Chapter 5

AUSTRALIA’S DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICY IMPLICATION FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Australia’s defence and security policy and its relations with South-east Asia has been discussed in detail in the earlier chapters. This Chapter would deal with the implications of Australia’s policy (defence and security) to its close neighbours- the South-east Asian countries. Though some in the Australian academic world felt that Australia is not important for South-east Asia\(^1\); but it is important to Australians. Moreover, its militaristic policy structure and it being a close ally of America would implicate threat in one way or the other to its non-aligned neighbours. Any disturbance occurring on or over South-east Asia would effect Australia. Hence, Australia and South-east Asia could be taken as one security complex. It is understood, as Barry Buzan said tensions within a security complex is more pronounced than tensions between two security complex; for e.g. South Asia and South-east Asia hardly has any tension between each compared to tensions within the South Asian region. Hence it becomes apparent that Australia’s external policy does imply on a broad array of issues over south-east Asia region.

\(^1\) The people who were randomly interviewed at SDSC (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre) of ANU, Canberra, between 16\(^{th}\) October, 1998 to 5\(^{th}\) January, 1999; were of the opinion that Australia is not important to South-east Asia and so its defence and security policy means nothing to them, hence would not implicate anything.
Australia in order to maintain amicable relations with South-east Asia needs to allocate its resources through economic, cultural, educational exchanges apart from maintaining the defence cooperation. For this the policy world, as in academic world needs to broaden its security perspective engulfing military, economic, political, environmental and social issues into it. But then policy-makers are still clutching to the narrow military terminology of security and are moving dramatically towards force structure development and further militarism. Barry Buzan’s analogy of world being in an anarchic state is gaining more and more acceptance. In an anarchic world, deterrence through military means is inevitable. What Robert McNamara said in 1968 still reign's supreme in the minds of the policy makers, which goes as follows; “In a modernizing world security means development. Security is not military hardware, though it may include it, security is not military force, though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it”\(^2\). So in the modern world, in order to be developed, security can never be tackled without military force. Thus, Australia turning militaristic sounds feasible.

Australia in the post-Cold War world situation is faced with uncertainties in its region’s power-balance, the world becoming nuclear and China’s growing influence and power in the region made things really

ambiguous. The South-east Asian steady rise in economy and military strength also affected Australia’s regional attitude towards its foreign and defence policy. Australia’s security is in the region, and US couldn’t/wouldn’t come to Australia’s help often, unless it is a nuclear threat or a threat to its own interest in the region. But Australian regionalists are equally pessimistic with the regional security, as ‘they acknowledge Asia-Pacific as not a coherent geo-strategic environment and the fact that there is no simple ‘balance’ in the region\(^3\). The post Cold War era had driven home the point that Australia is going to be a part of Asia-Pacific and nothing could change this fact. The labour governments in Australia had been quite friendly with the region and Gareth Evans even said that “All Australia wants is to be accepted as a natural partner in a common neighbourhood of remarkable diversity rather than as a cultural misfit trapped by geography”\(^4\).

The implication of Australia’s Defence and Security Policy on the South-east Asian countries can be discussed under the following ‘manifested’ issues

(i) Dualism in Australia’s Defence and Security Policy
(ii) Australia’s threat perception: theoretical underpinnings.
(iii) Australia’s threat perception: practical overview.
(iv) Australia’s role in South-east Asian fears.


The ‘Latent’ issues in Australia’s defence and security policy-making.

(v) Defence cooperation vis-a-vis economic interdependence.
(vi) The relevance of FPDA, is there a need of another alliance?
(vii) Buffer state syndrome.
(viii) Human rights issue

Dualism in Australia’s Defence and Security Policy-Making

The contradiction in its policy structure is interesting to note. On the one hand, the policy is made with regard to ‘threat without enemies’ and on the other hand it says to make a defence posture having a technological edge and harness the potential of RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs), which none of the South-east Asian countries put together would have. Secondly, Australia’s political rhetoric is transmitting a dual image as Gary Smith says that the terms used by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister is in stark contrast to what the defence Minister points out, which are as follows\(^5\).

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<tr>
<th>Prime Minister &amp; Foreign Minister Rhetoric A</th>
<th>Defence Minister Rhetoric B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities, challenges</td>
<td>Threats, contingencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part of Asia-pacific region</td>
<td>Increasingly alone</td>
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<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
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<td>Trade</td>
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<td>Aid</td>
<td>Defence cooperation programmes</td>
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<td>Asia-Literacy</td>
<td>Intelligence – gathering capabilities.</td>
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Finally, the dualism or the dilemma between Australian foreign and defence policies and their interpretation of regional engagements faces another crisis. Whereas Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) adopted a policy of cooperative security designed to promote greater regional dialogue and cohesiveness, the Department of Defence (DOD) has pursued defence cooperation, which emphasizes greater military capability and compatibility among Australian regional allies.

This duality in Australian policy structure led to a great deal of ambiguity among Australian neighbours and other regional actors, as to how Australia wishes to play a role in the region. According to Geoffrey Wiseman “Australia is not only seeking to find common ground on ‘interest’ and core ‘values’ with the countries of the region, it is also at a deeper level of discourse seeking to ‘invent’ a region”. This also means that Australia being and feeling alien in the region does not really want to be Asian but wants Asians to be ‘in its own image’, which is almost acknowledged by Alexander Downar, Minister of Foreign Affairs, when he gave a lecture at the Australian National University, Canberra, that “... There is an important new need, apart from the creation of regional grouping like APEC, PECC, ARF etc, a need reflected in a new agenda to improve standards of governance and the protection of citizens at the regional and global level.

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This is a difficult area of policy because of several sensitivities about national sovereignty\textsuperscript{8}. ‘Improving the standards of governance’ also means going through the human rights issue which is quite a difficult task for Australia as far as strategic proximity is concerned i.e. the human rights violation in Indonesia is their internal matter while the Human rights violation in Burma is an international affair. Australian policies revolved round two principle objects vis-à-vis Asia, one to seek a modus vivendi with the nations of Asia, particularly South-east Asia and to build up safeguards against any future threat from the direction\textsuperscript{9}.

**Australia’s Threat Perception: Theoretical Underpinnings**

The Dibb review suggested that “ADF should be structured and equipped for action in Australia’s ‘Area of Direct Military Interest (ADMI)\textsuperscript{10}. The ADMI stretches from 4,000km from the Cocos Island of New Zealand and the chain in the islands of the South-west Pacific and over 3,000 km from the archipelago and island chain in the north to the Southern Ocean”\textsuperscript{11}. Further, Australia’s sphere of primary strategic interest ‘is in South-east Asia and South Pacific\textsuperscript{12}. Australia’s ADMI is an overextended

\textsuperscript{8} “Reshaping Australia’s Institutions of Diplomacy” Occasional Lecture by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Alexander Downer, to the Australian National University (ANU) Canberra, 18 February 1998.
concept of military reach, part of a military mindset which relates Australia to the world in ways counterproductive to security"\textsuperscript{13}. The present coalition government in Australia, shows a willingness to envisage more ‘forward deployment of forces in the region\textsuperscript{14}. Australia’s major security concerns comes from the northern and northwestern parts of Australia, which is nearer to the South-east Asian region. Kim Beazely, Former Minister of Defence said that “Australian Defence Force (ADF) should have the capability of meeting any hostile forces within our area of direct military interest with successive layers of forces capable of detecting, identifying and engaging any hostile approach. To achieve this, Australia needs flexible and long range capabilities for wide-area maritime surveillance, target acquisition and damage assessment”\textsuperscript{15}. There is duality even in the kind of threat faced by Australia. While some, especially the academia argues that ‘its immediate threat to sovergnity is from Australia’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), illegal immigration and smuggling especially from the golden triangle\textsuperscript{16}. Where as the ASP’97 touches on some threats that Australia would face in the short term like interdiction of Australian shipping either by submarines

\textsuperscript{13} Gary Smith, no II, p 28.
\textsuperscript{15} Geoffrey Wiseman,Op.cit. no. 3, p 117.
or sea mines disputes, attack from ballistic or cruise-missiles and the proliferation of weapons of mass distraction.\textsuperscript{17}

This lead Australia having F/A-18’s, F-111’s and Over The Horizon Radar (OTHR) facilities along with Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capabilities which are very sophisticated and extremely expensive. These weapon capabilities doesn’t make an impression that they are for defensive purposes. As ‘what makes a military build-up destabilizing is not the build-up \textit{per se}, but the balance between offensive and defensive forces.\textsuperscript{18} It is often argued that there is no such thing as ‘defensive’ weapons since defensive systems can act as force multiplier for the offense. When we term these so-called defensive forces as offensive, then there is serious need for concern among the regional countries. Though the Non-Provocative Defence (NPD) strategist defined ‘the build-up, training, logistics and doctrine of the armed forces are unsuitable for offense and are actually used as ‘deterrence-by-denial.\textsuperscript{19} These (according to the realist theory), especially the defence build-up and doctrine of the armed forces of one country can never be non-provocative to the other countries, more so to the neighbouring

\textsuperscript{17} Craig, A. Snyder; Op. Cit. no.6, p 97.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p 251.
countries. This is so since threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity is often associated with proximity.\textsuperscript{20}

Australian defence planners concerns over the 'ADM!' and the 'sphere of primary strategic interest' shows that Australia is basically dreading the Asian region, since any major attack or a low-intensity conflict could arise mostly from these regions, specifically from its northern or northwestern border areas, i.e. from South-east Asia.

The Force Structure Review's (FSR) major principles were (i) to maximise combat capabilities by reducing the number of service personnel involved in headquarters and base support functions and by using commercial and civilian support and maintenance where operationally feasible and cost effective, (ii) to meet the strategic focus on northern and western operations by 'extending western basing for the navy and northern basing for further major Army units, and by enhancing the forward deployment capacity of the Air Force, and (iii) to make greater use of Reserves including a new form of Reserve Service, the Ready Reserve (RR), to supplement the current reserve elements while maintaining appropriate force readiness.\textsuperscript{21} Robert Ray, the former minister for defence had put in a very simplistic manner the emphasis and the inevitability of the


need of force structure, when he said "...The main threat to Australia is currently an economic and trade one. The Defence organization plays a major part in confronting that threat as much as it does other potential threats of a more military kind".  

Australia talked of self-reliance in 1976 White paper but it came into force in the 1987 White paper and later was accepted totally in the 1994 White Paper; along with regional security. The moment self reliance became a policy priority, Australia vouched for a 'New Militarism'. David Lee and Steward Woodman views Australia's defence policy in the future would, most probably be a convenient 'mixture of self-reliance and forward defence'. The emphasis on regional engagement has highlighted the growing tensions between engagement, priorities and objectives on the one hand and 'defence of Australia' on the other. While Australia is talking of intensifying defence cooperation with South-east Asian countries, at the same time it is arming against potential threat from these South-east Asian nations. There is a thin line bifurcating self-reliance and regional cooperation, where Australia has to make itself clear about.

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22 Ibid, p 15.
Australia's Threat Perception: Practical Overview

Paul Dibb says 'the policy-world is different from the academic world, where the idealist reign. We are in the realist realm'. So being realist, they have toed the path toward militarism. The new Australian militarist critique Marek Thee defines the characteristics of militarism as (i) an external orientation, fear of external threats, concern to protect international interests abroad, power projection well beyond border, alliance system; (ii) Capital intensive war preparation, reliance upon comparatively high levels of military technology and comparatively low levels of personnel; (iii) Substantial domestic military industry. When most of the Australian equipments are either tuned for the region or are targeted in the region, how can one call it non-provocative defence? The offensive nature of Australia's major weapons system is encouraging a regional arms race, i.e. through the purchase of 75 F/A-18s, upgrading of 18 of the 22 F-111 long-range bombers and the order for 6 Swedish-designed submarines to replace the current 6 Oberon-Class Vessels. The navy's surface fleet is to expand from 12 ships to include 2 guided-missiles frigates and 8 'ANZAC' frigates.

25 Paul Dibb in a personal interview on 22nd December, 1998 at Canberra was talking of how the realist differed from the idealists and why the policy makers are realist when he says that the real world is very different and anarchic and so the policy makers needs to have a clear, pragmatic picture of the world rather than like the academia.


27 Ibid.
Australia’s surveillance and early warning networks such as the Jindalee OTHR system at Alice Springs could locate ships and aircraft’s up to 2,000 km north of the Australian coast. To back up the information accurately, the government has AEW&C aircraft and these direct F/A-18s to the target. The P-3C Orion Long-Range Maritime Patrol (LRMP) aircraft is also equipped for these purposes. Government’s Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) operates electronic spy bases at shoal Bay (NT), RAAF-Pearce (WA) Cabarlah (Q ld), HMAS Harman (ACT) and jointly with British Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) in Hong Kong at Sek Kong and Tai Mo. These areas are equipped with high frequency radio transmission for locating ships in the eastern Indian Ocean, Western Pacific and South-east Asian region. Indonesia’s Palapa Satellite is easily accessible to the shoal Bay facility. Moreover, Palapa satellite is used by Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Brunei and Papua New Guinea (PNG). The DSD has access to all these communications. Last but not the least, the Defence Satellite Communication station at Geraldton (WA) has the accessibility of 93 Satellites, including satellites deployed by the US for military and intelligence use, the USSR, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, India and Japan and international communication satellites (INTELSAT).

29 Ibid, p. 29.
31 Ibid, p 40.
The Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) operations in the 'sea-air gap' through the FFG-7 frigates, the ANZAC frigates and Colin Class Submarines are suited for regional operations and for strategic and tactical mobility. The helicopter support ships and amphibious landing capabilities etc., all have the potential to act for or against the South-east Asian region. Australia's militarized concept of security could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to a vigorous arms race in the region particularly since Australia insists on having a military edge over its neighbours. Secondly, its relation with its neighbours is not tension free, especially with Malaysia. Australian government's politically incorrect use of words with regard to Malaysia and Indonesia over human rights and other issues. Thailand over China issue et.al.

Apart from offensive military capabilities, Australia is projecting in the region and towards South-east Asian countries, as mentioned above, it is also using diplomatically and politically incorrect statements like John Howard, the Prime Minister, in his first visit to Indonesia said "Australia did not claim to be Asian like every other country in the Asia-Pacific region we bring our own cultural attitudes and history to the region....". This question

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34 Tribune (Chandigarh), 28th Nov. 1996.
on identity, defining between its history and geography sparks tensions. Moreover, Pauline Hansen’s racist remarks were not exactly condemned by the government, which further gave the impression that the government actually supports that kind of statement, which made many Asian countries, especially South-east Asian countries apprehensive of Australia’s motives. Since most of the immigrants to Australia were from these countries. Thirdly, Hawke Government’s description of Malaysia’s decision to hang two convicted Australian drug traffickers as ‘barbaric’ and Keating’s accusation that Mahatir was a ‘recalcitrant’ for failing to participate in the APEC Seattle summit, shows the highhanded attitude of the Australian government. Australia should use politically non-controversial statements rather than act as adolescents and hurling words at each other in a friendly brawl turned sour. As John Ravenhill says that ‘Australia is the bridge between East and West’. This too leads to some sort of doubt as Australia is a major ally of US and South-east Asia doesn’t want any external superpower to interfere in the affairs of the region. The question here is what should be Australia’s role in the region. It could be easily answered, if Australia doesn’t try to identify itself with either east or west but with its own self, i.e. *Australia*.

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36 Ibid, 21.
By now it is clear that Australian defence and security planners have chosen the realist path, with a strong emphasis on militarism and after all, it is just a growing power and is in its adolescence though they (the planning committee as well as the academia) terms Australia to be in its adulthood. Richard Bolt had an altogether different view of Australia’s position saying that “Australia has entered a mal-adjusted, macho adolescence in which it is seeking to make its mark on the region by military means rather than by developing deeper relationships with the people’s and government’s in the region”\textsuperscript{37}. It could happen if economy i.e. trade is given a chance to grow. Australia has nearly 56.3 per cent of trade with East Asia, like Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China put together, most of them being traditional partners, i.e., since 1950’s. While only 15.7 per cent of trade with ASEAN countries and spends as much as $A23 billion in defence cooperation with the ASEAN. While it hardly has any defence cooperation with East Asian Countries.

\textbf{Australia’s Role in South-east Asian Fears}

Rapid change and increasing complexity mark the Asian region, more so with the end of the Cold War and the constant shifting of power balance. South-east Asia, a cluster of small island states (apart from Indonesia, which is spread on a wide ocean area) though economically successful had a major

setback recently due to the economic crisis which had effected the whole world in no uncertain terms. Each of the South-east Asian states is grappling with the fact that if there is economic crisis to this devastating extent, then security which is always on a thin edge, can be marred with a mere swish of the wind, coming from China directly or from Australia indirectly. It’s fears could be legitimized, as South-east Asia had been a focus of interest and rivalry among the superpowers, ever since the Cold War had started. It is due to the major powers intervention that South-east Asia had the fundamental sense of insecurity and instability in the region. There arose a fervour among these countries to eliminate these big powers influence from the region, which led to the formation of the much talked of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) which was articulated in three consecutive documents like ZOPFAN Declaration in 1971, the ZOPFAN blueprint and in 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. The formation of ASEAN as a corporate body to cope with intramural tensions and act at times as a diplomatic community took place concurrently with rising economic performances in most states. It has served the practical purpose of regional security at that time and also for times to come. ASEAN had been quite well functioning as a vehicle for common security. ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) which became operational by 1994, as a code of conduct

governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence building, preventive diplomacy and political and security cooperation, but without any specific reference to its use for dispute resolution. The major problem is to confront the problem of power in the new strategic environment which emerged in Asia-Pacific. ARF is also the only possible framework capable of drawing in all the major powers of the Asia-Pacific. There is talk of what Greg Fry said of a ‘future Asia in which the members could be ASEAN plus Japan, China, Korea plus Australia and New Zealand, which apart from Malaysia all agreed. He further said rather optimistically that the process of institutionalization of a regional forum is already going on.

ASEAN had been successful for not letting the suspicion and dispute among each other, take the colour of armed conflict. Apart from this inter-ASEAN strife (which could not be called as conflict), the China factor looms large in their security scenario, due to its fast growing economy and also its aggressive tendencies in the South China Sea. East Asian economic crisis downturn has drastically reduced regional demand for military equipment, which in turn could increase China’s military superiority over its neighbours. Moreover, none of the ASEAN country’s have any plans to

40 Ibid, p 89.
41 Greg Fry in a personal interview on 21 December, 1998, talked of a workshop he conducted in Japan where the proposal of future Asia and its perspective members was discussed which was almost accepted by every country participating, apart from Malaysia.
42 IISS, Vol 4, 1 same 6: July 98, p 1.
acquire weapons of mass destruction and for power projection. Its arms-buildup is relatively modest; especially among the smallest and most economically advanced countries like Singapore and Malaysia. Thailand has been the most pronounced arms builder in the region\(^{43}\) and have been also supporting China's moves in the region's security. It is equally unthinkable for ASEAN; a militarily weak, politically divided and inward looking, to form a military alliance to counter China. The latest crisis had led to the dependence on US military presence, especially Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and to some extent some South-east Asian countries like Philippines and Singapore. Here, what Australia could do is to play a part to form a strong security pact, need not necessarily mean a military pact, with ASEAN and lead the region towards security. Australia could do that by gaining the confidence of the ASEAN countries by potraing itself as neither East nor West but a bridge between the two, as John Ravenhill had mentioned in his working paper\(^{44}\). Since Australia was not 'burdened with the onus of colonialism and imperialism like Western powers and should stop pretending to be an outpost of western civilization which in fact she is not. She should on the contrary, advertise herself truthfully as the land of great social experiments and an escapee from colonialism, thereby appealing to


the nation's of Asia. But then such an approach is not yet given much thought by the framers of Australian policy. There is strong ambiguity in its policy structure. And in its very ambiguity lies ASEAN's fear of a middle-power, having a strong military alliance with US. ASEAN is trying to make some sense out of this ambiguity and dualism, where, how and in what way Australia is going to play the role in the smooth working of regional security.

**Latent Issues Implicating on South-east Asian Security vis-a-vis Australia's Defence and Security Policy**

Though most of the academia feels that Australia is not important for South-east Asian countries and so doesn't really pose a threat, but they fail to realize how any or every country is a threat to the other. Barry Buzan while writing on security emphasized the 'extraordinary difficulty states have in assessing and acknowledging the threat they pose to others'. He further points out that threat occurs due to certain factors like "the specificity of its identity, its nearness in space and time, the probability of its occurring, the weight of its consequences and also the perception of threat is amplified by historical circumstances". What Australia shares with South-east Asia is the 'nearness of space and time and the probability of its occurring'. Ever

since Australia had taken up self-reliance, it has been projecting two contradictory views which has been dealt earlier. On the one hand, it says military build-up is important for the safeguarding of the much coveted sea-air gap, especially, the north and north-western part, on the other it says that the countries like Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia provides ‘a strategic triangle that provides stability across the most likely approaches of Australia’s north’.

The manifested implications of Australia’s defence and security issues were dealt earlier. The following pages will deal with the latent meaning in the defence policy towards South-east Asia.

The Defence Cooperation vis-a-vis Economic Interdependence

The idealist or liberalists thinking of bringing the world to the marketplace from the battlefield is a legible answer in today’s nuclear world; where a nuclear war is most unlikely. Geo-economics has gained an upper hand to Geo-politics. The European era had given way to Pacific era, and the name of the game in the Pacific is ‘economy’. The end of the Cold War had led to harp on the liberalist theories. The system of independent states no longer depends upon balance of power. The ‘obsolescence of a major war’

48 Lachlan Strahan, “The Dread Frontier in Australia’s Defence Thinking”, in Graeme Cheeseman and Bruce Grant’s (ed), “Discourse to Danger and Dread Frontier: Australia’s Defence and Security Thinking after the Cold War”, (Allen & Unwin and RSPAS, the ANU, Canberra, 1996), p 175.
in today’s nuclear world has led to believe in the liberalist ideas of interdependence, especially through trade and foreign investment. The terms like globalization, global village is soon catching up the psyche of the people.

Australia has negligible trade relations with South-east Asian countries as said above. But it has strong defence cooperation with these countries. This shows that since they are strategically important for Australia, it could only think of a defence cooperation, a typical realist approach. ‘Realist approach has the risk of creating self-fulfilling prophesies, while liberalists emphasis on trade and democratization lead to wider inequalities in the societies and also in the region’. Since the liberal attitude would not /could not lead to war, while the realist approach has a strong tendency in creating conflict, the former is worth the try. But then Australian analysis of world scenario is strictly that of a realist. As Ian Maclachlan, Minister for defence pointed out, “we are not dewy-eyed idealist who think that growing economic interdependence guarantee us security. Nor do we think that regional dialogue on security is an alternative to credible and effective defence capabilities……” Most of them even justified the importance of having defence cooperation with these countries.


51 Australia, Department of Defence, Address by the Minister of Defence, The Hon’ble Ian McLachlan., AUMP, Media Release, Monday 15th July 1996.
will generate confidence and trust among each other. Gordon Bilney writes "one of the principle benefits of defence cooperation bilateral or multilateral, with any of the countries in our immediate region is that it helps stake a claim for active Australian participation in the gradually emerging sense of community of shared strategic interest in South-east Asia"52. Defence cooperation, on its own, does not bring a shared strategic interest, if and when a dispute arises. With defence cooperation, no two countries can hold back a war, no matter of how low intensity it is, the only matter of concern during a dispute or conflict taking the shape of war is the economic relation, trade and investment, one country has with the other. When economic relation is negligible and of no much significance between two countries, there is always room for friction.

ASEAN playing a lead role as a regional grouping views Australia with suspicion, while the Whitlam government proposed for Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC) and also Australia’s sponsorship to APEC53. It also poses a threat to ASEAN integrity as a viable regional grouping which has been remarkably successful, among all the regional groupings in the world, both economically and militarily. What Australia needs to do at the moment is to strike a balance between economic

cooperation and defence cooperation to make regional security more long lasting. European Economic community (EEC) is doing better than what NATO could have/would have achieved.

Relevance of FPDA-In Need of a New Alliance?

The breaking of bipolarity made the need for alliance, unnecessary. But most of the policy-makers all through the world believes in an anarchic system and so want to maintain military alliances, unlike the optimism of the 'dewy-eyed idealist'\textsuperscript{54}. With the demiss of erstwhile USSR, WarsawPact was dismantled, but not NATO which increased its membership taken from the members of the Warsaw Pact. What are they aligning for or against? Just the same way, Australia has military alliance with US and New Zealand through the ANZUS, which was further strengthened in the post Cold War days. Another military alliance in the Asia-Pacific region, including United Kingdom (UK), US, Australia, Malaysia and Singapore was the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) which came into force in 1954. But FPDA, looks more like a hold over the past, rather than part of a coherent defence strategy\textsuperscript{55}. FPDA, continues the operational role of Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) and further modernization of IADS and the Exercise Flying Fish was FPDA’s largest ever and first combined air and maritime

\textsuperscript{54} Ian McLachlan’s, Op.cit. no. 51.

exercise. Apart from a good, working defence relationship, Australia's relation with Malaysia is not all that good. Moreover, Indonesia generally views FPDA as an Australian attempt to 'ostracise Indonesia'. Indonesia, the closest neighbour and within the range of Australia's ADMI could not be left feeling castaway, when all Australia wants in the region is peace and stability. In these circumstances, it is but logical to feel the need of a new alliance in the region including Indonesia, Philippines as well as Thailand and Vietnam along with its traditional partners Singapore and Malaysia; without UK or US. This would not only create a strong bond between each other, but also trust to some extent, if coupled with various confidence-building measures, leading to transparency. If Australian defence policymakers like to call themselves as realist, then let it be full blown and make such a cohesive security regime work in the region.

The Buffer Syndrome

Though Paul Dibb feels 'Buffer State' as a concept has become old fashioned the concept still remains a strong International Relations theory. How Australia is seeing South-east Asia is something to that level. Since, it has China, Japan and India (in that order) as threats looming large in the horizon, in today's post Cold War era. China, especially, gains a

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56 Australia, Department of Defence, DPAO, 197/98, Media Release, Tuesday October 6, 1998.
57 Craig A. Snyder, in Moho Malik's, (ed), Op.cit. no. 6, p 102.
58 Paul Dibb in a personal interview on 22 December, 1998 discarded the notion of buffer state in today's world and also denied the possibility of Australia looking at these neighbours in that light.
strong emphasis among Australia’s defence policy-makers. Paul Dibb, identifies China as ‘the next hegemonic challenger’ and affirms that Asian powers, especially China have demonstrated old fashioned attitudes to nationalism, state sovergenity and the use of force\textsuperscript{59}. Lachlan Strahan, further points out that, Paul Dibb quoting the realist \textit{par excellence}, Henry Kissinger, argues that the west needs to assert a new balance of power to contain the emerging the threat. Strahan, gives the concept of ‘frontier zone’ pointing out that \textit{frontier} often acts as a buffer between competing states and has become a place of war. He supports this point by arguing that, ‘in part, South-east Asia became a vast frontier zone between Australia and red China, a battleground between Cold War forces and different races\textsuperscript{60}. For Australia, there is no much importance of the South-east Asian countries or the South Pacific countries apart from the fact that they are the main source though which an attack can be staged on Australia. As Craig A. Snyder, argues that the South-east Asian and South-west Pacific countries are not considered to be legitimate threat to Australia, having no much economic relations, are seen as focal points of Australia’s defence cooperation programmes and potential customers of Australia’s arms industry. These states also serve as a buffer between Australia and the more dangerous states beyond the ‘nearer’ groups\textsuperscript{61}.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid, p 157.
\textsuperscript{61} Craig A. Snyder, Op.cit. no. 6, p 98.
Australia’s policy structure, i.e., the policy of regional engagement also shows that it is not uniformly applied to the Asia-Pacific region. Australia is seeking a ‘strategic partnership’ with South-east Asia involving increased bilateral cooperation, especially in strategic planning exchanges, industry and science’. This strategy is aimed at enhancing that regions capacity to exclude potentially hostile influences that could also threaten Australia’s security. Another point of contention is Australia’s dealings with ‘interoperability’ – achieving different levels of cooperation and mutual dependence. Australia is ‘maximising interoperability with US at the highest level. A high priority will also be given to investment, to develop interoperability with ASEAN countries.

Thus, it is understood that South-east Asia is particularly important due to its size, proximity, economic dynamism and location across its strategic approaches.

Human Rights Issue

Human Rights violation is ‘the’ threat to humanity. Yet, country’s which are rich and powerful, try to fight for human dignity only when it suits their interest. HR issue has never been taken up for its very violation in

62 Graeme Cheeseman, in Cheeseman and Bruce Grant’s, (ed), Op.cit. no. 48, p 254.
this so-called civilized world but the benefits it reaps. UN had achieved remarkable results in Cambodia, but not ever in any place, say in Africa or in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or in Burma et. al. US has taken up where UN stopped, for of course, as a cover-up to US' internal problems. When these rich and powerful countries have the resources, the power, why not fight for pure and simple humanitarian reasons? Why and how does the national interest or let us say the vested interest of the few be given priority over such hideous crime of man against man? This is a 'real politik' situation. This is indeed anarchy!

Coming back to Australia, one could see that the Australian government is vocal on human rights issues only towards those countries that are not its significant economic and/or diplomatic partners and have basically no strategic relevance like say Burma, So the Australian government is quite agitated with the Human Rights violation in Burma but not when the same happens in East Timor. The Australia-Indonesia relation could be viewed as 'real politik' says Grey Fry. The foreign and defence planners in Australia have to be more concerned with the reality\(^65\). The Canberra’s, attitude shows that trade and security is superior to human rights in Indonesia. While its attitude is totally different in Cambodia and later in Burma. This double standard would lead to certain straight jacket

\(^{65}\) Ibid.
assumption that Australia is not exactly thinking of regional security having a military and economic dimension but also the human dimension, without which every theory is baseless.

To understand the implications of Australia’s defence and security policy over the South-east Asian countries, we need to see through the factors influencing each others policy, the threat scenario, the psyché of the policy-makers, their assumption of the region and how each of them goes about it. Both Australia and South-east Asia gives emphasis to the regional security but in their own different ways. While Australia wants a broader regional forum and talk on security along with the individual countries on their ‘choke points’ as well, where as South-east Asia, under ASEAN, consciously avoid talking about the delicate disputes like border issues or interpersonal issues which are likely to arose tension and have very comfortably avoided especially, under ARF, any specific reference to use it as a forum for dispute resolution. Remarkably ASEAN has been a success for the past three decades. Secondly, Australia’s defence posture gives major emphasis to arms build-up and alliance, in short militarism while South-east Asia gives more emphasis on economy, inspite of the military having a strong hold on the states’ political system. This, militaristic tendency did lead to ‘arms dynamics’. Malcolm Chalmers justifies this when

he writes, "none of the South-east Asian countries has any plans to acquire weapons of mass destruction and power-projection capabilities". Moreover, in spite of their remarkable economic growth, the defence spending hasn’t increased to the level of their GDP.

Thirdly, Australia’s western fetish and their constant humming off to the Asians, of Australia being western and so alien had made the small island countries either apprehensive of their motives, like the South Pacific or made them suspicious of their underlying notion behind the remarks they make and policies they write like the South-east Asian countries. More so, as Australia’s defence policy is a part of Western group rather than that of a South-east Asian block. Greg Fry further pointed out that ‘Australia is not fully engaged in South-east Asia as a natural force.

Fourthly, Australia’s over dependence on US, through ANZUS bilaterally also makes South-east Asian countries think twice to what kind of a role Australia is going to play, a leader?, a conciliator? Or as a partner like other Asian countries? Australia is giving the impression of being a regional policeman. Stuart Harris says that Australia’s defence planning has undergone a change from ‘being a kind policeman in the region (neighbourhood watch?) shifting to a need to be seen to be relevant. It would

68 Grey Fry in a personal interview on 21 December, 1998 confirmed the above words.
69 Ibid.
be seen as Australia's linking itself more closely to a US support role as a regional policeman, contrary to Australia's efforts to seek closer alignments with Asia. With US help Australia need not have a closer relation with Asia, it could do so even without such help.

Finally, the very ambiguity, dualism and its new militaristic tendencies does imply regional imbalance. Most of the South-east Asian countries feel Australian militarism as aggressive and has gone a long way towards achieving the feat of a regional power. But the comment of senior military aide Marshall Teddy Rusdy describing 'Australia as a military nuisance' confirms again that Australia is in an adolescent stage and has to go a long way in order to achieve confidence among the regional countries and have a comfortable region.