formed the ANZAM defence agreement, which was concerned with the defence of Malaya. New Zealanders dispatch a Commonwealth Strategic Reserve to take part in the campaign against Malayan communists. In the case of New Zealand in particular, continued attachment and reliance on Great Britain was evident not only in the security initiatives, which it pursued, but also in the constitutional and legal arrangements that continued to govern the nation.

New Zealand moved from having Dominion status to full legal independence relatively late, compared with other former British colonies. After initially declining to ratify the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which was to remove Great Britain's rights to make laws for New Zealand, the country finally adopted it in November 1947. It was the last Dominion to do so. By 1949 Labour Party Prime Minister Peter Fraser asked for his country to give "the

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<sup>288</sup> Bruce Brown, 'New Zealand in the Security Council. Part 1: The 1954-55 Term', in Malcolm Templeton (ed.), *New Zealand as an International Citizen : Fifty Years of United Nations Membership* (Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1995), pp. 28-29

maximum contribution possible to the defence of the British Commonwealth with which the destiny of New Zealand is wholly and completely bound up”.<sup>289</sup> Yet with Britain’s inability to act as a security guarantor in the Asia-Pacific New Zealand was forced to move away from the “Mother Country” to pursue its security interests. The Canberra security agreement alone would not suffice in ensuring Australian and New Zealand security from a possible Japanese resurgence and both countries turned towards the United States for their protection.

### **ANZUS and the Cold War**

Following the decline of Britain’s military power in Asia, Australia, along with New Zealand found themselves vulnerable to a possible Japanese military resurgence, which led the two countries to seek a defence agreement with the United States. New Zealand reluctantly turned to America for its security with the turn towards establishing a security pact with the US, in the form of the ANZUS treaty of 1951, representing somewhat of an unwilling replacement in terms of defence arrangements for the country. It was the first treaty that New Zealand signed with a foreign power, which did not include Great Britain.<sup>290</sup> On the one hand, the decision to join ANZUS must be understood within the ideological context of that time and the ideas that shaped the decision. Cold War thinking and the need to remain within the Western security alliance dominated New Zealand’s security policies, as the country’s identity remained firmly linked to that of the Western, English-speaking, democratic family. On the other hand, however, New Zealand continued to have a greater attachment to its traditional defence protector.

The nature of the security agreement with the US revealed differences between New Zealand and Australia; with the former seeking a unilateral declaration of protection, whereas

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<sup>289</sup> ‘Prime Minister Demands Readiness In Defence of N.Z.’, *Evening Post*, 24 May 1949

<sup>290</sup> McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 123

the later looked towards a formal arrangement. New Zealand was more interested in a unilateral declaration of protection by the Americans in the event of an attack as it would provide the country with, what it perceived at the time, as greater benefits.<sup>291</sup> New Zealand would be free of reciprocal obligations and commitments and be able to continue its attachment to Britain and its overseas defence initiatives in the Middle East and Europe, which were seen as more important than in the Pacific.<sup>292</sup> However, although the country was initially more content with an informal agreement, New Zealand eventually joined Australia in seeking a formal security declaration with Washington. It is worth pointing out however, that the ANZUS Treaty alliance did not provide for automatic assistance in the event of aggression, but rather for consultation in the event of an act of hostility.

According to Ramesh Thakur, the Labour Party was largely ambivalent towards the ANZUS alliance, in part because of anti-American sentiments. However despite these sentiments, since its inception, until the 1980s it had, along with the National Party officially expressed its position that ANZUS remained the cornerstone of New Zealand's defence policy.<sup>293</sup> During the Holland Government of 1949-1957, Labour supported the National Government's argument concerning the need for New Zealand to obtain a Pacific security pact and lent its support to the intervention in Korea.<sup>294</sup> New Zealand supported Britain in the involvement in the Korean War.<sup>295</sup> With the backing of the United Nations, in 1950 New Zealand dispatched a voluntary military force to the Korean War, which throughout the conflict totalled approximately 5000 New Zealanders.

As Cold War concerns dominated New Zealand and Australian security agendas, from the mid-1950s until the early 1970s the two countries followed the logic of forward defence in

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<sup>291</sup> Michael McKinley, *The ANZUS Alliance and New Zealand Labour*, Canberra Studies in World Affairs No. 20, 1986, p. 10

<sup>292</sup> McKinley, *The ANZUS Alliance and New Zealand Labour*, p. 10

<sup>293</sup> Ramesh Thakur, *In defence of New Zealand; Foreign Policy choices in the nuclear age* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), p. 60

<sup>294</sup> Bennett, *New Zealand's Moral Foreign Policy 1935-1939: The Promotion of Collective Security Through the League of Nations*, p. 91

<sup>295</sup> McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 118

Southeast Asia, which was based on the idea of creating a number of barriers as far from home as possible, to deter a potential adversary. In 1954, New Zealand joined Australia, Britain, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States in the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which aimed to provide for collective defence and block the expansion of communism. The forward defence approach was in accordance with New Zealand's long-held aspiration to preserve the country's strategic depth.<sup>296</sup> To strike a chord with New Zealand's values, participation in the forward defence arrangement was also framed as a necessary measure in fulfilling the country's responsibilities as an upholder of collective security. As the defence white paper of 1961 noted; "If our policy is one of collective security we must retain the confidence and support of the countries on whose assistance we rely...."<sup>297</sup> As the threat of nuclear attack loomed, New Zealand decided upon an approach that focused on deterring the use of nuclear weaponry whilst trying to stop their production. While critics argued that the safer option for New Zealand would be neutrality there was bipartisan agreement on the key strategic concerns facing New Zealand, the importance of the US and the path that would need to be taken during this period.

However, unlike its relationship with Great Britain, New Zealand's defence relations with the United States were not based by a similar sense of affinity and understanding. In contrast to previous British-led overseas security expeditions, which New Zealand enthusiastically supported, it appeared that commitments under the ANZUS treaty were viewed more as an unwilling necessity fulfilled to satisfy minimum obligations. Only a small percentage of New Zealanders identified the US as the country they considered to have most in common with.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Ian McGibbon, 'Forward Defence: the Southeast Asian Commitment', in Malcolm McKinnon (ed.), *New Zealand in World Affairs Volume II: 1957-1972* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 12

<sup>297</sup> "Review of Defence Policy 1961", *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* 1961, A. 19, p. 4, cited in McGibbon, 'Forward Defence: the Southeast Asian Commitment', p. 12

<sup>298</sup> 1984 McNair Surveys NZ Ltd, reproduced in Frank Corner, *Defence and Security: What New Zealanders Want*, Report of the Defence Committee of Enquiry (Wellington: The Committee, 1986), p. 4



The Vietnam War caused the first major foreign policy disagreement between National and Labour. It triggered the end of foreign and defence policy consensus, which largely existed between the two major parties since the Second World War.<sup>299</sup> Despite its security relationship with the United States, New Zealand showed great reluctance under a conservative government to commit fighting troops to Vietnam. While Australia sent 8000 soldiers, among them conscripts, New Zealand's contribution was substantially smaller – around 500. Under National's Prime Minister Keith Holyoake, New Zealand acted as the “most dovish of the hawks”<sup>300</sup>, trying to strike a fine balance between the tensions of fulfilling its duties as a loyal ally and its domestic attitudes of reluctant participation.<sup>301</sup> In 1968, when asked for his views on war, Holyoake's response was “I'm certainly not a “hawk”, nor a “dove”, perhaps somewhere in between.”<sup>302</sup> He was eager to stress that all the New Zealanders that were serving in Vietnam were volunteers.<sup>303</sup> Holyoake was acutely aware of the domestic sensitivities concerning military involvement in this case. In the end, the Vietnam War contributed to a disillusionment among New Zealanders about the cost of maintaining an alliance with the US, which led to the eventual rise of the anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s and eventual break away from ANZUS.<sup>304</sup>

By the 1970s New Zealand and Australia were forced to adapt to a new strategic environment. In 1969 the United States established the Guam Doctrine (or Nixon Doctrine), which called for allies, including the two Antipodes, to provide for their own regional security. Moreover, the declining power of Britain in the Asia-Pacific region was

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<sup>299</sup> Roberto Rabel, ‘Vietnam and the Collapse of the Foreign Policy Consensus’, in Malcolm McKinnon (ed.), *New Zealand in World Affairs Volume II: 1957-1972* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p. 59; Barry Gustafson, ‘New Zealand since the War’, in Raymond Miller (ed.), *New Zealand Government and Politics*, Fourth Edition (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 6

<sup>300</sup> Phrase coined by Ralph Mullins

<sup>301</sup> Roberto Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Politics and Diplomacy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2005), p. 351

<sup>302</sup> *Dominion*, 10 February 1968, quoted in Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War: Politics and Diplomacy*, p. 353

<sup>303</sup> Roberto Rabel, ‘The Dovish Hawk’: Keith Holyoake and the Vietnam War’, in Margaret Clark (ed.), *Sir Keith Holyoake: Towards a Political Biography* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1997), p. 187

<sup>304</sup> Ramesh Thakur, ‘New Zealand: the Security and Tyranny of Isolation’, in Ken Booth and Russell Troad (eds.), *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: St Martin's Press Inc, 1999), p. 301

demonstrated in its withdrawal from East of Suez. A shift in policy between New Zealand and Australia was noticeable by the mid-1970s, when the two countries moved away from “forward defence” in Southeast Asia and towards greater self-reliance and focus on their immediate region.<sup>305</sup> These new developments, coupled with popular unrest over the situation in Vietnam, gave birth to growing anti-war and anti-nuclear attitudes, which would dramatically influence New Zealand’s defence interests and arrangements.

**New Zealand’s Strategic Culture: The Influence of Anti-war and Anti-nuclear Attitudes**

As the era of “forward defence” in Asia ended, New Zealand pursued an independent course of action that was underscored by a deepening sense of identity and distinct strategic culture. It appears that the country became freer to pursue its own strategic preferences and values. The subsequent path taken in defence of New Zealand reflected and built upon the country’s past historical experiences and values, including strong anti-war sentiments.

A defining influence on New Zealand’s emerging strategic culture occurred during the two World Wars, where the country suffered huge loss of life. Former Secretary of Defence, Gerald Hensley highlights that “over one in twenty of all New Zealanders was a casualty in the First World War – 58 per cent of all those who served overseas and per capita the highest rate suffered by any nation in that war.”<sup>306</sup> In the Second World War more New Zealand lives were lost on a per capita basis (58 deaths per 10 000 people) than had occurred in any other Commonwealth country, and the proportion of wounded (110 per 10 000 people) was nearly double that, which was suffered by the next Commonwealth country.<sup>307</sup>

<sup>305</sup> S. E. Speed, ‘The Evolution of Australian and New Zealand Defense Policies’, *Defense Analysis*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1992, p. 261

<sup>306</sup> Gerald Hensley, ‘The effect of war on New Zealand’, in Carl Bridge (ed.), *Pacific Prospects: Australia, New Zealand and Future Conflicts* (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2002), pp. 66-67

<sup>307</sup> Thakur, ‘New Zealand: the Security and Tyranny of Isolation’, p. 301

This had a profound impact on New Zealand's future military involvements, even though alliance obligations often committed the country to send its troops to overseas expeditions. While military personnel deployments to Korea, Malaya and Vietnam were based on duties to its ally, following the end of the ANZUS military alliance New Zealand appeared to be more reluctant to send troops for combat as expeditionary forces, remaining more inclined to send non-combat forces such as peacekeepers to international missions. When it came to the use of force, New Zealanders viewed their engagement in overseas conflicts as a necessary contribution, as their security was reliant on others. However, as Michael King points out, despite their submission to the use of force and the need to go to war throughout the twentieth century, "New Zealanders have never accepted anything approaching militarism."<sup>308</sup> He highlights that New Zealanders have mostly resisted peacetime conscription and when a decision to take up arms would be made, it would be more in the spirit of amateurism, or a "civilian into soldier" tradition.<sup>309</sup>

A major event, which signalled the significance of anti-war attitudes on New Zealand's defence objectives, was the war in Vietnam. Vocal domestic opposition to the war affected how New Zealand saw itself and its security interests. According to Philips "there came out of opposition to that war ideas that would help to create a new vision of New Zealand's identity."<sup>310</sup> The anti-war movement that from 1965 onwards gained popularity and criticised New Zealand for becoming involved, may also be viewed as an element of a broader attack on the government's general alliance policies.<sup>311</sup> In 1968 New Zealand rejected the US request for hosting an Omega facility, a long-range radio navigation system that can be used underwater, and which critics point out would provide the US with precise data for its armed submarines, while also becoming a tempting nuclear target in the event of war.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Michael King, *New Zealanders at War* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1981), p. 2

<sup>309</sup> King, *New Zealanders at War*, p. 2

<sup>310</sup> Jock Phillips, 'New Zealand and the ANZUS Alliance: Changing National Self-Perceptions, 1945-88', in Richard Baker (ed.), *Australia, New Zealand and the United States* (New York, 1991), p. 192

<sup>311</sup> Rabel, 'Vietnam and the Collapse of the Foreign Policy Consensus', p. 51

<sup>312</sup> Nicholas Turner, 'Omega-A Documented Analysis', *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1972, p. 291

While Wellington rejected Washington's request; officials in Canberra agreed to host the Omega navigation station.

At a time when the US was viewed as crucial to maintaining the country's security, New Zealand's military participation in the war in Vietnam was as limited and delayed as much as was possible. An artillery battery was sent, in the hope that this would satisfy the Americans, while remaining an acceptable price to pay domestically. The lengthy response was in sharp contrast to New Zealand's responses to the Second World War and the Korean War, when the country was at the forefront of the willing participants offering combat troops to allies, often attempting to beat Australia in its readiness to fight aggressors.<sup>313</sup> One factor that may help explain New Zealand's unwillingness to participate in the ally's war was the influence of a new generation that strived for independent thinking on security matters. It may be the case that the unpopularity of the war helped to reinforce underlying anti-war sentiments, which a younger generation built upon.

By late 1970s most New Zealanders had been born after the Second World War and were more inclined to pursue independence in defence matters, rather than an alliance-based security approach. According to Ian McGibbon, the generational divide, which occurred during this time contributed to the end of New Zealand's traditional approach to defence, as was symbolically evident in 1984 when 63-year-old 2NZEF veteran Muldoon was succeeded by 40-year-old baby boomer David Lange.<sup>314</sup> Therefore, in order to understand New Zealand's changing approach to ANZUS, it is necessary to note the growth of a new social

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<sup>313</sup> Roberto Rabel, "'We cannot afford to be left too far behind Australia': New Zealand's entry into the Vietnam War in May 1965', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, Vol. 32, March 1999, available online at <http://www.awm.gov.au/journal/j32/rabel.htm>

<sup>314</sup> Ian McGibbon, 'New Zealand Defence Policy from Vietnam to the Gulf', in Bruce Brown (ed.), *New Zealand in World Affairs III, 1972-1990* (Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1999), p. 114

class, which exemplified self-assurance and knowledge that would guide the country down a path of greater independence in fulfilling its ideas and aspirations.<sup>315</sup>

During this era of increasing independence on matters of foreign affairs, New Zealand became a leader in the non-proliferation movement; being among the first countries that in 1969 signed and ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In 1972 one of the world's first green parties - the Values Party – was established in New Zealand, which encouraged a more independent outlook in international relations and lobbied for the abolition of the armed forces. The growing pacifist and anti-nuclear sentiments were driven by an emerging New Zealand identity that incorporated a Pacific component. Breaking from the shackles of its British history, the country increasingly realised that its identity and interests were firmly linked with its immediate region.

By the 1970s New Zealand became increasingly more aware of its Pacific connections, and that its security is intrinsically linked with the region. The 1978 Defence Review pointed to the need to incorporate that fact that “New Zealand is a Pacific country” into the formulation of defence policy.<sup>316</sup> For New Zealand, the identification with the Pacific strengthened its self-perception as a paradise that must be protected from external polluters and that traditional threats including Communist China, Soviet Russia, and Communism in Southeast Asia no longer appeared as immediate threats to security.<sup>317</sup> By the 1980s traditional concerns about conventional aggression had been overtaken by concerns about global nuclear war. The 1986 Defence Review stressed that nuclear war was “the most dangerous threat to New Zealand’s security.”

By the 1980s, New Zealanders also identified more with Australians rather than the British or Americans. It is interesting to note the divergence between Australia and New Zealand and their respective sense of identification. In 1984 McNair Surveys NZ Ltd carried

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<sup>315</sup> Jock Phillips, ‘New Zealand and the ANZUS Alliance: Changing National Self-Perceptions, 1945-88’, in Richard W. Baker (ed.), *Australia, New Zealand and the United States: Internal Change and Alliance Relations in the ANZUS States* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 190

<sup>316</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *Defence Review, 1978* (Wellington Government Printer 1978), p. 10

out a public opinion survey for the Australia-New Zealand Foundation, interviewing 1000 New Zealanders and 1200 Australians. One question asked respondents to identify with which country their compatriots considered to have most in common with, with the possible options including the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Europe. The majority of Australians, nearly 2/3 indicated they had most in common with the US, followed by half of respondents pointing to Great Britain. Only 37% of Australians pointed to NZ as the country considered to have most in common with. In contrast, an opposite tendency was found in New Zealand responses, with 79 % of New Zealanders indicating that they had most in common with Australians, followed by 37% pointing to Great Britain. Only 14% of respondents identified the United States as the country they had most in common with.<sup>318</sup> Interestingly, during this time exactly this percentage of New Zealanders was also of the view that the next greatest threat to their country, after the Soviet Union, was the US.<sup>319</sup>

The adoption of New Zealand's unambiguous anti-nuclear stance in 1985, which ended its security arrangements with the US, was a sign of an independent attitude on security matters and maturity for the country. This decision was consistent with the country's role as a moral leader in world affairs. New Zealand became the first Western country that rejected nuclear deterrence and wilfully submitted to remaining outside of a nuclear alliance in its quest for security.<sup>320</sup> Unlike some American allies, such as Japan and Denmark, which at times were willing to collude with the US and overlook its transgression of laws forbidding the entry of nuclear weapons to their territories; New Zealand enacted legislation which gave it full powers to control if ships entering its territory could possibly be carrying nuclear

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<sup>317</sup> Phillips, 'New Zealand and the ANZUS Alliance: Changing National Self-Perceptions, 1945-88', p. 197

<sup>318</sup> 1984 McNair Surveys NZ Ltd, reproduced in Corner, *Defence and Security: What New Zealanders Want*, Report of the Defence Committee of Enquiry, p. 41

<sup>319</sup> David Campbell, *The Domestic Sources of New Zealand Security Policy in Comparative Perspective*, Working Paper No.16 (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1987), p. 9

<sup>320</sup> Kennedy Graham, *National Security Concepts of States. New Zealand* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1989), p. 44

weapons.<sup>321</sup> This firm stance was directly in conflict with the United States' and Great Britain's policies of neither confirming nor denying whether their ships and aircraft contained nuclear weapons.<sup>322</sup>

While the National Party has placed greater emphasis on strengthening New Zealand's relationship with Australia and the United States, successive National governments have not challenged the 1987 legislation, which banned nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered vessels entry to New Zealand waters. While in power in 1991, the National Party government announced that it would commission a study on the safety of nuclear-powered vessels. As a result, an independent Special Committee on Nuclear Propulsion published a report in 1992 entitled *The Safety of Nuclear Powered Ships*. While the committee found that it would be safe enough for these nuclear-powered ships to enter New Zealand, public opinion remained firmly opposed to such an option, and the government was forced to abandon an initiative to repeal Section 11 of the nuclear-free legislation.<sup>323</sup>

The restrictive component of strategic culture helps to explain New Zealand's firm and persistent anti-nuclear policy stance, particularly given that any challenge to it is destined to fail and raise outspoken criticism. Two decades following the bold anti-nuclear move, in accordance with the country's symbolic nuclear deterrence posture and nuclear-free identity, nuclear-powered ships continue to be banned from entering New Zealand territory.<sup>324</sup> Since the 1980s the country has not debated the possibility of altering the ban, with this option remaining firmly out of the realm of possibility. For this reason, when the former leader of New Zealand's National Party in 2004, Don Brash, while in opposition, was reported to have said that if he was in power, this policy would be "gone by lunchtime"; he was greeted with

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<sup>321</sup> William T. Tow, and Russell Parkin, 'Small State Security Postures: Material Compensation and Normative Leadership in Denmark and New Zealand', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 2, August 2007, p. 318

<sup>322</sup> Tow and Parkin, 'Small State Security Postures: Material Compensation and Normative Leadership in Denmark and New Zealand', p. 318

<sup>323</sup> Andreas Reitzig, 'In defiance of nuclear deterrence: anti-nuclear New Zealand after two decades', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, April-June 2006, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 134

<sup>324</sup> Reitzig, 'In defiance of nuclear deterrence: anti-nuclear New Zealand after two decades' p. 132



wide public condemnation for this comment. National's recent Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Discussion Paper *Focusing on Our Core Strengths and Capabilities* does not mention the possibility of renouncing the nuclear-free status or moving closer to an alignment with the US. The anti-nuclear posture has become so embedded in the New Zealand psyche and identity that there is broad bipartisan agreement that the ideas underpinning this decision lie at the core of New Zealand's state identity. As Prime Minister Helen Clark stresses; "Our nuclear free policy and the values which inspired it have become central to our national identity and how we project ourselves to the world."<sup>325</sup>

### **New Zealand's Defence Policy:**

#### **Focus on Comprehensive Security and Multilateral Peace-keeping Missions**

While central to Australia's security is the pursuit of traditional military capabilities, New Zealand successive defence policies have emphasised the role of peace-keeping and non-military operations as lying at the heart of the country's defence strategy. In this respect, New Zealand has more definitely adapted to the contemporary environment and the modern security challenges that are most likely to occur, such as internal instability in regional states.

A divergence in perspectives among the two Antipodes is particularly noticeable in New Zealand defence assessments and policies in the post-Cold War era, although traces of departure may also be found in earlier documents. A change in focus in the country's defence reviews occurred as early as 1978 and 1983, when, according to McGibbon, "New Zealand returned to its 19<sup>th</sup>-century stance, before strategic influences drew its focus out of the region."<sup>326</sup> During the Cold War, New Zealand's 1983 *Defence Review* remained pessimistic in its outlook, advising that it is doubtful "whether many countries today would be prepared to

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<sup>325</sup> Helen Clark, *Prime Minister's Statement to Parliament for 2007*, 13 February 2007, available online at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/?q=node/28357>

<sup>326</sup> McGibbon, 'New Zealand Defence Policy from Vietnam to the Gulf', p. 116

gamble that they would not be involved in war within ten years.”<sup>327</sup> In this respect, the country shared many of Australia’s security concerns. However, within four years New Zealand’s perceptions of its environment changed, and the subsequent *Defence of New Zealand: Review of Defence Policy*, issued in 1987 stated that “The contingency of invasion is so remote that it need not form the basis of our defence strategy.”<sup>328</sup>

While under National Governments the 1991 and 1997 defence policies reflected a more realist assessment of the regional environment; they in essence shared the Labour Party’s main defence objectives and what New Zealand’s defence approach should focus on. The 1991 defence policy paper confirmed that “There are no direct threats to our [New Zealand’s] security. Within the South Pacific, security problems will continue to be internal rather than externally inspired.”<sup>329</sup> In effect, the defence paper stressed – what would be repeated in subsequent defence policies - that “Defence planning is therefore less concerned with New Zealand’s security needs, than with New Zealand’s security interests.”<sup>330</sup> The policy also highlighted that “The aim of a professional defence force is not principally to fight wars, but to make an effective contribution to achieving New Zealand’s external objectives.”<sup>331</sup>

Still, the character of the international system was described as uncertain and that New Zealand “cannot assume that states, within the Asia/Pacific region or outside it, will not at some time in the future use their military capabilities to pursue goals which are inimical to our security interests.”<sup>332</sup> Consequently, in 1997 the Government concluded that “The NZDF [New Zealand Defence Force] needs a range of capabilities suitable for a broad spectrum of military operations *including conventional war*, peace support operations, and the support of

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<sup>327</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *Defence Review, 1983* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1983), p. 7

<sup>328</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *Defence of New Zealand: Review of Defence Policy 1987* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1987), p. 11

<sup>329</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *The Defence of New Zealand 1991: A Policy Paper* (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 1991), p. 7

<sup>330</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *The Defence of New Zealand 1991: A Policy Paper*, p. 7

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17

friends and peaceful uses of military capabilities.”<sup>333</sup> However, despite the rhetoric of pursuing greater military capabilities, under National the result was to the contrary; between 1991 and 2002 the level of New Zealand’s GDP assigned to defence nearly halved and it was the National government that contributed to the majority of reductions in defence expenditure.<sup>334</sup> A resurrection of the previous security alliance with the United States also remained out of the realm of possibility.

Under the Labour leadership of Helen Clark since 1999, New Zealand’s security perspective reflects a shift from Cold War concerns and a focus on inter-state warfare capabilities, to that of maintaining a capable and readily deployable peace-keeping defence force. The country’s defence arrangements are driven by the conviction that it is conflicts within states that are most likely to occur in the current environment and that “the danger of spillover and escalation, as well as humanitarian concerns, may result in the involvement of others.”<sup>335</sup> According to former Secretary of Defence Gerald Hensley, “We have moved away from the concept of military threats, or preparing for future war, which so marked New Zealand’s experience in the first half of this century.”<sup>336</sup> Due to the low sense of external threat that New Zealand enjoys, the country’s defence policy is more preoccupied with the defence of New Zealand interests rather than defending the territory against an external aggression.<sup>337</sup> Therefore, rather than focusing on the defence of the homeland, the country has based its objectives on contributing to stability in the Asia-Pacific and maintaining international order.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *The Shape of New Zealand’s Defence: A White Paper* (Wellington: Ministry of Defence, 1997), p. 33, emphasis added

<sup>334</sup> Joel Hayward, ‘Current and Future Challenges for New Zealand Commanders’, in Glyn Harper and Joel Hayward (eds.), *Born to Lead? Portraits of New Zealand Commanders* (Auckland: Exisle, 2003), p. 224

<sup>335</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *The Shape of New Zealand’s Defence: A White Paper*, p.12

<sup>336</sup> Hensley, ‘The effect of war on New Zealand’, p. 82

<sup>337</sup> Terence O’Brien, ‘Facing the World the New Zealand Way’, *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1, January/February 2005, p 26

<sup>338</sup> Hensley, ‘The effect of war on New Zealand’, p. 74

New Zealand's defence and foreign policies are underpinned by a liberal internationalist perspective on international relations, and in pursuing its vision of collective security, the country contributes the highest quantity of financial and personnel support for UN peacekeeping operations, relative to its size, in the world. The four main aspects that (according to the current government) underpin the international legal order are the UN Charter and the UN system, internationally agreed legal norms and rules, effective international dispute settlement and judicial bodies and regional integration and cooperation.<sup>339</sup> The New Zealand commitment and dedication in pursuing an international rules-based order, in areas such as trade, human rights, or arms control, has been noticeable irrespective of the government in power. Examining New Zealand's defence policy between 1990-2005, Robert Ayson notes that under a National government the country continued to advance such issues as international nuclear disarmament and the disarmament of other non-conventional weapons, indicating it would not follow a fully realist approach that privileged power over norms.<sup>340</sup>

Promotion of collective defence is at the heart of ensuring New Zealand's security, and the United Nations remains the central international organisation in this process. New Zealand's core defence objectives include the pursuit of "comprehensive security through a range of initiatives including diplomacy, the pursuit of arms control and disarmaments, addressing global environmental concerns, providing development assistance and building trade and cultural links."<sup>341</sup> New Zealand's support for the United Nations and the coalition mission in the first Gulf War was based on the conviction that the security of small states is essentially based on the eagerness of the international community to take action when less powerful states fall victim to attack, rather than on formal alliance treaties or the charters of

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<sup>339</sup> Hon Phil Goff, 'International Institutions and Governance: A New Zealand Perspective', 4 July 2003

<sup>340</sup> Robert Ayson, 'New Zealand Defence and Security Policy, 1990-2005', in Roderic Alley (ed.), *New Zealand in World Affairs IV* (Wellington: Victoria University Press in association with The New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 2007), p. 135

<sup>341</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *The Government's Defence Policy Framework*, June 2000, p. 1

international organisations.<sup>342</sup> New Zealand's geographical isolation is seen as an advantage for maintaining the country's security. In contrast to Australia, New Zealand is therefore content with comparatively low level of spending towards defence.

By international standards New Zealand's defence expenditure is low both in absolute terms, as well as in proportion to the national economy.<sup>343</sup> While in Australia public sentiments lean to favour increases in defence spending; the situation in New Zealand reflects the opposite tendency, with the population more inclined towards reducing defence force spending, or keeping the status quo. Hayward notices that from 1991 to 2002 the percentage of New Zealand's GDP that has been committed to defence has almost halved, with the National Government contributing to the largest reduction in spending.<sup>344</sup> The lack of a sense of threat and subsequent public interest in defence matters has contributed to minor political interests and in consequence, decline in expenditure.<sup>345</sup> This ongoing trend in reducing New Zealand's military capabilities and defence expenditure has been widely criticised across the Tasman. There is a strong feeling in Australia that New Zealand is not pulling its weight in defence matters. Australian defence analyst Paul Dibb has called New Zealand a strategic liability for Australia and a re-occurring argument among Australian officialdom and commentators is that New Zealand is taking advantage of getting a free ride.<sup>346</sup> However, these comments fail to place New Zealand's defence attitudes in a historical context, only comparing its actions with those of Australia. It is important to keep in mind that historically, with the exception of the world wars, New Zealand has opted not to spend substantial percentages of its budget on the armed forces.<sup>347</sup> Increasingly, New Zealand

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<sup>342</sup> Thakur, 'New Zealand: the Security and Tyranny of Isolation', p. 311

<sup>343</sup> Paul Goldstone, *Defence Expenditure: Trends and International Comparisons* (Wellington: Parliamentary Library, 2005), p. 1

<sup>344</sup> Hayward, 'Current and Future Challenges for New Zealand Commanders', p. 224

<sup>345</sup> Alach, *Facing New Challenges: Adapting The NZDF And ADF To The Post-Cold War Security Environment*, p. 397

<sup>346</sup> Stuart McMillan, 'ANZAC defence' finding a way ahead', *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 30, No. 5, July-August 2005, p. 2

<sup>347</sup> James Rolfe, *The Armed Forces of New Zealand* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 19

strives to distance itself from the strategic concerns and security assessments that dominate Australia's approach to defence.

**“We’re not a single strategic entity”<sup>348</sup>:**

### **New Zealand's Identity and Defence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

While in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the population in Australia and New Zealand was dominated by ‘Anglo-Celtic’ immigrant communities, setting the basis for similarity; this is no longer the case in the present day.<sup>349</sup> New Zealand's identity has undergone significant changes in the past century, altering defence interests and security perspectives. The country's increasing multiculturalism and Polynesian links significantly influence New Zealand's social identity as a state, and the kind of defence arrangements that it sees as suitable. Looking at the period from 1985-2005, Gustafson highlights that New Zealand has experienced a dramatic social change.<sup>350</sup> Mass immigration from the Pacific and Asia, coupled with an increase in the Maori population have played a considerable role in not only shifting New Zealand's national identity composition, but also affecting the country's attitudes, security arrangements and relations with the Asia-Pacific region.

A noticeable divergence between the populations of the two Antipodes occurred from the 1960s onwards, with large migration sources of Pacific Islanders becoming the largest non-British source of migrants to New Zealand.<sup>351</sup> While in the 1980s and 1990s the country accepted substantial numbers of Asian and South African migrants, bridging a balance between the composition of New Zealand's and Australia's immigrants; this shift was

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<sup>348</sup> Statement made by Helen Clark regarding New Zealand and Australian defence approaches, cited in Ruth Laugesen, ‘Clark splits from Australians on military matters’, *Sunday Star Times*, 27 February 2000, Edition A, p. 2

<sup>349</sup> Denis McLean, *The Prickly Pair: Making Nationalism in Australia and New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003), p. 23

<sup>350</sup> Gustafson, ‘New Zealand since the War’, p. 9

<sup>351</sup> Ian Pool, ‘New Zealand Population: Then, Now, Hereafter’, *Joint Special Issue, Journal of Population Research and New Zealand Population Review*, September 2002, p. 30

insufficient to counter-balance the effects of different migrant compositions in the preceding three decades.<sup>352</sup>

New Zealand's Pacific identity is increasingly celebrated and emphasised, influencing the country's foreign policies. The country is coming to grips with its uniquely transforming identity from that of a white British colonial outpost, to an increasingly multicultural nation. The influx of Pacific migrants coupled with the population increase of Maori and Pacific Islanders in New Zealand has resulted in around 20 per cent of New Zealanders having a Polynesian background.<sup>353</sup> Phil Goff argues that "We see ourselves as a Pacific nation with key responsibilities in the South Pacific with an increasingly important trading and political relationship with Asia."<sup>354</sup> To what extent New Zealand's alleged Pacific identity and regional friendliness has impacted on its security policies are a debated issue. Writing in the 1980s Malcolm McKinnon was skeptical of the suggested identity transformation, suggesting that rather than viewing New Zealand's regional policies that include concerns over nuclear waste, fishing and Law of the Sea issues as exemplifying a "Pacific" dimension; they should be seen as continuing New Zealand's idea of independence in foreign policy and reflecting interest-driven policies.<sup>355</sup> Compared with Australia, New Zealand has tended to adopt a more indirect, low-key approach when dealing with its neighbours, as was the situation in the case of the Bougainville conflict. New Zealand has also tended to place more emphasis on regional concerns of environmental problems than has Australia, and rather than framing the Pacific as a source of threat and insecurity, it has preferred to focus on the humanitarian and developmental challenges that remain to be solved. Differences in perspective between Australia and New Zealand may partly evolve from a growing distinctiveness in national identities between the two countries, coupled with changing demographics and the fact that by

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<sup>352</sup> Pool, 'New Zealand Population: Then, Now, Hereafter', p. 30

<sup>353</sup> Ibid, p. 30

<sup>354</sup> Hon Phil Goff, 'Asia-Pacific Security Challenges', Speech delivered to the 37<sup>th</sup> University of Otago Foreign Policy School, Dunedin, 28 June, 2002

<sup>355</sup> McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 271



2050 almost a third of New Zealand's inhabitants will have Polynesian origins.<sup>356</sup>

However, this difference should not be overstated. For instance, following the 2006 political coup in Fiji, Australia and New Zealand both responded with a similar tone, which reflected a rigid, non-negotiable stance of a democratic Western country. To what extent New Zealand's alleged Pacificness and rhetoric on regional sensitivity is reflected in policy remains debated. Gerald McGhie points out that while rhetoric on New Zealand's Pacificness and engagement with the region is often repeated, the country has yet to fully address the complex nature of the problems facing Pacific states, which requires a change in attitudes as to how issues are approached.<sup>357</sup>

Another factor that is changing the ethnic composition of New Zealand and its security interests is a substantial increase in Asian immigrants, particularly in the past two decades. In Auckland, the biggest city in New Zealand, in 1986 Asians comprised only 2% of population; by 2001 they comprised 14% - more than those of Maori descent and by 2016, it is estimated that people with an ethnic Asian background will comprise a quarter of the city.<sup>358</sup> The second half of the twentieth century revealed that perceptions of Asia, as seen in official speeches have undergone a substantial shift; moving from perceiving Asia with suspicion and a sense of threat from the 1940s-1960s decades, to a growing sense of strategic and economic interdependence from the 1970s onwards.<sup>359</sup> New Zealand's relations with Asia may be therefore divided into three phases; suspicion, engagement and finally interdependence.<sup>360</sup> While Australia is more wary of any regional shifts in military power in the Asia-Pacific, New Zealand adopts a more internationalist attitude, officially recognising

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<sup>356</sup> Hon Phil Goff, 'The Trans-Tasman Relationship: A New Zealand Perspective', *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 2001, p. 8

<sup>357</sup> Interview with chairman of Transparency International, New Zealand and former diplomat, Gerald McGhie, 18 March 2008

<sup>358</sup> New Zealand Herald, 'Heading for the sun: Races blending under Gisborne's clear blue skies' 13 January 2006

<sup>359</sup> Seth Hartdegen, 'Perceiving Asia 1945-1998: Shift and Changes as Seen in Official Speeches', in Yongjin Zhang (ed.), *New Zealand and Asia: Perceptions, Identity and Engagement* (Auckland: Asia 2000 Foundation & Auckland University, 1999), p. 5

<sup>360</sup> David B. MacDonald, 'Regionalism: New Zealand, Asia, the Pacific, and Australia', in Robert Patman and Chris Rudd (eds.), *Sovereignty under Siege? Globalization and New Zealand* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 172

that “These increases in capabilities do not constitute an arms race – there is little sign in the region of the acute rivalries that an arms race implies.”<sup>361</sup>

Instead, New Zealand views itself as uniquely positioned in offering a link between the West and East. As Defence Minister Goff notices, “As a nation which is genuinely multicultural, we have the potential to bridge gaps between the cultures of Europe, the Pacific and Asia.”<sup>362</sup> What underpins this conviction is the country’s ability to pursue biculturalism in the domestic context; an area that Australia has been incapable of matching. New Zealand has aimed at promoting the principle of reconciliation between indigenous people and other citizens as the bedrock of its society.<sup>363</sup>

It appears that under the Clark Government, New Zealand’s identity is not only linked to the Pacific region; but it is increasingly emphasised as having its own independent perspective on world affairs, separate from the one adopted by Australia. Prime Minister Helen Clark stresses the importance of national identity for foreign policy, arguing that “there is an evolving New Zealand way of doing things and a stronger New Zealand identity is emerging. We pride ourselves on being a nation with a sense of fair play, on being clean and green, and on being nuclear free.”<sup>364</sup> While during the era of forward defence, New Zealand was content with viewing itself as a “single strategic entity” with Australia, and continued to use this description in the 1990s; this rhetoric has been absent and rejected by the Clark government. This phrase was used during the period of “forward defence” in 1976.<sup>365</sup> It also featured in the Defence Policy of 1983 and 1991 Defence Review. Under a National government in 1998, New Zealand was still seen, for practical purposes, as constituting a

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<sup>361</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *The Shape of New Zealand’s Defence: A White Paper*, p.16

<sup>362</sup> Hon Phil Goff, ‘Address to the Australian Defence College – Centre of Defence and Strategic Studies’, 6 August 2002

<sup>363</sup> O’Brien, , ‘Facing the World the New Zealand Way’, p. 25

<sup>364</sup> Clark, *Prime Minister’s Statement to Parliament for 2007*

<sup>365</sup> Peter Jennings, ‘Achieving Closer Defence Relations with New Zealand’, in Robert A. Hall (ed.), *Australia-New Zealand: Closer Defence Relationships*, Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1993, p. 50

single strategic entity with Australia.<sup>366</sup> However, the successive centre-left administration dropped this logic around which defence planning was made. In the words of Prime Minister Helen Clark, “Australia is a middle-sized power. We are a small country. ‘Close but not identical’ would sum it up.”<sup>367</sup> Clark has made it clear to her Australian counter-part that “We’re not a single strategic entity. It would be quite wrong for New Zealand to suggest that we have exactly the same interests, we don’t.”<sup>368</sup> In contrast to Australia, New Zealand views its geographical isolation and size as an asset, and is more relaxed about its strategic environment, as was evident in Clark’s comment about the country living in “an exceptionally benign strategic environment.”<sup>369</sup> While the comment predated the era of concern over terrorism and subsequent cases of instability in the Pacific; it highlights the general perspective that influences defence planning in New Zealand. As Rolfe notes, the country holds a world view that is quite optimistic.<sup>370</sup> The divergence in outlooks is also noticed by Minister of Defence Phil Goff who believes that New Zealand views security “in a comprehensive way as a partnership between foreign policy and our defence capabilities. Australia has tended to view its security as a calculation of threat.”<sup>371</sup>

New Zealand is less concerned than Australia about the likelihood of a possible threat from Indonesia and does not see this Asian giant as an inherent threat to any regional state. Following a visit to Australia in March 2000, Helen Clark asserted that “the Indonesians have had centuries to invade and have never done so.”<sup>372</sup> That same year, in a review of New Zealand defence capabilities, no reference was made to the possibility of armed conflict.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> New Zealand Executive Government, ‘Australia-New Zealand Defence Ministers’ Talks: Joint Communique’, 27 March 1998, available online at <http://www.executive.govt.nz/9699/minister/bradford/anz/index.htm>

<sup>367</sup> John Armstrong, ‘PM shuns ‘single’ defence entity’, *The New Zealand Herald*, March 1, 2000

<sup>368</sup> Laugesen, ‘Clark splits from Australians on military matters’, p.2

<sup>369</sup> Helen Clark, Debate–Urgent Public Matter–Cancellation of F16 Contract, *Hansard*, 21 March 2000

<sup>370</sup> Rolfe, *The Armed Forces of New Zealand*, p. 24

<sup>371</sup> Hon Phil Goff, ‘The Trans-Tasman Relationship: A New Zealand Perspective’, *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 2001, p. 6

<sup>372</sup> As cited in McLean, *The Prickly Pair: Making Nationalism in Australia and New*, p. 281

<sup>373</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *New Zealand Defence Force Capability Reviews, Phase One – Land Forces and Sealift*, November 2000

The country's geographical isolation may be part of the reason for its greater content with its security situation. However, it appears that the strategic outlook is influenced by more than just geography. It emanates from New Zealand's perception of the constraints on international actors in world affairs, rejecting the Australian realist view that anarchy is the defining feature of the international system.

The country is also less preoccupied with maintaining a close security arrangement with the US, although the current relationship appears to have largely recovered from the breakdown of the ANZUS security pact. Robert Ayson notices, that the *New Zealand Defence Policy Framework*, which was issued in 2000, while directly referring to Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and some Pacific Islands states with regard to security co-operation; does not even once specifically mention the United States.<sup>374</sup> However, it appears that the two countries are working around the ANZUS rift. In 2007 President George W. Bush conceded that New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance is a non-negotiable topic in its relationship with New Zealand.<sup>375</sup> While the foreign policy relationship appears to be working well, New Zealand does not see a need to pursue a closer defence relationship with the US or consider a return to ANZUS as a possibility.

In a review of defence capabilities in 2001, the Clark government decided to disband the air combat force, in the belief that it was redundant for pursuing New Zealand's defence interests. This move was based on the assessment that it was unlikely for the air combat force to be used for low level security purposes in the region and that up to the present day, the Skyhawks have not been used for regional security challenges.<sup>376</sup> In addition, the government decided that only two Anzac frigates were to continue service. Savings from this manoeuvre were intended to stay within the New Zealand Defence Force and to go towards upgrading other defence capabilities. In contrast to Australia, New Zealand has therefore

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<sup>374</sup> Ayson, 'New Zealand Defence and Security Policy, 1990-2005', p. 141

<sup>375</sup> New Zealand Herald, 'Bush says US can live with nuclear ban', March 23, 2007

<sup>376</sup> New Zealand Government, Government's Defence Statement, *A Modern, Sustainable Defence Force Matched to New Zealand's Needs*, 8 May 2001, p. 10

remained content with scaling down its military posture, and re-focusing its resources towards peacekeeping missions. Increasingly emphasis is placed on narrowing the tasks of the defence force towards more likely land deployments, rather than warfare involving high-technology. This preference is by no means a departure from the country's previous approach to defence. As Rolfe notes, "New Zealand's armed forces have rarely been designed or intended to defend New Zealand – invasion scares in the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries notwithstanding."<sup>377</sup> New Zealand's defence strategy has always been based on being part of a collective entity in the form of either the "Empire", or "Commonwealth", or "free world", which would provide the bedrock for New Zealand's security.<sup>378</sup> This outlook manifests itself today in the country's support of the United Nations and its peacekeeping missions.<sup>379</sup>

New Zealand's strategic culture is based on the preference of avoiding the use of military force and deploying it only in necessary circumstances and in accordance with the principles of the United Nations. Officially New Zealand recognises that "Military force is not our method of choice. We shall always prefer to use peaceful means to respond to conflict in keeping with the principles of the UN Charter and fundamental New Zealand values."<sup>380</sup> However, acknowledging that the use of force may need to be contemplated, albeit rarely, it will be done with the highest reluctance with New Zealand governments insisting on a high threshold for any such choice.<sup>381</sup>

Security interests are therefore not simply predetermined by New Zealand's resources, size and geographical location; but rather emerge from politically redefined ideas about New Zealand's role as an international actor and its interests. There is no single national identity that influences New Zealand's international relations; rather it is a mix of British ties,

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<sup>377</sup> Rolfe, *The Armed Forces of New Zealand*, p. 18

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>380</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *New Zealand's Foreign and Security Policy Challenges*, May 2000, Summary of Conclusions, available online at <http://executive.govt.nz/minister/burton/defence/mfat/summary.htm>

<sup>381</sup> Ibid

evolving New Zealand interests and Polynesian influences that impact on the country's image and distinct interests. While much of the literature on New Zealand identity points to the 1980s as the decade when New Zealand experienced an identity crisis and a significant change to its security policies, it is wiser to adopt a longer historical timeframe in order to trace the evolution of New Zealand security thinking and the guiding factors that have influenced the formulation of defence policies. According to Derek Quigley, Former Chairman of the New Zealand Parliamentary Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, "New Zealand's evolving defence policy is more about our search for who we are and what we want to be as a nation, than anything else; and reflects our attempts to develop a more independent stance internationally."<sup>382</sup> Therefore, the anti-nuclear policy of the Lange government, its subsequent acceptance in the 1990s by the Bolger government as well as the present decisions on defence matters may be all interpreted as part of this developing process.<sup>383</sup> Future defence decisions will likely be based not only on New Zealand's military capabilities, but also on the country's distinct ideas, values and preferences of remaining nuclear-free, an emphasis on the non-military aspect of defence and the pursuit of collective security through multilateral means.

## Conclusion

New Zealand's shifting approach to defence reflects the country's evolution from a colonial outpost to that of an independent nation. In contrast to Australia, New Zealand's security thinking has undergone dramatic shifts throughout the twentieth century. The country's identity was for a long time linked to that of the "Mother Country", Great

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<sup>382</sup> The Hon Derek Quigley, 'New Zealand and Australia: Where Are We Going in Defence?', in Bruce Brown (ed.), *New Zealand and Australia – Where Are We Going? Papers presented at the Seminar, 2001*, The New Zealand Institute of International Affairs at Victoria University, Wellington on 4 July 2001 (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 2001), p. 52

<sup>383</sup> Quigley, 'New Zealand and Australia: Where Are We Going in Defence?', p. 52

Britain, with which it loyally pursued security initiatives. At the same time identification of not being Australian, although sharing the desire for close co-operation with the larger neighbour, influenced New Zealand's early preference for remaining an independent entity with separate strategic concerns. By the 1970s the country developed a distinct strategic culture; one that is based on anti-war and anti-nuclear sentiments and which continues to affect security arrangements to the present day. In recent times, in accordance with the growing Polynesian influences on the nation, New Zealand proudly projects itself as being a Pacific country and emphasises the non-traditional security concerns of Island states, such as those emanating from the environment and the need for informal diplomacy when dealing with Pacific countries.

Influenced by its size, as well as historical preferences, the country adopts a moral, internationalist approach to security, and in support of its interests and values, New Zealand does not rule out disagreement with British and American ventures. Its worldview bears the traces of liberal optimism, that was promoted by the first Labour Government, and which continues to promote the ideals of collective security and to dominate security thinking to the present day. New Zealand's reluctance to acquire larger military might or to reverse its firm anti-nuclear policy must therefore be understood within the system of values and preferences that have developed throughout the course of the country's history.

Until the ideational sphere of influences on New Zealand behaviour is recognised, it is doubtful that Australia will better understand the roots of its neighbour's take on defence, and vice versa. In both cases, neorealist expectations fall short of explaining both Australian and New Zealand defence approaches, or why they have been diverging; leaving the room for constructivist insight to shed light as to the driving factors influencing security thinking in both countries.

With the consolidation of distinct identities and strategic cultures in the past few decades, the way Australia and New Zealand approach their defences also has an impact on



how these two Antipodean states view regional security in the Pacific. The next chapter compare how these states approach security challenges facing the region, along with a case study, which examines the rationales provided by Australia and New Zealand for their participation in the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003.

## Chapter 4

### **Responding to Instability in the Pacific:**

#### **Australia, New Zealand and RAMSI**

While Australia and New Zealand have been diverging in their approaches towards defence, how this impacts on their respective perspectives on regional security in the Pacific is worthy of closer examination. The aim of this chapter is to compare how the two countries frame the issue of Pacific security and to what extent they converge regarding the issue of regional intervention. Specifically, the chapter will examine the rationales given by Australia and New Zealand in 2003 for their participation in the largest military and police deployment to the region since World War II: the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). I chose to focus on this case as it represents a relatively recent co-operative regional undertaking, which has been hailed by commentators as a model for possible future interventions. Aside from studying Australia's and New Zealand's political justifications for intervening, the study will also take into consideration their degree of congruence as to the nature of the operation. Rather than providing a detailed discussion of the mission itself or evaluating its success, the chapter seeks to explore the ideational and strategic influences underpinning Australian and New Zealand action in the Pacific, and what, if any, predictions can be made for their future responses to instability and conflict in the region.

## Regional Security Concerns: The View from Canberra and Wellington

To understand Australia's and New Zealand's views of the Pacific, we need to understand their broader views on security in the post-Cold War era. These in turn are influenced by domestic considerations. Roderic Alley points to the linkage between domestic politics and international relations, and how the interaction of these spheres may be utilised by actors to further a specific goal. He points out that in both Australia and New Zealand there is an ongoing blend of domestic and international concerns.<sup>384</sup> In his book of case studies he notes, for instance, that the impetus for New Zealand's World Court Project and nuclear disarmament at the international level was domestically driven, while his study on Australia and its refusal to limit greenhouse gases revealed the pursuit of domestic interests via international means.<sup>385</sup> Similarly, Australian and New Zealand domestic considerations help explain the countries' perspectives on security in the region.

In 2000, Mark Burton, New Zealand's Minister of Defence at the time noted that Australia paints a "decidedly gloomy" picture of the regional security environment, while New Zealand recognises that "we are dealing with an environment that is less predictable and more complex, but not necessarily more dangerous."<sup>386</sup> Both Australia and New Zealand argue that their interest is to keep the Pacific region free from potentially hostile outside influences, including the threat of terrorism.<sup>387</sup> When it comes to the wider Asia-Pacific region, among the enduring concerns of Australia is its "very strong interest in the avoidance

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<sup>384</sup> Roderic Alley, *The Domestic Politics of International Relations: Cases from Australia, New Zealand and Oceania* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 15

<sup>385</sup> Alley, *The Domestic Politics of International Relations: Cases from Australia, New Zealand and Oceania*, p. 46, p. 250

<sup>386</sup> Hon. Mark Burton, "Opening Address", *Defence Policy After East Timor*, Seminar at Victoria University, hosted by the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Wellington, 17 February 2000, cited in Robert Ayson, 'New Zealand and Asia-Pacific Security: New Rationales for Engagement?', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 2, August 2000, p. 395

<sup>387</sup> Speech delivered by Graham Fortune, Secretary of Defence, 'Regional Security in Oceania and East Asia: Continuities and Discontinuities', September 12, 2005; Speech by Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Speech at the 38<sup>th</sup> Munich Conference on Security Policy, 'Security Policy in the Asia-Pacific - New Challenges, Enduring Interests', 3 February 2002

of destabilizing strategic competition between the region's major powers.”<sup>388</sup>

Whereas Australia directly refers to great power rivalry as a possible regional threat, New Zealand is more reserved in adopting this perspective.

New Zealand does not view great power rivalry and the rise in power of major states in the Asia-Pacific as likely developments that may threaten the security of the South Pacific region. According to Robert Ayson, the fact that New Zealand was the first Western country to open an embassy in China and the only of the Western countries to lose an alliance relationship with the US, suggests that New Zealand holds a positive outlook on China's role in the region.<sup>389</sup> Looking at security in the 1990s, Don McKinnon, Foreign Minister at the time, while noting the extraordinary economic and military growth of East Asia and the fact that some saw dangerous shifts in the balance of power, argued that this is not the case in New Zealand. Instead, he stressed that “The New Zealand government sees these developments not as a threat, but as a major opportunity for New Zealand, and for the wider region.”<sup>390</sup> While this rhetoric may have been particularly dressed-up for Asian consumption, it remains the case that New Zealand has been less worried than Australia about Pacific states facing threats from external actors. Physical isolation from continental Asia may be viewed as one factor that influences this perspective. Another may be the fact that, as a study of policy statements and speeches indicates; New Zealand tends to approach the “Asia-Pacific region” and “South Pacific” separately.<sup>391</sup> Therefore, security concerns facing Pacific Islands may be addressed without seeing them as connected to the strategic dynamics of the wider region.

While both Australia and New Zealand recognise that the pursuit of Pacific Island security requires a broad, comprehensive approach, Canberra has arguably had a less successful record in dealing with Pacific challenges. John Henderson suggests that New

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<sup>388</sup> Downer, ‘Security Policy in the Asia-Pacific - New Challenges, Enduring Interests’

<sup>389</sup> Robert Ayson, ‘Australasian security’, Robert Ayson and Desmond Ball (ed.), *Strategy and Security in the Asia-Pacific* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006), p. 254

<sup>390</sup> Don McKinnon, ‘Security in the 1990s: New Zealand's Approach’ in Robert G. Patman (ed.), *Security in a post-Cold War world* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 14

<sup>391</sup> Robert Ayson, ‘New Zealand and Asia-Pacific Security: New Rationales for Engagement?’, p. 397

Zealand maintains an arguably better sense of the regional security challenges and “new” security concerns than Australia.<sup>392</sup> New Zealand has frequently taken the initiative in voicing a united Pacific opinion abroad on security concerns. The country has prided itself on pursuing a comprehensive security agenda, for example placing emphasis on environmental issues and effectively voicing the concerns of low lying atoll islands about climate change and rising sea level. These concerns were reflected in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the formal outcome of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. This topic is particularly significant, because low-lying atoll states such as Tuvalu and Kiribati would be drowned if sea level rose by even a small amount. Graham Fortune, Former New Zealand Secretary of Defence, has said “For most countries in the region [...] the new security paradigm is vulnerability. [...] This response does not necessarily require large armed forces, nor sophisticated high tech weapons systems or platforms.”<sup>393</sup> To a large extent, this perspective draws from New Zealand’s own take on national security and the essentially non-military threats that it faces as an isolated and relatively small country.

Australia, while discursively committed to a wide conception of threats to the region, has, especially under Prime Minister John Howard’s leadership, tended in practice to focus on its own interests over those of the wider region. The country has on numerous occasions gone against the wishes of Pacific Island nations. In 1990, for instance, Australia went against the views of all Pacific Island states, including New Zealand when it supported the United States’ use of Johnston Island for the dumping of chemical weapons.<sup>394</sup> It appears therefore that alliance commitments may also interfere in foreign policy making when it comes to regional security. Australia has on several occasions prioritised national interest over Pacific Island

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<sup>392</sup> John Henderson, ‘Oceania and the New Security Agenda’, Derek McDougall and Peter Shearman (eds.), *Australian Security After 9/11: New and Old Agendas* (Burlington: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2006), p. 187

<sup>393</sup> Graham Fortune, ‘Regional Security in Oceania and East Asia: Continuities and Discontinuities’, *Perspective of Asia-Pacific Security for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, September 12, 2005, p. 2

<sup>394</sup> John Henderson, ‘New Zealand’s Relations with the Pacific Islands in the Post Cold War World: Turning the Tyranny of Distance to Advantage’, in Ralph Pettman (ed.), *Rethinking Global Affairs: New World Order/New International Relations/New Zealand* (Wellington: Department of Politics, Victoria University of Wellington, 1996), p. 241

concerns, often being seen as a bully at the Pacific Island Forum, due to its disregard for the Forum's consensus decision-making style of diplomacy and the interests of fellow member states. This was clear in the country's refusal of becoming a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and in lowering its carbon emissions and greenhouse gases; a policy that has lasted from 1997 until the election of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister in 2007. During the 38<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum in 1997, which aimed to address the problem of climate change, Howard would not settle for a compromise, arguing that he could not agree to binding targets for greenhouse gas reduction because millions of Australian jobs would be lost.<sup>395</sup> After intense discussions between Forum members, the rest of the countries gave in to Australia's stance. Howard expressed his belief that "There were a range of views, but in the end there was consensus."<sup>396</sup> However, others disagreed that the decision taken reflected common interest, with Tuvalu Prime Minister Bikenibeu Paeniu commenting that "Australia dominates us so much in this region. For once we would have liked to have got some respect."<sup>397</sup> While Australia has been often criticised for placing national interests first; New Zealand has generally sustained the image of a Pacific partner that tends to respect the concerns of its smaller neighbours and their most pressing issues.

One reason for this more positive regional image may be the fact that New Zealand has greater cultural familiarity with the Pacific Islands. Foreign Minister Winston Peters outlines that the key factors that define New Zealand's place in the South Pacific region are geography, cultural experience, constitutional and historical linkages.<sup>398</sup> The country has constitutional links with the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau (with the first two wishing to retain a free association with New Zealand), giving New Zealand formal obligations in

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<sup>395</sup> Bernadette Hussein, 'The big retreat', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, November 1997, p. 11

<sup>396</sup> Hussein, 'The big retreat', p. 11

<sup>397</sup> Ibid

<sup>398</sup> Winston Peters, 'Perspectives on the Pacific', *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4, July/August 2006, p. 9

the region.<sup>399</sup> However, this is only part of New Zealand's commitments, as the country's substantial Polynesian influences – around 20 per cent of the population is of either Maori or Pacific Island descent – give New Zealand a distinct Pacific identity. According to Defence Minister Phil Goff, as a "Pacific nation" New Zealand's "strong Pacific population, deep linkages and long history with the region, places us in a good position to engage with Pacific governments."<sup>400</sup> The country's historical linkages with the region and cultural familiarity give it an advantage in not only dealing with Pacific states, and demonstrating a greater sensitivity to Pacific concerns; but also in assisting in the resolution of regional tensions. This is due to the fact that New Zealand diplomacy is not only perceived by Pacific Island states as being more sensitive and sympathetic to their needs, but also as less biased.

A clear example of this was New Zealand's involvement in negotiating a peace agreement between New Guinea and its breakaway province of Bougainville, which greatly contributed to the resolution of the conflict. Pacific Islanders appear to be more accepting of New Zealand's role, as was reflected in Papua New Guinea's invitation to New Zealand in assisting the negotiation of a ceasefire in early 1990s with Bougainville rebels, which saw the shipment of the frigate HMNZS Canterbury and later HMNZS Endeavour assist in this cause.<sup>401</sup> Subsequently, New Zealand hosted peace talks and provided leadership for the multinational Truce Monitoring Group.<sup>402</sup> The country had an advantage over Australia for two main reasons. In contrast to Australia, New Zealand did not carry with it the legacy of opposition to Bougainville's independence, military assistance to the PNG Defence Force and support for PNG integrity.<sup>403</sup> Moreover, realising how Melanesian politics work, New

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<sup>399</sup> John Henderson, 'New Zealand's Relations with the Pacific Islands in the Post Cold War World: Turning the Tyranny of Distance to Advantage', p. 241

<sup>400</sup> Phil Goff, Speech to the Young Pacific Leaders Conference, 'New Zealand in the Pacific', Auckland, 8 March 2007

<sup>401</sup> Stephen Hoadley, 'New Zealand's Pacific Island Security Policies', in Eric Shibuya and Jim Rolfe (eds.), *Security in Oceania in the 21st Century* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2003), p. 126

<sup>402</sup> Hoadley, 'New Zealand's Pacific Island Security Policies', p. 126

<sup>403</sup> Stewart Firth, 'Conceptualizing Security in Oceania: New and Enduring Issues', in Eric Shibuya and Jim Rolfe (eds.), *Security in Oceania in the 21st Century* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2003), p. 44



Zealand was effective in taking practical steps towards the resolution of the conflict. In June 1997, instead of inviting just a small number of key leaders of Bougainville, New Zealand invited around 280 Bougainvilleans to participate in the talks at Burnham military base near Christchurch and adopted a format that allowed for large flexibility and openness as to the agenda of negotiations, which ultimately resulted in a first binding agreement during the conflict.<sup>404</sup> Therefore, in the words of Phil Goff; “New Zealand’s advantage as a small, non-threatening state enabled the signing of the Lincoln and Burnham peace agreements and complemented Australia’s ability to contribute substantial resources to maintain the momentum of the peace process.”<sup>405</sup>

In response to increasing instances of political instability in the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia led the calls for a more robust and capable regional Pacific Islands Forum. To allow this Pacific organisation to effectively tackle regional tensions and conflicts, the PIF adopted the Biketawa Declaration in 2000. This was a major development for the organisation, as it committed Forum leaders to accept “the need in time of crisis or in response to members’ request for assistance, for action to be taken [...]”<sup>406</sup> This step was seen as a necessary measure by Prime Minister Helen Clark, who commented, that the Biketawa Declaration would contribute to the advancement of the Pacific Islands Forum in becoming a “significant regional organization [...] taking a step beyond talk, talk, talk.”<sup>407</sup> It marked a major shift, as over the last three decades the Forum had not dealt with issues relating to the internal politics of a member state, strictly obeying the norm of non-interference. However, it wasn’t until 2003 that the declaration would be directly referred to in times of crisis.

The next section turns its focus on political instability in the Pacific, with specific

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<sup>404</sup> Firth, ‘Conceptualizing Security in Oceania: New and Enduring Issues’, p. 45

<sup>405</sup> Phil Goff, ‘The Trans-Tasman Relationship: A New Zealand Perspective’, *The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 2001, p. 6

<sup>406</sup> Biketawa Declaration (Attachment 1), Forum Communiqué, Thirty-First Pacific Islands Forum, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati, 27-30 October 2000 p.11, available online at <http://www.undp.org.fj/gold/docs/FORUM200.PDF>

<sup>407</sup> Rowan Callick, *Australia No Longer Cast in Pacific Cop Role* (2000) Pacific Islands Report, available online at <http://archives.pireport.org/archive/2000/october/10%2D31%2D06.htm>

reference to the conflict in the Solomon Islands. It begins with background to the case provided, so that the subsequent analysis of Australia's and New Zealand's rationales for intervening in the country can be put into context.

### **Instability and Conflict in the Pacific: The Case of the Solomon Islands**

Since gaining independence, several Pacific Island countries have grappled with political instability, violent conflicts, coups and secessionist movements. Notable cases include the war in Bougainville from 1989-1998, the Kanak struggle for independence in New Caledonia, armed conflict in the Solomon Islands and coups in Fiji in 1987, 2000 and 2006. While the underlying causes of political instability in Pacific Island states are complex, it is often the case that the colonial legacy of nation-building, in an environment based on indigenous systems of governance has contributed to tensions and the failure of political stability and control. As David Hegarty and Anna Powles note, turbulence is often the result of the incompatibility between traditional norms and mechanism of indigenous political culture and the introduced institutions.<sup>408</sup> As a result, political control often remains weak in Pacific states, as the inhabitants prefer to obey local indigenous forms of authority over that of the state.

However, this does not necessarily have to lead to political volatility and conflict. Examining the case of Papua New Guinea, Ron May found that the factors that are often considered to be indicators of instability in the country, such as its ethnically fragmented society and large turnover of politicians at the national level, may in fact be the forces that are giving PNG a considerable amount of political stability when it comes to conventional

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<sup>408</sup> David Hegarty and Anna Powles, 'South Pacific Security', in Robert Ayson and Desmond Ball (eds.), *Strategy and Security in the Asia-Pacific* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006), p. 259

indicators, including regular elections, an independent judiciary and a free press.<sup>409</sup> However, he notes that in PNG a weak state capacity has negative consequences on the inhabitants' perception of the legitimacy of the state, which consequently undermines its democratic establishment.<sup>410</sup> In other cases in the Pacific this lack of political cohesion has contributed to volatility, lawlessness and unrest.

Instances of upheaval in the Pacific have often been categorised under the rubric of "ethnic conflict". However, this description is overtly simplistic and inaccurate. According to Teresia Teaiwa, "ethnic tensions only really manifest themselves when social inequalities already exist."<sup>411</sup> She points out that ethnic diversity alone is not the cause of bitterness and violence, but rather every major conflict in the Pacific over the past three decades has had at its core the problem of inequitable access to resources.<sup>412</sup> In the case of the Solomon Islands for years political instability, economic downfall, corruption, and deliberately manipulated ethnic tensions had run down the country, leaving law and order in the hand of armed militia. Some historical context is necessary to understand the recent conflict.

Since 1978, when the Solomon Islands achieved independence, the country had not developed a strong sense of nationhood. This reality was summed up in the words of former Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, who argued that his country had been "conceived, not born."<sup>413</sup> Following the end of World War II, the national capital was relocated to Honiara and migrants from other provinces of the country were drawn to Guadalcanal, the major island of the Solomon Islands.<sup>414</sup> The identities of the two main islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita are more of a product of colonial and post-colonial times

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<sup>409</sup> Ron J. May, 'Papua New Guinea: Disorderly Democracy or Dysfunctional State?', in Dennis Rumley, Vivian Louis Forbes and Christopher Griffin (eds.), *Australia's Arc of Instability: The Political and Cultural Dynamics of Regional Security* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), pp. 151-152

<sup>410</sup> May, 'Papua New Guinea: Disorderly Democracy or Dysfunctional State?', p. 152

<sup>411</sup> Teresia Teaiwa, 'Ethnicity and Identity', in John Henderson and Greg Watson (eds.), *Securing a peaceful Pacific* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005), p. 271

<sup>412</sup> Teaiwa, 'Ethnicity and Identity', p. 271

<sup>413</sup> Cited in Tom Allard and Craig Skehan, 'Danger island', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 2003, p. 27

<sup>414</sup> Sinclair Dinnen, 'Winners and Losers: Politics and Disorder in the Solomon Islands 2000-2002', *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2002, p. 286

rather than remaining long-established examples of ethnic polarisation.<sup>415</sup> Due to frequent migration and inter-racial marriage, ethnic divisions eventually became blurred. Therefore, the crisis that began to severely grapple the Solomon Islands in the late twentieth century was not the direct result of ethnic clashes.

In the late 1990s Guadalcanal was the scene of armed conflict between the island's indigenous inhabitants, the Isatabus and migrant Malaitans. In the belief that Malaitans had unfairly prospered at the expense of the local population and in resentment at the loss of their land, armed Isatabus militants known as the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (renamed later as the Isatabu Freedom Movement) forced the migrants out. In a bid to take back jobs and land, the Guadalcanal militia launched a violent campaign of harassment and intimidation. As many as twenty thousand people were displaced, many of whom were forced to return to their islands of origin. In retaliation the Malaitan Eagle Force was formed in 1999, and demanded compensation for the Malaitans that were killed as well as for the destruction to their properties. In late 1999 Prime Minister Ulufa'ulu announced a state of emergency and asked Australia and New Zealand for assistance, but both declined to intervene.

Leaders of the opposing militant groups deliberately manipulated their differences to pursue their causes and ignite hatred. Anti-Malaitan sentiments were reinforced by the use of stereotyping that involved an emphasis on negative cultural traits, including alleged aggression, assertiveness, as well as insecurity to local "kastom."<sup>416</sup> Corruption played a major role in igniting trouble. Weapons were supplied to the Malaitan Eagle Force by the police, which was mostly composed of Malaitans. Rather than being simply triggered by ethnic rivalry, it was the poor policies of successive governments', a flawed political system, socio-economic development problems and poor leadership that lay at the heart of the crisis.<sup>417</sup> During the conflict the country suffered increasing lawlessness, violent crime, and

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<sup>415</sup> Dinnen, 'Winners and Losers: Politics and Disorder in the Solomon Islands 2000-2002', p. 285

<sup>416</sup> Ibid, p. 286

<sup>417</sup> Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, *Beyond Ethnicity: The Political Economy of the Guadalcanal Crisis in Solomon Islands*, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Working Paper 01/1 (Canberra: ANU, 2000), p. 1

the political system, including judiciary were either corrupt or terrorised by the warring sides. There had been profound suspicion of central government by the other provinces, and continuous resistance at local levels, which goes back historically to the era of colonial administration.<sup>418</sup>

The first step towards resolving the conflict took place on June 28, 1999, with the signing of the Honiara Peace Accord. Sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Australian Government, the agreement's purpose was to raise the significance and need for address of the issues of concern of the people of Guadalcanal, especially those relating to land. Fiji's former Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretariat's special envoy, Major General Sitiveni Rabuka played a major role in brokering the Accord. Subsequent efforts, the Panatina Agreement of 12 August 1999 and Buala Peace Conference were less successful, as in the first case the Guadalcanal militants refused to sign the agreement, while in the second instance the militant groups did not take part in the meetings. By mid-2000 armed conflict had resumed.

The MEF took control of the capital Honiara on 5 June 2000 and seized the national armoury, forcing the Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'ulu to step down. As a consequence, two weeks later Parliament created a new government and opposition leader, Manasseh Sogavare became Prime Minister; an outcome that despite questions over legitimacy and criticism by the Isatabu Freedom Movement, was recognised by Australia and New Zealand.<sup>419</sup> After this coup, work at the Gold Ridge mine was suspended, which was coupled with a drastic fall in commercial revenue, effectively sinking the country's economy. The Sogavare government focused its peacemaking efforts on compensation payouts, referred to as "kastom", to the representatives of both islands for past grievances. Many commentators

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<sup>418</sup> Dinnen, 'Winners and Losers: Politics and Disorder in the Solomon Islands 2000-2002', p. 286

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, p. 288

saw this as a euphemism for extortion. The demands for compensation and associated reconciliation ceremonies were manipulated for either provincial or personal profit.<sup>420</sup>

On 15 October 2000, thanks to the efforts of Australia and New Zealand a formal ceasefire was reached as both the Malaitans and Isatabus agreed to the conditions of the Townsville Peace Agreement, which involved a weapons amnesty, demilitarisation, restructure of the police and the end to the Malaita Eagle Force. Critics of the Townsville Peace Agreement argue that it had traded human rights for peace as immunity was given to former militants for past crimes, making the agreement more of “a quick fix solution: to get cease-fire – perhaps at *all* costs.”<sup>421</sup> Under the agreement an International Peace Monitoring Team was established, charged to observe the disarmament process and made up of around 50 personnel most of whom were from Australia, New Zealand and the Cook Islands. However, while putting a stop to fighting, the peace agreement was unable to develop a framework via which the Solomon Islands government could implement peace provisions and improve the economy.<sup>422</sup> A key Guale militant leader, Harold Keke and his group refused to disarm and abide by any agreement and continued to use terror tactics.

The Townsville Peace Agreement was frequently broken and conflict on Guadalcanal became so severe that the Solomon Islands Government requested the military assistance of Australia. However, the country refused to intervene, stating that the problems were of an internal matter. In June 2000 Alexander Downer, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that; “The problems in and around Honiara, and the underlying causes of the ethnic conflict, can only be resolved by the will and effort of Solomon Islands leaders.”<sup>423</sup> Downer held this view for the next three years. The decision not to intervene must also take into account

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<sup>420</sup> Jon Fraenkel, *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004), p. 185

<sup>421</sup> John Selwyn Taupongi, Alan Christian Siale, Toepenina Hekau and Myint Zan, *Atrocities in the Solomon Islands (1998-2000) and the Townsville Peace Agreement: Trading Human Rights for Peace?*, Occasional Paper No. 1, 2003, p. 2

<sup>422</sup> John Connell, “‘Saving the Solomons’: A New Geopolitics in the Arc of Instability’?”, *Geographical Research*, Vol. 44, No. 2, June 2006, p. 116

<sup>423</sup> Alexander Downer, ‘Solomon Islands: Australian Assistance’, Media Release, 20 June 2000

Australia's strategic priorities at the time. As Christian Hirst points out, during this time instability in the Pacific was of secondary importance to Australia, which was more preoccupied with the threat of a potentially disintegrating Indonesia and balkanisation of its Northern region, as well as its troop commitment to East Timor.<sup>424</sup>

Elections in December 2001 resulted with Sir Allan Kemakeza being appointed Prime Minister, but again this development did not lead to an improvement in the security situation. By 2002 order yet again had broken down as the Solomon Islands was on the brink of total economic collapse, public services seized to function and many public servants went unpaid. Criminality, corruption, a weak central government and lack of good governance continued to grapple the conflict-stricken country. This was powerfully illustrated in December 2002, when Finance Minister Laurie Chan resigned after he was forced at gunpoint to issue a cheque to a group of militia members. Extortion, corruption and a bankrupt state prompted the Prime Minister to yet again ask for outside assistance, which in 2003 was finally forthcoming in the form of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). It signalled a dramatic shift in Australia's relations with Pacific neighbours. Why this policy shift occurred and how it was justified requires a closer examination.

### **Failed states and Australia's "Arc of Instability"**

Following the terrorist attacks in 2001 on the US and in 2002 on Bali, where 88 Australians lost their lives, Australia's concerns over the threat of terrorism reached an all time peak. Previously the country had avoided pursuing policies that would interfere in the domestic affairs of its sovereign neighbours. However, fear of terrorism sparked the Liberal-National Party government of John Howard to adopt a more proactive approach, which

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<sup>424</sup> Christian Hirst, 'Foresight or Folly? RAMSI and Australia's post-9/11 South Pacific policies', in Carl Ungerer (ed.), *Australian Foreign Policy in the Age of Terror* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008) p. 238



manifested itself in a controversial proposal for Australian pre-emptive intervention against terrorist activity in Southeast Asia, if no alternative was available.<sup>425</sup> This post-Bali intervention policy echoed the Bush administration's logic that pre-emptive action may be at times necessary and required, despite the centrality of state sovereignty in international law. Widely condemned by his Asian neighbours for its aggressiveness, intrusion, and conviction that Australia had the right to override the principle of non-intervention, the policy later returned with a turn of attention to the wider Pacific region. According to Greg Fry this shift in focus from Southeast Asia to the Pacific was influenced by Australia's improved relations with Indonesia over anti-terrorism matters, the problem of sustaining the pre-emptive argument and the growing popularity in the use of "failed states" rhetoric by the US in the fight against terror.<sup>426</sup> While this so-called Howard Doctrine had many new elements, its core motives were not new and had at heart a view of Australia's interests and responsibilities that is as old as Australia's strategic thinking.<sup>427</sup> This involved making sure that Australia's regional environment is stable and under control, so that the country is safe.

While increasingly instability and civil unrest in nearby Pacific states were viewed as a potential danger for Australia's safety and the region, re-engagement and a more hands-on approach towards regional security required a convincing strategic rationale in order to mobilise popular support. The government needed to rationalise its reversal in regional policy, as being wary of accusations of neo-colonial behaviour, during the previous decades Australia adopted a hands-off approach to conflicts and unrest in the Pacific, largely limiting its activity to the granting of aid. Once the threat of terrorism gained increasing prominence among the security agendas of Western governments, however, a new policy direction was sought by the

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<sup>425</sup> Catherine McGrath, 'PM supports action through pre-emptive strikes', *Transcript from AM on ABC Local Radio*, 2 December 2002, available online at <http://www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s738657.htm> (version current at 12/02/2008)

<sup>426</sup> Greg Fry, 'The 'War Against Terror' and Australia's New Interventionism in the Pacific' in Nancy Sullivan (ed.), *Governance Challenges for PNG and the Pacific Islands* (Madang: Divine Word University, 2004), p. 54

<sup>427</sup> Hugh White, 'Australia-South Pacific', in Brendan Taylor (ed.), *Australia as an Asia Pacific Power: Friendships in Flux?* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 118

Howard government, one that would restore order in Australia's "backyard".

Framing the Pacific Islands in negative terms throughout the 1990s provided a sound basis for the subsequent adoption of "failing states" rhetoric that would become intertwined with concerns over terrorism. Fry points out that the "war against terror" ideas were inserted onto already existing ideas about the Pacific, which from the mid 1990's saw the islands states being viewed as a group of failed economies that were moving towards a "Pacific nightmare" or "doomsday" scenario, unless neo-liberal policies and good governance were embraced.<sup>428</sup> By depicting the Pacific Islands in this way, Australia framed the islands as facing a nightmare of poverty, overcrowding, widespread unemployment, severe environmental degradation as well as deteriorating health standards.<sup>429</sup> This approach produced a different image of the South Pacific to that used during the Cold War, depicting it as "falling of the map" and doing very poorly economically.<sup>430</sup> Drawing on World Bank reports, in 1994 the Australian Government misrepresented the data collected by the organisation in a bid to exaggerate the image of failure.<sup>431</sup> For instance, while World Bank information indicated that those Pacific Islands, which were members of the organisation (at the time six out of fourteen and excluding Papua New Guinea) witnessed an average growth rate of 0.1 per cent per capita, the Australian side used this number to depict the average for all Pacific countries.<sup>432</sup> Likewise, during this time Canberra ignored World Bank Reports, which indicated the health of Pacific Island economies surpassed that of Caribbean countries.<sup>433</sup> Another way the Pacific was depicted as failing involved a perception of a disparity between an excessive population growth that would not cope with the available

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<sup>428</sup> Fry, 'The 'War Against Terror' and Australia's New Interventionism in the Pacific', p. 56

<sup>429</sup> Greg Fry, 'Framing the islands: knowledge and power in the in changing Australian images of "the South Pacific"', *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 9 No 2, Fall 1997, p. 305

<sup>430</sup> Greg Fry, 'Australia and the South Pacific: The Rationalist Ascendancy', in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds.), *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs, 1991-95* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1997), p. 295

<sup>431</sup> Fry, 'Australia and the South Pacific: The Rationalist Ascendancy', p. 296

<sup>432</sup> Ibid, p. 296

<sup>433</sup> Ibid, p. 296

income and resources in the region. This “doomsday” depiction, which influenced policy, was driven by a project of the Australian National University’s National Centre for Development Studies entitled *Pacific 2010: Challenging the Future*.<sup>434</sup> The “failing state” discourse that would eventually gain currency sat well with the long-term inclination of Australian policy makers, bureaucrats, journalists, and academic political economists to portray the region with primarily negative imagery.<sup>435</sup>

At the same time the Australian academic community debated the idea that the Pacific was becoming “Africanised”. In his widely debated article Ben Reilly argued that the South Pacific was sharing in the plight of sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, he pointed to what he considered to be similar characteristics which contributed to violent conflict and state weakness. They included increasing friction between governments and military forces, competition between ethnic identities and rivalry over possession of natural resources, weakness of basic primary institutions of governance and the increasing centrality of the state as the vehicle of producing wealth and controlling resources.<sup>436</sup> This analogy was rejected by academics such as Jon Fraenkel and David Chappell. The former argues that the thesis is “analytically weak, internally inconsistent and empirically flawed”<sup>437</sup> while the latter adds that such an analogy provides an ahistorical analysis and that “it is ultimately an orientalist discourse, whose negative, timeless imaging of “others” is still being used to justify metropolitan hegemonies.”<sup>438</sup> In addition, John Henderson points out that claims about violence in the Pacific are often overstated as only two conflicts in the Pacific, West Papua

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<sup>434</sup> Fry, ‘Australia and the South Pacific: The Rationalist Ascendancy’, p. 297

<sup>435</sup> Kabutaulaka, ‘Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands’, p. 296

<sup>436</sup> Ben Reilly, ‘The Africanisation of the South Pacific’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2000, pp. 262-263

<sup>437</sup> Jon Fraenkel, ‘The coming anarchy in Oceania? A critique of the ‘Africanisation of the South Pacific’ Thesis’, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 1, March 2004, p. 1

<sup>438</sup> David Chappell, ‘“Africanisation” in the Pacific: blaming others for disorder in the periphery?’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 47, Issue 2, April 2005, p. 290

and Bougainville, meet or have met the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme criteria of having sustained at least 25 battle-related deaths per year.<sup>439</sup>

While the “Africanisation” thesis was not adopted by the Australian policy community, an “arc of instability” metaphor did gain currency. The phrase was popularised prior to the terrorist attacks on the US and Bali, in order to point to the region’s volatility and potential security threat for Australia. Warnings were given by scholars, including Paul Dibb, David Hale and Peter Prince, who in 1999 signalled the strategic uncertainties facing Australia, mainly that “*The arc of instability to the north and east of Australia: a balkanised Indonesia, a broken-backed Papua New Guinea and a weak New Zealand are very real prospects.*”<sup>440</sup> This label has also been popularised by the Australian political community, particularly when referring to Melanesia.<sup>441</sup> The term “arc of instability” was first applied to depict the environment following the collapse of the Suharto regime, the effect of the Asian economic crisis and the possibility of unrest following the gaining of independence of East Timor.<sup>442</sup> The rhetoric has spilled over from concerns over Southeast Asia and has been connected to and been applied to Oceania, bridging the regional boundaries.<sup>443</sup> It has therefore served as a frequently referred to label that stirs fear, and a more proactive security approach, despite the lack of a precise definition or agreed geographical area. However, the “arc of instability” rhetoric alone was insufficient in changing Australia’s hands-off policy towards the Solomon Islands conflict.

Despite repeated calls for assistance by the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, and reports of the dire situation in the conflict stricken country, the Howard Government remained

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<sup>439</sup> John Henderson, ‘Introduction: Pacific Conflict-How Much and Why?’ in John Henderson and Greg Watson (eds.), *Securing a peaceful Pacific* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005), p. 8

<sup>440</sup> Paul Dibb, David D. Hale and Peter Prince, ‘Asia’s Insecurity’, *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 3, Autumn 1999, p. 18, emphasis in original

<sup>441</sup> See for instance, the collection of essays in R. J. May (et al.), *‘Arc of Instability’? Melanesia in the Early 2000s* (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies ; Canberra, ACT : State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2003)

<sup>442</sup> Kim C. Beazley, ‘Arc of Instability’, *National Observer*, Winter 2003, p. 17

<sup>443</sup> Eric Y. Shibuya, ‘Pacific Engaged, or Washed Away? Implications of Australia’s New Activism in Oceania’, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2, June 2006, p. 72

long reluctant to consider intervention in the troubled neighbour. In January 2003, Downer proclaimed that “Australia is not about to recolonise the South Pacific, nor should it.”<sup>444</sup> He stressed that “Sending in Australian troops to occupy the Solomon Islands would be folly in the extreme. It would be widely resented in the Pacific region.”<sup>445</sup> Moreover, he was of the conviction “that it would not work – no matter how it was dressed up, whether as an Australian or a Commonwealth or a Pacific Islands Forum initiative. The fundamental problem is that foreigners do not have the answers for the deep-seated problems afflicting Solomon Islands.”<sup>446</sup> This view was also reflected in Australia’s 2003 Defence Update, which argued that the Australian Government “should not be expected to solve the problems of Solomon Islands, and anyway cannot do so. It is only the people and their leaders who can end the violence and give Solomon Islands the stability necessary to address its economic and political problems.”<sup>447</sup> The following month *The Economist* concluded that “The Solomon Islands faces the prospect of becoming the Pacific’s first failed state.”<sup>448</sup> It is likely that by this time the government was coming to grips with the possibility that the situation in the Solomon Islands would only worsen and could potentially lead to a security threat for Australia.

Discourse relating to failed states and their vulnerability to terrorist exploitation entered the policy arena in Australia relatively late. In contrast to other developed countries including the UK, the US and Germany, following the September 11 terrorist attacks Australia did not move to securitise failed states and in fact, did not connect state failure to terrorism until mid-2003.<sup>449</sup> Why and when this shift occurred, may be linked to an influential

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<sup>444</sup> Alexander Downer, ‘Neighbours cannot be recolonised’, *The Australian*, 8 January 2003, p. 11

<sup>445</sup> Downer, ‘Neighbours cannot be recolonised’, p. 11

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11

<sup>447</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update 2003* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2003), p. 21

<sup>448</sup> ‘The Pacific’s first failed state?; The Solomon Islands’, *The Economist*, February 15, 2003, Vol. 366, Issue 8311, p. 61

<sup>449</sup> Daniel Lambach, ‘Security, Development and the Australian Security Discourse about Failed States’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 3, September 2006, p. 411

report of a leading Australian think tank, which provided the base for which the political rationale for the intervention would be formulated.

Launched in June 2003, *Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands*, was drafted by the government-funded think tank the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. It warned that the Solomon Islands was on the brink of becoming a failed state and that it could, among several things, become exploited for terrorist purposes. The report argued that;

[...] Solomon Islands risks becoming-and has to some extent already become-a petri dish in which transnational and non-state security threats can develop and breed. Despite its poverty, there is wealth in Solomon Islands for those with the will to extract it: gold, timber and fish. If the state cannot provide security and a legal framework in which such extraction can occur, others will. And their methods will be far from attractive.<sup>450</sup>

The report also warned Australians that “A failing state on our doorstep engages Australia’s interests at many levels, from short-term economic, consular and humanitarian concerns to our most enduring strategic imperatives.”<sup>451</sup> Launching the report Foreign Minister Alexander Downer hinted that new thinking on regional instability would be adopted by his government, which would reverse the previous hands-off approach. Here we can see how Anglo-American security discourse impacted on the approach taken by Australia, with its emphasis on assisting a “failed” state before terrorist activity might threaten Australia.<sup>452</sup> Downer asserted that “In some countries of the South Pacific, our assistance might need to take a more proactive form than in others.”<sup>453</sup> In this respect, he introduced Australia’s new doctrine of “cooperative intervention”; a policy based on a strengthened approach to regional security, which would be characterised by direct engagement whilst working with others and at the request of the

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<sup>450</sup> Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), *Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the Future of the Solomon Islands* (Canberra: ASPI, 2003), p. 13

<sup>451</sup> ASPI, *Our Failing Neighbour*, p. 3

<sup>452</sup> Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, ‘Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands’, *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2005, p. 283

<sup>453</sup> Alexander Downer, ‘Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands’, Speech at the launch of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute report, 10 June 2003

relevant government.<sup>454</sup> In stark contrast to his previous view on the Solomon Islands situation, Downer asserted that “If we don't fix up the Solomon Islands no one will be able to. We're the only country with the capability to do this.”<sup>455</sup>

*Our Failing Neighbour* is likely to have contributed to a renewed plea for help from the Solomon Islands Kemakeza government, as in April 2003 draft of this document circulated in Honiara leading to comments from government officials.<sup>456</sup> In June 2003 Prime Minister Kemakeza asked for military help to restore law and order in his country, to which he received a positive reply.

Australia's justification for participating in the intervention in the Solomon Islands drew on the rationale offered in ASPI's report, which followed the logic behind American thinking on security and fit well with Howard's agenda on defence. As Fry notices, “Where the pre-emptive doctrine was developed against the backdrop of the US pre-emptive doctrine for Iraq, the new intervention policy was developed against the backdrop of US policy on ‘failed states’ and their link to terrorism.”<sup>457</sup> It is therefore Australia's security interests that were at the centre of the shift in policy towards the Pacific. Howard pointed out that “it is not in the interest of Australia for a whole range of reasons to have failed states on our doorstep.”<sup>458</sup> Reference to fear blended well with discourse on Australian regional leadership.

In an interview on 20 July 2003 Howard played on the domestic fears of invasion stressing that;

I'm sure the Australian people will understand if the Solomons becomes a failed state it is a haven potentially for terrorists, drug-runners and money launderers. We don't want that on our doorstep. It is in Australia's interest — forget about any other country for the moment — it is in Australia's interest

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<sup>454</sup> Downer, ‘Our Failing Neighbour: Australia and the future of Solomon Islands’,

<sup>455</sup> Annabel Crabb, Australia may send forces to troubled islands’, *The Age*, June 11, 2003

<sup>456</sup> Lambach, ‘Security, Development and the Australian Security Discourse about Failed States’, p. 412

<sup>457</sup> Greg Fry, ‘The ‘War Against Terror’ and Australia's New Interventionism in the Pacific’, p. 52

<sup>458</sup> Claire Harvey, ‘Happy to ‘patch’ things up in the Pacific’, *The Australian*, 9 August 2004



that the Solomons not fail. That's why we're going to get involved and that's why we have significantly changed our policy. What we're doing in the Solomon Islands represents a very significant change in policy.<sup>459</sup>

After getting the permission of the Solomon Islands government to restore law and order, and international legitimacy for the operation from the Pacific Island Forum and the Commonwealth; the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was established in July 2003. The United Nations was not involved. China would likely have vetoed a Security Council vote, as the Solomon Islands has diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

Led by Australia, the initial RAMSI deployment consisted of 2225 personnel, among whom 1500 were members of the Australian Defence Force, 105 were New Zealand defence personnel and 35 were from the New Zealand police. The regional mission also included personnel from Fiji, Tonga and Papua New Guinea and the diversity was also helped by representatives of Samoa, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Nauru, Tuvalu and Kiribati also taking part. Sending a force to the Solomon Islands was the largest Australian deployment to the Pacific since World War II.<sup>460</sup>

In his Ministerial Statement to Parliament on the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) Howard fused the “state failure” and “terrorism” arguments, with reference to Australian safety and its role as regional leader, stating that:

The international community looks to Australia to play a leading role in the South Pacific. Our leadership of the regional assistance mission to the Solomon Islands reflects both a national interest and an international expectation. A failed state would not only devastate the lives of the peoples of the Solomons but could also pose a significant security risk for the whole region. Failed states can all too easily become safe-havens for transnational criminals and even terrorists. Poor governance and endemic corruption provide the conditions that support criminal activities. If Australia wants security, we need to

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<sup>459</sup> Transcript of the Prime Minister the Hon John Howard MP Interview with Charles Wooley, 60 Minutes, 20 July 2003

<sup>460</sup> Angela Shanahan, ‘Solomon Islands: The New Way’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 7, 2003, p. 19

do all that we can to ensure that our region, our neighbourhood, is stable – that governance is strong and the rule of law is just.

That is why we have joined with the other nations of our region to lend a helping hand. Failure to act would have sent the wrong signal to those who are endeavouring to maintain stability in other parts of the Pacific.<sup>461</sup>

Howard also made sure to refer to Australia's regional obligations, stating "the rest of the world expects Australia to shoulder a lot of the burden because this is our part of the world, this is our patch."<sup>462</sup> Highlighting his country's role as a major regional player, the Australian PM also asserted that "The rest of the world sees Australia as having a special role in this area and I believe that the Australian Government and the Australian people should assume it."<sup>463</sup> Moreover, to add to the culture of fear, allegations surfaced that Indonesia, was offering the Solomon Islands military assistance.<sup>464</sup>

Rhetoric on Australian leadership was also reflected in renewed engagement with the main regional organisation. In 2003 at the Pacific Islands Forum it was the Australian Prime Minister who attended the meeting – a role previously delegated to foreign ministers – which signalled a greater desire by Australia to play the leading role in regional policies.<sup>465</sup> From 1996 to 2003 Howard had taken part in just three of the six Pacific Island Forum meetings.

To strengthen the rationale for intervention a financial argument was also put forward to support the security one, with Howard arguing that;

If we do nothing now and the Solomon Islands becomes a failed state, the challenges in the future of potential exploitation of that situation by international drug dealers, money launderers, international terrorism-all of these things-will make the inevitable dealing with the problem in the future more costly

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<sup>461</sup> John Howard, Ministerial Statement to Parliament on the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), 12 August 2003

<sup>462</sup> Kerry O'Brien, Interview with John Howard, the 7:30 Report, ABC, 25 June 2003

<sup>463</sup> Mark Forbes, 'Pacific leaders back Australian role', *The Age*, 9 August 2004, p. 10

<sup>464</sup> Special Broadcasting Service Television (SBS TV), 'Solomons Riddle', *Dateline*, 27 August 2003, cited in Kabutaulaka, 'Australian Foreign Policy and the RAMSI Intervention in Solomon Islands', p. 291

<sup>465</sup> Warwick E. Murray and Donovan Storey, 'Political Conflict in postcolonial Oceania', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 44, No. 3, December 2003, p. 221

and more difficult, and we would pay very dearly for our indifference if we were to adopt that course now.<sup>466</sup>

This view was echoed in 2004 by the Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand, Allan Hawke, who said that “the financial costs and potential threats to Australia from failed States, including transnational crime and international terrorism, would be immense.”<sup>467</sup>

The job of Prime Minister’s special co-ordinator of the RAMSI force was given to former High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea – and at the time of his appointment – ambassador for counter-terrorism, Nick Warner.<sup>468</sup> His appointment suggests at how Australia viewed the threat in the Solomons. The government’s logic for intervening was echoed by Warner, who stated that “experience elsewhere shows that weak states are also attractive as havens for money laundering, people smuggling, drug smuggling and terrorism.”<sup>469</sup> This line of argument mimicked Ellie Wainwright (the leading author of the ASPI report), who argues that “Failed or failing states are often Petri dishes for transnational criminal activity such as money laundering, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, people trafficking, and terrorism.”<sup>470</sup>

The “arc of instability” label, which played an important part in shifting Australian attention to events closer to home, served, and continues to serve a strategic purpose. Its boundaries have proven flexible and grow to include countries that suffer the latest signs of instability, as was the case, for instance, when East Timor and the Solomon Islands suffered unrest in 2006.<sup>471</sup> The use of this terminology has both strategic and political utility. First, it focuses attention to the long-held view in Australia about the importance of stability and security in its proximate archipelagic and Pacific region, and warning of the possible

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<sup>466</sup> John Howard, *Hansard House of Representatives*, 25 June 2003, p. 17484

<sup>467</sup> Allan Hawke, High Commissioner for Australia, “Regional Co-operation in the Pacific: An Australian (‘s) Perspective”, Address to the University of Otago Foreign Policy School, “Redefining the Pacific? Regionalism, Past, Present, and Future”, Dunedin, 26 June 2004

<sup>468</sup> Mary-Louise O’Callaghan, ‘Terror supremo sent to Honiara’, *The Australian*, 19 July 2003

<sup>469</sup> Nick Warner, ‘Operation Helpem Fren: Rebuilding the Nation of Solomon Islands’, Speech to National Security Conference, 23 March 2004

<sup>470</sup> Ellie Wainwright, ‘Responding to state failure-the case of Australia and Solomon Islands’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3, November 2003, p. 486

<sup>471</sup> Robert Ayson, ‘The ‘arc of instability’ and Australia’s strategic policy’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2, June 2007, p. 215, p.221, p. 225

exploitation of weak states in the region either by terrorists or by larger North Asian powers, namely China and Taiwan and their potentially dangerous competition for influence.<sup>472</sup>

Robert Ayson suggests the “arc” metaphor serves as a warning notice, drawing parallels to concerns over Soviet penetration in the Pacific in the 1980s.<sup>473</sup> Paul Dibb says that the “arc of instability” is “one defence planning construct [...]. Given the vast geographical distance that that involves, it will always give the government of the day options for operations much further afield—if you like the phrase, expeditionary operations.”<sup>474</sup> The phrase therefore has powerful political utility.

The political significance of the “arc” is reflected in the metaphor’s power as an “organising framework”, implying a systemic process that is taking place and performing the role of a recognisable symbol in political debate.<sup>475</sup> As such, it draws on core fundamentals of Australian strategic culture and associated fears of attack. The “arc of instability” metaphor has been espoused and strategically used by both sides of the political spectrum. For instance, Kevin Rudd has shared the use of this language with John Howard when criticising his political rival. Rudd claims that “In the period of Mr Howard’s prime ministership, the southwest Pacific has become an arc of instability.”<sup>476</sup> Adopting Howard’s discourse, Rudd who was the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and International Security, at the time, warned in August 2006 that “within this arc of instability, Australia’s strategic and economic influence relative to other external powers is declining.”<sup>477</sup>

While still in Opposition, Rudd argued in July 2007 that;

Within our more immediate region, the ‘Arc of Instability’ to our North and North-East has gone from

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<sup>472</sup> Ayson,, ‘The ‘arc of instability’ and Australia’s strategic policy’, pp. 222-223

<sup>473</sup> Ibid, p. 223

<sup>474</sup> Comment made by Professor Paul Dibb, *Official Committee Hansard*, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, (Defence Subcommittee), Reference: Australia’s defence relations with the United States, 2 April 2004, p. 71

<sup>475</sup> Ayson,, ‘The ‘arc of instability’ and Australia’s strategic policy’, p. 224

<sup>476</sup> ‘Howard blamed for Pacific’s political woes’, *The Australian*, 8 January 2007

<sup>477</sup> Kevin Rudd, *The Mismanagement of Australia’s National Security*, University of Queensland, Brisbane, August 2, 2006, cited in Graeme Dobell, ‘South Pacific Paradoxes’, 21<sup>st</sup> Asia Pacific Roundtable, Kuala Lumpur, June 7, 2007, p. 11

being a strategic concept a decade ago to becoming an unsettling strategic reality today – with Jema'ah Islamiyah's continued operations in the Indonesian archipelago; police and military crises in East Timor; continuing challenges to political stability in Papua New Guinea; ethnic violence in Vanuatu; the implosion of law and order in the Solomon Islands; a series of coups d'état in Fiji; a constitutional crisis combined with unprecedented street violence in Tonga; and Nauru the region's first properly defined failed state having also become a centre for international money laundering.<sup>478</sup>

The logic continues to be espoused by Australian Governments. The 2005 Defence Update reaffirmed that "Failing states may provide the opportunity for recruiting, training and deploying terrorists."<sup>479</sup> Likewise, the defence White Paper stresses that "The risk of convergence between failing states, terrorism and the proliferation of WMD remains a major and continuing threat to international security."<sup>480</sup> In 2006 the then Defence Minister, Brendan Nelson warned that;

We cannot afford to have failing states in our region. The so-called 'arc of instability', which basically goes from East Timor through to the south-west Pacific states, means that not only does Australia have a responsibility in preventing and indeed assisting with humanitarian and disaster relief, but also that we cannot allow any of these countries to become havens for transnational crime, nor indeed havens for terrorism.<sup>481</sup>

The "arc of instability" label therefore continues to draw on deeper Australian fears, its sense of insecurity, and urge for regional leadership, all factors that form the core of Australia's strategic culture.

The failing states logic and Australia's pessimistic view of the region were also used as a rationale for increasing the size of its military. Under Howard's leadership in 2006 the Australian Army substantially increased in personnel. The Prime Minister justified this increase by stating that:

The reason why we need a bigger Australian Army is self-evident. This country faces on-going and in

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<sup>478</sup> Kevin Rudd, 'Fresh Ideas for Future Challenges: A New Approach to Australia's Arc of Instability', Speech to the Lowy Institute, 5 July 2007

<sup>479</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: Defence Update 2005* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2005), p. 4

<sup>480</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: Defence Update 2005*, p. 4

<sup>481</sup> Graeme Dobell, 'Correspondents Report – The Pacific 'arc of instability'', *ABC Online*, 20 August 2006

my opinion increasing instances of destabilised and failing states in our own region. I believe in the next ten to twenty years Australia will face a number of situations the equivalent of or potentially more challenging than the Solomon Islands and East Timor.<sup>482</sup>

Despite official endorsement, the use of state failure, terrorism and the “petri-dish” scenario as a rationale has been criticised by some as fundamentally flawed in its reasoning and an inaccurate depiction of the region. The reference to terrorism is inappropriate.

According to R. J. May:

Pacific Island countries are unlikely bases for terrorists: there is no local constituency for terrorism, the arrival and presence of outsiders in small, personalised societies is generally very obvious, and the logistics of undertaking terrorist activities from small island countries must be unattractive.<sup>483</sup>

Instead, he argues that;

A more serious problem for Pacific Island countries has been small-scale criminal activity, often involving sole operators, which has targeted small island governments (including those of Nauru, Tonga and Vanuatu) or their populations through financial swindles. Corrupt business practices and pyramid credit schemes – and such activities have not been attracted by state failure.<sup>484</sup>

Jon Fraenkel adds that “Although borders are often poorly policed and passport scams – notably in the Marshall Islands, PNG and Solomon Islands-have opened avenues for identity fraud, the small, close-knit and often predominantly rural societies of Oceania would prove an inhospitable environment for terrorist cells.”<sup>485</sup> Indeed, in 2003 the British Police Commissioner in the Solomon Islands, Bill Morrell, dismissed the view that the country may pose a terrorist threat.<sup>486</sup> Likewise, while the notion of “failed state” may be useful to the extent that it draws awareness to the importance of the territorial state in human affairs; this

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<sup>482</sup> John Howard, Prime Minister, 2006, cited in Graeme Dobell, ‘Post-Iraq and Australia’s Arc’, *Quadrant*, October 2007, p. 16

<sup>483</sup> R. J. May, ‘Weak States, Collapsed States, Broken-Backed States and Kleptocracies: General Concepts and Pacific Realities’, *The New Pacific Review (La Nouvelle Revue Du Pacifique)*, Pacific Island States Today –Letat des Etats, Vol. 2, No. 1, December 2003, p. 53

<sup>484</sup> May, ‘Weak States, Collapsed States, Broken-Backed States and Kleptocracies: General Concepts and Pacific Realities’, p. 53

<sup>485</sup> Jon Fraenkel, ‘Myths of Pacific Terrorism’ in John Henderson and Greg Watson (eds.), *Securing a peaceful Pacific* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005), p. 121

<sup>486</sup> “Solomons Backgrounder”, SBS, 2 July 2003, cited in Jon Fraenkel, *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004), p. 163

description is deceptive when it assumes that independent and strong states had existed in Oceania but have by some means collapsed over time.<sup>487</sup>

The “arc of instability” thesis has also drawn plenty of academic criticism. David Hegarty points out its flawed logic in that “it both over-simplifies and over-dramatises a region of vast diversity and complexity.”<sup>488</sup> He also criticises the label for concealing rather than revealing of the governing dynamics in Melanesia and the Pacific Islands.<sup>489</sup> Similarly, Dennis Rumley points out that “Australia’s immediate region is not homogeneously unstable” and “that the arc of instability concept is an overgeneralization, an oversimplification and even an exaggeration and that the term “vulnerability” might be preferred to “instability.”<sup>490</sup> The label implies that the Pacific is inherently and continuously prone to conflict. But as John Henderson rightly points out, that “With the notable exception of the Melanesian sub-region [...] Pacific conflict can be described as sporadic rather than endemic.”<sup>491</sup> Perhaps this is one reason, why New Zealand has been less inclined to use this rhetoric.

### **New Zealand’s Rationale for Intervention**

Once Australian intervention was assumed, New Zealand’s participation in RAMSI appeared almost inevitable. The country’s involvement in assisting its troubled neighbour received unanimous support from all sides of the House of Representatives. The only political

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<sup>487</sup> Terence Wesley-Smith, ‘There Goes the Neighbourhood: The Politics of Failed States and Regional Intervention in the Pacific’ in Jenny Bryant-Tokalau and Ian Frazer (eds.), *Redefining the Pacific? Regionalism Past, Present and Future* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), p. 122

<sup>488</sup> David Hegarty, ‘Through and beyond the ‘Arc of Instability’, in Ivan Molloy (ed.), *The Eye of the Cyclone: Issues in Pacific Security* (Sippy Downs: Pacific Island Political Studies Association and University of the Sunshine Coast, 2004), pp. 50-51

<sup>489</sup> Ibid

<sup>490</sup> Dennis Rumley, ‘The emergence of Australia’s Arc of Instability’, in Dennis Rumley, Vivian Louis Forbes and Christopher Griffin (eds.), *Australia’s Arc of Instability: The political and cultural dynamics of regional security* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), p. 18

<sup>491</sup> John Henderson, ‘Introduction: Pacific Conflict-How Much and Why?’, p. 8



debate focused on the nature of the deployment, with several political parties attacking the Labour-led coalition government for acceding to a heavier military approach than they desired. For instance the Green Party queried the need for 2000 military personnel to part in the deployment.<sup>492</sup> On the other side of the spectrum, the National Party argued for intervention “with enough force to actually make a difference.”<sup>493</sup>

New Zealand’s rationale for intervention was markedly different from that offered by Canberra. From the outset it stresses values and its desire to engage in a multilateral regional response with limited use of force. The country was concerned that RAMSI should adopt a Pacific approach towards resolving the conflict. Central to its regional security policy is the conviction that “New Zealand is a Pacific nation – through our geography, our culture and our outlook.”<sup>494</sup> In line with this view Helen Clark told a Ceremony to Farewell the Solomon Islands Contingent that;

Three years ago, the Pacific Island Forum meeting in Kiribati adopted the Biketawa Declaration. It envisaged a situation, like that which exists in the Solomon Islands, where member countries might need help. It is in that spirit that New Zealand and other Pacific countries have joined with Australia to support the Solomon Islands.

This is a Pacific solution to a Pacific problem. Thus it is important that our involvement is handled in a Pacific way. We must be sympathetic to the interests and needs of the Solomon Islands people. Our approach must be low key and helpful, and enable the Solomon Islands to build the capability to progress their own development.<sup>495</sup>

The reasons that were offered for the intervention included concerns about transnational crime, New Zealand’s regional responsibilities, concerns over the spread of instability to other

<sup>492</sup> Keith Locke, Urgent Debates – Solomon Islands –Deployment of Police and Military Forces, Debates (Hansard) Speeches, Vol. 609, p. 6703, 1 July 2003

<sup>493</sup> ‘NZ opposition backs proposed armed intervention in Solomon Islands’, *Radio New Zealand International*, 9 June 2003

<sup>494</sup> Phil Goff, ‘Challenges and responses for the Pacific’, 23 February 2004

<sup>495</sup> Helen Clark, Address at Ceremony to Farewell Solomon Islands Contingent, 24 July 2003

parts of the Pacific, obligation under the Biketawa Declaration<sup>496</sup> and New Zealanders' expectations.<sup>497</sup>

Officials were eager to stress that the intervention would not be military in character. The Labour/Progressive Coalition Government of Helen Clark argued that this would be a police-led deployment. Mark Burton, New Zealand's Defence Minister at the time claimed that the mission's main purpose was to aid the country's own police and civilian authorities.<sup>498</sup> Foreign Affairs Minister Phil Goff said that;

New Zealand is well placed to offer the kind of non-combat elements necessary to support the police contingent. Our personnel will play a key role in facilitating civil and humanitarian assistance, providing helicopter transport, engineers for refurbishment of facilities, and medical staff who will work to re-establish community level medical support.<sup>499</sup>

Recognising that a military component to the operation was inevitable, Minister of Defence, Mark Burton downplayed the heavy-handedness that would be involved. He reassured the House of Representatives that the mission "must be a police- a civil-intervention" while noting that in order to restore civil control and order "it will require, to the extent that is necessary, military support to back it up."<sup>500</sup>

Despite their agreement as to the necessity of this regional intervention, there were early differences between Australia and New Zealand as to the exact nature of the operation. Allan Hawke, the Australian High Commissioner in Wellington stressed that "As far as RAMSI itself is concerned, Australia and New Zealand agreed on the end to be achieved, but

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<sup>496</sup> Adopted in 2000 by the Pacific Islands Forum, the Biketawa Declaration broke with the previous rule of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, committing Forum Leaders to accept "the need in time of crisis or in response to members' request for assistance, for action to be taken on the basis of all members of the Forum being part of the Pacific Islands extended family.", Biketawa Declaration, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, available online at <http://www.forumsec.org/resources/article/files/Biketawa%20Declaration.pdf>

<sup>497</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Solomon Islands: Possible intervention', Defence Cabinet Document, Submission and Annex, Article 11, SLB/4, 2003, p. 5, cited in Beth Greener-Barcham, 'RAMSI: The New Zealand Experience', in John Henderson and Greg Watson (eds.), *Securing a peaceful Pacific* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005), p. 215

<sup>498</sup> Claire Harvey, 'Old Mates go Separate Ways – Defence and Energy: Worldwide Special Report', *The Australian*, 25 August 2003, p. B10

<sup>499</sup> Phil Goff, 'NZ assistance to Solomon Islands government', 15 July 2003

<sup>500</sup> Mark Burton, Urgent Debates-Solomon Islands-Deployment of Police and Military Forces, Debates (Hansard) Speeches, Vol. 609, p. 6709, 1 July 2003

we had quite different views about the means that should be employed to that end.”<sup>501</sup> Phil Goff acknowledges that “New Zealand and Australia did not have identical views” and that New Zealanders “were more cautious in [their] approach”.<sup>502</sup> There were heated exchanges across the Tasman, fuelled by the Howard government’s announcement of details about the size and shape of the intervention force prior to obtaining approval by the Solomon Islands’ Parliament and participating countries.<sup>503</sup> New Zealand was initially wary of Australia marking for itself a new role of a Pacific policeman.<sup>504</sup> Moreover, the country was apparently anxious to install a deputy for the operation, due to concerns over Howard’s security agenda for the Pacific and the conviction by the New Zealand side that a New Zealander’s oversight would be crucial in the success of the sensitive intervention.<sup>505</sup> The New Zealand government was also keen to make sure that the operation would adopt “as low-key an approach as possible.”<sup>506</sup> However, it appears that the differences were eventually put aside. Alluding to these concerns, in December 2003 Alexander Downer said that, “everyone now warmly accepts Australia’s new role, even New Zealand.”<sup>507</sup> He went on to say that while his neighbour across the Tasman was “a bit hesitant and thought it might be a regional version of United States pre-emption [...] they [New Zealanders] feel comfortable now with what we are doing and are throwing their weight behind what we are doing.”<sup>508</sup>

Despite reservations about the nature of the deployment, New Zealand did share some of Australia’s concerns about the possibility of terrorist manipulation of troubled Pacific states. Like Downer, Phil Goff said that “New Zealand and Australia and the other countries in the Pacific know there are huge costs if the state collapses in the Solomon Islands – the cost

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<sup>501</sup> Allan Hawke, High Commissioner for Australia, “Regional Co-operation in the Pacific: An Australian (‘s) Perspective”, Address to the University of Otago Foreign Policy School, “Redefining the Pacific? Regionalism, Past, Present, and Future”, Dunedin, 26 June 2004

<sup>502</sup> Private correspondence with Minister of Defence, Phil Goff, 13 March 2008

<sup>503</sup> John Armstrong, ‘Big neighbours flex muscles’, *The New Zealand Herald*, 16 August 2003

<sup>504</sup> Tracy Watkins, ‘Downer Digs at NZ Solomons Hesitancy’, *Dominion Post*, 22 December 2003, p. 2

<sup>505</sup> Helen Tunnah, ‘Nzer to keep a hand on mission’, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 July 2003

<sup>506</sup> Tracy Watkins, ‘Kiwis may ‘Helpem Fren’ for years’, *Dominion Post*, 24 July 2003, p. 3

<sup>507</sup> Watkins, ‘Downer Digs at NZ Solomons Hesitancy’, p. 2

<sup>508</sup> Ibid

of the place becoming a haven for drug smugglers, people smugglers, terrorists.”<sup>509</sup> In May 2004 Helen Clark repeated this line, explaining that;

The problem to be confronted in our region is not so much that terrorists will seek to attack the citizens of institutions of Pacific countries. It is rather that the Pacific might present a tempting target, either for an attack like the one in Bali, or as a base from which terrorist cells might undertake the planning and groundwork for an attack.<sup>510</sup>

However, New Zealand generally appeared to be less concerned about the likelihood of terrorist activity being carried out in the Pacific, downplaying the threat to the immediate region. In 2004 Goff stated that;

International terrorism is an issue in the wider Asia-Pacific region, with Al Qaeda links to the Abu Sayef Group in the Philippines and Jemaah Islamiah in Indonesia. In the Pacific, the threat is lessened by the fact that people in the region are predominantly Christian in their religious adherence. This makes it difficult to establish the sort of radical and extremist networks that have supported terrorism in some Islamic communities. However, the characteristics of the Pacific do make it vulnerable to organised crime, violence by local militia groups, and potentially vulnerable to terrorist groups exploiting the region as a weak link in the security chain.<sup>511</sup>

Although New Zealand shared some of Australia’s rationale for the intervention, it justified its position quite differently, using language about regional obligations and norms, not the logic of the “arc of instability”. Indicating that there was overwhelming public support in the Solomon Islands for outside intervention, Goff asserted that his country “will endeavour to provide that assistance, as we have previously done in the Pacific in East Timor and Bougainville, in a way that maintains and builds upon that public support.”<sup>512</sup> New Zealand framed its intervention more as a humanitarian obligation, rather than a security challenge. While the country followed Australia’s actions, it framed the need for intervention

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<sup>509</sup> Ray Lilley, ‘New Zealand says armed intervention necessary to return stability to Solomon Islands’, *Associated Press Newswires*, 26 June 2003

<sup>510</sup> Helen Clark, ‘Opening Address to Pacific Roundtable on Counter-Terrorism’, Intercontinental Hotel, Wellington, 10 May 2004

<sup>511</sup> Phil Goff, ‘NZ, France and international security: the Pacific dimension’, Speech delivered to the French Institute of International Relations, Paris, 16 September 2004

<sup>512</sup> Phil Goff, ‘NZ assistance to Solomon Islands government’, 15 July 2003

differently for domestic political purposes.

This raises the question, why did New Zealand follow the Australian action? As Stephen Hoadley notices, “New Zealand’s rhetoric was more circumspect but did not contradict the thrust of Australian activism.”<sup>513</sup> It may be the case that once Australia’s willingness to intervene was confirmed, New Zealand’s participation did not require a new-found rationale, but rather one that would fit well with domestic attitudes. In this case, while references to failing states and terrorism were made, New Zealanders did not focus on framing the Solomon Islands conflict as a security threat to their own country, as was the case in Australia, when providing the justification for intervention. Rather, it was New Zealand’s regional obligations, in the form of both the formal Biketawa declaration and informal duty to assist fellow Pacific Islanders, which formed the main thrust behind the country’s involvement.

A qualitative study of official discourse by Australian and New Zealand governments reveals that while the former referred to the threat of terrorism on each occasion when justifying its involvement in the intervention in the Solomon Islands, the latter did not directly link this cause to New Zealand’s participation. While the idea that terrorism could penetrate the Pacific region was shared by both countries, and reflected in several speeches by the New Zealand side, this security argument was absent from the official explanation outlining the basis of the country’s commitment.

### **The Ramifications of RAMSI: Scenarios for the Future**

Despite some challenges RAMSI has generally been hailed as a success in stopping the conflict in the Solomon Islands and starting to rebuild the country. This led John Howard

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<sup>513</sup> Stephen Hoadley, *Pacific Islands Security Management by New Zealand and Australia: Towards a New Paradigm*, Working Paper 20/05 (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 2005), p. 7

to suggest that “in the long run the RAMSI way is really the way of the future if other countries get into similar difficulties.”<sup>514</sup> In particular, as Downer noted, Australians will be “working with those states that lack the capacity to address the kinds of threats to their sovereignty that may one day threaten ours.”<sup>515</sup>

However, despite initial praise for RAMSI, Australia has been accused of heavy-handedness by the Solomon’s leadership. The Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare accused Australia that “It was supposed to be a regional assistance mission to the Solomon Islands but it has become AMSI – basically just an Australian mission.”<sup>516</sup> Tensions were fuelled by disputes between Howard and Sogavare over Julian Moti, an Australian lawyer accused of child sex charges and who was selected to become the Solomon Islands’ Attorney-General. Australia accused the Solomon’s of helping him escape from PNG, where he had been arrested. In September 2006, Sogavare expelled the Australian High Commissioner from his country. The following month raids of Mr Sogavare’s office were carried by Australian police, in a bid to search for proof of his involvement in the Moti matter.

While RAMSI never assumed sovereign powers in the Solomon Islands, RAMSI personnel had a large influence over government policy.<sup>517</sup> According to Morgan and McLeod, “While there have been multiple attempts to demonstrate that RAMSI is not a neo-colonial exercise, it is difficult to deny the fact that Australians working in line positions, and even advisory positions, are promoting (and in some cases enforcing) the use of barely modified Australian processes.”<sup>518</sup> This may be partly why RAMSI has been criticised for offering a “band-aid” solution, failing to address the underlying deep social structures causing

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<sup>514</sup> Cynthia Banham and Craig Skehan, ‘Howard gets his way at forum’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 October 2006, p. 1

<sup>515</sup> Alexander Downer, ‘Security in an Unstable World’, Speech at the National Press Club, 26 June 2003

<sup>516</sup> Raphael Minger, ‘Pacific forum to review role of Australian-led Solomons force’, *Financial Times*, 25 October 2006, London Ed 1, p. 8

<sup>517</sup> Toby Carroll and Shahar Hameiri, ‘Good Governance and Security: The Limits of Australia’s New Aid Programme’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 37, No. 4, November 2007, p. 419

<sup>518</sup> Morgan and McLeod, ‘Have we failed our neighbour’, p. 424

conflict and the limits to state-building in the Solomon's.<sup>519</sup> In April 2006, violence again briefly erupted, as allegations that the newly appointed Prime Minister, Snyder Rini was involved in corrupt activity with Chinese businessman to buy Parliamentary votes. Accusations led to riots and the destruction of Chinese businesses in Honiara.

In light of criticism over the nature of RAMSI, Pacific Island Forum countries agreed to an independent review of the mission. Sogavare however boycotted the review and his foreign minister, Patterson Oti even protested before the UN General Assembly about Australia's "occupation" of the Solomon Islands. In 2007 the Solomon Islands government announced that it would carry out its own review of RAMSI, scheduled to be completed by July 2008. Despite Australian criticism of this idea, New Zealand gave its support for the evaluation of the mission.<sup>520</sup>

Australia's recent approach to instability in the Pacific and security discourse suggests that they country may be more inclined to unilaterally and directly engage or intervene in the domestic affairs of Pacific states, despite the rhetoric of "cooperative intervention". Greg Urwin, an Australian currently serving as Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat suggests that;

While New Zealand and Australia's interests in the region will continue to be similar, they will not be identical and may become in some ways less so. There should be no essential problem in this, provided both countries remain aware of the processes at work, domestic and regional.<sup>521</sup>

While cooperation, similar to the one witnessed during RAMSI is likely to remain the preferred policy option in Canberra and Wellington, Australia's greater fear of its region and sensitivity to shifts in the status quo are more likely to propel the country to adopt a pre-emptive security stance. Australia's sense that it is the regional metropolitan power, together with its close association with the US, is likely to propel Canberra to be more active in

<sup>519</sup> Michael G. Morgan and Abby McLeod, 'Have we failed our neighbour', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 3, September 2006, p. 414

<sup>520</sup> 'Solomon Islands to review RAMSI', ABC Radio Australia, 25 October 2007

<sup>521</sup> Greg Urwin, 'Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific', *New Zealand International Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January/February 2003, p. 9



maintaining stability in the Pacific in the hope of preventing Pacific states of becoming “havens” for terrorists. While New Zealand is likely to continue to share Australia’s concerns of maintaining regional stability and to work closely together on issues of regional concern, it may chose not to pursue the same kind of rhetoric as Australia, whilst providing assistance to troubled countries under the heading of humanitarian obligations.

### **Conclusion**

The Solomon Islands case suggests that while Australia and New Zealand had different assessments of the nature of the regional security environment, and different justifications for assisting a Pacific state they ultimately can arrive at a similar point and unite in cooperating in the Pacific. Australia focused on its security objectives, referring to the “arc of instability” and threat of failing states falling to terrorism, as well as the country’s duty and quest for leadership, when justifying its involvement in the Solomon Islands. New Zealand preferred to allude to its historical and cultural links with Pacific Islanders and the country’s moral and regional obligations to assist, downplaying the link to terrorism. The two countries drew on their distinct strategic cultures and identities in the explanations they give intervening, which is why political rationales were so starkly different. The justifications matched their beliefs and perspectives and fit well with their respective domestic audiences.

Incorporating strategic culture and identity as variables sheds light on the influences guiding policy formulation in Australia and New Zealand and their possible responses to conflict in the Pacific. It is not without its challenges however. One question that remains is at what point in time and in what circumstances does the strategic use of symbolic language and argumentative discourse take hold. For example why did Australia change its policy on the Solomons so dramatically between 2000 and 2003? The closing chapter considers this

issue and explores whether strategic culture and identity can be useful tools for the prediction of policy outcomes.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that in order to explain Australia and New Zealand's approaches to defence, why they have been diverging in their broader security strategies and how they respond to instability in the Pacific, it is necessary to incorporate non-material variables. Specifically, it argued that the inclusion of the variables of strategic culture and identity provides a more comprehensive explanation of the influences guiding policymaking and interest formation in the two countries. The preceding chapters have aimed to point out an alternative way at looking at the formation of state interests and policies, by acknowledging the multiplicity of influences that guide security thinking in the Antipodes. These ideational influences included historical links and experiences, the countries' varying interpretations of their geographical location, the presence and persistence of attitudes, such as ideas, values, fears and preferences that have emerged and consolidated over time.

This concluding chapter critically evaluates the utility of identity and strategic culture as explanatory tools in light of the two cases examined. A summary of findings is offered, followed by a critical assessment of the limits of an ideational approach in predicting state behaviour. Finally, I point out a number of challenges that remain for future research on the security policies of states.

#### **Explaining the Security Policies of Australia and New Zealand: Why the Divergence?**

The study adopted a long historical timeframe in order to examine the formative influences on the development of defence policies in Australia and New Zealand. It noted areas of commonality, particularly during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and identified

a growing divergence in their security strategies, something that has become prominent particularly in the past couple of decades. Despite variation in external threats, and particularly following New Zealand's adoption of an anti-nuclear stance and departure from ANZUS, both countries have exhibited and continue to pursue policy preferences challenging explanations based on solely materialist assumptions. However, it is one thing to criticise a neorealist explanation and another to offer a convincing alternative. How well then does an ideational approach explain Australian and New Zealand security strategies?

A study of Australia's approach towards the country's defence identified several patterns and enduring policy preferences, among which was a strong tendency to view security through a realist lens, a perceived continuous need for furthering military might, as well as an ongoing conviction of the necessity of having a powerful protector for securing the nation's defence interests. The Australian view on security has been underpinned by fear of its geographical remoteness from allies combined with its proximity to a culturally unfamiliar Asia. This sense of alienation from its immediate region and unease caused by its situation has been fuelled by a sense that international relations are inherently unpredictable. By realising the way material and ideational factors interlock, providing a social "map" that informs an actor which conditions should be interpreted as dangerous and how other states and their militaries are to be perceived, this study has pointed to the social construction of insecurity in the Australian psyche and policymaking setting. In the case of Australia, the study found that its dominant strategic culture proves to be a highly useful variable in better explaining the country's past and current historical security arrangements and policy preferences, and that its core characteristics have remained remarkably steady throughout Australian history .

Whereas strategic culture helped to point out the ideational context in which policy and defence strategy emerged, along with the attitudes that underpinned it, the identity component helps us understand why Australia has formed a strong alliance with the United

States, while its relationships with Asian neighbours remain less familiar. As a culturally alienated nation, that sees itself belonging to the English-speaking Western camp, Australia's relations with its Asian neighbours have largely been underpinned by a cautious, ongoing recalculation of relative power gains in the region. In contrast, the US is seen as culturally familiar and strong. It is viewed as indispensable to Australian security, something manifested in nearly blind support for its America's international undertakings, as was most recently reflected in the country's support for the US-led military venture in Iraq. This shared identification with the world's superpower has also ramifications for how Australia perceives security challenges in the Pacific, as was evident in its rationale for RAMSI. Canberra framed its involvement in the Solomon Islands as a matter of national security, employing discourse of "failed state" and "terrorism", along with the label of "arc of instability" all of which echoed the Bush administration's security vocabulary. In summary therefore, the Australian case suggests that despite major shifts in external threats and domestic politics, there are deeply embedded ideational factors that guide security thinking and policymaking in the country, constituting a framework within which policy is constrained and developed. Like Australia's strategic culture, the country's identity has also largely withstood the test of time, even as Australia's demography has changed to reduce differences with Asia.

The case of New Zealand is more complex, as the strategic beliefs underpinning defence policy formulation in the country shifted more than was the case in Australia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During its time as a colony and dominion New Zealand heavily relied on Great Britain for security, consolidating a strong emotional attachment to the "Motherland". With the growing desire for independence in foreign policy, evident particularly from the 1930s onwards, New Zealand pursued a strategy that sought to advance multilateral diplomacy, whilst retaining its military alliances. New Zealanders however were never as convinced as the Australians regarding the need for advancing hard military capabilities and the necessity of maintaining a security guarantor. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century, the country had developed a more distinct strategic culture, one that focused on independence in strategic thought, the pursuit of multilateral security arrangements, and, from around the 1970s onwards, non-aggressive means of furthering security based on anti-war and anti-nuclear sentiments. These interests were underpinned by growing distinct values and an independence of thought that continues to govern policy preferences to the present day.

New Zealand's predominant state identity has gradually been evolving from a British colonial outpost that was seen as the most loyal dominion, to that of an independent Pacific nation. This evolution has impacted on the country's defence priorities and regional security approach. It is most evident in political rhetoric, and is more subtly evident in changing policy orientation. The country does not have such a strong identification with the United States as is the case with Australia, which may be seen as part of the reason for its breakaway from ANZUS. It does, however have stronger connections with its immediate Pacific region, largely due to its demography and increasing Pacific population. This has been manifested in a more indirect and low-key approach to resolving regional crises as well as an arguably greater sensitivity to regional security concerns, such as those caused by climate change. The centrality of upholding a firm anti-nuclear stance is also better understood once this policy is interpreted with an identity framework.

The divergence between the Australian and New Zealand approaches to defence matters and their different rationales for intervening in the Pacific is therefore better understood once non-material variables are included. Factors such as the geographical location of each country, their size and wealth still matter, but more importantly it is the way these aspects are interpreted and given meaning, which determines their significance. Hugh White believes that during the Cold War the differences were muted, and that now as each nation is trying to define itself and determine how to relate to the region, the "deep-seated differences are coming to the fore."<sup>522</sup> He points out that it is important to recognise the

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<sup>522</sup> White, 'Living without illusions: Where our defence relationship goes from here', pp. 134-135

enduring differences in Australian and New Zealand strategic perceptions and policy preferences, so that the future defence relationship is based on a better mutual understanding of the two countries' approaches.<sup>523</sup> He has a point. Australian officials have in the past criticised New Zealand for downgrading its hard military capabilities, while in turn New Zealand has been wary of what it sees as Australia's heavy-handed take on security. While the trans-Tasman bilateral defence relationship seems to be largely unaffected by their diverging security worldviews, both countries appear to point out the "irrationality" of their neighbour's approach, without fully understanding the "rationality" that underpins it. Once an ideational explanation is added to the examination of policy, it becomes more apparent why each country has pursued the strategy it has and what its rationalisation has been.

This study has particularly focused attention on the divergence in how Australia and New Zealand seek to defend their countries, in the belief that this occurrence is an interesting puzzle for investigation. However, it should be stressed that the divergence should not be overstated, in that the two countries' security policies continue to converge in many respects, and that often their differences are a matter of emphasis and not a matter of fundamental disagreement. As Phil Goff notes Australia is New Zealand's closest partner, especially in the economic and defence sphere and yet despite this "there will be differences of perspective, often reflected in a difference in tone."<sup>524</sup>

### **The Limitations of Strategic Culture and Identity**

Making use of fluid concepts such as strategic culture and identity as research tools is a challenge, one that not only requires a robust methodological framework, but also

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<sup>523</sup> Hugh White, 'Living without illusions: Where our defence relationship goes from here', in Bob Catley (ed.), *NZ-Australia relations: Moving together or drifting apart? Papers from the 36th Otago Foreign Policy School* (Wellington: Dark Horse Pub., 2002), p. 129

<sup>524</sup> Private correspondence with Minister of Defence, Phil Goff, 13 March 2008



acknowledgement that as concepts that are not cast in stone, but rather remain in constant fluidity, they have limited explanatory power. This partly explains neorealism's appeal. It is preoccupied with material factors, which are easier to measure, while researchers of strategic culture have a more complex task at hand, seeking to examine variables that are inherently difficult to define and quantify.<sup>525</sup> This study has sought to demonstrate that this is a task that can and should be attempted, despite the challenges. That said it is useful to point out some of the main limitations in using ideational variables for analysis, which this study has encountered.

One of the major problems in operating the variables of identity and strategic culture is their comparative imprecision. It is difficult, if at all possible, to identify in time when a country's identity and strategic culture emerges, when it changes, or how exactly one may define it. Even upon an agreed definition, as fluid constructs they require constant re-assessments of how a country perceives itself, its role and values, as well as how it is viewed by the outside world, such as regional neighbours. While the study has focused on examining political discourse and speeches made by leaders in which they refer to their sense of self, their country's goals and values, this kind of examination is by no means complete. To assuage some of these concerns, this analysis has attempted to include other useful sources such as public opinion data and the views of regional countries. However, this task has also been limited due to the complexity of studying how others perceive Australia and New Zealand and the inherent problematic nature of conducting such an investigation.

In the case of New Zealand, the study found it difficult to pinpoint the end of the country's "traditional" strategic culture and to identify a point in time where we can begin to distinguish a more independent identity, beliefs and values. This is probably due to the fact that the formation of strategic preferences and identity formation is an ongoing, fluid process.

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<sup>525</sup> John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore (eds.), *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), p. 229

Therefore my analysis provides generalisations of the kind of identity New Zealand and Australia have acquired, views which are open to criticism, and which in practice perhaps required a more detailed examination than was possible in a study of this length. For instance, the issue of whether New Zealand is in fact a “Pacific nation” or to what extent it has this kind of identity needs to be studied by not only adopting an inquisitive approach that examines the congruence between political discourse and policy, but also an investigation as to how the outside world (primarily Pacific states) view New Zealand. It might also be valuable for a future study of identity to go beyond the examination of official political discourse, extending attention to sources like the news media, literature and non-governmental perspectives, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the domineering identity of a state, as seen by its population and outside actors. When examining strategic culture, the objects of analysis could also be expanded, to include not only discourse of political elites, but also how images of war and peace are portrayed by the media, military ceremonies and so on.<sup>526</sup>

Another challenge is establishing causation. To what extent are ideational variables the direct cause of policy? As Maja Zehfuss points out, there is a problem of disentangling identity and behaviour. It is difficult to determine whether something is the result of a change in identity or just a change in behaviour.<sup>527</sup> Constructivist theory holds that a change in state identity affects the security interests and policies of a state.<sup>528</sup> While I argue this has been the case in New Zealand’s shifting security priorities, particularly as it promoted a more independent identity, it is also important to recognise the possibility of external shocks impacting on state security policy. Kowert and Legro notice that some sources of change that are externally inspired, such as exogenous historical events and revolutions are incapable of

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<sup>526</sup> Johnston, ‘Thinking about Strategic Culture’, p. 49

<sup>527</sup> Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 62

<sup>528</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security’, p. 52

being explained within an ideational logic of culture.<sup>529</sup> This appears to be the case, when due to external pressures; New Zealand turned to an alliance with the United States in 1951, despite its initial reservations and greater identification with Great Britain.

A related challenge concerns the extent to which strategic culture impacts on policy. Macmillan, Booth and Trood believe that “Strategic culture produces tendencies, it creates predispositions, but it does not determine policy.”<sup>530</sup> This study supports this view. New Zealand’s participation in the war in Vietnam may be an example that can be interpreted within this logic, in that despite its anti-war predispositions, the country, largely due to external pressures and its alliance obligations supported American efforts in the war.

The duration of a particular identity and strategic culture also poses a challenge to scholarly analysis particularly because it raises questions as to their predictive potential. An inherent challenge facing scholars who use a constructivist approach concerns the identification of causes of change to the ideational variables that have guided policymaking in a particular state. Macmillan, Booth and Trood attempt to find a way around this problem by arguing that “change in strategic culture may be the result of external circumstances, the follow-on from a profoundly dramatic event, a consequence of technological innovation or the result of political manipulation by elites.”<sup>531</sup> They suggest therefore that there is an interactive link between material and cultural variables, where the former, in the form of technological equipment for instance, may lead to cultural or ideational changes. This very broad list of possible factors hinders the use of strategic culture as a predictive tool. Kowert and Legro point out a similar shortcoming in that a sociological approach has difficulty in explaining both patterns of stability and change.<sup>532</sup> The strength of strategic culture and identity appears

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<sup>529</sup> Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, ‘Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise’, in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 489

<sup>530</sup> Macmillan, Booth and Trood, ‘Strategic Culture’, p. 13

<sup>531</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>532</sup> Kowert and Legro, ‘Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise’, p. 488

to lie in their power to expand our understanding of policy formation, while they can perhaps at best only provide a limited prediction of future state behaviour.

### **Challenges for Further Research**

In order to add rigour and test the utility of ideational explanations like the one offered here, more case study research should attempt to examine the degree to which political leaders are socialised by their strategic culture and state identity and whether these constrain their policy options. Comparative case studies could be useful in comparing the policies and security interests of states which are similar in material terms and facing a relatively similar political environment. It is also important to study the level of domestic political consensus on the strategic values of a particular country, in order to test the influence of ideational variables and their effect on socialising political leaders into adopting key strategic values and preferences of a polity.

Future studies might examine the problem of discontinuity of strategic culture and identity and whether it is possible to develop a set of “predictive signs” on when this process is most likely to occur. Studies could start with testing the congruence as to security policy direction in a polity and examine the extent of divergence when changes in governments occur. If a strategic culture is as influential as advocates assert, then one should expect that parties of both political leanings will be socialised into the main values and ideas underpinning security thinking in the country. If that is not the case, and a significant departure in defence policy takes place then researchers should evaluate whether there has been a breakdown in the previous strategic culture underpinning security thinking, by examining, for instance the level of debate on security in the time leading up to the change or the impact of external shocks. Public opinion polls may also be useful in assisting this kind of investigation. The fact that strategic cultures and identities are not cast in concrete for all time,

remains a challenge for scholarly analysis and more investigation is needed in order to provide a framework that deals with not only explaining continuity, but also change in strategic thought.

In terms of methodology, scholars who use discourse analysis as a source for tracing identity and strategic culture must also be wary of its sometimes misleading and limiting nature. The problem of studying rhetoric is that states often project an image of the way they *want* to be seen, and not necessarily of the way they *are*. That is why a study confined solely to political discourse may provide limited insights, unless it is supported by other sources of data. This as was the case here, may involve the inclusion of public opinion poll data, the views of other regional players, and perhaps most importantly an effort to compare discourse with policy and behaviour. As culture and identity are not confined to just the political sphere, it might be useful for further research to draw on other sources that represent the country's self, including the content and framing of domestic news media.

These conclusions suggest the best approach might be an eclectic method, drawing on a range of sources and using different variables for analysis. As this study on the defence approaches of Australia and New Zealand has indicated, it is crucial to understand the domestic setting and the ideational factors influencing the choice of security policies by states. The use of a flexible methodology incorporating both strategic culture and identity as explanatory variables greatly assisted in the exploration of the historical origins of policy preferences and patterns of behaviour in security matters. The findings suggest that an approach based solely on material factors cannot provide an adequate explanation for the diverging security paths taken by the two countries. This is a lesson that needs to be appreciated by policymakers and officials on both sides of the Tasman. Until the roots of Australian and New Zealand thinking on defence issues are better understood and seen to grow out of different strategic cultures and identities, the two neighbours will continue to struggle to grasp the logic behind their respective policy decisions.

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