Middle Power or Awkward Partner?

A Study of Australian Foreign Policy in Asia

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The support and confidence of great friends are great assets; but it is unprofitable for Australia to pay an unnecessarily high price. The present price of our American friendship is some suspicion and wariness towards Australia in Asia, with whom we have to live for a thousand years

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DECLARATION

This is to certify:

(1) That the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD;

(2) That due acknowledgement has been made in the text to other material used;

(3) That the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of the bibliography.

Signed: Allan Patience

Date: 11 December, 2015
ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a clarification of middle power theorizing in order to demonstrate how what is identified here as *middle power imagining* contributes to Australia’s *awkward partnering* in the Asia Pacific region. Australia’s characteristic assumption of a middle power identity is re-conceptualized as *dependent middle power imagining*. It is argued in the thesis that an analysis of the scholarship and commentary (the political science) on Australian foreign policy points to a new and more nuanced understanding of Australia’s relations with its major Asian neighbours than the conventional accounts have thus far provided.
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I have benefitted from comments on two papers drawn from early drafts of chapters 2 and 3 that were anonymously reviewed for, respectively, the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, and the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*. The relevant chapters in the thesis are revised and expanded versions of those publications.

None of these good people is responsible for the errors, omissions, interpretations or judgments in the thesis. That awful responsibility is mine alone.

The epigraph on page 1 is a quotation from a Briefing Paper (dated 22 June 1955) by A.H. Tange (Permanent Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 1954-1965) prepared for External Affairs Minister, R. G. Casey.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This thesis seeks to make a contribution to the growing scholarly examination of Australia’s assumption of middle power status in regional and global forums (Beeson 2011; Beeson and Higgott 2014; Carr 2014; Carr 2015a; Carr 2015b; Cooper 1997; Evans 2015; Leaver 2008; Leaver and Cox 1997; Potter 2015; Ravenhill 1998; Sussex 2011; Ungerer 2007a; Ungerer 2007b; Ungerer 2008a). It reveals how re-conceptualizing the type (or types) of middle power identity that states like Australia assume in contemporary international politics can point to possible resolutions of problems in their foreign policy making. The thesis draws from Stephen George’s account of Britain’s ‘awkward partner’ relationship with the European Union (George 1998) in order to analyze Australia’s relations with two major states in Asia: Japan and China. As Philomena Murray et al. have pointed out:

In both the United Kingdom and Australia, the close security relationship with the United States, the Anglosphere’s cultural traditions and identity, and domestic politics all interact and produce the same problem of awkwardness in their engagement with regional processes (Murray et al. 2014, p. 296).

The thesis contends that the prevailing middle power identity that Australia affects in international politics contributes more to its awkward partnering with states like Japan and China than it does to desirable outcomes in the country’s regional diplomacy generally. This points to a fundamental flaw in the making of the country’s foreign policy – a misplaced form of middle power imagining. This is not to argue, however, that Australia is the only awkward partner in Asia. In different ways and for different reasons Japan, China, North Korea, Malaysia – to name just a few – could be viewed as having
awkward relationships within their regions. The point, however, is that Australia’s awkwardness is problematic for its foreign policy in Asia for interesting reasons that should be of concern to the country’s foreign policy makers.

As discussed in chapter 2, scholars of middle power theorizing routinely point to the lack of consensus about what the term middle power actually means. Cooper et al. (1994) argued that initiatives taken by countries like Australia and Canada (for example, in regard to the Cairns Group of agricultural exporting economies) appear to have brought them a degree of middle power kudos in regional and global forums. However, despite the evidence of conceptual opaqueness in middle power theorizing (discussed in chapter 2), it has become the orthodox consensus among foreign policy commentators in Australia that the country is recognized – even respected – as a middle power in regional and global forums. Does this mean that its diplomacy is expansive and ambitious, reflecting the self-confidence of a ‘big country with an ability to influence the balance of power in Asia’ (Fullilove 2014; see also Downer 2003)? Is it suggestive of a country engaging in subtle and sensitive diplomacy in the security and diplomatic interstices of Asia (Miller 1969; White 2012b; Wesley 2013)? These questions have guided the development of the thesis.

Middle Power Imagining

The thesis coins the term middle power imagining to point to the manner in which Australians are inclined to think about (imagine) their state’s standing in international affairs. Many would agree with the of Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant that Australia is ‘manifestly not a great power or even a major power; nor, however is it small or insignificant’ (Evans and Grant 1995, p. 344). As outlined in chapter 3, middle power imagining, then, is the manner in which growing numbers of foreign
policy observers in Australia have come to identify with what they firmly believe is their country’s international standing since World War II.

There are alternatives to the conventional middle power imagining Australia assumes in regional and global politics. There is a view for example that the country should remain firmly grounded within the anglosphere. Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott expressed this view in these terms: ‘The bonds between the countries of the anglosphere arise from patterns of thinking originally shaped by Shakespeare and the King James Bible, constantly reinforced by reading each other’s books, watching the same movies and consuming the same international magazines’ (Abbott 2009, p. 159; see also Knopfelmacher 1982). Stefano Gulmanelli argues that conservative Australian leaders like John Howard believe that membership of the Anglosphere implies interests ‘shared with the UK and the US [that] provide the compass in defining Australia’s national interest and its projection into the world’ (Gulmanelli 2014, p. 593).

Alternatively, it has been proposed that Australia is better understood within broader western European cultural traditions (Crowley 1968; Hirst 1993; Passmore 1992). This would suggest that the country’s cultural ‘relocation’ into Asia – to utilize Higgott and Nossal’s (1997) term – conjures up unrealistic, even potentially anti-social and conflicting demands that could corrode the country’s time-honoured traditions and stifle the development of more pragmatic economic and strategic links with the region.

Samuel Huntington, the American realist scholar, counseled Australia against becoming ‘torn’ between its British-European-American cultural and strategic affiliations and the geo-politics of the Asia Pacific region. Any prevarication about its commitment to Western civilizational values and its contingent alliance with the
United States (with the ‘West’) could imperil Australia’s security in an increasingly anarchical and dangerous world (Huntington 1996, pp. 151-154).

Each of these factors in Australia’s historical development contains a grain of truth. Each has been influential in various combinations with other factors in the evolution of the country’s relations with the world beyond its borders and in the foreign policy debates within its borders. It has also been argued that Australia’s historical ties with Britain, its commitment to the Commonwealth, and its on-going alliance with the United States have benefitted the country throughout the Cold War years and since (Abbott 2009, pp. 156-161; Partington 1991). Nor, however, have these relationships been without cost. It is argued in the thesis that a worrying indicator of that cost is Australia’s awkwardness in the Asia Pacific region.

Australia’s growing links with Asia, and its post-War development as a robustly multicultural society (one that embraces a growing number of settlers from Asia) suggest that seeking exclusive membership in a grouping of Anglosphere states is not Australia’s only (or even most desirable) option in an increasingly cosmopolitan world. Additionally, an understanding of the European cultural influences in Australian history that categorically (and at times simplistically) differentiates Australia from the cultures of its region will undoubtedly inhibit the development of positive relations with the country’s Asian neighbours. Indeed, many of those states also acknowledge European (‘modernizing’) influences in their own national cultures, and this suggests that there might be common ground where cooperation rather than estrangement could (indeed should) be the order of the day.

Edward Said once observed that ‘All cultures are involved with one another, none is single and pure; all are hybrid, heterogeneous’ (Said 1994, p. xxix). Australia could build on this relevant observation to propose that, as a successful multicultural
society, its governments should be ambitious to play an active and valued role in a cosmopolitan Asia. This may not be as fanciful as it seems at first glance, provided Australians are able to become familiar with Asian cultures through comprehensive education programs (Patience 2014c). Furthermore, in the wake of the United Soviet Socialist Republics’ (USSR) implosion and China’s transformation into a major trading partner, Australia’s Cold War ‘fear of China’ has been replaced with what is an economically pragmatic outlook, although one tinged with degrees of suspicion and constrained by ignorance about the region. This is despite Stuart Harris’s advice nearly twenty years ago that Australia should seek to cultivate ‘friendly relations of the kind that enable us to say when we think China is doing the wrong thing and to have that concern considered on its merits. This attitude, not one based on fear of China, is the most sensible framework for Australia’s political relations with China’ (Harris 1996, p. 19).

Since the 1980s there has been a growing awareness among many of Australia’s contemporary foreign policy leaders of the core relevance of Asia to the country’s security and prosperity. However, it still tends to be a constrained awareness, prioritizing benefits accruing from the growth of the Chinese economy, continuing demand for Australian resources from Japan, and the greatly anticipated expansion of Asian markets for Australian food exports, inbound tourism, and financial, medical and education services. The economic growth of India and Indonesia in recent years has added to Australia’s burgeoning enthusiasm for expanding its trade with Asia. So we are provided with phrases like ‘being in Asia but not of it’ and ‘practical regionalism,’ in opposition to ‘cultural regionalism,’ (Downer 2000) ensure that economic utilitarianism dominates much of Australian foreign policy thinking about Asia. Clive Hamilton’s observation is relevant: ‘In the
belief that economics is all, our foreign relations have become increasingly dominated by the pursuit of narrow trade and investment interests’ (Hamilton 1997, p. 3).

As business and political leaders look to Asia through the narrow prism of trade and commerce, the wider population appears unpersuaded about benefits that may flow from the cultivation of closer cultural engagements (or enmeshment) with Asian societies. There is little public interest, for example, in educating young Australians about those societies’ histories, cultures and languages. David Hill has pointed to a 37 per cent drop in enrolments in Indonesian studies in schools and universities in the decade to 2010 (Hill 2014; see also Orton 2010). At the same time a debate has erupted about potential instability in Asia caused by the re-emergence of China as a major regional power. Referring to this controversy Dr Chengxin Pan notes: ‘Rather than ushering in a new era of Australia’s China literacy, the highly charged debate exposes a rich seam of Australia’s Asia anxiety’ (Pan 2012, p. 246).

The contradictory influences of economic utilitarianism and suspicions about China’s ambitions in the Asia Pacific are tending to influence (and at times distort) attitudes to Asia generally in Australia today. They reinforce a long-held commitment in Australia to a particular kind of middle power identity. In chapter 2 this is described as a dependent form of middle power imagining, prioritizing alliances with ‘great and powerful friends.’ There is an ingrained conviction in contemporary Australia that it would be unwise for the country to assert its independence from what is today the country’s greatest and most powerful ally, the United States of America, on whom it is plainly dependent for its security.
Australia’s Middle Power Imagining in Asia

The hypothesis that Australia’s middle power imagining contributes to the country’s awkward partnering in the region is investigated through a survey of previous scholarship – the political science – of Australia’s bilateral relations with two states of high importance to Australia in the Asian region: Japan and China. By ‘political science’ is meant a wide selection of scholarly texts, book chapters, political memoirs and biographies, academic journal articles, political speeches, and media commentaries addressing the issues explored in this thesis. What emerges from the research has been that discovery that issues explored in not a few contemporary accounts of Australian foreign policy, seemingly de novo, have already been elucidated, often in depth and with remarkable prescience, in earlier scholarship, sometimes without acknowledgment. This historical political science deserves to be more closely explored by contemporary scholars and policy makers – if only to ensure they are not reinventing the wheel. This thesis, in part, is an attempt to step in that direction.

By the middle of the 1960s Japan had emerged as a major market for Australian resources (especially coal, iron ore, and bauxite, and wool, meat and dairy products). In July 2014 the two countries signed a Free Trade Agreement. Plans are advanced for cooperating on defence matters. Notwithstanding these developments, Australia continues to oppose Japanese ‘scientific whaling’ in the Southern Ocean, having received a favourable judgement on the matter to the

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1 For example, in the writings of: A.V.C. Melbourne, Frederic Eggleston, W.G. Goddard, W.G.K Duncan, William Macmahon Ball, D.C.S. Sissons, J.D.B. Miller, C.P. Fitzgerald, T.B. Millar, T.H. Rigby, Hedley Bull, Coral Bell, Max Teichmann, David Martin, J. A. Camilleri. Contemporary Australian foreign policy scholars are more indebted to the work of those earlier scholars than they often appear to realize.
International Court of Justice, albeit one by which Japan appears to be steadfastly unfazed, as noted in chapter 5.

By the late 1990s China was rapidly emerging as a regional power in the Asia Pacific. Early in the twenty-first century it surpassed Japan as Australia’s biggest trading partner. In November 2104 Australia and China signed a Free Trade Agreement and there are on-going negotiations about joint military training programs.

The importance of Asia to Australia’s security and prosperity came into sharper foreign and defence policy focus in 1989 when the Hawke Government commissioned a report entitled *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy*. This Report (generally known as the Garnaut Report) is an important milestone in the making of Australian foreign policy on Asia. In drawing attention to economic, political and social transformations taking place in Northeast Asia, it announced:

This is a time of great opportunity for Australia. It is a time when Australians have a chance to grasp the prosperity, self-confidence and independence in an interdependent world that earlier Australians in expansive times had hoped for their country [...] Australians, in a favourable international environment, will choose whether they step out in new, more hopeful directions throughout the twenty-first century (Garnaut 1989, p. 1).

This report was the prelude to a plethora of books, articles, reports, conference papers and commentaries on how Australia could (and should) be better integrated into the region (see for example, Broinowski 1992; FitzGerald 1997; Griffiths and Wesley 2010; Keating 2000; Walker 1999; Wesley 2007; Wesley 2011; White 2010; White 2012b). Much of this literature has contributed to the growing understanding of Asia’s importance to Australia’s foreign policy (see for example, Australian Government 2012; Beeson 2001; Beeson and Higgott 2014; Beeson and Jayasuriya 2009; Capling 2008; Higgott and Nossal 2008; Johnson *et al.* 2010). It has pointed to
the region’s historical and on-going rivalries and mutual suspicions while coping with mounting pressures of ‘predatory globalization’ (Falk 1999). It has identified ‘transnational threats’ in the region including climate change, food, water and energy security issues, a growing refugee crisis, international crime syndicates, terrorist threats, and disease pandemics (Burke 2006; Dupont 2001). More recently it has been focusing on how the region – including Australia – may come to grips with a re-emerging China while dealing with the other big powers in the region, the United States and Japan (Beeson 2004; Beeson and Li 2014, ch. 8; Pan 2012; White 2012a; White 2012b).

So how do Australia’s leading politicians, foreign policy commentators and scholars think their country is regarded in this dynamically complex regional setting? How do they imagine the Australian version of liberal representative government is understood among neighbouring states? Is Australia looked up to, or looked down upon? It is likely that many Australians take for granted that their country is recognized as a substantial middle power, not only in its region but also in the world. Not a few, for example, would therefore be disappointed to learn that their country ‘does not feature much on the [European Union] radar screen and it is not important enough to merit special consideration’ (Murray 2005, p. 7; see also Murray and Benvenuti 2014). Those Australians (for example, those identified in chapter 3) who persist in believing that their country is a respected middle power in the Asia Pacific, may also be equally shocked that it is not always seen in that light across the region.

What is ‘Asia’?

David Kang sums up the dilemma faced by those who would use the term ‘Asia’ indiscriminately: “‘Asia” often refers to a geographic area that takes in Russia and Japan, encompasses the entire Pacific Ocean including Australia, and ranges as far
west as India and Pakistan. These countries have different cultures, histories, political institutions, economies, geographic features, and climates’ (Kang 2003, p. 60). As Amitav Acharya notes: ‘Asia is, of course, not a given. It is constructed, as most regions tend to be. There are powerful forces working against the concept, with diversity (geographic, cultural, and political), rivalries, and the lack of European-style regional integration being chief among them (Acharya 2010, p. 33; see also Wesley 2015b, ch. 2). Australia’s geopolitical location is the southern perimeter of the Asia Pacific region. However, *culturally* it is almost universally identified as a Western country characterized by Western values, sharply differentiating it from its Asian and South Pacific neighbours. Nonetheless, just as the ‘West’ is an omnibus term that can mean many contradictory things, so ‘Asia’ is interpreted in a bewildering variety of ways. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* notes that ‘in Britain Asian is used to refer to people who come from (or whose parents came from) the Indian subcontinent, while in North America it is used to refer to people from the Far East.’ It is noteworthy, as the Korean historian Hye Jeong Park points out, that ‘It was Europeans who called Asia as Asia, not Asians’ (Park 2014, p. 892). This echoes the point made by Edward Said in *Orientalism*: ‘It is Europe that articulates the Orient’ (Said 1978, p. 57).

More recently within East Asia (China, Korea and Japan) ‘Asia’ has been increasingly appropriated to refer to the peoples of those countries, distinguishing them from peoples from other parts of the Asian continent (Acharya 2008, Part I; Schoppa 2007). This excludes, as ‘Asian,’ peoples from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, many from Southeast Asia, as well as Tibetans, Uighurs, Mongolians, and others in Central Asia. This appropriation of ‘Asia’ to mean *East Asia* is increasingly employed to draw a distinction between what is posited as an advanced
Asia in contrast to an Asia that remains a region of poorer or under-developed states. Increasingly ‘Asia’ is being read to mean China, or of peoples of Chinese origin, in much the same way that ‘Western’ is often read to mean American. It is noteworthy that what has been termed ‘the Asian Century’ may in effect be seen as the ‘China Century.’ As Michael Wesley notes: ‘China’s rapid rise, from a marginalized small economy to the largest and most central economy in the region, has led to heightened attentiveness among a range of countries to any assertions of superiority from Beijing’ (Wesley 2015e, pp. 106-7; See also Wesley 2015d). Hence the appropriation of the term ‘Asia’ to mean East Asia – in effect China – is all the more auspicious (Acharya 2008, ch. 4).

Various meanings of the terms ‘Asia’ and ‘Asian’ are discernible in the interstices of the ‘Great Traditions’ of Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam (Fingarette 1972; Harris 1999; Lester 1973; Little and Reed 1989; Redfield 1956). Each has contributed to the dynamism of what Robert Bellah refers to as ‘living communities whose religious practices defined who they were and whose stories are essential to their identities’ (Bellah 2011, p. 606). The influences of the Great Traditions remain powerfully present in the structuring of economies, the socializing of political elites and the systems of governance within which they operate, as well as the development of socio-cultural formations in Asia today. Acharya has noted that what he terms ‘the localization of new ideas and norms’ (for example, westernization or modernization) ‘does not extinguish existing local beliefs and practices, but may instead universalize and amplify the latter’ (Acharya 2009, p. 5).

For centuries the politics of the major East Asian states (Japan, North and South Korea, and China) have been profoundly shaped by Confucianist philosophical
and ideological traditions (Yang 2000). As Xinzhong Yao notes: ‘while the social 
structure of old Confucianism has long been demolished, its doctrinal and idealistic 
values remain inherent in Chinese psychology and underlie East Asian peoples’ 
attitudes and behaviour’ (Yao 2000, p. 275). Buddhism has not only reached into 
East Asia but has also shaped the lives and politics of peoples across South Asia and 
into Southeast Asia through post-War anti-colonialist movements and a wide range 
of nationalist and regional movements (Howell and Schak 2000). Hinduism has 
largely been confined to the Indian subcontinent, although it is also established in 
parts of Bangla Desh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia (Smart 1992, pp. 
95-100). Its resurgence in contemporary Indian politics in tandem with a rise in 
nationalism has far-reaching implications for the international relations of South Asia 
(Nussbaum 2009; Thakur 1995). The roots of Islam are very deep in many parts of 
Asia where they pre-date European colonialism (Azra 2005). A minority of Muslims 
has brought sometimes harsh and violent fundamentalist understandings of their 
religion to the forefront of contemporary politics in several Asian states (Aslan 2010, 
ch. 4). As Nathan and Kamali note, ‘it is its political dimension seized upon by its 
most conservative and radical elements that have aroused concern and suspicion both 
amongst the moderate Muslims and non-Muslim strata of the [Asian] populace’ 

Each of the Great Traditions in Asia continues to variously influence the 
contemporary politics and regional affairs within the region. And within each 
tradition there is a plethora of sects and political movements, sometimes in conflict with each other (for example, Shia and Sunni Islamic and Islamist groups) (Lapidus 2002, ch. 10).
In the face of this pluralism, some Asian leaders have asserted that there is a uniform ‘voice of Asia’ (for example, Ishihara 1995; Mahathir 1995; Mahbubani 1998). Chris Patten has rightly dismissed this assertion as ‘Asian values ballyhoo’ (Patten 1999, p. 153). On the opposite side of this counterfeit coin, writers like Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington have written books redolent with Western triumphalism – that in the aftermath of the Cold War, America and its Western allies had proven the superiority of the ‘West’ over the ‘Rest’ and that therefore its achievements are of contemporary universal relevance (Fukuyama 1992; Huntington 1996). Huntington warned that the West’s achievements were in danger of being over-shadowed by a ‘clash of civilizations’ in which anti-modern (or anti-Western) forces would be mobilized to clash with the ‘West’ with the intention of destabilizing it, if not destroying it.

The claims by the proponents of Asian values are contradicted by the centuries-old ethnic and cultural pluralisms that make plain that there is no such thing as a monolithic, over-arching, or uniform ‘Asian’ cultural or political discourse. Nor have there ever been such discourses. What we have instead is a complex pluralism in which not only are the Great Traditions dynamically present but also (to borrow from Redfield again) a host of ‘Little Traditions’ (localised religio-cultural practices, linguistic turns, and socio-economic institutions), as well as external influences imposed by the colonial era and since (Redfield 1956). Many of these Little Traditions are only now re-grouping as previous constraints originally imposed in colonial times are dissolving. This process has hastened as the Cold War recedes, leading to transformations in economies, social structures and political systems right across the contemporary Asian continent.
An example is Singapore. At its foundation in 1819 it was a humid, marshy and malarial island with little obvious value apart from its strategic potential as a naval base. Today, with a population of some six million, three-quarters of whom are Chinese in origin, it is one of the wealthiest and most technologically advanced cities in the world. Mandarin, Bahasa Malay, and Tamil are all official languages, while Buddhists, Daoists, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, animists and modern secularists live an orderly and mostly benign co-existence (Chandler et al. 2005, p. 14; Mahbubani 1998, pp. 183-7).

A reified understanding of ‘Asia’ is therefore profoundly at odds with developments in the contemporary world. As Breslin and Wilson remind us: ‘the search for a once-and-for-all single definition of the Asian region, and a correspondingly regional organisation embodying this definition, is not only misguided, but counterproductive’ (Breslin and Wilson 2015, p. 128). In the Conclusion (Chapter 7) it is argued that Australia can – and should – make a positive contribution to the emerging cosmopolitanism of Asia through a regular and sophisticated exercise of niche diplomacy. This will require a transformed middle power imagining that can only be achieved by addressing the educational and related cultural barriers that contribute to Australia’s awkward partnering in its region. This awkwardness is becoming more evident as various transformations are taking place across parts of Asia that suggest to many observers that the world is now embarking on an ‘Asian Century.’ This is a catch-all concept that needs to be interrogated.

What is the Asian Century?
Paul Keating has colourfully observed that ‘every galah in every pet shop is now talking about the Asian Century’ (quoted in Evans 2012). According to the breathless prose of former Economist editor Bill Emmott, the Asian Century ‘will
form the single biggest and most beneficial economic development in this twenty-first century, providing dynamism, trade, technological innovation and growth that will help us all’ (Emmott 2008, p. 284). In a similar vein Kishore Mahbubani announced the coming of what he termed ‘the new Asian hemisphere’ based on ‘the irresistible shift of global power to the east’ (Mahbubani 2008). Pankaj Mishra observes that, ‘As the West retreats into parochial neuroses, Asian countries appear more outward-looking, confident and optimistic (Mishra 2012, p. 296).

However, as noted above, the concept of ‘Asia’ can mean many different things. As Michael Wesley has observed: ‘Dividing the world’s largest, most populous and most diverse continent into arbitrary chunks is a very old habit of the human mind’ (Wesley, 2015 b, p. 37). Similar charges can be laid against the notion of the ‘Asian Century.’ Despite the triumphalism characterizing many of the conversations about the Asian Century, there are millions of people across Asia who are not obviously benefitting from an ‘Ascending Asia.’ Governance failure, corruption, endemic poverty, malnutrition, disease pandemics, famines and floods related to climate change, defiant transnational crime syndicates, terrorist attacks, repressive regimes – these are everyday realities still dogging many Asian states and societies and undermining human security in the region (Dupont 2001; Heshmati et al. 2015; Camilleri 2012).

As Chulalongkorn University’s Thitinan Pongsudhirak points out: ‘In Cambodia, for example, an estimated four million people live on less than $1.25 per day; 37 percent of Cambodian children under five years old suffer from malnutrition’ (Pongsudhirak 2014, p. 49). In the Philippines policies aimed at reducing poverty have had disappointing results (Asian Development Bank 2009). Meanwhile the Rohingya in Rokhine State in Myanmar (Burma) are daily facing vicious ethnic cleansing campaigns at the hands of
fundamentalist Buddhists (Bhattacharya, 2015). There are still millions of Bangla Deshies living below the poverty line (IMF, 2013). In Sri Lanka there is on-going persecution of Tamils (White, 2014). Counterproductive campaigns are being waged against alienated Muslims in southern Thailand and in Mindanao in the Philippines (Liow 2006). Murderous campaigns conducted by the Taliban are continuing relentlessly against Hazarachs in Afghanistan (Monsutti, 2005). Michael Kirby’s report to the United Nations has documented the unconscionable repression of North Korea’s subjects by its brutal government (Kirby, 2014). And despite the growth occurring in contemporary India and China, those countries’ economies are still a long way from alleviating the plights of millions of their rural poor (Niño-Zarazúa and Addison 2012). It is difficult to pinpoint precisely what benefits, if any, all of these post-colonial ‘wretched of the earth’ have yet to gain from the Asian Century. Moreover all the signs suggest that their prospects are likely to remain bleak for a long time to come.

Furthermore, the time-span implied in ‘the Asian Century’ is unhelpfully vague. Is it simply a metaphor? Is its estimated time-line based on empirical analyses of the relevant facts? Is it already under way? In asking these questions it is useful to recall that the seemingly interminable Cold War lasted for less than half a century. The grim Stalinist shadow cast by the former Soviet Union, which its propagandists predicted would last forever, fell rather short of a century. This suggests there could be rather more rhetoric than substance in the febrile commentaries linking the Asian Century and the twenty-first century.

The concept needs deconstructing. It is argued here that it has six notable components. At times these overlap and at other times they contradict each other. They all feed into a growing belief (or ideology) that the world is on the cusp of major transformations, even civilizational clashes, as Asia ‘ascends.’ Four of these components
are about what is perceived to be happening in Asia: (i) The China component, (ii) The India component, (iii) The Japan component, and (iv) The Asian ‘mini-tigers’ and ASEAN component. The remaining two arise from a tradition of self-doubting within the West itself. As Chih-yu Shi notes: ‘Not only does the alleged China rising in itself trigger endless debates among its observers over the meanings of China rising, but they also inspire one another into self-searching’ (Shi 2013, p. 18). This ‘self-searching’ relates to tendencies to ontological pessimism evident among a number of Western observers and is symptomatic of two further components relevant to the Asian Century: (v) Doubts about the sustainability of America’s superpower status, and (vi) Anxieties about the ‘decline of the west.’

(i) The China component

The most compelling evidence of a putative Asian Century is the re-emergence of China as a big power, regionally and globally. Doug Guthrie concludes: ‘As the twenty-first century unfolds, China’s role in the global economy will continue to grow and transform, and that role will also continue to transform China from within’ (Guthrie 2006, p. 331). The remarkable growth of the Chinese economy since Deng Xiao Peng’s qualified opening of his country’s markets in the late 1970s is at the epicentre of this development (Mackerras et al. 1998). The optimism evident in the view expressed by Guthrie (and by others) suggests that the times may be more aptly entitled the ‘China Century’ as commentators wonder – sometimes deliriously, sometimes anxiously, sometimes both – about the potential consequences of this development.

In a more sober assessment, Stuart Harris notes: ‘A substantial belief in the West […] is that China has long-term objectives that are not compatible with the Western system and its underlying values and beliefs’ (Harris 2014, p. 187). This echoes Napoleon Bonaparte’s purported warning: ‘Let China sleep, for when the Dragon wakes,
she will shake the world.’ Michael Thawley believes that China is unready to shape a new world order and is not ‘interested in endorsing the present one’ (quoted in Garnaut and Wroe 2015). This points to a conundrum for foreign and defence policy makers around the Asia Pacific, especially those (like Australia) that are closely allied with the United States. How should they respond to China’s challenges? Are conventional responses (for example, as one would expect from a dependent middle power) the most appropriate ways to meet the threats implicit (and increasingly explicit, in the East and South China Seas) in China’s re-emergence not only as an expanding economy but also as a rising military power? These questions point to uncertainties about what China’s re-emergence really means. Determining how to respond to the ‘China threat,’ as well as seeking to benefit from the economic spin-offs from China’s ‘rise,’ is complicated by the fact, as John Garnaut has observed, that ‘the story of inexorably rising China may not go on forever’ (Garnaut 2015, p. 18). There is mounting evidence that the ‘rise’ is stalling, at best temporarily, and maybe even entering a plateau phase, or even coming to an abrupt landing.

In addition to the economic and military aspects of China’s ambition to reassert its power in Asia are radical changes to its system of governance. James Leung points to President Xi Jinping’s promises to rid the Chinese bureaucracy of corrupt cadres and Party officials (Leung 2015, p. 32). The implementation of Xi’s policies has resulted in the selective arrest of high profile Politburo members and bureaucrats (McDonnell 2015). At the same time it has seen the closing down of public access to information within ‘that great black box that conceals the struggles, brutality, partial truths and outright fabrications upon which China has built its staggering economic and social transformation’ (Garnaut 2012, p. 120). Dazzled by China’s post-1978 record of
economic growth, China-watchers, like Guthrie, who are convinced of the imminence of democratic reforms in China, appear to have got ahead of themselves.

The early years of the twenty-first century have seen Asia’s regional politics overshadowed by China’s assertiveness, resulting in pockets of localized instability within China itself as well as in the region. What is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated is the extent to which China’s foreign policy is driven by internal influences, perhaps as much (or more) than any external influences or pressures. Robert Sutter pointed out that the Chinese leadership has exhibited a ‘long-standing tendency to exaggerate the strategic threat to China, posed [since the Cold War] by the United States […] to foster a united front against it’ (Sutter 2008, p. 70). Particularly since the 1990s, nationalist demonstrations have erupted in regions and cities across China, on occasions mobilized by Communist Party bosses to consolidate their leadership. At other times local nationalist protests have broken out spontaneously. As Fewsmith and Rosen have warned: ‘Renewed tensions in the Taiwan Straits, U.S. foreign policy decisions that are perceived as “anti-China,” and friction with Japan could all trigger nationalist reaction from China’s sub-elites or the broader public’ (Fewsmith and Rosen 2001, p. 187).

However, there are many steep mountains for the Chinese leadership to climb before the structural problems within ‘fragile’ China’s economy and reforms of its system of governance can be deemed to be successful (Shirk 2007; Verrender 2015). John Lee argues that ‘Mere growth cannot solve Beijing’s domestic and social problems just as it cannot solve the structural problems with its economy’ (Lee 2007, p. 131; see also Lee 2015). British journalist Ambrose Evans-Pritchard recalls President Xi’s promise at the Communist Party’s Third Plenum in November 2013 that the government would allow market forces to have free rein in the economy. Yet there remains a glaring contradiction in the fact that the vaunted free market forces are still subject to the strictures of an
authoritarian state. As Evans-Pritchard notes: ‘Xi was touting free enterprise, even as he tightened control on the internet, academia, and political dissent’ (Evans-Pritchard 2015, p. 28). However, the fact is that what is now occurring in China constitutes ‘the biggest strategic shift in Asia in decades, or even centuries’ (White 2015d, p. 19). Coming to grips with this reality will be a substantial part of what is meant by the Asian Century. But that is not what the Asian Century is *all* about. As Acharya points out:

> China is not the only country in the [Asian] region offering public goods to its followers. Japan is not to be discounted. While there is some uneasiness about recent developments in Japanese security policy, Japan remains a significant provider of investment and aid to the region. And the Japanese technological lead over China and other Asian neighbours is not about to be lost (Acharya 2008, p. 22).

(ii) *The Japan component*

Japan’s rapid economic growth, leading into the 1980s, made it a ‘development state’ model for other Asian economies. Its ‘economic miracle’ was based on an intimate relationship between government and business (Johnson 1992, ch. Nine). The flying geese metaphor, with Japan leading other Asian ‘mini-tiger’ economies into economic prosperity, had considerable influence in the region until the Japanese Government adopted radical neo-liberal economic reforms in the late 1980s (Hayter and Edgington 2004). Since then Japan’s economic growth has tapered off. The country is now a lonely economic goose rather than a model for its region. Nonetheless as Robert Locke has argued: ‘Japan is not in anything like the death-spiral that *laissez-faire* mythology supposes. It is, at absolute worst [...] stuck in a gentle stagnation of slow growth’ (Locke 2004, original italics). In 2012 the newly elected Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe began introducing a raft of economic reforms (dubbed ‘Abenomics’) expanding Japan’s fiscal policy, easing monetary policy, and introducing structural reforms in the labour market (McBride and Xu 2015). The policies are aimed at producing a resurrection of
Japan’s ‘miraculous’ post-War economy. However from the evidence to date, it is not clear that a third Japanese ‘economic miracle’ is in the immediate offing.

Japan is also strengthening its military capacity in cooperation with the United States and other allies in the Asia Pacific, ostensibly in response to China’s re-emergence (Ball 2006). However, it is noteworthy that powerful conservative politicians in the dominant Liberal Democratic Party have been eager for Japan to shed the humiliations of its Pacific War ‘unconditional surrender’ and to become a ‘normal power’ in Asia (Singh 2002). The result, as Richard Samuels notes, is that: ‘Revision of the U.S.-imposed constitution – the holy grail of antimilitarism – is once again in play’ (Samuels 2008, p. 80). China’s re-emergence, therefore, is a godsend for nationalist elements in Japanese politics, providing them with the kind of rationale they have been long been searching for, to argue for expanding their country’s military presence in East Asia. This is the context in which Prime Minister Abe has been seeking to ‘reinterpret’ Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution that has corralled Japan’s military capability within constitutionally imposed limits (Fackler and Sanger 2014). The ‘reinterpretation’ will enable Japan to engage in more robust military strategies than were originally anticipated in its post-War ‘pacifist constitution’ (Sieg and Takenanaka 2014). Most of the allies who originally supported the insertion of Article Nine into the Japanese Constitution would now welcome its ‘reinterpretation’ (if not repeal), especially the United States.

Given its post-War economic history in Asia and its revived military ambitions, Japan remains a central player in contemporary East Asia. It will continue to be a

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2 Those limits are helpfully outlined in Hayes (2009, ch. 13). It is noteworthy that in 2015 the Japanese Defence Force Agency was ranked ninth among the ten most powerful military organisations in the world. When freed from its Article Nine constraints, Jieitai will be an even more powerful military organisation, collaborating with United States’ and other allies’ militaries (Hayes 2009, pp. 268-270; see also Kawashima 2005, ch. 2).
significant influence in the Asian Century, not the least because any military revival in Japan will be seen as a provocative move by China.

(iii) The India component

David Brewster has observed that ‘India is without doubt becoming an ever more important factor in the Asia Pacific strategic order and the world’ (Brewster 2012, p. 163). This development prompted Shashi Tharoor to announce that India is on a trajectory that will make his country a ‘twenty-first century power’ (Tharoor 2007). However, these ambitious assessments may be read as a reaction to the long period from 1947 when India’s economy stagnated and its international influence was, at best, muted. Ramesh Thakur notes that that era was marked by ‘under-utilisation of industrial capacity, inefficient allocation of foreign exchange and investment capital, blocked land reforms and a generally corrupt polity that severely [inhibited] the possibility of development’ (Thakur 1995, p. 344).

Recently however, India has been showing a determination to shrug off its mendicant state image. Following the end of the Cold War it has introduced a number of economic reforms resulting in increased trade between India and the United States, Europe and China. In the meantime, India is gaining recognition as a significant power regionally and globally. As Manjeet Pardesi notes: ‘the United States, not only seems to be willing to recognize India as a great power, especially in Southeast Asia, but is also championing it as one’ (Pardesi 2015, p. 17). Harsh Bhasin described this development as a ‘paradigm shift in Indo-US relations’ as the two countries increasingly discover common ground on security issues (Bhasin 2010, p. 26). Nonetheless, as Hugh White reminds us: ‘India will not allow itself to be a card for Washington or Tokyo to play their games with China. It has its own game to play’ (White 2015b, p. 12). Principally that game involves placing a high priority on sorting out its relationship with China. How it
does sort that out may not be all that comforting to its new allies in the West (Hall 2015). At the same time, seven Southeast Asian states are backing India’s ambitions for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (Taneja 2015). It is obvious that India is an emerging power that has to be taken into account in the Asian Century.

(iv) The Asian ‘mini-tigers’ and ASEAN component

The growing self-confidence, even assertiveness, of the so-called Asian ‘mini-tigers’ (economies emerging from the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-8: especially South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Indonesia), and of the ASEAN states, is also a significant component of the Asian Century. At the heart of this development is what has been described as ‘the widening and intensification of ASEAN’s leadership role in East Asian regionalism’ (Caballero-Anthony 2014, p. 564). ASEAN’s achievements sometimes are less real than imagined. Nonetheless, as Richard Stubbs concludes, ‘ASEAN is likely to play a significant role in the future of Southeast Asia, and the wider East Asia regions’ (Stubbs 2004, p. 232). It has cobbled together a range of regional groupings that may portend the configuring of a more substantial regional architecture in due course (Gill and Green 2009). However we assess ASEAN, there is little doubt that its members have benefitted from the organisation in terms of their collective influence in regional affairs, resulting in greater assertiveness in their dealings with their Asian neighbours while strutting the regional and even the global stage. As Lee Jones observes, ‘ASEAN […] seems to be moving towards a sovereignty regime in which ‘non-interference’ is permanently down-graded, and where domestic issues with important ramifications for the region are subjected to an emerging form of regional governance’ (Jones 2012, p. 126; see also Kennes 2015).

* * *
The four developments outlined above point to the fact that there will be more surprises, energy, assertiveness and disturbances among the states of Asia as time passes. Considered together they make a case for arguing that this century will see significant shifts towards Asia in the world economy and political leadership. But it is very unlikely that these shifts will constitute a unified and coordinated development. The Asian Century does not imply a united Asia emulating, for example, the still fragile coalescence in the European Union where ‘the drive for more integration in Europe risks being further slowed down’ (Reiterer 2015, p. 388). Asian regional institutions are at best weak while Asian states remain fiercely jealous of their sovereignty. As Christopher Clapham points out, ‘the post-colonial states have, since their independence in the decades following the Second World War, emerged as the most strident defenders of Westphalian order within the international order’ (Clapham 1999, p. 100). The likelihood of rivalries, mutual suspicions, pragmatic alliances, and even military conflicts between Asian states cannot be ruled out. If the Asian Century is incubating a coherent narrative for the diverse states of Asia, that narrative has yet to be revealed.

So we turn to the non-Asian elements contributing to the sometimes over-blown talk of the Asian Century.

(v) Doubts about the sustainability of America’s superpower status

The ideological representation of the Asian Century is evident in prognostications about the decline of the United States as the dominant global military and economic hegemon (Acharya 2014). In the post-Cold War era these claims have gained momentum as states formerly subject to, or cowed by the United States as a superpower begin to question the contemporary substance of American foreign and defence policies.

Fanning this development are growing concerns among American voters about the fundamental institutions of their democracy and the rise of political ginger groups that
promote a deep-seated hostility towards ‘big government’ (or ‘Washington’) (Perrin et al., 2014). Reporting on a large empirical survey of American voters, John Hibbing and Elizabeth Thiess-Morse have concluded that: ‘The people do not care at all about most public policies and do not want to be involved in the political process […] [They] prefer a process that allows them to keep politics at arm’s length’ (Hibbing and Thiess-Morse 2005, p. 227; see also Hibbing and Thiess-Morse 1995). Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson view this alienation from American democratic politics as a consequence of ‘decades of inattention to middle-class concerns and energetic [policy] action on behalf of the economically powerful’ (Hacker and Pierson 2010, p. 289). Observing it from an international perspective, Fareed Zakaria concludes: ‘American democracy is more dysfunctional and commands less authority than ever’ (Zakaria 2013, p. 24).

Citizens’ alienation from the democratic process in America may also be read as a reaction to setbacks (even humiliations) in America’s post World War II foreign policy. These include the stalemate that ended the Korean War, the defeat in the Vietnam War, and the massive expenditure of blood and treasure on seemingly unwinnable conflicts in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Adding to these woes is the unpredictability of the ‘war on terror’ while Americans are still haunted by the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York in September 2001. Setbacks like these have prompted some outspoken American commentators to ask whether their country is declining as a world power. William Pfaff, for example, opines that ‘Americans today conduct a colossally militarized but morally nugatory global mission supported by apparent majorities of the political, intellectual, and academic elites of the nation. It has lacked from the very beginning an attainable goal’ (Pfaff 2010, p. 190). Ahmed Rashid shares a similar view: ‘American power has been squandered, and hatred for Americans has become a global phenomenon’ (Rashid 2008, p. LVIII). Accusations
of this order have been augmented by what Gilbert Rozman describes as ‘pointed criticisms of the United States for causing the world financial crisis’ (Rozman 2012, p. 27). The ‘self-searching’ that Shi referred to has raised questions inside and outside the United States about the sustainability of the *Pax Americana* that has held sway across the Asia Pacific since the end of the Pacific War (Pempel 2010). Is the Asian Century really about the establishment of a *Pax Sinica*? Martin Jacques concludes, perhaps more in hope than expectation, that this is likely: ‘As a Chinese world order begins to take shape, the American world order is eroding with remarkable speed’ (Jacques 2012, p. 636).

But is it? Harris notes that historically China has exercised a regional rather than global influence, and this remains so today (Harris 2014, p. 168). Moreover, controversy over the United States’ security strategies will continue to proliferate simply because America is a global power with a global reach, while its cultural influence (‘soft power’) is second to none across the globe. As the foreign editor of *The Australian* noted: ‘The paradox of course is that people sometimes loathe America at the very same time as they want to be Americans, or at least to have what Americans have’ (Sheridan 2006, p. 290). Insignificant states rarely attract the kind of vitriol (or jealousy) that great powers do because of what they are. While United States foreign and defence policy is certainly not above reproach, America remains the preferred great power in the Asia Pacific, no doubt to China’s chagrin. As journalist John Garnaut points out:

The generals in Myanmar have dumped their Beijing sponsors, as have voters in Sri Lanka. The people of Japan and India have chosen strident nationalists who can “stand up to China”. Vietnam is no longer fighting American forces but joining them for exercises. The Philippines, after kicking out American bases, is harassing the US Navy to return. All of these nations and half a dozen others are moving rapidly closer to the US (Garnaut 2015c, p. 18).
Claims that the United States is losing its potency as the major player in the Asia Pacific are usually premised on a view that conflict with China is more or less inevitable, in due course (Mearsheimer 2104). However Geoffrey Garret points to the complex economic inter-connectedness of America and China: ‘America,’ he writes, ‘seeks to maximize the economic benefits of China’s rise’ (Garret 2010). He notes that Japan and South Korea’s also share similar economic inter-connectedness with China. The subtext in this observation is that states that are deeply engaged with each economically other are disinclined to go to war. In the meantime, there is little to suggest that the United States will not be a major player in the Asian Century. Amitav Acharya rightly refers to ‘the sweeping and as-yet-unfinished US hegemony in world politics’ (Acharya 2014, p. 2).

(vi) The decline of the West component

Predictions of the West’s decline belong to a tradition of pessimism that has long haunted modern social theory. Pierre-André Taguieff usefully labels this tradition as ‘ultrapessimistic involuntarism’ that he ascribes to Nietzsche whom he accuses of preaching ‘the over-all denunciation and total condemnation of the modern world’ (Taguieff 1997, p. 159). Nietzsche was not alone in predicting the end of the modern world. Anthony Giddens underlines Marx’s conviction that capitalism’s internal contradictions will lead to its inevitable dénouement. He elaborates Durkheim’s account of a pathologically individuated and anomic world. And he outlines Max Weber’s despair at modern society’s relentless entrapment in an ‘iron cage of rationality’ (Giddens 1971; see also Lukes 1985, ch. 27; Mitzman 1970, ch. 4).

The twentieth century’s two World Wars, the rise of totalitarian regimes in Hitler’s Germany, Mussolini’s Italy, Stalin’s Russia, the Nazi Holocaust, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Mao’s China – all these catastrophic examples of ‘modernity on endless trial’ helped to inject themes of disenchantment, alienation,
existentialist despair, and nihilism into a great deal of the West’s self-reflection (Kolakowski 1990). Jonathan Glover’s observation is strikingly apposite: ‘Trying to learn from the twentieth century atrocities can seem absurd […] Any ‘lessons’ drawn are bound to seem puny beside the events themselves’ (Glover 1999, p. 399). The Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 was a potent symbol of a world at the brink of self-destruction (Judt 2009, pp. 314-340). The Cold War intensified the darkness of this cultural mood during which ‘the world’s two superpowers were threatening to blow up the globe’ (Craig and Logevall 2009, p. 173). The result, as Francis Fukuyama concluded in 1992, was that ‘The twentieth century has made all of us into deep historical pessimists’ (1992, p. 3).³

In the post-Cold War years, as previously noted, Samuel Huntington was concerned that incipient self-doubting in the West required a regrouping of its member states under America’s leadership to resist being overwhelmed by anti-Western forces in a looming ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington 1996). In reviewing Huntington’s thesis, Professor Wang Gungwu observed that it heralded a paradigm shift in the West’s thinking about itself, noting that ‘to depict the values the West has stood for in the past two centuries as less than universal will call for a revolution of attitudes’ (Wang 2002, p. 267). It seems paradoxical that implicit in Huntington’s call to the West to arms is an underlying anxiety that the West is in fact facing the distinct possibility of its impending disintegration.

Meanwhile, the advocates of ‘Asian values’ had already been vaunting what they sought to convey as the superiority of Asian cultural practices over an increasingly decadent West (Barr 2000). Western culture, they asserted, was doomed by a lazy work

³ Although Fukuyama believed at that time (1992) that ‘the pessimistic lessons about history that our century supposedly taught us need to be rethought from the beginning’ (1992, p. 12). He proceeded to adopt an almost apocalyptic optimism, a view he has since modified considerably.
ethic, corrupt trade unions subverting essential services and industries, the prioritizing of human rights over community wellbeing, narcissism being mistaken for individualism, the turning of a blind eye to rebellious drug- and sex-addicted youth, and the wholesale acceptance of slack standards in public ethics and private morality. In 1993, for example, Malaysia’s Dr Mahathir had warned his fellow Malaysians against adopting Western democracy because it had caused ‘moral decay, homosexual activities, single parents and economic slow-down because of poor work ethics’ (quoted in Patten 1999, p. 150).

Japan’s arch-nationalist Shintaro Ishihara proclaimed the ‘paramount reality of the mid-1990s […] the retreat of the West and the increasing dynamism of Asia’ (Ishihara 1995, p. 141).

More intellectually impressive was Edward Said’s passionate critique of the West’s representations of ‘the Orient.’ Said argued that these representations reflected prejudices, misunderstandings, racism, and assumptions of Western superiority. He showed how they were integral to the colonial exploitation of Asia by the European imperial powers: ‘a willed imaginative and geographic division made between East and West, and lived through during many centuries’ (Said 1978, p. 201). Implicit in Said’s account of Orientalism is a deep critique of the West itself and its assumed (but rootless) ontological superiority. The fact that his thesis has been influential in Western intellectual circles points to a subterranean self-doubting (even self-hating) within the West, especially notable among scholars espousing a range of post-colonial and subaltern studies critiques of mainstream Western literary, historical, and philosophical scholarship that have been described by Robert Irwin as ‘the West’s hand-wringing and guilt about its imperialist past’ (Irwin 2007, p. 309).

Trepidation about the West’s demise has intensified anxieties about the encroaching Asian Century. As Christopher Layne expressed it in an issue of *The Atlantic*: ‘The Euro-
American world [has] had a long run of global dominance, but it is coming to an end’ (Layne 2012). Implicit in this pessimism is a view (even a fear) that Asia is rising to replace the ‘Euro-American world.’ Moreover, it assumes a ‘clash of civilizations’ scenario in which progressive Western values are in danger of being swamped by the values of resurrected oriental despots. This ignores the fact that Asia’s rise is significantly a product of the modernizing (or Europeanizing) of its economies, political systems and social institutions. Professor Wang, for example, identifies ‘a credible European heritage that will continue to be important in Asia for a long while’ (Wang 2002, p. 193). A multitude of Asian states and societies are absorbing Western values, consuming Western culture, and benefitting from technology transfers from the West as they eschew oppressive social mores and overcome the ravages of colonialism and under-development. In doing so, they have added to, refined, and enculturated those influences. The result is that modernity is now as much an Asian reality as much as it is a Western reality. To quote Wang Gungwu again: ‘It may not be long before as many Europeans learn from the modern experiences of Asia as our peoples have learnt from Europe’ (p. 214). The auguries are promising for an Asian contribution to a cosmopolitan world, rounding out the contributions of the ‘West.’

* * * *

In short, one need not be a card-carrying post-modernist to discern the ideological grabs for power, the semiotic twists and turns, and the normative imperatives constituting the substance of the grand narrative-making that the cheerleaders on the one hand and the doomsayers on the other would have us believe about the Asian Century. The days of a Cold War realist narrative insisting that global order can only be achieved when great powers are locked in a balance of power (that, in effect, is a balance of terror) are well and truly over. The myriad mini-narratives lumped together under the Asian Century
rubric constitute anything but a single coherent understanding of the region. The contemporary transformations now occurring in Asia must not be reduced to a rehashed version of the 1990s Asian values debates and/or a fearful anticipation of potential clashes between a declining West and the resurging ‘Rest.’ However, there should be no doubt that following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there have been shifts occurring in the global distribution of power. And some – but not all – of the most auspicious of those shifts are occurring in Asia. Clearly, then, the concepts of ‘Asia’ and the ‘Asian Century’ have to be treated with great care in seeking to establish their relevance to Australian foreign policy.

**Theories**

International Relations scholars have a wide range of theoretical tools at their disposal to help understand the ‘great complexities and variations’ in the making of foreign policy (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, p. 17; see also Wesley 2009). While realism has been the most influential theoretical paradigm in the discipline, other approaches have emerged to challenge, refine or redefine its theoretical perspectives (see, for example, Reus-Smit and Snidal 2008, Part III).

The analysis offered in this thesis seeks to draw from an ‘analytically eclectic’ range of those tools - ‘to follow,’ as Katzenstein and Sil recommend, ‘the road of problem-driven rather than paradigm-driven research’ (Katzenstein and Sil 2008, p. 110; see also Katzenstein and Okawara 2002). Steve Yetiv refers to this as the ‘integrated approach’ to political analysis: ‘presenting different perspectives on government behavior, testing them against the record, integrating the resulting insights into better explanations of government behavior, and bridging areas of theory that tend to be treated as separate’ (Yetiv 2004, p. 2). This approach helps us remove the blinkers imposed on political analysis through theoretical over-
determination. Where establishing the coherence of a theory becomes more important than the empirical realities it is aimed at clarifying, theoretical over-determination harms the analysis, even rendering it irrelevant.

However, this is not to question the importance of theory per se. Professedly atheoretical analyses of international politics are equally problematic to over-determining theories. What C. Wright Mills once famously described as ‘abstracted empiricism’ (the fetishizing of empirical fact gathering via narrowly stipulated positivist methodologies) can also be misleading (Mills 1959, ch. 2). Accounts based on abstracted empiricism are generally slaves to an unconscious or camouflaged theoretical agenda. On the other hand, theories that are open to regular empirical testing, and factual inquiry skeptically informed by ‘middle range’ theories, are likely to lead to a sharper focus on relevant facts and clearer understandings of the issues involved (Merton 1968, p. 39). They are infinitely more useful than a simple-minded focus on ‘the facts’ or purblind conformity to a reductive theoretical paradigm. Gertrude Himmelfarb’s sagacity remains relevant: ‘there are such things as truth and reality and […] there is a connection between them’ (Himmelfarb 1994, p. xii). Good political theorists are well aware of this vital connection.

The negative consequence of disconnecting truth from reality is demonstrated by the controversy in realist International Relations theory following the demise of the Soviet Union. Despite its paradigmatic sway in the discipline, realism underestimated evidence signaling the impending collapse of the USSR (Wohlforth 2010). (Although Realists were certainly not the only scholars to have experienced this failure of analytical acumen.) Moreover, realists seem not to have anticipated the alacrity with which many former east European allies of the old Soviet Union sought entry to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and alliances with the West
rather than flocking to the Russian Federation to balance the influence of the American superpower in Europe. Realism’s state-centricity and constricted theoretical focus on the power of superpowers – especially the United States – deflected attention away from the peoples, their identities, ideas and values, and the structures and events that ultimately brought down the Soviet Union and transformed the Cold War (Gaddis 1992-3). Gyngell and Wesley suggest that this oversight should have resulted in ‘much greater discrediting’ of realism in International Relations theory (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, p. 17). They partly blame the ‘precipitous decline in foreign policy analysis since the 1970s’ on the disparity between realist perspectives and the making of foreign policy and its diplomatic outcomes.

Gareth Evans has pointed out that in the real world of diplomacy ‘good ideas and values sometimes carry the day but often they don’t; realities constantly intrude, and compromises constantly have to be made’ (Evans 2011, p. 126). While there are plenty of ‘good ideas and values’ across a great deal of Australia’s foreign policy, the over-arching aim of this thesis is to interrogate the prevailing middle power thinking in the country’s foreign policy. Does the assumption of middle power status spring from what Evans believes are ‘good Australian ideas and values’? If the answer is ‘Yes’ to this question then a constructivist approach is likely to clarify the kind of middle power imagining that shapes Australian foreign policy in the Asia Pacific. Or is Australia’s middle power imagining the result of realities and compromises arising from its alliance with a ‘great and powerful friend’ that contribute to making Australia an awkward partner in the Asia Pacific? If the answer is ‘Yes’ to this second question then a realist approach will also be shown to be useful for this analysis.
Coming to grips with middle power imagining involves an investigation of values, identities, and cultural frameworks. Within these frameworks we can see how ideas and understandings are constructed about how leaders and followers understand their state, and how that state operates in domestic, regional and international contexts. What Hurd criticizes as the ‘materialism’ of realism and the ‘rationalism’ of neoliberalism are constraints on the scholarly analysis of middle powers (Hurd 2010, p. 300). A constructivist approach, on the other hand, begins with an appreciation of ‘how people and states think and behave in world politics […] premised on their understanding of the world around them, which includes their own beliefs about the world, the identities they hold about themselves and others, and the shared understandings and practices in which they participate’ (Hurd 2010, pp. 312-3). This approach is notably helpful in facilitating an analysis of middle power imagining and how this influences Australian foreign policy by going to the core of ideas and values driving that policy.

**Thesis Structure**

The thesis provides a clarification of the middle power concept in Australian foreign policy through an exploration of the implicit and explicit utilization of the concept in the political science of Australian foreign policy. It commences with a literature survey of the background of the concept in the history of International Relations theory. It then analyses how ‘middle power imagining’ (as it is discussed below) affects Australia’s relations with Japan and China and therefore is likely to affect the country’s diplomacy with other Asian states.

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Drawing on analyses by Benedict Anderson and Yaron Ezrahi, three concepts of middle power imagining are identified in Chapter 2 (Anderson 2006; Ezrahi 2012). In summary they are:

1) The Dependent Concept of Middle Power Imagining
The first concept has its origins in nineteenth century diplomacy in Western Europe, as the modern state system began to congeal and small states started to arrange alliances with great powers for commercial and security reasons, and to bask in reflected power and prestige. At the same time, European powers were imposing their imperial designs on the world (Luard 1992). It is contended in the thesis that this concept is the increasingly atrophied intellectual scaffolding within which Australia’s conventional middle power imagining has been erected.

2) The Regionalist Concept of Middle Power Imagining
The second concept, which has been noticeably present since the latter half of the twentieth century, is a by-product of the quickening forces of globalization. The post-World War II system of international politics, once mainly preoccupied with competing superpowers, is now under challenge as a multipolar world emerges from the throes of the Cold War. There are some signs that this concept has influenced recent Australian foreign policy in the Asia Pacific – for example, the Hawke Government’s commitment to a form of Asian regionalism through the development of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

3) The Neo-Kantian Concept of Middle Power Imagining
The third concept reprises Kantian philosophizing about the universality of the human experience (Kant 1996). It places high value on diplomacy engaged in by smaller states, or by putative middle powers, aimed at influencing international society (including bigger, more powerful states) to follow their lead on issues such as
combating human rights abuses, advocating measures to limit the spread of nuclear weapons, countering global warming, responding to global inequality, and mobilizing relief missions following regional catastrophes, whether naturally occurring or humanly contrived. Andrew Cooper describes this as middle power exercising of ‘niche diplomacy’ (Cooper 1997a). More recently, a development in Neo-Kantian middle power conceptualising has been the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (Evans 2008; International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001). This development suggests that orthodox understandings of state sovereignty are in the process of revision (Camilleri and Falk 1992; Kaldor 2003; Keane 2003; Mahbubani 2013; Singer 2002).

One of the outstanding features of neo-Kantian middle power imagining is its resistance to being overwhelmed by realist notions of power based on military might and economic indicators (what Nye refers to as ‘hard power’ or de Crespigny calls ‘coercive power’) (Nye 2011, chs. 2, 3; de Crespigny 1970, pp. 43-4). The forms of power Neo-Kantian middle powers are able to deploy are largely but not exclusively based on what de Crespigny described as ‘attrahent’ and ‘persuasive’ power – power based on attractiveness or reason (de Crespigny 1970, pp. 50-2). Nye has also labelled the latter form of power as ‘soft power’ (Nye 2011, ch. 4). However, Nye’s depiction may underestimate the magnitude and character of the kind of influence Neo-Kantian middle powers seek to bring to regional and international affairs. It is power, or influence, derived from being perceived as a ‘good international citizen,’ being trustworthy while appealing to rationally based arguments (for example, regarding the science of global warming and climate change), and moral suasion (for example, on human rights issues, women’s equality, or the inhumanity of torture and capital punishment).
Chapter 2 also explains the relevance of the ‘awkward partner’ concept to Australian foreign policy. As noted earlier, Murray et al. have argued that the ‘awkward partner’ sobriquet points to an alternative – and, this thesis argues, a better – understanding of Australian foreign policy to conventional analyses of Australian middle power imagining (Murray et al. 2014). They conclude that Australia’s ‘liminality’ in Asia has important similarities to Britain’s awkward partnering with the European Union. Stephen George (1998) coined the term ‘awkward partner’ in relation to Britain’s difficult relationship with the European Union. The United Kingdom’s reluctance in the 1950s to join what was initially known as the European Common Market, coupled with France’s (or, more precisely, President Charles de Gaulle’s) opposition to British membership, and on-going doubts on both sides about Britain’s commitment to Europe, have all contributed to the United Kingdom’s reputation as an awkward partner in the European Union (George 1998, pp. 28-41. See also Blair 2012, ch. 4; McCormack 2008, pp. 74-77).

However the United Kingdom is not the only awkward partner in an uncomfortable regional setting where it does not quite fit in. Thakur and Inoguchi have noted similarities between Japan’s awkwardness in mainland Asia and Britain’s awkwardness in Europe (Thakur and Inoguchi 2004; see also Cox 1989; Miller 2004). Moreover, in the Asia Pacific the diplomatic problems that tend to configure Japan as an awkward partner in Asia are not dissimilar to the awkwardness that sometimes marks Australian foreign policy in the region generally (Beeson and Yoshimatsu 2007; Patience and Jacques 2010).

John Burton identified an early manifestation of what is described in this thesis as Australia’s awkwardness in Asia, noting that from 1947 Australia declined to exercise an independent stand in the United Nations, preferring instead to align itself with other
British Commonwealth countries (Burton 1954, p. 90). This was, he noted, ‘a severe blow to Australian prestige throughout the world, and in particular in Asia.’ Subsequently, Australia hesitated to take a lead on issues related to its region. And by 1949, Burton notes, ‘principle, facts and even direct Australian interests were thrown aside and the guiding instruction [to the Department of External Affairs] was to “Follow the United States”’ (p. 90). In this we can detect the emergence of Australia’s post-war awkward partnering in Asia, but that awkwardness predates the Pacific War, as demonstrated in the prewar history of Australia’s relations with Japan outlined in chapter 5.

Chapter 3 provides a background to the scholarly analysis (or what is termed here, the political science) of Australian foreign policy from federation in 1901 to the present. It identifies two major competing streams of middle power thinking in Australian foreign policy and traces these streams back to their sources by focusing on the formative experiences of Australia as an ‘Old Dominion’ (or ‘White Dominion’) within the British Empire, on the influence of the White Australia policy on the country’s relations with its region and the world, on the influence of the ‘tyranny of distance’ on Australian security thinking, and on the ‘anxieties’ produced by fears induced by Australia’s proximity to Asia.

Chapter 4 asks whether Australia can be identified as being a part of Asia. Higgott and Nossal have questioned the effectiveness of former Prime Minister Hawke’s advocacy of Australia’s ‘enmeshment’ with Asia (Higgott and Nossal 2008; Hawke 1994, p. 230). They point to the country’s persistent ‘liminality’ in its region, the manner in which it hovers at the cultural and political margins of Asia – geopolitically in but not culturally of Asia. This thesis traces Australia’s hesitant, anxious and largely unexpected ‘relocation’ into Asia Pacific that, paradoxically, is due in part to its security alliance with
the United States. It is argued that the alliance has helped Australia to develop and deepen its Asian diplomacy, especially since 1989.

The choice for Australia is whether or not to move on from what the alliance with the United States helped it to achieve in Asia, towards further integration into the Asia Pacific region. This question has become an urgent one. The almost instinctive response (or reaction) to Australia’s sense of insecurity in its region has been to look for even closer security ties with the United States and its like-minded allies in the region. As Tony Kevin has noted: ‘In the post-September 11 era, the government decided to seek closer defence integration with the United States. Australia’s defence planners are still grappling with this shift’ (Kevin 2004, p. 302). As the thesis asks in chapter 4: Does this mean that Australia’s ‘relocation’ journey into Asia has come to a sharp halt, or has it merely stalled?

Chapter 4 also explores one of the core features of Australia’s prevailing middle power imagining. This is the country’s ingrained dependency on ‘great and powerful friends’ – even when those friends are potentially in conflict with states in the region. As W.J. Hudson noted nearly half a century ago: ‘Australia’s experience of diplomacy has, perhaps to an uncommon degree, been taken up with alliance diplomacy’ (Hudson 1970, p. 86; see also Harper 1987). Hudson’s observation remains relevant. At first this tendency was embedded in Australia’s reliance on Britain for its diplomacy and security. But faith in the reliability of Britain’s security arrangements in the region declined after 1942, following the rout of Britain and its allies in Singapore by Japanese forces (Day 1988; Shores et al. 2002). That decline accelerated considerably when Britain joined what is now known as the European Union in 1973. Meanwhile, during the Pacific War, America emerged as Australia’s second big power ally – a development that gathered momentum after the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS)
was signed in 1951 (Bell and Bell 1993, ch. 3; Murphy 2000, ch. 7). Hugh White sums it up precisely: ‘No other country in Asia – perhaps none in the world – has relied for so long, and so deeply, and so happily on America. None has benefited more from an alliance with that remarkable country’ (White 2012b, p. 48).

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on studies of Australia’s relations with Japan and China respectively. The aim in these chapters is to illustrate the manner in which Australia’s predominant form of middle power imagining has led to awkwardness in the country’s relations with each of these two major Asian powers. Each state is of significance to Australia’s security and prosperity. How Australian foreign policy towards both states either facilitates or constrains Australia’s relations with each of them will also have ramifications, as Arthur Tange observed, for the security of Australia and the wider Asia Pacific region ‘for a thousand years’ (Tange 1954). It is noted in the concluding chapter that the conceptual clarification arrived at in the thesis points to the awkwardness of the predominant mode of middle power imagining shaping Australia’s relations. This is true not only with regard to Japan and China but also to much of the rest of the Asia Pacific.

Overall the thesis proposes a case that suggests it is time for a comprehensive revision of Australia’s middle power identity. This entails navigating away from the prevailing dependent middle power imagining towards the development of a foreign policy that is more astutely attuned to the country’s geopolitical setting. The thesis proposes that the mere assertion that Australia is a middle power is to be confused by an oxymoron, because the ‘power’ in the country’s claim to ‘middle power’ status is largely derived from its alliance with the United States. In short, Australia’s power is mostly reflected power. Herein lies the awkwardness in Australia’s relations with states like Japan and China. As it faces up to the challenges of the Asian Century Australia will need to consider the symptoms and the causes of its awkward partnering in Asia by cultivating
skilful niche diplomacy derived from Regionalist and Neo-Kantian principles – principles that are explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 2
MIDDLE POWERS AND AWKWARD PARTNERS:
A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter commences with the proposition that what is termed middle power imagining is evidence of the way in which a state’s citizens identify with, and think about their state in international affairs. It also refers to the way the outside world evaluates the significance of that state in its regional and global settings. The chapter provides an assessment of the evolution of the middle power concept from classical and oriental thought, through medieval times, to the present day. It then identifies three concepts of middle power imagining relevant to contemporary International Relations theorizing.

The chapter also elaborates the awkward partner concept in International Relations and comments on its relevance to Australian foreign policy towards Japan and China. It is argued that Australia’s awkwardness, both regionally and bilaterally in the Asia Pacific, is likely to be better understood through a clarification of the problems associated with its dependent middle power imagining.

Imagining States

Lisbeth Aggestam has observed ‘There seems to be agreement between many foreign policy practitioners and theoreticians that perceptions of identity are of importance as a psychological frame of reference in international relations’ (Aggestam 1999; see also Holsti 1970). When citizens identify with their state they engage in a widely shared act of imagining within the political culture of that state. The idea of ‘imagining’ being utilized here reflects Benedict Anderson’s thesis that states are as much imagined into being by their power elites and citizens (or subjects) as they are constituted by the state’s political,
judicial, economic, and military institutions. Nations, Anderson concludes, are ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 2006). The constitutional historian Helen Irving agrees: ‘Before a nation can be formed, a group of separate populations must imagine themselves part of a larger national community. Then they must imagine it as natural and inevitable that such a community should exist’ (Irving 1999, p. 25). That community can coalesce into a state.

Yaron Ezrahi explains that much of the legitimacy of states and the potency (or otherwise) of the power they wield are grounded, in part, in what he describes as ‘necessary political fictions’ (Ezrahi 2012, p. 83). These emerge from a cultural miscellany of prevailing norms and values, religious doctrines, cultural symbols, structured actions, belief systems, ideological creeds, and propaganda. Influenced by these factors, citizens are induced, persuaded, or cajoled (socialized) into imagining that they belong to a grander, sometimes comforting, and at other times remote, mysterious and sometimes threatening collectivity called the state. Chengxin Pan explains that this imagining is often accompanied by a ‘chronic anxiety about [the state’s] ontological being,’ giving rise to an ‘incessant concern with national identity, border control, ‘access’, foreign invasion/takeover, regional order, power balance and power shift’ (Pan 2014a, p. 455).

Is this imagining an act of deliberative agency? Does it emerge from a sense of insecurity? Is it simply taken for granted? However we answer these questions, it is noteworthy that political imagining is a necessary condition for the constituting and legitimating of the state.

Anderson argued that, as ‘imagined communities,’ states are formed around a dynamic mix of ‘genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational
system, administrative regulations, and so forth’ (Anderson 2006, p. 14). The forces he identifies facilitate the ‘linking of fraternity, power and time meaningfully together’ (p. 35). In doing so they help to shape the institutions and policies of the state, enabling people to transcend (to borrow Edwina Palmer’s evocative phrase) the ‘self-destructive reality of our human insignificance’ (Palmer 2005, p. 15). The state, in short, provides opportunities for individual citizens to imagine themselves writ large. Robert Putnam refers to this as ‘bridging social capital,’ a reality that enables us to ‘transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves’ (Putnam 2000, p. 411).

However, state imagining does not always imply positive outcomes. Indeed, some argue that it rarely (if ever) results in positive outcomes – that any kind of collective or communitarian cooperation is inimical to the individual’s liberty and the flourishing of that individual (Burgin 2012, ch. 1). An example of the negative consequences of a state’s imagining is the *fleur du mal* of ultra-nationalism in Japan during the Pacific War. Emperor Hirohito and the Japanese nation became united in what Hirohito’s biographer describes as a ‘political unit based on sentiment and ideology, as well as shared memories of war’ (Bix 2001, p. 10). The instilling of this ultra-nationalist imagining about the Japanese state aimed to mobilize the Japanese people to make extraordinary sacrifices to enable the Japanese military to incorporate East and Southeast Asia into an imagined Japanese empire – the ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ (Dower, 1986, Part III). This demonstrated that the abstract nature of state imagining could be a powerful generator of legitimacy for governments and for the mobilization of large sectors of society for war – in Japan’s case during the Pacific War.

In modern systems of representative government most citizens tend to absorb and reproduce much of the imagining of their state into their thinking (or everyday
consciousness). It is reflected in their preferred values and their public actions. States assist (some more determinedly than others) in the reproduction of a broad political culture within which important elements of their citizens’ identities are grounded. However, some citizens simultaneously revise and adapt (and even challenge) their state’s imagining through exercises of agency – as members of civil society groups, as trades unionists, as activists in social movements, as public intellectuals, as religious leaders, or as members of political parties (Keane 2003; Neocleous 1996). Others internalize what Ezrahi describes as ‘necessary political fictions’ (Ezrahi 2012, p. 83). These are mostly taken-for-granted realities of everyday life for most people. As foreshadowed in the first chapter, these ‘fictions’ represent a multifaceted mixture of symbols, rituals, customary and contemporary values, traditional ‘stories’ and memories all woven into the vast tapestry of modern identity (or identities) (Giddens 1991, ch.7). They may be active in developing ‘bridging social capital’ (facilitating communities) or, alternatively, in fostering state-centric forms of nationalism, patriotism and militarism.

Ezrahi points to the ‘special capacity of the imagination to conceal its role in framing the contents of our mind, in generating and consolidating the images and metaphors that give form and meaning to our ideas and experiences’ (Ezrahi 2012, p. 13; see also McLaren 2012, Part I). Citizens’ socialization (or enculturation) into society and into its political arrangements may result in a form of indoctrination or absorption of experience and tradition, inducing within them an artless acceptance of the deployment of power in society and leading to an unshakable belief in its given or ‘natural’ character – its legitimation. This often occurs agnotologically through various forms of social persuasion, education, media management, ideological indoctrination, or state-sanctioned force. It is an ‘imagining’ that Michael Oakeshott reasoned is based on ‘self making and recognizing images, and moving about among them in manners appropriate to their
characters and with varying degrees of aptitude.’ This happens, he writes, ‘although we may not be always (or even often) aware of the universe of discourse to which our imagining on any occasion belongs’ (Oakeshott 1991, p. 496). Echoing Oakeshott, Ezrahi notes: ‘Historically, actual freedom has evidently been advanced largely by faith in illusions of liberty, imaginaries of independence, and voluntarism, in false idealizations of past freedoms as well as utopian visions of future freedoms’ (Ezrahi 2012, p. 313). In a similar vein the historian Miriam Dixon has pointed out that ‘under conditions of nurturance […] illusion distorts yet [it] may also enrich the reality to which it serves as an entrée and a way-station’ (Dixon 1999, p. 5). It would appear, therefore, that not all political illusions or fictions and their outcomes are always necessarily nefarious.

‘Political fictions’ extend into the domains of international politics, promulgated by political leaders, bureaucrats and academics. Natasha Hamilton-Hart points to the example of beliefs and attitudes towards the power of the United States in Southeast Asia ‘[that] rest on a combination of specific interests and illusions […] shaped, first, by the direct political, economic, and career interests of powerholders, foreign policy practitioners, and those in the wider foreign policy community’ (Hamilton-Hart 2012, pp. 9, 11). In Ezrahi’s view this is constructed upon ‘humanity’s capacity to imagine and historicize diverse forms of civic order.’ He explains:

[T]acit social and political knowledge is engaged and expressed in informal yet discernable commonsense ways of assembling the world and acting in it. It is precisely because imaginaries (unlike theories) can bind together and bring into relation diverse elements (such as fictions, facts, and emotions) that their effects on collective behavior […] are greater than those produced by philosophical ideas (Ezrahi 2012, p. 37).

If a majority of a state’s citizens does not share the conventional imagining it sponsors, or is skeptical about it, and if significant regional and global partners fail to
respond positively to it, it is very likely that the state will not only experience internal unrest but also struggle to establish what Martin Wight referred to as its ‘international legitimacy’ (Wight 1977, pp. 153-73). Moreover even if a state’s imagining attracts strong adherence (however this is nurtured, contrived, or enforced) within its borders but it is poorly received outside (a glaring example is North Korea), it will still lack international legitimacy leading to foreign policy weaknesses, even failure (Caspersen 2012, ch. 1). As Andrew Carr points out, ‘the view of others is fundamental […] there is a need for both capacity and a recognition of capacity by others’ (Carr 2015a, p. 24).

The consequences of the external reception of this imagining are a concern in this thesis. What are the reactions or responses of a state’s allies and contenders to its characteristic forms of state imagining? Australia’s middle power imagining sometimes distorts domestic attitudes about the Asia Pacific region (in the past, for example, inculcating popular beliefs about a ‘fearfully’ proximate Asia teeming with ‘yellow peril’ or a looming ‘red menace’). It also means that the country is not always recognised or respected in the region as the kind of middle power that orthodox opinion in Australia believes that it is.

Where a state’s imagining does achieve acceptance, within and outside its borders, other states may try to emulate it, not only benefitting its foreign policy but also transforming the circumstances of its region – or even aspects of the current global order. As Amitav Acharya notes: ‘Local actors operating out of historically formed normative contexts often redefine and reconstruct international norms in accordance with their beliefs and norms’ (Acharya 2009, p. 30). Joseph Nye explains that a state’s capacity to exercise this form of ‘soft power’ ‘rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them and is perceived to do so at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (where they are seen as
legitimate and having moral authority’ (Nye 2006, p. 11). Some Scandinavian states (with the possible exception of Finland), for example, acquired international respect partly for the success of their social policies and in part because they were able to minimize the excesses of the Cold War (Hilson 2008, p. 178). Meanwhile other states’ self-imaginings have resulted in negative responses within their regions and globally – for example, North Korea and Zimbabwe have acquired reputations in regional and global forums as pariah or rogue states, while internally the levels of propaganda and coercion by repressive state apparatuses guarantee a brutalized, cowed and compliant citizenry.

In short, if a state’s imagining is to win it respect internationally and legitimacy at home, it requires authenticity within and recognition without. A state that is an imagined community based on ideological fantasies or domestic and/or international delusions will very likely experience awkwardness that could lead to indifference or a lack of cooperation from neighbouring states. If ignored it is likely to result in international opposition, inviting sanctions or other forms of intervention like that experienced by South Africa during its grim apartheid years.

**Enter Middle Powers**

Carsten Holbraad has noted that within the discipline of International Relations, states that are ‘grouped together under the label of minor powers or small states [are] given only little attention’ (Holbraad 1984, p. 10). Because there are limits to their hard power capacities, these ‘minor powers’ or ‘small states’ (Holbraad is referring to middle powers like Canada) are more likely to experiment with soft power strategies in their foreign policies. In reality, they have little choice. Prior to Holbraad, Martin Wight had identified a class of lesser modern powers that despite their size are not, he observed, without some influence in their *regional* settings (Wight 1978, p. 63). He referred to them as ‘regional
great powers’ (big fish in small ponds) that ‘will probably be candidates, in the states-system at large, for the rank of middle power.’ Australia’s influence in the Pacific Islands Forum is an example (Peebles 2005, ch 3). Realism’s neglect of these ‘regional great powers’ (or middle powers) has arguably contributed to what Donnelly suggests is its ‘declining popularity’ in contemporary International Relations theory (Donnelly 2005, p. 48).

Realism’s paradigmatic dominance in International Relations theory (particularly in terms of its central focus on great powers) needs counterbalancing with a sharper focus on not-so-great powers and non-state actors in global politics. Scholars are becoming interested in ‘powers great and powers small and some in between trying to speak louder than the latter and to exert some influence on the former’ (Campbell 1984, p. 1247). In Canada, for example, the term ‘middle power’ has long been conventional terminology for characterizing the country’s role as ‘an active, responsible participant in global politics’ (Keating 2010, p. 6). Phenomena such as the post-war decolonization movements, the non-aligned bloc formed at the Bandung Conference in 1955, the evolution of regional organizations (for example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union), on-going alliance systems (for example, ANZUS, NATO), the assertiveness of small states in international politics, and the burgeoning influence of non-state actors in international affairs, all now have a place in International Relations scholarship (Hey 2003; Jackson 1987; Milner and Moravcsik 2009).

Pre-modern Middle Power Thinking

The ranking of states hierarchically (big, small, middle sized) is by no means a modern (or even post-modern) invention. In ancient China and classical Greece the organisation of political communities and their relative locations among similar or divergent communities was of great interest to thinkers as diverse as the Chinese sage Confucius
and later Mencius (?372-289 BCE or ?385-303 BCE), and the Athenian philosopher Socrates (469-399 BCE) (Johnson 2011, pp. 5-8).

Confucianist theorizing conceptualizes the state, or guo [国], as an ideal extended family, or jia [家]. The relationships between rulers and ruled emulate those between parents and children (Yao 2000, p. 184). Confucius believed that hierarchy (or authority), reciprocity, benevolence, discipline and loyalty characterize the well-ordered family. Although Confucius himself paid little attention to the world beyond the provincial borders of the Middle Kingdom, in an ideal Confucian world, states would reflect his ideal familial ordering, commensurate with their size and significance, within a hierarchy of states (Confucius 1997, ch. 20). Moreover, even though Confucianism has a marked commitment to rule by a social elite under the emperor (or, more specifically, to the authority of the cultivated or learned ‘gentleman’ – which is a concept not dissimilar to Plato’s notion of the philosopher-king), it contains no advocacy of, or apology for, the suppression or brutalization of the lower orders in society (Chan 2008, p. 76). The ideal Confucian hierarchy of families or states (big, middle sized and small) is unquestionably a benign one, if remote from the realities of the ‘anarchical society’ that constitutes the contemporary world ‘order.’

Mencius ranked the various fiefdoms within the Middle Kingdom into three categories: big, middle sized and small (Walker 1953, pp. 73-94). He concluded that fiefdoms of more than 100 square li⁴ could be designated as ‘big.’ Fiefdoms of 70 square li in area were deemed to be middle-sized. Those less than 50 square li in area in most

⁴ A li [里] is a measure of distance, roughly equivalent to about 4.8 kilometres. In Mencius’ estimation, a ‘big’ fiefdom would be some 500 square kilometres or more in area. His middle-sized fiefdoms would be up to about 300 square kilometres in area. He is writing in the context of the many fiefdoms and semi-autonomous territories within what today we call ‘China.’ Some were governed by mini-emperor systems, others by warlords. In Mencius’ time (as in Confucius’ time) there was endemic warfare between these territories.
cases were simply dependencies (Luard 1976, p. 203). Amidst an era of attenuated conflict between competing rulers within the Middle Kingdom, Mencius sought to champion what he believed was the innate goodness in human nature that could only flourish in middle-sized states (Brooks and Brooks 2003). Moreover, he believed that these middle-sized fiefdoms would have the moral authority to initiate what he called ‘punitive expeditions’ to restrain tyrannical rulers and initiate what today would perhaps be seen as humanitarian interventions, to halt human rights abuses and mass atrocities (Bell 2008, pp. 129-30). Ancient China’s understanding of an orderly world and its anticipation of a benevolent role for the equivalent of middle powers contains relevant lessons for contemporary China – and for the contemporary world (McArthur 2010).

The states system of classical Greece also acknowledged a hierarchy of big ‘magnates’ (Sparta, Athens, Thebes and Persia), middle-sized polities (Corinth, Argos, Corcyra, Thessaly and Syracuse), and small, weak city-states (Ionia, Sicily) (Luard 1976, p. 206). While status was measured in part by military and economic might, culture also played a significant role in determining the standing of a polis. The cultural superiority of Athens over Sparta in areas such as philosophy, architecture, and governance was widely acknowledged. The Classical Athenians were well aware of its potency. Evan Luard noted what he termed the ‘ideological character’ (he likens this to the ideological power of Cold War superpowers) in shaping the reputations of the Greek polities that also influenced how neighbours and other foreign powers felt about powerful city-states like classical Athens or Sparta (Luard 1976, p. 209).

In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a true believer in the sacred origins of kingdoms and the absolute powers of monarchs, argued that each kingdom was placed in an hierarchical order ordained by God (Baumgarth and Regan 1988, p. 117). Tampering with that order (for example, when a kingdom belligerently acquires new
territory and/or access to resources and markets) could be tolerated only if initiated by the pope or a monarch, on the grounds that their wisdom in such matter was based on an intimacy with the Almighty that was unmatched by the *hoi polloi*. Aquinas believed that middle sized kingdoms and smaller kingdoms had limited room to move in international affairs and therefore should know (and remain) in their divinely ordained places, in obedience to natural law and subordinate to the great powers whose dominance reflected God’s grand (if imponderable) design (Donnelly 1980).

During the Renaissance, the Thomist tradition of sanctifying the state (particularly big states) found its expression in the doctrine of the divine right of kings that underpinned the development of absolute monarchy. The tenor of this doctrine found expression, later, in Louis XIV’s apocryphal declaration, ‘L’état, c’est moi’ (Rowen 1976). The Thomist emphasis on the *sacredness* of the state filtered into modern political theory through the writings of Hegel, Edmund Burke and Lord Acton in the nineteenth century (Taylor 1975; Armitage 2000). As Gertrude Himmelfarb observed of Acton: ‘Like Burke’s, his theory of politics was empirical, while his theory of the State was metaphysical and even mystical’ (Himmelfarb 1993, p. 73). In the twentieth century the tradition is echoed in the writings of the British idealist philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1975, pp. 198-201), with the result that ‘Thomism is [today] looked on as being eminently conservative’ (Coppleston 1961, p. 235). The contemporary heirs of this metaphysical tradition are among the state-centric ranks of realist International Relations theorists.

In the fourteenth century, Bartolus de Saxaferato (1313-1357) – aptly described as ‘the most imposing figure among the lawyers of the middle ages’ (Beale 1914, p. 9) – categorized states according to their size: (i) city-states (which he called democracies); (ii) countries (properly governed, he believed, by aristocracies); and (iii) empires that
would require the unifying power of a monarch. His hierarchical system saw the last of his categories as the greatest, though he lauded countries governed by aristocracies because he believed they were capable of exercising a ‘chivalrous’ or moderating influence in international affairs. Like Mencius, he seems to have anticipated a version of the Neo-Kantian middle power imagining that has been gaining increasing attention in International Relations scholarships in recent years. This attention emerges from the view that middle powers possess a facility for mediating between conflicting states to ameliorate or even end conflict, on the grounds that they are not big (hence threatening) states, but neither are they utterly without clout or the capacity to exercise moral authority in inter-state affairs.

In the sixteenth century Botero (1544-1617) observed that political history affirms that all powers, great, not so great, or small, inevitably rise and fall (Botero 1695, Book III, pp. 161 ff). A fixed hierarchical ordering of states in the global order was neither natural nor inevitable. States could rise up or decline in response to contingencies like defeat in war, natural disasters, or economic downturn. Botero divided his world into three grades of states: grandissime (empires), mezano (middle powers) and piccioli (small powers). Unlike the tendency towards the state-centricity in medieval political thought (and in contemporary Realist theory), Botero’s scheme offered a more flexible view of the ways of the world beyond the borders of states. Like Mencius and Bartolus he was a firm believer in moral authority possessed by ‘middle-sized states’ that he saw as:

[T]he most lasting, since they are exposed neither to violence by their weakness nor to envy by their greatness, and their wealth and power being moderate, passions are less violent, ambition finds less support and licence less provocation than in large States. Fear of their neighbours restrains them, and even if feelings are roused to anger they are more easily quieted and tranquility [is] restored […] Thus some middle-sized powers have lasted far longer than the greatest (Botero 1695, Book I, p. 9).
What is interesting here is the theme of middle-sized states acting as mediators and peacemakers. This can be traced from at least the time of Mencius and, as noted above, it is also evident in the writings of Bartolus and Botero. The kinds of niche diplomacy alluded to in chapter 1, characterising neo-Kantian middle power imagining, are rooted in this historical thinking. It is also echoed in the writings of Emmanuel Kant in the eighteenth century and latterly in the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (Evans 2008; International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001). (This theme resurfaces in the most recent form of contemporary middle power theorizing – the Neo-Kantian form – that is outlined below.)

The ‘theologian’ of International Relations theorizing ‘Hugo Grotius’ (also known as ‘Huig de Groot’, 1583-1645) preached that states’ rulers are bound by conventions that amounted to an international society (Bull 1999, p. 72). This view was developed richly later in Kant’s theorizing of the universality of humanity and the possibility of perpetual peace (Kant 1996). Yet Grotius’ view of international society was a hierarchical one: not all states are equal, he argued, though all were equal before international law (Suganami 1999, p. 225). Grotius, in short, saw international society as groupings of states exercising their individual sovereignties that nonetheless manage to operate within a finely tuned international order most of the time (Wight 1991, p. 168).

In the eighteenth century Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) also identified a trinity of states (big, middle-sized, small) but his sympathies were with small communities in which the ‘General Will’ could prevail and democracy in a richly participative form would be able to flourish (Rousseau 2003, p. 71). As Carole Pateman notes: ‘Although Rousseau was writing before the modern institutions of democracy were developed, and his ideal society is a non-industrial city-state, it is in his theory that the basic hypotheses about the function of participation in a democratic polity can be found’
His insistence on the effectiveness of small states/communities distanced him radically from the statism of the Thomist/Conservative (and ultimately realist) tradition in political philosophy.

Rousseau’s contemporary, L’Abbé de Mably (1709-1785) also proposed a tripartite hierarchy of world powers (puissances): powers of the first-order (or great or dominant powers), powers of the second-order (or middle powers - he identified the core members of this category as Austria, Russia, Spain, Denmark, ‘& c.’); and powers of the third-order or smaller powers) (Mably 1795, pp. 74-85). He believed that the more ambitious of the second-order powers would be eager to curry favour with first-order powers: ‘Their moderation makes them trustworthy, and their love of justice often makes them arbiters – or peacemakers – between the first-order powers’ (Mably 1795, p. 75). However, in sounding a warning to the first-order powers, Mably noted that some restive second-order powers were likely to harbour first-order power ambitions themselves and ought not be trusted by their first-order allies. This would justify something like a balance of power configured by big powers. In exercising caution in regard to their second-order allies, first-order powers should be encouraged to act in concert, to maintain order between all states. As Holbraad notes, ‘by generalising about the interests of the secondary powers and relating their conduct to the politics of the dominant powers, [Mably] brought thinking about the character of middle powers in the European states system to a more advanced stage than any other writer before the nineteenth century seems to have done’ (Holbraad 1984, p. 16).

Subsequent writers developed similar schemes for ranking states. Most preferred a simple (or simplistic) categorization of states as ‘great’ and ‘small.’ And most of these

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5 ‘Leur modération leur fera des alliés; leur amour pour la justice les rendra même souvent arbitres entre les puissances du premier ordre.’
focused on the prestige (‘glory’) of states, or their lack of it, and classed them accordingly, with big states being seen as the proper domain for scholarly interest while small states tended to be disregarded or tolerated as mere addenda to big states. In the nineteenth century the ranking of states became almost an obsession. Being seen to be a great or imperial power, or close to greatness (through alliances or by sheer ambition) was a political aphrodisiac for rulers and their supporters across Europe.

**Recent Middle Power Thinking**

Martin Wight’s original focus on middle powers in the modern international system has been unjustifiably overlooked. The orientation among most scholars today has mainly been towards great powers (or superpowers, especially in the context of the Cold War) on the one hand, and developing countries (Third World, post-colonial states) on the other. More recently scholars have also been examining ‘failing states’ and ‘rogue states’ - some of the latter believed to be sheltering terrorist organisations (Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Rotberg 2003; Rotberg 2004). But the emphasis on great powers and/or problematic powers has meant that middle powers have been left drifting at the margins of post-Cold War International Relations scholarship, despite some earlier attempts to bring them inside the academic pale (Wight’s and Holbraad’s efforts being outstanding examples). It is time to bring them in fully from the theoretical cold.

There have been some noteworthy attempts in the recent past to focus more sharply on middle powers. Amid the idealism attending the birth of the United Nations, Glazebrook predicted that that nascent organisation would assist certain states that are ‘capable of exerting a degree of strength and influence not found in the small powers’ (Glazebrook 1947, p. 307; see also Kennedy 2006, ch. 1). He called them ‘middle powers,’ suggesting Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Australia and India belonged to this group within the United Nations. He
identified three factors that he believed would contribute to their acquisition of middle power influence: ‘their opposition to undue great power control, their growing tendency to act together, and the influence they have individually come to exert’ (Glazebrook 1947, p. 308). However, while separately and collectively they might have expressed concerns about great power dominance in global affairs, there is not much evidence of their acting together, and their influence as individual states is certainly debatable - possibly it is even negligible. Holbraad concludes, somewhat pessimistically, that ‘as long as two or more great powers dominate the states system, middle powers are unlikely to receive legal recognition and gain international status – whatever the nature of the roles they may perform and whatever the degree of influence they may command, in non-post-war situations of international politics’ (Holbraad 1984 (p. 66; see also Ungerer 2007b). But Holbraad’s conclusions were formed under the shadow of the Cold War. In the multipolar environment of the post-Cold War period, it is arguable (as Andrew Cooper et al. have argued) that middle powers may develop the capacity to achieve greater salience and influence (as originally proposed by Mencius) than at the time when Holbraad was writing (Cooper et al. 1997). On the other hand, Denis Stairs strongly disagrees. He outlines what he concludes is an undistinguished record of middle powers in United Nations peacekeeping operations. He writes:

The Phariseean cant that finds its way into the rhetoric of those who take prideful comfort from the contributions of their public servants to the politics of moderation abroad are an apparent hazard of trade. It is also, however, unattractive and ill-founded, and for that reason is likely to be counterproductive in the end (Stairs 1998, p. 281).

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6 The Non-Aligned movement established in the 1950s by the leaders of India, Burma, Indonesia, Egypt, Ghana and Yugoslavia was originally an attempt by developing countries to steer a middle path between the two superpowers (Morphett 2004). Its aims echo many of the ‘middle power’ roles advocated by Glazebrook.
However Stairs (an arch anti-middle power polemicist) is far too dismissive of past achievements and the potential for effective middle power activism. For example, at the United Nations Charter Conference in San Francisco in 1945, Australia’s External Affairs Minister, Dr H.V. Evatt, worked with Canada and other ‘small Powers’ (Evatt’s words) to try to curb the dominance of the great powers and looming super powers. Canadian scholars are inclined to appropriate this as a predominantly Canadian initiative. As Costas Melakopides asserts: ‘Canada […] assumed a leading position among a group of countries that came to be known as middle powers.’ Evatt’s election as the first chairman of the General Assembly of the United Nations signified that Australia was also recognized as playing a noteworthy role in this display of global assertiveness by ‘small Powers’ (Melakopides 1998, p. 39). It is obvious that a more systematic approach is needed to revise the characterization of middle powers than they have been accorded in mainstream debates in International Relations.

**Clarifying the Middle Power Concept**

Almost every discussion of middle power theorizing begins with the disclaimer that the field is conceptually and theoretically opaque. As R.A. MacKay noted some decades ago: ‘One weakness of the case for special recognition of middle powers in the United Nations was that there was no agreed list, nor any agreed definition or description’ (MacKay 1969, p. 136). More recently Carl Ungerer has similarly concluded: ‘there is no agreed definition of middle power and middle power diplomacy’ (Ungerer 2007a, 539). Stairs is even blunter:

Commentators on the roles played by ‘middle powers’ in world affairs […] assume, or they try artfully to demonstrate, that patterns exist where in fact they do not, and that causes are simple when they are actually complex. Generalising about the behaviour of a motley collection of highly differentiated states – operating, as they
do, in kaleidoscopic environments with diverse challenges in view and disparate objectives in mind – is risky business (Stairs 1998, p. 270).

Jonathan Ping complains of a ‘proliferation of definitions [of middle powers] with little reference to previous studies’ (Ping 2005, 56). Mark Beeson notes ‘Middle power’ is not an entirely happy formulation. Like ‘globalisation’ it can obscure as much as it reveals’ (Beeson 2011, p. 564). Matthew Sussex is worried that claiming ill-defined middle power credentials may tempt Foreign Ministers to try ‘casting about with solutions to problems [their country] lacks the capacity to resolve’ (Sussex 2011, p. 546). Cooper, et al. make a similar point: ‘Although the term middle power has long been used in discourse about Australian and Canadian foreign policy in the post-1945-era, there is little agreement on what constitutes a middle power in international politics’ (Cooper et al. 1994, p. 17). Ronald Behringer is correct when he observes that a lack of agreement on what constitutes a middle power is one of the main reasons why the comparative analysis of middle powers has been neglected in recent International Relations scholarship (Behringer 2012, pp. 16-17).

In a brave attempt to remedy this conceptual vagueness, Bernard Wood had previously identified five defining roles that he proposed could be used to identify middle powers at regional and global levels: (i) as a ‘regional or sub-regional leader’ (for example, Australia in the Pacific Islands Forum); (ii) as a ‘functional leader’ taking a lead on an issue (or issues) in which the middle power has relevant interests (for example a role Australia, as one of the world’s leading uranium exporters, has sought to play in more rigorously regulating and monitoring the global uranium market); (iii) as a ‘stabiliser’ mediating between or counter-balancing powers that threaten to destabilize a given situation (e.g., Australia’s role in the United Nations’ intervention in Cambodia in 1992); (iv) as a ‘free rider’ acquiring kudos by allying with a big power; and (v) being a
‘good multilateral citizen’ (or in Gareth Evans’ terminology, ‘a good global citizen’) supporting actions such as United Nations peace keeping operations (Wood 1988, 21ff.). Wood’s attempt to bring conceptual rigor into the field is admirable, but once again it is undermined by the fact that it impossible to identify a bloc of states (or even just two working in tandem) that conform to even a few of his roles, much less a single state that acts in this manner. Some states manage some of these roles some of the time, but there is no consistent pattern of behaviour in these roles by states that could be readily identified as sustaining middle power activity in regional or global affairs.

Cooper, et al. identify four different categories of middle powers (Cooper et al. 1994, pp. 16-27). The first they call ‘geographic,’ a state located between two great powers or power blocs, an ‘in-between’ state – for example, Turkey in relation to the European Union and the Islamic states. The second is a ‘normative’ middle power – one that Mencius, Botero and Mably would approve of because it acts as an honest broker or trusted mediator in regional or global crises. The third is a ‘positional’ middle power – a state whose power is relative to both great and small states. The fourth is what they refer to as a ‘behavioral’ middle power – a state that is able to engage successfully in ‘niche diplomacy’ to avert crises. They note that the behavioral middle power may act as a catalyst or an entrepreneur in regional or global matters, to ‘take the lead in gathering followers around it.’ It may act as a facilitator, ‘planning, convening, and hosting of formative meetings, setting priorities for future activity and drawing up rhetorical declarations and manifestos’ (Cooper et al. 1994, p. 24). And it may act as a manager, ‘with a heavy emphasis on institution-building’ (Cooper et al. 1994, p. 25). Cooper et al. have provided arguably the clearest way forward for making theoretical sense of the middle power concept in International Relations. What is needed in their analysis is a comprehensive empirical account of middle powers in action.
Andrew Arthur noted that at the founding of the United Nations, Canada ‘sought Great Power recognition that there were countries that did not have the near-universal interests of a Great Power but which were ‘great’ for some purposes and in some regions’ (Arthur 1993, pp. 24-5). He was echoing Evatt’s view that Canada, Australia, New Zealand and (white-settler) South Africa should therefore be seen as leading contenders for middle power status. Canada has long claimed middle power status by drawing attention to its role as ‘a mediator/integrator within the international community’ (Michaud and Bélanger 2000, p. 97; see also Donneur and Alain 1997).

In an examination of the pressures of neo-liberal globalization on a number of economies, Satoshi Ikeda concludes that Canada, Mexico, Australia and Norway qualify as middle powers, largely because of their apparent abilities to maintain degrees of economic sovereignty (Ikeda 2004, p. 263). Ping wants to augment this list with Indonesia and Malaysia using measures of the size of populations, the levels of military expenditure, the magnitude and structure of economies, and indicators of development such as life expectancy at birth (Ping 2005, p. 11). He concludes that in the year 2000 there were fourteen middle power states active in global politics (in alphabetical order):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>GDP (US$)</th>
<th>Military Expenditure / % GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Australia</td>
<td>22.7 million</td>
<td>$1.4 trillion</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Canada</td>
<td>34.5 million</td>
<td>$1.7 trillion</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chile</td>
<td>17.2 million</td>
<td>$248.6 billion</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. India</td>
<td>1.3 billion</td>
<td>$1.84 trillion</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Indonesia</td>
<td>242.4 million</td>
<td>$846.8 billion</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Iran</td>
<td>74.7 million</td>
<td>$331 billion</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Malaysia</td>
<td>28.9 million</td>
<td>$278.7 billion</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mexico</td>
<td>114.8 million</td>
<td>$1.155 trillion</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Philippines</td>
<td>95 million</td>
<td>$224.8 billion</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Singapore</td>
<td>6.0 million</td>
<td>$239.7 billion</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. South Korea</td>
<td>49.7 million</td>
<td>$1.116 trillion</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Taiwan</td>
<td>23.1 million</td>
<td>$393.2 billion</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Thailand</td>
<td>69.5 million</td>
<td>$345.8 billion</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Turkey</td>
<td>73.6 million</td>
<td>$773.1 billion</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Ping (2005, p. 104)
What is missing in Ping’s account is measurable evidence of regional and global acknowledgment of the middle power status of one or more of these states. While assembling some noteworthy data on aspects of socio-economic development and military capacity of middle powers, he inadvertently confirms the point made by John Ravenhill: ‘Such indicators have proved to be of almost no value in predicting or explaining the behaviour of those states classed as middle powers’ (Ravenhill 1998, p. 325).

Paul Painchaud had previously concluded that an empirical approach to categorizing middle powers in the international system contains ‘numerous methodological difficulties which have led to its being progressively abandoned on the scientific level’ (Painchaud 1966). Nonetheless it has, he argued, a different and more apposite utility:

It has become, in fact, what one would call an ideology of foreign policy. By that is meant that certain states have adopted this concept both as a symbol and as a general objective of their diplomacy. On this level, the concept of middle power then has a much more precise bearing. It signifies a certain type and a certain content of foreign policy. It expresses, beyond each particular decision, an intention and continuing aims that ‘delineate’ the global international policy of states that claim it (Painchaud 1996, pp. 29-30).

This interpretation of an ideology of middle power foreign policy saw its earlier advocates, like Canada’s Lester Pearson and Australia’s Dr Evatt, embrace the United Nations because they identified the Organisation as having the potential to promote global collective security. They also wished to see the United Nations become a fulcrum for resisting great power (or superpower) dominance in global affairs. It emphasized the centrality of the United Nations as a vehicle for giving a voice to middle powers amid the ideological distractions of the Cold War, establishing a ‘niche’ for them to act as
mediators and peacemakers, while ‘introducing notions of responsibility and morality practically unknown before’ (Painchaud 1966, p. 34).

Painchaud’s argument is about the absence of ethics in foreign policy. In rejecting an ethically empty politics, Painchaud argued that middle powers should seek to capitalize on opportunities provided by the United Nations, and in similar global forums, to solve the ‘problem of underdevelopment,’ which he described as ‘the greatest menace of the present time to the stability of international relations’ (Painchaud 1966, p. 35). He hoped his native Canada would assume a leadership role in advancing the ideology of middle power diplomacy. However, he was sufficiently a realist to acknowledge that any Canadian capacity for middle power leadership was likely to be derailed by Cold War pressures, obliging Canada ‘to place itself in the position of being at the disposition, more and more, of the United States’ (Painchaud 1966, p. 32). These limitations of the Cold War on middle power activism appear to justify the disdain of critics (like Denis Stairs) of the entire project of middle power diplomacy. But, as MacKay noted just three years after Painchaud: ‘the cold war epoch is passing into history; the bipolar system of international relations is giving way to a multi-polar system’ (MacKay 1969, p. 142).

While an empirically systematic account of ‘middlepowermanship’ (MacKay’s infelicitous term) appears unattainable, is there another form in which it can be presented to progress its imagining beyond ideology? Ezrahi concludes that what he calls ‘performative political imaginaries’ relate to ‘conditions in history in which societies are presented with possibilities of choice’ (Ezrahi 2012, p. 299). In the post-Cold War world can powers ‘neither great or small’ develop a form of middle power identity that leads them to effective foreign policy action drawn from their particular middle power imagining? Before any advance in our understanding of the potential for middle powers to assert a more substantial presence in regional and international politics is possible,
clarification is needed of the forms of middle power imagining that underpin what Painchaud thinks of as an ideology of foreign policy and that MacKay sees as holding out the possibility of effective middle power activism, however that effectiveness is to be both imagined and measured.

**Three Concepts of Middle Power Imagining**

Australia’s characteristic foreign policy as a ‘dependent ally,’ plus on-going speculation about the development of an Asia Pacific community, along with Canada’s efforts at ‘middlepowermanship,’ are indicative of three broad, occasionally over-lapping, and sometimes contradictory concepts of middle power imagining. As noted in chapter 1, the first concept of middle power imagining echoes aspects of nineteenth century European diplomacy, post-1815. The second concept is a late twentieth century conceptualization focusing on the building of regional organisations in which big powers and smaller powers seek common ground for consolidating commercial, trade and security interests. Smaller states like Belgium and Ireland in the European Union reflect this kind of aspirational middle power dreaming (Wagnsson 2008, pp. 104-7). The third concept is identified as a twenty-first century concept because of its recent growing salience in the era of globalization, reflecting the efforts of states ‘punching above their weight’ through a range of diplomatic measures. Norway, Canada and Denmark feature efficaciously in discussions about this kind of diplomacy that is referred to below as ‘Neo-Kantian’ middle power imagining (see for example, Henrikson 2007; Holbraad 1991, ch. 4; Elgström 1992).

*i) The dependent concept of middle power imagining*

The concept of contemporary middle power imagining is firmly grounded in realist International Relations theory. What really matters is the size and structure of a state’s
economy and its associated military capability – in short, its ‘hard power’ capacities relative to other states. As John Mearsheimer has observed: ‘For all realists, calculations about power lie at the heart of how states think about the world around them. Power is the currency of great-power politics, and states compete for it among themselves. What money is to economics, power is to international relations’ (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 12). Realism’s focus on powerful states highlights the relative powerlessness (or absolute weakness) of small states, leaving them vulnerable to the predations of bigger states. However some states – Hedley Bull describes them as ‘secondary powers of major importance’ – may be persuaded to become ‘junior partners’ of big states, to avoid being preyed upon by other less friendly big states or alliances of states (Bull 1995, p. 23). Bull also describes these junior partners as ‘middle powers.’ Junior partners of great powers seek to take advantage of the security and reflected glory the partnering offers. The junior partners of big powers would be well advised to be cautious about placing too much faith in their preferred big partners. The kind of _amour propre_ it fosters in those junior partners can all too quickly become _après l’amour_.

The Concert of Europe in the nineteenth century is illustrative of the strategies confected by small powers to ally themselves with big powers. But the small powers’ alignments with their preferred big power partners came at a price. As Soutou notes, ‘all [sic] European countries were involved in the order, albeit with a more passive role for the ‘lesser’ ones’ (Soutou 2000, p. 131). In the context of the Concert, small powers like Portugal operated within strict limits aimed at maintaining the status quo of European order in the face of mounting pressure for change (Holbraad 1970, p. 205). The Concert’s over-riding and patently illiberal purpose was ‘to fortify the monarchical principle, and thereby to assure the unimpaired maintenance of the social and political order in the respective states’ (Mowat 1930, 77). It was clearly not a liberal or progressive movement
though it arrived at a fragile balance of power in Europe, especially from the Congress of Vienna (1815) to the Treaty of Paris (1856). But the whole ramshackle structure came tumbling down with the outbreak of World War I.

Reflecting the manner in which the Concert of Europe contrived dependency alliances between small states and great powers, the state that is ambitious for middle power recognition today accrues influence through its alliance with a great power partner by frequently sheltering beneath that partner’s ‘security umbrella.’ Without the great power alliance its influence would be limited. In such circumstances smaller powers may even be obliged to shape their military organisations – and sometimes even political and economic institutions – in conformity with the requirements of their big power allies. For example, America’s guarantee of Japan’s post-War security came at the cost of controversial clauses being written into the new Japanese constitution – for example, renunciation of the Emperor’s divine status, the establishment of equal rights for women, the deregulation of trade unions and legalization of political parties (including the Communist Party of Japan), and the insertion of the famous ‘war renouncing’ paragraph 9 (Shibusawa 2006, ch. 3; Takemae 2002, ch.6).

As explained in chapter 3, Australia’s middle power imagining is deeply embedded in the culture of alliance-making that typified small powers in the Concert of Europe. This has resulted in an entrenched Australian habit of junior partnering in foreign and defence policy: first with Britain (in the context of the British Empire), up to about 1942; subsequently, with the United States of America (Goldsworthy 2002; see also Altman 2006, ch. one). The nineteenth century Concert of Europe model of smaller powers attaching themselves to larger powers is the dominant, albeit implicit, model behind Australia’s contemporary middle power imagining and even today it is reflected in its awkward partnering in the Asia Pacific region. As explained in chapter 6, awkwardness is
evident, for example, in the country’s diplomacy with China – and its near Asian neighbour, Indonesia. Malcolm Fraser argued for an Australia that is able to ‘agree and disagree with both Washington and Beijing, as its suits our interests’ (Fraser 2014, pp. 283-4). As becomes evident in the survey of Australian foreign policy on Japan and China (chapters 5 and 6) this form of what Fraser refers to as ‘strategic independence’ is inconceivable while Australia’s middle power imagining remains entrenched within a dependent framework.

(ii) The Regionalist Concept of Middle Power Imagining

The second concept of middle power imagining focuses on putative states neither great nor small seeking to cultivate regional groupings. They do so in response to a number of pressures brought about by globalization: the increasing multi-polarity and uncertainties of global politics; global financial crises; anxieties about the supply and demand for energy; food insecurities; and related transnational threats to security. In their discussion of the European Union’s foreign policy, Keukeleire and MacNaughtan point out that ‘even the largest member states are not sufficiently powerful to unilaterally exert major influence’ (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008, p. 135). This may result, as Wesley has observed, in ‘powers with partly competitive but partly mutual interests [forging] a cooperative arrangement for managing the regional order’ (Wesley 2007, p. 12).

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is illustrative of just such a regional grouping. As Khong and Nesadurai note: ‘A ‘if we don’t hang together, we will hang separately’ syndrome operates to prompt the adoption of relatively (for ASEAN) more intrusive institutional mechanisms in order to deliver the joint collaboration needed to counter developments construed as threatening to economic growth’ (Khong and Nesadurai (2007, p. 36). This would be true too to developments construed as threatening to regional security. By contracting regional cooperation agreements, middle-sized states
in particular expect (or hope) to gain access to power and influence beyond what they
would accrue if they were to stand alone in a multipolar and ‘disordered’ international
system. This is an environment in which the looming global economy is overshadowing
local economies. The growth of social media is contributing to changes in relations not
only between states but also between peoples across state borders. And state sovereignty
is under pressure on a number of fronts as ‘the boundaries between the ‘domestic’ and the
‘international’ […] become increasingly blurred’ (Fawcett and Hurrell 1981, p. 3). A
number of variously successful regional organizations have been evolving in response to
these developments, as states seek to maximize the benefits of globalization and
minimize its disadvantages by clubbing together. The European Union (EU), the
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade
Agreement (NAFTA), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the Asia-Pacific Economic
Cooperation (APEC) are examples of this kind of regional coming together by states
great and small and states in between. Regionalism as a response (or reaction) to
globalization and to other transnational threats (for example, pandemics, global warming,
terrorism, refugee mobility) is one strategy by which a state may develop its middle
power imagining.

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, Australia’s role (in close
collaboration with Japan and with encouragement from the USA) in forming the Asia-
Pacific Economic Cooperation bloc (APEC) is evidence of how a relatively small power
(albeit a self-proclaimed middle power) is both permitted and enabled to take a lead on an
issue that would very likely invite opposition or rejection if piloted by larger powers. As
Ravenhill has noted: ‘That the final push for APEC should come from Australia is not
surprising given Australia’s association with Japan in earlier initiatives for Pacific
regionalism and the perception that it was tactically preferable for the lead not to be taken
by either Washington or Tokyo’ (Ravenhill 2001a, p. 82). More recently, Australia’s ambitious attempts to assemble support for an Asia-Pacific community (the brainchild of Kevin Rudd when he was in his first phase as Prime Minister) are indicative of this second kind of middle power imagining (Baba and Kaya 2014; see also Woolcott 2009). This concept is also being explored in terms of a ‘middle power coalition,’ a collective security arrangement, in Asia in the face of China’s rise in the region. Medcalf and Mohan (2014, p. 17) have even suggested that: ‘Confronted with the rise of China and its new assertiveness, and worried about the prospects of American relative decline and inconstancy of purpose, the middle powers [in Asia] are exploring avenues beyond traditional alliances, regional institutions or non-alignment’ (Medcalf and Mohan 2014, p. 17).

(iii) The Neo-Kantian Concept of Middle Power Imagining

Andrew Cooper has proposed that ‘The classification of middle powers as a separate class of countries in the hierarchy of nations stands or falls not on their subjective identification but on the fact that this category of actors engages in some kind of distinctive form of activity’ (Cooper 1997a, p. 7). This distinctive activity is termed ‘niche diplomacy.’ In the post-Cold War context it is believed that middle powers are faced with greater demands and increasing opportunities to engage in niche diplomacy (Cooper 1997, p. 21). Behringer argued that ‘middle powers [can] organize a coalition of like-minded states, international humanitarian organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs), who have come to agreement on a treaty or plan of action that is effective for addressing a particular human security problem’ (Behringer 2005, p. 306). Lovbraek uses the term ‘like-minded countries’ to identify middle powers that seek ‘to generate support for international economic policies which were more responsive to Third World wishes’ – a project of the 1970s that has quietly dropped way down the
international agenda since the late 1980s (Lovbraek 1990, p. 32). Gareth Evans adds a further dimension to a putative middle power’s identity: ‘in being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen, both regionally and globally’ (Evans 2012, p. 3).

The emphasis in neo-Kantian middle power imagining is on the influence that middle powers may acquire, either in concert with one another as ‘like-minded states,’ or on their own. ‘Soft power’ refers to a state’s use of non-threatening modes of diplomacy (e.g., cultural or public diplomacy) to persuade other states to follow their lead, or to offer those states support in conjointly planned diplomatic ventures. As Nye puts it: ‘A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it’ (Nye 2005, p. 5; see also Nye 2011).

In the so-called ‘golden age’ of Canadian diplomacy (1945-1957), the Government sought ‘to increase the rightful room for action by the middle powers’ (Melakopides 1998, p. 50). Canada therefore gave prominence to the kind of niche diplomacy characteristic of neo-Kantian middle power imagining. By building on this foundation Canada’s leadership has won international regard for such achievements as the Ottawa Process, resulting in the passing of the United Nations Convention banning landmines in 1997 (Axworthy 2004; Bátor 2010, p. 107). Canada was also instrumental in the establishment of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (which reported to the United Nations in 2001 and whose report was unanimously endorsed by the UN World Summit in 2005) (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001). We could add to this record Canada’s past diplomatic involvement in attempts to resolve the Suez crisis, its support for smaller nations in the United Nations, and its activist record in peace keeping and humanitarian efforts around the world.
Similarly, despite a population size of about five million, Norway’s leadership on human rights issues in China, Indonesia, Vietnam and South Africa has achieved global recognition for that country grounded in an active program of niche diplomacy, adding weight to Norway’s ambition to be recognized as a twenty-first century middle power. This is further reinforced by the Norwegian government’s persistence in maintaining contacts with the elected Palestinian government, in the face of Israeli, American and European criticism (Egeland 1989).

* * * *

The three concepts of middle power imagining are discernible in the identities assumed by states that aspire to be more than small powers even if they cannot aspire to be big powers. As demonstrated in subsequent chapters, the most persistent influence in Australia’s middle power imagining remains the dependent concept. This is not only an out-dated form of imagining, it also contributes to, or is the primary cause of awkwardness in Australia’s foreign policy making. There is clearly a need for an overhaul of Australia’s middle power imagining.

States that are most successful in consolidating their middle power credentials in regional and international forums today mostly reflect aspects of the second and third concepts of middle power engagement. As Beeson and Higgott point out: ‘There are clearly limits to what middle powers can do, but they do have options – if they choose to exercise them in the right areas’ (Beeson and Higgott 2014, p. 232). They can enter regional alliances, usually for trade and security purposes. They can mount diplomatic campaigns in the United Nations or similar forums on issues as diverse as confronting human rights abuses, seeking an end to mass atrocities, responding to natural catastrophes, mitigating the consequences of climate change. They can become supporters of small states, providing avenues for their voices to be heard, while
challenging big power domination in regional and global conflicts. For example, the Canadian and Norwegian cases mentioned above approximate a neo-Kantian form of middle power imagining, expressed in ‘niche diplomacy,’ that is not only advantageous for its outcomes but also for its contribution to the international stature of those states.

Australia’s middle power imagining – thought to guarantee Australia’s security during the Pacific, Korean, and Vietnam wars – has in fact evoked a form of diplomacy that appears on not a few occasions as insensitive, self-righteous and neo-colonial, at least as far as some of Australia’s most important neighbours in the Asia Pacific are concerned (Johnson et al. 2010). As noted in chapters 5 and 6, this often results in Australia’s awkward partnering with states of high strategic importance in the region.

Middle power conceptualizing has languished at the margins of International Relations theory for far too long. Meanwhile Australian foreign policy has ebbed and flowed while faced with strictures caused by its preferred imagining of its middle power identity. This thesis challenges the conceptual opaqueness that is constraining Australia’s middle power imagining and focuses on how that imagining contribute to the country being more of an ‘awkward partner’ in the Asia-Pacific region than a creative and active middle power. To begin investigating these issues we need to determine where Australia’s middle power imagining comes from. What are its sources? However, before pursuing this issue clarification is needed of the ‘awkward partner’ concept.

**Awkward Partners in International Relations**

Jim Buller has noted that ‘awkward partner’ has become ‘the dominant academic interpretation of Britain’s relationship with the European Union’ (Buller 1995, p. 33). Murray et al. propose that ‘awkwardness refers to an uncomfortable state of affairs in which one party strives to participate in a region but lacks full belonging and commitment to the goals of the latter. It is a kind of liminality – being both of the region,
and also not of it, simultaneously’ (Murray et al. 2014, p. 280). While of particular interest in the study of Britain’s interactions with the European Union, its awkwardness (at times it has amounted to estrangement) stretches back centuries, including times when Britain was at war against its European neighbours. It was especially intense during the late nineteenth century when Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister (1885-92 and 1895-1902). Barbara Tuchman aptly characterizes the British mood at that time:

As a nation, Britain in 1895 had an air of careless supremacy which galled her neighbors. The attitude, called ‘splendid isolation,’ was both a state of mind and a fact. Britain did not worry seriously about potential enemies, felt no need of allies and had no friends (Tuchman 1966, p. 30).

That sentiment has ebbed and flowed ever since. In 1935 in an article in The Evening Standard Winston Churchill articulated a characteristically British view of Europe that endures even today, especially among conservative politicians and voters: ‘We are with Europe but not in it; we are linked but not compromised. We are associated but not absorbed. If Britain must choose between Europe and the open sea, she must always choose the open sea’ (quoted in Coudenhove-Kalergi 1953, pp. 162-163). Prime Minister David Cameron made a commitment to hold a referendum not later than 2017 on whether Britain should stay or withdraw from the European Union if the Conservative Party were to win government after the general election due in 2015:

The next Conservative Manifesto in 2015 will ask for a mandate from the British people for a Conservative Government to negotiate a new settlement with our European partners in the next Parliament. It will be a relationship with the Single Market at its heart. And when we have negotiated that new settlement, we will give the British people a referendum with a very simple in or out choice. To stay in the EU on these new terms; or come out altogether. It will be an in-out referendum (Cameron 2013).
Historian Tony Judt has observed that many British people persist in feeling that Europe remains peripheral, if not antipathetic, to their real interests (Judt 2007, p. 763).

At the formation of what was to evolve into the European Union, Britain was reluctant to relinquish its dreams of being an imperial power and was in no mood to think of integrating itself into a pan-European arrangement that seemed altogether foreign and less civilized than the British (or at least their more conservative leaders and followers) believed themselves to be. Britain’s ruling elites still imagined themselves as being at the centre of their own Empire, with a global – not merely regional – reach. This imagining substantially accounted for Britain’s decision not to join the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The British government declined to support the development of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), despite the fact that the ECSC and EURATOM were vital forerunner communities of what ultimately has become the European Union.

Britain’s early decision to reject applying for membership of the European Union was influenced by its preferential tariff treatment in the Commonwealth. It could not reconcile the Commonwealth trading preferences it enjoyed with the requirements of the EU. Moreover, other factors were also in play. These included Britain’s clinging to its imperial past rather than joining the ‘new Europe,’ its close relations with the United States, historical links to its Commonwealth allies, and its jealous guarding of its sovereignty in the face of the political and bureaucratic structures embraced by the European Union. At the end of 1962, when Britain finally decided to apply for entry, President de Gaulle vetoed the application. As John McCormick notes: ‘The French president was an Anglophobe who had plans for an EEC built around a Franco-German axis, saw Britain as a rival to French influence in the EEC, and resented Britain’s lack of enthusiasm toward the early integration moves of the 1950s’ (McCormick 2008, pp. 75-
7). Even when Britain finally gained entry in 1973 (on its third attempt), British enthusiasm for Europe remained (and remains) lukewarm.

Since acquiring membership of the European Union in 1973, Britain has resisted the extension of the EU’s remit into social policy. It frequently complains that it is required to shoulder more than its fair share of the EU budget (although Whitehall is not alone in this regard). Like several other EU members, it has rejected joining the Eurozone (Blair 2005, pp. 64-5). As the words of Prime Minister Cameron (quoted above) make plain, Conservative Party thinking about the European Union remains pragmatic and utilitarian (a perspective shared by some elements in the Labour Party). Throughout the development of the Union it has largely remained impervious to the vision of two of the leading Europeanists, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, the ‘Fathers of Europe’ (McCormick 2008, p. 63).

In his landmark analysis of Britain’s problematic history with the European Union, Stephen George notes: ‘The attitude of the makers of British policy towards most other West European states was condescending, and at times almost contemptuous. France in particular was considered to be politically and economically unstable.’ He points to ‘attitudes based on generations of imperialism’ that result in Britain’s gaze being directed ‘to the wider world [while] treating Europe with disdain.’ He cites Britain’s ‘negative attitudes to the French that became embodied in popular culture, and, since the early twentieth century, of fear and mistrust towards the Germans.’ And he identifies ‘an instinct of many leading British political figures to look first to the United States for partnership.’ He explains:

The failure of the British to embrace the ideal of European union has continually led to differences with other member states. The unpopularity of the [EU] with much of the electorate for much of the time has influenced the approach to negotiations by statesmen (and women), who are also politicians who have to win elections. The
strong sense of national identity has made it difficult for Britain’s representatives in the Council of Ministers of the EC to put the interests of Europe before those of Britain where a clash occurs. Most importantly of all, though, the relationship between the EC and the United States, and the relationship of the EC to the wider world order, have been frequent sources of disagreement with the Community, in which Britain has often been seen as the US Trojan horse, or at least an awkward partner (George 1998, pp. 40-1; see also Wall 2008; Wilks 1996).

Since the first edition of George’s book appeared in 1990 the European Union has moved towards further integration. Britain has shown little enthusiasm for these developments. Alasdair Blair notes that Britain ‘opposed […] any development within the field of social policy on both economic and political grounds and stressed that decisions relating to social and monetary policy (among others) should be taken at the national level’ (Blair 2005, p. 64).

**Other ‘Awkward Partners’**

‘Awkward partnering’ in a regional context is not unique to Britain’s relations with the European Union. The Scandinavian states have not always been enthusiastic about the European Union either. Norway is not a member, though it has a special association with the EU. Denmark opted out of the EU’s Security and Defence Policy in 1993 (Pedersen 2006, pp. 38-9). Like Britain, Denmark has a close security alliance with the United States (Holbraad 1991). Finland and Sweden have so far avoided joining NATO. All of this points to varying degrees of awkward partnering among the Nordic states themselves and in those states’ relations with the European Union and its related security arrangements. Denmark, Iceland and Norway have all joined NATO while Finland and Sweden contribute to the European Security and Defence Policy, a policy that Denmark eschews. As Tarja Cronberg points out: ‘Differences in Nordic security policy are,
however, not only institutional. There is a deeper divide related to national identity and the ‘will to defend’ (Cronberg 2006, p. 315).

A state that exhibits many of the features of awkward partnering in its relations with its regional neighbours is Japan. Indeed throughout its history Japan has been Asia’s pariah state, ‘in’ but not ‘of’ Asia. Miller points to its refusal in pre-modern times to join in the Chinese tributary system and its self-imposed isolation from Asia during the Tokugawa (or Shogunate) era (1604-1868) (Miller 2004). In the Meiji era (1868-1912) Japan modernized itself with remarkable speed and agility (Storry 1970, ch. 4). Like many Western scholars, Miller sees this as a Japanese attempt to emulate the West while differentiating the country as ‘advanced Japan’ in contrast to the rest of ‘backward Asia.’ Nonetheless Japan’s feverish rate of modernization was equally a deliberate strategy to keep the West at bay. Having observed the horrors suffered by China at the hands of European colonial powers in the nineteenth century (for example, the Opium Wars, 1839-42 and 1856-6, sometimes referred to as China’s ‘century of humiliation’), the Japanese were determined to make themselves so strong that they would be able to resist the ravages of European imperialism. During the Meiji era, under the slogan Revere the Emperor; Repel the Barbarians the Japanese comprehensively transformed their backward economy into one of the most advanced in the world at that time. This achievement astonished not only the European powers (especially the Russians who were defeated by the Japanese at the Battle of Port Arthur in 1904/5), but also Japan’s neighbours in the Asia Pacific, including Australia.

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7 In a class on Australian studies in a Japanese university, this writer once asked: ‘What do Asian students like you think about Australia?’ There was a long silence. Then a polite student stood and bowed: ‘Sensei,’ she said, ‘we are not Asians. We are Japanese.’

8 Sonno jói [尊王攘夷].
It is also noteworthy that Japan’s modern nationalist imagining has always been imbued with a deeply and widely held belief in the country’s exceptionalism. The renowned American historian and diplomat Edwin Reischauer has drawn attention to ‘the Japanese sense of being somehow a separate people – of being unique.’ He explained:

The line between the ‘we’ of the Japanese as a national group and the ‘they’ of the rest of mankind seems to be sharper for them than for most peoples who participate much in international life. They appear to have a greater feeling for group solidarity and a correspondingly stronger sense of their difference from others […] The line between those inside and outside any group has always been sharply drawn, and the biggest and today the most important group is the Japanese people themselves (Reischauer 1982, p. 401).

Throughout the Meiji era this sense of Japanese exceptionalism gave rise to a race-based ideology of Japanese ethnic superiority, first in regard to China and then to the rest of Asia. As Rumi Sakamoto explains: ‘The negative representation of China and the Chinese in the discourse of the Japanese Enlightenment resulted from the Meiji elites’ attempt to resist the Orientalist-racist gaze of the West by constructing a subject position of the ‘Japanese race’ as a distinct category from the ‘Chinese race’’ (Sakamoto 2004, p. 179).

During the Pacific War the racism underpinning Japan’s imagined exceptionalism was elaborated into an ultra-nationalist ideology in which the Japanese were directed to think of themselves as the ‘leading race’ whose head was the emperor descended from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. Abject self-denial and deferral always to the will of the Emperor was the emphatic order of the day. Wars were fought in the name of the deified emperor and deification would follow for those who died for the emperor (Buruma 1994, p. 220). There are echoes in this emperor worshiping and nationalist mythologizing of the

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9 Shidō minzoku [指導民族].
Nazi ideology that claimed membership for the German people of a superior Aryan race.

The ultra-nationalist imagining in Japan deeply influenced the way the Japanese government and military waged war, leading to over-estimations of Japanese strategic superiority and misjudgments about Allied capabilities (Dower 1986, p. 239).

The imagining of Japan’s exceptionalism became a fundamental element of its wartime ultra-nationalism and vestiges of this continue to contribute to Japan’s awkwardness in Asia. This is evident in the persistence of conservative Japanese Prime Ministers paying their respects at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo where, among other honoured dead, the souls of war criminals are enshrined. In China, the two Koreas and across Southeast Asia these visits are regarded as especially offensive. They are seen as evidence of Japan’s post-War hubris, its failure to appropriately apologize and account for its wartime atrocities in Korea, China and Southeast Asia (Kawashima 2003, p. 15). This diplomatic insensitivity on the part of successive post-war Japanese governments continues to trouble its relations with its Asian neighbours, especially re-emerging China. As the historian Rana Mitter points out: ‘China’s most fraught international relationship is still with Japan, and the war remains central to the present friction between them’ (Mitter 2013, pp. 8-9). Its diplomacy in Asia has many of the hallmarks of awkward partnership. While the causes of Japan’s awkwardness are very different, there are parallels with Australia’s awkward partnering with states as diverse as China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan itself.

**Is Australia as an ‘Awkward Partner’ in the Asia Pacific?**

Murray *et al.* point out: ‘Despite significant differences between the United Kingdom and Australia, they are not incomparable ‘apples and oranges’ as far as their participation in regional integration is concerned’ (Murray *et al.* 2014, p. 296). They note similarities between George’s account of Britain in relation to the European Union and a generally
unacknowledged awkward partnering in Australia’s relations with its regional neighbours. There is of course no regional economic or security organisation in East and Southeast Asia like the European Union, though there are groupings such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation agreement (APEC) (Gill and Green 2009). These suggest a vestigial interest among a growing number of states in some kind of Asia Pacific regional architecture. Nonetheless as John Duffield has observed: ‘one cannot help but be struck by the relatively limited nature of the formal institutional security architecture to be found in the Asia-Pacific region throughout the post-war era, at least in comparison […] with the Euro-Atlantic’ (Duffield 2003, pp. 243-4). Nor is there an historical or cultural basis for imagining an integrated Asia-Pacific community along the lines of the European Union. As Griffiths and Wesley have observed: ‘Efforts to embed East Asia’s powers into a stable regional order have to overcome an imposing set of obstacles’ (Griffiths and Wesley 2010, p. 23). The rich diversities of cultures, colonial histories, economies, and political systems in the region provide scant grounds for mooting, say, an Asia Pacific parliament along the lines of the European Parliament. Nor, for that matter, apart from some proposals emanating from Seoul, is there any serious proposal on the horizon for an integrated Asia Pacific monetary union (and if there was, it has no doubt been pushed back by the crisis in the Eurozone).

Nonetheless there are accords in the Asia Pacific such as the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement comprising the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. There is the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement made up of Bangladesh, China, India, South Korea, Laos, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Philippines. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation agreement (APEC) comprises 21 Asia-Pacific states with more seeking to
join it, including India. And there is a range of bilateral free trade agreements in the region (Godement 1997, pp. 274-87). On the basis of such developments Motohide Saji is optimistic about East Asian regional integration, seeing it as emerging in tandem with a ‘global or transnational civil society [that] is also said to be materializing’ (Saji 2009, p. 124). On the other hand, Wesley has argued that: ‘What seems to be required is a new vision about the purposes of regionalism, identifying commonalities in aspirations and aversions, as a prerequisite for revitalizing the regional organizations themselves’ (Wesley 2003, p. 164). In view of the recent re-emergence of China there is likely to be a growing interest in addressing Wesley’s proposal, as witnessed by negotiations for a range of bilateral and multilateral security agreements among regional states now taking place. Perhaps the most notable of these is the growing interest in a trilateral security treaty between Japan, the United States and Australia (Jain and Bruni 2006).

As noted earlier, Stephen George referred to the negative attitudes many British leaders have towards France and Germany. He mentioned the legacy in Britain of ‘generations of imperialism’ turning Britain’s gaze ‘to the wider world [while] treating Europe with disdain’ (George 1998, pp. 40-1). And he emphasized Britain’s inclination to turn first to the United States as a global partner. As already intimated, within the socio-cultural, economic and political diversity of the Asia Pacific there are noteworthy similarities between the United Kingdom’s difficulties with the European Union and Australia’s complicated relations with the region.

A toxic legacy of the White Australia Policy is the condescension not a few Australians still have for Asia and Asians (however those terms are understood, or misunderstood) (Tavan 2005, ch. Eleven). For well over a century Australia’s role in the British Empire fixed the Australian gaze on ‘the far West’ (Britain and Europe) far more than on the ‘near North’ (the Asia Pacific) – and for not a few Australians its legacy
lingers on (Lockhart 2012). Awkwardness in relations with neighbours like Indonesia persists. As an example, Richard Woolcott points to the banning of live cattle exports to Indonesia by the Gillard Government. He continues: ‘Another is the handling of the refugee/asylum seekers issue in the region, an issue which is much less of a priority to Indonesia, than it is to Australia. Another was the decision, announced during President Obama’s visit last November [2012] to locate 2,500 Marines through Darwin (Woolcott 2013, p. 4). Dalrymple’s observation about the Australia-Indonesia relationship is apposite: ‘there is no sense of warmth or reaching out for a deeper engagement of interests and perspectives’ (Dalrymple 2003, p. 182). Meanwhile fear and mistrust of China seems to be embedded in the Australian collective consciousness, despite Australia’s eagerness to sell its abundant resources to the Chinese (Pan 2012). Meanwhile most Australian political leaders have little hesitation in looking first to the United States for regional and global partnership (Altman 2006; Bell 1988; Fraser 2014).

What emerges clearly from the ‘awkward partnering’ literature is that this analysis is a useful tool for analysing Australian foreign policy in the Asia Pacific. It offers a useful counterfoil to the assumption of middle power status that characterizes Australian foreign policy in the Asia Pacific. As demonstrated in the chapters on Australia’s relations with Japan and China, Australia’s assumption of a predominantly dependent middle power imagining, rooted in Empire nostalgia, should not be seen as the better way to advance Australia’s security and prosperity in the region. Rather, it could very well be hindering it. In the country’s relations with Japan and China Australia not infrequently presents itself (seemingly un-self-reflectively) as an awkward partner in the Asia Pacific.

We now turn to an investigation of the development of Australian foreign policy and the middle power imagining that is driving it.
Chapter 3

AUSTRALIA’S MIDDLE POWER IMAGINING

Introduction

This chapter argues that there are two rival streams of middle power imagining in Australia. These have been identified by James Cotton as the internationalist stream and the imperialist stream (Cotton 2013). It is important to be clear about the differences between the two streams in order to understand how the dominant (imperialist) stream contributes to Australia’s awkward partnering in the Asia Pacific and how the less influential (internationalist) stream has been unsuccessful in countering this awkwardness.

The chapter critically examines the development of Australian foreign policy to provide a backdrop to the country’s dominant stream of middle power imagining. This imagining has roots that reach back to the early years of federation when it was dawning on Prime Ministers like Alfred Deakin and Billy Hughes that Australia needed to develop greater self-reliance rather than continuing to depend entirely on Britain for their new country’s security. This is at odds with the scholarly consensus that middle power imagining commences with Dr H.V. Evatt’s contributions to the founding of the United Nations. It was only at that time that Evatt began to spell out his defence of a role for what he termed ‘small Powers’ vis-à-vis great powers in the nascent international organisation and in the emerging post-war international order. He wanted this to be a role that endowed middle powers with levels of influence in regional and global conversations and enable them to stand up to the pressures that he was sure would be placed upon them by the great powers.
Context

More than four decades ago one of the pioneers of the study of International Relations in Australia, Professor J.D.B. Miller, outlined three possible scenarios for the country’s foreign policy:

We can see ourselves as essentially a small power among other small powers, with all of whom we try to be friendly, and otherwise take no initiatives; or we can identify the great power most likely to protect us and adopt its viewpoint in all matters without question; or we can try to become so wise, skilled and sophisticated in our diplomacy that we are welcomed, by great powers and small alike, as a candid friend and trusted conciliator and go-between (Miller 1969, p. 136).

Miller observed that while Australia’s foreign policy ‘style’ reflected ‘our inexperience in international affairs,’ it also pointed to ‘that very real decency and friendliness which we can justifiably regard as part of the Australian character’ (1969, pp. 137-8). Miller’s third scenario (his preferred one) alludes to a state exercising sensitive and intelligent niche diplomacy in the twenty-first century.

Any sympathy for Miller’s scenario (much less his remarkable faith in Australia’s national character) was eclipsed by the country’s involvement in the Vietnam War (Edwards 2014). Four years later there was very little evidence that Miller’s third scenario had inspired significant scholarly interest in a role for Australia in regional or international diplomacy as a ‘candid friend and trusted conciliator and go-between.’ In 1973 a leading foreign policy scholar would ruefully comment that ‘it cannot be said that the interpretation or analysis of Australian foreign policy has reached a particularly high level of sophistication’ (Camilleri 1979a, p. v).

Almost a decade after Miller’s proposal, an historian of Australian foreign policy, E.M. Andrews, advised International Relations scholars ‘to turn from particular problems
to the general trends and assumptions of our diplomacy’ (Andrews 1978, p. 121). He, too, was proposing a big-picture approach. However, in the same way that Miller’s preferred direction for Australian foreign policy has been accorded scant attention among the majority of Australian foreign policy experts, so Andrews’ counsel has also largely been over-looked. Even today, as Gyngell and Wesley observed: ‘Most writing on [Australian] foreign policy [provides] either detailed memoirs of negotiations or initiatives, with little indication of whether they are typical of the broader policy process’ (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, p. 17). This is symptomatic of reluctance in Australia to come to grips with the country’s presence, in all its dimensions, in the Asia Pacific region and in the world, except in rather naive or culturally constrained ways. As journalist Paul Kelly has observed, there is an entrenched resistance – at least in political and bureaucratic circles – to the critical interrogation of ‘the nature and extent of [Australia’s] power in the world’ (Kelly 2004, p. 4). He also points out that this is ‘the debate Australia refuses to have.’ He explains:

This is a subject not to be raised in polite company and rarely to be confronted in the straitjacket of Canberra officialdom. There are other debates that command attention – our ties with America, our engagement with Asia, our counterterrorism strategies and our defence force structure. But as a nation we prefer to discuss the various parts of our existence rather than the totality of our existence.

Michael Wesley has also drawn attention to the manner in which International Relations scholarship in Australia is preoccupied with ‘multilateralism, regionalism, regimes, and international organisation.’ While not dismissing these achievements he regrets that ‘Australian diplomacy in Asia between 1996 and 2006 raises some intriguing issues on which the vast literature of international relations is silent’ (Wesley 2007a, p. 222; see also Wesley 2011b; Wesley 2011c). That silence centres especially around the kind of middle power that Australians imagine their country to be – around the ‘totality of our existence.’
Just as it is time to bring middle power thinking in the International Relations theoretical cold, so also it is time to bring the true character of Australia’s middle power imagining in from the cold and subject it to close interrogation.

**Internationalism Versus Imperialism**

At the beginning of this chapter James Cotton’s identification of two major streams in the foreign policy community of the 1930s in Australia was referred to: ‘empire or imperialism (including ideas regarding race) on the one hand and internationalism on the other’ (Cotton 2013, p. 241). It is the contention of this thesis that the first stream springs from four political-historical sources outlined below. The imperialist stream emphasizes challenges facing Australia that require the country to rely for its security on ‘great and powerful friends.’ The second stream (‘internationalism’) reflects an ambiguous idealism in the middle power imagining it inspires. In recent times, both streams have shown evidence of some degrees of regionalist middle power imagining.

There is an orthodox consensus among Australian foreign policy scholars who may be located within the internationalist stream of foreign policy analysis that the country’s middle power ambition in international politics is a uniquely Australian Labor Party contribution to the country’s foreign policy development. Its origins are traced from Dr H.V. Evatt’s time as Minister for External Affairs in the Curtin and Chifley governments (1941-1949). Gareth Evans’ 1997 paper exemplifies this view: ‘The creation of an Australian foreign policy, and the beginning of a distinctive Labor tradition in foreign policy, came only with Evatt’ (Evans 1997, p. 12).

In the House of Representatives on 30 March 1944 Evatt presented a Ministerial Statement that was described at the time as ‘the first important attempt by an Australian government to evolve an independent Australian regional policy in the Western Pacific’
What is evident in Evatt’s speech is a broad ambition for international acceptance of Australia’s middle power credentials based on what he perceived to be the country’s distinctiveness:

In their national development of this continent, meeting dangers and overcoming difficulties, the people of Australia have developed their own point of view and a mind of their own. That point of view is the result of numerous influences – the stock from which we are bred, the traditions we have inherited, and the emergencies we have faced – but it is now an Australian point of view. We owe it to ourselves and to other countries to express it clearly and firmly […] if we value our nationhood, we must have a positive Australianism (Evatt 1945, pp. 177-8).

On other occasions Evatt made reference to ‘small Powers’ and ‘near-great Powers’ (Evatt 1945, pp. 212-3). He located Australia in one or other of these categories, but mostly the latter. At international conferences he became an outspoken advocate for what he referred to as ‘middle Powers’ (Bingham 1946). These sentiments have led Carl Ungerer to conclude that ‘Since the Second World War Australian foreign policy practitioners and policy-makers from both sides of the political divide have framed most diplomatic activity within the broad rubric of Australia’s middle power status and role in international affairs’ (Ungerer 2007, p. 539). As Ungerer suggests, it has become an article of faith among the believers in the ‘Labor tradition’ of foreign policy analysis that Evatt is the founding father of Australia’s middle power imagining.

However, as foreshadowed above, there is another version of Australia’s middle power imagining that springs from four other sources. These are explained below as (i)

10 Colin Bingham quotes Evatt at the Procedure Committee of the Peace Conference in Paris on 31 July 1946: ‘We middle Powers must be given the opportunity of not merely being advisers and consultants, but having what we say in the Council put in some formal way before the Council of Foreign Ministers as the view of the majority’ (Bingham 1946; See also Hogan 2008, ch. 2).
the White Dominion source, (ii) the White Australia Policy source, (iii) the ‘tyranny of distance’ source, and (iv) the proximity to Asia source. These sources produce a variation on the middle power theme that predates and diverges from the internationalism that Evatt was largely responsible for initiating. The origins of the variation to Evatt’s position are evident, for example, in the views espoused by some of the country’s early leaders. Alfred Deakin\textsuperscript{11} was a strong advocate for a self-reliant Australia in terms of both its economy (via protectionism) and national security (Birrell 2001, 201-2). Moreover Billy Hughes\textsuperscript{12} was thought by the Governor-General, Lord Munro Ferguson, in 1918: ‘[to be] animated by a real Imperial patriotism, but I am not without fear lest in his zeal for Australia’s safety he be inclined to turn to America and seek a very close and direct understanding with her’ (quoted in Spartalis 1983, p. 58). These views were assertions of the right for Australia’s interests to be heard and respected within the imperial context (Edwards 1983, ch. 4). Their intention was to bolster both Australia and the British Empire, not to transcend the latter but to be an even more formidable and influential part of it.

The Evatt tradition remains somewhat subordinate to the predominant (‘imperialist’) form of middle power imagining in Australia even today, although Evatt’s internationalism is the most promising source for effective Australian foreign policy making – one that points in the direction of neo-Kantian middle power imagining. While ‘exacting and difficult as a government minister’ there can be little doubt that at External Affairs, Evatt was one of the giants on whose shoulders subsequent political leaders, foreign ministers, and commentators on Australian foreign policy have nimbly clambered whenever it has suited their purposes (Burton 1996, p. 8; see also Hasluck

\textsuperscript{11} Prime Minister 1903-4, 1905-8, and 1909-10.

\textsuperscript{12} Prime Minister 1916-23.
1980, ch. 3). ‘No single individual,’ writes Peter Edwards, ‘has been so closely associated with the making of Australian foreign policy as Dr Herbert Vere Evatt’ (Edwards 1983, p. 140).

**Australia’s Middle Power Imagining in the Asia Pacific**

Prior to the 1989 Garnaut Report, a number of scholars had been focusing on Australia’s role in the Asia Pacific region, testing the ground for a middle power strategy for the country, in both its region and globally. A pioneer in this endeavour was William Macmahon Ball, Foundation Professor of Political Science in the University of Melbourne (Darby 2015, pp. 206-210). In 1949 he introduced an International Relations course into the Melbourne political science major focusing on East and Southeast Asia. His biographer states that ‘Ball’s initiative in bringing Asian politics into the Political Science curriculum occurred well ahead of other Australian universities’ (Kobayashi 2013, p. 150; see also Cotton 2013, pp. 181-207). F.W. Eggleston concluded that Australia is ‘a small or middle power faced with difficult strategic problems and has to formulate her policy accordingly.’ He warned against relying too heavily on great power allies that, ‘however friendly, are not apt to understand the special problems of their smaller friends.’ ‘Nor,’ he added, ‘do alliances of this kind necessarily build up a satisfactory world order’ (Eggleston 1957, p. 9; see also Cotton 2013, ch.3). Eggleston ‘became something of a ‘one-man China lobby’, pressing opinions that were not welcome in Australia’ (Edwards 1983, pp. 128). They were opinions that influential scholars like Professor Garnaut years later would take for granted. However, Eggleston’s counsel – as was the case with the advice from Miller and Andrews cited earlier – went largely unheeded as Australia’s middle power imagining determinedly diverged from the route that Evatt and Eggleston had been championing. Thus, as T.B. Millar noted in the 1960s: ‘Australia has no dreams of empire or great power status, but she has visions of an
independent role, image, status in Asia which are not necessarily incompatible with an American alliance’ (Millar 1968, p. 33; italics added).

A decade later Hedley Bull sounded a different note. He observed: ‘Australia is emerging as a middle power, whose natural policy on many international issues is to cooperate not with her former great power mentors but with other middle and small states’ (Bull 1975, p. 369). The kind of middle power he had in mind – membership in a grouping of ‘like-minded states’ – was a revision of the Evatt and Eggleston tradition. It was reflected in the Whitlam Government’s reforms to foreign and defence policy, including recognition of Communist China, ending Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War, ‘fraternal’ criticism of US foreign and defence policy, and a more concentrated focus on an emergent Asia (Camilleri 1979b). Subsequent governments were to shift away from the relative autonomy from ‘great and powerful friends’ that Bull had identified approvingly in the Whitlam Government’s approach to middle power imagining (Camilleri 1989). The Evatt and Eggleston visions (and that of J.D.B. Miller) were being disregarded yet again. Twenty years after Evatt’s statement to the House of Representatives, Sir Garfield Barwick, External Affairs Minister in the Menzies Government, began spelling out what was by then pushing forward as the dominant theme in Australia’s foreign policy thinking:

Australia is a middle power in more senses than one. It is clearly one in the general sense in which the expression is used. But it also has common interests with both the advanced and the underdeveloped countries; it stands in point of realized wealth between the haves and the have-nots. It is at the one time a granary and a highly industrialized country. It has a European background and is set in intimate geographical propinquity to Asia. This ambivalence brings some strength and offers promise of a future of which Australia can be confident, a future of increasing influence (Barwick 1964, p. 486).
Ten years after Barwick’s speech, Gordon Greenwood wrote that ‘Australia is a middle power within Asia and very much within South-East Asia, whether by industrial and technological sophistication, or by educational standards, or by political stability and administrative performance’ (Greenwood 1974, p. 559). There are echoes in both Barwick and Greenwood’s words of the sense of advanced social and economic development – even civilizational superiority – that many Australians then imagined their country had achieved relative to their neighbours in the Asia Pacific. This questionable conclusion would not have been alien to many Australian minds at that time.

By March of 1981 Foreign Affairs Minister Tony Street was unequivocal about his country’s presence in its region and in the world: ‘Australia,’ he proclaimed, ‘is now a significant middle power with a range and depth of relations comparable to any country, other than a handful of great powers’ (Street 1981 829). The triumphalism – some may perceive it as truculence – evident in Street’s statement has surfaced regularly in Australia’s middle power imagining ever since.

Employing a more measured approach in 1994, Andrew Cooper et al. provided a nuanced understanding of middle power imagining. They argued: ‘Historically [it] has tended to be a somewhat blunt instrument for ‘locating’ states such as Australia and Canada in an increasingly complex and interdependent world’ (Cooper et al. 1994, p. 32). But their approach failed to persuade Australian leaders across the political spectrum (and not a few academic observers and media commentators) to be judicious about using the term ‘middle power’ in relation to Australia. As John Ravenhill notes: ‘During the Hawke and Keating Labor governments, it became popular, both in official discourse and in academic studies, to consider Australian foreign policy as an example of middle power statecraft’ (Ravenhill 1998, p. 309). Mark Thomson asserted that Australia will ‘continue
to play the role of middle power as we have in recent years’ (Thomson 2005, p. 13). In 2010 Malcolm Cook predicted that ‘the ongoing shift of power to Asia is helping to move Australia from the fringe towards the centre of regional and global affairs in the economic and security fields […] underpinning its middle power self-identity’ (Cook 2010, p. 117). This is despite Higgot and Nossal’s earlier warning: ‘Australians tend to be regarded with some ambiguity in the region’ (1997, p. 181; see also Higgott and Nossal 2008). It is precisely this ambiguity that points to Australia having many of the characteristics of an awkward partner in terms of its diplomacy in the Asia Pacific region.

Gareth Evans outlined four principles that he believed should guide an activist middle power role for Australia. First, avenues for possible action had to be carefully researched and the strategies for that action had to be clearly understood. Second, the necessary resources had to be available to ensure the action could be initiated successfully and followed through to its conclusion. Third, an informed awareness of the need for the action and its execution was essential. Fourth, the action had to be credible to regional and global stakeholders (Scott 1999, p. 234). In 2012 Evans returned to this theme:

The limits of Australia's strength are self-evident: we are not, and never will be, either a super power or major power. We are at best a middle power [but] we are certainly able to have some influence if we employ creatively the characteristic methods of middle power diplomacy, viz. coalition building around particular issues with ‘like-minded’ countries, and ‘niche diplomacy’, which means simply concentrating resources in specific areas best able to generate returns worth having rather than trying to cover the field (Evans 2012, p. 3).

Evans’ words, like those of Bull, portend a revisionist approach to Australia’s middle power thinking that is the latest version in the evolution of the Evatt tradition.
In his 2006 essay ‘Faith in Politics,’ Kevin Rudd elaborated on his middle power vision for Australia, identifying action on climate change and promotion of the Millennium Development Goals as two areas for Australia’s international activism. He argued for ‘an Australia that becomes a leader, not a follower, in the redesign of the rules of the international order that we helped craft in 1945, to render future genocides both intolerable under international law and impossible through international resolve’ (Rudd, 2006, pp. 28-30). Like Evans before him, Rudd’s vision of middle power gravitas for Australia was grounded in the Evatt tradition. However, as suggested earlier, this tradition remains on the margins of Australia’s middle power imagining.

Curiously, despite appearing regularly in public speeches, scholarly publications, and in the media, questions have rarely been asked about the evolution of Australia’s middle power imagining, about the ideologies driving it, or about its intellectual consistency. Nor do we know a great deal about how the country’s middle power assumptions are received by its neighbours in the Asia Pacific region. Commenting on Australia’s relations in Asia, Ann Capling doubts that the country’s middle power diplomacy provides a ‘sufficient basis for Australia’s Asian engagement in the future.’ She considers it to be more a result of ‘ASEAN’s angst about the rise of China’s influence in the region’ than any middle power dexterity in Australia’s diplomacy (Capling 2008, p. 619). Her caution is salutary. Is an Australian diplomacy that is based on a fragile middle power ‘political fiction’ (applying Yaron Ezrahi’s term to Australia’s foreign policy presumptions) actually a constraint on the country’s relations with its Asia Pacific neighbours (Ezrahi 2012, p. 83)? Could it be that this ‘political fiction’ is no longer tenable? Is there is an identifiably Australian middle power imagining, that facilitates Australia’s Asia Pacific foreign policy, or does it contribute to awkwardness in the country’s diplomacy in the region? The issues relating to Australia’s middle power
imagining need to be critically interrogated if Australia is going to exercise the kind of influence in the Asia Pacific that enables it to play a respected role in an evolving so-called ‘Asian century’ – perhaps more accurately labelled the ‘Chinese Century’ given that much of what is happening in contemporary Asia, economically and strategically, is in response (or reaction) to China’s re-emergence as potentially a big power.

A new, more effective middle power imagining is needed in Australia. This means moving on from the dependent mentality that presently characterizes Australia’s middle power posturing, towards a neo-Kantian skillfulness in niche diplomacy in the region. But before this can be contemplated an exploration of the sources of Australian middle power imagining needs to be undertaken.

**Two Sources of Australia’s Middle Power Imagining**

*Imperialism*

Until 1942, Carl Bridge has observed, ‘Britain was and remained the economic and military rock on which Australia built its place in the world’ (Bridge 2000, p. 182). In 1942 the United States became that rock. This dependency on ‘great and powerful friends’ is based on affinities that many Australians feel they have with both countries, most recently with America. As Coral Bell concludes: ‘The sense of affinity (justified or not) sweetens the consciousness of dependence’ (Bell 1988, p. 203).

As noted earlier, four political-historical sources flow together into this stream of middle power imagining in Australia. They require analytical dissection to identify the influence each of them has on the country’s foreign policy. In recent years Australian ambitions for regional leadership have disturbed the calm surface of the country’s dependent middle power imagining. An example is the Hawke Government’s role (in collaboration with Japan) in initiating the Asia Pacific-Economic Cooperation (APEC)
(Ravenhill 2001a, ch. 2). But rather than being read as a bid for independence from the American alliance, these ambitions are better understood as an element in an Australian strategy to keep the United States actively engaged in the region. Nor is Australia alone in this desire: in the wake of China’s re-emergence other Asia Pacific states are seeking alignment with American security interests (see for example, Hamilton-Hart 2012, ch. 1; Jain and Bruni 2006).

**Internationalism**

The fifth source, which is different to the other four sources, flows along its own course. This is the internationalist stream within Australian foreign policy. There is an orthodox consensus that this version of Australian middle power imagining has its roots in Dr Evatt’s time as External Affairs Minister and that subsequently (or consequently) that experience has given birth to the ‘Labor tradition’ in Australian foreign policy making (see, for example, Lee and Waters 1997). This suggests too that the Australian Labor Party is the *fons et origo* of Australian middle power imagining and the sole driver of the country’s foreign policy making. The difficulty with the orthodox consensus is that it obscures the four political-historical sources that shape the first (dependent) stream. Those sources pre-date Evatt’s undoubted originality in foreign policy; moreover it is noteworthy that they also influenced Evatt’s thinking. It is also true that Labor policy has been shaped by those very same sources at least as much as it has been by its internationalist ambitions.

The consensus around the Labor tradition emphasizes the strategic value of engagement with international organisations like the United Nations. This is the signal characteristic of the tradition. In recent times the diplomacy it has embraced includes arms control and nuclear disarmament measures, opening up regional and global trade, contributing to international conflict resolutions, focusing on global warming and climate
change, and canvassing non-permanent membership for Australia on the United Nations Security Council. Commenting on these kinds of issues, Evans and Grant believe ‘middle powers [like Australia] are as well equipped as anyone else, and in some respects better equipped, to generate acceptable solutions’ (Evans and Grant 1995, p. 344).

Despite the orthodox consensus that it is the original stream in Australian foreign policy, the Labor tradition was pre-dated and subsequently it has largely been overshadowed by the first stream of middle power imagining. This is in part due to the fact that not a few opinion makers within the Australian Labor Party have been at least as committed to fostering great and powerful friendships as to orchestrating foreign policies emphasizing internationalist themes. Recently, as Nick Bisley observed, ‘All the key figures shaping foreign policy in the two ALP governments since 2007 have been staunch supporters of the [American] alliance’ (Bisley 2013, p. 411). This was not the first time the Australian Labor Party has mobilized staunch support for security ties with the United States (Camilleri 1980, ch. 1).

Labor’s claim to prioritizing internationalism in its foreign policy has its roots in an account of Australia’s mainstream political parties that still wanders like Banquo’s ghost on and off the stage of Australian political party analysis. It is an account echoing an over-simplified interpretation of Hancock’s thesis that Australia’s two main political parties (the Australian Labor Party and its conservative opponents) could be characterised, respectively, as the party of initiative or reform versus the party of resistance (Hancock 1931, chs. X and XI; see also Crisp 1965, chs. 8 and 9). At its height (the 1930s) McCallum provided what was then a widely accepted (though less than nuanced) version of this thesis: ‘In office, or out of office, [Labour] is the magnetic pole

13 Though the pendant might cite Mark Latham’s brief tenure as Labor leader (December 2003 – January 2005) as a period characterised by Latham’s (if not Labor’s) hostility to the US alliance. It would be wrong however to argue that this reflects a repositioning of the Australian Labor Party’s policy on ANZUS.
by which all political ships must set their course’ (McCallum 1935, p. 50). This interpretation of the policy orientations of the two mainstream parties greatly over-simplifies the differences between them. The earliest (and clearest) statement of this thesis is by Henry Mayer (1956; see also Mayer 1966). It has been noted that ‘Most observers of Australian politics have now properly abandoned the initiative/resistance concepts, recognizing that neither of the major parties has a monopoly on either innovation or resistance, and that the parties actually share a lot of common ground in many policy areas’ (Head and Patience 1979, p. 2). But, as Derek McDougall points out, the tradition persists in foreign policy circles ‘that Labor is more idealistic and internationalist in its approach to foreign policy, whereas the Coalition parties are more realist’ (McDougall 1998, p. 29).

The Labor tradition would have it that Australia needs to ease itself – albeit ever so tentatively – away from its penchant for dependency on security ties with great powers while pointing it in the direction of a policy of independence. It is also a tradition without much traction within the Realpolitik of Australian foreign policy making, nor much influence in the Labor Party other than as an ideological talisman in its foreign policy thinking. This could be the reason why opinion leaders claiming to belong to one or other stream have demonstrated an agility to dive back and forth among the two streams, depending on their political inclinations at the time, or as they react to populist demands from voters, or as they simply grasp at political opportunities as they arise. Right across the political spectrum Australian middle power imagining is nothing if not pragmatic.

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14 Both McCallum and Hancock used the old form ‘Labour’ when referring to what is now known as the ‘ Labor’ Party.
It is clear that the consensus asserting the primacy of Labor’s internationalism in Australia’s middle power imagining is in need of revision. This can be achieved by exploring the sources of that imagining. This chapter now examines the sources of Australia’s assumption of a dependent middle power imagining – its penchant for imperialism and empire, before returning to the internationalist stream.

(i) The White Dominion Source

When the Australian colonies began shouldering the burdens of self-government in the 1850s it was taken for granted that Britain would continue to guarantee the defence of the Australian colonies and manage their foreign policies. For all the colonists’ braggadocio about the uniqueness of the ‘currency lads and lasses,’ and subsequent claims about a robust Australian nationalism based on notions of ‘mateship’ and the ‘bush,’ Australia’s white settlers imagined themselves first and foremost as belonging to the British Empire’s inner sanctum of white Dominions. As Don Watson notes: ‘Nowhere was imperial sentiment stronger than at the furthest reaches of the empire’ (Watson 2014, p. 53). Sometimes referred to as the ‘Old Dominions,’ these were white settler colonies in which the assumed superiority of white settlers was hardly ever questioned and the rights of indigenous peoples were rarely given a second thought (Miller 1966; Reynolds 2005, Part 1; Thomas 2015; see also Denoon 1983). Martin Jacques notes that the white Dominions ‘were always treated entirely differently [to the other British colonies] – for straightforward racial and ethnic reasons – and prospered greatly as a consequence’ (Jacques 2012, p. 49).

15 ‘Our colonial-born brethren are best known here by the name of Currency, in contradistinction to Sterling, or those born in the mother-country […] Our currency lads and lasses are a fine interesting race, and do honour to the country whence they originated.’ (Cunningham 1827, p. 53).
Based on Britain’s naval superiority and wealth, the *Pax Britannica* that existed prior to 1914 allowed the Dominions to focus on developing their domestic economies while leaving it to Britain to be responsible for foreign and defence matters (Carter 1974, p. xv). This was especially true in Australia throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century where an almost jingoistic attachment to Britain flourished. As Neville Meaney notes, ‘the imperial fervour was such that most Australians did not exercise any discrimination either in terms of moral justification or national interest in coming to the aid of the Mother Country’ (Meaney 2009a, p. 4). Donald Horne referred to this as the ‘legend of Britishness’ reinforcing Australia’s white Dominion posturing. He explains:

> Before the Second World War it was one of the most effective ideologies among decision-makers and trend-setters in Australia. It cast a simple image to the world; it gave meaning to life and identity to national personality; it provided a guide to action. If you were British you knew who you were and what you were supposed to be doing; you had a sense of the past and a sense of the future (Horne 1993, p. 119).

While this ‘legend’ held sway in the minds of many British-Australians (although less so among Irish-Australians), it would have been simply unthinkable that Australia could develop interests that did not also reflect Britain’s interests.

Federation in Australia in 1901 was emphatically not a declaration of independence from Great Britain. As the legal historian K.C. Wheare once pointed out, the Australian Constitution was originally ‘granted under an Imperial Act’ (Wheare 1933, p. 95). Indeed it was *created* by the Commonwealth Of Australia Act 1900, passed by the Parliament at Westminster and signed into law by Queen Victoria. When it came into force on 1 January 1901, ‘full international sovereignty had not yet been achieved, nor was it sought’ (Irving 1999, p. 26). With Australia’s overseas representation mostly conducted through British embassies and consulates, a deeply held conviction persisted in Australia
not only that Britain’s interests were also precisely the same as Australia’s interests. Moreover, as an integral part of the British Empire, Australia would always acknowledge that the interests and needs of the Empire should always take precedence over Australia’s immediate concerns. As Ewer puts it: ‘The benevolent protection of a wise mother, and the implied gratitude of her children – so went the imperial myth’ (Ewer 2013, p. 22). Meanwhile liberals like Hancock were imagining that the Empire ‘could be an example of international cooperation, the principles of which could be extended progressively to the larger international system’ (Cotton 2009, p. 492; see also Davidson 2010, ch. 8). This contained echoes of proposals for an Imperial Federation to replace the British Empire as some of the Old Dominions (but not Australia) and some of the more ambitious colonies like India began pressing for independence (Bell 2007).

Notwithstanding the nostalgia of antipodean Britons or the romanticism of their liberal contemporaries, by the end of the nineteenth century in Britain there was growing consciousness that the realities of Empire were increasingly at odds with its dominion and colonial mythologizing. There was a quickening realization that the Empire had really been ‘a mass of contradictions, aspirations and anomalies […] in its heyday it was largely a sham’ (Darwin 2009, p. xi). In the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries in Australia this would have been taken as rank heresy – the perverted thinking of traitors. On the other hand less enthralled politicians in South Africa and Canada saw the writing on the wall. Responding to their promptings, the 1926 Imperial Conference in London produced a second Balfour Declaration16 proclaiming that Britain and its white Dominions were autonomous and equal political entities within the British Empire (Marshall 2001). Other British colonies (in Africa, the Caribbean, the sub-continent, etc.)

16 Not be confused with the first Balfour Declaration of 1917 that appeared to commit the British government to securing a national home in Palestine for the Jewish diaspora in Europe. See Clarke (2008, p. 86; see also Mansfield 2013, pp. 230-1).
China, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific) were not accorded the same status. In Australia this sentiment persisted well into the twentieth century. As Mungo MacCallum notes: ‘Sir Robert Menzies made no secret of his disdain for a system that saw the black pawns of the former colonies (colonies which he believed should not have been granted independence so early, if at all) assume equal status with the white knights, whose company he greatly preferred’ (MacCallum 2012).

The Statute of Westminster was passed by the British Parliament five years later. It reflected rising anxieties in Whitehall about the future of the Empire – about its economic viability given the impact of the Great Depression and Britain’s shrinking capacity to defend its far-flung colonies (Darwin 2009, p. 419). But equally it was a response to pressures emanating from the Canadians and South Africans who had been less than impressed by aspects of the behaviour of the Imperial Government during and after World War I. By the 1930s Britain’s more sagacious leaders were concluding – if ruefully – that their country’s imperial sway could not last much longer. Such thoughts, however, were far from the minds of their Australian counterparts who fervently believed the Empire would last forever; their keenest desire was that it should do so.

The Statute of Westminster provided legal grounds for realizing the 1926 Balfour Declaration by limiting the British government’s power to legislate for its Dominions except at their request and by their consent (Gray 1960). Wheare (1933, pp. 7-8) noted that the Statute ‘stands at the close of a period in the history of the British Empire which […] witnessed the gradual emergence of those overseas possessions of the Crown which

17 Although it is noteworthy that about a decade later the British government was prepared to offer Dominion status to ‘whatever states were to emerge from the Raj [India] within the re-labellled British Commonwealth’ (Anderson 2012, p. 14). In effect this amounted to a bribe to try to keep the Raj intact, at least on the sub-continent. Such an offer would have been anathema to Menzies, among other influential voices in Australia aping British manners and clinging to a resolute belief in Australia’s superior white Dominion standing within the unsettling (to them) new Commonwealth (Kuruppu 2004, ch. 3).
now comprise the British Commonwealth of Nations from a state of imperial governance to full responsible self-government.’ Nonetheless the passing of the Statute came as a severe jolt to Australia’s comforting assumption that it was joined at the hip to Britain. Prominent Australians at the time (for example, Menzies and Latham) were deeply disturbed by what they saw as a display of unsympathetic unilateralism by the British government. As far as they were concerned (and they were very concerned about the matter), the apron strings tying colonial Australia to mother Britain were not for sundering. They viewed the Statute as a threat to nearly everything they believed in about the Empire and its importance to their security and (even more importantly) to their very identity as Englishmen, albeit in another country (Lewis 1998). The Australians delayed ratification of the Statute until October 1942, sulkily backdating it to September 1939. Arriving late in the day, the ratification was, as Horner notes, ‘a significant step along the road to Australia’s full independence’ (Horner 2013, p. 28).

The legacy of the white Dominion status continues to influence those Australians whose cultural memories pre-date post-War, multicultural Australia. Not a few in this generation feel that the immigrant society of post-War Australia is usurping their country’s sacred traditions and true identity (see for example, Dixon 1999; Betts 1999). This remembering is intertwined with Jim Davidson’s account of ‘de-dominionisation.’ While de-dominionisation could be more or less accepted, if grudgingly, decolonization (meaning the comprehensive severing of political and security links with the mother country) could not be further from the Australians’ minds. With de-dominionisation ‘the political structures developed almost as a matter of course, and were transferred to the local white populace, usually of kindred stock, before there was much differentiated sense of nationality either to agitate them or to activate the institutions’ (Davidson 1993, p. 149; see also Davidson 2005). Australia regarded itself simply as Britain alter terra.
Just as federation was not a declaration of independence, neither was de-dominionisation a nationalistic rupture with Britain. Australian nostalgia for the British connection remained in place well into the twentieth century. This had practical consequences. For example, as Phillip Deery has noted, ‘throughout the 1950s, Australia was intimately entwined with Britain’s vast programme of atomic development and nuclear weaponry’ (Deery 2001, p. 30).

Britain’s demise as Australia’s security blanket in Singapore in February 1942 was a bitter blow to the Australian national psyche. As Horner notes: ‘The crisis of 1942 has a deep and long-lasting effect on Australia’s political life’ (Horner 2013, p. 26; see also McMullin 2013). The strategic catastrophe that is was ripped from under it the confidence that Australia had so placed in Britain’s capacity and will to guarantee Australian security. Even so, in Australia’s security planning these developments initiated little desire to shuffle off the deeply felt sentimentality attending the real and imagined connections with Britain. ‘De-dominionised’ Australia continued to be influenced well into the 1960s by conservative leaders like Sir Robert Menzies who clung to ‘a higher identity as Britons,’ an identity that ‘was still personally and politically important’ As Goldsworthy explains:

Although they accepted the inevitability of the ending of empire, such individuals found it extremely difficult to come to terms with some of the broader policy changes with which this process was associated […] changes to the Commonwealth, to trade relationships and to regional security, for example, in ways that most of them felt to be unfavourable (Goldsworthy 2002, pp. 8-9).

Australia’s middle power imagining can thus be seen in part to be a product of a culturally reinforced nostalgia for the golden age of Empire – for what was perceived as Britain’s cultural superiority and civilizing destiny in a world becoming bewilderingly cosmopolitan and ever more foreign and fearful. The core feature of this nostalgia is a
belief in Australia’s status as a white Dominion, first within the Empire, then within the Commonwealth. For those for whom nostalgia for Empire and white Dominion standing in the world remains important to their identity, the equality and respect they see accorded to post-colonial non-white states in the Commonwealth is grating. Its antidote is to imagine belonging to an Australia that, while obviously not a great power, can lay claim to gravitas wrought from its standing as a white Dominion in what was once a mighty Empire. But like that Empire, that Australia no longer exists – if ever it did.

(ii) The White Australia Source

In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, most white settlers in Australia (and not a few of their descendents even today) imagined Anglo-Saxon-Celtic blood flowed in their veins, making them legitimate and true subjects and heirs of the Empire. As the country’s first Prime Minister Edmund Barton expressed it: ‘We are guarding the last part of the world in which the higher races can live and increase freely for the higher civilization’ (Barton 1901, p. 3503). Reared in a culture of reverential Britishness they ensured that their children shared the same values and habits. Meaney explains:

The rising generation through universal, compulsory education was socialised into the creed of Empire. The curriculum and text book in the classroom, the rites and ceremonies in the playground, all helped to inculcate the religion of British imperialism. The newspapers, similarly, in appealing to a mass-educated readership promoted the ideals of empire, publicized the wars of empire and fostered a racial sense of British, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ or ‘Anglo-Saxon-Celtic’ identity (Meaney (1989, pp. 394-5).

This amounted to racial exclusion – on occasions labelled ‘Anglo-Saxon race patriotism’ – through which the settlers and subsequent generations differentiated themselves not only from the Aborigines but from all ‘coloured races,’ drawing spurious authority from the writings of the English sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). In constructing his
theory of ‘Social Darwinism,’ Spencer adapted nineteenth century speculation about the origin and survival of species to theorize ‘the evolution of Society in respect both of its political and economical organization; and [...] in all those endless concrete and abstract products of human activity which constitute the environment of our daily life’ (Spencer 1857, p. 465). Like Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), Spencer held the view that people who conquered and colonized other peoples were very likely the benefactors of a process of ‘natural selection’ – they were, so to speak, born to rule (Gilmour 2003, ch. 14). This translated into a rationale for the colonisation and dispossession of native peoples by European settlers and played a baleful role in the closing stages of British imperialism – evidenced, for example, in the mindset of the officer responsible for the massacre of unarmed men, women and children in the northern Indian city of Amritsar in April 1919 (Bond 1963). It is also grimly present in Australian federal and state policies that legalized the stealing of Aboriginal children of mixed parentage from their families (Australian Human Rights Commission 1997).

Henry Reynolds has shown that Spencer’s ideas, though rarely acknowledged as such, influenced the thinking of white settlers in Australia, encouraging them to believe that ‘the minds of “the inferior races” were unable to respond to ideas of even moderate complexity’ (Reynolds 2005, p. 75). The evidence for this specious dogma was based on what Dickens identifies as ‘flawed analogies between evolution in nature on the one hand and of human society on the other’ (Dickens 2000, p. 5). Nonetheless Social Darwinism provided a popular and potent rationale for those who were committed to believing that the British colonizers were the strongest and fittest people, racially and culturally, to exercise ‘dominion over palm and pine.’

In Australia many people were not only resolutely committed to this prejudice but were also remarkably complacent about its determining of their actions. The result was a
rapid decline in the Aboriginal population after 1788. In a foundational study of the plight of Aborigines following white settlement, C.D. Rowley revealed:

No real allowance has been made for the extreme violence of the treatment of the Aboriginal. The facts are easily enough established that homicide, rape, and cruelty have been commonplace over wide areas and long periods. Cultural deprivation has been as complete as possible over most of the continent; and it is still lightly weighed in the face of possible economic development of Aboriginal reserves (Rowley 1970, p. 7).

Rowley’s observations have subsequently been confirmed and extended in many disturbing publications and reports (see, for example, Lippman 1981; Rowse 2002; Reynolds 2006; Broome 2011; Rowse 2012).

The racism marginalizing Aborigines also under-pinned the tortured logic of Australia’s early immigration policy. The first Act (other than ‘machinery Bills’) to pass in the new Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 was the Immigration Restriction Act, subsequently known as the White Australia Policy. As N.B. Nairn noted, the parliamentary debates prior to the Bill’s inglorious passage were marked by ‘racial crudities and economic extravagances’ (Nairn 1973, p. 75). Gwenda Tavan explains that its overriding purpose was to maintain ‘sovereignty over the Australian continent and the survival of the white races’ (Tavan 2005). These prejudices, vividly present in the making of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, reflected the crimson thread of racism running through much of Australian history, from the earliest days of European settlement (Nelson and Dunn 2013). As Tavan reminds us, ‘Although debate accompanied the passing of the IRA [Immigration Restriction Act], White Australia was, in fact, already a well established doctrine and policy by federation’ (Tavan 2005, p. 9). This doctrine had legitimized violence directed at Chinese who were attracted (like many Europeans) to the gold fields in Victoria and New South Wales in the mid-nineteenth century, hoping to
make fortunes (Rolls 1992; Yong 1977). Peter Stanley notes that during the gold rushes, ‘one of the threats [white] colonists perceived was Asian, and specifically Chinese.’ He explains:

While white settlers were happy to buy their vegetables from Chinese market gardeners or entrust them with them with their laundry, they always saw them as alien and threatening. The people they called ‘Chows’ or ‘Chinks’ were feared because it was believed they would undercut wages, sell opium, spread plague or pollute the European race (Stanley 2008, p. 23).

Some Chinese settled in Australia after the gold fields were depleted, contributing to the country’s development. But, as John Fitzgerald notes: ‘Despite their modern aspirations, universal values, business success and engagement with civic communities, Chinese Australians could not escape being characterised as servile, hierarchical and self-interested aliens in White Australia’ (Fitzgerald 2008, p. 226).

The 1901 Act was simultaneously an expression of, and a contribution to, white Australians’ imagining of peoples who differed from them culturally and ethnically as aliens, as ‘Other.’ Matthew Jordan argues that it was ‘established for the sole purpose of prohibiting non-Europeans from migrating to Australia’ (Jordan 2006, p. 228). It was a critical element in the emergence of Australia’s national identity and Australian nationalism – a yardstick for distinguishing Australians from other peoples and potential enemies in their region. In the words of two of the finest scholars on this subject: ‘It stimulated national sentiment and unity, and a readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of the commonly held ideal’ (Yarwood and Knowling 1982, p. 227)

The belief that Australia was a white Dominion – a part of the Empire – and the doctrine of White Australia fed off each other. Together these influences persuaded many white Australians across several generations to think of themselves as more civilized,
more democratic, and more advanced than the Aborigines and the inhabitants of states in their geopolitical neighbourhood, especially when those people have pressed to live among them. (This reaction is echoed in contemporary responses to asylum seekers.) What Robert Manne describes as ‘the long racist shadow of the White Australia policy’ also contributes to a longing for recognition of Australia as a racially and civilizationaly more advanced country than its neighbours (Manne 2013, p. 18). This viewpoint stresses Australia’s cultural affinity with great powers across the seas. Writing of his training as an Australian diplomat in the early days of the Department of External Affairs, Pierre Hutton notes:

Little was said to us about the handicap of the ‘White Australia’ policy in our efforts to win hearts and minds in the new nations of the Third World. Serving in Asia and Africa, I would feel its burden as a Third Secretary and through to my first appointment as a High Commissioner (Hutton 1997, p. 14).

It seems never to have crossed the minds of the advocates of White Australia that their attitudes and the policy it produced could result in Australia becoming an awkward partner in the Asia Pacific. The idea that Australia should aim to become a state that was regionally respected with well-earned middle power gravitas could not have been further from their minds.

(iii) The ‘Tyranny of Distance’ Source

‘Distance,’ writes Geoffrey Blainey in the Preface to his well-known interpretation of modern Australian history, ‘is as characteristic of Australia as mountains are of Switzerland.’ He continues: ‘By sealanes or airlanes most parts of Australia are at least 12,000 miles from western Europe, the source of most of their people, equipment,

18 As Christos Tsiolkas (2013, p. 29) has observed: ‘We can’t understand what is now happening in our nation without understanding racism.’
institutions and ideas’ (Blainey 1974, p. vii). From the earliest days of Britain’s incremental colonisation of the Australian continent, convicts and jailers alike were haunted by the remoteness and strange environment in which they found themselves incarcerated, while contact with the motherland was very much at the mercy of the elements. Ships with badly needed supplies were wrecked en route or were blown off course. Letters home and reports to government had to be conveyed by ship and could take two years or more before a reply was received (provided, that is, the ships and their crews survived the long and arduous sea journey). ‘Much of Australia’s history,’ Blainey notes, ‘had been shaped by the contradiction that it depended intimately and comprehensively on a country which was further away than almost any other in the world’ (p. 213). And while Alan Frost writes admiringly of the British Empire as ‘perhaps the most extraordinary imperial expansion in world history,’ the nervous early settlers in Terra Australis were not a little anxious about Britain’s reliability should their supplies run out, if a natural catastrophe should strike, or the war ships of putative foes should come over the horizon (Frost 2003, p. 313).

The anxieties (or geo-phobias) generated by the perceived distance of Australia from Britain influenced Australian attitudes about security in the Asian region until well after the Pacific War. It fostered a habit of dependency on ‘great and powerful friends’ – the belief that Australia must become an ally of a state so powerful that any potential enemies would be dissuaded from attacking for fear of retribution by the powerful state. The consequences are evident in the long record of Australia committing its soldiers and materiel to wars that in hindsight may not necessarily be seen as serving the country’s security interests: to the second Boer War (1899-1902) in alliance with Britain; to the Middle East and Europe during World War I (1914-1918), again out of loyalty to the British; to World War II (1939-1945) on the side of Britain, and of the United States; to
the Korean War (1950-1953), in support of the United States; in the Vietnam War (1965-1975) in alliance with the United States; to the War in Iraq (2003) as an ally of the Americans; and in the War in Afghanistan (since 2001), again as an American ally. Throughout the Cold War (1945-c.1989), Australia remained a close ally of the United States (Beeson and Higgott 2013, p. 227; Lowe 1999; Middleton 2011; Molan 2008; Murphy 1993; Patience 2015).

What is noteworthy about all these military engagements in support of big power allies is the fact that Australia has never been threatened with an actual invasion by any of the enemies in those conflicts – and this includes Japan about which there are reasons to doubt the existence of its so-called plans to invade Australia during the Pacific War, although it is true that most Australians seriously feared a Japanese invasion at that time. (Frei 1991, ch. 10). Nonetheless, it is difficult to over-estimate the impact on most Australians in February 1942 of the Japanese forces’ sweeping victories down the Malay Peninsula and their subsequent seizure of Singapore. It demonstrated conclusively that British defence establishments in Southeast Asia were far from impregnable (Ewer 2013; Shores et al. 2002). Britain was not only distant, but (demonstrably) now unreliable. The tyranny of distance combined with Britain’s lack of support for Australia drove Canberra to turn to the United States.

(iv) The Proximity to Asia Source

There has been an entrenched and persistent resistance within Australia to develop educated understandings of the cultures, languages and peoples in their geopolitical neighbourhood. Studies of Asia have remained on the periphery of Australian educational curricula (Asian Studies Association of Australia 2009; Hill 2012; Lindsey 2007). Australian perceptions of cultural differences with the country’s Asian neighbours are negatively reinforced by the legacies of white Dominion nostalgia and the white Australia
policy. Culturally and geographically for many Australians, Asia is simply too close for comfort. In her study of Australian attitudes to Asia, Alison Broinowski notes: ‘Instead of becoming the best informed of English-speaking peoples about the Asia-Pacific region, as they were well placed to do, Australians sheltered from the challenge, accepting Europe’s Orientalist constructs for knowledge’ (Broinowski 1992, 14; see also Walker 1999). In the past these constructs were lurid and extreme. Asians were depicted as apes in trousers, as dissolute and diseased gamblers and opium addicts, as fanged orientalized giants with claws raised above the Australian horizon, as terrifying Fu Manchus threatening the virtue and safety of white women and children. An imagined spreading monolithic Asian state was depicted as a monstrous octopus with voracious tentacles reaching into the Australian heartland (see for example Broinowski 1992, pp. 6-13; Walker 1999, pp. 144-5). These imaginings were symptomatic of Australia’s sense of being an isolated white British enclave, recalled in Sir Garfield Barwick’s fastidious terminology: ‘in intimate geographical propinquity to Asia.’ surrounded by what was widely perceived to be a fearfully proximate Asia. Lack of familiarity with Asia has bred if not contempt, then trepidation.

The fear of Asia’s closeness snowballed in Australia following the Japanese Imperial Navy’s defeat of the large Russian fleet at the Battle of Port Arthur in 1904/5. Henry Frei observes that this prompted Australia’s decision ‘to establish an army and a navy to forestall a Japanese invasion’ (Frei 1991, p. 67). It helped galvanize the movement for federation of the colonies into the Commonwealth of Australia as the colonists closed ranks against the region (Meaney 1989, p. 403). Fears of a militaristic Japan advancing southward escalated during the Pacific War. As T.B. Millar has written:

The rapid and seemingly unstoppable Japanese advance southwards towards Australia realized accumulated apprehensions of two generations of Australians. They were now engaged in a war not simply in defence of the Empire and
Commonwealth but for their own survival as a people and a nation, a war against a powerful, populous, determined, and largely unknown Asian state (Millar 1968, p. 145).

With the outbreak of the Cold War, post-1945, culturally entrenched fears about Asia’s proximity turned febrile fanned by the so-called ‘domino theory.’ In effect this was a clumsy metaphor, never a cogent theory, although it had wide acceptance in the minds of defence planners in the United States and was a view widely shared in Australia. The metaphor originated in a press statement by President Eisenhower in 1954:

You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and […] the last one […] will go over very quickly. So you could have the beginning of disintegration […] the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula and Indonesia […] you are talking really about millions and millions and millions of people (quoted in Fraser and Simons 2010, p. 102).

As Edwards notes, the metaphor implied a warning that ‘communism was spreading, that it threatened Australian security, and that it would be expedient to meet the threat as early as possible and as far away as possible’ (Edwards 1997, p. 185). Australian Cold War foreign and defence policy swiftly absorbed this kind of mindset.

Routinely confused with Asian nationalism, Asian communism was viewed as a monolithic force spreading like a cancer out of Moscow to Beijing and across East Asia, extending down into Southeast Asia (Chandler et al. 2005, Part 4; Cribb 2000; Stuart-Fox 2000). As Anthony Burke puts it: ‘Absolute otherness was reserved for movements named “communist”; they were to be confronted, contained and eliminated’ (Burke 2008, p. 102). In was within this context of public paranoia about communism closing in on Australia that the Menzies Government committed Australia to two major conflicts in Asia: the Korean War and the Vietnam War (Burke 2008, pp. 112-118; Lowe 1999, pp. 62-65). Menzies insisted that were those states to fall to communism, the adjacent
dominoes would also fall, bringing communism to Australia’s vulnerable northern shores. The yellow peril and the red menace loomed large in the metaphorical politics of the Menzies Government’s defence policy (Lowe 199, pp. 53-57). Proximate Asia was believed to be a strategic disadvantage for an Australia that was culturally and ‘racially’ out of place.

This kind of thinking became especially pronounced following the Chinese Communists’ defeat of the Kuomintang forces in 1949. A ‘fear of China’ took hold in Australia, displacing (though not replacing) phobias about Japan (Clark 1966). This fear was fanned by the propaganda of the Cold War and President Eisenhower’s warnings about the domino effect in Asia. Following the lead of the United States, in 1950 the Menzies Government declined to recognize Mao’s communist regime in mainland China, a policy that remained in place for almost a quarter century. Fear of China was generalized to most things Asian and not a few Cold Warrior politicians exploited this fear to lock in support for the alliance with the United States while capitalizing on the populism that could be whipped up around the issues. China’s invasion of Tibet, its military actions on its border with India, and its demands for the ‘return’ of Taiwan were presented as evidence that China was aggressive and ultimately a threat to Australian security. As Gregory Clark noted at the time, this created a foreign and defence policy paradox: ‘Few Western countries have been less the target of Chinese hostility than Australia. Few countries, Western or non-Western, are more hostile to China than Australia’ (Clark 1966, p. 161). In the 1950s and 1960s right wing political groups like the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) ‘exercised great influence, especially over foreign and defence policy’ (Edwards 1997, p. 346). This influence in turn was based on concerns about Asian (and especially Chinese) communism that was regarded as too close for comfort by many Australians fearful of the geopolitics of Asia’s proximity.
If not fear and loathing, then fear and suspicion continue to haunt the subconscious of Australians who remain anxious about Asia’s proximity, evidenced by the way in which Indonesia looms in such counterproductive imagining. As the 2013 Lowy Poll noted:

On the annual ‘thermometer’ scale, Indonesia had never scored above 50° until 2010, and then it only rose to 54° following a successful visit to Australia by Indonesia’s President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. In 2013, Australians remain lukewarm about Indonesia, rating it at 53° on the thermometer scale (Lowy Institute 2013).

The concerns about Indonesia identified by the Lowy Poll have been compounded by its perceived instability, its threatening actions during the era of Konfrontasi, by issues of corruption and human rights abuses, and Indonesia’s invasion in 1975 of East Timor and subsequent brutal control of that small nation (Cotton 2005, ch. 3). The often misplaced tendency of Australians to champion the underdog is aroused when Australians convicted of crimes in Indonesian courts (for example, Schapelle Corby and the Bali Nine) end up facing daunting sentences.19 As Tim Lindsey notes: ‘The popular Australian attitudes about Indonesia are of fear and loathing, sentiments that are the unfortunate children of ignorance’ (Lindsey 2007, p. 23).

Whether it is Japan, China or Indonesia – or an amorphously conjured mixture of these and other notions of what is ‘Asian’ – the proximity of Asia continues to keep alive a geopolitically generated angst at the core of Australia’s ambition to be recognized as a middle power. From the very beginning of Australia’s middle power imagining, negatively cultivated by the desire for recognition as a white Dominion and the

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19 Australian citizens convicted of drug smuggling offences. Corby served an almost decade-long Indonesian prison sentence until she was paroled early in 2014 (Lambert 2007, pp. 73-9). Seven of the Bali Nine are serving prison sentences in Indonesia; two were executed in April 2015 by the Indonesian authorities (McKenzie-Murray 2015, pp. 1 and 10-11).
commitment to the white Australia policy, anti-colonialist ideologies played no part in its development. Nor were anti-imperialist enthusiasms or revolutionary ideologies ever a part of it. The contrast with so many post-colonial states in the Asia Pacific – for example, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam – could not be starker.

* * *

The four political-historical sources of Australia’s middle power imagining outlined above converge into a stream of foreign policy making that inclines Australian foreign policy towards the cultivation of alliances with great and powerful friends. Replete with a deep-seated cultural nostalgia for imperial days, it is a stream that also engenders fearfulness, even paranoia, about Australia’s geopolitical vulnerabilities and cultural isolation in the Asia Pacific. Flowing along a different course is a stream of middle power imagining that opens up an alternative approach to foreign policy for Australia, the so-called ‘Labor tradition.’

(v) The ‘Labor tradition’ as a source of middle power imagining

As noted earlier the Labor tradition is generally believed to have its roots in Evatt’s ambitious foreign policy initiatives while he was External Affairs Minister in the Curtin and Chifley Governments (1941-1949). Ungerer explains it in these terms:

> Although the concept has undergone various revisions and reconstructions in the [more than] sixty years since Evatt first employed the term, its core elements – nationalism, internationalism and activism – have remained constant reference points in the understanding of Australia’s diplomatic position and behaviour, regardless of which political party held power in Canberra. That this has been the case reflects the broad political consensus around the notions of Australia as a middle power in the international system, and the diplomatic style that follows, among both Labor and non-Labor governments (Ungerer 2007a, p. 548).
Bruce Grant demurs about Ungerer’s history, though he is in accord with the view that middle power imagining is integral to Labor Party foreign policy thinking (Grant 2008). He states: ‘Australia began to experiment with middle power diplomacy in the Whitlam period, refining it during the Hawke and Keating governments, especially during Evans’ time as foreign minister.’ Ungerer has also argued that early in his first term as Prime Minister Kevin Rudd ‘returned middle power diplomacy to the forefront [of Australian foreign policy]’ (Ungerer 2008).

According to this interpretation of Australia’s foreign policy history, the Labor tradition promotes internationalism and cooperation with international organizations, to help middle powers and small states to withstand (or at least stand up to) the demands of big states. It is committed to finding a way of balancing or limiting great power politics by facilitating the collective diplomacy of middle and small powers in organisations like the United Nations or regional groupings like the European Union (Lee and Waters 1997).

Certainly Evatt hoped that the nascent United Nations would become a global force for constraining the politics of the emerging Cold War era (Hudson 1993; Lee 1997; Dee 2000). His motives for doing so reflect a consistent internationalism in Evatt’s thinking. However Neville Meaney (2012) doubts this view is sustainable. He points out that it was not until taking up the External Affairs portfolio early in World War II – in the midst of a global cataclysm which threatened the nation’s survival’ – that Evatt began to formulate an internationalist perspective on foreign affairs. Meaney (2012, 34) writes: ‘It is passing strange that Evatt before this time should have ignored international relations.’ John Murphy notes that throughout the 1920s and thirties ‘his few encounters with internationalism were glancing’ (Murphy 2013, p. 1). Murphy highlights Evatt’s nationalism, explaining that after 1941 Evatt ‘was acting almost completely
autonomously in devising a foreign policy and much of it was fiercely nationalist’ (Murphy 2013, p. 11). In 1942 and 1943 when Evatt ‘insisted the war in the Pacific be given a higher priority and that Australia’s voice – his voice – had to be recognised as an independent national interest’ (Murphy 2013, p. 7).

Both Meany and Murphy have drawn attention to the fact that Evatt’s internationalism came to him relatively late in the day. Moreover he never resiled from his firm commitment to the White Australia policy. But once he adopted a liberal internationalist outlook he energetically opposed President Roosevelt’s ‘four policemen’ proposal that the United Nations be led by the four allies in World War II: the USA, the UK, the USSR, and China (Hooper and Brinkley 1997). His vision for the nascent United Nations was almost Kantian in its scope. He wanted it to ‘become the central organ or forum in which the conscience of the peoples of the world should have its most potent expression’ (quoted in Meaney 2012, p. 45). In those immediate post-War years this kind of idealism attracted not a few followers in a war-weary world. On 27 June 1945 the *New York Times* opined:

> When Evatt came here he was a virtually unknown second-string delegate […] He leaves, recognized as the most brilliant and effective voice of the Small Powers, a leading statesman for the world’s conscience, the man who is not afraid to force liberalization of the League charter (quoted in Tenant 1970, p. 174).

By the end of World War II, the passivity of Australia’s diplomatic past was slowly but surely giving way to a new and more assertive approach in foreign policy planning in which Evatt’s appearance at the United Nations Charter Conference in San Francisco in 1945 was arguably the first real public signal that the country was changing its diplomatic course. Both Evatt and Prime Minister Curtin realized that the invitation to Australia to attend the San Francisco conference was a rare moment for a minor power to play a
leading role on the world stage. Evatt was extraordinarily energetic (even frenetic) in San Francisco. As Moreen Dee notes, ‘with boundless enthusiasm and extraordinary stamina, he was almost manic in his pursuit of the amendments deemed important to Australian interests’ (Dee 2000 p. 139). Even Hasluck, one of Evatt’s harsher critics, declared that at the United Nations Charter Conference Evatt ‘made Australia the acknowledged activator and often the spokesman of the small powers’ (Hasluck 1952, p. 173).

Evatt argued: ‘The community of nations consists of small and near-great Powers as well as the Big Three or the Big Four’ (Evatt 1945, p. 212; see also Renouf 1983). His allusion to ‘near-great Powers’ is revealing. It points to the conceptual background of his spirited defence of the interests of ‘small Powers’ at the formation of the United Nations. It also highlights his belief in a hierarchy of states in world affairs – a hierarchy that would provide states like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa with opportunities and responsibilities requiring a particular kind of diplomatic activism, while maintaining a special relationship with the mother country. It is especially noteworthy that Evatt referred to them as ‘British self-governing Dominions,’ signaling his belief that they were in a different category to the post-colonial states achieving independence after the War (Evatt 1945, p. 210). As noted earlier in this chapter, an understanding of this background is important for Australia’s subsequent middle power imagining. Evatt in fact was in accord with Menzies’ view that the ‘Crown Commonwealth’ states should be accorded greater gravitas in world affairs than countries he patronizingly referred to as ‘Commonwealth republics’ like India, Ceylon (later Sri Lanka) and Pakistan. In both Evatt’s and Menzies’ views there are echoes of the white Dominion nostalgia that would coalesce into Australia’s version of dependent middle power imagining as the evolution

20 The terms are more Menzies’ than Evatt’s, though it is unlikely that Evatt would have found them objectionable. See Goldsworthy (2002, p. 22).
of the country’s independent foreign policy processes and institutions gathered
momentum (Lowe 1999, ch. 2; see also Kuruppu 2004, pp. 114-56).

The experiences of World War II (especially in the War’s Pacific theatre)
confirmed in the minds of increasing numbers of foreign policy makers in Australia that
an understanding of the strategic relevance of Australia’s geopolitical location in the Asia
Pacific was vital for the country’s future security and prosperity. This would require
dispensing with nostalgia for the ‘British connection’ and ushering in a new basis for
Australia’s imagining of itself in world affairs. Small but influential groupings of
politicians, academics, bureaucrats, and journalists (for example, Sir Percy Spender, W.
McMahon Ball, Sir John Crawford, and George Ernest – ‘Chinese’ – Morrison) had
already concluded that as far as Australian foreign and defence planning was concerned
‘nearby Asia for the first time took clear and continuing precedence over distant Europe’
(Millar 1968, p. 165).

The Labor tradition of Australian foreign policy has its roots in this mode of
thinking. In recent times it has led leaders like Paul Keating to advocate clearing ‘the
warm fog of sentimentality that swirls around the relationship between the United States
and Australia’ in favour of a more mature foreign policy in which Australia ‘engages’
with Asia (Keating 2000, p. 24). Prime Minister Bob Hawke was even more explicit. In a
statement to the House of Representatives on 3 June 1988 he stated: ‘Australia’s capacity
to survive in the years ahead […] will depend upon the preparedness of this country to
enmesh itself with the dynamism of our region, the Asia-Pacific region.’ Nonetheless the
Labor tradition remains more ambiguous than many of its proponents acknowledge. Even
during the Whitlam years, Labor still harboured some support for the White Australia
Conclusion

Australia’s foreign policies are largely derived from the first tradition of middle power imagining (imperialism), with some segueing into the second tradition from time to time. This has fostered a particular self-confidence in Australia’s foreign policy that surfaces regularly in the country’s diplomacy with the Asia Pacific region. At times this self-confidence is perceived, elsewhere, as truculence or insensitivity. Here are two examples. First, in an interview with the *Bulletin* magazine in September 1999 Prime Minister John Howard was reported as claiming that Australia should be playing a ‘‘deputy’ peacekeeping role to the global policeman role of the US’ in the Asia Pacific region – although the form of words used was that of the journalist, not the Prime Minister (Brenchly 1999, p. 23; see also FitzGerald 1999, p. 13). The reaction to this report by Malaysia’s then Foreign Minister, Mr Abdullah Badawi, was typical of many responses from Southeast Asia: ‘We did not appoint them […] We don’t wish to see any nation which sees itself as [peace] keeper or leader or commander in the region’ (quoted by Dodd and Cummins 1999, p. 3). At first the Australian Prime Minister stuck to his guns, emphasizing Australia’s ‘Western’ (implying advanced, more democratic) cultural and political traditions in contrast to those in the Asia Pacific and implicitly reflecting Australia’s claims to middle power status in the region. However, as Wesley notes: ‘It was only after a storm of derision from domestic and regional critics that [Howard] backed away from the *Bulletin*’s interpretation of the interview’ (Wesley 2007, p. 86). Second, in a widely reported speech in Beijing in April 2000, Mr Howard’s Foreign Minister Alexander Downer emphasized that Australia was culturally different to other states in the Asia Pacific region. He drew a sharp distinction between ‘cultural regionalism’ (common historical ties, emotions and sentiments which he claimed were shared by many Asian states but *not* shared by Australia) and ‘practical regionalism’ (for
example, trade, security issues, and instrumental regional forums, to which he argued Australia was committed) (Downer 2000). Australia’s policies on relations with Asia thus became (to quote FitzGerald again): ‘a technocratic/transactional/economic/security exercise with short-term horizons’ (2105, p. 243). This emphasizing of Australia’s cultural differences in relation to states and cultures in the Asia Pacific region is an echo of the middle power imagining that had earlier been articulated publicly by Evatt and Menzies. It also begs the question of what might be seen to constitute a typically ‘Asian culture’ - Asia, after all is noteworthy in the first instance for its astonishing cultural, religious, linguistic, political and geographical diversity.

It is a mistake to assume that the Labor tradition is the only source of Australian middle power imagining. Non-Labor governments have also made claims to middle power status for the country. In March 1981 the Foreign Minister in the Fraser Government, Tony Street, confidently announced in the Parliament: ‘Australia is now a significant middle power with a range and depth of relations comparable to any country, other than a handful of great powers.’ He continued:

[T]he designation ‘middle power’ refers to one’s overall global position and one’s status in terms of the whole range of international issues. It does not define a nation’s importance in terms of particular issues or circumstances. The ‘weight’ of a middle power can be very considerable indeed within its region – as ours is in South East Asia and the South West Pacific. It can be very considerable in a particular forum – as ours is in the Commonwealth. And it can be very considerable in relation to particular resources – again, as ours is in relation to food and energy (Street 1981).

In his diplomacy to help bring an end to white minority rule in Zimbabwe and to overthrow apartheid in South Africa, Malcolm Fraser assumed an effective middle power posture in a number of global forums (for example, the United Nations and at
Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings). And though Ungerer suggests that the Howard Government eschewed middle power self-imagining, Wesley has argued that the ‘paradox’ of Howard was that he presided over a foreign policy as much imbued with middle power ambitions as previous governments (Wesley 2007).

In short, the conservative side of politics in Australia has been as active at middle power imagining as the Australian Labor Party. But it has developed as a different tradition of middle power imagining. The Labor tradition, prioritizing liberal internationalist or multilateralist approaches to foreign policy, is not the first stream of middle power imagining in Australia and, as argued earlier, nor is it the only kind of middle power imagining shaping Australia’s foreign policy. The Australian version of dependent middle power imagining has in fact been the dominant influence in Australian foreign policy making since 1942. Both of the major political parties have shaped their foreign policies, each in accord with an agreed emphasis on the importance to Australia of remaining allied with ‘great and powerful friends.’

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Chapter 4

SHOULD AUSTRALIA ‘RELOCATE’ TO ASIA?

Introduction

This chapter explores how Australia’s alliance with the United States has played an unanticipated role in drawing Australia into economic enmeshment and increasingly complex cultural interactions with its Asian neighbours. This development has been described as Australia’s ‘relocation’ to Asia (Higgott and Nossal 1997). This ‘relocating’ is occurring despite the dilemma described by Craig Snyder: ‘Australia’s Asia-Pacific regional security policy has traditionally seen a balancing between two competing policy approaches, one of seeking protection from threats in the region by “great and powerful friends” and the other of greater engagement with the region’ (Snyder 2006, p. 322). The chapter explains how the American alliance has triggered Australia’s engagement with states in Asia through a number of regional forums (APEC for example), as well as a number of bilateral arrangements, including Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). The balancing act to which Snyder draws attention has wrought some transformative effects on Australia’s foreign policy-making that have not always been achieved with enthusiasm or foresight. However, they have been arrived at through a growing realization that Australia has little choice other than to come to foreign policy terms with its Asian geopolitical location in ways that it has not been hitherto willing or able to do.

The medium and long-term effects of the diplomatic interactions with Asia raise questions about the appropriateness of the country’s conventional middle power imagining while also raising the issue of whether a more nuanced approach to the alliance with America is now needed. These issues are canvassed in the concluding chapter.

‘Relocation’ to Asia refers to Australian policy makers’ re-thinking of its security and cultural ties with Asia to match its deep economic engagements in (and, indeed,
commercial reliance on) the region. This would involve a shift from the country’s commitment to its traditional cultural ties with Britain, Europe and the United States towards a more cosmopolitan accommodation with Asian cultural values. In the concluding chapter it is argued that these values need to be accounted for in the country’s foreign policy approaches to such countries as Japan and China.

This chapter focuses on America’s role (as the ‘great and powerful friend’ from the 1950s through the Cold War and into the increasingly multipolar post-Cold War world) in bringing about this relocation. It argues that the alliance with the United States can in fact be regarded as a catalyst for Australia relocating into its region. This raises the question: Where should the country go from here? Must Australia (as a former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir once declared) ‘decide whether it’s an Asian country or a Western country’ (The Australian, 24 November 2002)? Or should it choose to remain embedded within the American security sphere, committing itself indefinitely to the United States’ leadership in the region and globally – that is, making the stop along the way the end of the relocation process? Or should it chart its own course, seeking recognition from both its Western allies (especially the United States) and its Asian neighbours as an independent, reliable and respected regional player?

There is a pronounced preference within mainstream Australian foreign and defence policy circles for the country to remain embedded in the American security sphere. If it prevails, this sentiment will effectively bring an end to Australia being a more independent player in its region, thereby reinforcing its ‘liminal’ positioning in the region. Roberto Dominguez has explained that in light of the 2007 United States-Australia Defense Cooperation Treaty ‘both countries are moving forward in deepening the security relationship.’ He points to the 2011 agreement for 2500 American Marine Ground Task Force personnel to rotate through Darwin regularly, as part of the United
States’ renewed focus on the Pacific, as well as up-graded cooperation arrangements between the Royal Australian Air Force and the US Air Force (Dominguez 2013, p. 427). At the same time, Australia’s commitment to sustaining a lucrative trading relationship with China makes Australia’s security reliance on America problematic. This is because the rotation and associated air force arrangements are integral to a collective security agreement between the United States, Australia and other East and Southeast Asian allies to strengthen security ties in response (or reaction) to China as a big power in the Asia Pacific (White 2012b). As Asia becomes increasingly central to Australia’s foreign and defence policy, Australia’s foreign and defence policy leaders will have to decide whether the relocation journey should continue, or whether their country should stay firmly embedded within America’s security orbit.

The Long and Winding Relocation into Asia

Beeson and Jayasuriya have usefully pinpointed four ‘key periods’ in the shaping of Australia’s foreign policy towards Asia (Beeson and Jayasuriya 2009, pp. 360-374). The first period is from federation to the Cold War during which the British were effectively in charge of Australia’s external policies and when Asia was thought to be quite beyond Australia’s foreign and defence policy pale. Even so, in terms of its White Dominion status, Australia sought to influence imperial policy in the Pacific, although always with an eye to its own security in the region while also maintaining what its leaders took to be its special standing in the inner circles of the Empire. Nonetheless, in the 1930s scholars like A.V.C Melbourne and W.G. Goddard wanted to go further, arguing that Asia needed to be both central to the country’s foreign and defence policies and a focus for Australian education. Melbourne was simultaneously pressing for Australia to recruit Ministers to be appointed to diplomatic postings in Tokyo and Washington (Edwards 1983, p. 119). As Melbourne observed of Australia’s Asian proximity ‘The peoples are […] geographically
[...] Australia’s neighbours; and to a great extent, they must determine the development of Australia’s commercial and foreign policy’ (Melbourne 1935, p. 27; see also Goddard 1935).

The second period identified by Beeson and Jayasuriya is the Cold War era when Australia actively sided with American security strategies while maintaining a close relationship with Britain right up to the 1960s (supporting Britain, for example, during the 1956 Suez crisis). The third period constitutes a ‘turn to Asia’ during the Hawke and Keating Governments. The fourth period was a time of ‘distinct cooling in enthusiasm for “Asia” and interest in reviving older strategic ties with the US’ during the Howard Government (Kevin 2004). However, this period was also marked by what Wesley calls the ‘Howard paradox’ which, though ‘more apparent than real’ (Wesley 2007, p. 214), also demonstrated ‘that there is more than one approach to Asia, and that different regional circumstances reward different approaches’ (p. 216).

Though there were expectations that the Rudd and Gillard Governments might have ushered in a fifth key period, building on the Hawke-Keating era, the foreign policies of both Rudd and Gillard were mostly a continuation of the Howard Government era, especially in terms of maintaining the alliance with the United States (Camilleri 2014; Carr and Roberts 2010). Of Rudd’s prime ministership, Stephen FitzGerald observes: ‘I have to accept we don’t have an pro-Asia renaissance, or indeed any foreign policy renaissance at all.’ And of the Gillard Government he notes: ‘Julia Gillard doesn’t offer much hope for an ideas-driven foreign policy either’ (FitzGerald 2015, pp. 231-2).

The Abbott Government ‘demonstrated a tendency to view foreign policy through the lens of domestic politics’ (McDonald 2015, p. 14). In doing so it exhibited a pronounced awkwardness in its diplomatic approaches to Asia (Hartcher 2014, pp. 78-95). Initially this included upsetting the Indonesians over spying allegations on the
President and his wife and other senior government personnel. This was exacerbated by Australia’s hamfisted approach to asylum seeker policies. In his first visit to Tokyo as Prime Minister Tony Abbott described Japan as Australia’s ‘best friend in Asia.’ This came as a surprise to the Japanese, the chagrin of the Chinese, and the bemusement of the South Koreans and the Indonesians. FitzGerald concludes that ‘Abbott and his government […] seem to believe you can ignore what Asians think and play to a domestic grandstand, and then turn around and seek to ingratiate yourself when it suits you. Hardly a sophisticated diplomacy based on building long-term relations’ (FitzGerald 2015, p. 236). The Abbott Government was also noteworthy for its championing of an economically instrumental relationship with China, including hastening talks on a Free Trade Agreement culminating in the signing of an FTA in November 2014. At the same time the Abbott Government had facilitated further American security arrangements (the ‘pivot’ to Asia) focused on containing a rising China (White 2014c). While in Opposition it endorsed increased commitments to Asia literacy in Australia’s schools and universities. In government it called for curricula reforms that emphasise Australia’s Western cultural values and traditions. And all the while it unequivocally lauded the American alliance in a manner that raises questions, if not ire, in Asia. Whether the Turnbull Government will offer a new perspective on this policy remains to be seen. It does not appear to be as deeply committed to the foreign policy assumptions of the Abbott Government, perhaps opening some hitherto ‘closed doors’ in international diplomacy. As correspondent Nick O’Malley has observed: ‘The Australian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in New York appears to be receiving a different welcome than it might have had Tony Abbott still been in office’ (O’Malley 2015, p. 9).
Allying with America

Contrary to conventional interpretations of the security arrangements that have evolved between Australia and the United States since the Pacific War, as noted earlier those arrangements have proven to be an unanticipated catalyst for drawing Australia – hesitantly, ambiguously, but irrevocably – into a range of bilateral and multilateral engagements with its Asian neighbours. Graeme Dobell views this as a ‘foreign policy line that runs relatively consistently from Whitlam – the attempt to grapple with regional geography on Australian rather than alliance terms’ (Dobell 2000, p. 343). And it is despite what Philip Ayres has termed the ‘[Whitlam] Government’s antagonistic and unstable attitude to the United States’ (Ayers 1987, p. 330). Some of the growing engagements with Asia have simply been the result of America’s superpower status reflecting on Australia. The alliance, in this sense, is the message. At other times the alliance has been more proactive, involving Australia directly in regional conflicts (for example, the Korean and Vietnam Wars), or encouraging participation in multilateral arrangements (for example, the defunct Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation – SEATO – and the Colombo Plan). This experience is not unique to Australia. As Dominguez points out:

[T]he US has remained committed to building and maintaining security in East Asia through several types of engagements, such as stationing military bases in Japan or South Korea, providing military equipment to Taiwan or displaying diplomacy and coercive instruments in its dealings with North Korea or Burma [resulting in a] regional security transformation [that] is taking place in which the US has played a pivotal role (Dominguez 2013, p. 421).

The effect on Australia has been to draw the country into deepening relationships with its Asian neighbours that previously had been ephemeral, hesitantly pursued, or deliberately avoided. At the same time some leading commentators on Australian foreign policy have
begun proposing that closer relations with Asia (for example with China) may not be possible so long as the alliance with the United States is maintained in its present form (White 2012b; Fraser 2014). Nonetheless, the alliance has not prevented Australia from developing strong trading relationships with Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, and the ASEAN states.

Australia’s relocation into the Asia Pacific was certainly not anticipated when the alliance with the United States was conceived during the Pacific War. Based on a ‘vague and sentimental relationship that was the legacy of wartime’ the original expectation was that a security treaty with the United States would keep Australia safe from a potentially re-militarized Japan in the first instance (Harper 1968, p. 11). Subsequently the alliance became focused on assumed threats from communist China. These developments reflected ‘a deep and longstanding Australian desire for great power protection in a region seen as threatening and unstable’ (Curran 2015, p. 7).

The prevailing view in Australia is that the alliance has nurtured a unique partnership between the two countries that adds kudos to Australian assertions of influence in the region. For example, in 2002, following the deaths of 88 Australians in Bali from terrorist attacks, the Prime Minister John Howard claimed for Australia the right to make pre-emptive strikes in neighbouring states against terrorists or other targets that constituted a threat to Australia (Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2002). Previously, in September 1999, John Howard was reported to have appropriated a leading role (reported incorrectly as a ‘deputy sheriff’ role) for Australia with the United States in the Asia Pacific (Brenchley 1999, pp. 22-24). Subsequently Howard protested that he had been misquoted, but not before his reported declaration had provoked negative reactions from Asian leaders like Malaysia’s Dr Mahathir. Officials in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines joined in this criticism of
Australia. Moreover, as Snyder notes: ‘Even Singapore, a traditional supporter of Australia’s role in the region, criticized the Australian statement’ (Snyder 2006, p. 325).

The issue reigned four years later when President George W. Bush, in a speech to a joint sitting of the Australian parliament, declared that Australia was in fact America’s sheriff, not merely its deputy, in the region. This too was not well received in Asia (Grubel 2003). Australia’s awkwardness in Asia was on vivid display at that time. It was (and remains) awkwardness caused in part by the country’s alliance with the United States, allowing it to be accused by its Asian critics (justly or otherwise) of being an instrument of American strategy rather than respected as an independent regional player. As Ann Capling observed, the image of deputy sheriff ‘is counterproductive for Australia and for its desire to maintain an independent foreign policy’ (2008b, p. 145).

However, even though the alliance may be seen as a source of Australia’s awkward partnering in its region, it would be a mistake to view this as the end of the story. Acknowledging that the alliance has also catalyzed Australia’s increasing engagement with Asia, especially economically, opens up a new understanding of the way in which the country has started out (albeit hesitantly) on a ‘relocation’ journey into Asia. It also points to possibilities for reconfiguring of the alliance with the United States so that it can be equally advantageous to both sides, while benefitting the region. However, without strong bipartisan leadership at the highest political levels, any proposals initiated from within Australia for radically changing the alliance are likely to be resisted by Australian voters. The 2014 Lowy Poll indicated that 78 per cent of Australians value the alliance as ‘very important’ and ‘fairly important’ for the country’s security, while 17 per cent said it is ‘somewhat important’ (Lowy Institute 2014, pp. 14 and 27). These views are echoed in speeches made by Australian leaders across the political spectrum. In March 2011, for
example, addressing the United States Congress in Washington, Prime Minister Gillard was emphatic:

You have an ally in Australia. An ally for war and peace. An ally for hardship and prosperity. An ally for the sixty years past and Australia is an ally for all the years to come. Geography and history alone could never explain the strength of the commitment between us. Rather, our values are shared and our people are friends (Gillard 2011).

In a keynote address in June 2014, the Foreign Minister in the Abbott Government, Julie Bishop, expressed what a leading journalist described as ‘exuberant confidence’ in the alliance (Hartcher 2014a). She stated: ‘It’s in all our interests that the United States continue its diverse and multi-dimensional engagement in our neighbourhood. The Australia-US Alliance is an important pillar of that regional engagement […] The Alliance will remain the touchstone of our relationship’ (Bishop 2014b). Time will tell whether the Turnbull Government will revise the long-lived Australian commitment to the alliance with the United States. It is unlikely to change it substantially.

Nonetheless it is significant that during the Bush Administration’s conduct of the Iraq War, Lowy Institute polling (2013b) pointed to a rising concern in Australia about the alliance with the USA, suggesting that Australians were becoming more discriminating (or reactive) about the alliance. Moreover the 2014 Lowy Poll showed that just over a quarter of respondents believe that the American alliance is a ‘critical threat’ to Australia’s interests (Medcalf 2014). The same poll showed that there is an age factor at play too: while nearly half of Australians (44 per cent) aged 60 or over believe that the United States will remain a reliable ally twenty years into the future, less than a third of Australians aged 18 to 20 in the 2014 polling believed this to be the case (Lowy Institute 2014, pp. 14-15). This suggests that despite the strong overall support for the alliance
among Australians, a significant minority is indicating increasing concern about the ramifications entailed in supporting it, especially if the United States and China up the ante in the region. This could have consequences for the future of the alliance.

Recognizing that the alliance is both advantageous and problematic for its diplomacy in Asia is therefore a vital prelude to the development of a less awkward foreign policy in Australia. This would require a more mutually respectful relationship with America, less assymmetrical, while deepening Australia’s involvements in the Asia Pacific – a deepening that must begin to address the country’s awkward partnering with Asia.

A brief history of the role the United States has played in relocating Australia into Asia will help clarify these problems and possibilities.

**Reluctant ‘De-Dominioniser’**

Australia’s turning to the United States during the Pacific War was an early step towards de-dominionisation following the Australians’ belated acceptance of the Statute of Westminster in 1942 (Davidson 1993). De-dominionisation meant Australia had to commence untangling its foreign affairs and defence dependency on Whitehall. It meant accepting greater responsibility for its own security, formulating its own foreign policy, and conducting its own diplomacy. An early indicator of this shift in foreign policy thinking (a prelude to de-dominionisation) was Prime Minister Menzies’ announcement in a radio broadcast on 26 April, 1939: ‘in the Pacific, Australia must regard herself as a principal providing herself with her own information and maintaining her own diplomatic contacts with foreign powers’ (Menzies quoted in Watt 1968, p. 24).

However, Australia’s experience of de-dominionisation was very different to the post-war de-colonisation experiences of the country’s Asian neighbours. De-
dominionisation emerged from a rueful acknowledgement in Australia that Britain was no longer capable of (and probably losing interest in) maintaining the security of its increasingly demanding colonial entanglements in South and Southeast Asia. In the Malay Peninsula, Borneo and Singapore for example it was already in discussions with nationalist groups pressing for independence (Turnbull 1999, pp. 261-3).

De-dominionisation initially proceeded at a snail’s pace. Australia continued to cling to sentimental ties with what it still regarded as the mother country. However the process was given sudden and unexpected momentum by the rapid advance into the Malay Peninsula and into Singapore by Japan’s Imperial Forces in the early 1940s. The military alliance that began to be cobbled together with the United States at that time was evidence (at official levels at least) of Australia awakening to the fact of its vulnerability in the face of Japan’s southward thrust. Officially too Australia was increasingly (if reluctantly) aware that reliance on Britain was no longer tenable, despite what David Day describes as ‘a chorus of calls for some concrete expression of British concern for Australian security’ (Day 1992, p. 13). Those calls mostly fell on deaf ears in Whitehall.

**Turning to America**

Australia’s foreign policy focus on the United States in the first four decades of the twentieth century was negligible. As Carl Bridge notes of this period: ‘Australia had judged that its affairs with the United States were not sufficiently important to warrant the sending of a senior diplomatic representative’ (Bridge 2000, p. 182). But this rapidly changed when war broke out in the Pacific in 1941. Britain’s preoccupation with the European and Middle Eastern theatres of World War II, and its lacklustre defence arrangements in Southeast Asia, reinforced the view in Canberra that Australia was at a strategic disadvantage because most of the country’s troops and much of its defence materiel had been committed to Europe and the Middle East. Prime Minister Churchill
was adamant about keeping the Australians in the Middle East and Europe. Moreover the British effectively stifled the development of Australia’s defence industries, obliging them to rely on Britain’s defence manufacturers. Despite the perceived threat to Australia from the encroaching Japanese, Churchill insisted that the ‘main enemy’ remained Nazi Germany. As David Day notes: ‘The “Germany first” strategy ensured a low priority for the Far East and among the claimants for British assistance in that region, Australia was low on the list’ (Day 1988, p. 216; see also Ewer 2013). It became apparent that Australia would have to look beyond Britain for a more dependable big power ally in its region. While Menzies’ 1939 announcement was a watershed moment in the evolution of Australian foreign and defence policy, it was a qualified moment. Fear rather than courage was its primary motivation – fear of losing what David Goldsworthy calls the British ‘security blanket’ in a region from which Australia had studiously averted its gaze for over a century (Goldsworthy 2003). Therefore the fall of Singapore in February 1942 constituted, for Australia, probably the darkest moment of World War II (Ewer 2013; Horner 2013).

From December 1941 the Pacific War became Australia’s major security preoccupation (Beaumont 1996). The strategic blunders that led to the Singapore catastrophe meant that Australia’s newly minted foreign policy makers could no longer close their eyes to the fact that, as far as the interests of Australia and Britain were concerned, the twain would not always meet in the Asia Pacific. Even the pro-British Menzies was aghast at the consequences of Britain’s failures. The American Consul-General in Melbourne reported on a conversation he had with Menzies in March 1942: ‘Whereas a year and a half ago only 5 per cent of the people of Australia were anti-British, now over 50 per cent are anti-British. British blundering in Malaya and British inability to come to the aid of Australia are the causes’ (quoted in Curran 2011, p. 87).
The poorly coordinated British naval deployment in the Pacific and an awakening to the fact that the Allied forces in Malaya and Singapore were unlikely to stall, let alone halt, a Japanese invasion there began to haunt Australia’s defence chiefs and political leaders (Day 1988, ch. 5; Shores et al. 2002). Even so, Australia still clung to its nostalgic ties with Britain while acknowledging the reality of America’s growing power in the Pacific. Predictably Australian pragmatism won out over imperial nostalgia and America was turned to as a source of security and reassurance. Almost immediately Australia placed a minister in Washington, to open diplomatic communications with the Americans (Bridge 2000, p. 182). This was an overture to a new way of thinking that was beginning to influence Australian foreign and defence policymaking.

In a widely read newspaper article that appeared a fortnight after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Prime Minister Curtin rallied his fellow Australians to war in the Pacific. He announced: ‘The Australian government’s policy has been grounded on two facts. One is that the war with Japan is not a phase of the struggle with the Axis powers, but is a new war. The second is that Australia must go on a war footing.’ The following paragraph in the article would have astonished many of his fellow citizens; the majority of whom were dyed-in-the-wool deniers of the declining might of British imperialism. Curtin wrote:

Without any inhibition of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom. We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion. We know the dangers of the dispersal of strength. But we know too that Australia can go, and Britain can still hold on. We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies toward shaping of a plan, with the United States as its keystone, which will give our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy (Curtin 1941, italics added).
Curtin then added a curious précis of his speech: ‘Summed up, Australia’s external policy will be shaped towards obtaining Russian aid, and working out, with the United States, as the major factor, a plan of Pacific strategy, along with British, Chinese and Dutch forces’ (italics added). Roland Perry explains this as a strategy by Curtin to bring the left and right of Australian politics together in support of his call to war (Perry 2014, p. 62). Perry also notes that by including the British in with the Chinese and Dutch he was effectively downgrading Britain’s significance in the defence decision-making upon which Australia had embarked. As Perry points out: ‘This, too, represented a monumental shift away from Australia’s past.’

It was indeed a major step on Australia’s de-dominionisation journey. It did not please the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who declared angrily in a letter to Curtin that the latter’s statement would cause resentment throughout the Empire (Ross 1977, p. 247). Nor were the Americans impressed. President Roosevelt summoned Australia’s Minister in Washington to tell him that, if the statement was intended to ingratiate Australia with the United States, it was likely to have the opposite effect (Lloyd and Hall 1997, p. 28). Despite these rebuffs Curtin never wavered in his belief in what was evolving from the British Empire into the British Commonwealth of Nations in which the ‘Old Dominions’ at least would have greater salience vis-à-vis Britain. At the 1944 Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in London he strongly argued for a formally institutionalized role for the Empire/Commonwealth, although his argument was not taken up by his fellow prime ministers (Curran 2011, ch. 4).

Nonetheless, by now Australians were reluctantly coming to the realization that their country’s special status within the Empire/Commonwealth was no longer the security guarantee they had believed it to be. In coming to this realization Australia was inevitably if unconsciously shifting its focus to Asia. Fearful that a Japanese invasion was
imminent, Australians began to embrace the idea of a protective United States of America to replace the declining might of Britain’s Royal Navy in the Asia Pacific. Ultimately, this sentiment was to be enshrined in the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) signed in San Francisco on 1 September 1951. For the Menzies Government what was auspicious about ANZUS was that it appeared to guarantee that the United States would remain engaged in the Asia Pacific. This belief (in effect it has become an article of faith) has persisted in Australia ever since.

The sense of security the country had developed as a White Dominion within the British Empire, and the country’s belief in the racial superiority of its legislatively assured White Australia status, were sorely tested when the Japanese Imperial Army demonstrated its military ascendancy over the British and their allies (including Australia) in Southeast Asia. As noted earlier, turning to America was the almost knee-jerk response for Australia as it rallied to fight the Japanese. The Pacific War plunged Australian troops and the Australian public into an encounter with an Asian country that was demonized (for good reasons and bad) for the duration, and well after (Dower 1986). The irony is that it also made possible a post-war trading relationship that proved to be immensely beneficial to the Australian economy. By the late 1960s Japan overtook Britain as Australia’s main overseas trading partner and it remained number one until the late 1980s (McLean 2013, pp. 194-5). Moreover the aftermath of the Pacific War saw the consolidation of the security alliance with the United States formalized in the terms of the ANZUS Treaty. It was within this framework that the foundations were laid for the possible relocating of Australia into Asia. The United States was the serendipitous instigator of this process.
ANZUS

ANZUS sits at the epicentre of the Australia-American alliance. It has granted Australia varying degrees of critical access to logistical support, American intelligence, joint military exercises in the Pacific, and arms deliveries. Over the years the Treaty has taken on a highly valued status in the minds of Australian foreign and defence policy makers and the Australian public. On the other hand American foreign and defence policy planners have always regarded ANZUS as a low-key element in the USA’s international strategy to contain the spread of communism in Asia and more recently to contain China’s re-emergence as a big power in the region. As Camilleri observed: ‘Ambiguity and generality […] characterised America’s interpretation of its obligations under ANZUS’ (Camilleri 1987, p. 13; see also Hopkins 1968). The treaty can be wheeled out by the Americans when it is in their interest to do so, or quietly shelved when shelving it is also in America’s interest.

A central reason for America’s agreeing to the ANZUS treaty was to bring early closure to the Allied Occupation of Japan, while subtly seeking to persuade the Japanese to rearm in order to bolster America’s anti-communist objectives in East Asia (Sissons 1952). Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines were bitterly opposed to the idea of Japan embarking on a policy of rearmament. So ANZUS became the carrot dangled by the Americans to reassure Australia and New Zealand of American support in the event of an ultra-nationalist Japan rising again. The reluctance of many of Australia’s leading politicians to accept a peace treaty with Japan was on angry display during the debates in the Australian Parliament to ratify the Treaty (Gifford 2001). However, given America’s determination to conclude the peace treaty with Tokyo, the concession of the ANZUS Treaty was Australia’s better bet. Significant Australian resources (diplomatic, economic
and military) have been committed to the maintenance of the ANZUS alliance in the half-century since it was signed.

The Americans offered their allies in the Western Pacific the idea of a ‘chain of Pacific defence’ that would reach from the Kuril Islands, south through Japan, through the Ryukyu Islands, south into the Philippines, and further south to Australia and New Zealand. United States troops in North-East Asia, along with the substantial American military bases in the Philippines, would complement new security arrangements with Australia and New Zealand. At ANZUS’s conception one of Australia’s leading advocates for the Treaty, External Affairs Minister Percy Spender, worried that it might be derailed by British objections before the Treaty was approved in Washington. Prime Minister Menzies remained sceptical of the proposal, preferring still to look to Britain for security reassurance in the Pacific. So even as the Empire was waning, British approval for Australia’s fledgling foreign policy independence was still regarded as important in Canberra. Spender wrote:

There was no certainty by any means that we would not run into opposition in the United Kingdom, opposition which might be sparked off by adverse official opinion, particularly within the Foreign Office and the armed services. If opposition were encountered it could make things difficult for us in the U.S.A (Spender 1969, p. 162).

In the event, Australia’s angst about Britain’s reaction to the proposed treaty was unnecessary. The British acceded to it and it formally came into effect in April 1952. This amounted to nothing less than Australia’s incorporation into America’s strategic domain even as links with Britain continued to have a symbolic (or nostalgic) significance in Australian foreign and defence policy circles. The United States presumed that ANZUS would be limited to the Western Pacific, but this was soon overlooked by Canberra where the Treaty was interpreted more broadly to mean that America’s security guarantees
should relate to threats emanating from almost anywhere on the globe (Broinowski 2007). This has led to a conviction among Australia’s leaders that they should therefore choose to fight with the United States, even in wars that are not obviously relevant to the geopolitics of the Pacific.

The ANZUS Treaty has therefore always been an asymmetric element in the context of the Australia-United States security arrangements. It could hardly be otherwise given that it is an alliance between a great power and a country ambitious for middle power status – as realists could (or should) have pointed out when the treaty was originally signed. As Dennis Altman observed, ‘the reality is that the United States will defend Australia’s interests if it believes them to be consistent with its own, and this is so whether or not our governments constantly proclaim their support for the United States’ (Altman 2006, pp. 124-5). No less a figure than Prime Minister Menzies was aware that ANZUS compromised Australia’s autonomy: ‘our defence ceases to be of merely local significance, but becomes part of the concerted efforts of the free world’ (Menzies 1952, p. 195). It would lead to Australia hosting missile testing by the Americans at the Woomera Rocket Range in South Australia; proffering strong support for America during the latter’s Cold War strategies directed against the Soviet Union and communist China; actively supporting the United States in the hot Korean and Vietnam Wars; the establishment of American communications facilities and military bases on Australian soil; and the commitment of Australian military personnel and resources to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the so-called ‘war on terror.’

America’s commitment to the Treaty has always been less enthusiastic than Australia’s. As Peter Hartcher notes: ‘In 2007 the then US ambassador to Australia, Robert McCallum, gave a reminder of how lightly the treaty rests in the consciousness of the superpower when he cheerfully volunteered at the National Press Club that he had not
read it.’ Hartcher goes on to note, ‘when McCallum was asked [what would be the response] in the event that the White House and Congress disagreed over the course of action [on the treaty], he answered: ‘I’ve not done the constitutional analysis and I imagine there would be a vast difference of opinions among academics and practicing lawyers and politicians as to what might be required.’ ‘In other words,’ writes Hartcher, ‘the American response to an Australian request for assistance would be unpredictable and possibly confused’ (Hartcher 2014b, p. 43). Ambassador McCallum’s comment was not a novel contribution to the understanding of the status and significance of ANZUS. Early in its formulation, the chief American negotiator of the Treaty, John Foster Dulles, was convinced that his country was under no obligation to act as its Australian and New Zealand allies might expect it to act in terms of the putative Treaty. In a top-secret letter he wrote in 1951 to General Douglas MacArthur about the Treaty he stated: ‘the United States can discharge its obligations by action against the common enemy in any way and in any area that it sees fit’ (Dulles quoted in Camilleri 1980, 8). This communication would hardly have pleased the Australians and the New Zealanders had they been aware of it at the time.

 Nonetheless, as Peter Edwards points out, there was dismay in the Department of External Affairs in the 1950s and 1960s at the ‘tendency of many conservative politicians to assume that virtually all Australia’s security problems could be solved by uncritical support of American policy, even if that meant accepting positions that were not in Australia’s, or the Western world’s, best interests’ (Edwards 2006, p. 115). There has been little apart from high-blown rhetoric since to suggest that the sentiment expressed so frankly in the Dulles letter has changed in Washington. Nonetheless, as Thomas Young argues: ‘The very close security relationship between Australia and the United States that extends up to the strategic level by virtue of the Joint Defence Facilities in Australia, and
Canberra’s long-term objective of forging ever closer defence ties with Washington, remains intact and, indeed, has grown in scope’ (Young 1991, p. 4).

Even so, despite ANZUS’s asymmetry, the alliance with the United States has drawn Australia into encounters with its Asian neighbours. While there is truth in the argument that ANZUS has often skewed those encounters in ways that contribute to Australia’s awkward partnering in the region, it has nonetheless placed Asia firmly on Australia’s foreign policy map. This was especially the case from early in the Cold War era when, in direct response to assessments of what American interests and strategies in the region entailed, Australia began to focus ever more sharply on the security challenges it faced in the Asia Pacific. In the meantime, the United States remains an ally highly valued by Australians. The 2015 Lowy Institute Poll report notes that 80 per cent say that the alliance with the United States is ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ important, while 53 per cent see it as ‘very important’ (Lowy Institute 2015, p. 9). As the report notes: ‘the US alliance is seen as a natural extension of our shared values and ideals, while acknowledging that the alliance allows Australia to expend less on its defence (p. 10).

**Cold War Realities**

As the 1950s unfolded, the mounting pressures of the Cold War began to dilute the potency of imperial nostalgia, even in the Menzies Cabinet (Edwards 1991). Overshadowing the post-war disintegration of the British Empire was the global sparring of the USA and the USSR, the new superpowers. In Australia, government officials fostered a culture of anti-communist paranoia. This was inflamed by the defection in 1954 of a junior Russian diplomat from the Soviet Embassy in Canberra, Vladimir Petrov. He was alleged to have provided information about communist fellow travellers in the Australian Labor Party and trade union movement (Deery 1997; Manne 2004).
International politics at that time was dividing into Soviet or United States spheres of influence and Australia located itself well inside the American sphere.

By 1962 Menzies, ever the arch-monarchist and British Empire romantic, had even come round to the view that ‘No responsible Australians would wish to see any action affecting the safety of Australia on the issues of war and peace except in concert with our great and powerful friends’ (Menzies 1962, italics added). The fact that he spoke of friends (plural) showed, however, that Britain remained close to his heart, even as he acknowledged the reality of America’s rise as a superpower. As noted earlier, in the 1956 Suez crisis he had strongly backed the British against strong American criticism of Britain’s actions (Hudson 1989; Hutton 1996). Nonetheless, as Malcolm Fraser – at that time a government backbencher – recalls Menzies discussing his government’s response to the Cuban Missile Crisis that was developing into a major crisis in 1962 (Fraser 1987).

Menzies stated that Australia had no choice other than to strongly support the Kennedy Administration’s confrontation with the USSR over the issue – that it was necessary for Australia to convincingly demonstrate its loyalty to the American alliance. This was the clearest evidence yet of Australia’s Cold War security strategizing. Menzies’ gaze had finally settled at least as much on the rising American superpower as it had on a receding Britain. Henceforth the Menzies Government was strenuous in its efforts to establish the closest possible security rapport with the United States. (Gifford 2001, p. 171).

David McLean notes that not a few of his critics believed that ‘under Menzies [Australia] became a servile client of the United States’ (McLean 2001, p. 301).

But Menzies had not entirely given up on Britain. At the end of May 1962 he travelled to London and for two weeks he campaigned up and down the country against British entry to the European Community. As his biographer notes:
So effective were Menzies’ speeches that, though he was usually at pains to say that he insisted that the decision whether to go into the Market or not had to be made exclusively by Britain herself, it was often difficult not to think that he was arguing that, if she took her Commonwealth obligations seriously, Britain should simply stay out, and that was that (Martin 1991, p. 446).

However, for all their sound and fury, Menzies’ speeches proved to be little more than a Canute-like gesture. After several failed applications for entry to Europe, and following Charles de Gaulle’s end of term as President of France, the United Kingdom joined the European Community in 1973, much to the chagrin of Menzies and many of his fellow Australians. If Australia was in the hunt for great and powerful friends the only option, clearly, was America. But as the United States drew Australia into its security orbit, it also drew the Australians into encounters with Asia that hitherto they had largely avoided, even shunned.

**The Colombo Plan**

Australia’s sharpening focus on Asia was on display at a conference of Commonwealth foreign ministers in Colombo, Ceylon in January 1950. The British Government saw this meeting as a way of mobilizing the regional member states of the Commonwealth, ostensibly against the spread of communism in Southeast Asia but also reinforcing British influence in the region (Turnbull 1999, p. 270). The leader of the Australian delegation to the Colombo meeting, External Affairs Minister Percy Spender, observed the pitiful urban poverty that characterized the region’s cities. He wrote: ‘It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that the coolie’s bowl of rice a day was all that stood between him and eternity’ (Spender 1969, pp. 197-8).

The Colombo meeting ratified proposals for the provision of economic assistance to the newly independent states in the region. This was originally an initiative of Dr John Burton, the first Permanent Secretary of External Affairs. However, Australia’s
commitment to the policy was substantially shaped by Arthur Tange, described by his biographer as a ‘rising diplomat’ in the new Department (Edwards 2006, p. 52).\footnote{Tange was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in 1954, at the age of 39. Under his leadership the department’s work expanded considerably. He was subsequently High Commissioner to India, 1965-69, then Permanent Secretary of the Department of Defence 1970-79. In this latter role he was ‘central to the greatest peacetime reform in Australia’s defence organisation in the twentieth century’ (Edwards 2006, p. 216).} Minister Spender responded to the idea with enthusiasm, describing it as ‘one of the most fruitful operations in [the 20th] century in mutual assistance and understanding between nations’ (Spender 1969, 9). The Colombo Plan included the provision of infrastructure such as roads, communications, bridges, and dams. It also provided education and training programs designed to support economic growth and good governance. The initial recipients of Colombo Plan aid were India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya and other British territories in Southeast Asia. However the plan was soon expanded to embrace the United States as a participant and donor and the net for aid recipients was cast even wider to include Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Australia welcomed United States’ involvement in the Plan believing that anything that helped to keep the Americans focused on Southeast Asia was worthy of consideration, if not outright support.

By the 1970s the Colombo Plan had transcended its British Commonwealth origins to become a broad-based international grouping with most of the aid it delivered annually coming from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. By the end of the 1980s Japan had emerged as by far the largest donor to the Plan. Initially extended for another five years beyond its original six-year time limit, in the 1980s it was extended indefinitely. In addition to the technical assistance and education programs provided by its wealthier donor members, it also fostered technical cooperation among the members from developing states (Turnbull 1999, p. 311).
Australia’s involvement in the Colombo Plan was a moment in the country’s early realization that the politics and living conditions of the peoples in its region had a close bearing on Australian security. Australia’s most noteworthy contribution to the Plan was the provision of educational sponsorship in its schools, technical colleges and universities for students from Southeast Asian countries. It has been estimated that between 1951 and 1980 more than 20,000 Asian students came to Australia from Southeast Asia (Lowe 2004, p. xxv). The impact of these Colombo Plan students on their host institutions, their fellow students and Australian society generally was far-reaching — as it was, no doubt, on the Colombo Plan students as well. Despite what Daniel Oakman refers to as the Plan’s ‘quasi-imperial intent’ he acknowledges that it had more auspicious consequences: ‘its creation represented a shift away from the often insular concerns of the Menzies Government and actively (if with considerable ambivalence and trepidation) breached the barriers, both geographic and mental, of Australia’s northern frontier’ (Oakman 2004, p. 278).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Asian and Australian students rubbed shoulders on campuses around the country (Pun 2013). By 1965, 5 per cent of tertiary students in Australia were from overseas, mostly from Southeast Asia. As Oakman notes: ‘Somewhat shocked by the shift away from Britain and America, [the Department of External Affairs] thought that ‘something of a revolution’ was taking place.’ Relationships blossomed, some resulting in marriages, while also contributing to what has been termed a ‘brain drain’ from Asian countries to Australia (Sullivan and Gunasekaran 1992). Not a few Australians began to revise what had been culturally entrenched prejudices about Asians, a development that contributed to the ending of the White Australian policy (Tavan 2005, pp. 81-5; see also Dalrymple 2003, p. 121). At the same time, Australian politicians and diplomats began to travel more frequently in and
out of Asia to negotiate the country’s increasing aid contributions and to monitor their implementation. As Lowe observes: ‘Amidst the problems and limitations of realizing some of the early goals Australians set themselves at the inception of the Colombo Plan, one crucial trend became clear: the plan, and its associated diplomacy and planning, built strong momentum towards stronger and more regular exchanges with Asian nations’ (Lowe 2004, p. xxxv).

The Korean War

Australia’s resolve to cement a strong alliance with the United States was underlined by the troops the Menzies government swiftly committed to the Korean War in September 1950, urged on by its Foreign Minister Percy Spender. The decision to commit troops was arrived at even before the ANZUS Treaty was signed in San Francisco in 1951. As early as 1950 Spender had argued strongly for a significant Australian military commitment to the emerging conflict on the Korean Peninsula. As he explained: ‘if we refrain from giving further aid we may lose an opportunity of cementing friendship with the US which may not easily present itself again’ (Spender quoted in O’Neil 1981, p. 65).

The result was that Australia immediately followed the United States, committing units of all three services to the United Nations campaign in Korea (McCormack 1983, p. 100). Spender’s observation was acute. Australia’s support for the United States in Korea was one of the reasons why the Americans were amendable to the ANZUS Treaty (Dorling 1989, pp. 1-2).

Spender differed from his Prime Minister on the issue of strong support for America in Korea (O’Neil 1991, p. 103). This identifies him as an early activist in the vanguard of those who realized that Australia’s strategic and economic future would ultimately be shaped by developing new understandings of Asia and the quality of its diplomacy with Asia. Menzies had a long held predilection for a unified foreign and
defence policy for the entire British Empire (Edwards 2014, p. 31). He remained unpersuaded that Australia needed to develop close relationships in the Pacific. In this he was not alone among his fellow Australians. His attitude echoed a popular prejudice in Australia at the time: ‘Not only were Australians European people but it was the British empire or the ‘English-speaking peoples and their Western European allies’ who formed the centre of gravity in world affairs’ (Lowe 2010, p. 132).

There is as much to criticize about Australia’s conduct during the Korean War. As Gavan McCormack notes: ‘For Australia, Korean issues were always secondary, in the prosecution of the war no less than in the diplomacy surrounding it’ (McCormack 1983, p. 167). What was primary of course was Australia’s desire to show strong commitment to an alliance with the Americans. McCormack also questioned whether Australia’s security was in fact advanced by the Australia’s cooperation with the United States during the war. However, the experience of the Korean War certainly challenged and changed public attitudes in Australia in three important ways.

First, it raised the levels of awareness in the foreign policy community of China as an emerging power in East Asia. While this tended to be part of a campaign to inculcate a ‘fear of China’ within Australia, it also persuaded the country’s political leaders that China had to be an increasingly important strategic consideration in Australia’s security future. This resulted in the opening up of a debate about how China should be understood and responded to diplomatically (Clark 1967). And while the initial reaction was to cling ever more closely to the United States, an alternative debate emanated from among scholars at the Australian National University suggesting that China was not part of a monolithic communist movement intent on devouring the free world (see, for example, Fitzgerald 1964; Fitzgerald 1966; Miller and Rigby 1965). The seeds for a less paranoid
understanding of China were thus planted in academic and policy communities in Australia.

With the election of the Whitlam Government at the end of 1972 Australia adopted a radically new approach to China. Whitlam’s recognition of the communist regime in Beijing opened a route that led, in due course, to the Howard Government’s embrace of a close trading relationship with China. This journey was not always without its problems but, as Michael Wesley notes, ‘Howard […] worked assiduously at the bilateral relationship and built slowly on the solid foundations of China’s and Australia’s economic synergies’ (Wesley 2007, p. 127). Today China is Australia’s largest overseas market for resources (particularly iron ore and coal). The early Cold War warriors of the Menzies era must be turning in their graves.

Secondly, the Korean War helped to facilitate a growing awareness in Australia that there were important differences among the cultures and political systems in the region. Instead of bundling the peoples of the Western Pacific (or East Asia) under the omnibus rubric of ‘Asians,’ politicians, commentators and educators were absorbing the fact that among the frequently misunderstood (and widely feared) Asian masses there were peoples who could be regarded as allies (in this case the South Koreans) whose defence justified the expenditure of Australian lives and military equipment. Australians began to distinguish between those Asians who could be regarded as friends and those who were less likely to be friendly. And even with the less friendly there was the possibility that trade deals could yet be struck.

Thirdly, for Australia the Korean War was economically fortuitous. It provided a significant fillip to Australia’s economic growth in the years immediately after World War II (McLean 2013, pp. 186-191). Wool exports (which were still the main export industry) increased impressively throughout, and immediately following the Korean War
years. The wool price index rose to 143 per cent between the outbreak of the War and the early part of 1951. The flow-on effects in the Australian economy saw demand surge as the rationing constraints of the Pacific War years began to fall away. Australian exporters started to realize that there were markets in considerable abundance in Asia. For Australia the economic potential of what would eventually become known as the ‘Asian Century’ began to attract the attention of Australia’s agricultural producers and business leaders. Even so, it was all filtered through a Cold War framework that fostered suspicion as much as it encouraged economic pragmatism – perhaps more so – within the Australian foreign policy establishment of the 1950s and 1960s. By aligning itself with America’s leadership in the Korean War, Australia was set on a course that inevitably drew it into increasing contact with its Asian neighbours, prodding into life its hitherto moribund Asian consciousness. Paradoxically, by seeking to guarantee America’s protection from Asia, Australia was drawn increasingly into Asia, pointing to contradictions at the heart of the country’s characteristically dependent middle power imagining.

The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO)

The brainchild of one of America’s earliest Cold War warriors, John Foster Dulles, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was, from its inception in 1954, part of the American strategy for containing the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Its original purpose was to become a southern hemisphere version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). In the wake of the French withdrawal from Indo-China (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) and North Vietnam falling to a communist government, Australia’s leaders warmly welcomed Dulles’ proposal to establish an organisation whose membership encompassed Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines, and Pakistan. The United States and Britain were the two leading partners in SEATO, although they held divergent views about the implications of communism in the region.
(Lerche 1956). France was also a member, but its influence was overshadowed by the Americans and the British. The British were more measured whereas Dulles was fully committed to America’s anti-communist crusade in Southeast Asia. He stated:

Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action (Dulles 1954).

Nonetheless, as the historian C.M. Turnbull points out, the dissension between what she describes as the ‘two main architects’ of SEATO meant that the organisation was ultimately doomed (Turnbull 1999, p. 276). Nonetheless, the Menzies Government strongly endorsed Dulles’ position. The Australians regarded SEATO as an instrument to bring its Western allies (especially Britain and the United States) into a collective security arrangement that would check instability in the region, including communist insurgencies. The Australian thinking behind its commitment to SEATO was summed up in an editorial in *The Age* of 2 July 1951:

> South-East Asia stands athwart the line of Communist advance in Asia. Impoverished, oppressed people are receptive to invidious doctrines which hold out to them some hope of material betterment. The best resistance to the spread of Communism or other totalitarian doctrines is to give to the peoples of South-East Asia food, learning, human dignity, resourcefulness and democratic freedom.

However SEATO remained a pallid organisation committed more to anti-communist rhetoric, rather than active security strategies (Edwards 2006, p. 71; Franklin 2006). As Macmahon Ball noted almost a decade before its demise: ‘It has become increasingly evident that each member of SEATO tends to interpret the treaty’s provisions in accordance with its own judgment or interest’ (Ball 1968, p. 137; see also
Miller 1970, p. 204). Yet Australia’s membership of SEATO was evidence that the country’s leaders were focusing on *regional* commitments and challenges. It also demonstrated the awkwardness that was beginning to characterise Australia’s approaches to its Asian partners in the organisation. There was little interest in Australia in cooperating with Asian countries such as India (Lowe 1999, p. 173). Australia’s hope for SEATO was that it would ensure its great and powerful friends in the West (the United States and the United Kingdom) would maintain their involvements in the region to Australia’s strategic advantage. Even so, for all its Cold War failings, SEATO added to the forces drawing Australia into ever increasing contact with Asia.

**The Vietnam War**

Before Menzies left for the United Kingdom in 1962 to campaign against British entry to the European Union, the American Secretary of State Dean Rusk had visited Canberra to discuss with Menzies and his Cabinet the possibility of Australian involvement in Vietnam, alongside the United States. As the official historians of Australia’s involvements in conflicts in post-war Southeast Asia have revealed, subsequent to Rusk’s visit the Cabinet ‘recorded a long minute which virtually formed a charter for Australian military involvement in Vietnam’ (Edwards and Pemberton 1992, p. 241). The Menzies Government’s rationale for committing Australian troops to South Vietnam in 1965 had little to do with the contribution Australian forces could make to defend the South Vietnamese from the mounting North Vietnamese-backed insurgency. While preferring to act in accord with its broader alliance partners, the over-riding intent of sending Australian troops to Vietnam was to persuade the United States to maintain (or even strengthen) its military presence in Southeast Asia (Lee and Dee 2001, pp. 281-2). It is clear that even if Australia’s (and America’s) allies in the region (for example those in SEATO, including Britain, France and New Zealand) would not come on board in
Vietnam, Australia was nevertheless ready to support the United States so that the latter were not seen to be acting unilaterally (Edwards 2014, p. 75). This was in line with the logic of Australia’s policy of ‘forward defence’ designed to contain communist insurgencies (preferably with America in the lead) and doing this as far from Australian shores as possible. The fact that this strategy would wreak havoc and untold suffering in other countries’ territories (as Vietnam was to demonstrate on an apocalyptic scale) seems not to have troubled the consciences of Australia’s foreign and defence planners.

While the primary drivers of the Australian response to the Vietnam conflict was the view that Australia’s loyalty to the American alliance must be palpably demonstrated, it was reinforced by the growing fear of the communist threat in Asia (Murphy 1993; Edwards 2014). So the Australian government announced its decision to send 30 military advisors to Vietnam. The official reason for sending them was to assist the Republic of (South) Vietnam in its struggles against the communist insurgency. However it was also a response to a request from the United States for support in dealing with the problematic public relations of the growing conflict. The intention was to assemble an international force to confront the Viet Cong – insurgency forces recruited from the South and from the People’s Army of (North) Vietnam – to counter the view that America was launching a neo-colonial adventure in Vietnam (McNeill 1993, p. 34). This opened up a window of opportunity for Australia to demonstrate its commitment to the security treaty with its great and powerful ally. It had the required effect. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge noted approvingly that Australia was ‘one hundred percent with the United States’ (quoted by Edwards and Pemberton 1992, p. 369). This was in contrast to other long-standing allies of the USA who were either reluctant to offer support or had declined to do so.

Nonetheless, the decision to send an Australian battalion to Vietnam in 1965 was one that was delicately arrived at. The official position was that the Government of South
Vietnam had initiated a request for Australian military aid in its fight against the Viet Cong insurgency. However, there was a considerable time lapse between the decision being made and its public announcement. In part this was to avoid the damaging accusation that Australia was dancing to America’s tune. But it was principally because South Vietnamese political and military leaders were unenthusiastic about foreign troops intervening in what they believed was fundamentally a Vietnamese civil conflict. For this reason the South Vietnamese were in no hurry to issue a formal invitation to Australia to send military aid, much to the annoyance of an impatient Canberra. Even so, the Australian government was unmoved by the sensitivities of the South Vietnamese leadership. While External Affairs Minister Hasluck and other officials urged caution, desiring a delay in making a final decision, their pleas were ignored by the more hawkish members of the Menzies Cabinet, including the Prime Minister himself. Pressure was put on the South Vietnamese to extend an official invitation to the Australians to enter the conflict. Significantly, the South Vietnamese Government did not initiate the request; the Australian Government was its instigator (Sexton 2002).

As with Australia’s commitment to the Korean War, so its commitment to the Vietnam War was a contingency of the American alliance. It was primarily about sheltering beneath the American security reach and seeking to ensure that that reach extended well over Southeast Asia, to benefit Australia’s ambitions for a successful forward defence strategy. However this very strategy drew Australia into an encounter with an Asian country that saw Australian troops on the ground in Vietnam, meeting Vietnamese people in many walks of life, living amongst them, fighting the putative

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23 Ambassador Lodge had paid an unexpected, and largely unexplained, visit to Canberra in April 1965. It would not have looked good if an announcement had been made immediately following his visit.
enemies of those people, while awakening not a few to the often ambiguous civilian implications of the conflict.

Back home the war had a profound impact on Australian society. Echoing what was seen as a generational challenge to established cultural traditions across the West, the War was hotly debated in the public domain (Flanagan 2012; Pierce 2002). Although the Government maintained that it was in Australia’s security interests that the spread of communism into Southeast Asia be contained in Vietnam, an array (some saw it as an affray) of academics, public intellectuals, students, and media commentators argued that Australia had little to benefit and much to lose from its involvement with the United States in the Vietnam War (Murphy 1993). From 1965 until the newly elected Whitlam Government withdrew the last of Australian military advisers from the conflict, at the beginning of 1973 more than fifteen thousand Australian soldiers (including conscripts) had fought in the War. Some 500 were killed and more than three thousand were wounded (Australian War Memorial nd). Particularly in the latter stages of the war sizable public protests had erupted across university campuses and spread into city streets across Australia. Some of the more radical student groups sought to send aid to the North Vietnamese, inviting accusations from government and sections of the media that their actions were traitorous (Gray 2002). Although initially inclined to support the Government’s Vietnam strategy, the Opposition Labor Party was persuaded by leading left intellectuals in the Party (for example, Dr Jim Cairns and Senator Lionel Murphy) to mount a concerted attack on Australia’s involvement in the war (Strangio 2002; Hocking 1997). Of particular concern was the issue of conscription of young men to fight in the war. This became a particularly divisive issue in Australia. A number of draft resisters and conscientious objectors sought to evade the requirements of the conscription act. Some were harshly treated by the courts. This only exacerbated the controversy about the
war in the public domain. Opposition to the war began to grow, especially during the 1969 and 1972 federal elections, contributing to the electoral defeat of the conservative government at the end of 1972 after nearly a quarter century in office (Edwards 2014, ch. 9).

Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War brought into sharp relief the manner in which the alliance with America impinged on Australia’s regional relationships. As Garry Woodard points out, Garfield Barwick (a ‘radical Tory’), External Affairs Minister in the Menzies Government, was ‘alive to the danger that Australia’s long-term regional interests could be adversely affected by being perceived as too closely associated with the US or by over-dependence itself’ (Woodard 2004, p. 125; see also Woodard 2003). Barwick’s successor on the other hand, Paul Hasluck, another noted conservative, was by now strongly committed to the Americans throughout the conflict.

In this difference of high-level opinion we can discern an emerging questioning in Australian foreign policy circles about the alliance with the USA and its implications for Australia’s security interests in the region. Even among conservatives there were those who were starting to query the advisability of remaining too closely associated with the United States. As Minister for the Army and then Defence Minister in the 1960s, and subsequently as Prime Minister from 1975 to 1982, Malcolm Fraser was a staunch supporter of the American alliance. However, in his recent book Dangerous Allies he advocates ‘strategic independence’ from both the USA and China that ‘would allow Australia to agree and disagree with both Washington and Beijing, as it suits [the country’s] interests’ (Fraser 2014, pp. 283-4). The seeds for the growing awareness that Australia’s regional interests are both positively and negatively affected by the country’s alliance with the United States began to germinate during the Vietnam War. There was a growing realization in Australia that the country’s foreign and defence policies are at
least as contingent on the country’s location in the Asia Pacific as they are on the relationship with America.

Immediately following the Vietnam War, the region had to deal with a large number of Indochinese refugees (mostly from the old South Vietnam) who were fleeing from the communist regime that seized power as the United States and its allies withdrew (Viviani, 1996, pp. 9-11). There were even suggestions that this outflow of people was tolerated, if not encouraged, by the communist regime in Vietnam to rid itself of those deemed to be ideologically unreliable, politically troublesome, or criminal. Many of these were ‘boat people’ effectively expelled from their homeland and forced to set out on perilous journeys in often small and unsafe craft to seek asylum in other countries. ‘This was,’ as Nancy Viviani points out, ‘a regional crisis of historic proportions’ (Viviani 1996, p. 9). Australia was one of the countries to which these people headed. The Fraser Government responded with a policy of processing boat people arrivals swiftly and helping them settle in Australia. The Government also accepted that it had a responsibility to assist neighbouring Southeast Asian states, where Indochinese refugees were being detained in refugee camps, by processing visas enabling many of those refugees to also settle in Australia (Viviani 1984). By 1995 there were nearly 250,000 first-generation and second-generation Indochinese settled in Australia. As Fraser and Simons note: ‘The Fraser government changed the mix of the Australian population forever’ (Fraser and Simons 2010, p. 421).

The success of Indochinese settlers has had a major impact on the ways Asians are accepted into Australian society generally. As Jayasuriya and Kee point out: ‘The occupational spread of “Asian migrants” […] is consistent with other social indicators showing the convergence of Asian migrants with Australian-born and other overseas-born, particularly with increasing length of residence’ (Jayasuriya and Kee 1999, p. 88).
An increasing proportion of Australia’s annual immigration in-take now comes from China, Vietnam, India, the Philippines and Malaysia. By 2006 there were almost a million and a half settlers in Australia who were born in Asia. Although tensions and strains do exist, and despite the fact that there has been racially motivated violence directed against some Asians, the anti-immigration campaigns that characterise the politics of some European countries are not so evident in Australia (Markus et al., 2009, pp. 156-7; Jakubowicz 2013). However, this observation is qualified by the populist politics of Pauline Hanson\(^{24}\) in the 1990s when her anti-Asian rhetoric gained not insignificant support among some sectors in the Australian electorate (Lake 2000). Again, the Cronulla Riots in Sydney in 2005 pointed to an ugly display of anti-Muslim hatred pointing to an incipient racism lurking in the interstices of Australian society (Collins 2009).

Of particular significance is the fact that this development has impacted on the country’s foreign relations. The obvious demise of the White Australia policy, as demonstrated by the growing numbers of Asian-Australians settling in Australia, has helped shape the country’s foreign relations in the region – for example, in growing trade and increased security dialogues with Vietnam. As Sean Brawley concludes: ‘It seems that foreign relations has become […] the ‘indispensable condition’ of foreign policy’ (Brawley 2005, p. 329). Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War alongside its superpower ally was intended as part of the country’s former forward defence policy – to

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\(^{24}\) Originally an endorsed Liberal candidate for the federal seat of Oxley (Queensland) in the 1996 federal election, though disendorsed shortly before the election date, Ms Hanson became an independent member of the federal parliament from 1996 to 1998. She co-founded the One Nation Party in 1997 whose policy platform included restricting Asian immigration. In her maiden speech in the parliament she warned that Australia was being ‘swamped by Asians.’ See Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 22 October 1996, pp. 3860-3. The Howard Government quietly appropriated some aspects of Ms Hanson’s rhetoric, to its political advantage (Wesley 2007, pp. 141-2).
keep real and imagined threats emanating from Asia at bay. The irony is that it has had the effect of ‘Asianising’ Australian society, bringing Asian settlers here and developing a degree of mostly positive Asia consciousness in the society that was absent prior to the war (Inglis et al. 1992). While the American alliance drew Australia into a war whose justification and conduct has long been controversial, it also connected Australia to its region in ways that once would have been unimaginable. There is a degree of irony in the fact that today Vietnam is emerging as a valued trading partner for Australia, that it has become a tourist destination for many Australians (including Vietnamese-Australians), and that the two countries are finding common ground on security issues arising in the wake of China’s rise in the region. It is ironical that the war made this rapprochement possible. In hindsight the old forward defence policy, initiated by the Menzies Government and designed to halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, appears to have been not only a very costly mistake but its strategy has been turned on its head.

**Australia’s Asian ‘Liminality’**

Throughout the long years of the Menzies Governments (1949-1966) most Australians were satisfied that they belonged to a country populated by white citizens who, to a man and woman, were dependable (if dependent) Cold War allies of the United States, while remaining in thrall to the ghost of the British Empire. The short years of the Whitlam Governments (1972-1975) witnessed the commencement of a divergence from this Menzies’ orthodoxy. Originally this meant relinquishing the more timorous connections with Britain (for example, imperial honours), seeking to nuance the ANZUS Treaty, and tilting the country’s foreign relations more towards the Asian region. Even so, Whitlam was opposed to settling the growing numbers of Vietnamese refugees that were beginning to appear across the horizon. The Fraser Government (1975-1983) consolidated some of the central features of Whitlam’s initiatives – for example, deepening the relationship with
communist China while accommodating Vietnamese refugees, though in far larger numbers and with greater compassion than the Whitlam Government had displayed towards the ‘boat people’ (Viviani 1996).

However Higgott and Nossal argue that after Fraser the Hawke and Keating Governments (1983-1996) sought ‘to ‘move’ Australia from being a European-American oriented community to being a nation in, and of, Asia’ (Higgott and Nossal 1997, p. 169). Under Hawke and Keating, Australia began to focus Australia’s foreign and defence policies more sharply on Asia. A security treaty (the ‘Lombok Agreement’) of 2006 and an agreement for joint military exercises with the Philippines are examples of the achievements of this period (Chung 2007, p. 158). The Howard Government (1996-2007) was initially cool about the Hawke-Keating ‘enmeshment/engagement’ approach to Asia, although subsequently Howard and his Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, engaged in what has been aptly described as ‘intensive and creative diplomacy in the Asian region’ (Wesley 2007, p. 19). This involved agreeing to security dialogues with neighbouring states (especially Indonesia), negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Singapore and Thailand, while exploring FTA possibilities with ASEAN, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, and China.

Nonetheless John Howard’s early prevarications about Australia’s role in Asia helped to incite a wave of anti-Asian sentiment that had been whipped up in the public domain by the populist politician Pauline Hanson. The debate fuelled by Ms Hanson’s ant-Asian immigration speeches brought to the surface deeply felt anxieties in Australia about its proximity to Asia and an incipient racism harboured by her supporters (Nelson and Dunn 2013). Moreover it revealed that a vocal minority of Australians was uncomfortable with the rhetoric about Asian ‘enmeshment’ or ‘engagement.’ As Higgott and Nossal point out, this mode of addressing foreign policy ambitions fostered a desire
for ‘‘returning’ [Australia] to an earlier location, when engagement with Asia was limited, and Asians themselves were vigorously kept out of the country by design’ (Higgott and Nossal (1997, p. 169).

Writing in the 1980s, the historian Geoffrey Blainey was sharply at odds with the Hawke and Keating governments’ view that Australia should ‘enmesh’ or ‘engage’ with Asia. He advocated a steadfast commitment to Australia’s European (especially its Anglo-Saxon-Celtic) roots. He was disturbed by proposals that Australia should increase its levels of Asian immigration and the recommendation that it should be generous in terms of its refugee intake. He (rightly) rejected the view that there is a single homogenous ‘Asian’ identity, highlighting the remarkable cultural, political and economic pluralism of Asia. However, echoing a theme that characterised the era of the White Australia Policy, he advised that increased Asian immigration could lead to a demographic inundation of non-Asian Australians by Asians:

That Australia is so close to parts of Asia could in some conditions be a warning to take fewer rather than more immigrants. If we take too many, we raise expectations in Malaysia, Indonesia, Indo-China and Hong Kong that Australia is a promised land that can accommodate all who want to come (Blainey 1984, p. 64).

On the other hand, Stephen FitzGerald was part of a new generation of foreign policy specialists who argued that Australia had to come to terms with the geo-politics of its proximity to Southeast Asia. He pointed to the manner in which contemporary Australia’s ‘willing and non-discriminatory acceptance of people from other parts of the region for permanent settlement is making for a dynamic mix of a kind which has never before existed in Australia, and is nowhere else in Asia’ (FitzGerald 1997, p. 178). Given its presence as a contemporary modern and cosmopolitan country in the Asia Pacific, Australia has little reason to want to remain ‘liminal’ in its region. As Mark Beeson has
noted: ‘While ‘Asia’ may not always have occupied the place in Australia’s foreign policy that its importance has warranted, simple geographical contingency has meant that it was, and is, an unavoidable geopolitical reality that has to be taken seriously’ (Beeson 2002, p. 44).

One thing is clear: Australia’s political leaders and foreign policy makers are increasingly aware that the country has to come to a more comprehensive and challenging accommodation with its Asian neighbours than has ever before been anticipated in the country’s foreign policy. This awareness is spelt out clearly in the 2012 Henry Report:

A transformational agenda for Australia’s engagement with the region is needed […]. This will include expanding regular high-level meetings between government leaders, ministers and senior business leaders. We will also build dialogues between young leaders and increase the flow of people and ideas between institutions. Institutions that should look to expand their links include parliaments, the judiciary, academia, cultural institutions, research organisations and businesses. In addition, we will continue to implement agreements and treaties across a wide range of areas (Australian Government 2012, pp. 252 and 257; see also Henry 2015).

Resolving the dilemma of whether to remain with United States strategies or ‘relocate’ further into Asia will require a thoroughgoing revision of the country’s middle power imagining. This does not mean that Australia must necessarily abandon its alliance with the United States. It could be in both countries’ interests for Australia to continue relocating while maintaining a more balanced relationship with America.

‘Relocating’ to Asia

During the long era of what was effectively British management of Australia’s foreign and defence policies (from federation in 1901 until at least 1942), and during the Cold War, the conduct of Australia’s diplomatic contacts with Asia was largely influenced by the country’s great and powerful allies. However, in 1984 the Prime Minister, Bob
Hawke, confronted this tradition with his declaration that ‘Australia’s future is firmly enmeshed with the progress of China, East Asia and the Pacific region.’ Reflecting later on this epistemological rupture with previous foreign policy thinking he noted:

We had, as a country, to wrap our minds around the fact that [the Asia Pacific region] was where the future of Australia would lie. [...] Enmeshment meant change, radical change. It was a case of change or be left behind, with our living standards declining, our economy and way of life stagnant, out citizens envious and, in the long term, left to become the poor white trash of Asia (Hawke 1994, p. 230).

Hawke’s treasurer and successor as Prime Minister, Paul Keating, shared this view: ‘the way Australia comes to terms with the region around us will be fundamental to all we want to do in the future’ (Keating 2000, p. ix).

The consequences of Bob Hawke’s (1994, p. 230) statement that Australia must ‘enmesh’ itself with Asia are surveyed in Ann Capling’s account of twenty years of Australia’s diplomacy with Asia (Capling 2008a). She provides a cautiously positive assessment of Australia’s ‘deliberate and self-conscious efforts to ‘relocate’ itself (economically, diplomatically and militarily) to the Asia Pacific region’ (Capling 2008a, p. 602). On the other hand Higgott and Nossal note that the Hawke Government’s ‘‘Asianization’ project […] generated an often sharp and negative reaction from many Australians’ (Higgott and Nossal 2008, p. 625). They conclude that, far from enmeshment, Australia’s position vis-à-vis Asia is rather more problematic than Capling suggests (Higgott and Nossal 2008, p. 632). They argue that Australia remains ‘liminal’ to Asia. This dilemma needs urgent resolution if Australia’s characteristic mode of middle power imagining continues to provoke its awkward partnering in its region. Nonetheless, Capling is of the view that ‘eleven years of the Howard government brought an end to Australia’s ‘liminality’ and its ‘identity crisis’ in the context of Asian
engagement’ (Capling 2008a, p. 618). Murray et al., on the other hand, offer a more nuanced reading of the situation:

Australia seeks to maintain and build alliances with Asia and the United States. Nonetheless, most Asian elites have a continental notion of regionalism despite different versions of Asia-Pacificism among many leaders and scholars in Japan, Korea and Singapore […] For most Asians, notions of an East Asian Community are indigenous, emanating from Asia and advocated by Asians, with historical origins and supported by contemporary cultural and economic dynamism […] – and here Australia is not a natural partner (Murray et al. 2014, p. 291, italics added).

Can (or should) Australia therefore aspire to become a ‘natural partner’ in Asia? A problem bedevilling this debate is the lack of a precise meaning (or meanings) for the terms ‘Asia’ and ‘Asians.’ However, given the fact of Asia’s cultural pluralisms outlined in the Introduction, Capling’s claim – that ‘Cultural differences between Australia and the rest of Asia would prevent Australia’s inclusion in culturally defined regional institutions’ – is puzzling (Capling 2008a, p. 618). It is even more puzzling given socio-cultural developments in Australia, particularly since the 1980s – for example, increased Asian immigration (Inglis et al. 1992; Jayasuriya and Kee 1999; Markus et al. 2009). Australia’s increasingly cosmopolitan population and the intensifying integration of regional and global economies mean that the realities of state boundaries, cultural differences, and notions of state sovereignty are being profoundly challenged by the contemporary realities of globalization (Ball and Taylor 2006; Friedman 2007; Mahbubani 2008). The philosopher Peter Singer argues that the ‘diminishing significance of national boundaries’ could be viewed as the prelude to a ‘step-by-step approach to greater global governance’ (Singer 2002, p. 2000). Mahbubani refers to this as a ‘great convergence’ between Asia and the West (Mahbubani 2013, ch. 2). Kwame Anthony Appiah sees it as ‘our civilization [becoming] more cosmopolitan’ (Appiah 2007, p. 174).
John Keane argues that ‘an ethic of global civil society puts pressure on any and all actors – within the governmental or non-governmental domain – who are tempted to play dangerous games with humankind and its biospheres’ (Keane 2003, p. 209). However we interpret these accounts of the on-going processes of globalization the fact is that, in this late modern era, we are increasingly experiencing what Amartya Sen refers to as ‘multiple identities’ at personal and national levels. He explains:

I can be, at the same time, as Asian, an Indian citizen, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a Sanskritist, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a man, a feminist, a hetero-sexual, a defender of gay and lesbian rights, with a nonreligious lifestyle, from a Hindu background, a non-Brahmin (Sen 2006, p. 19).

He shows that while our identities are ‘robustly plural […] one identity need not obliterate the importance of others.’ Therefore in a globalizing world in which multiple identities are becoming, sooner or later, the sine qua non it is not unrealistic to expect that, with a focused education system and the development of a more contemporary nuanced and effective form of middle power imagining, Australia could develop both an Asian identity (or identities) and a Western identity (or identities) simultaneously while legitimately seeking mutually respectful membership in the Asia Pacific community of states and societies, while maintaining meaningful alliances with great and not so great powerful friends wherever they can be found. Moreover, as Wang Gungwu has pointed out: ‘Paradoxically, what Australians value about their culture: the law, the respect for human rights, the parliamentary system, which are not features of Asian societies, are what attracts Asians’ (Wang 1992, p. 334; see also Patience 1997; Patience 2014c).

Even so, Australia’s ‘relocation’ into Asia will need what Thanh-Dam Truong describes as a ‘genuine process of understanding between East and West [that] would
need an initiative from both sides to reflect on their own internal values, and thus recognize each other’s cultures in non-dominant terms’ (Truong 1998, p. 50). The possibility of this process gaining momentum in Australia has been charted by writers like Alison Broinowski in her groundbreaking book *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* and Nicholas Brown (1990) in his essay on ‘Australian Intellectuals and the Image of Asia’ (Broinowski 1992; Brown 1990). As Brown observes: ‘many intellectuals during the interwar years found ways to identify Australia’s relationship to Asia in terms which were no longer colonial but increasingly regional and national-developmental in their perspective’ (Brown 1990, pp. 80-1). More recently, attempts to bring Asian studies to the forefront of school and university curricula, while receiving plenty of rhetorical support, have not received consistent or sustained resourcing from successive governments, even as the Asia Pacific region has become increasingly important for Australia’s economy and security (Garnaut 1989; Legge 1990). Greg Lockhart’s observation is apposite: ‘When Australian historians refer to ‘Asia,’ they generally convey a non-specific zone of incomprehensible foreignness’ (2013, p. 273).

As indicated in the White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century*, Australia has to undertake a great deal of educating of itself about Asia if it is going to raise levels of Asia consciousness and Asia literacy in the wider population and transcend its characteristic form of middle power imagining rooted in White Dominion- and White Australia-influenced traditions (Australian Government 2012). The view from Asia is summed up in an editorial in the influential Malaysian newspaper, *New Straits Times*: ‘Asia, with its diverse cultural and religious traditions, can at least accommodate Australia’s values and norms, even though these are essentially Western. But the same reciprocity cannot be expected of Australia, given its cultural arrogance and US-influenced human rights agenda’ (quoted in Baker, 2002). While an overstatement, the editorial is symptomatic of
the kinds of reputational issues Australia faces in Asia, the manner in which it is perceived in not a few Asian contexts.

This suggests that Australia might consider whether its alliance with the United States, *as it is presently configured*, is a contributing factor to its awkward partnering in its region. A reconfiguration of the alliance could see it maturing into a sounder relationship between the two countries. However, considerations of this magnitude are not going to be easy. Is it therefore possible for Australia to develop a more nuanced relationship with its Western allies (for example, by revising its characteristic dependent middle power imagining in favour of a neo-Kantian form) while developing more intimate relationships with its Asian neighbours? Beeson and Higgott have intimated that this may be possible because ‘middle power theory implies that state actors have a capacity to think beyond the dominant drivers of realist power politics’ (Beeson and Higgott 2014, p. 221).

The question is: Can Australia’s middle power imagining (dominated as it is by Realist power politics) can be re-visioned beyond its conventional Dependency imperatives. Beeson and Higgott argue that a more meaningful middle power concept (other than ‘a simple reading of material capabilities’) could enable ‘regional middle powers such as Australia, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea’ to ‘play a constructive crucial role in parallel to the great powers in the Asia-Pacific if China and the United States are not to become paralyzed by the same stultifying logic that produced the Cold War stalemate’ (Beeson and Higgott 2014, p. 232). This would amount to a radical revision of Australia’s middle power thinking, shaking off the dependent middle power shackles that lead to Australia’s awkward partnering in its region. Can Australia become a middle power in the Asia Pacific, ‘advancing a defensible normative aspiration’ via skilful niche diplomacy, in collaboration with like-minded states in the region, in order to
make it a better place? As proposed in the concluding chapter, it does have the potential
to do so by engaging in ‘niche diplomacy’ initiatives, probably in tandem with ‘like-
minded states.’ But this will involve reinvigorating the ‘relocation’ into Asia, moving
Australia along from the involvements in Asia that the United States alliance has invoked
as it establishes a ‘location’ for itself in an increasingly cosmopolitan Asia.

How likely is this to happen? Karl Marx once noted that the weight of history lies
like a dead hand on the present. In this vein Beeson and Jayasuriya point out that,
‘Depressingly enough, it seems that as far as [Australia’s] Asian engagement is
concerned, the more things change, the more they stay the same’ (Beeson and Jayasuriya
2009, p. 374). This suggests that Australia is in urgent need of a comprehensive
rethinking of its present mode of middle power imagining and how that conventional
mode leads to awkward partnering in its region.

**Conclusion**

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Australia’s post-Pacific War alliance with the
United States has encouraged Australia’s foreign and defence focus on its region to
sharpen and deepen. In seeking to shelter *from* Asia with the American alliance as a
security blanket, Australia has in fact been drawn *into* Asian engagements, sometimes
clumsily, sometimes for contradictory or highly questionable reasons, sometimes for
strategically intelligible reasons. However in the process the country has steadily been
developing closer relations with its Asian neighbours. The old hankering for White
Dominion status within the British Empire, the influences of the White Australia policy,
and fears relating to the tyranny of distance and Asian proximity (the ‘yellow peril,’ the
‘red menace’) have slowly been evaporating for some time now as more Australians
interact with Asian-Australians in their communities and as they travel more frequently to
Asian destinations for work, business, trade and tourism. The imperial mind-set that led
Australians to think of Asia as the ‘Far East’ has given way to an acknowledgement that Asia is the country’s regional ‘Near North.’ This has not been an easy or rapid adjustment. The 2012 White Paper *Australia and the Asian Century* makes clear that there is still a lot of hard learning and soul searching to be done in Australia if it is to ‘relocate’ more convincingly to Asia (Australian Government 2012). But this does not require Australia to become an ‘Asian society’ any more than it requires Australia’s Asian neighbours to become like Australia. However, as argued in the Conclusion, Australia can work towards the cultivation of a cosmopolitan Asia in which it can be as at home as any other country in the region (Patience 2014c). This may include contributing to regional movements for ending capital punishment, collaborating with neighbouring states to find a regional solution (or solutions) to the pressing needs of asylum seekers, regional cooperation on issues like piracy and terrorism, regional cooperation in dealing with natural disasters and disease pandemics, and finding common ground on policies relating to climate change (Kertzer et al. 2014).

To fail to act in this way means that Australia is in danger of becoming stranded in its ‘liminal’ positioning in Asian regional affairs, a contributing factor to the country’s ‘awkward partnering’ in the Asia Pacific region. That awkwardness is evident in Australia’s foreign policies with its partners and contenders in the Asia Pacific – policies that are shaped by the country’s conventional middle power posturing in its region. Have its core cultural values and its alliance with the United States, *as it is presently configured*, become permanent impediments to its acceptance as a valued and integral partner in its region? Higgott and Nossal have argued that even if they are not permanent, those impediments are certainly substantial (Higgott and Nossal 2008, p. 632). They believe that Australia remains an ‘oddity’ in Asia for two fundamental reasons: ‘it is a
liberal community in a non-liberal region, and it is linked to the United States in a way that no other country in Asia is.’

In recent times, however, some Asian states themselves have embarked on political transformations that emulate aspects of liberal constitutionalism and the institutionalisation of representative government. Indonesia, Taiwan, the Philippines, and South Korea are examples of these developments. India and Japan have well-established systems of representative government. Singapore and Malaysia have been labelled as ‘quasi-democracies’ (Case 2002). If we think in terms of the development of liberal systems of representative government in Asia, fragile and unpredictable as these developments may be, clearly Australia is not the only liberal community in Asia today. Its liberalism might be more established than among many of its Asian neighbours, but liberalism is not unique to Australia nor is it totally foreign to Asia. Nor is Australia universally criticized in contemporary Asia for being a liberal community. ASEAN states, for example, have taken steps towards improving their human rights records, although, as Lee Jones points out, ‘the scope of those reforms remains highly constrained by entrenched oligarchic power and neo-patrimonial rule’ (Jones 2012, p. 116).

At the same time (as proposed in the introduction to this chapter) Australia’s alliance with the United States, while contributing to the country’s awkwardness in Asia, has also drawn the country into a relocation process that has resulted in greater engagement with Asia and greater awareness of the importance of that engagement in Australia today than at any other time in its history. Nonetheless, Macmahon Ball’s prescient observation is even more relevant today than when he made it nearly half a century ago:

It is proper for us to consider not only how far our relations with America assure our security, but also how far they may bring embarrassments and disadvantages. We
can never properly assess our relations with America without considering their effect on our relations with the nations of East and Southeast Asia. Our future safety will depend not only on whether we have powerful friends, but on whether we can expect to have powerful enemies. We need to consider how far our relations with America improve or impair our relations with the nations of East Asia (Ball 1968, p. 141).

The kind of consideration recommended by Macmahon Ball is now well overdue. As the so-called ‘Asian Century’ (or, perhaps more aptly, the ‘China Century’) unfolds, the time is ripe for a substantial rethinking by both parties to the ANZUS alliance to enable it to foster a more mature and balanced relationship between them. Those who are fearful about overhauling the alliance with the United States might reflect on the fact that its current asymmetrical character very likely weakens its appeal to the Americans precisely because it impairs Australia’s relations with Asia by reinforcing the country’s liminality in its region. If Australia were able to relocate fully into Asia (a possibility that is explored in the concluding chapter), a new shape could be given to the alliance, making it a conduit for America to engage with its Asian counterparts (especially China) in ways that have so far not been practicable. A full relocation would build on the paradoxical influence that Australia’s alliance with the United States has had in drawing Australia closer to Asia that might otherwise have been the case. Macmahon Ball’s advice therefore remains highly relevant. How much does the alliance – as it is presently understood (not only by the two parties to it but also by much of Asia) – improve or impair Australia’s relations with Asia? This question is considered in the two case studies that follow: Australia’s relations with Japan and its relations with China.
Chapter 5

IS JAPAN AUSTRALIA’S BEST FRIEND IN ASIA?

Introduction

This chapter explores how the middle power assumptions in Australia’s foreign policy have been contributing to the country’s awkward partnering with Japan. From the 1860s through to the 1950s, the development of a constructive relationship with Japan was effectively blocked by the White Australia policy, by vestiges of Australia’s White Dominion pretensions, its anxieties about losing the British ‘security blanket,’ and its fears about Japan’s proximity. Indeed, at various times in the history of the relationship those influences fed into the making of a particularly counterproductive foreign policy – the lowest point being the Pacific War years. On the other hand there have been aspects of the country’s middle power imagining (notably the alliance with the United States) that in the post-war era have drawn Australia into a mutually beneficial relationship with the Japanese. Initially these mutual benefits were centred on a significant trading relationship while leading to a joint initiative to develop a regional bloc, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) (Ravenhill 2001a). More recently the relationship has been widened to embrace a security dimension – ‘influenced,’ as Rikki Kersten notes, ‘by [Japan’s] assessment of what China’s rise meant for Japan in the region and in the world’ (Kersten 2012, p. 95).

The chapter critically assesses the history of Australian foreign policy towards Japan across four consecutive periods. Running through them all is an unbroken thread of Australia’s assumption of a dependent middle power imagining. It argues that this imagining that is at the heart of Australia’s awkwardness in its relationship with Japan.
The first period is from the Meiji Restoration to the end of the Great War (1868-1918) when the assumptions behind the White Australia policy were fundamental to the shaping of foreign policy thinking right across the political spectrum. The second is from the Versailles (or Paris) Peace Conference (1919) until 1937. This was arguably the most *publicly* awkward period in the on-going awkwardness marking relations between the two countries largely because of the hectoring of Japan by Billy Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, at the Conference. The third period examines the Pacific War years (1937-1945) and the Occupation of Japan (1946-1952). The fourth period considers the years since 1957 when the first post-war trade treaty (the Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce) was signed between the two countries.

This chapter argues that the post-war relationship between Japan and Australia is best understood as a utilitarian or instrumental alliance sustained since the late 1950s by mutually beneficial trade. In this respect it is not dissimilar to many bilateral relationships around the world. The point however is that in nearly all cases the utilitarianism in relations between states becomes an end in itself, limiting possibilities for a more rounded relationship. It becomes a constraint on the development of a more cosmopolitan and cooperative bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. Moreover a narrowly conducted utilitarian or instrumental diplomacy is likely to ossify over time leaving little room to maneuver if circumstances surrounding the bilateral relationship suddenly change.

Over the past decade or so, and particularly during the Abbott Government, the utilitarianism characterizing the Australia-Japan relationship intensified as a result of shared security concerns in the Asia Pacific. Commenting on most recent developments, John Garnaut quotes Japanese officials who stated: ‘Military ties
between Australia and Japan have been growing so fast that they amount to a “quasi-alliance” (Garnaut 2014, p. 9).

The chapter argues that, despite the post-war utilitarianism of the relationship with Japan – a relationship that unquestionably has been mutually advantageous in economic terms – Australia’s predominant form of middle power imagining has nonetheless contributed to the country’s narrowly utilitarian relationship with the Japanese throughout all four periods under review. This utilitarianism raises questions about former Prime Minister Abbott’s declaration: ‘As far as I’m concerned, Japan is Australia’s best friend in Asia’ (Kenny 2013b). Warming to this theme in the Australian Parliament on 8 July 2014, Mr Abbott made reference to Japanese submariners who attacked ships in Sydney Harbour in 1942, lauding ‘the skill and the sense of honour that they brought to their task, although we disagreed with what they did.’ He continued: ‘Perhaps we grasped, even then, that with a change of heart the fiercest of opponents could be the best of friends’ (Abbott 2014a). The tenor of these remarks suggests that the Prime Minister was less than mindful of the long and difficult history of Australian diplomacy with Japan. On the other hand, perhaps the former Prime Minister was aware that this history is as much of Australia’s making as it is of Japan’s.

**Background**

The Japanese have the longest record of formal bilateral relations with Australia of any Asian state. For some 250 years prior to 1866 it was a capital offence for Japanese to travel abroad. However in that year the government in Tokyo repealed the travel restrictions and the following year Japanese visitors started coming to Australia. By the time federation arrived in 1901 several hundred Japanese had become permanent settlers in the country (Sissons 1971, pp. 8-10). However the
history of this era is not well understood in Australia. Australia’s main focus has been on the Pacific War years and the years since the war. The tendency has been to overlook the critically important seven decades prior to 1942. Rarely is it entertained in accounts of Australia’s Pacific War that the country’s foreign policy might have been a factor that influenced Japan’s conduct leading up to, and during, the Pacific War.

In this history there is evidence of Australia’s awkwardness in dealing with Japan. There are three honourable exceptions to the neglect of the history being referred to here. The first is Henry Frei’s scrupulous research into Japan’s ‘southward advance’ and its implications for Australia (Frei 1984; Frei 1991). The second is Neville Meaney’s history of Australian defence and foreign policy (Meaney 2009a; Meaney 2009b). The third is Max Suich’s well-researched columns published in 2012 (Suich 2012a; Suich 2012b). These contributions to the formative years of Australia’s relations with Japan are discussed below.

As Takashi Terada observed, Japan has been ‘imbued with a deep negative image in the minds of Australians because of [its] brutality during the Pacific War’ (Terada 2006, p. 536). Many of the first-hand accounts of this brutality are at once moving and horrifying (Jeffrey 1954; Kent Hughes 1946; Rivett 1946; Simons 1954; Wigmore 1957). As a veteran of the Kokoda campaign in Papua New Guinea, former Sergeant Len Griffiths stated: ‘[The Japanese] were good soldiers, but they were also bloody cannibals and I saw dead Australian troops whose arm muscles has been cut out for food’ (quoted by McPhedran 2014). It is well documented that on many

25 These articles are the first two of a three-part series by Max Suich (in collaboration with Garry Woodard) published in The Weekend Australian in the middle of 2012 (Suich 2012a; Suich 2012b; Suich 2012c). The series constitutes a rare example of a successful marriage between sound scholarship and first-rate journalism.
occasions Japanese soldiers rode roughshod over international protocols concerning the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians in occupied areas (Daws 1994; Dower 1986; Havers 2003; Nelson 1985; Roland 1991; Tanaka 2002; Totani 2008; Warner and Sandilands 1983). However, there is the danger that ‘victors’ history’ in Australia has over-emphasized the view that Australia was the innocent victim of an evil Asian power. As Suich (2012a, p. 21) reminds us, ‘Australia was at the very centre of the inflammatory issues that led to war with Japan: disputes over access to raw materials; competition for markets that became trade wars; hostile denunciations and diplomatic exchanges arising from racial pride and imperial alliances.’ As discussed below, the possibility that Australia’s middle power imagining could have been among the causes provoking the militarists in Japan has not been at the forefront of Australia’s remembering of the war. This is important to note because, as Matt McDonald has shown, the ‘politics of memory’ plays a significant role in a country’s subsequent involvements in war (McDonald 2010). The pre-Pacific War of Australian foreign policy and its associated diplomacy needs to be more accurately remembered if the country is to learn from history and successfully address the awkwardness in its diplomacy with Japan.

That said, it is important to acknowledge that there has been an alternative view in Australian foreign policy – on Japan in particular and Asia generally. While liberal in character, this stream has not been as influential as the conventional view, but it merits recognition as a more nuanced alternative to the prevailing policy approaches of the pre-Pacific War years. It came into focus in the 1930s, initially as a set of proposals for an Australian leadership role within the British Empire on policy on

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26 In his novel The Narrow Road to the Deep North, Richard Flanagan (2013) has provided perhaps the most rounded Australian account yet of the interactions between the Australians and the Japanese during the Pacific War.
eastern Asia. It was a response by a number of Australian intellectuals to what they believed was a decline in the capacity of Britain to extend its protection to the farthest corners of the Empire. They were convinced that Australia’s future security would be determined by the geopolitical realities of the Asia Pacific region rather than by the country being over-reliant on Britain.

One of these intellectuals was A.C.V. Melbourne (1888-1943) who was ‘credited with eloquent and persistent advocacy of Australia’s particular interests in the Asia-Pacific’ (Cotton 2013, p. 73). Characterized as a firm Australian nationalist, ‘ready at all times to question the wisdom of British politics’ (Bolton 1995, p. 113), Melbourne sought to widen and deepen Australia’s trade ties with Asia to help assuage the effects of Australia’s diminishing markets in Europe because of the Great Depression. He recommended softening (although not, it should be noted, abolishing) the strictures of the White Australia policy (Melbourne 1932, pp. 151-2). He advised: ‘If Australia is to obtain and keep a footing in the East, some indication must be shown of a willingness to meet the peoples of the East on equal terms’ (p. 79). He was convinced that both China and Japan would play a major role in Australia’s future in the region. As Cotton notes, ‘Melbourne can confidently be placed in the narrative of developing Australian awareness of Asia’ (Cotton 2013, p. 77).

Another of the liberals in the 1930s was F.W. Eggleston. He argued that ‘of prime importance’ to Australian foreign policy was ‘the political and economic stability of the Pacific area’ (Eggleston 1957, p. 10). He had been an adviser to Prime Minister Hughes at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, although he ruefully observed that his advice was rarely heeded. He deplored Hughes’ aggressive approach at the conference believing it placed Australia in a vulnerable position,
reliant on the vagueness of Britain’s security guarantees. In a letter from Paris to his wife back in Australia Eggleston wrote:

The war to end war is a fraud. [...] It looks as if the war will end by the destruction of society. Of all the criminal lunatics in the world, Hughes is the worst. He is unbridled blood lust. I feel sick of it & long for home & you to look after and love me (quoted in Osmond 1985, p. 91).

Hughes’ belief in Britain was held despite his habit of offending the British and the Japanese whenever he thought it would assist his cause (Cotton 2013, p. 52). Eggleston and his contemporary Sir John Latham favoured a more conciliatory approach to the Japanese, realizing that to provoke such a powerful regional neighbour was potentially counterproductive. In the event, their prescience could not have been more apposite. From 1941 to 1944 Eggleston was Australian Minister to China, based in Chungking. Latham took leave from the High Court to take up the posting of Australia’s Minister in Tokyo from 1940 to 1941. The familiarity they each acquired in their respective diplomatic postings informed their views on the need for Australia to develop a foreign policy that would enable the country to successfully adjust to the proximity of Asia.

So even as the prevailing view in Australia was that the Japanese should be kept at bay, there was an underlying stream of thought that sought to counter its inherent awkwardness. This underlying stream would begin to surface in the post-war years, led by influential Australian public servants like Sir John Crawford (Drysdale 1987) and Sir Arthur Tange (Edwards 2006).

The postwar trade relationship between Japan and Australia has led to some tentative regionalist middle power imagining by both countries culminating in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 1989 (Ravenhill 1998).
Moreover, from the early 1950s, Japan and Australia’s respective alliances with (or dependencies on) the United States, and security strategies arising from those alliances, have had similar consequences for their relations with their Asia neighbours, aggravating their similar ‘odd men out’ or ‘lonely’ status in the region (Beeson and Yoshimatsu 2007; Patience and Jacques 2010). Despite this shared status, for most of the post-war period Tokyo and Canberra have maintained a polite but culturally distant dialogue primarily focused on their trading partnership. The cultivation of a more culturally nuanced diplomacy between the two countries has been left in abeyance. Both countries give precedence to the utilitarianism of their trading partnership over a more ‘dramatic’ friendship. More recently, China’s efforts to re-establish its status as a major power in the region have seen Japan and Australia hastening into closer security dialogues. Thomas Wilkins observes of this development: ‘This structured security collaboration has allowed Australia and Japan to build their joint capacity in responding to both traditional and nontraditional security challenges, including humanitarian aid/disaster relief and peacekeeping operations’ (Wilkins 2015, p. 91).

(1) From the Meiji Era to the Great War (1868-1918)

1868 was the year of the formal restoration of the emperor to the centre of Japan’s system of governance. This followed the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867) by clans loyal to Emperor Mutsuhito (posthumously known as the Meiji Emperor). Surrounding the young emperor were advisers drawn from among

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27 The distinction alluded to here is drawn from Michael Oakeshott’s account of ‘utilitarian’ versus ‘dramatic’ friendship. He writes: ‘A friend is not somebody one trusts to behave in a certain manner, who supplies certain wants, who has certain useful abilities, who possesses certain merely agreeable qualities, or who holds certain acceptable opinions; he is somebody who engages the imagination, who excites contemplation, who provokes interest, sympathy, delight and loyalty simply on account of the relationship entered into. […] The relationship of friend to friend is dramatic, not utilitarian’ (Oakeshott 1991, p. 417).
leaders of the most powerful clans. In the five decades or so that followed the restoration the Japanese achieved wide-ranging social, economic and political modernizations akin to those achieved over a much longer time span during the West’s Industrial Revolution (Andressen 2003, pp. 78-96; Kajima 1968, Part I; Roehrs and Renzi 2004, pp. 4-10; Storry 1970, ch. 4). In the midst of these remarkable developments government officials in Tokyo commenced friendly overtures to Australia, desiring a mutually beneficial trade relationship in the first instance. However, the recently constituted federal government was resolutely committed to the White Australia policy. It snubbed Japan’s approaches, sowing the seeds of the country’s awkwardness in its future dealings with the Japanese. Of course Australia was not uniquely a racist country at this time. So too were the British, the Americans and other big powers on the world stage. What was unique to Australia however was its geopolitical location as a Western culture in an Asian geography – a reality that did not seem to impinge on the consciousness of Australia’s politicians. As Frei observed: ‘Australian concern about living close to the proverbial hordes of Asia’s teeming millions began to focus on Japan’ (Frei 1991, p. 63). In 1896 a resolution was passed at a conference of colonial premiers extending the exclusion of Chinese in the colonies to the Japanese. This severely curtailed Japanese immigration and placed prohibitive constraints on Japanese commercial ventures in Australia (Sissons 1971, p. 36).

28 In accordance with imperial Japanese tradition, following his death Emperor Mutsuhito’s reign (1867-1912) was named Meiji Ishin [明治維新] – the Meiji Era, or ‘era of enlightened government.’ Because of the dramatic pace and comprehensive reach of the modernizations that occurred in this period, historians have also labelled it the ‘Meiji Revolution’ (Beasley 1972, ch. XIII).

29 The genro [元老] – aristocratic classes.
Conflicts between Caucasian and Asian gold seekers during the 1850s gold rushes had helped to ignite what was to become a culturally entrenched prejudice against Asians who had come to the gold fields in Victoria and New South Wales to seek their fortunes. Most of the Asians arriving on the gold fields were Chinese (Fatt 1977; Seith 1974; Yarwood 1964). The antipathies towards Asians fed into the thinking behind the White Australia policy, surfacing legislatively as the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (Fitzgerald 2008; Price 1974; Tavan 2005). Defenders of the Act insisted that it would minimize conflicts arising from cultural differences among ordinary Anglo-Saxon-Celtic Australians. Others argued that it would protect Australian wage earners from threats of unfair labour competition by workers from poorer countries prepared to work for lower wages. Despite the eristic sophistry of these defences, the policy aroused considerable resentment in Japan. Nonetheless Australia’s politicians at state and federal levels were insensitive to the fact that Japan’s national pride might weigh heavily with its leaders who expected their citizens to be treated respectfully when visiting foreign countries (Bain 1982, p. 104).

Debating the Immigration Restriction Bill in 1901, a leading Member of the Commonwealth Parliament was reflecting the majority view when he declared: ‘I am prepared to do all that is necessary to insure that Australia shall be white and that we shall be free for all time from the contamination and the degrading influence of the inferior races’ (Isaacs in Ball 1969, pp. 7-8). But this unalloyed racism was intensified by anxiety following Japan’s victory over China in 1895 and its subsequent victory over the Russian naval fleet at Port Arthur in 1904/5 (Kajima 1968, ch. 1). Some of Australia’s leaders began to fear the inevitability of war

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30 Isaac Isaacs, the Federal Member for Indi from 1901 to 1906, went to the High Court in 1907 and was knighted in 1928. He became the first Australian-born Governor-General (1930-1936).
breaking out, with Australia pitted against would-be invaders from Asia. Thomas Ewing, Defence Minister in the second Deakin Government (1905-1908), was convinced that, ‘Between the white and yellow man there is racial hatred […] They are destined to be enemies for all time.’ He predicted the apocalyptic explosion of ‘a great battle of Armageddon, which has to be fought between the yellow man and the white man’ (Ewing 1908). These sentiments reflected widespread public opinion in Australia at that time. They were, as Macmahon Ball sharply observed, ‘a blatant expression of racial arrogance’ (Ball 1969, p. 3).

The contrast in official Japanese thinking about Australia at this time could hardly have been greater. A number of intellectuals were curious about the potential for commercial activities in ‘South Seas.’ One such thinker was Shigetaka Shiga (1863-1927) who embarked on a voyage around the South Pacific in the 1880s. He published a book on his return to Japan in 1887 that deeply influenced thinking in the Japanese bureaucracy. He declared: ‘The Australians are the bravest and most audacious among the Anglo-Saxons. It is incomprehensible why we have so far had no dealings with this flourishing and civilized people close to us in the south’ (translated and quoted by Frei 1984, p. 71). Shiga’s report pointed to Australia’s abundant resources and its potential as a valuable trading partner with Japan. This kind of positive (or, more to the point, hopeful) speculation about Australia persisted in Japan more or less until the end of the Great War.

However, at the same time the Japanese government had concluded that the White Australia policy was of concern to them for two fundamental reasons. The first had to do with Japan’s growing consciousness of itself as a modern nation. The Japanese were proud that they were the first non-European people to achieve levels of economic and military power similar to those of the advanced economies.
However the White Australia policy relegated Japan to the ranks of the less developed Asian and South Pacific economies and societies. In the wake of the achievements of the Meiji Restoration the Japanese regarded it as insulting to be ranked among societies still adhering to what they regarded as pre-modern practices and traditions (Storry 1970, ch. 4). Moreover, it was a matter of national pride that they had avoided being colonized – a fate that had enveloped many of their neighbouring societies, including China (with its partitioned cantonments) and Korea, with devastating consequences. Secondly, the policy was an unwelcome constraint on the development of commercial ties between the two countries.

Baron Hayashi, the Japanese minister in London, asked the British Colonial Office to ‘induce the Government of Australia […] to place Japanese subjects on the same footing with those of European nationalities’ (quoted in Meaney 2009a, p. 116). The British had signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1902, opening up trade between the two countries. The Treaty was renewed in 1911 (Nish 1966; Nish 2000). That fact, along with the region’s remoteness from Britain, meant that whoever exercised power in the Far East was of minor concern to Whitehall. But this was cold comfort to the Australians for whom Japan was emerging as an unnervingly proximate threat (Meaney 1988). The British were nonetheless indifferent to the growing anxieties of the ‘colonials’ in the antipodes. They tried to pressure the fledgling federal government in Australia into softening the immigration restrictions imposed on the Japanese. Britain’s attempted persuasion fell on deaf Australian ears. Even so, Japan continued with its wooing of the Australians. Squadrons from the Japanese navy paid goodwill visits to Australia in 1903 and 1906. They were received with surprising warmth and widespread curiosity. Crowds cheered and bands played as the Japanese ships berthed in Sydney and Melbourne. Bunting and
floral decorations adorned official receptions for the smartly uniformed Japanese officers and their crew. As David Walker writes: ‘Every potted palm was recruited to the cause. Barely a chrysanthemum was left standing when the fleet was in town’ (Walker 1999, p. 89).

Despite the saccharine sentiments uttered by the public officials charged with welcoming the visitors from Japan, the White Australia policy remained resolutely (if freshly) on the statute books. The Japanese desire to be accorded preferential treatment in contrast to other non-Europeans was stubbornly ignored in Australia. Japan’s rising naval power was frightening the Australian officials, prompting Prime Minister Deakin to seek favour with the Americans to shore up a security alliance (Meaney 2009a, ch 5). Australia’s advances to the Americans were not appreciated by the British who saw them as evidence of unfaithfulness to the Crown and Empire. Nonetheless Australia’s leaders were becoming aware that reliance for their security on Britain alone was potentially unsound policy. They worried about the withdrawal of the British from Southeast Asia in response to growing German activity in the North Sea. And they were especially anxious at what they saw as Britain’s narrow focus on the security of the British Isles at the expense of the Empire’s far-flung domains. Britain was also concerned about possible Russian designs on India. The Anglo-Japan alliance was therefore a strategy to help contain Russia, while also keeping a cautious eye on emerging Germany. Meaney explains that this ‘produced in Australia an entirely new picture of their external situation’ (Meaney 2009a, p. 268). However these developments did not arouse among the Australian leaders a desire for more cooperative ties with Japan. They dug in their White Australia heels. Convinced of their elevated status as a White Dominion and expecting to be cosseted in the secure embrace of the British Empire, they persisted in identifying exclusively
as Britons in the antipodes, racially and culturally superior to all in their region. This was offensive to the Japanese who themselves were cultivating a sense of their racial superiority in Asia (Befu 2009). In Australia, moreover, growing anxieties about the country’s tyrannous distance from Great Britain and the close proximity of Asia were morphing into strategic nightmares for those Australians concerned with thinking about their country’s security.

The Japanese persisted in their efforts to initiate a mutually beneficial relationship with the Australians in the face of Australia’s constant rebuffs. When the Australian government zealously committed itself to Britain’s cause at the outbreak of World War I, the Japanese aligned themselves with the British war effort too – although rather more calmly in alignment with the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The Australian Labour leader Andrew Fisher (subsequently Prime Minister) stoutly declared that his countrymen should ‘stand beside our own to help and defend Britain to the last man and the last shilling’ (quoted in Bastian 2009, p. 185). In their febrile rush to the Great War, it was not well known in Australia that the Japanese were also committed to an alliance with the British. Two weeks after the declaration of war, the Australian cruiser Sydney, accompanied by the Japanese cruiser Ibuki, hunted down and sank the German cruiser Emden in the Indian Ocean. Frei notes that it was ironic that the Sydney had been built specifically to defend Australia from Japanese ships like the Ibuki (Frei 1991, p. 91). However, their common cause with Britain saw the Australians and Japanese acting together to dispose of the German cruiser – a case of the enemy of my enemy is my friend! It is also insufficiently understood in Australia that throughout the Great War Japanese naval ships escorted Australian and New Zealand troop carriers across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Europe and assisted in patrolling Australia’s vast northern coastline.
In the face of the support the Japanese provided in war, Australia’s leaders remained deeply suspicious of Japan’s medium and long-term ambitions in the Pacific. In a visit to London in 1916 Prime Minister Billy Hughes reached the view that Japan’s pro-British stance was designed to inveigle the Australia authorities into permitting Japanese products and people into Australia. Japan, he was convinced, was ‘most keenly interested in Australia’ (quoted in Spartalis 1983, p. 24). But it was an interest with which Hughes was not at all comfortable. He was convinced that if the war turned against Britain and its allies, Japan would swiftly switch its allegiance to Germany. As the Great War thundered on, the anti-Japanese mind-set among Australia’s leaders soured what goodwill that could have been nurtured between Japan and Australia during those war years. It was a mind-set that remained fixed even though Japan had regularly demonstrated its reliability as an ally against Germany. It was all very well for Japanese and Australian ships to sail together back and forth across the Indian Ocean yet in politico-cultural terms the two countries were as ships passing in the night. In this context the foundations were laid for Australia’s awkward partnering in its region, an awkwardness that commenced with its earliest relations with Japan.

(2) 1919 to 1937

The treatment of Japan by the Allied powers at the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference was about as hypocritical as the Treaty that was its lamentable product. As Harold Nicolson (1933, p. 187) observed of the Treaty: ‘seldom in the history of man has such vindictiveness cloaked itself in such unctuous sophistry.’ While Germany was the main target of this vindictiveness and sophistry, numerous problems remained unresolved or had been shelved. Margaret MacMillan notes: ‘The peacemakers in 1919 felt that they had done their best, but they had no illusions they had solved the
world’s problems’ (MacMillan 2001, p. 497). The Japanese left Paris disillusioned with the whole peace process. Before the outbreak of war their country had achieved the status of an advanced industrialized economy. It ranked third in the world as a naval power. It had major victories to its credit. It had a sustained record as an ally in the war against Germany. Despite these achievements, the great powers had mostly been indifferent, (when not actually opposed) to Japan’s contributions at the Conference table. Like a terrier among a pack of great danes, Australia was complicit with the counterproductive strategy of edging Japan to the margins of the world’s highest forums.

At Versailles the Australians made it abundantly clear that they wanted to have nothing to do with their northern neighbour whose military and economic capabilities appeared to be on a dangerously upward trajectory. Meany observed: ‘The one specific interest Australia had at the peace settlement was keeping Japan at bay’ (Meany 2009b, p. 317). The strategies pursued at the Conference by Australia’s Prime Minister, while popular back home, had the effect of alienating the Japanese. ‘Australia,’ MacMillan observed (meaning Hughes), ‘was not moderate on anything’ (MacMillan 2001, p. 55). What needs interrogation is the extent to which Hughes’ strategies contributed to the eventual eruption of hostilities between the two countries at the onset of the Pacific War (Spartalis 1983, pp. 122-168).

As was the case with all participants in the debates about the fate of Germany’s colonial territories, the Japanese were interested in enhancing their commercial and strategic interests. But their proposals also had a degree of internationalism to them that contrasted with those of the British and French who were bent on securing and extending their imperial possessions, especially in the Middle East. The Japanese were open to negotiation with states with related interests in the Pacific region, but
Billy Hughes obdurately refused to cooperate (Frei 1991, ch. 7; Meaney 2009b ch. 14). Meanwhile President Wilson was so focused on defending his Fourteen Points that he overlooked what the Japanese were proposing. They desired a more inclusive international community, one that would begin expanding its horizons beyond Europe and the United States (Andelman 2008, ch. 10). The unfortunate irony is that if President Wilson and Baron Makino31 had understood each other better, they might have come away from Versailles more successfully than the way things actually turned out.

Hughes fought tenaciously to prevent the Japanese gaining a foothold in any of the former German Pacific territories south of the equator. Confecting what he labelled as ‘an Australian Monroe Doctrine in the Pacific,’ he declared that ‘whoever controls the islands within Australian waters also controls Australia.’ He was determined that ‘the great rampart of islands stretching around the north-east of Australia should be held by us’ (quoted in Bridge 2011, p. 101). In pursuing this policy he was complicit in the sidelining of Japan as its main proposals were circumvented by the Conference. This amounted to humiliating the Meiji modernizers at the Conference in the full glare of the public gaze. It contributed to their eventual overthrow by militarist elements stirring in Japanese politics.

The Conference decided to place responsibility for the former German colonies under the auspices of the League of Nations, mandating them to specified countries to administer on behalf of the League. Hughes fought for, but lost his shameless demand that Australia be permitted to annex German New Guinea outright. Nonetheless, what Hudson describes as the ‘very permissive terms’ of the compromise agreement, Australia guaranteed that it would be a ‘humane tutor’ of the

31 Though officially second in charge of the Japanese delegation, Makino (an exemplar of a Meiji modernizer) was in effect the leader (Shimazu 1998, pp. 15-16).

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peoples of New Guinea (Hudson 1978, p. 28). It agreed to outlaw slavery and the sale of alcohol to ‘the indigenes.’ It promised to refrain from establishing any military or naval bases in the territory and desist from recruiting a ‘black army.’ Otherwise Australia was free to incorporate the territory as ‘an integral portion of the Commonwealth of Australia.’

The Japanese were mandated the Marshall and Caroline Islands – about half of the territories they had claimed the right to administer (Bridge 2011, p. 83). The strategic consequences of this arrangement, to which Australia (or more accurately, Hughes) was a blinkered party, became evident with the onset of the Pacific War. Japan had been handed a strategic advantage in the Marshall and Caroline Islands. It is hard to escape the image of an ingénue Australia at Versailles bumbling towards an abyss not a little of its own making. The ‘permissive terms’ of the mandates were merely the beginning of a diplomatic mess. Meanwhile the Japanese were determined to sheet home blame for the war to the West. As Dower notes:

In Japanese eyes it was the non-Axis West that aimed at world domination and had been engaged in that quest, with conspicuous success, for centuries; and it was the value system of the modern West, rooted in acquisitiveness and self-gratification, that explained a large part of its bloody history of war and repression, culminating in the current world crisis (Dower 1986, p. 24).

Japan’s claims to former German territories in the Pacific were insensitively handled, leading to the alienation of Japan from the League. Hughes was blind to the potential danger in this development, failing to understand the implications of the sidelining of Japan, not only for the Japanese themselves but also for the entire Asia Pacific region. The Japanese delegation returned home to a growing political crisis in Tokyo that resulted in the eclipse of moderates and progressives in the Japanese government and the rise of militarists and ultranationalists. As Suich has explained, Hughes was
‘careless of the aid he gave Japanese militarists and extremists to undermine the liberal elements in the Japanese government seeking an accommodation with the West’ (Suich 2012b, p. 20). It is perhaps not too farfetched to suggest that Hughes’ actions in Paris should be listed among the causes of the Pacific War. Certainly the Japanese believed they were the victims of provocation that commenced at Versailles where Hughes was a standout critic of the Government of Japan’s proposals for establishing the terms of the peace treaty (Frei 1991, ch. 7; Spartalis 1983, pp. 134-142). It was this belief that led to the confection of the ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere whose Draft Basic Plan stated that it aimed ‘to cause East Asia to return to its original form of independence and co-prosperity by shaking off the yoke of Europe and America, and to let its countries and peoples develop their respective abilities in peaceful cooperation and secure livelihood’ (Jansen et al. 1958, p. 802).

As with the discussions about the German territories in the Pacific, Hughes’ contributions to the formation of the League of Nations were based on a short-sighted view of what role the League might play in fostering a peaceful world and whether Australia should play a role in this idealistic dream. Hughes was by no means an internationalist. As Hudson observed: ‘There was nothing in Hughes’ performance in Paris to suggest he was there with any ambition to reform the world’ (Hudson 1978, p. 43). The issue on which Hughes was most outspoken in his opposition to the Japanese was the latter’s proposal for a racial equality clause to be written into the League’s Charter. Hughes saw this as a threat to the White Australia policy and single-mindedly drummed up opposition to the Japanese proposal. Naoko Shimazu refers to ‘the centrality’ of Hughes’ role in the rejection of the Japanese proposal (Shimazu 1998, p. 125). She notes that it reflected how important the
upholding of the White Australia policy was in Australian politics with its ‘anti-Japanese component’ (p. 167; see also Nish 200, p. 158). On his return from Paris Hughes stated:

We claim the right [...] to say in regard to Australia who shall enter and who shall not. This is our house. To keep it ours, our soldiers have sacrificed their blood, and they have placed the keys in our hands. The war was waged for liberty. We had this right before, and we claim to retain it now (quoted in Bridge 2011, p. 101).

But for all his self-congratulating, Hughes had inflicted a wound on the Japanese sense of national pride. One Japanese observer commented at the time:

Of all rebuffs Japan has met at the peace table, that was the most discouraging. By Japan I do not mean the Japanese Government, much less the Japanese peace envoys. By Japan I mean the Japanese people, for this proposal to eliminate racial discrimination was primarily the proposal of sixty million souls of the Mikado's Empire. [...] However cogent and convincing the reasons might be in favor of the proposal, the Japanese leaders could not but recognize that the peoples of those great western countries, who had long discriminated against the Asiatic races, had not undergone a change of heart. To the contrary, they saw that even the baptism of blood and fire, from which the world had just emerged, failed to consecrate mankind to the ideals of humanity and universal brotherhood (Kawakami 1919, pp. 46-7).

Suich points out, that Hughes had ‘effectively vetoed Japan’s request to be formally acknowledged as an equal with the white Anglo-Saxon empires in the foundation documents of the League of Nations’ (Suich 2012a, p. 21). This is not to argue, of course, that Hughes and Australia were the main cause of the Pacific War. Rather, it is to propose that they played an active part in contributing to this tragedy. At the

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32 John Howard echoed these sentiments in his 2001 election campaign speech when referring to asylum seekers: ‘we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come’ (Howard 2001a).
same time, Japanese militarism was playing its role in pushing Japan into war. However, buoyed by what Hughes saw as the British Empire’s victory over Germany, while firmly believing in Australia’s status as a white Dominion within the Empire, and an avowed believer in the doctrine of White Australia, like most of his fellow antipodeans he saw no reason to be concerned about Japan’s humiliations in Paris. As far as he and his Australian supporters were concerned, the agreements reached at Versailles had established a strategic buffer zone between Australia and Japan (Twomey 2000, pp. 68-9). But Hughes remained concerned about Japan’s military ambitions in the Pacific, prompting the Australian government to embark on a policy that discriminated against Japanese interests in Australia’s sphere of influence in the region. Japanese companies were locked out of the former German New Guinea and Japanese migration into the region was banned. Japanese were not allowed to own or operate their former copra plantations and businesses in Rabaul, once the administrative nerve centre of German New Guinea. Japanese shipping was excluded from trade routes between Australia and its mandated territories. The White Australia policy continued to exclude Japanese settlers from all Australia territories. In effect, Australia was cutting off its strategic nose to spite its security face. Clumsiness and insensitivity marked its diplomacy with Japan at every step of the way. At the same time the Australians began to build up their defence capacity, eyeing Japan as a potential enemy who would eventually have to be confronted. In the process they virtually ensured that such a confrontation would eventually have to take place.

Resentment was stirring in Japan over its negative experiences in Paris, including those resulting from Billy Hughes’ interventions. Most Australians were ignorant of Hughes’ part in scotching the racial equality clause in the League of
Nations Charter (Morris-Suzuki 2000a, p. 156). Nor did they have the slightest idea that it was causing angst in Japan. As Shimazu points out, it ‘contributed to a general disillusionment which pervaded Japan in the 1920s, a belief that the Anglo-Saxon West had created an international system which was fundamentally ‘unfair’ and ‘unjust’’ (Shimazu 1998, p. 170). Gerald Horne makes the point that the sidelining of Japan was grounded in white prejudices prevalent throughout the British Empire and more generally across Western Europe and the United States: ‘the stern refusal,’ as he describes it, ‘of those of “pure European descent” to fully accept the new phenomenon of an Asian power’ (Horne 2004, p. xiii). Moreover, as Shimazu goes on to explain, it helped inflame a mounting nationalist ideology in Japan that favoured a foreign policy that was ‘Japan-centric and pan-Asian.’ This became a central tenet of Japanese foreign and defence policy in the 1930s. Billy Hughes role in this ill-fated development should not be over-looked. He shoulders some of the blame for its eventual metamorphosis into the doctrine of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere described by Beasley as ‘a type of informal empire, serving the needs of the Japanese economy, but rejecting […] the models of European colonial governments’ (Beasley 1987, p. 233). Japan was a rising big power in Asia at that time. Its nationalism (and later ultra-nationalism) was imbued with a view of racial superiority (as indeed was the Nazi view of Germany’s ‘Aryan’ racial superiority). However, the reaction in the West to Japan’s rise was also met with equally racist responses. Dower notes: ‘the positive self-images of one side were singled out for ridicule and condemnation by the other’ (Dower 1986, p. 28).

As the Great Depression deepened, the United Kingdom started cutting Japanese imports. Following the British example, in 1936 Australia introduced its ‘trade diversion’ policy that imposed higher tariffs on Japanese imports while
lowering tariffs on British imports (Nish 2000, p. 163). Halting iron ore and other resources exports to Japan soon followed. As Suich notes, ‘the ban on all iron ore exports put Australia at the forefront of an embargo on raw material exports to Japan’ (Suich 2012b, p. 20). This was despite the fact that Australia had been enjoying a profitable trading relationship with Japan. Wigmore revealed: ‘By 1935-36, the balance in Australia’s favour of her trade with Japan amounted to more than one-third of the sum Australia needed to pay interest upon the heavy indebtedness she had incurred to other countries’ (Wigmore (1957, p. 5). Nonetheless Australia embarked on a policy mirroring the trading curbs that the British and Americans were placing on exports to Japan and on Japanese imports. Suich points out that one of the most lamentable consequences of these actions was a strengthening ‘of those in Japan who felt reliable access to resources could only be assured by force’ (Suich 2012b, p. 20). In 1933 Australia followed Britain’s lead in abrogating trade treaties, thereby commencing the isolation of Japan that led to that country’s catastrophic entry into the Pacific War (Nish 1972, p. 334). Soon afterwards Japan commenced negotiating alliances with Germany and Italy and initiated plans to acquire resources elsewhere, notably China.

Following its disappointments in Paris, its economic marginalization in global trade agreements, and in the context of negative effects of the Great Depression, Japan embarked on its advance into China, in pursuit of resources. As Kawakami observed at the time: ‘It must be frankly admitted that ever since China opened her doors to western nations, her territory has been regarded as a “happy hunting ground” by concession-seekers of all, but especially European, countries’ (Kawakami 1919, p. 161). In the context of this kind of thinking Japan’s military budget rose from 29.4 per cent of total government expenditure in 1931 to 71.7 percent in 1939.
The Japanese annexation of Manchuria (Manchukuo) in 1931, and in 1937 and its creation of a puppet state there was the prelude to the country’s invasion of the Chinese heartland. It was part of the run-up to the Pacific War (Mitter 2013, Part One; Nish 1993, ch. 5). Meanwhile, in conformity with its dependent middle power imagining, Australia huddled beneath imperial Britain’s coat-tails, cocking a snook at Japan’s efforts to become an accepted partner in the ‘big game’ of international politics.

An examination of the decades leading up the Pacific War throws into sharp relief Australia’s awkwardness in its dealings with Japan. As patriotic members of the British Empire nothing could have been further from the Australian consciousness than the notion of cultivating a respectful and equitable rapport with countries in the Asian region. But the frightening proximity of Asia, the tyrannous distance from the motherland, Britain’s absorption with growing tension in Europe, and Japan’s rising power in their region all served to disconcert leaders, officials and the general public in Australia. Little value was placed on the fact that Japan had been genuinely proffering friendship with Australia since the Meiji Era. Frei pointed to the fact that relations between the two countries had become ‘tense and erratic, hinging as they did on a distinct Australian feeling of insecurity towards the growing regional power of Japan’ (Frei 1991, p. 63). The Japanese were the ‘other’ – aliens with whom the Australians wanted as little contact as possible.

Meanwhile national paranoia was not confined to Australia. In Japan a belief was taking hold that the country was being encircled by powers wanting to contain and constrain it. In February 1936 a group of young officers in the Japanese Imperial Army attempted a coup against the government claiming that not enough was being done to build up Japan’s military security. They assassinated several senior figures in
the government. The coup was brought to a swift end, but the embers of ultra-nationalism were about to burst into flame. Carol Gluck notes: ‘during the years of militarism and increasing state control in the 1930s the content and apparatus of ideology reached an intensity that required police enforcement and culminated in the “spiritual mobilization” for war’ (Gluck 1985, p. 279). Within a year the militarists had gained the upper hand in the Japanese government (Beasley 1986, pp.199-210). In China, the Nationalists (Kuomintang) under Chiang Kai-shek were staking out a claim to govern the country, to the chagrin of the militarists in Tokyo. Japan’s leaders moved quickly to portray this as the emergence of a hostile enemy on their western doorstep (Mitter 2013, p. 47). As this conviction took root in Tokyo, the scene was set for Japan’s entry into what would end up as one of the bloodiest, most merciless wars in modern history.

(3) 1937-1952
The grim years of the Pacific War (1937-1945) mark the lowest ebb in relations between Japan and Australia. They were followed by the years of the Allied Occupation of Japan (1946-1952) in which the record of Australian servicemen’s behavior was not always honourable (Johnston 2000, chs. 5 and 6; Oates 2001; Takemae 2002, pp. 131-3, 135-6). Throughout the war Australia’s politicians and media had depicted Japan as incomprehensibly orientalist, governed by ultra-nationalists who were ready to mobilize a fanatical military without let or warning (Rivett 1946). Or, as Russell Braddon notes, an Australian intelligence officer had assured his troops that the Japanese were ‘small, myopic, ill-equipped, frightened of the dark and anyway physically repulsive.’ Russell Braddon goes on to ask:

How would he (had he still been with us, which he was not, because one of his unlikely invaders had killed him) have explained the fact that the very first of them with whom we, his subordinates, had come face to face, behind a road-
block, was tall, strong, splendidly equipped, conspicuously unbespectacled – and very nearly beautiful (Braddon 1983, p. 9).

The possibility that Australia might have provoked some of the enmity the Japanese directed towards it during the conflict is rarely proposed. Historian John Dower’s labeling of it as ‘war without mercy’ is entirely appropriate. While his primary focus is on the enmity between America and Japan during the war, his account of what he describes as a ‘race war’ is equally applicable to the way Australia and Japan fought against each other. He explains:

It is [...] necessary to acknowledge that atrocious behavior occurred on all sides in the Pacific War. Such acts, and the propagandizing of them, became part of the vicious circle of war hates and race hates and contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of individuals – millions, if the civilian deaths of the Japanese as well as other Asians are counted – long after Japan’s defeat was a foregone conclusion (Dower 1986, pp. 12-13).

Australia’s alliance with the United States was forged in the furnace of the Pacific War. When General Douglas MacArthur escaped from the Philippines to Australia in February 1942 he was regaled ‘as a saviour and a hero, both because of the leader he appeared to be and the nation he represented’ (Millar 1978, p. 148). Over the course of the war Australia hosted nearly one million United States military personnel. The presence of the American troops created some tensions in Australia’s wartime society (Darien-Smith 2013, pp. 79-84). It was privately believed by some Australian military commanders like General Blamey that MacArthur was inclined to big-noting his successes in the war while under-stating Australia’s contributions (Johnston 2000, p. 117; Hetherington 1973, pp.296-7). As Phillip and Roger Bell note, ‘few Americans were aware that, until 1944, most of MacArthur’s troops were in fact Australians’ (Bell and Bell 1993, p. 100). Despite minor altercations between Americans and Australian troops, Peter Stanley comments: ‘The remarkable reality
was that the two forces cooperated so harmoniously, in and out of action’ (Stanley 2008, p. 171). The Australians proved their mettle in dislodging the Japanese from Papua and New Guinea with America’s help, and ‘mopping up’ operations as part of MacArthur’s ‘island hopping’ strategy to push the Japanese back (McDougall 1998, p. 167; Roehrs and Renzi 2004, ch. 7).

Throughout the early stages of the war it was widely feared in Australia that the country was threatened by an imminent Japanese invasion. Prime Minister Curtin declared: ‘The fall of Singapore opens up the battle for Australia’ (quoted in Burke 2008, p. 69). What Dower has aptly labelled as ‘race hate’ found fertile ground in the Australian national psyche. As Hetherington notes: ‘Japan’s entry to the war changed the whole meaning of the conflict for Australians. Hitherto they had fought wars on other people’s soil; now a war threatened their own’ (Hetherington 1973, p. 191). The Japanese bombing of Darwin in 1942 convinced most Australians (or those who knew about it at the time) that this was the prelude to the feared invasion (Stanley 2008, Part II). However, this belief was not based on fact. As Frei pointed out, ‘the raid on [Darwin] was Japan’s southernmost and last major territorial bombardment in the final stage of her southward advance’ (Frei 1991, p. 133). Moreover, he noted, ‘Japan’s southward advance theorists, if they looked to the South Seas, rarely took much notice of faraway Australia’ (p. 218). Already logistical problems and disruptions of supply-lines were hampering Japanese military operations in the South Pacific and Southeast Asia (Shindo 2013, pp. 118-121). Back in Tokyo, the Imperial Army chiefs were arguing against the Navy’s proposals for an invasion of Australia. They pointed out that strategically they could not afford the dozen or so divisions that a successful invasion would require. They feared, moreover, that the scale of deployment of soldiers and materiel that an invasion of Australia would necessitate
to ensure success would encourage the Soviet Union to attack the Japanese heartland from the north (Bullard 2013, p. 136; see also Fujiwara 1972). In due course the Army strategists in Tokyo won out over their Navy counterparts and by early March 1942 ‘the Australia dispute was put on the back-burner for good’ (Frei 1991, p. 171). This was not understood in Australia by the advocates of anti-Japanese strategies at that time. Even today there is a persistent view that Japan was hell bent on invading Australia and but for the heroism of Australian troops in the battle on the Kokoda Track in Papua, the invasion would have become a reality (Brune 2003).

The Australians’ actions on the battlefields across the Pacific and Asia included episodes of genuine courage and laconic fortitude, sometimes against shocking odds. Many of those who were captured by the Japanese were treated as slave labour and subjected to gratuitous harshness. Wigmore records that more than one-third of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) under the Japanese died – three times more than soldiers who died in active service (Wigmore 1957, p. 674). Many of the civilians and members of the Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS) captured by the Japanese were also treated abominably. Yuma Totani refers to the case of a group of Australians who surrendered to the Japanese on Banka Island, east of Sumatra: ‘After accepting the surrender, the Japanese took all the male captives to a nearby cliff and bayoneted them to death.

Similarly they ordered the 22 surviving female nurses to march into the sea, and machine-gunned them to death from behind’ (Totani 2008, p. 164). Similar episodes to this, and others even more brutal, have left bitter memories. They partly explain the Australian Government’s reluctance to treat Japan leniently after the war and influenced the country’s approach to the war crimes tribunal that followed. This was evident in Australia’s pressuring of the Allied governments to name Emperor
Hirohito as a major war criminal (Totani 2008, p. 53). In the event MacArthur was able to protect Hirohito who remained on the chrysanthemum throne until his death in 1989.

The Australians’ understandings (or misunderstandings) of the Japanese soldiers against whom they fought were stark reminders of the cultural divide that existed between them. Many of the Japanese soldiers were steeped in a perverted rendering of the code of Bushido and ultranationalist brainwashing to serve the emperor to the death (Embree 1945, pp. 239-243; Tsunoda et al.1958, pp. 761-805). Bushido was a samurai tradition of chivalry that cultivated abject loyalty to the daimyo (or lord) under whom the samurai served. There was a tradition in feudal Japan that on their lord’s death after suffering defeat his samurai would commit suicide (Nitobe 2005). This tradition was extolled by the Japanese military commanders as the ideal for their soldiers to follow in the Pacific War. Death was regarded as infinitely more virtuous than capture. Indeed capture by the enemy was regarded as the deepest form of shame. Japanese ultranationalism had its roots in the Shinto [神道] religious ideology that came to the fore during Meiji era when, as Scott Schnell notes, ‘Nationalist ideologues began to propagate the notion of state Shinto in an attempt to draw people’s allegiances away from local areas toward the all-encompassing figure of the empower’ (Schnell 2008, pp. 206-7; see also Hardacre 1989, pp. 37-40). In the Pacific War years this ideology was relentlessly indoctrinated into the ranks of the Japanese military (Embree 1945). Mark Johnston (2000) refers to what appeared to the Australians as a fanatical desire (a ‘collective madness’) among the Japanese enemy to die rather than accept defeat. ‘Suicide,’ he writes, ‘was often used [by the Japanese] as a means of avoiding capture, a preference which was generally alien to Australians.’ He reports that in one
campaign for example – Wewak in northwestern Australian New Guinea – 9000 Japanese soldiers were killed while only 269 were captured. Many of those deaths were the result of suicide (Johnston 2000, pp. 90-1).

The cultural divide between Japanese prisoners and their Australian captors was tragically on display in the events leading up to the so-called ‘Cowra Breakout.’ Journalist Harry Gordon (2002) provides a compelling account of the attempted escape by more than 300 Japanese prisoners of war from a prison camp in Cowra, New South Wales on 5 August 1944. 231 Japanese were killed in the breakout, 108 were wounded. Well before their attempt to break out from the prison camp, the POWs were aware that the odds were stacked against them, that the break out would in effect be a suicide mission. Soon after midnight the Japanese hurled themselves at the barbed wire perimeter of the camp during the breakout, many of them appearing to welcome the anticipation of being killed in the ensuing chaos. Those who managed to make it into the surrounding countryside were eventually recaptured, whereupon many of them begged to be shot.

The Australians found it extremely difficult to comprehend the reasons for the break out. Their Japanese prisoners acknowledged that they were being treated humanely in the camp. Food was plain but nutritious. Appropriate medical facilities were in place. Accommodation, though basic, was comfortable. The Japanese POWs were provided with facilities for pursuing hobbies, concerts, gardening, and playing sports. What the Australians had no understanding of was the overwhelming sense of shame that the Japanese felt at being captured. The Japanese viewed themselves as having proven to be unforgivably disloyal to their comrades who had died on the battlefield, to their god-emperor, and to their families. Gordon quotes one of the Japanese leaders of the break out: ‘We will die as warriors […] I have been thinking
each day of some way to kill myself because I can’t bear the thought of living as a prisoner. Now we can die in combat, and bring some honour to our families after all’ (Gordon 2002, p. 99). Sentiments like this were totally alien to their Australian guards. What seemed to the Australians an act of fanatical self-destruction was to the Japanese evidence of their disciplined uniqueness and unconditional loyalty to their emperor and homeland. The deep cultural gap dividing the Australians and the Japanese was a major contributor to the uneasiness that they both displayed in their encounters, in Cowra, on the battlefield, and in their foreign policies.

Japan surrendered on 14 August 1945. The following day General Douglas MacArthur assumed the role of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in the Pacific (SCAP) (Harvey 2006, pp. 321-5). American soldiers provided the bulk of the occupying forces supported by British Commonwealth contingents, including the Australians. The Japanese response to the arrival of the victors was mostly one of calmness and cooperation, to the surprise of the victors who had feared violent resistance (Harvey 2006, pp. 307-309). Indeed Japanese behaviour stood in sharp contrast to the occupying troops, many of whom were guilty of ill discipline and gratuitous violence in the first weeks and months of the Occupation. The historian Eiji Takemae writes: ‘Misbehaviour ranged from black-marketeering, petty theft, reckless driving and disorderly conduct, to vandalism, assault, arson, murder and rape’ (Takemae 2002, p. 67). The strategy of indirect rule applied by MacArthur throughout the Occupation was based on a firm belief that it would usher in an era of radical transformation in Japan’s political system, economy and society. In contemporary terms, the proposed reforms would amount to ‘regime change.’ Following the formal surrender of Japan ceremony on 8 September, MacArthur
declared: ‘Today freedom is on the offensive, democracy is on the march’ (quoted in Spector 2007, p. 73).

Yet for all the claims about transforming Japan into a modern democracy, Harvey notes that ‘It is fair to say that America won the war, and Japan won the occupation’ (Harvey 2006, p. 383). In John W. Dower’s authoritative interpretation of Japan’s development in the post-Pacific War years, it has been shown that the structural changes that MacArthur and his subordinates believed they had implemented in Japan during the Occupation were more frequently fudged, side-stepped and even flatly contradicted by their Japanese ‘collaborators’ through whom they imagined they were exercising a form of indirect rule (Dower 1999). As he explains: ‘It is now clear that the structural legacies of wartime Japan to the postsurrender decades were enormous […] This was the bedrock on which the Allied occupation of Japan rested – and it was a system that the Americans who controlled the occupation largely perpetuated’ (Dower 1999, p. 559; see also Harvey 2006, ch. 35). More often than not the Australians were sidelined as these developments were unfolding and were easily distracted when the Americans started negotiating the ANZUS treaty, pointing to the weaknesses of the Australia’s dependent middle power imagining that presupposed American guarantees for its security.

Two noteworthy moments in Australia’s role in Japan between 1946 and 1952 were the appointments of Sir William Webb as President of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, and former University of Melbourne academic William Macmahon Ball as British Commonwealth Representative on the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ).  

Webb was the Chief Justice of Queensland. On several occasions between 1943 and

33 MacMahon Ball resigned from the University of Melbourne to join the ACJ in Tokyo. Later he returned to the University to take up the Foundation Chair of Political Science (Kobayashi 2013, p. 81).
1945 he had been appointed by the Australian government to document Japanese atrocities against Australian and American military personnel and civilians in the South Pacific (Totani (2008, p. 14). On most issues the autocratic MacArthur managed to keep the ACJ at arms length (Harvey 2006; Kobayashi 2013, ch. 4). Takemae notes that on many occasions ACJ meetings ‘were adjourned within minutes for lack of an agenda, and a full 47 of the 53 that US delegate William J. Sebald attended between 1948 and 1949 ended as soon as they began’ (Takemae 2002, p. 100). Ball was nonetheless an active Australian presence in the upper echelons of the Occupation. Both appointments were evidence of an Australia emerging from under Britain’s foreign policy coat-tails and coming to grips with its location in the Asia Pacific region. Australia’s involvement in the Occupation also witnessed the marvelous ambiguity of human relationships confronting bad public policy when a number of Japanese women married Australian soldiers (Nagata 2001; Tamura 2001). The Menzies Government’s grudging if sotto voce approval of visas for the Japanese war brides to enter the country with their Australian husbands contributed to the eventual undermining of the White Australia policy (Tavan 2004, pp. 74-76).

Nonetheless the immediate post-war years were marked by a deeply felt sense of anger and hostility to the Japanese in Australia. As Derek McDougall notes: ‘The war reinforced the racial stereotypes that had been present in Australia in earlier years’ (McDougall 1998, p. 167). Survivors of the Japanese prison camps returned to Australia with terrible accounts of their experiences at the hands of their captors. Many were psychologically as well as physically scarred by their treatment by the Japanese. ‘In the immediate postwar years,’ writes historian Gavan Daws, ‘when Japanese war criminals were learning how to be prisoners, the POWs were having to
learn how to be free men and it turned out to be a life sentence’ (Daws 1994, p. 376).
The ever-present sense of Asia’s threatening proximity had been amplified throughout the long years of the war and continued to aggravate a sense of vulnerability in Australia’s foreign and defence planning.

The Australian government’s desire was for the Occupation to extend longer than it actually did. Moreover it argued that Japan should be subjected to sanctions more severe than the Americans believed were warranted. Rosecrance noted: ‘In the six years after the war a major proportion of Australian diplomacy, both in Europe and in the Pacific, was devoted to two related problems: how could Japan be restricted, economically, politically, and militarily; and how could an alliance be created to protect Australia from a revivified Japan’ (Rosecrance 1962, p. 7). As noted in chapter 4, this was one of the reasons for the United States agreement to the ANZUS treaty, to assuage Australian anxieties about a remilitarized Japan.

The Occupation drew formally to a close in April of 1952, following the signing of the peace treaty with Japan in San Francisco in September of the previous year. Diplomatic assurances by the United States and the formalization of the ANZUS treaty in San Francisco in April of 1952 mollified Australia’s fears about a resurrected Japanese enemy. As the Cold War clouds gathered over the Pacific, new threats were perceived to Australia’s security. Central to these threats was the new communist regime in Beijing under Mao’s dictatorship. Japan’s increasingly intimate security alliance with America (based on security concerns that Australia shared) encouraged Canberra to begin viewing the Japanese less antagonistically. The Korean War stimulus to the Australian economy coupled with an emerging Japanese demand for Australian resources helped Australia’s economy to enter a growth phase
that would redirect its economic gaze towards Asia. As the economic historian Ian McLean notes:

The single most important market to emerge during these years was that of Japan. In the late 1940s, following its defeat in the war, Japan accounted for less than 2 percent of Australian exports. Over the next two decades, as Britain’s share fell, Japan’s rose, the latter surpassing the former for the first time in 1967. By 1970 Japan accounted for 25 percent of exports, Britain only 12 percent (McLean 2013, p. 194).

Economic pragmatism in Australia began to shoulder aside the old racial prejudices and the postwar desire for revenge. Reparations on any large scale had been effectively ruled out during the peace negotiations with Japan. A potentially lucrative trade relationship began to glimmer as a light at the end of what had been a very long and dark wartime tunnel.

(4) Australia-Japan Relations since 1957

Diplomatic relations between Japan and Australia were formalized in 1952. While the relationship began to settle down after the Pacific War, it remained overwhelmingly focused on trade – principally resources exports. Commercial pragmatism began to displace the bitterness of the ‘war without mercy.’ Somewhat to their surprise and relief, Japanese athletes and accompanying officials were politely received at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. Japan’s ‘second economic miracle’ was taking off by the late 1950s, to the growing advantage of the Australian economy. Australian exporters began sniffing the Japanese trade winds. In 1957 Australia and Japan signed a trade agreement that was a key development in Japanese-Australian relations following the War. When this agreement was revised in 1963 Japan had grown to be one of Australia’s most significant trading partners, requiring resources such as coal, iron ore, bauxite, wheat, beef, sugar, and dairy
products. Previously fearful of a remilitarized Japan, Macmahon Ball advised in 1963 that ‘it would seem good sense for Australia to work as closely as possible with Japan’ (Ball 1963, p. 269).

When the United Kingdom joined the European Union on 1 January 1973 the Australian government realized that the end of the road had come for relying on Commonwealth trade preferences with the United Kingdom (Benvenuti 2015). Indeed from the 1960s Australia’s economic gaze had been turning to Asia, especially Japan. Earlier, in 1971, the Whitlam Government had negotiated an agreement with the Sato Government for regular cabinet-level meetings between the two countries (Nakanishi 2011, p. 126). However the Australians were first and foremost looking for markets. Straightforward trade deals rather than nebulous regionalist or internationalist conversations were the order of the day. Working closely with the Japanese meant exporting mainly primary resources to their shores. H.W. Arndt identified the reasons for this proscriptive focus: ‘spectacular economic growth of Japan and the high degree of complementarity of the two economies’ (Arndt 1972, p. 30). Large-scale minerals resource discoveries in Australia in the late 1950s and 1960s turned Australia from being primarily an agricultural exporter (wool, wheat, meat, sugar, and milk products) into a major mineral resources exporter (Blainey 2003). As British markets turned increasingly to Europe, Australia was obliged to look for markets in its region. With next to no resources of its own Japan was eager to enter into long-term trade agreements with Australia. This was more an arranged marriage of rather than a love match between the two countries. The growth of trade with Japan grew exponentially in the 1970s, with a decided imbalance in Australia’s favour. The Japanese tolerated this because their rapidly expanding economy was hungry (voraciously so) for the resources it needed for its
spectacular industrial growth in these years (Vogel 1979). Australia not only had the resources Japan needed but had them in abundance. Trade has been the mainstay of diplomacy between the two countries ever since. While China recently eclipsed Japan as Australia’s number one trading partner, Japan still remains a very significant number two.

The predominant influence shaping Australian foreign policy with Japan has come from economists based mainly at the Australian National University (ANU). They have spearheaded the research that guided Australia’s foreign and economic policy towards Japan in the postwar era. The intellectual giant pioneering this development was Sir John Crawford.\textsuperscript{34} Well before the Pacific War Crawford had written presciently about Australia’s future in the Pacific region (Crawford 1938). As Permanent Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Trade, he was one of the architects of the 1957 Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce (Drysdale 1986; Way 1997, pp. xv-xxiii). Between them Crawford and his Minister Sir John McEwen radically transformed Australia’s trade policies, reorienting Australian trade away from Britain (whose market doors were beginning to close anyway) towards Japan and then to wider Asia. While privately Crawford had a qualified view of McEwen’s contributions to these changes there is no doubt that they laid the foundations for what is today Australia’s most important overseas markets (Golding 1996, p. 130). At the ANU Crawford encouraged the innovation of university curricula and research programs that focused on the Asia Pacific region (Foster and Varghese 1996, pp. 42, 129, 180; Miller 2007). He encouraged the establishment of the Australia-Japan research Centre at the ANU. Under Professor Peter Drysdale’s leadership, this centre

\textsuperscript{34} Professor of Economics and Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU, 1960-67; Vice-Chancellor, 1968-73; Chancellor, 1976-84. Prior to his academic appointments Crawford had had a distinguished career in the Australian public service.
became a widely respected source of expertise on the economic relationship between Japan and Australia (see for example, Drysdale 1988; Drysdale et al. 1989; Drysdale 1993; Terada 2005).

In 1976 the Fraser and Miki Governments signed the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Between Australia and Japan, ‘demonstrating,’ as Hiroshi Nakanishi noted, ‘that development of a regional international relations in the Asia-Pacific area was one of the objectives in strengthening relations between Japan and Australia’ (Nakanishi 2011, p. 126). This was a major achievement flowing from the economic diplomacy between the two countries. While the McMahon Government had toyed with the idea of such a treaty in 1972, it was, as Moreen Dee describes it, originally a Whitlam initiative (Dee 2007, p. 13). Even so, in its planning phase it met with some trenchant political and bureaucratic opposition. Suich points to the ‘underlying themes of race and fear that persisted in the 1970s’ (Suich 2007, pp. 22-3). However, as Garry Woodard has pointed out, both sides to the treaty have ‘singularly failed’ to broaden their relationship beyond trade issues (Woodard 1989, p. 35; see also Woodard 2007). Perhaps in reaction to the reluctance by both sides to develop a better mutual understanding, some token efforts were made to broaden Australia’s diplomacy with Japan. A visiting academic position in Australian studies in the University of Tokyo was created, jointly funded by the Australian and Japanese governments. Australian humanities and social sciences academics were recruited to this position for one or two year periods providing a broad range of Australia-related cultural, political, historical and economic subjects for Japanese students. As a result Australia began attracting the attention of area studies scholars in Japan. Australian studies research began to appear in Japanese academic journals (Patience and Jacques 2003). Students from
Japan were encouraged to consider postgraduate studies in Australian universities before returning to careers in business and in universities (Australian Studies Association of Japan nd.). In July 2014 the mining conglomerate Rio Tinto announced that it would fund a permanent chair of Australian Studies in the University of Tokyo (Rio Tinto 2014).

Another proposal that deviated from the postwar pattern of economic utilitarianism that has characterized relations between the two countries was announced at an Australia-Japan Ministerial meeting in January of 1987. The Japanese officials presented Australia with a scheme to build what was labelled a ‘Multifunction Polis’ (MFP) in Australia. This initiative came out of the Japanese Ministry for International Trade and Industry (MITI). It reflected the confidence that the Ministry’s bureaucrats then had in the high rates of economic growth that Japan had experienced throughout the 1970s and eighties. It also reflected a desire that was then growing in Japan for a more ‘internationalized’ approach to the country’s direct foreign investment strategies. It was envisaged that with Japanese government backing and private investment the new city would become a major international centre for technological research and development (focusing, for example, on reducing environmental pollution), international higher education, as well as being a regional and global diplomatic hub with world class resort facilities attracting international tourism (MITI 1987). As Sugimoto and Moeur noted at the time: ‘The MFP is to be more than a science city; it is to provide a lifestyle which will shape the future of the nation as a community’ (Sugimoto and Moeur 1990, p. 2). The Japanese were eager for it to be built on a ‘green fields site’ on, or near, the Gold Coast in Queensland. However the Queensland Government, then facing a state election, rejected this idea because of an anti-Japanese backlash among voters. Eventually it
was decided to set aside a site for the MFP’s development on the northwest edge of Adelaide. The inauspiciously chosen site was a former toxic waste dump. However the Australian and South Australian governments both argued that the efficacy of the MFP’s proposed focus on addressing problems associated with environmental pollution would be amplified by cleaning up the site for the city’s development. The Commonwealth and South Australian governments established committees to liaise with the Japanese government and to bring greater clarity to the concept in cooperation with the Japanese and to develop investment strategies.\(^{35}\)

From the outset the proposal was long on idealism and noticeably short on practical detail. Even as the ink on its planning documents was drying, the Japanese economy began tilting downwards into the economic doldrums it has been wallowing in since the 1990s. In Australia the vagueness of the proposal left it open to criticisms. ‘Could it be,’ asked Joseph Camilleri, ‘that the multifunction polis is but a symbol of another phase in our history in which Japan complements, and perhaps eventually replaces, the United States as our colonial master?’ (Camilleri 2000, p. 23). Gavan McCormack was dismissive of ‘Australian politicians, bureaucrats and business leaders [who] harboured the delusion that ‘Japan’ had chosen ‘Australia’ to be the beneficiary of a unique transfer of technology and development funds.’ He continued:

Ignorance of the relationship between the centre and the regions in Japanese development, of the powers of MITI and its relation to the Japanese public and private sectors, and of the Japanese record of technopolis and resort development, compounded the naïve expectation that the MFP proposal was driven by a fundamentally benevolent Japanese desire to be nice to Australia. A

\(^{35}\) This writer became aware of the early thinking about the MFP in MITI while a visiting academic at Keio University in Tokyo in 1986. Subsequently he was a participant in Flinders University’s group of administrators and academics formed to cooperate with representatives of the two levels of government in Australia involved in the MFP negotiations.
‘cargo cult’ mentality prevailed in early Australian deliberations (McCormack 1998, p. 64).

Self-styled social activist Bruce Whiteside lamented that there were increasing numbers of school students on the Gold Coast studying the Japanese language, in preparation for developments like the MFP ‘What they are not taught are the skills required to make an independent judgement about the desirability of Japanizing the Coast,’ he declared (Whiteside 1990, p. 153).

Controversy soon erupted in South Australia around the proposal too. While Japanese tourists were welcome, any thought of permanent Japanese settlers in a vaguely outlined urban development was unacceptable. Other critics voiced concerns about the consequences for the environment of an MFP development, arguing that polluting industries and a high demand for resources and energy would have negative consequences. Within these reactions to the MFP proposal are echoes of the responses to the Meiji era proposals for a closer relationship between the two countries. The Commonwealth and South Australian governments seemed unable to counter the growing opposition to the MFP being articulated through the press and in public protests. The Japanese government was equally confused by these responses to the scheme. It concluded that it had been misunderstood and misrepresented by their Australian counterparts. The initial enthusiasm among a few political leaders, bureaucrats, and business leaders for the project quickly subsided. By the middle of the 1990s the project had been quietly shelved. Coral Baines argues that as far as Australia was concerned, the dropping of the MFP was a lost opportunity, suggesting it could have been an antidote to some of the more draconian consequences of the neo-liberal economic policies that have become fashionable in Australia (Baines 1999). She concludes:
As far the MFP is concerned, Australia learned nothing about the alternatives to economic rationalism which were offered by involvement with the Japanese in the MFP. Any future commitment to a more focused or interventionist industry policy is unlikely to fill the vacuum left by the virtual demise of manufacturing and the strategic place it should have had in creating industry linkages in this country. And perhaps even more unfortunately, never again will the same forces combine which led to the opportunity that Japan offered Australia in 1987 (Baines 1999, pp. 275-6).

One of the senior South Australian bureaucrats who had worked hard to make the MFP a reality agrees with Baines: ‘It's an international embarrassment that we deliberately sought and captured international attention for a project that we did not deliver. South Australia had a chance to do something that would make the nation take it more seriously but what history shows is it bit off more than it could chew’ (Denis Gastin quoted by Hodge, 1998).

The Australian studies appointment in the University of Tokyo and the MFP were two rare examples of Australian foreign policy thinking that dared to venture outside the square of economic utilitarianism. That utilitarianism has, however, remained the dominant influence in Australia’s relations with Japan since the 1950s. Cultural diplomacy (the integration of ‘soft power’ initiatives into foreign policy) has always been at the margins of Australia’s diplomatic approaches to Japan (McBride 1987). More recently utilitarianism has been reinforced by concerns about a rising (or re-emerging) China. Taylor and Ball point out:

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\text{[G]iven the growing probability of their common involvement in the ‘Long War’ [the ‘War on Terror’], counterproliferation initiatives and peacekeeping operations (with and without UN mandates), as well as their mutual interest in BMD [ballistic missile defence] developments, it is becoming increasingly likely that elements of the Australian and Japanese armed forces will serve together in operational situations, including not only combat support activities but also actual combat (Taylor and Ball 2007, p. 54).}
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Hugh White has noted that as ‘the convergence of Australian and Japanese strategic interests in Asia became clearer, the idea of a trilateral exchange of strategic ideas with the United States almost inevitably emerged in Australia’ (White 2007, p. 105). This development has accentuated both Japan’s and Australia’s dependent middle power imagining, deriving from their respective security alliances with the United States. Moreover it contributes to their awkwardness in dealing with each and with other states in East and Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, the two countries’ security reliance (or dependence) on the United States was the background to their joint initiation of what is still an inconclusive attempt to institutionalize a regional grouping: the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Agreement (APEC). This forum began gathering momentum in 1993, and Japan and Australia remain committed to the organisation. Yet, like Australia’s trade relationship with Japan, APEC’s multilateralism has been driven by economic imperatives rather than deeper, more culturally sensitive diplomatic engagements.

This is a shortsighted foreign policy strategy. By focusing so narrowly on economic factors means that the way is opened for cultural very profound misunderstandings and historical factors to get in the way of capitalizing on the economic benefits that might otherwise be gained. It is possible that those benefits will be held hostage to a welter of unanticipated nationalist, strategic, and ideological politics that could explode at any moment. As Ravenhill notes: ‘Whether an institution whose principal focus is the minutiae of trade facilitation and whose achievements remain modest will continue to attract participation at the highest political level remains to be seen’ (Ravenhill 2001a, p. 222). The narrowly utilitarian relationship with Japan – the foundation of its awkwardness – fits Ravenhill’s bill precisely.
There can be little doubt that Australia owes much to the mainly economic and security pragmatism that has shaped its relations with Japan since the end of the Pacific War. However these important sub-structural realities need to be augmented by a more culturally nuanced foreign policy. The prejudices that clouded Australia’s contributions at Versailles in 1919 and which can been detected even today may need to be critically confronted. The diplomatic disasters they drew down upon the country need to be frankly acknowledged in the hope that they will never happen again. The lingering nostalgia for the era of British imperialism in Asia must not be allowed to stunt the growth of an independent Australia of strategic, economic and cultural value to its region. This suggests that it may be beneficial for both Japan and Australia to share their experiences of their respective alliances with the United States, to ensure those alliances are not inhibiting efforts to engage positively with their neighbouring states in the Asia Pacific region.

This raises the question: Does Australia’s dominant form of middle power imagining confine the relationship with Japan to narrowly instrumental purposes – mainly trade and security? These are of course very important matters. However to confine them within a restrictively instrumentalist framework leaves them vulnerable to the vicissitudes of international and domestic politics. Australian foreign policy needs a cultural broadening, a focus on an increasingly cosmopolitan region and world. The alliance with the United States that is at the core of Australia’s particular form of middle power imagining has had two dominant effects. First, it has kept the focus of Australian foreign policy almost exclusively on strategic issues, mostly conceived in the context of the Cold War. This focus is maintained even as the Cold War is being overtaken by the complex multilateralism of the post-Cold War world. Secondly, trade is seen as the most appropriate corollary to this strategic focus. From
the 1950s, as Australia was laying the foundations of its post-war relations with the Japanese, commercial matters took precedence over all other forms of diplomacy. As Peter Edwards points out, the Department of Trade was more influential in Cabinet at that crucial time than External Affairs (Edwards 2006, p. 99).

However, that the utilitarianism of the Australia-Japan relationship may not be the end of the story is evident in the dispute between the two countries over the so-called Japanese Whale Research Program. Japan has a long tradition of whale hunting (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2002). It is argued in Japan that the consumption of whale meat is a deeply traditional aspect of Japanese culture and should be respected as such by the international community. Over the past decade Japanese whaling fleets have been active in the Southern Ocean, sometimes in waters subject to Australian jurisdiction (Sand 2008). This has generated a high level of criticism in Australia, especially among environmentalist groups. In response to this criticism, Australian governments sought Japanese cooperation to limit whaling in the Southern Ocean. However that cooperation was not forthcoming.

In 2010 Australia took the matter to the International Court of Justice, arguing that Japan’s assertions that it was conducting scientific research rather than merely hunting whales was without foundation (Anton 2010). In April of 2014 the Court found against Japan. Its judgment placed constraints on the Japanese whaling fleet in the Southern Ocean. Nonetheless, as Payne points out: ‘Although it imposes a hiatus on Japan’s whaling activities, the decision does not resolve the fundamental cultural conflict between those who believe whales should not be hunted and those who are willing to restrict hunting as part of a wildlife management program’ (Payne 2014). Late in 2015 the Japanese announced they would resume whaling in the

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36 The judgement is available at www.icj.cij.org/docket/files143/18136.pdf
Southern Ocean, regardless of Australian protests (Flitton 2015, p. 29). The protagonists on both sides in this dispute are staring at each other across a vast cultural divide. This is evidence that neither country is able to fully comprehend the positions being taken in the dispute, which is likely to fester on despite the International Court of Justice ruling. For all the bruited benefits of an economically comfortable and pragmatically strategic relationship between Australia and Japan, the cultural awkwardness that is over-shadowing ties between the two countries is not going away.37

In the meantime Australia has embarked on a search to identify a new submarine fleet to replace its aging fleet (the Collins class submarines). An interesting development in relations between Australia and Japan emerged during Tony Abbott’s prime ministership. As noted earlier, he declared on his first overseas visit that Japan was Australia’s ‘best friend’ in Asia. It appears that he established a good rapport with the conservative Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe who is an avowed nationalist concerned with the security implications of China’s re-emergence as a big power in the region. Koskuke Takahashi explains:

In his own words, [Abe] is seeking a “departure from the postwar regime” by “bringing back Japan.” Although Abe has never said from “what” he will bring back the nation, many Japanese believe what he meant is to bring back a militarily, diplomatically and economically strong Japan from the political and economic abyss of the past decades, and perhaps in the long term from the U.S. itself (Takahashi 2014).

Abbott shared many of Abe’s concerns about China. He was also particularly focused on finalizing a Free Trade Agreement with Japan for which the negotiations had dragging on for some years. It has been suggested that to close the deal, Tony Abbott

37 Interestingly, there are similar cultural awkwardnesses in Australia’s relations with the United States – for example, differences over capital punishment.
‘gave his [Japanese] counterpart a shake-of-hands-undertaking to buy Japanese submarines’ (Richardson 2015). The possibility that such an agreement was made has been met with widespread criticism. For example, Hugh White questions the integrity of the selection process and the suitability of the Japanese submarines for Australia’s needs. He writes:

There are huge strategic risks to Australia in mortgaging the future of our submarine capability to Abe’s vision of a resurgent strategic power in Asia. There are huge administrative risks in such a complex and sensitive project with a country that has no experience at all in arms exports or collaborative defence procurement (White 2015a, p. 18).

Liberal Party senators from South Australia were critical of the deal because it would have meant job losses at the Adelaide-based Australian Submarine Corporation. This inflamed debate within the Federal Government, the South Australian State government, and the media about what kind of deal might have been done – if, indeed, any deal was done – or whether Australia is about to renege on a private deal with the Japanese Prime Minister.

Cameron Stewart has drawn attention to the foreign policy implications of this domestic debate. He notes that the Japanese government views Australia as a potential ‘security partner and its most vocal advocate in the Asia-Pacific.’ Therefore, he notes, the ‘confusion Tony Abbott […] injected into the future submarine issue is undermining Japan’s efforts to sell a more assertive new security policy to the region’ This could result, he implies, in Japan revising its view of Australia. He quotes academic Rikki Kersten who suggests that that the Japanese have been forming the view that Australia is potentially a ‘benign, reliable and well-disposed partner that has moved beyond memories of World War II atrocities and into a future-focused friendship’ (Stewart 2015). If a secret deal concerning the
procurement of submarines falls through, the awkwardness that has characterised relations between Australia and Japan is likely to be aggravated. Meanwhile Japan is participating in an Australian-American military exercise (dubbed ‘Talisman Sabre’) in July 2015, designed to strengthen links between allies responding to China’s increasing assertiveness in the East and South China Seas. A few weeks previously China released a Defence White Paper making clear that it would not relinquish its claims to islands in the South China Sea while stating that it would retaliate if attacked by foreign forces (Murdoch 2015, p. 9). Raoul Heinrichs suggests that the ‘white paper reveals a plan to build military capabilities that, for the first time, could pose a direct threat to Australia and its vital interest’ (Heinrichs 2015). In this context Malaysia’s Defence Minister’s warning is apposite: ‘This has the potential to escalate into the deadliest conflict of our time, if not history’ (Hishammuddin Hussein quoted by Hartcher 2015).

**Conclusion**

It may therefore be argued that a new form of middle power diplomacy is needed in Canberra, to cultivate deeper, more culturally aware and nuanced relations with Tokyo. As discussed in the concluding chapter this will require a far deeper cultural awareness in Australia of Asian societies, their histories and politics generally. The importance of educators in providing this knowledge cannot be over-estimated. Over a quarter of a century ago Drysdale et al. were arguing that ‘there is scope for an important initiative between the two governments to encourage larger scale educational exchanges supportive of both countries’ interests in promoting internationalisation and long-term closeness in development of the relationship’ (Drysdale et al. 1989, p. 71). As noted earlier, similar sentiments were expressed in the 1989 Garnaut Report. The Henry Report of 2012 and numerous reports before
Garnaut and in between Garnaut and Henry have also advocated the innovation of educational reforms that will produce more informed Australians pursuing professional careers focused on the cultivation of a sounder, deeper relationship with Japan. If Japan is to be a close friend (if not the ‘best friend’) that Australia has in Asia, the country’s education system will need to be geared to show Australians how they can optimize their trade, security and broader regional and international ambitions with Japan.

The assertion that Japan is Australia’s ‘best friend in Asia’ was therefore problematic, in foreign policy terms and conceptually. It might have been better to ask whether Australia was Japan’s best friend in Asia. Moreover, if, for example, Japan and China are unable to contain their disagreements over their respective claims to the Senkaku/Daiyo Islands in the East China Sea, Australia is likely to find itself in a bind: should it remain neutral if conflict escalates or should it side with Japan? While Tony Abbott’s declaration that Japan is ‘Australia’s best friend in Asia’ was no doubt sincere, and while it helped the then newly elected Prime Minister to put his stamp on foreign policy, the events surveyed in this chapter show that there is much more has to be done to deepen and broaden the relationship with Japan. More also needs to be done to diagnose the causes and consequences of the awkwardness in the relationship. All of this demonstrates that the re-examination of Australia’s current middle power identity and its comprehensive revision that is being undertaken in this thesis is apposite. To continue relying almost exclusively on economic and security interests that the two countries have in common at this point in history will leave Australia vulnerable to being ignored in the event that Japan takes a different foreign and defence policy course, or if unforeseen disasters threaten the foundations of the relationship. ‘How sure can we be,’ asks Hugh White
‘that [by 2040] Japan will no longer be a US ally? […] That it will not have become a compliant neighbour of China, or on the other hand have become China’s bitter enemy?’ (White 2014d, p. 27). The narrowly instrumental focus of Australian foreign policy on Japan means that Australia is not well positioned to anticipate the problems to which White’s questions are alluding. Its dependent middle power imagining results in awkward partnering with Japan.
Chapter 6
AUSTRALIA’S RELATIONS WITH CHINA

Introduction

During a visit to Canberra in November 2014, the German Chancellor Dr Angel Merkel reportedly questioned the then Prime Minister about the Australian government’s policy towards China. In reply, in a jocular mood, Tony Abbott identified ‘fear and greed’ as the drivers of the policy (Garnaut 2015a, p. 1).\(^{38}\) This chapter asks whether such a candid summary of Canberra’s relations with Beijing is plausible. If so, are fear and greed the results, or causes (or both), of awkwardness in Australia’s relations with China? Are they a product of Australia’s misplaced middle power imagining in Asia? As noted in chapter 2, the concept of awkward partnering being alluded to here is derived from Stephen George’s broad account of Britain’s relations with the European Union (George 1998). In this scenario it may be said that China is to Australia as Germany is to the United Kingdom. A mixture of suspicion, fear, deep-rooted cultural and language differences, a preference for looking beyond the region for reassurance about the country’s security (hence the United States alliance), and ideological hangovers from the Cold War – these factors combine to make Australia’s instrumentally defined relations with China particularly awkward.

The chapter surveys six consecutive periods in Australia’s relations with China. The first is from the 1850s gold rush era to the 1950s. Events in this period constitute

\(^{38}\) This was part of a private conversation that appears to have been overheard by or leaked to a respected journalist. At the time of writing its authenticity has not been officially denied or confirmed. In a subsequent report the journalist restated his claim: ‘Prime Minister Tony Abbott earned himself an honesty prize after the G20 summit in November, when Germany’s Angela Merkel asked what drove his China policies. “Fear and greed,” Abbott said’ (Garnaut 2015b, p. 18). The journalist subsequently noted that ‘Abbott’s comment to Merkel, incidentally, had been delivered ironically, with self-deprecating good humour’ (Garnaut 2015d, p. 18; see also Garnaut 2015e, p. 18).
Australia’s contribution to what the Chinese justly believe to have been a century of humiliation imposed on the Middle Kingdom by western imperialism. It constitutes the historical background to the hardening of negative Australian attitudes towards the Chinese that fed into the evolution of the White Australia policy. And it was a time when Australian fears about the remoteness of Britain and the close proximity of Asia began to gather pace. These negative attitudes are still evident in populist opposition to Chinese investment in land and real estate in Australia today.

The second period is from 1950 until 1972. These years were over-shadowed by the Cold War, when Australia aligned itself closely with American policies designed to combat the threat of communism spreading throughout Asia. Mao’s China was identified by officials in Canberra and Washington as a real and present danger in the region, primarily because of its self-identification as a communist state intent on fanning the sparks of communism glowing across the region. This view dominated Australian foreign policy thinking until China began to change course on both the economic and diplomatic fronts in the 1970s. Even today its communist credentials are regarded with deep suspicion in Australia, although what actually constitutes ‘communism’ is rarely interrogated.

The third period surveys the ‘China breakthrough’ when the Whitlam Government accorded diplomatic recognition to Beijing early in 1973 (Griffiths 2012). Relations began to thaw in the wake of this development, improving further following the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976. They gathered pace after Deng Xiao-ping initiated his wide-ranging economic reforms in the late 1970s, opening market opportunities in China that had previously been unimaginable for Australian exporters.

The fourth period examines relations between the two countries from Deng Xiao-ping’s ascendancy through to the Hawke and Keating Governments. Relations in this
period ran hot and cold, chilling noticeably following the terrible events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Zhou 2008, Part II). Yet trade issues soon over-rode any short-term concerns in Australia about human rights issues and the merciless reaction by the Chinese government to the students’ calls for democratic reforms and an end to corruption among powerful cadres and government leaders in China.

The fifth period outlines developments from the time the Howard Government came to power in Canberra in 1996 until 2007. This period saw the emergence of a burgeoning trade relationship largely based on Australia’s resources exports, especially liquid natural gas, coal and iron ore. In this period China became one of Australia’s major international trading partners, leap-frogging over Japan and Australia’s other major markets in Asia. China’s significance for Australia as a trading partner was evident in generous tax breaks the Howard Government was able to implement, as well as the ‘Future Fund’ initiated by Howard’s Treasurer Peter Costello to enable the Commonwealth Government to meet its public service superannuation liabilities (Garnett and Lewis 2008).

The sixth period surveys developments since 2007 during the Rudd, Gillard and Abbott governments. China’s demand for Australian resources at this time placed Australia in an enviable economic position to ride out the worst ravages of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-9. However America’s strategic ‘rebalancing in’ (or ‘pivot to’) the Pacific – seen in a number of quarters as a renewed containment of China strategy – has presented Australia with an unprecedented policy dilemma: How should the country position itself in the event of conflict breaking out between the United States and China? Should it remain loyal to the alliance with America, or will it renege on the alliance in order to protect its resources exporters’ interests in China? Will ‘fear’ triumph over ‘greed,’ or vice versa?
In short, the analysis in this chapter demonstrates that Australia’s prevailing form of middle power imagining is problematic for its foreign policy on China. Australia’s dependent middle power imagining attaches the country to its great and powerful friend, the United States. Even though in the recent past this has assisted Australia to begin ‘relocating’ to Asia, it is now proving to be a block on that ‘relocation,’ as the country’s foreign policy on China demonstrates.

**Background**

1949 was the year when Chinese communist forces (the Peoples Liberation Army or PLA) finally overpowered the Nationalists (the Kuomintang or KMT) (Fitzgerald 1966). Thus ended what for decades had been a bitterly fought war of attrition, made even more unbearable by the Japanese Imperial Army throughout the terrible years of the Sino-Japanese conflict (Mitter 2013). Acknowledging the reality of its defeat, although insisting that the war would continue by other means, the KMT hastily decamped from the mainland to Taiwan under its leader Chiang Kai-shek. Subsequently, on 21 September, at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing, Mao Tse Tung triumphantly declared:

> The Chinese people, forming one quarter of mankind, have henceforth stood up […]
> Our nation will never be an insulted nation any more […] The era in which the Chinese were regarded as uncivilized is now over. We will emerge in the world as a highly civilised nation’ (Mao 1972, pp. 90-2).

1949 was also the year that Australians began to be haunted by the uncritical view that their country was vulnerable to potential Chinese aggression (Clark 1967). The falling dominoes metaphor frightened many people into believing that Chinese communism had already extended its reach into Southeast Asia (Dalrymple 2003, pp. 26-7). External Affairs Minister Percy Spender observed that the communist victory in China ‘fundamentally changed the whole picture in Asia [boosting] the efforts of international
communism to control and direct the new spirit of nationalism in [Asian] countries’ (Spender 1969, p. 195). Governments and the media amplified the growing paranoia by using broad-brushed accounts of a looming security menace. Anthony Burke aptly describes this as ‘the imagination of otherness and threat’ (Burke 2008, p. 99). Its underlying message emphasized the fundamental importance to Australia’s security of the ANZUS alliance.

Following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, President Truman promised American action to counter any threat to Taiwan from the PLA (Taylor 2009, p. 436). Australians were heartened by this reassurance, believing it provided a barricade against the falling dominoes. What was not fully appreciated is how this has contributed to Australia’s problematic foreign policy on China. It is a foreign policy characterised by what has been referred to as awkward partnering – a relationship based on fragile foundations and narrowly focused on the mutual economic advantages it is able to facilitate. However, as with the Japan, so with China, Australia’s approach to China is replete with stereotyping, fearfulness, cultural ignorance, language barriers, and a strong desire to remain allied with the United States come what may.

This awkwardness has not evaporated despite the fact that, over the past two decades, the two countries have developed a strong trading relationship based on China’s enthusiasm for Australia’s accessible resources. It has been an enthusiasm that was serendipitous for the Australian economy, particularly during the Global Financial Crisis. However serendipity is invariably a fleeting visitor. As Andrew Charlton notes: ‘China’s growth […] brought [Australia] a windfall, but it is a precarious sort of prosperity’ (Charlton 2014, p. 71). Such precariousness is likely to be amplified where an outdated form of middle power diplomacy (with roots in a nineteenth century Concert of Europe
form of alliance making) is influencing policy, rather than diplomacy more suited to the complex foreign and defence policy demands of the twenty-first century.

While it is not complacent about its ability to sway Australian foreign policy making, it is not clear that Washington has been as eager to use its influence as much as conservative politicians from both the major political parties in Canberra have been to entertain it. The result, as Coral Bell pointed out, is that ‘Australian policy concerning China may be seen as dominated since 1950 by the American concept of containment of China, and may be most clearly defined by the degree to which it has endorsed or been reserved towards particular trends and strategies within that general concept’ (Bell 1965, p. 176). Although published half a century ago, Dr Bell’s words remain sharply relevant today.

(1) A Century of Racial Humiliation: From the Gold Rush Era to the 1950s

The racist suspicion that has printed an indelible stain on Australian relations with China is grounded in the colonial origins of Australia as an essentially British invention. As historian Eric Richards explains:

Australia was the last habitable continent to be grasped by European imperialism. The British regarded it as virtually empty (though there were possibly a million Indigenous people), a tabula rasa on which they could conduct exercises in colonial expansion. They determined who came to Australia and how they should live. Even the convict colony of New South Wales – that unsavoury start – was an exercise in control and design (Richards 2008, p. 163, original italics).

The imperial disdain demonstrated by the British towards the Chinese, especially during the second Opium War in China (1856-1860) was echoed in the 1850s gold rush era in Victoria and New South Wales. That the Chinese were a central focus of

39 The disdain is evident, for example, in the style adopted by an official interpreter for the British during the Opium Wars: ‘For years he swaggered about […] defending British dignity in tasseled, braided, violet-cushioned sedan chairs of blue silk, all the while denouncing the natives
discrimination, violence and exploitation on the Australian gold fields in the 1850s is well documented (Fitzgerald 2008, ch. 3; Inglis 1975; Jupp 2001, pp. 197-204; Price 1974, ch. Three; Rolls 1992, pp 106-122). Two infamous examples are the Buckland River Riot (Victoria) of 1857 when 100 white diggers attacked Chinese settlements, driving their occupants off the gold fields; and the Lambing Flat Riots (New South Wales) in June 1861 when more than 3000 Europeans drove the Chinese off their claims (Seith 1974). Gwenda Tavan notes that ‘Anti-Chinese agitation had a long history in the Australian colonies, most of it motivated by a potent combination of racial arrogance and economic self-interest’ (Tavan 2005, p. 11).

The entrenched racism of the Caucasian miners towards the Chinese emerged from an unfortunate convergence of factors. The numbers of Chinese on the gold fields (some 17,000 in 1856 among whom there were very few females), aligned with their cultural distinctiveness, set them apart from the other miners. Inflammatory rumour-mongering about their alleged immorality spread far and wide, ‘even though,’ as Jean Gittins observed, ‘it was a well known fact that sodomy was not a monopoly of the Chinese camps’ (Gittins 1981, p. 118). The success of the Chinese in finding gold in places that had been passed over by the Caucasian miners (for example, abandoned mullock heaps) was humiliating competition in what was often a futile search for a finite resource. Moreover, sending the gold the Chinese found back home was regarded as unfair to the local economy. Overall the Chinese were not regarded, culturally or racially, as eligible candidates for the ‘British’ future of the Australian colonies.

As the gold rush era faded not all Chinese gold seekers returned to their homeland. Some settled in the Australian colonies to become shopkeepers, market gardeners, labourers, and professionals. But white Australia was less than enthusiastic about

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(including, no doubt, the carriers who transported him in his silken thrones) as ‘a most obstreperous race’ (Lovell 2011, p. 245).
welcoming this development even though, as John Fitzgerald points out, ‘Chinese in [colonial] Australia wanted to be modern and cosmopolitan and they imagined there were few better ways of being modern and cosmopolitan than being an Australian subject of the British empire’ (Fitzgerald 2008, p. 224). The prejudices incubating the doctrine of white Australia dictated that Chinese people in Australia were simply incapable of realizing such aspirations; no matter how hard they tried to channel modern and cosmopolitan identities (Andrews 1985, p. 8).

The marginalization imposed on Chinese-Australians in the second half of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century coincided with strong public support for restricting non-white immigration. These attitudes intensified in the period between the World Wars, ensuring that Chinese-Australians continued to be regarded as alien (Tavan 2005, p. 27). The attitudes underpinning the White Australia policy permeated foreign policy thinking, leading to a sluggish disinterest in the terrible years of civil conflict in China from 1912 until the seizure of power by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949. Moreover, like most of its western allies, Australia displayed a bovine insouciance towards Japan’s merciless war against China from 1937 to 1945.

In late 1949 the Chifley Government in Canberra decided to extend diplomatic recognition to Mao’s regime. When the Menzies Government came to power in December of that year, the External Affairs Minister in the new government, Percy Spender, was initially inclined to follow the Chifley Government’s lead (Penrose 1998). However almost simultaneously the Cold War began reaching into Asia. On 14 February 1950 Mao and Stalin signed a 30-year friendship treaty between their two countries as conflict on the Korean Peninsula loomed. It was clearly aimed at challenging American interests in Europe and beyond (Li 1994, pp. 117-8). With the outbreak of the Korean War in June of that year, the fear of communist expansion began to concentrate defence
and foreign policy thinking in Australia. Prime Minister Menzies resolutely believed that communism was ‘anti-British, anti-Australian, and pro-Russian’ (quoted in Lowe 1999, p. 101). After hesitating, he finally concluded that the best course for the Australian Government was to follow the American refusal to extend recognition to the government in Beijing. It is noteworthy that neither the United Kingdom nor newly independent India agreed with the United States and Australia on this issue. These states extended diplomatic recognition to the government in Beijing in the 1950s. France followed suit in 1964.

(2) From 1950 to Deng’s Reforms

From 1950 until 1973 Australia determinedly followed America’s lead in seeking to contain communist China. This was an exercise in classic nineteenth century middle power imagining on the part of the Australians. It meant conferring recognition on Taipei as the true constitutional centre of Chinese governance and supporting Taiwan as the legitimate (permanent) representative of China in the Security Council and General Assembly of the United Nations. This was despite the fact that oppressive practices of the communist regime on the mainland – against which Australian and American leaders alike pontificated loudly – were mirrored in the ruthlessness of the KMT regime that had imposed itself upon Taiwan (Taylor 2009, pp. 429-30). It was this kind of hypocrisy that characterized so much of the rhetoric of the Cold War.

Throughout the turbulent years of Mao’s ‘Great Leap Forward’ (1958-1961), and the subsequent years of his folie grotesque, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1971), Australia’s foreign policy towards Beijing was highly critical, matching (at times even surpassing) Washington’s anti-Communist China rhetoric.

Much of the criticism directed by Australia (and a great deal of the western world) at the Maoist regime was justified. Mao’s intention in the Great Leap Forward was ‘to
squeeze centuries of capitalist history into a few socialist years’ (Ci 1994, p. 55). He anticipated the rapid transformation of China’s rural subsistence economy into an industrialized socialist society. However the policy wreaked havoc in the lives of millions of peasants and caused a prolonged famine that swept across China between 1959 and 1962, resulting in ‘45 million excess deaths’ (Dikötter 2010, p. 333).

The Cultural Revolution was likewise a catastrophic event for many Chinese. Ezra Vogel describes it as an “anti-culture” revolution because it so relentlessly attacked established Chinese traditions rather than replacing out-moded cultural practices with more appropriate practices drawn from the Middle Kingdom’s time-honoured traditions (Vogel 2011, p. 249). At the instigation of Mao’s inner circle (which included Lin Biao and Jiang Qing, Mao’s last wife), young people were mobilized into competing factions in the Red Guard movement with orders to attack ‘reactionary’ and ‘bourgeois’ elements in Chinese society (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006, chs. 6-8). As Joel Andreas explains, ‘people in schools, workplaces, and villages across China coalesced into contending factions that pursued distinct and contradictory interpretations of the goals of the Cultural Revolution’ (Andreas 2009, p. 88). Temples, museums, art galleries and historic monuments were vandalized. Libraries were ransacked and books were stolen or burnt. Cultural artifacts were smashed. Families identified by jealous or vindictive neighbours as middle class were subjected to show trials, beaten, and sometimes killed. Schoolteachers and academics were tortured and humiliated. Cadres were cruelly disgraced in show trials and forced to produce contrived self-criticisms. Urban professionals were exiled to work in remote rural areas; many did not survive the

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40 Jasper Becker writes: ‘If we look at Mao’s famine as a deliberate act of inhumanity, then his record can also be measured against that of Hitler and Stalin. Some 12 million died in the Nazi concentration camps and a further 30 million were killed during the Second World War. Stalin is thought to have allowed 20 million to die in the gulags and overall he is believed to have been responsible for between 30 and 40 million deaths. However, an investigation into Mao’s record […] suggests that [he] exceeded even these ghastly totals’ (Becker 1996, p. 274).
unfamiliar labour regimes (Chen 1973; Tsou 1986). For nearly four years many elements in Chinese society were subjected to acts of pitiless violence. And all the while, as Laszlo Ladany reports, ‘The rampaging youngsters felt they were on top of the world’ (Ladany 1988, p. 290).

However, the consequences of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution were not the fundamental *raison d’être* of Australia’s antipathy towards the Chinese Communist Party. Not a lot was known outside China, and even inside the country, about these terrible events until quite recently. An Australian correspondent in Beijing in the 1970s drew attention to ‘the bamboo curtain that descended on all real news in China’ (Preston 1980, p. 13). The lack of access to relevant personnel, the events and struggles in which they were involved, and related data, and the secretive and ruthless nature of the regime itself were a closed book to nearly all outsiders. Rather, the west’s ideological attacks on the communist regime followed established Cold War rhetoric about a ‘great world struggle’ between communist dictatorships and the ‘free world.’ This allowed all sorts of ideological shibboleths to be confected in the minds of those in Australia who were easy prey to fear-mongering about China as a looming threat. The realities of the disastrous blunders of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution went largely unnoticed among the general public in Australia or were conveniently overlooked by the minority of pro-Maoist sympathizers, many of whom were university students who mindlessly romanticized the Maoist era (Taft 1972).

From a foreign policy perspective, of even greater significance than Mao’s twisted policy making in the 1950s and 1960s, was the fact that by the late 1950s relations between China and the Soviet Union were beginning to chill. This was the prelude to a significant rift between the two countries extending into the 1960s and 1970s (Friedman 2010). In part this was a result of Mao’s suspicions about Stalin’s designs on China.
Mao’s doubts were intensified by Russia’s stance towards the United States that centred on accepting the relationship was one of ‘peaceful competition between equals’ (Camilleri 1980, p. 58). The rift deepened when the Soviets backed the North Vietnamese in their war against the South and the United States. In line with the policy of peaceful coexistence, the Russians were putting pressure on their North Vietnamese allies to negotiate with the Americans, with a view to ending the Vietnam War (Prados 2008, pp. 443-4). The Chinese, however, sought to prolong the conflict believing that the war was distracting and weakening the Americans.

The most notable feature of Australia’s China policy during the Maoist era policy was its narrow ideological obsessions. There was plenty to criticize about the Maoist regime, as the devastating failures of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution later made plain. Moreover, there appeared to be no clear understanding in government, or among the most influential commentators in the media in Australia, of the full import of the split between China and the Soviet Union. This was glaringly evident in Prime Minister McMahon’s reaction to news of Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam’s visit to Beijing in July 1971. McMahon raged at Whitlam’s temerity to be in China at all. ‘In no time at all,’ he declared, ‘Zhou Enlai had Mr Whitlam on a hook and he played him like a fisherman plays a trout’ (quoted in Griffiths 2012, p. 51). Implicit in the Prime Minister’s attack was the view that Whitlam was not only betraying Australia, but also the ANZUS alliance. However, in what is a revealing feature of the Australia-America alliance, Prime Minister McMahon had not been forewarned that the United States Secretary of State Dr Henry Kissinger was also heading to Beijing to negotiate a détente with the Chinese Government. That détente grew out of China and America’s related interests in dealing with the Soviet Union. Some three days later President Nixon announced to the whole
world the news of Kissinger’s visit. The Australian Government was diplomatically embarrassed by this revelation.

Nonetheless it is also noteworthy that there was a pragmatic aspect to Australia’s relations with China throughout the 1960s. By the end of the decade China was purchasing a third of Australia’s annual wheat harvest. However, this convenient deal ended abruptly late in 1970 following bumper harvests in China itself. At the same time the Canadian Government under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau extended formal diplomatic recognition to Beijing, facilitating Canada’s wheat sales to China and disadvantaging Australia’s wheat growers (Walker 1971, p. 21). Australia’s fragile access to China’s markets became more difficult to negotiate while it still clung tightly to its anti-Beijing foreign policy, underlining the problematic nature of the relationship. By conforming to the United States’ position on China, Australia was clearly acting against its national economic interest – certainly as its wheat farmers were concerned – while displaying the awkwardness that characterizes much of the Australia-China relationship even today.

An incident that illustrates the problematic nature of the relationship was the so-called Francis James affair. James was an Australian citizen, a journalist with a reputation for eccentricity who visited China in 1969 and published articles about what he alleged were secret Chinese military bases. The articles were not well received in Beijing, suggesting that James’ claims had some veracity. When James returned to China later that year he was arrested and imprisoned as a spy. He languished in a Chinese jail for over three years. Whitlam had known James from their student days at Canberra Grammar School in the 1930s. During his 1971 visit to Beijing he interceded on James’ behalf. Subsequently the Chinese discreetly advised Australian officials that James was about to be freed from jail and deported (Griffiths 2012, pp. 72-7). In a display of
political one-upmanship calculated to distract attention from Whitlam’s involvement in the affair, the McMahon Government claimed the credit for James’ impending release. The Government arranged for an ambulance and medical personnel to meet James at the Hong Kong border with China. Alerted by Canberra, media representatives gathered at the border crossing to record James’ release. The Chinese officials accompanying James were initially surprised and then affronted by the waiting medical team and the media, regarding them as a very public criticism of their treatment of the prisoner. They promptly returned him to the jail in which he had been incarcerated for the previous three years and where he was to stay for another nine months (Inglis 1992). This was a vivid illustration of how a sensitive diplomatic matter could be misused for short-term domestic political advantage – further evidence of the problematic nature of Australian diplomacy with China.

(3) The ‘China Breakthrough’

At the end of 1972, after 23 years of conservative government in Australia, a Labor Government under Gough Whitlam came to power in Canberra. In Opposition Whitlam had campaigned in favour of recognizing Beijing over Taipei. Menzies’ successors (especially Prime Minister McMahon) were aghast at such a proposal, entrenched as they were in the belief that the containment of Chinese communism was the soundest security strategy for Australia. They did not doubt that the American policy of diplomatic non-recognition of the regime in Beijing was vital for realizing their security goal. In short, in Opposition Whitlam presaged a radical rupture with past policies. During his visit to Beijing in 1971 he gave an assurance to Zhou Enlai that recognition of the Government of the People’s Republic of China would receive immediate priority if he and his Labor colleagues were elected to government (Griffiths 2012, p. 71). In effect, when it came to power, the Whitlam Government comprehensively transformed the foreign policy
thinking of previous years in seeking to develop a more mature relationship with Beijing. This also meant acknowledging what had previously been unthinkable: that the American policy of containment of China has been a failure (Camilleri 1979, p. 253).

As soon as he came to office Whitlam moved swiftly to fulfill his assurance to Zhou by extending diplomatic recognition to the government in Beijing. He took advantage of the positive public response in Australia to his 1971 visit that had paved the way for moving the China relationship to a new level. In 1973 he appointed Australia’s first ambassador to China, Australian National University China specialist Stephen FitzGerald who notes: ‘When the Embassy opened in 1973, there was almost no other Australian in China we knew of’ (FitzGerald 2015, p. 97). The granting of diplomatic recognition began unlocking Chinese markets for Australian exporters. The advantages of trade, rather than the rhetoric of the Cold War, began to take precedence in exchanges between the two countries. Whitlam paid an official visit to Beijing in October of 1973 when arrangements were finalized for the export of Australian sugar and wheat into China. As Evans and Grant note: ‘Recognition of communist China was one of Gough Whitlam’s magnificent obsessions, which he handled with courage and flair, demolishing his political opponents while making history’ (Evans and Grant 1995, p. 249). What should not be overlooked is that the benign view that most Australians took of Whitlam’s ‘breakthrough’ was undoubtedly reassured by the United States’ simultaneous detente with the regime in Beijing and its on-going commitment to the ANZUS treaty. However, the fact is that a state can be awkward in a region if it has a close alliance with a hegemonic power.

With Mao’s death in 1976 the ‘Gang of Four’ led by Mao’s widow Jian Qing moved to seize control from Hua Guofeng, the man designated by Mao as his successor (Tiewes and Sun 2007, pp. 559-60). Their overthrow and imprisonment (during which
Madam Mao is alleged to have committed suicide) paved the way for Deng Xiao Peng to emerge as paramount leader of China. The expectation was that a whole new policy era was opening up in China’s economy and society. This was received enthusiastically in the west, evidenced during Deng’s historic visit to America in 1979. An excited Ezra Vogel noted: ‘This massive revolution ignited from many sources, but no single spark spread more rapidly than the one resulting from Deng’s visit to the United States’ (Vogel 2011, p. 347). Deng’s accession to power led to some overly-optimistic speculation about the imminence of political reforms.

(4) Australian Foreign Policy during the Era of Deng Xiaoping

The Fraser Government came to power in Canberra in December 1975. The new government embraced the Whitlam Government’s ‘breakthrough’ on China. Fraser’s first overseas trip as Prime Minister was to Beijing and Tokyo, not London and Washington as had been the tradition, especially for conservative political leaders in Australia (Fraser and Simons 2010, pp. 460-462). The Fraser years coincided with the early stages of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms in China. ‘Socialist countries,’ Deng proclaimed in 1978, ‘can also develop market-oriented economies’ (quoted in Li 2009, p. 419).

Deng is widely lauded as the great post-Mao reformer of the Chinese economy. Henry Kissinger sums up this viewpoint:

Only those who experienced Mao Zedong’s China can fully appreciate the transformations wrought by Deng Xiaoping. China’s bustling cities, the construction booms, the traffic gridlocks, the un-Communist dilemma of a growth rate occasionally threatened by inflation and, at other times, looked to by the Western democracies as a bulwark against global recession – all of these were inconceivable in Mao’s drab China of agricultural communes, a stagnant economy, and a population wearing standard jackets while professing ideological fervor from the

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41 Deng never accepted a formal title in government. As Henry Kissinger notes: ‘Deng held no major office; he refused all honorific titles; he almost never appeared on television; and practiced politics almost entirely behind the scenes. He ruled not like and emperor but as the principal mandarin’ (Kissinger 2011, p. 334).
“Little Red Book” of Mao quotations […] China as the present-day economic superpower is the legacy of Deng Xiaoaping’ (Kissinger 2011, p. 320 and p. 333).

Deng signaled an end of the ideology of class struggle that had been at the heart of Maoist ideology and set China on course for economic growth, the results of which have been astonishing (Jacques 2012, pp. 175-187). His policies won the praise of many in the west, including Australia, who believed that they presaged the evolution of a liberal-capitalist economy in the Middle Kingdom and the beginnings of a democratization process. However, as Michael Dillon writes: ‘His political legacy is less straightforward and uncomfortable questions remain about his attitude to democracy, openness and freedom of expression’ (Dillon 2015, p. 294).

It is noteworthy that Deng’s political authoritarianism – even his exercise of dictatorial powers – tended to be over-looked or forgotten in Australia where emphasis was placed on his economic reforms and opportunities they were opening up for increasing Australian exports into Chinese markets - especially resources exports. A diplomat in the Australian embassy in Beijing in the 1970s noted that ‘The political atmosphere in China improved as Deng Xiaoping strengthened his position within the Party and introduced the new ‘Open Door’ policy of improving relations with the West’ (Chey 1998, p. 41). Nonetheless, the overriding question in Australia was: ‘What’s in it for us?’ (Pan 2012a). As Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser encouraged the expansion of trade with the communist mainland while noting that ‘Australia and China have a like interest in seeing that Soviet power in the Pacific and South-East Asia is balanced by the power of other major states’ (quoted by Camilleri 1989, p. 44). The Government’s traditional concerns about threats to the west from the Soviet Union could therefore comfortably accommodate the Sino-American rapprochement of the 1970s.
The Hawke and Keating Governments (1983-1996) also responded enthusiastically to openings for trade with China resulting in what was ‘a period of rapid expansion of substantive relations’ (Garnaut, 1996, p. 70). But just how substantive they were needs to be interrogated. They were almost entirely focused on the economic (‘greed’) side of the relationship. As noted earlier, issues such as China’s domination of Tibet, ethnic confrontations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China, religious persecution of groups like the Falun Gong, the incarceration of dissidents, and other violations of international human rights accords to which Australia is a signatory. These matters are certainly not at the centre of Australian diplomacy with China. It is difficult therefore to comprehend what Ann Kent meant when she referred to ‘the interrelatedness of human rights with Australia’s political, commercial and strategic relations with China’ (Kent 1996, p. 65). The ‘interrelatedness’ she detects is so subtle as to be invisible.

During the Hawke and Keating Governments there was a substantial rise in the number of Chinese students enrolling in Australian schools and tertiary education institutions, helping to consolidate education as a major contributor to Australia’s economy. Emphasis continued to be placed on the commercial benefits of the relationship, even as Hawke stressed the centrality of Australia’s alliance with the United States. Indeed it was that very alliance that gave Australia the confidence to engage with China at this time.42 However, it was diplomacy that Stuart Harris has aptly described as ‘romanticized’ (Harris 1996, p. 11). China’s attractiveness was overwhelmingly seen in Australia through the wide eyes of marketers of Australian resources. It reflects negatively on Australian policy makers – especially in Treasury – that they failed to see that China’s markets were never going to be bottomless pits for Australian resources. At the same time, little attention was being paid to Chinese foreign policy making in all its

42 Gareth Evans has provided an insight into the Cabinet of both the Hawke and Keating Governments, with regular glimpses of foreign policy matters (Evans 2014a, pp. 33-381).
aspects. Moore and Yang have pointed to China’s ‘mixed record of abiding by agreements on arms proliferation and intellectual property rights to its unwillingness to commit the South China Sea dispute to processes of international law’. As they note, ‘China continues to vigorously guard its economic autonomy and political sovereignty’ (Moore and Yang 2001, p. 229). In preferring to keep its eye almost exclusively on the economic ball, Australia’s ‘romanticized’ diplomacy with China failed to see that there were other balls in play.

The Tiananmen Square crisis, and Deng’s role in precipitating the accompanying violence that culminated in a brutal crackdown on the protestors on 4 June 1989 was a shock to many people in Australia. The crisis demonstrated that Australian understandings of the character of China’s paramount leader were based on a less than complete picture of the man. Dingxin Zhao notes that during the crisis (and for long afterwards) Deng ‘had the final say on the most important matters in the country.’ The hard line tactics adopted by Deng and his associates to end the demonstrations in the Square ‘reflected […] the nature of the state and state-society relations in China’ (Zhao 2004, p. 234). They certainly contradicted Australia’s admiration for Deng’s economic reforms as the prelude to some kind of democratization process in China. Moreover, as Vogel points out, ‘If anything was sacred for Deng, it was the Chinese Communist Party. He instinctively bristled at criticisms of the party and emphasized that public criticisms of the party would not be tolerated’ (Vogel 2011, p. 262). The evidence suggests that it was Deng who had People’s Liberation Army troops chosen specifically for their reputation for being out of sympathy with those identified as threatening the power of the Party and the Government (Dillon 2015, pp. 272-77). Accompanied by tanks and other military vehicles the troops confronted the students and their supporters who for weeks had been calling for an end to corruption in government and the introduction of democratic
reforms. As Michael Dillon notes, ‘the carnage that ensued […] had a profound and mainly negative impact on Deng Xiaoping’s reputation both within and outside China’ (Dillon 2015, p. 272).

The Chinese Government’s response to the Tiananmen protestors impacted negatively on relations between the two countries. It provoked Prime Minister Hawke’s emotional declaration that any Chinese students who fearful of returning home in the wake of Tiananmen would be granted immediate sympathetic consideration if they applied for permanent residence in Australia. The result was a downturn in Australia’s relations with Beijing for a time, but by the early 1990s links between the two countries began growing again in science and technology, trade, and related fields as China’s economy began to take off as its demand for iron ore, liquid natural gas, and coal became voracious. Economic pragmatism once more emerged as the major influence shaping Australian diplomacy. In Canberra the rights of the young people who had been so brutally dealt with in Tiananmen Square were conveniently put to one side and soon forgotten.

(5) The Howard Era

The Howard government was in power from 1996 to 2007. Its foreign policy was pre-eminently focused on maintaining Australia’s security relationship with the United States. John Howard insisted that Australia’s relations with Asia were basically utilitarian (Wesley 2007a, p. 54). The Howard Government’s policy on dealing with China was based on a firm commitment to developing the two countries’ economic ties (Jakobson 2012, p. 4). There is a long history in the Liberal Party of concerns about the threat of communism, emanating from China as well as from the former Soviet Union (Fraser 2005). Nonetheless this was qualified by a degree of economic pragmatism – agricultural exports (especially wheat) were exempted from the usual strictures imposed on relations
with China throughout the long years of the Menzies era. Under Howard, trade began to improve as China’s demand for resources began to expand. China’s response was fundamentally pragmatic. As one commentator observed: ‘China’s leaders do not oversee the purchase of Australia’s primary resources because they like us. They do so because Australia provides an excellent product at competitive prices and has an independent judicial system to resolve any contractual disputes’ (Henderson 2012).

(6) From 2007 to 2015

With a bachelor’s degree in Asian Studies from the Australian National University, majoring in Chinese studies (including Mandarin), and as an avowed Christian, Kevin Rudd was a rare figure in Australian politics. Rudd’s honours thesis was a study of political dissent in communist China, a topic that was unlikely to endear him to Chinese authorities (Stuart 2007, pp. 57-63). His early career as a diplomat, first in Moscow and then in Beijing, was cut short when he became an adviser to the Queensland Opposition leader Wayne Goss. He subsequently became a senior bureaucrat in the Goss Labor Government. His time in the Queensland public service earned for him a solid reputation as a ‘policy entrepreneur’ (Mackenzie 2004). A major policy achievement was the initiation of what became a federally funded program for upgrading Asian language studies in Australian schools.43 In due course he entered federal politics where he was fiercely focused, hard working, and ambitious.

Given his academic interest in Asia and his diplomatic experience in Beijing, Rudd’s interest in Australian foreign policy naturally saw him concentrate on Australia’s relations with the Asia Pacific region. On becoming Prime Minister in 2007, there were high expectations that he would pursue a more engaged Australian foreign policy in Asia with a particular focus on China. In light of his facility in Mandarin it was anticipated that

43 The policy, known as the National Asian Languages in Schools Strategy (NALSAS), was sidelined after the Howard Government came to power in 1996 (Henderson 2007).
he would be able to engage more successfully with China’s leaders than almost any other western leader.

It seems that Rudd’s political leadership style negatively affected his policy thinking and political programs. Paul Kelly identifies two fundamental character flaws: ‘managing people and running a government’ (Kelly 2014, p. 137). His political nemesis Julia Gillard refers to his ‘restlessness that arose because of a lack of definition of the government’s core mission’ (Gillard 2014, p. 9). These kinds of problems proved to be insurmountable and no doubt contributed to the abrupt ending of his prime ministership in 2010. However, we need to look beyond Rudd’s psychology to explain how an Australian leader, seemingly well qualified for the task, did not live up to expectations that he would reinvent Australia’s foreign policy on China.

Rudd aligned himself closely with the Labor tradition in foreign policy. As he explained to one writer: ‘Because I’ve always been an internationalist and was always a great admirer of Evatt, I wanted to be a Labor foreign minister […] That’s why I went into politics’ (Bramston 2014, p. 62). He was particularly ambitious about establishing a respected middle power presence for Australia in regional and global forums. As Opposition leader, and subsequently as Prime Minister, he embarked on numerous overseas trips, strenuously advocating his foreign policy vision. This included initiating a campaign for Australia to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, advocating for an international agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons and global poverty, while arguing for the need for a new form of regional architecture in the Asia Pacific. He said of this last initiative: ‘we need to make sure that all of the major players are engaged in an open conversations about the region’s future – the United States, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and others – including India’ (Rudd 2008a, p. 21).
While accepting the American alliance as a central element of Australian foreign policy, he was eager to do more than reflect the policies and interests of the United States. He addressed issues affecting small states in the Pacific Islands Forum and successfully argued for an expansion of the G-8 grouping of states into the G-20, winning Australia membership of this auspicious body. As Kelly notes, ‘Rudd, in fact, was passionate about the G-20 and anxious to ensure it became a heads-of-government group […] It became a breakthrough moment for Australia’ (Kelly 2014, pp. 208-9). In Rudd’s view this ‘breakthrough moment’, constituted an exercise of middle power diplomacy. It is indicative of the traditional middle power role Australia preferred to play on the global stage. Rudd believed that as a middle power Australia could and should have a respected voice in international forums in which its voice, at best, had hitherto been muted or even absent (Weller 2014, p. 181).

How did Rudd conceptualize Australia’s middle power status? The answer to this question becomes clearer when we examine his foreign policy record on China. In April of 2008 Rudd travelled to Beijing. He had been invited to deliver a lecture at the prestigious Peking University. His delivery was in Mandarin and during the lecture he was frankly critical of China’s human rights record in Tibet. He stated:

Australia like most other countries recognizes China’s sovereignty over Tibet. But we also believe it is necessary to recognize there are significant human rights problem in Tibet. The current situation in Tibet is of concern to Australians. We recognize the need for all parties to avoid violence and find a solution through dialogue. As a long-standing friend of China I intend to have a straightforward discussion with China’s leaders on this (Rudd 2008b).

The lecture was noteworthy for its diplomatic insensitivity. His Chinese hosts were quick to disagree with him. Australian journalists accompanying the Prime Minister reported that following his lecture Rudd was criticized by several senior figures in the
Chinese leadership. The Governor of Tibet declared that Rudd’s claims about human rights abuses in Tibet were ‘totally unfounded.’ Another Chinese official stated that foreigners who criticized China were ‘ignorant of history’ (Grattan and Toy 2008). Rudd argued that there was wide agreement around the world on China’s record in Tibet. He insisted that his duty was properly to reflect the views of ‘the Australian people.’ He wrongly assumed that ‘the Australian people’ constituted a moral entity in regional and global affairs that had the appropriate authority to criticize moral failings in its neighbours’ affairs. He was projecting a middle power confidence that was obviously not appreciated in China. Unsurprisingly, Rudd’s welcome in China chilled.

The chill intensified when the Rudd Government’s White Paper on Defence was made public in 2009, proposing a range of upgrades in the Australian defence forces: new submarines, frigates, helicopters and fighter jet aircraft (Australian Government 2009). Two analysts predicted that ‘the proposed new capabilities will probably be received positively by the US and its allies and negatively by China […] There is something of a conundrum in that while the White Paper says that the force structure is not determined by events or trends in North Asia, it is there that it appears likely to have the greatest impact’ (Lyons and Davies 2009, p. 5).

Their predictions proved to be correct. As Geremie Barmé notes: ‘Beijing’s response to the Australian White Paper […] was reportedly one of “fury”’ (Barmé 2012, p. 14). A Wikileaks file released in 2010 reinforced Beijing’s concerns, revealing that Rudd had warned American Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to be prepared to use force against China ‘if everything goes wrong.’ The leaked file also noted that Secretary Clinton had been advised by Rudd that the proposed build-up of the Australian Navy was ‘a response to China’s growing ability to project force’ (Flitton 2010).
Patrick Weller observed that on the international stage, ‘Australian prime ministers are often seen to be trying to inflate their own influence’ (Weller 2014, p. 184). Rudd illustrates this tendency in his approaches to China as both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. The Chinese leadership was unmoved by Rudd’s human rights scolding and felt let down by his warnings to the United States about what to do if became a serious threat in the region (Barmé 2012; Flitton 2010). The widely held expectation early in Rudd’s prime ministership that he would have special insights into China’s developmental challenges proved to be unfounded. Unsurprisingly, therefore, China did not fold him to its collective bosom. Yet Rudd assumed that as the Prime Minister of a middle power Australia possessed the gravitas that gave it (and him) the right to draw China’s attention to its human rights failings.

Rudd’s approach to China was characteristic of Australia’s prevailing form of middle power imagining. He did not appear to understand the sources and character of middle power imagining that he was projecting nor was he sensitive to the consequences of his actions. In this regard he personifies the misplaced middle power imagining that is at the heart of much Australian foreign policy making today. It is a middle power imagining encourages bravado when what is needed is understanding.

Rudd’s middle power imagining was tested with the arrest in China in 2009 of Australian citizen Hu Stern. Born in China, Hu had graduated from the prestigious Peking University. He became an Australian citizen in 1994. At the time of his arrest he was a Rio Tinto executive based in Shanghai. The charges brought against him included stealing state secrets and bribing Chinese officials. There was controversy in Australia about the evidence used in the trial and about judicial procedures that were conducted behind closed doors. Despite protests by the Australian government, including directly from Rudd, the Chinese declined to release Hu and return him to Australia. Australia’s
influence, and that of its Mandarin-speaking Prime Minister, clearly amounted to little in
this case. As noted at the time by journalists John Garnaut and Phil Coorey: ‘China has
dismissed Australian concerns about the detained Rio Tinto executive Stern Hu as mere
"noise" and warned that representations on his behalf will only hurt Australian interests’
(Garnaut and Coorey 2009). In due course the Australians stopped pressing for Hu’s
release, prioritizing their commercial diplomacy with Beijing (O’Sullivan 2009).

Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister in June 2010. Given that ‘the
very idea of “engagement with Asia” [was] one that the Hawke-Keating governments
largely created […] the Gillard government might have expected to bask in the afterglow
of real earlier achievements’ (Beeson 2013). But this was not to be. The Gillard
Government’s foreign policy was primarily shaped by its commitment to the American
alliance and the close rapport the Prime Minister developed with President Barack
Obama and his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Bramston 2014, p. 91). Gillard brushed
aside Chinese concerns about the rotation of American Marines through the United States
military base in Darwin. She shared the American view that ‘China will become more
assertive/adventurous in the future’ and this warranted reinforcing Australia’s defence
ties with the United States. Like her third Foreign Minister, Bob Carr, she calculated that
the United States ‘rebalancing [to the Pacific] was strongly supported in Australia’ (Carr
2014, pp. 34 and 40). Nonetheless when she visited Beijing in April 2013, she reached an
agreement with the Chinese government for annual leaderships talks between China and
Australia. Described as ‘the foreign policy triumph of her leadership,’ the agreement
placed the finalization of a Free Trade Agreement firmly on track (Kenny 2013a).
However, at the core of this agreement were measures designed to enhance the trade
relationship with China; they were not designed to foster closer mutual understandings
between the two countries. The pragmatism of economic utilitarianism characterizing
Australia’s post-Deng links with China remained central to the diplomacy between Canberra and Beijing throughout the Gillard years (Howe 2015).

The Abbott Government came to power in 2013 and endured for two years, to be replaced by the Turnbull Government late in 2015. The minority party in this coalition government – the National Party – was one of the centres of opposition to overseas investment in Australia, particularly in relation to rural properties, related agricultural industries and urban real estate. Abbott’s Treasurer, Joe Hockey, moved swiftly to disallow a large American conglomerate from taking over the GrainCorp, a commercial entity with a near-monopoly on the handling of international markets for Australia’s wheat farmers. His reasoning, simply stated, was that the proposed take-over lacked popular support. In an editorial on 29 November, a leading newspaper stated acidly: ‘If popular support is a new condition for foreign investment Chinese investors need not bother to apply’ (Australian Financial Review 2013). However, former Treasurer Joe Hockey was unlikely to have felt lonely in regard to his Grain Corps decision. The 2015 Lowy Institute Poll indicates that 70 per cent of Australians believe there is too much investment being allowed into the country from China (Lowy Institute 2015, p. 8).

The Turnbull Government was able to announce the finalisation of a Free Trade Agreement with China at the end of 2015 after many years of painstaking negotiations (Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2015). However the problem for Australia is that it is treading a thin line between maintaining and expanding its trade deals with China while simultaneously supporting American security strategies in the region. This is a case of wanting to have one’s cake and eating it too. The foreign policy it presupposes is fraught with difficulties that successive Australian policy makers seem oblivious to. The Government is facing a more measured demand in China for Australian resources exports than was experienced during the Howard and Rudd years.
Moreover, as one commentator has noted: ‘China’s economy, on which Australia has greater [economic] dependence than any other nation, is slowing and efforts by its authorities to stabilize growth are yet to prove effective’ (Uren 2015). This is impacting negatively on the Australian economy.

Nonetheless China’s economic growth is likely to continue on a trajectory that on current trends will probably see it become the world’s largest economy by 2050. As a 2014 report notes, in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), ‘China will replace the US as the world’s largest economy by 2015’ (Yang 2014). The same report also notes that the American economy will continue as a major contributor to the global economy, even if it is overtaken by the Chinese economy in terms of scale by the middle of the century. If these trends persist, the ramifications for Australia’s policies towards China are immense. Warren Cohen’s question is highly relevant: ‘If China’s power comes to equal or exceed that of the United States, how will it use that power?’ (Cohen 2009), p. 38). That this has not been thought through in Australia is evident in the flurry of diplomatic assertions and denials that erupted when a senior American official stated in May 2015 that ‘we will be placing additional Air Force assets in Australia as well, including B-1 bombers and surveillance aircraft’ (quoted in Dorling 2015). This was seen as part of a wider American strategy to deter China’s South Sea ambitions. The Australian Prime Minister immediately denied this claim. He stated: ‘I understand that the official misspoke and that the US does not have any plans to base those aircraft in Australia’ (quoted in Garnaut and Wroe 2015). What this incident suggests is that the United States appears to take Australian cooperation for granted as far as it ‘pivot’ to the Pacific is concerned and that that strategy is primarily about containing China.

Uncritical compliance with the United States’ plans is arguably not in the best interests of Australia, particularly in regard to Australian diplomacy with China. The
Abbott Government’s policies showed that Australia’s prevailing middle power imagining had inclined the Prime Minister and his associates to stay close to the United States. The Turnbull Government is similarly disposed. That this results in on-going problems in relations with China appears to be secondary to remaining a loyal partner in the ANZUS alliance. These problems are likely to become even more salient if China ignores the pressure from America and its allies to desist from its South China Seas activities. As Hugh White has observed: ‘it is not at all clear that the US can or will actually do anything to stop China continuing to build up bases on its islands, unless it is willing to run a high risk of a major confrontation’ (White 2015c, p. 19). James Brown has noted that the United States’ allies in Asia are beginning to question whether China’s South Seas ambitions can be changed. Moreover, he notes that those same allies wonder ‘how committed America is to investing more than rhetoric in changing it’ (Brown 2015, p. 7). If it is more than rhetoric, Australia will be faced with a major foreign and defence policy dilemma.

Conclusion

Prior to 1949, China was largely ignored or racially derided by successive governments in Australia and by the Australian people. From 1949 until the late 1970s Australians feared what they imagined to be a threatening China bent on communizing the Asia Pacific region. Indeed the culture of the whole Cold War era imprinted fear of China on the collective Australian psyche. However from the late 1970s economic opportunism entered the Australian consciousness of China as Chinese markets began opening up and the Chinese economic dragon began to stand up. Nonetheless, the economic utilitarianism of the subsequent Australia-China partnership has had to be sustained against a troubled record of relations between the two countries. The first of two recent examples of these troubles was the blocking of the state-owned Chinese conglomerate Chinalco’s attempt to
increase its shareholding in the second biggest Australian mining company Rio Tinto in 2009. As John Garnaut explained, this was the ‘biggest investment deal in both Australian and Chinese corporate histories’ (Garnaut 2009). Rio Tinto’s decision not to proceed with the deal was received with considerable annoyance in Beijing. The attitude of Australian government was seen by China as a major factor in frustrating Chinalco’s ambitions. (The arrest and imprisonment of Hu Stern soon afterwards is seen in some quarters as Chinese payback for Chinalco being denied access to Rio Tinto.)

The second example was the Abbott Government’s decision not to allow the Chinese company Huawei to supply sophisticated telecommunications equipment to Australia’s National Broadband Network (Cai 2013). As Max Suich warns: ‘China feels discriminated against by Australia, not unlike how Japan did over our discriminatory trade policies’ (Suich 2012c, p. 20). (The reference here is to Australia’s unilateral imposition of trade constraints on Japan in the 1930s.)

Shrugging off these kinds of problems in Australia’s dealings with China, and ignoring the history behind them, is likely to exacerbate the difficulties that have characterized the relationship, particularly since 1949. Nonetheless the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries in November 2014 indicates that China is inclined to strengthen its commercial links with Australia – an inclination Australian resources exporters and government leaders and officials have been only too happy to accommodate. Paul Kelly views this as ‘a path to seduction via prosperity.’ He warns: ‘While the FTA is a transformative event it would be ludicrous to believe all issues in the Australia-China equation are solved’ (Kelly 2014b). Kelly’s observation is apposite: Australia’s complacent assumption that China would continue to demand enormous supplies of resources has proven, at best, to be naïve. The unsolved issues in the equation to which Kelly refers emerge from a history riddled with suspicion (‘fear’) and economic
utilitarianism (‘greed’) that continue to shape the relationship. They act as a straitjacket, precluding a more effective, more informed – less awkward – relationship between the two countries.

Beeson and Li have observed that ‘differences in politics, economics, and even culture present major challenges for China’s political elites in managing a relationship with an inherently unlikely partner’ (Beeson and Li 2014, p. 163). As the ‘unlikely partner’ Australia has a long record of awkwardness in its relations with China – as outlined in this chapter. Since the end of World War II this awkwardness has in large part been premised on Australia’s reliance on the United States as its major security guarantor with fear of China as its main motivator. However more recently this has come under fire for being a counterproductive strategy, leading to recommendations that ‘Canberra seeks meaningful political and strategic ties with Beijing in order to build political trust between the two governments’ (Jacobson 2012, p. 8; see also White 2012a). Clearly a more effective Australian foreign policy is essential to shape a sustainable diplomacy with the People’s Republic of China. This would be a diplomacy recognizing that China’s emerging power in the region requires a reappraisal of Australia’s security alliance with the United States – not, by any means, an abandonment of the alliance, but a striving for a nuanced readjustment that would encourage and assist the United States to work with China ‘as an equal partner in a shared leadership to build and maintain, with other countries, an international order in Asia that conforms to the broad principles laid down in the UN Charter’ (White 2012b, p. 181).

A sour mixture of ideology and trade and a limpet-like attachment to the alliance with the United States, then, have been the predominant characteristics of Australia’s foreign policy thinking about China. Tony Abbott’s summary of this mix as ‘fear and greed’ has a point, with greed appearing to be the stronger driver. The 2015 Lowy Poll
showed that 39 percent of Australians believe that China will become a military threat to their country in the next twenty years (48 per cent believed this in 2014). On the other hand, 77 per cent said they believed that China was more of an economic partner than a military threat (Lowy Institute 2015, pp. 8-9). As China continues to assert itself in the Asian region, it is clearly in Australia’s interests to re-imagine its identity in the region and devise strategies for addressing the awkwardness that its prevailing middle power imagining imposes on its foreign policy making. It would be well for the country to remember Thomas Christensen’s observation: ‘China’s rise in wealth, diplomatic influence, and military power since 1978 is real and it’s stunning’ (Christensen 2015, p. 13). Hiding beneath Uncle Sam’s coat-tails is no way to respond to this development. A new middle power identity is now called for.
**Chapter 7**

**CONCLUSION:**

**AUSTRALIA’S DEPENDENT MIDDLE POWER IMAGINING IN THE ‘ASIAN CENTURY’**

**Introduction**

This thesis has argued that Australia’s *dependent* middle power imagining in regional and global politics is contributing to its awkward partnering in the region. This has been achieved by clarifying the history of the concept of middle power imagining in International Relations. The thesis has laid out a new way of mapping middle power theorising. It has shown how flaws in a state’s middle power imagining can be problematic for its foreign policy making. Consequently, the particular middle power assumption on which Australian foreign policy on Japan and China is based has been able to be identified. Australia is a particular kind of middle power and that particularity is a problem for foreign and defence policy-making in Canberra. As the case studies on Japan and China have illustrated, it has shown how the country’s dependent middle power imagining leads to awkwardness in Canberra’s relations with Tokyo and Beijing.

As the so-called Asian Century proceeds, unprecedented challenges are emerging for Australia’s foreign policy makers. In particular this suggests that the current form of Australia’s alliance with the United States contributes to the flawed middle power imagining at the core of Australian foreign policy in Asia. This is now an urgent matter, for Australia and for the region. As Mark Beeson notes: ‘[A]t a time of growing regional tension and uncertainty, fuelled by both the rise of China and the relative decline of the USA, it is not clear what impact the extant alliance system is having on the region or its stability’ (Beeson 2015f, p. 305).
This chapter first makes clear what a dependent middle power is and what an ‘awkward partner’ is in regional politics. It then proposes two initial strategies towards a renewed Australian middle power imagining: (i) Re-thinking the ANZUS alliance; and (ii) Educating for an Australia that is Asia aware.

**Australia as a dependent middle power and awkward partner in Asia**

As outlined in chapter 2, the primary focus of a dependent middle power’s foreign policy is cementing an alliance with a great power. The alliance is intended to achieve one or more of three key outcomes: (i) to reinforce the dependent middle power’s security within a regional or global balance of power; (ii) to provide benefits for its economy (partly by minimising its defence spending by relying – in effect, freeloading – on its great power ally); and (iii) to confer on it degrees of authority or influence that otherwise would not be readily available in international forums. The history of dependent middle powers suggests that these outcomes are more hoped for than realized, particularly in terms of exercising regional or global influence. Consider, for example, the repressed satellite states of eastern Europe during the Soviet era (Applebaum 2012), or the clampdown on independence aspirations within Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere during the Pacific War (Li and Cribb 2003). Nonetheless, from 1901 until the Imperial Japanese Army over-ran Singapore in 1942, Australia floundered towards dependent middle power status, closely aligned with Britain, especially during the two World Wars. Since then, and especially during the Cold War, it has been dependent on the United States.

An awkward partner is an ‘odd man out’ in regional politics – a lonely country, or a liminal state, reluctant to engage or mesh or relocate within its region. Australian foreign policy in Asia exhibits many of these hallmarks. Its relations with regional neighbours can be uncomfortable and lack subtlety. They can be condescending on issues like
immigration, border protection, or human rights (James and Maley 2014). For example, when the Indonesian Government insisted on proceeding with the execution of two Australians convicted of drug smuggling, the then Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott complained that because Indonesia is Australia’s largest recipient of overseas aid, Jakarta should defer to Canberra’s request that the death sentences be commuted. This was seen across Indonesia as trampling on that country’s sovereignty and cultural sensibilities and resulted in a chill in relations between the two neighbours (Scarr et al. 2015).

An awkward partner tends to limit its regional diplomacy to pragmatic or instrumental concerns such as trade, FTAs and investment agreements, security matters. In Australia’s case, diplomacy grounded in culturally nuanced, mutual understandings seems to be beyond its foreign policy remit. Its principal diplomatic energies are directed outside its region, while taking a narrow view of its national interest in response (or reaction) to important regional issues. It justifies its extra-regional foreign policy focus on the grounds that its shares similar cultural values and political and strategic interests with great and powerful extra-regional friends. As noted in chapter 1, this is illustrated by Stephen George’s argument that British leaders’ gaze tends to be directed more to the United States than Europe. In a similar fashion, as Dennis Altman has observed, Australian foreign policy is limited by a ‘parochialism that means our eyes remain rigidly fixed on the English-speaking countries of the North Atlantic’ (Altman 2006, p. 128).

Australia’s assumption of middle power status in its region is therefore unconvincing; its status more often is that of an awkward partner in Asia. The consequence, as former diplomat Tony Kevin has pointed out, is ‘that since 2001 there has been a deepening disconnect between Australian governments’ long-established rhetoric of good global citizenship and close Asia-Pacific regional engagement’ (Kevin
Following the debacle in Singapore in 1942, Canberra has gone to great lengths to impress on Washington that Australia should be valued as a worthy American ally, resulting in Australian involvements in conflicts whose strategic relevance to Australia appear tangential and whose endgames are difficult – if not impossible – to discern. They include the stalemate that brought the Korean War to an inconclusive close, what was effectively a defeat in the Vietnam War, and the oppressive era of the Cold War (Patience 2015, pp. 53-6). The complex conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq are also cases in point (Broinowski, R. 2015, pp. 12-13).

The dependent middle power identity that Australia complacently assumes encourages its foreign policy leaders to believe that the country should be actively punching above its weight in international forums – for example, as a non-permanent member in the Security Council of the United Nations. Advocates of this kind of posturing on the world stage believe it wins for the country the reputation of a ‘good global citizen’ (Evans 1990). However the danger in fixing the country’s foreign policy’s gaze extra-regionally can result in a foreign policy that results in the deploying of Australian resources in American-led anti-terrorist campaigns in the Middle East while under-resourcing similar regional strategies – for example, the on-going crisis in the Solomon Islands which festers on with no immediate resolution on the horizon (Droogan and Waldek 2015). This constitutes foreign policy over-reach in which issues of particular concern to regional neighbours are neglected even though they impinge directly on Australian interests. For example, the chagrin with which Indonesia greeted revelations that Australian intelligence agencies had been spying on the then Indonesia president and his wife resulted in Jakarta suspending cooperation with Canberra on people smuggling, an issue of major concern to both countries (McPhedran 2013).
Australia’s extra-regional foreign policy focus is therefore a pressing issue for the country’s security and prosperity in the context of what is loosely termed the Asian Century – a time frame in which China’s re-emergence as a major regional power is the dominant narrative, as noted in chapter 1. Nonetheless since 1942 Australian foreign policy makers have persisted in the conviction that the ANZUS alliance not only deters potential enemies in the regional and globally, but also accrues authority and influence, if not actual power, to Australia (Bisley 2013; Fullilove 2015). As chapter 4 explained, this has been reported inaccurately as Australia playing a deputy sheriff role to America in the region. The commitment to the alliance has been under-pinned by an agnotologically-induced anxiety about the country’s geopolitical location. This is what David Walker means when he describes Australia as an ‘anxious nation’ (Walker 1999). Also noted in chapter 4, Asia’s proximity continues to be viewed by many Australians through the prism of a racist or xenophobic anxiety about an unreliable Indonesia, a threatening China, and what Edward Said would identify as ‘orientalist’ suspicions of Asia generally (Said 1976).

Underlying the anxiety in Australia about the proximity of Asia is a persistent expectation, especially (but certainly not exclusively) among conservatives, that the country should be seen as being culturally located within the bosom of the Anglosphere. In advocating this perspective educationalist Kevin Donnelly, for example, writes: ‘Instead of extolling the virtues of Asia, forcing students to learn an Asian language, and making schools teach every subject from an Asian perspective, money and resources would be better spent teaching Australia's Western heritage and Judeo-Christian tradition’ (Donnelly 2012). The ambition by Australian conservatives to be acknowledged as a

44 Dr Donnelly was co-chair of a major review of Australian education curricula, commissioned by the Abbott Government in 2013, when Christopher Pyne was Minister for Education. The report was published in 2014 (Wiltshire and Donnelly 2014). Donnelly is an influential
member of the Anglosphere is evident in their querulous resistance to ending the country’s adherence to the British monarchy as its head of state.

This all leads to the conclusion that Australia needs to reinvent its middle power identity if it is to advance its interests and to earn for it the regard of its Asian neighbours as a reliable, independent, and legitimate regional partner shaped by the Regional and Neo-Kantian middle power concepts outlined in chapter 2. Reinventing a new middle power identity will entail gathering together the frayed policy threads of the immediate post-1989 Garnaut Report era – when Bob Hawke advocated ‘enmeshment’ in Asia and Paul Keating promoted ‘Asian engagement’ – and weaving them into a new foreign policy. This new policy needs to be premised on an Australia that eschews its dependent middle power imagining, that is Asia aware,\textsuperscript{45} and that is resolved to becoming a collaborative rather than nostalgic middle power in the Asia Pacific.

\textbf{Strategy 1: Rethinking the ANZUS alliance}

Beeson’s observation is apposite: ‘The presumed benefits that come from a powerful alliance partner have come at a high cost in blood and treasure, as Australia has fought alongside, or perhaps on behalf of, the USA in successive regional conflicts’ (Beeson 2015a, p. 314). There is an added cost: the criticism that Australia receives from the region when it is perceived to be dependent on United States’ security strategies rather than as an independent state with a more regionally focused foreign policy – when it leaves itself open to being criticized for being the ‘running dog of US imperialism’ (as conservative commentator on education in Australia and is held in high regard by conservatives on the right of the Liberal Party.

\textsuperscript{45} Two terms that appear routinely in the literature on Asian Studies in Australia are ‘Asia consciousness’ and ‘Asia literacy.’ The former generally refers to Australians educated in important aspects of the histories, cultures, politics, and geography of Asia, and having an understanding of Asian economies and business cultures. The latter generally refers to Australians who are competent in an Asian language (or languages). While language competence is highly desirable, and should be encouraged, it should not be a necessary condition for accessing other Asia-focused curricula across Australia’s educational systems. The aim in the first instance should be the designing of Australian educational curricula for Asia awareness.
Mao once expostulated). This points to the fact that the alliance with the United States, in its present form, contributes to Australia’s manifestation as an awkward partner in the Asia Pacific.

Rethinking the ANZUS alliance will be unnerving for many Australians who invest a high level of trust in what, as Lowy polls consistently show, is widely believed to be their special place beneath America’s security umbrella. This is despite the ‘deliberate ambiguity’ in the formal text of the ANZUS treaty that, Nick Bisley notes, ‘has periodically caused fears of abandonment within Australia’ (Bisley 2013, p. 405). Nonetheless, a comprehensive review of the alliance is necessary now, even though (as noted in chapter 4) it has been a catalyst in the past for Australia’s partial and equivocal ‘relocation’ into Asia. And it is necessary notwithstanding Bisley’s conclusion that ‘as Australia charts a path in this new [Asian Century] landscape, it will do so with its US alliance as its lodestar’ (Bisley 2013, p. 416). Astute observers from Coral Bell in the 1960s to Malcolm Fraser most recently have been asking whether that lodestar is guiding Australia in the right direction for the times (Bell 1965; Fraser 2014). As Hugh White has noted, ‘China’s assertive moves in the South China Sea have […] challenged the regional order based on US maritime supremacy’ (White 2015f). This raises serious question for Australian foreign and defence experts. How will they direct the country in what was noted in chapter 4 as Australia’s ‘relocation’ into Asia? It clearly won’t be easy. The strident Singaporean pundit Kishore Mahbubani has put it bluntly:

The one country that will have to make the most painful adjustment to the Asian century is undoubtedly Australia. […] Under these dramatically changed historical circumstances, the biggest mistake Australia could make is to continue on autopilot, clinging to Western or American power as its sole source of security’ (Mahbubani 2012, p. 2).

Constructing a new middle power identity for Australia does not mean abandoning
the United States as an important ally. However, this is likely to require a different alliance with the United States – a less asymmetric alliance in which the United States does not take Australia’s commitment for granted. It may need to be more of a quid pro quo relationship to counter the view that, ‘under the ANZUS Treaty the United States has never come to Australia’s assistance when the Australian interest alone has been at stake, and never will’ (FitzGerald 2015, p. 238). In fact, for more than four decades now Washington has been pressing its allies to shoulder more of the security burden in the region, as evidenced in Washington’s pressure on Tokyo to revise, or even remove, the problematic paragraph 9 of the Japanese Constitution (Samuels 2008, pp. 80-82). In a major policy speech in July 1969 outlining what has become known as the Nixon Doctrine46, President Nixon warned America’s allies that they would be expected to play a larger role in defending themselves against communist aggression (Kimball 2006). The United States, he advised, would continue to provide assistance but without necessarily committing itself to any conflicts involving those allies (Meiértöns 2010). He continued: ‘as far as our role is concerned, we must avoid the kind of policy that will make countries in Asia so dependent upon us that we are dragged into conflicts such as we have in Vietnam’ (quoted in Kimball 2006, p. 62). The Nixon Doctrine was a shot across the bows for those who were inclined to take ANZUS for granted as the natural and permanent centrepiece of their country’s foreign policy architecture.

Moreover, those same believers in the stability of the alliance appear oblivious to how it could be easily unsettled, even threatened with cancellation by the United States. In his book Unholy Fury: Whitlam and Nixon at War, James Curran detailed how the Nixon administration was angered by Prime Minister Whitlam’s criticisms of its conduct of the Vietnam War and by blunt condemnations of the bombing of North Vietnam by

46 This is sometimes referred to in the literature as the Guam Doctrine because Nixon made the speech while he was visiting Guam.
some of Whitlam’s ministers. At the same time some trade union leaders were calling for boycotts of American ships in Australian ports which would have spelt trouble for trade between the two countries and for American war ships’ refueling and re-provisioning while their crews were on rest and recreation leave in those ports. The threatened boycotts seemed to echo the Whitlam Government’s views. Curran notes:

[T]he combination of freewheeling ministerial tongues and the muscular threats of militant trade unionists created something of a perfect storm in the relationship. The Americans believed that the prime minister was actively sponsoring both the slander and the strikes’ (Curran 2015, pp. 176-7).

Curran draws attention to the ‘fog of mistrust and misunderstanding’ that quickly descended over relations between Washington and Canberra at that time. Washington even began to issue ‘warnings and threats’ about the ANZUS treaty (p. 179). This moment in Australia-United States relations illustrates how the tendency in Australia to view ANZUS through rose coloured spectacles is naïve and problematic for the country’s foreign policy.

With Nixon’s inglorious departure from the presidency in 1974 and Whitlam’s crushing defeat at the 1975 election, relations between the United States and Australia began to return to a more even keel. However the episode makes it clear to observers of the Australia-United States alliance that unquestioning Australian faith in its everlasting efficacy is, at best, naïve. This should hardly come as a surprise given the glaring asymmetry of the relationship. The fact of great powers is that they are rarely unconditionally altruistic. Their security strategies are grounded in self-interest in the first instance, not charity or sentimentality. President Johnson’s advisor, McGeorge Bundy, had already made this abundantly clear: ‘The American commitment anywhere is only as deep as the continued conviction of Americans that their own interest requires it’ (Bundy 1969, p. 190). Australia’s foreign policy makers need to have a clear understanding, at
the very core of their defence and foreign policy thinking, that their great and powerful American friend will wield its power as only its sees fit, always in its own interests. As Beeson reminds us: ‘The US has a long track record of privileging its own national interests over those of its allies, and Australia is no exception despite its assiduous efforts to cultivate good relations’ (Beeson 2013, p. 205). The tense relationship between Nixon and Whitlam serves as a warning to those who would place all their security eggs in the ANZUS basket. This demonstrates that ANZUS certainly needs a thoroughgoing reappraisal and suggests that further serious research is necessary on how such a reappraisal should be conducted and what a rethinking of Australia’s alliance with America would entail.

It should be unsurprising that the alliance has also attracted its critics. Their criticisms became louder as the allies’ fortunes in the Vietnam War began to sour. The debates about the war widened to debates about the desirability of the alliance itself. In 1969 Max Teichmann was arguing that ‘the alliance is not necessary […] it puts us in a situation of danger and a posture of moral ambiguity from which a policy of non-alignment would deliver us’ (Teichmann 1969, p. 159). In 1981 he continued this theme: ‘Australia should not be aligned militarily or politically with any other nation’ (Teichmann 1981, p. 5). Other critics have been equally trenchant. ‘We are tied,’ argued David Martin, writing over thirty years ago, ‘to an alliance which, whatever purpose it once served or was supposed to serve, does not help us now and cannot be shaped to do so’ (Martin 1984, p. 1). As noted in chapter 4, other scholars have elaborated on this theme, proposing that its existing conditions are in fact disadvantaging Australia’s regional interests and inducing awkwardness in its relations with Asia.

As Minister for the Army during the Vietnam War, then as Minister for Defence and subsequently Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser was a staunch supporter of the
American alliance (Fraser 2005). However, as Beeson observes, in 2014 Fraser ‘emerged as an unlikely advocate of a more independent foreign policy position for Australia’ (Beeson 2015a, p. 315). Fraser proposed ‘an option of strategic independence to avoid complicity in America’s future military operations and secure a future that best serves Australia’s interests’ (Fraser 2014, p. 276). He recommended that Australia withdraw from a wide range of joint security arrangements with the Americans including, in due course, the closing of communications bases like Pine Gap. He acknowledged that this strategy would not be without problems:

> There is no doubt that the United States would take the strongest possible exception to such moves. Every pressure would be exercised on an Australian government so that the United States would maintain strategic control. We would need to resist such pressures and make it clear that, in our view, the risks of a strategic alliance with the United States, of being forced into a war that was not in our interest, were so great that we had to cut the ties (p, 277).

Fraser explained his apparent change of heart about the American alliance by pointing to what he saw as a radical shift in United States security strategies based on dubious intelligence and questionable rationales for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the war on terror. He had also come to believe that when he was Minister for Defence at the height of the Vietnam War, the Americans had deceived him over the conduct of the war. He noted: ‘At best, the Americans were derelict in their duty to inform us of the true situation in Vietnam; at worst, they were deceitful’ (Fraser 2014, p. 147). He expressed astonishment at Robert McNamara’s revelation, well after the fact, that as United States Secretary for Defense in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations (1961 to 1968) he was aware that the war was unwinnable even while publicly at the time he had avowed that victory was always in sight (McNamara 1995).
In the light of his analysis of contemporary United States politics generally, and its foreign policy outcomes in particular, Fraser was concerned at what he perceived as clumsiness and arrogance in America’s response to China’s growing assertiveness in the Asia Pacific. He believed this was rooted in a change in America’s political culture, one that had pushed American politics towards more extreme neoconservative policy prescriptions. He would agree that ‘not a single argument offered by the neoconservatives since the 1990s, nor the sole justification they offered for the invasion of Iraq, has turned out to have merit’ (Velasco 2010, p. 218). Fraser concluded that the Americans had thus become ‘dangerous allies.’ He endorsed Hugh White’s thesis that Washington should come to an agreement with Beijing to share power in the region (White 2012a). He was especially concerned that, under the present arrangements of Australia’s alliance with America, a conflict between the United States and China, with Japan also involved, could draw Australia into a war that the Americans are unlikely to win, seriously endangering Australia’s relations with the Chinese. He warned:

The only way we can remove ourselves from the risk of being involved in a war between China, the United States and Japan is to remove the taskforce from Darwin and insist that Pine Gap, over time, be closed down. We could at least indicate out good intentions by taking Australians out of Pine Gap in a matter of months (Fraser 2014, p. 290).

The persistence of the debates in Australia about the American alliance is an indicator of a growing concern among policy observers in the country about the alliance’s on-going integrity amid the new challenges emerging across an ‘Ascending Asia.’ Journalist Rowan Callick noted that an opinion poll conducted in January 2015, more than two thirds of respondents believed Australia should not join the United States in any conflict in the East China Sea (Callick 2015, p. 10). Michael Green et al. suggest that this development has led to consternation in Washington with ‘some senior officials quietly
questioning whether Japan may in future replace Australia as the most trustworthy ally should US and regional tensions continue mounting with Beijing’ (Green et al. 2015, p. 7). These concerns will no doubt be intensified following debates within the Australian Labor Party about changing the Party’s policy platform to play down the importance of the ANZUS treaty in Australia’s defence policy. It was reported that the proposed changes may mean avoiding all references to the ANZUS treaty as ‘one of Australia’s great national assets […] and ‘the bedrock of regional stability’ (Balogh and Shanahan 2015, pp. 1 and 6).47

On the other hand, as noted in chapter 4, Australians committed to maintaining the alliance with the United States are convinced that for more than sixty years it has guaranteed their country’s security. As Bisley concludes, it has provided ‘protection in times of risk, access to technology and informational advantage’ (Bisley 2013, p. 416). Moreover, the alliance’s advocates point to the cultural values that the Australian and America have in common. The two countries share a worldview; they have similar political institutions founded on the rule of law; they have fought together in wars around the globe; they cooperate in regional and global forums; they have a Free Trade Agreement. The conservative journalist Greg Sheridan believes that the alliance is ‘a global partnership’ implying that there is balance in it that the critics of the alliance’s asymmetry fail to recognize (Sheridan 2006, p. 319).

The characteristic that stands out about the way the alliance is debated in Australia is the manner in which it is imbued with deep-seated, enculturated security anxieties. As noted in the discussion about Australia’s ‘relocation’ to Asia (chapter 4), there is a tradition in the country’s culture of being haunted by what is perceived as the tyranny of

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47 It is noteworthy that this proposed policy change was given front-page, headline treatment in The Australian newspaper which described it as a ‘significant foreign policy shift’ (Balogh and Shanahan 2015, p. 1).
distance separating Australia from the centres of power deemed to be the country’s protectors and guardians in a geopolitical setting in which Asia’s proximity is felt always to be menacing (Blainey 1982). As David Walker notes: ‘the forms in which these threats appeared, their logic, rationale and appeal are themselves complex and culturally revealing.’ He argues that they range along ‘a spectrum of concern [that] ran from direct military aggression to suspicions of a shadowy oriental presence’ (Walker 1999, p. 231). As Anthony Burke puts it, Australia is ‘still in its mind an anxious and threatened outpost of Europe’ (Burke 2008, p. 234). In Said’s terms this constitutes an orientalized collective consciousness in Australia in which Asia has always been alien, the other, unknown, a locus of fear (Said 1978). As explained in chapter 3, in opting for an imperial basis for the dominant form of its middle power imagining, Australia’s foreign policy makers have helped to marginalize the country in its region, contributing to its awkward partnering with Asia.

Contemporary debates about the American alliance today are still shrouded in the culture of the Cold War and the entrenched security anxieties that preceded it. Green et al. note that Canberra’s ‘primary motivation’ to support the current United States’ military engagements in the Middle East ‘was the strategic objective of forming a closer partnership with the United States’ in order ‘to foster a more focused and sustainable long-term Alliance’ (Green et al. 2015, p. 19). However, what constitutes a ‘more focused and sustainable long-term Alliance’ is now likely to be the most pressing issue that Australian foreign policy makers have to ponder in the wake of China’s increasingly assertive posturing in the region.

At the same time, domestic politics in the United States need to be taken into account as Australia’s foreign policy makers consider their future within the American alliance. As noted earlier, Malcolm Fraser expressed concern about disturbing trends he
detected in United States politics following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks of New York’s Twin Towers. They include truculence in political rhetoric (especially among vociferous neoconservatives in American politics), ideologically driven strategies for conducting campaigns ostensibly directed against international terrorism, and failure to bring an end to conflicts in the Middle East. These developments, he believed, were grounds for Australia to rethink its alliance with the United States (Fraser 2014, pp. 190-3). Of course these trends have a longer history than 9/11. However, after 9/11 they appear to have generated opaquely planned interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria (Rashid 2008). Australia has played its characteristic role of supporting these United States’ strategies, however disconnected they might appear to be from Australia’s regional security interests. If (given his earlier Cold War warrior credentials) the trends that provoked Malcolm Fraser’s extraordinary volte face on the American alliance persist – resulting say in the election of a Republican President with apocalyptic foreign policy proposals – Canberra will certainly need to reconsider how it reacts to United States military campaigns.

There is, then a need for an in-depth public conversation about Australia’s security interests, explaining how they are inextricably bound up, first and foremost, in its region. This is necessary because, as Hugh White has observed: ‘Australia’s strategic environment is becoming riskier as our neighbours grow stronger, and as the US-led order that has kept Asia so stable since the 1970s starts to fray’ (White 2015e, p. 29). This is now the greatest challenge for the country’s foreign policy makers.

The contemporary geopolitics of Asia mean that Australia needs to temper the nostalgia for the company of great and powerful friends with a realistic evaluation of its strategic relations with its regional neighbours, to foster cooperation and to look for common ground on regional issues. A new alliance with the United States has to be
seriously considered in which Australia relinquishes its freeloading dependency on American power, demonstrating that it is prepared to shoulder far greater responsibility for its own defence than it ever has been since 1942. Hugh White has recalled that in the early 1970s there was a ‘great national debate, driven equally by both sides of politics, about whether Australia had reached the point where it could stand on its own two feet’ (White 2015e, p. 29). He notes that the subsequent 1976 Defence White Paper ‘announced that Australia would not depend on our great and powerful friends for our security.’ He cautions that there has been a turning back of the clock since that time. Australian governments have reverted to ‘clinging closer than ever to our great and powerful friends.’

Malcolm Fraser was correct when he proposed that rethinking the American alliance necessarily entails closing United States communications bases located on Australian soil and ending the ‘rotation’ of United States Marines through Darwin. There will be scholars like Bisley and Fullilove who are likely to claim that this will alienate Washington, but they may need to remember the Nixon Doctrine pressuring America’s allies in the Asia Pacific to take greater responsibility for their own security. In becoming a more independent, self-reliant state in Asia, no longer tied into United States strategies in the region but able to be accepted as a friend to America without being beholden to it.

**Strategy 2: Educating for an Australia that is Asia-aware**

Opinion polling suggests that Australians have only a superficial knowledge of the cultures and political systems of their region. For example, a 2012 poll reported that 30 per cent of Australians were unaware that Bali, a popular tourist destination for Australians, was part of Indonesia. Less than half knew that Indonesia has one of the fastest growing economies in the world (Newspoll 2012). A 2015 Lowy Poll noted that 53 per cent of Australians appeared not to know that Xi Jinping is the President of China,
59 per cent seemed unaware that Shinzo Abe is Prime Minister of Japan, and 66 per cent apparently did not know that Narendra Modi is Prime Minister of India, even though all three leaders visited Australia in 2014 and addressed the Australian parliament during their visits (Lowy Institute 2015, p. 17). This lack of knowledge about the region is symptomatic of a deeper problem. As Stephen FitzGerald has observed: ‘We are not yet accepted in Asia as having demonstrated our will to belong, and we are not accepted quite specifically because of what we fail to do in our education in the matter of speaking the languages and learning about the societies of that part of the world’ (FitzGerald 1990, p. 10). Ignorance of Asia incubates what Chengxin Pan labels as Australia’s ‘Asia anxiety,’ noting that a ‘sense of fear and trepidation’ about Asia persists in the country despite the fact that Asian states and societies have experienced some radical transformations since the end of the Pacific War (Pan 2012a).

This points to the need for comprehensive reforms in Australia’s educational curricula, to prepare young Australians to rise to the challenges and benefit from the possibilities that their country’s regional location presents. As the 1989 Garnaut Report pointed out: ‘Australia’s long-term success in getting the most out of its relationship with Asia depends more than anything else on the scale and quality of its investment in education’ (Garnaut 1989, p. 317, original italics).

As noted in chapter 4, late in 2012 the Gillard Government released the White Paper, *Australia in the Asian Century* (the Henry Report) calling for a ‘profound transformation’ in educational areas to provide Australians with a ‘deep knowledge’ of Asia (Australian Government 2012; see also Henry 2015). Publicity followed in which leaders in all the major parties welcomed the report’s recommendations with rare unanimous enthusiasm. However since then most of the report’s recommendations about educational reforms have disappeared from the debates about Australia’s relations with
contemporary Asia.\textsuperscript{48} No allocations have subsequently been made for resourcing the White Paper’s recommendations. Moreover, its narrow (utilitarian) economic/trade focus appears to have contributed to a lack of interest in the paper among the general public (Connell 2015, p. 42).

On the White Paper’s release, the then Shadow Foreign Minister Julie Bishop applauded its recommendations and announced: ‘the Coalition will work with the States and Territories with the aim of making it compulsory to learn a foreign language from 7 years of age or earlier’ (Bishop 2012). The then Opposition Leader Tony Abbott gave similar public assurances (Abbott 2012). In 2014 the Abbott Government commissioned a review of educational curricula in Australia conducted by Professor Kenneth Wiltshire and Dr Kevin Donnelly. Their report barely mentions Asian studies (except to criticize its relevance in some parts of the curriculum) while attacking ‘the Australian Curriculum for failing to properly acknowledge and include reference to Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage and the debt owed to Western civilisation’ (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training 2014, p. 176). In short, there has been a persistent reluctance in government to recognize the importance of Asian studies in Australian schools and universities – a puzzling incongruity that is potentially harmful of Australia’s security and economic wellbeing as Asia’s contemporary geopolitical and economic significance to the country is increasing so rapidly. The results, as noted previously, have been declining student enrolments in Asian languages courses and a resistance to making Asian studies a central focus of the country’s educational curricula (Orton 2010). The importance of those studies is not simply for facilitating trade and commerce with Asia. Educating young Australians about Asia will give them the confidence to throw off anxieties and prejudices that contribute to negatively to their country’s awkward

\textsuperscript{48} Soon after the Abbott Government came to power in 2013 the White Paper disappeared from the Commonwealth Department of Education’s website.
partnering in its region.

It is important to understand why Asian studies remain underdeveloped in Australia’s educational curricula. Part of the explanation is that they have their roots firmly embedded in 1940s area studies approaches to research and teaching about Asia. Lucian Pye explains that area studies gained prominence in American universities during World War II, ‘when political science seemed to have embarrassingly little to contribute to the war effort, while area specialists had a great deal to offer, from interpreting and intelligence work to conducting psychological warfare and preparing for military government in the enemy countries’ (Pye 2001, p. 805). The political utility characterising area studies was carried over into the Cold War era when, as Peter Katzenstein notes, a great deal of area studies research was designed ‘to safeguard the American national interest in what was rapidly becoming a global confrontation with communism’ (Katzenstein 2001, p. 789; see also Morris-Suzuki 2000b). Other critiques of area studies focus on their characteristically a-theoretical approaches to their subject areas, their methodological incoherence, and unresolved questions about whether they belong to the social sciences or the humanities, or whether they belong to an applied policy category all of their own (Tessler et al. 1999, pp. 17-18).

The development of Asian studies in Australia reflects some or all of the weaknesses of the history of area studies generally. However, as Walker and Sobocinska have pointed out: ‘Generic Asia has been much imagined, visited and invoked [by

49 An example is the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict’s much cited The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, originally written as a cultural guide for American officials administering the post-war occupation of Japan, although also (even today) widely read as a ‘classic’ in cultural anthropology (Benedict 1947). It is noteworthy that Benedict never visited Japan, nor did she speak or read Japanese. In a comprehensive and at times scathing critique of Benedict’s essay, noted Japan scholar C. Douglas Lummis concludes: ‘It is policy research carried out for the U.S. Office of War Information. It is manipulative social science, showing how the behavior of the Japanese people can be predicted and controlled. […] It is political propaganda, providing an ideological basis for American domination in Japan and in Asia’ (Lummis 1982, p. 54).
Australians], as have individual nations that make up the Asian continent. It has been a presence both within and outside the nation’ (Walker and Sobocinska 2012, p. 20). This Asian ‘presence’ provides Australian educators at all levels with the opportunity to make use of what Raewyn Connell has identified as their peripheral positioning in international scholarship to challenge the hegemonic metropolitan (American and Western European) theorising of societies, governance systems and economies (Connell 2007; see also Connell 2015). In a similar vein Kanishka Jayasuriya has argued that by researching contemporary developments in Asia – thereby ‘reversing the usual West to East intellectual traffic’ – new insights into contemporary developments in Europe and North America may also be gleaned (Jayasuriya 2012; see also Jayasuriya 2015).

In short, Australian educators have opportunities provided by the Asian ‘presence’ in Australia, by their perspective and experiences on the periphery of mainstream academic scholarship, and their proximity to Asia to transcend the limitations of the old area studies approaches to Asia, developing academic programs to counter the ‘continuing tendency in the West to treat “Asia” as the Other’ (Ang 2000, p. 7). This will require more Asians teaching in Australian schools and universities, more staff and student exchanges with Asian schools and universities, the development of more bilingual education programs (especially in interpreting and translating studies), and more accessible curricula on the histories, cultures, and contemporary politics and economies of Asia taught in English for Australian students.

This means developing curricula that will enable young Australians to feel at home in Asia, to ‘relocate’ into a cosmopolitan Asia. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has observed: ‘Cosmopolitans suppose that all cultures have enough overlap in their vocabulary of values to begin a conversation’ (Appiah 2007, p. 57). It is not too much to suppose that Australia can contribute to the cosmopolitanisation of Asia as the so-called
Asian Century unfolds by moving beyond its dependent middle power imagining and engaging in subtle and sensitive diplomacy based on a foreign policy that is formed out deep understandings of the cultures and peoples among whom Australia is located. However, this is not an argument for the abandonment of time-honoured Anglo-Saxon-Celtic and related European values and traditions that for most of the time have served the cultural evolution of Australia well. Rather, it is an argument for articulating the relevance of those values and traditions, sensitively and intelligently, within the nascent conversations about the Asian Century, while simultaneously acknowledging the relevance to Australia of the cultures, histories, political systems, and economies of Asia.

Conclusion

This thesis has made the case that the alliance with the United States and educating Australians to become Asian-aware can be, therefore, the first steps towards a strategy for reinventing Australia’s dependent middle power imagining and overcoming its awkward partnering in the Asia Pacific. Transcending its dependent middle power identity could allow Australia to focus its foreign policy on regional issues and overcome its awkward partnering in the region. As Philomena Murray has observed: ‘The Australian policy and scholarly communities’ understandings of the processes of region building is extensive, but it might be worth elaborating a sound narrative of region building in Asia in order to reflect on how far the region (however defined) has come’ (Murray 2010, p. 39).

Gareth Evans has noted that there are many problems facing contemporary Asia: ‘terrorism, maritime security, arms control, drug and people trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, refugee management, and some major trade and financial imbalances.’ And, he reminds us, they ‘all need cooperative and collective action’ (Evans 2015, p. 7). He argues that this opens up opportunities for middle power diplomacy in the region. But
it will need to be a different kind of middle power diplomacy to the one that the Australia as a dependent middle power currently pursues. As Evans explains:

The biggest dogs on the block won’t always be receptive to the smaller ones nipping at their heels. But – remembering the way the Permanent Five were roped into engagement on Cambodia by the Australia–Indonesia initiative, and how the initially reluctant US, Russia and China were persuaded to endorse and join the APEC, ARF and EAS initiatives – there is good reason to hope that the region’s security leadership will be shared, and its destiny not forever hostage only to great power rivalry. (Evans 2015, p. 9).

If Australia’s leaders and fellow citizens are going to win the confidence and respect of their regional neighbours they will need a richly informed Asia awareness and a capacity for sensitive and effective niche diplomacy. A reinvented middle power identity for the country would see an Australia that is a more active participant in regional forums like the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, and the APEC while offering issues-based leadership in those forums. Moreover, it could see Australia engaging more with its Asian partners in extra-regional forums like the Asia-Europe Summit and the World Trade Organization. Being able to converse both with the West (including the United States) and with its Asian neighbours, the possibilities are boundless for Australia to become a sophisticated and effective regional citizen. Michael Wesley has aptly observed that a ‘Creative Australian diplomacy could be the beginnings of a new tradition: pragmatic and eclectic in drawing on past strengths and creative in finding new solutions’ (Wesley 2013, p. 12). By abandoning its dependent middle power imagining, Australia has nothing to lose but its awkward partnering in the region. By becoming self-reliant for its security, it will be able to establish a mature relationship with the United States and be open to cordial friendships with countries across Asia. This would see Australia approximating the kind of middle power that Mencius, Bartolus de Saxaferatto, and
Botero had in mind in previous centuries. By educating young Australians about Asian states, cultures and peoples, the majority of future generations are likely to realize that their ‘Asian anxiety’ is unfounded. And in the process they will discover that they can feel at home in a cosmopolitan Asia.

In short, the challenge for Australian foreign policy is for the country to imagine itself differently, to become different kind of middle power, to be – as J.D.B. Miller wisely expressed it in words quoted earlier – so ‘wise, skilled and sophisticated in our diplomacy that we are welcomed, by great powers and small alike, as a candid friend and trusted conciliator and go-between’ (Miller 1969, p. 136).
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