CHAPTER FIVE

AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC LINKS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA

5.1 Background

A nation like an individual perceives threats of all kinds -- ideological, cultural, political, economic and strategic-- to its existence and makes necessary arrangements for its security and well-being. The threat perception is central to national security and therefore a fundamental concern of any government. Threats come in diverse forms, vary enormously in range and intensity. Threats cannot be assessed accurately, however, their assessments are based on probabilities. Just as an individual householder would take all precautions to preserve the life and limb, prevent theft and damage to the property or livelihood, any nations make decisions for their security keeping in mind the competing pressures, priorities, and motives. Security, said Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, ‘is as much about the protection of individuals as it is about the defence of territorial integrity of states.’ To him, security in ‘our highly interdependent world is indivisible; we cannot simply confine our vision to our immediate neighborhood and ignore what might be happening further afield.’ Security of a nation has been compared to the breathing of oxygen in real life. Security is like oxygen – you tend not to notice it until you begin to lose it, but once that occurs there is nothing else that you can think about.’ The modern concept of security has been broadened beyond the concepts of diplomacy and military policy, including terrorism, AIDS, drug trafficking, immigration, political relations, economic competition, environmental pollution, famine and information warfare. They all pose threats to the national security. There is no modern state in the world that can escape


the shivering tension between primacy of national interests and growing necessity for entering into multilateral undertakings and networks.\(^5\)

Australia, a 'white continent abandoned at the foot of Asia' to quote an American novelist John Updike, for much of its history, saw itself as part of a remote and vulnerable white enclave in a region which Australians did not understand.\(^6\) Alienated from the sources of authority, power and protection, it, therefore, relied on great and powerful friends. In 1950s and 1960s, the threat of Asian communism occupied the mind of Australia. Japan was profoundly distrusted. China was considered a barbarous power.\(^7\) It was termed as 'the unreasoned fear and hostility' to exclude a small number of permanent colored settlers.

The core elements of Australia's strategic principle comprise its unique geography, vulnerability of its northern approaches and key importance of the sea-air gap; and the warning time that could be brought to bear in more credible low level conflicts. Without disputes and no readily identifiable threat of significant military action against its territory or interests, Australia does not seem to have reasons to fear. However, the conceptual basis of Australian strategic thinking has undergone considerable transformation since the 1970s. Now they are concerned more with its defense, regional contingencies in South Pacific and regional defense cooperation with states in Southeast Asia and South Pacific.

Given its location, relative isolation, small population, large area, unique history, and distance from countries of cultural affinity, Australia, considered itself vulnerable from the North, and therefore looked to the external powers for protection. It appeared


more as an appendage of the British Empire (till World War-II), and of American alliance, since then. Britain’s security was its security and London’s enemies were its enemies. Australia’s policies were geared to contribute to the global strategies of its major allies. Their defence rather than the local defence was its policy.

Under the tutelage of domino theory, Australian casualties exceeded American casualties in the World War I. Australia sent 330,000 troops to Britain during the World War-I out of total population of 5 million. Of these 59,000 died 8 During World War –II, it sent some 550,000 servicemen and women overseas and lost over 3400 of them, 8031 died in inhumane conditions in Japanese prisoner of war camps. Australian defence preparedness was under the forward defence. The maintenance in friendly hands of the land route from China through Indo-china and Malaya to the archipelago and Australia’s north was seen as vital to prevent communist influence and power from coming within striking range of Australia. Australia’s aim was, therefore, to keep the threat distant from its shores. 9 It showed the high concern of Australia to the rise of communist China. Australia’s defence policy was, thus, designed in consonance with Britain and United States to counter the spread of communism by all means-short of war and resist further aggression 10

A series of security alliances emerged in an apparent bid to make Southeast Asia a security shield. ANZUS, SEATO etc were concluded to contain the march of communism. The possibility of Beijing –Jakarta axis, the communist and nationalists inspired movements closer to Australia also added to its worries. These developments led the Foreign Minister, Gordon Freeth in 1969 to remark that Australia should not be frightened

---


10 Defence Committee Report on A Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy, 8 January 1953, p.10, quoted in n.9, p. 284.

219
at the sight of Russians in the Indian Ocean because they could act as a restraint upon the Chinese.

However, with Kissinger-Nixon openings to China, and changes on equation, China was seen providing a useful counterweight to growing Soviet power in the region. Growing Soviet presence in Indian Ocean, modest base in Somalia and Ethiopia, conclusion of a treaty with Vietnam in 1978 and communication and intelligence facilities there, invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 gave rise to Australia’s apprehensions of Russian desires for access to warm waters in the Indian Ocean.

Indonesian activities also stirred a sense of insecurity in the 1960s. Its claims to West New Guinea (West Irian or Irian Jaya) that was only a line’s thickness from the Australian administered Territory of Papua New Guinea fuelled further fears. Soon thereafter they clashed physically in Borneo over President Sukarno’s venture of confrontation with Malaysia. Relations with Indonesia were normalized only after the fall of Sukarno.

Australian strategy of ‘forward defence’ was frustrated by the British withdrawal from “east of Suez” from the late 1960s and American Guam Doctrine, which would provide a back-up strategic role in Asia. These developments heralded a move in the direction of a strategy of “self-reliance” from the 1970s. The 1976 White Paper incorporated the policy of self-reliance, and reinforced in the Review of Australian Capabilities 1986. Finally the high point of the self reliance was one of the prominent the features of the Defence of Australia 1987, which is considered a most through reconsideration of Australia’s defence since the World War II detailing a comprehensive policy taking into account geographic, strategic, demographic and economic factors. Australia’s defence policy underwent significant change from a forward defence to increased self-reliance. In this journey, it combined both change and continuity. The change in policy was intensified with the declaration of Guam Doctrine by President Nixon calling upon the Asian countries to undertake greater responsibility for their own defence. Nixon’s Guam remarks on July 25, 1969 advocated regional defense self reliance.
doctrine that asserted three propositions: the US would honor all its treaty commitments, it would provide a shield if a nuclear power threatened the freedom of an allied nation or one whose survival was considered vital. US security and the security of the region as a whole and in cases involving other types of aggression, Washington shall furnish military and economic assistance when threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.\textsuperscript{11} The conclusions of bilateral and multilateral arrangements by the countries in the region were grown out of these concerns. It was thought necessary for Australia to cultivate the habit of consultation with neighbors before announcing force structure and other decisions with potential regional security implications.\textsuperscript{12}

In the following paragraphs an overview of the defense strategies adopted by Australia over time and changing perspectives on the security scenario are discussed.

5.2 Defense strategies: Historical context

5.2.1 Empire Defense

The Defense Committee in its review of Australia's strategic circumstances in 1946, concluded, 'the basic ingredients of Australia's defence must be Empire Cooperation since the size of this country demands for its defence, armed forces and an industrial potential quite beyond our present capacity...(Australia's military forces) should be organized and trained that they can fit in as complete units with Empire forces in any theatre, keeping particularly in mind the Pacific Theatre...'\textsuperscript{13} The success of communism in China, the surge in the nationalistic movements in Southeast Asia, increasing power of the Soviet Union and possibilities of communist expansion in Eastern and Central Europe on the back of Moscow, its ambitions in Middle East coupled with the tense situation in Korea, Malaya, Indo-china, were viewed with great concerns in Canberra. Under such


circumstances, Australia's strategy of security remained to be identified with the Empire and the United States. Australian forces were primarily trained for overseas commitment in alliance with the Imperial forces. In this scheme of Empire defence, Australia worked closely with them extending generous support in many conflicts, and regional defence in the Pacific was to be worked out with the Empire.

The fall of Singapore in 1942, British withdrawal of its forces from the East of Suez made it clear that the Empire was no longer in a position to stand for the protection of Australia. Communist insurgencies in South and Southeast Asia driven by nationalist sentiments, attack on South Korea by communist North Korea, coinciding with communist led industrial strife in Australia, convinced that the monolithic world communist movement was bent on imposing an alien and acceptable ideology on others.

5.2.2 Forward Defence /External Guarantee

Canberra remained preoccupied with the continuing sense of remoteness, vulnerability and dependence. That made it look for external protectors. A sense of dependence always appeared stronger than the notion of self-reliance. Forward Defense (FD) became its strategy encouraging powerful friends (Britain and then the United States) to interpose themselves between Australia and its potentially hostile and sometimes communist near neighbors. Security arrangements under this doctrine became inextricably linked to 'Britain or the United States exercising predominant influence in the region – as in a Pax Britannica or an American Lake – or at least balancing the presence of a potentially hostile power already involved in the area.\(^{14}\) The doctrine of forward defense involved the deployment of combat forces in 'frontline' states' directed against continuing worldwide struggle between communism and the Free World. Hence collective security was Australian strategy to respond the complex politico-military situation in the region. America also saw benefit in involving Australia to address the problems it perceived in the wake of de-colonization, political developments and counter insurgency warfare in many

\(^{14}\) Grey Fry (ed.), *Australia's Regional Security* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), p.1
places. On its part, Australia continued to look to America as its primary protector and guarantor.

Korean War, Premier Menzies said, “cannot be looked at isolation, nor can we in Australia regard it as remote from our own interests and safety”. To him, the Indo-China conflict and the operation of communist guerrillas in Malaya were evidences of communist aggression in Asia, an aggression which is full of menace for us. Australia realized that the decision by the US to engage communist China presented a unique opportunity to lock Washington into a regional defense arrangement, and ‘thus to commit her to a practical guarantee of active support to Australia through the ANZUS and SEATO Treaties.’ It “substantially decided the issue of Australian adhesion to US purposes in Asia for twenty two years”. American-Australian security relations thus came to be dominated, by the overwhelming US presence in the Pacific. Five Power Defense Agreements (FPDA) consisting of Australia along with the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore was concluded to promote regional stability centered on Singapore and Malaysia’s security. FPDA was “…to strengthen the overall security of the region from external threats and armed attacks.” They were all based on forward defense policy and reliance on great and powerful friends. Under this policy, Australia fought alongside British and American allies in four wars in Asia aimed largely at communists in Korea, Malaya (the Malayan Emergency), Borneo (Konfrontasi) and Vietnam. Australia also hosted facilities to the United States. All these commitments sprang from dependence.

15 Quoted in Alan Dupont, n.6, p.41.
17 Bell, Dependent Ally; A Study in Foreign policy, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.45
18 JA Camilleri, An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy (Melbourne: Jacaranda Press Pty. Ltd. 1975), p.68.
Forward defense guided Australian strategic responses and actions in Southeast Asia which was believed to be of fundamental strategic importance to Australia’s defense, to prevent the spread of communism and political instability. Given Australia’s military weakness, this approach needed to be based on its links to ANZUS and SEATO, and above all upon the presence of the United States in the area. Australia, therefore wanted, United States’ commitment to Southeast Asia to show its presence politically, diplomatically and if necessary, militarily.

Forward defense that began with the dispatch of the 8th Division to Malaya in mid-1941, substantially ended with the final withdrawal of combat forces from Vietnam in early 1972. The withdrawal of British, and American forces from mainland Southeast Asia, American defeat in Vietnam and parallel announcement of Guam Doctrine caused its demise. However the relevance of alliances to Australian security seems to have been continuing, as has been marked by Defense Minister in the aftermath of the Cold War and the lessons learned from the Gulf War that strengthened ‘our belief in a policy of self-reliance in defense, effective regional cooperation and strong alliances.’ 19.

5.2.3 Alliance relationships

Two basic tenets of Australian foreign and defence policy are: focus on Asia Pacific region and the continuation of the alliance relationship. Alliance relationships have remained tools of ‘pragmatic’ foreign policy and the fundamentals to the security of Australia. An intricate network of alliances and coalitions sustains among Australia and the countries at Australia’s door steps. These alliances act as shields against threats, link Australia with Asia and the West, provide bridges to them, and have continued to shape Australia’s future regional security postures. Most significant alliances entered into by Australia and relevant to the context of Australia’s strategic environments are discussed below.

5.2.3.1 South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)

Australia joined Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954. Also known as Manila Pact, it was considered a Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty as a first line of defense against communism. The developments in Malaya and Indo-China made Australia seek refuse under this pact. It was an "absolutely essential link in the chain of Australian defense" to protect the neighborhood, assist Asian neighbors and repel the advances of communism.20

5.2.3.2 Australia, New Zealand and United States (ANZUS)

Concluded in 1951, it was viewed as the corner stone of Australian security providing a pattern of close defense cooperation, with accelerated joint military exercises and defence technology collaboration. Article IV was interpreted as "...the meat of the treaty" and therefore the assured foundation of Australia’s ultimate security. It says, "Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of the parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.” The language resembled the doctrine of the Monroe Declaration. In other words, the United States can discharge its obligation by action against thee common enemy in any way and in any area that it sees fit”.21

Australia’s active and important role in advancing western interests both in the Asian region and on a worldwide scale was appreciated by the United States.22 Singapore Foreign Minister opined that any weakening of the ANZUS was a matter of concern because the security of the region is interwoven and what is happening in the South Pacific

20 Percy Spender, Politics and a Man, (Sydney: Collins, 1972), p.290
21 Message, classified Top secret, from J.F. Dulles, consultant to the US Secretary of State to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (Mac Arthur) 2 March 1951, Documentary History, p.586, quoted in Alan Dupont, n.6, p.44.
22 President Regan’s reply to remarks of the newly appointed Ambassador of Australia, Sir Robert Carrington Cotton, Australian Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. 53, No.5 (May 1982), p.542.
and in Southeast Asia cannot be “separated.” US representative Averell Harriman said of
the ANZUS, “Anything that happens in the Pacific area is of vital concern to all three, and
that a threat to any of the partners in the area, metropolitan and island territories alike is
equally a threat to the others.” The ANZUS treaty declared in direct and simple terms that
in matters of defense, Australia, New Zealand and the United States stand as one.

ANZUS, to Prime Minister Bob Hawke, was very much an alliance of equals. Not
equals in power, but equals in terms of the right to be critical, and each of the other, and to
be heard with respect. It was through ANZUS and more specifically through the joint
facilities, Australia had its part to play in helping to turn that dream (ending of the Cold
War) into a reality. US bases were cited to be in Australia’s interests in global nuclear
deterrence and in maintaining the global strategic balance. They were an element of
balancing wheel, certainty and predictability and a solid base on which to build a positive
security environment. Prime Minister raised the issue of review with US President Reagan
who responded sympathetically and on July 12, 1983, he wrote, “I am personally
convinced, as I am sure, that a fundamental consequence of the review process will be
agreement that the ANZUS alliance remains not only relevant to our mutual security, but
also is more important than ever in the face of increasing Soviet military power in the
Pacific and elsewhere... I trust all will also agree that ANZUS is a vital and integral
element of the security of all western and democratic nations- that their security is, in the
final analysis, intertwined, indivisible and global.

5.2.3.3 Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA)

FPDA emerged as defense arrangement in the wake of Konfrontasi with Indonesia
and British decision to withdraw its forces from East of Suez. It was to provide

---

24 Bob Hawke, The Hawke Memoirs, n.11,p.213.
25 Ibid., p.214.
26 Ibid.
reassurances to Malaysia and Singapore against external threats and "...to strengthen the overall security of the region from external threats and armed attacks." It involved Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. FPDA inaugural communiqué obliged the members to ‘immediately consult together’. It sought to fill the ‘void’ left by the British force. Senior Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew viewed FPDA as a “powerful cornerstone” of Australia, New Zealand and American security arrangements. Some scholar thought FPDA as “an insurance against possible reversion of Indonesia to its old ways exemplified by its Confrontation Campaign against Malaysia in the 1960s”.

FPDA was merely an arrangement, not a treaty, which provided for joint consultation among the parties concerned to decide on the course to be taken. However, the Integrated Air Defence Systems (IADS) in the FPDA was a tangible and concrete umbrella providing security guarantee. It provided an avenue of cooperation. FPDA exercises were of particular value to Australia. Though FPDA/IADS activities stagnated during 1970s, FPDA occupied the front stage after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. By mid-1980s, it came to be termed as obsolete. To Paul Dibb, it reflected the concerns of previous era and saw its continuation as a political rather than military consideration. The core of FPDA was being interpreted as political and psychological deterrence. Foreign Minister Gareth Evans in his Australia’s Regional Security statement of 1989 talked of subsuming such arrangements in a wider new regional security community arrangement or understanding.

In the post Cold War world, as has been outlined by Senator Robert Ray, the FPDA “are a formal expression of Australia’s commitment to the region. FPDA gives us formal access to the important regional defense communities, facilitates our ability to conduct important defense activities there, these being best represented by exercises under the

---


28 See for details, Senator Evans, Australia’s Regional Security Statement (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, December 1989).
auspices of IADSs. After all, the FPDA provides for the ability of participants to enhance their independent defense capabilities. Australia continues to support the FPDA and considers it keenly relevant to the strategic needs of its principal partners. However, the Government expressed the need to complement the arrangements with a more widely based program of exercises, exchanges with regional nations, particularly Indonesia."

5.2.4 Evolution of self-reliance /Defense in depth/ Defense of Australia

Periodic Strategic Basis documents, produced every three to five years, have shaped Australian perceptions of the strategic thinking. They draw upon intelligent assessments and examine Australia's strategic circumstances and their broad implications for defense planning. These papers have largely provided guidelines to Australia's defense needs and shed light on the evolution of self-reliance defense strategy.

The thinking of independent and self-reliance policy can be traced back to 1959 when the Department of Defense made a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs envisaging a range of threats to Australia's vital interests demanding her own defensive and economic capacity for an indeterminate period. The document recognized that a number of situations might arise where Australian forces might have to act independently. The retention of non-communist Southeast Asia in friendly hands and structuring of defense forces to be able to defend New Guinea, were the two main considerations of that time. For the first time, forces shaped in concert with major allies were not considered to be necessarily capable of an independent role. Though Southeast Asia did not pose a direct threat to Australia, the continued deteriorating strategic environment of Southeast Asia led to the thinking of progressive development of self-supporting forces. Indonesia's expanding capability and aggressive policies of that time reinforced the view that Australia must rely on her own independent military capability

30 Quoted in n.9, p. 285.
and collective security arrangements for her defense and the maintenance of stability in the area." 31

The British withdrawal from East of Suez, enunciation of the Guam Doctrine, transitions of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei from colonial status to nationhood, and declining influence of colonial legacy in their foreign and security policies, disengagement of the United States from Southeast Asia and Indo-china introduced the necessity for 'important modification in Australia's attitude and policies – particularly the need for the countries of Southeast Asia to do more to contribute to their own and regional security. 32 The Whitlam government (1972-1975) stressed on the development of an independent foreign policy, and regional cooperation. The Sino-American rapprochement came in 1972, further closing the distance between the communist regime and the free world. The Fraser government emphasized the development of an independent strategy for Australia. These developments showed a reduced threat from the communist movement, finally demanding that Australian security be defined more in terms of events of direct relevance to Australia. 33 While the possible need for support for Southeast Asia from Australia was recognized and acknowledged, the inability of Australia to step into the military shoes of either the United Kingdom or the United States and the importance of economic and other non-military strategies in combating insurgency were also recognized, 34 notwithstanding the region being Australia's strategic shield.

The Strategic Basis of Australian Defense Policy 1971, approved by the Defense Committee in March 1971, recognized that the Asia Pacific region was of primary importance to Australia's security and that greater attention should be devoted to the protection of sea lines of communication. The Paper discounted the threat of China into

31 Submission by the Australian Department of Defense to the Parliamentary Joint committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade, Submission No 27 quoted in n.9, p. 287.
32 Ibid., p.288
34 H.J. Donohue, RAN: The Evolution of Australian Strategic Defense Thinking, in n.9, p. 288.
Southeast Asia or by Vietnam beyond Indo-china. It advocated the concept of continental defense, although overseas deployment of troops in support of security was not ruled out. Accordingly, the Whitlam government shed "vague and generalized fear of our own environment, the feeling of being alien in our own continent and our own region." The Government called for a comprehensive review and subsequent reorganization and re-examination of Australia's defense policies and force structures in the light of changing strategic circumstances. It favored programs of political conciliation and cooperation rather than military intervention. Australia adopted regionally oriented posture and moved towards developing much broader networks of regional links. A new consultative forum was proposed for the Asia-Pacific region, which would, "give all the countries of the area, irrespective of their ideological differences, a forum in which to talk informally together and promote greater understanding and cooperation." The Strategic Basis of Australian Defense Paper 1973 stated that Australia "must assume the primary responsibility for its own defense against any neighborhood or regional threats." The Paper mentioned for the first time, Australia as one of the most secure countries in the world. However, the need for vigilance about Chinese sponsored subversion in Asia and Soviet penetration of the Indian Ocean were the debates in internal politics in Australia.

Fraser government had deep-seated emotional and ideological distrust of the Soviet Union. It advocated a hard line against it, and sought national security through a revival of the military side of the American alliance. The Soviet Union was seen as a power having global ambitions, aggressively expansionist and threat to Australia's security. It was perceived as a source of international tensions and therefore "the deeply disturbing world environment". Fraser said, "Reasonable people can... reasonably


conclude that the Soviet Union still seeks to expand its influence throughout the world in order to achieve Soviet primacy... Its actions all too often appear inconsistent with the aim of reducing world tension.\textsuperscript{38}

The 1975 Strategic Basis Paper recognized that ‘there was no present likelihood of major strategic pressure or major military threat against Australia, its territories, maritime resources, zones or lines of communication.’ \textsuperscript{39} However, with the Soviet Union having air and naval facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang in Vietnam, it had ‘a unique opportunity to extend surveillance activities into areas adjacent to Australia’s trade routes and in areas of security concern’. \textsuperscript{40} Its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 alarmed Australia. Fraser argued that the world was ‘facing probably its most dangerous crisis since World War II and that the Afghanistan crisis has changed ‘ substantially for the worse the strategic order underpinning Australia’s security.’ \textsuperscript{41} The 1976-79 papers devoted considerable portions to the development in Afghanistan and the Soviet Union was singled out, though a direct military threat to Australia and its territories from the Soviet Union was highly unlikely.

China’s military posture was considered no threat or concerns to Australia. In the long term however, it was thought that it could establish a primary status in the region that would be of substantial, political and strategic consequences for Australia. A sense of developing self-defense in Australia followed these perceptions in the 1980s. It no longer wished to remain embroiled under the protection of a larger ally, United States. The time had come for Australia to look to itself, as Foreign Minister Bill Hayden put it ‘Allies but not acolytes.’ \textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38} Speech by Prime Minister M. Fraser to Parliament, 1 June 1976, CN, Vol.47, 1976, quoted in Alan Dupont, n. 6, p.77.

\textsuperscript{39} Defense Committee Minute, No.11/1975,3 October 1975, quoted in Alan Dupont, n.6, p.78.


\textsuperscript{41} Speech to Parliament by Prime Minister M. Fraser, 19 February 1980, \textit{Australian Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. 51, No.2}, (February 1980), pp.16-23.

\textsuperscript{42} Quoted in Bob Hawke, n.11, p.227.
Paul Dibb, conducted a thorough review of Australia’s Defense Capabilities, specifically on the content, priorities and rationale for defense planning; the capabilities appropriate to present and future defense requirements; and the appropriate balance between equipment, personnel, facilities and operating costs, between current readiness and long term investment, and between the relative priority given to responses to various levels of possible threats. It assessed its strategic circumstances, examined the security scenario of Australia, analyzed of defense planning deficiencies, examined its capacity requirements and finally made specific force recommendations. The Review placed Australia as one of the most secure countries in the world. The document stated that ‘strategic circumstances at present are not threatening, but exhorted that they are likely to become more demanding over the next fifteen years.’ More specifically, it identified ‘the possibility that our security environment could deteriorate, perhaps quite seriously in the future.’ It makes a note of China’s economic growth which will ‘affect global power relationships and become a dominant factor in the strategic framework of Asia and the Pacific.’ It advised the leadership to equip the country for an invasion and called for measures to protect sea-lanes for maritime trade.

The Report also outlined a strategy of denial that represented a defensive doctrine that “allows (Australia) geography to impose long lines of communication on an adversary and forces her to consider the ultimate prospect of fighting on unfamiliar and generally inhospitable terrain.” The paper embraced three reference priorities: defense of Australia, preservation of the US and New Zealand alliance relationships and an increasing engagement in the Asia Pacific region. In sum, there has been a shift in the strategy based on forward defense and reliance on an external guarantor (Great Britain, United States) to a strategy based on increased self reliance and defense in depth like

44 Paul Dibb, n.27, pp.47-48.
continental defense, multilateral participation to regional engagement and continuation of self-reliance.46

Defense of Australia 1987 termed the self reliance as the foundation of Government defense policy requiring it to maintain the military capabilities to defend our country without depending on help from other countries’ combat forces.47 Foreign Minister Gareth Evans called it the watershed document, which ‘laid the foundations and blueprinted the structure for a new Australian policy of defence self reliance.’48 However the alliance with the United States remained critical ‘as fundamental to Australia’s national security and foreign and defense policies’, in the context of enhanced Soviet access to the Southwest Pacific to be inimical to Australia’s interests.

The 1989 statement on regional security by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans was a significant development on focusing security regionalism. He argued that Australian approach to security should not focus solely on the military aspect but should be multidimensional with a focus on self-reliance and Australia’s immediate region. This was a part of Canberra’s attempts to emphasize Australia’s Asia-Pacific identity. Later, Foreign Minister Evans suggested that Australia be seen as part of the ‘East Asian hemisphere’.49 The policy of regional engagement will be dealt separately.

5.2.5 Post Cold War era

The end of the Cold War introduced unprecedented changes in the regional and international horizon. Economic strength came to be recognized as the index of national power and prestige. The centrality of economic factors made economic competitiveness,
trading and interdependence of relationships - the major features of international relations in the post-Cold War era.

The collapse of the Soviet Union injected a major geo-strategic change in the world. The post Cold War world confronted with two types of conflicts: preserving the geostrategic status quo (Gulf War) and internecine ethnic or racial wars in the wake of collapsing states (the former Yugoslavia, satellite states of the former Soviet Union). The latter type of conflicts, which arise from ethnic, cultural and racial differences are straining the long held fabric of many societies. It is this fight that most of the nations shall have to gear their machinery to contain.

The strategic scenario emerging following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was found ‘profoundly inimical to Australia’s future interests’. This aggression was a powerful reminder that a benign international order would not automatically spring up to take over where superpower competition left off. Australia supported the coalition against Saddam Hussein in 1990. It dispatched three warships - two frigates and one support ship to Gulf ‘to operate and exercise with US ships and other allied ships’. The commitment of troops, as highlighted by Prime Minister Bob Hawke was in consonance with the principles laid down by Dr. Evatt that ‘nations seeking representation in the world organization must be prepared to contribute their share of physical force to restrain the action of aggressor.’

Australia felt pride to have acted at all times promptly, decisively and with great clarity of purpose. It hoped that the stand of the international community through the UN in resisting Iraq’s aggression would lay a strong foundation for a peaceful post-Cold War era. These enforcements were active in ‘identifying, contacting, interrogating and warning’ vessels suspected of breaching sanctions.’ And the commitment of the troops and active


51 Quoted in Bob Hawke, n.11, p.519.

52 Bob Hawke, n.11, p.525.
participation in multilateral and UN-sponsored endeavors, was not to consider to serve the alliances, but to protect international law.\textsuperscript{53}

The post Cold War period mirrors Australia in growing interdependence with Asia, the emergence of self-reliance in defense, engagement with the region in the form of developing strategic partnership, active role in emerging security dialogues, including the promotion of sound and publicly visible strategic assessment and commitment to the UN peace keeping operations at a higher level than in past decades. The dominant theme was the defense of Australia in the \textit{Australian Strategic Planning Document} for the 1990s (ASP-1990). It emphasized that Australia “should aim to keep the US strategically involved in Southeast Asia and South Pacific. This would in turn, reinforce Australia’s strategic position. The close contacts with the US should be pursued through high level policy exchanges and closer working relationship at the operating level.”\textsuperscript{54}

The principle of self-reliance and commitment to the region continued to be the main focus in the succeeding strategic papers. The 1991 Force Structure Review stated that it was high time to move from a position of defense dependence on allies, to acceptance of both the need for self-reliance, and the need to help shape a regional strategic environment in which Australia is substantial power. This has involved a shift towards selectively higher levels of readiness so as to have the capacity to deal with the lower level military situations that might arise with little warning.”\textsuperscript{55}

The \textit{1993 Strategic Review} stressed that Australia’s security is being linked to be increasingly with Asia.\textsuperscript{56} It referred to the development of defence relationships based on “the evolution of a sense of regional security community.”\textsuperscript{57} The Review discussed the need

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Hansard}, House of Representatives, 21 August 1990 (Canberra: 1990), p. 1123.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.
for a strategic partnership and placed emphasis on collaboration with regional neighbors: a shift from a position of defense cooperation to a new position of strategic partnership with Southeast Asian countries. The Review stated:

Increasingly, our defense relationships with Southeast Asia will be characterized by the concept of partnership... Australia has the opportunity to develop new patterns of defense relationships with Southeast Asia that will strengthen the future security of the region... We should aim to develop defense relationships based on the concept of partnership that increasingly reflect the growing sophistication of regional capabilities, regional perceptions of a more complex strategic environment, and the evolution of a regional community.  

It projected a more demanding complex and chargeable strategic environment than in the Cold War years. Australia’s commitments to expanding its engagement in the Asia-Pacific and playing decisive role in building a regional security framework were seen in the context of the need for confronting the problems uncorked by the end of the Cold War. The issues included missile proliferation, maritime piracy, illegal narcotics, and other non-traditional threats like terrorism, economic dislocations, uneven development patterns, flows of refugees, floating labor force, environmental degradation, demographic pressures, growing crime rates, spreads of AIDS and HIV, and the role of religion, growing ethnic or religious and national tensions that have roots elsewhere but make their way into Australia. Australia’s foreign and defense policy of Comprehensive Engagement with Southeast Asia is bound to target these issues.

The Report termed the security of Southeast Asia as of fundamental concern to that of Australia as is reflected in the statement of Defence Minister Kim Beazley’s statement on February 23, 1988 when he said,“The fall of Singapore in February 1942 was the darkest moment Australia has known in 200 years, and underlines unambiguously that Australia’s security is tied to the security of Southeast Asia.”

58 Ibid., pp.22, 32.
59 Quoted in Australian Foreign Affairs Record, Vol.59, No.2 (February 1988), p.54.
The 1993-94 Defense Budget Papers focussed on the attention being increasingly given to the notion that Australia can be defended, should it need be, from its own resources. The Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994 lays out defence plans for the next decade. It abandoned a fortress Australia mentality, enlarging the military and enhancing its capabilities for rapid deployment in the Asia-Pacific region. Labeled as ‘the specific and detailed defence plan in more than 25 years,’ the document saw the most credible regional threat coming from its outer ring of strategic defence – stretching from India through China, Eastern Russia, the Koreas and Japan. The competition played out among these powers through proxy nations in Southeast Asia was considered of destabilizing consequences. It mentioned of the emergence of ‘a sense of shared strategic and security interests’ in the Asia and the Pacific and argued that it is in “Australia’s interests that to foster this trend, encouraging countries of the region to recognize the interests they share and ways they might cooperate to support them.” It placed emphasis on Australia’s strategic geography, and recommended that even without any potential capabilities to mount major conventional attack on Australia, it needed to prepare itself in case of changing political circumstances. It suggested to concentrate on maintaining a qualitative technological edge in the areas such as intelligence collection, evaluation and distribution, surveillance and reconnaissance, command and control, key weapons and sensors and electronic warfare.

In 1997, the Howard government undertook a review of national strategic policy. It says, ‘Australia’s most important strategic and economic interests lie in the region – the

---

60 Program Performance Statements (Canberra: Defense Department 1993-94, p. 25,
62 Ibid., p.27.
Asia-Pacific, a region of ... great cultural and historical diversity." The document listed its key national security interests as:

- Avoiding destabilizing strategic competition between the region’s major powers
- Preventing the emergence in the Asia-Pacific region of a security environment dominated by any power hostile to Australia
- Maintaining a benign security environment in Southeast Asia and preventing a foreign power from concentrating forces in that subregion that should attack Australia, and
- Helping to prevent the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

5.3 Survey of Security Settings in Asia-Pacific region

5.3.1 Asia-Pacific

The relaxation of superpower competition removed a significant layer of antagonism from the region. The settlement of Cambodian problem was a great relief to all peace loving people. The normalization of relations between China and Indonesia, China and South Korea, Vietnam seeking economic and political relations with neighboring countries in the region and South Korea and North Korea talking to each other were welcome developments. However the region known for its diversity and heterogeneity, had many contentious issues. Regional powers competing to fill in the vacuums created by the withdrawal of superpowers were another features in the security settings of the region.

Economic success of the region gave it a prominent place in the world map. The economic miracle was closely tied to ‘... a security miracle...(region’s) extraordinary economic performance sits on a foundation of stability and regional security.’ However,
a number of security uncertainties cast a long shadow of potential threats over the region. These ambiguities emanate from geographical demarcations, deep-seated animosities, rigidities built in national character. Historical tensions are abundantly evident in the region: between China and Vietnam, China and Taiwan, China and some members of ASEAN, China and India, India and Pakistan, Japan and Russia, and the two Koreas and Japan. The end of the Cold War did not fundamentally alter these geopolitical realities, but its impact has been felt in other ways.China’s role in the context of its assertiveness, newfound economic strength to implement a long term strategy to dominate the region politically and militarily, forays into South China Sea, increasing lack of transparency in military spending, growing military relations with Burma coupled with Japan’s intentions, India’s emerging competing role gave rise to new disputes and conflicts with competitors in the region. China is feared to be acquiring a position to exercise a disproportionate amount of influence in the region. China’s behavior, as US analysts write, has been to that of an ‘emerging power seeking to write its own rules for international order rather than accept existing norms ... China is the one country in Asia that has a clear political strategy: calculated ambiguity to mask its ambitions.’ Defence Minister Kim Beazley corroborated the perception by saying that there is now a range of major powers (China, India, Japan and the Soviet Union) on the periphery of the region with the potential to intervene in regional affairs should they consider their interests threatened.

India’s growing stature has been remarkable in international arena. Its increasing population, military capabilities, developed manufacturing industrialized sector, developing satellites, missile capability, its detonation of nuclear weapons, its expansion

---

of naval activities and its capacity to project power into Southeast Asia and Indian Ocean' and therefore should be perceived as a direct security threat to Australia or its neighbors. 69

Locked in constructive engagement and strategic partnership from early 1970s to 1980s mainly to contain the Soviet Union, the United States and China are now the central players in the region competing with each other for influence in the absence of Soviet Union. They have clashed several times over trade, Taiwan, missile proliferation, intellectual property rights, and human rights. Devoid of any ideological considerations, their fights are likely to be marked by more complex issues of political, economic and security challenges.

5.3.2 Significance of the Southeast Asian region: Australia’s Strategic Environment

Australia’s place in the region is an inescapable physical fact, just as the earth is round and revolves around the sun. 70 Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence recognized that no other part of the world promises to be more consistently importance to Australia than the region of South and Southeast Asia. This makes East Asia a region of potential global conflict. 71

The region for Australia comprises the countries of East Asia, Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, the United States, and, perhaps increasingly in the future, South Asia. 72 The areas to the immediate north of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia were also included 'within our area of direct military interest' 73 covering around ten percent of the earth’s

---


73 Paul Dibb, n.27, p.50.
surface. This involved 'distances equal to those between Sweden and Afghanistan or from Finland to Suez Canal.'

The 1986 Review defined Australia's area of direct military interests as encompassing the maritime and air approaches (to Australia) including the Timor and Arafura seas, the Coral and Tasman seas, and our Indian Ocean approaches. It considered the Indonesian archipelago as a protective barrier to Australia's northern approaches, and categorized as Australia's area of direct military interests to stretch up to the Cocos Islands. During the Cold War, focus of concern was on China, as an aggressive power bent on thrusting Southward. However, papers disapproved of this notion and concluded that it was necessary to rid Australian policy of perceptions and preoccupations of that era.

Southeast Asia groups ten countries in ASEAN fold. They are heterogeneous – culturally, economically, politically and technologically. The diversity and differing interests provide a fertile ground for conflicts to grow, and act as magnet for outside intervention. It is a melting pot of world's leading religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It is also an intersection of the conflicting interests of superpowers. President Ford's remarks that 'Let us forget about Southeast Asia' following the American withdrawal from Vietnam led China and Soviet Union to compete in the region.

Their competition for spheres of influence added fuels to already existing territorial disputes, the proliferation of dangerous weapons, rapid population growth, the specter of AIDS, environmental degradation and drug traffic. Australia stood against the "balkanization of the region" and considered increased activities of outsiders in South China Sea as detrimental to its interests. The presence of a number of bilateral

---


75 Paul Dibb, n.27, pp.3-4.


animosities, and the competing territorial claims among ASEAN countries, as pointed out by Defense expert Paul Dibb in the 1990s, Australia itself could face for the first time a “potential threat from a force in being.”

A public opinion study contains a list of countries according to their priorities from the view of perceptions of the importance of defence and security relations: United States, New Zealand, Indonesia, Japan, China, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Singapore, India and Vietnam. In terms of perceptions of security threats to Australia, the rank of the above countries stand in the following order: Indonesia, China, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, United States, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, India and New Zealand. The survey concludes, “A modest resurgence in public fears that significant security threats to Australia is evident, with Indonesia resurging as the most likely security threat.”

The immediate neighbor Indonesia looms large in the region. It is first among equals of the ten ASEAN states. Its rich mineral resources and geographic position make it a leader in the region. This position gives Indonesia potential rights over sea-lanes that are essential to the survival of Singapore and Malaysia and to the foreign trade of Australia. The supply of oil from Middle East to Japan, Korea and Taiwan also passes via Indonesian Sea lanes. This makes Indonesia a confluence of several factors. What happens to Indonesia affect not only the rest of Southeast Asia, but also the rest of the wider Asia-Pacific region.

Australia regards Indonesia as the linchpin in the structure of Southeast Asian security. Close and cordial ties with Indonesia are therefore a strategic imperative for Canberra. To Prime Minister Keating, “No country is more important to Australia than Indonesia” and was for a strategic partnership with Indonesia. It is a vital factor in

---

78 Paul Dibb, Challenges in the 1990s and Beyond, Pacific Defense Reporter, (February 1983), pp.18-19.
Australia’s security considerations. Recent trends and developments have shown that an unstable Indonesia would affect Australia’s political, economic and social conditions adversely. Australia wants a united, democratic and economically successful Indonesia that is able to meet and overcome the challenges of sectarian violence and embark on a strong path of growth and development. Australia’s commitment in defense relationship with Indonesia is demonstrated in a wide range of activities, including reciprocal senior officer visits, staff college visits and officer student exchanges.

Vietnam is another country in the region, which is of great importance to Australia. While committing troops to ally with the United States, Prime Minister Robert Menzies on April 29, 1965, justified the commitment by saying, “the takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and to all the countries of South and Southeast Asia.” He continued,” it must be seen as part of a thrust by the Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.” Explaining why Australia was in Vietnam, Prime Minister Holt said, “We have an obligation arising from our treaty relationships, from our role as an ally in supporting the United States in international diplomacy and politics.” It committed troops to halt communist aggression at the Thai-Laos border, at the urging of the United States. Australia found it suddenly pushed into war on two fronts. – Borneo jungles and dispatch of troops to South Vietnam. Both these events were of crucial importance to the security of Australia itself and ‘to the integrity and stability of the whole Southwest Pacific’. Fall of Indochina to communists was interpreted as threats to Thailand, Malaya and Singapore on the onward march to dominate the northern approaches of Australia and cut Australia’s lifelines with Europe.

Malaya was also considered vital to the defense of Australia. The dispatch of Australian troops to Malaya was interpreted “ a revolutionary switch in Australian

82 J.D.B. Miller, Australia in Vietnam, Round Table (July 1970), p.296
83 Quoted in Vandenbosches, Australia Faces Southeast Asia: The emergence of Foreign Policy,(Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p.120-21.
policy." Australia feared that the spread of the menace of communism in the region would gravely affect the security of the whole of Southeast Asia and ultimately its southern shores. While being sensitive to their concerns, Australia desired as wide protection as possible against aggression in Southeast Asia. It related Australia's interests and objectives to the building of security in the Pacific.

The strategic importance of the major Southeast Asian states was amply reflected in Prime Minister R.G. Casey's statement to the Australian Parliament in 1954, when he said, "If the whole of Indo-China fell to the communists, Thailand would be gravely exposed. If Thailand were to fall, the road would be open to Malaya and Singapore. From the Malaya peninsula, the communists could dominate the northern approaches to Australia and even cut our lifelines with Europe." As emergence of power alignments are caused not only by the force of international power relations, they are often engendered as the consequence of internal factors such as communist subversives, inter-ethnic conflicts, religious tensions, economic disparities, leadership succession, and technological changes. Australia thought that if Communists achieved their aims, that would gravely affect the security of the whole of Southeast Asia and ultimately Australia itself.

A submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense (Subcommittee on Defense Matters) in March 1984 by the Department of Defense projected a threat of attack against Australia from its northern neighbors. Defense Minister G.G.D. Scholes concurred with this view and stated, "In the unlikely event that other countries developed motive or intent to launch a major military force against Australia, the substantial forces needed would take many years to develop, even with massive external assistance. Such a threat could be feasible only from or through the

---

region to our north, and the nations in our region – which are generally Western oriented – have neither capability nor motive. Australia’s traditional fear of Asians, thus, underwent significant change. Prime Minister Bob Hawke empathetically argued, “Instead of seeking security from Asia, we should seek security in and with Asia. We should seek enhanced security through enmeshment in an Asian security system ... We must think of ourselves as part of an Asian security system which is beginning very slowly to enhance to meet Asia’s new strategic circumstances.”87 His visit to Papua New Guinea and Indonesia after becoming the Prime Minister was to demonstrate his Government’s priority to the Asia-Pacific region. His government took several initiatives, which were not only independent of Australia’s alliance with the United States but were at odds with US positions.88 He did not believe that Americans held a monopoly on neither wisdom nor monopolistic power over Australia’s support on every issue in the international arena.

5.4 Maritime perspectives of security

Australia has the second largest continental margin in the world. Its resources are located in the offshore. As a trading nation it is heavily dependent on seaborne trade. That makes its defense strongly a sea-oriented. It cannot just ignore its attention on high sea. A former chief of Naval Staff of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) has remarked, ‘Any country wishing to conduct activities against Australia’s interests must exploit the maritime environment between its bases and Australian targets. This applies regardless of whether the objectives are to conquer Australia by invasion or merely harass our sea lines of communication, maritime resources zone or coastal centers of population and industry. Any confrontation or conflict with Australia would be, initially, at least maritime in character.’89

88 Bob Hawke, n.11, p.207.
Maritime piracy has emerged a serious challenge to the security of the world shipping. Free flow of commerce through sea-lanes is necessary to keep the economies going. Piracy has therefore to be seen as a strategic threat and dealt accordingly. Defense White Paper 1987 judged that though Australia not currently threatened, it is probably more exposed in a defense sense than it has been since 1942. It called for supportive measures as effective reserves, surveillance, efficient and comprehensive defense industry, intelligence, command and control, communications, research, some bases in the north, integration of the reserve and permanent armies, easier call out of reserves and many others. It argued:

Australia’s overseas trade routes are diverse and their comprehensive interdiction would be credible only in the unlikely circumstances of protracted global conflict. Under those conditions, threats to international shipping would affect many countries. Countries, which have important interests in the free flow of trade, would seek to protect international shipping. Australia would then contribute to wider efforts to protect international trade, operating in our own area in accordance with the procedures of Radford-Collins Agreement.

Australian overseas trade passes through the Indonesian straits of Lombok, Ombai and Wetar, and therefore the Indonesian strait remains a fundamental Australian security interests. Northeastern Indian Ocean approaches to Australia look to have significant importance in the security of Australia. Defense Minister Kim Beazley opined, “Not all events in the Indian Oceans affect Australia’s security equally. Australia’s area of broader strategic interests includes the areas of the Indian ocean bounded by the Ninety East ridge in the West, Indonesia in the north and Diamantina Trench in the South.”

Australia is a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) formed in 1997 to promote regional economic cooperation and human resource development. It brings together people from bureaucracy, business and

---


91 Ibid. p.5

academic sectors. Australia has adopted a proactive policy in this regard and wants to build a habit of dialogue as a routine to deal with an array of issues. It also wants to establish research links relating to transnational crime, maritime security issues and projects relating to environmental security, which could lead to the building of a comprehensive security dialogue.

5.5 The Policy of Regional Engagement

Ever since the 1956 Strategic Basis Paper foresaw a probable scenario of the allied assistance not coming to the rescue of Australia in case of regional conflicts, the root of independent thinking in security arrangements seems to have taken place. These papers defined Australia’s security interests primarily in terms of the security of countries in Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific. Regional strategic environment was considered a part of Australia’s strategic interests, the region hence as its strategic shield. The 1959 Paper stressed on the need to have own defensive and economic capacity to meet local defence needs for an indeterminate period. The 1969 and 1971 versions of the document argued for preparedness and explore the possibility of using alternatives that are of relevance to the defence of Australia itself. The 1971 Paper also foresaw the probability of American assistance coming to Australia if they considered Australia having developed an adequate military capability of its own.93

A paper developed in parallel with the 1971 Paper ‘Environment of Future Australian Military Operations’ (EFAMO) recommended that Australia’s primary area of operations would be the Australian mainland and its immediate surrounds, and the essentially maritime-cum-island environment extending from Malaysia/Sumatra in the west through the Indonesia and New Guinea archipelagoes to the lesser island groups of

---

the Southwest Pacific in the east.'  

The paper also saw the possibility of conflict coming to Australia through maritime routes. Given the important role of Indonesia to maintain a desired strategic balance in the Pacific, EFAMO painted a scenario of US influencing Australia towards accepting an early political settlement—even involving political concessions to Indonesia—and withhold from Australia its military support. The ambivalence of US policy was documented during the conflict between Australia and Indonesia over Indonesian annexation of West Irian.

The Guam Doctrine led to a review of Australia’s past policies and ways on how it should deal with future threats and uncertainty. It introduced new dimensions in Australia’s journey to the regional strategic thinking. The successive governments continued to show more concerns over the prospect of change occurring in Australia’s region of interest, and argued that Australia must continue to work constructively with countries in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific ‘to support stability and security in the general strategic situation.’ The Fraser Government advocated close connections with countries in Southeast Asia. Focus was on the protection of ‘supply lines in the maritime areas near to Australia’s principal ports, to make contribution to assisting allies protect our more remote sea routes, to provide defense help to regional friends to our immediate north; and to provide the Government of the day with the practical option of contributing to Pacific defense in accordance with the ANZUS Treaty.’ The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was taken as an encroachment into the region having serious implications for Australia. Australia aligned with the countries in the region to conduct surveillance operations in the Eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

Canberra supported moves to keep the region free of weapons of mass destruction and supported the Treaty of Raratonga, a South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. The

---


95 Cited in Ibid., pp.8-9.

1986 Review included the maintenance of a favorable strategic situation in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific and the promotion of a sense of strategic community between Australia and those countries located within its so-called ‘area of direct military interests’. *Defence White Paper of 1987* saw common concerns ‘to strengthen regional stability and to limit the potential for external powers to introduce tension or conflict into the region.

Australia continued to see its own security as inseparable from that of its surrounding region. It showed its desire to act, as the regional guardian of pro-western and alliance interests, and to act as a conduit for advanced American and Western military technologies, and to gain confidence and ear of its neighbors. At the same time Australia continued to follow old and familiar strategies for securing its interests in the region: economic and development assistance, defense cooperation, support for regional institutions and security arrangements, forward projections of military power, and, in the last resort the use of military force.97

The policy of comprehensive engagement with Southeast Asia was taken as a symbol of the growing importance. Foreign Minister Gareth Evans stated that Australia ‘must come to terms with Asia; we cannot deny our geography; politically unstable or economically vulnerable region is a potential threat to Australian national security.”98 It laid the foundation for constructing a cooperative security environment, by developing linkages in other areas such as preservation of the environment, terrorism, narcotics trade, the destruction of armaments, migration, as well as those concerning human rights, the rule of law, and the process of democratization could enhance cooperation in security relationships.

---

97 Graeme Cheeseman and Michael McKinley, n.95, p.27.
5.5.1. Australia’s Regional Security: Ministerial Statement of 1989

Foreign Minister Gareth Evans saw the 1987 White Paper as a watershed, not only in defense policy, but in foreign policy also. Defense policy as detailed in the White Paper contained components of the development of capable self-reliance, effective regional cooperation, and maintenance of close alliances with the United States. The ministerial statement of December 1989 entitled Australia’s Regional Security initiated a quiet transformation of Australia’s regional security policy. It broke a new ground in a number of ways. Australia showed enough indications of not relying its security too much on military capability alone. Foreign Minister Gareth Evans indicated Canberra’s willingness to become more closely involved in defence cooperation and regional security arrangements in Southeast Asia, outlining a multidimensional approach to Australian Security policy and planning:

The policy responses or instruments available to protect Australia’s security are multidimensional. They go well beyond strictly military capabilities, essential though these are. They also embrace traditional diplomacy, politico-military capabilities (in the border zone between defense and diplomacy), economic and trade relations, and development assistance. And they extend to immigration, education and training, cultural relations, information activities, and a number of other less obvious areas of government activity.99

The concept of common security with the region, what came to be known as security regionalism, formed the core element of this policy. The security with states not against them was based on the notions of comprehensive engagement with Southeast Asia. The phrase comprehensive engagement was taken to understand ‘the development of diverse links with Southeast Asian countries and to make Australia as a natural participant in regional affairs. Foreign Minister Evans proposed ‘participating actively in the gradual development of a regional security community based on a sense of shared security interests.’100 He advocated constructive commitment with Southwest Pacific for the promotion of ‘shared perceptions of the region’s strategic and security interests, laying


100 Ibid, p. 44.
the basis for a regional approach to situations, internal and external, which put regional
stability at risk.\(^{101}\) He remarks, “Australia should use its military assets and presence in
the region to help foster the gradual development of regional security community based on
a sense of shared security interests. We should not be embarrassed about using the military
capability we possess, with prudence and sensitivity, to advance both Australia and the
common security of the region.” \(^{102}\) The statement recognized the correlation between
Australia’s capability to maintain positive security environment and the strategic stability
of the neighboring regions, producing a *secure South* for Southeast Asian countries and a
*secure West* for Southwest Pacific nations. Region’s vulnerabilities, sea-lane security, and
also the *fear* might have led Australia to adopt a cooperative approach towards the region.
The emotional and geographic isolation from its cultural roots also made Australia to have
a degree of immediacy to work to ensure regional stability,\(^{103}\) and fashion productive
relationship.

5.5.2 Proposal of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific
(CSCAP)

With a view to have an institutional framework for multilateral framework for
multilateral security dialogue in Asia, Gareth Evans floated the idea for a Council for
Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) at the ASEAN Post–Ministerial
Conference (PMC), where ASEAN dialogue partners, including the United States met.\(^{104}\)
Projected to be a counterpart of the CSCE in Europe, CSCAP emerged as a central part of
the regional multilateral process in security matters bringing together academics,
journalists and occasionally politicians along with government officials. This route has
been most inclusive creating a network around Asia and the Pacific. It was labeled as


\(^{103}\) Thomas-Durell Young, Assessing Australia’s Southeast Asian Strategy, *Contemporary

\(^{104}\) Gareth Evans, Australia in East Asia and the Pacific: Beyond the Looking Glass, *Australian
multi-tiered or multiplex security framework to regional cooperation. He talked of evolving in Asia just as in Europe, 'a framework for addressing and resolving security problems ... and asked why should there not be developed a similar institutional framework- a CSCAP – for addressing the apparently intractable security issues which exist in Asia.'

Evans's proposal 'a Pacific adaptation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe,' appeared to have been the culmination of Australia's past efforts in this direction. Australia had been urging measures to address tensions in Northeast Asia. Bill Hayden had pleaded for a superpower dialogue on security perceptions and concerns. He had also argued for a dialogue among regional and other interested countries about specific problem in the security environment of the region. Making diplomatic inroads into the region was not an easy mission. ASEAN rejected the Australian and Canadian proposal to transform the Association into an Asian version of the CSCE.

US preferred bilateral arrangements and agreements, and showed concerns for a Helsinki type process for Asia or regional security dialogue. ASEAN states talked of the necessity to have common ground for the perceptions to be harmonized. Indonesia advocated caution and Japan called it premature. However, the proposal became a basis for the discussion of the regional security issues at the 1994 July meeting ASEAN-PMC, which was a forum to engage member states in new areas of cooperation in security matters. This security component of the PMC dialogue came to be known as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) with the then six countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and Brunei), their seven major trading partners (the United States, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the European Community), and the five guests and observers at the ASEAN meeting (Russia, China,

Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea). This security architecture in the form of ARF was to act as a constraining factor in any likely intra-Southeast Asia disputes.

### 5.5.3 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

ARF is the first such diplomatic arrangement to deal with security matters in the region. Australia has been a solid contributor in the evolution of this Forum. Its foreign and trade policy spoke of the key components of Australia’s regional security strategy as ‘a strong national defence capability, the security alliance with the United States, developing bilateral defence and security relationships with the countries throughout the Asia-Pacific, and strengthening multilateral security links in the region, especially the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).’

ARF is the single most important vehicle to have emerged for wide consultation and dialogue among nations in Asia Pacific region including US, China, Japan and Russia. It is a multi-faceted approach based on ‘complementing Australia’s national defence capability, bilateral security arrangements and regional defence cooperation with an active Australian role in fostering regional integration and shaping the regional security institutions which are emerging in the Asia Pacific.’

ARF initiates security dialogues to develop shared perceptions of strategic landscape, strengthen links with existing friends and reaching out to adversaries and build cooperative capacity to tackle jointly regional issues. Though issues of non-nuclear proliferation, preventive diplomacy, trust and security building proposals in sensitive areas, transparency on military capabilities and conflict resolution constituted agenda in the forum, the concept extended its areas to include political stability, economic well being and social harmony and environment.

---


The regional dialogue process was supported by some institutionalized infrastructure both at the official and political levels. The first PMC-SOM (Senior Officials Meetings) in 1993 held extensive discussions of multilateral approaches to regional peace and security, including such issues as preventive diplomacy and conflict management, non-proliferation (both at nuclear and non-nuclear); UN peacekeeping activities; the UN Conventional Arms Transfer Register; the extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); exchanges of information among defense planners; prior notification of military exercises; and concepts of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality and the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ).111

ARF focussed on the following stages:

Stage I: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

Stage II: Development of Preventive Diplomacy

Stage III: Development of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms.

Through ARF, Australia sought to create a mechanism to foster regional peace and stability, interlock the United States in regional security, engage China in constructive ways, and provide platform for Japan to play a more active role. The concept of information sharing and trust building, increased dialogue, non-threatening exchanges of information in the forum were to help enhance understanding and reduce uncertainty. The information sharing areas included strategic dialogue, strategic policy, oceanographic and hydrographic research, information on shipping routes and hazard, mapping and charting etc. The arrangement for voluntary submission to ARF of short defense policy papers and endorsement of exchanges between members on an annual basis was to serve the cause of tension free region. ARF also had an official level Intersessional Support Group (ISG) to study Confidence Building Measures, peacekeeping, research and rescue. Australia has been sponsoring seminars for officials and non-officials in Canberra, which addressed

measures for building confidence and trust. There has also been a second track process, which drew governmental and non-governmental institutions. These arrangements can be taken as constituting Southeast Asia’s regional security architectures.

The ARF process engaged countries in security dialogue and limited exchange of military information despite having some unresolved territorial issues like South China Sea. Regional Security Studies Center, Maritime Information Data Base, Strategic Planning Exchanges, Observers at military exercises, peace keeping training, maintenance of a regional arms register, notification of major military deployments, multilateral agreement on the avoidance of naval accidents were some of the measures that could lead to a more structured approach for peace, stability and progress of the region.

5.5.4 Defense cooperation activities in the region

There are various forms of cooperation to promote linkages. The existence of a joint Defense Cooperation Program (DCP) with the countries in the region was fundamental to Australia’s policy of regional engagement. It is said to be a byproduct of the need to ‘move beyond the framework of existing relationships’.112 In his 1992 interview with the Asian Defense Journal, Defense Minister Robert Ray spelt out Australia’s defense relations with the region in the following words:

> Australia makes a major contribution to regional security through a wide range of bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation activities. These include extensive ship visits and personal exchanges, the Five Power Defense Arrangements with Malaysia and Singapore and the Joint Declaration of Principles with Papua New Guinea. We also have long established cooperation with Malaysia and, consistent with the Timor Gap Treaty Arrangements. We will be cooperating with Indonesia in maritime surveillance in the Timor and Arafura seas. It is a major aim of Australia’s defense policy to continue to add substance to our defense relations with the region. This is a direct contribution both to bilateral security and the security of the region as whole.113

---


These cooperative activities were termed as an 'integral link between the defense of Australia and our increasing defense engagement with regional nations.' \(^\text{114}\) Proliferation of cooperative activities under DCP were seen as partnership rather than 'donor recipient.' This cooperation was 'an integral part of the evolution of Australia's broader national enmeshment with Asia.' \(^\text{115}\)

Australia assisted all ASEAN states for the enhancement of their capabilities for external defense. It provided training for Malaysian-Singapore personnel in Australia, mainly in the field of combat training. Southeast Asia also provided an important market for the Australian defense industry. The main aim of Australia's national security was to maintain a favorable strategic environment, particularly in the closest region- Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific. *Defense White Paper 1976* mentioned, "Insofar as we can directly influence developments shaping our strategic prospects, this will often be by the political rather than the military arm of policy." \(^\text{116}\)

The bilateral programs with the regional countries were aimed at "cooperation in developing defense capabilities and professional standards appropriate to the legitimate defense needs of the countries concerned." \(^\text{117}\) The paper held the view that the national interests were linked to assisting the development of regional security. The growing and expanding military capabilities and self-reliance of the countries in the region made them increasingly valuable strategic partners for Australia.

An extensive and interlocking web of bilateral and multilateral processes to address security and political issues included military training programs with countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. These programs provided frameworks for working collaboratively, and focused on common defense tasks such as maritime

\(^{114}\) *Strategic Review 1993*, n.112, Defense Minister Robert Ray made these comments in his preface remarks to the Strategic Review 1993.


\(^{117}\) *Defense of Australia 1994*, n.47, paras 8.1 and 8.2.
patrol, air defense exercises and military training and personnel exchanges. They imparted technical skills, helped share operational concepts and doctrines, and created a network of personal friendships and professional contacts reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. In addition, there were peacekeeping training programs with the regional countries. Joint exercises were found extremely productive. Observers were invited to such exercises to help make strategic assessments, strategic objectives and major defense acquisition programs and activities.

In response to Southeast Asia’s growing requirements to develop maritime and air forces, Australia offered its assistance in developing these forces’ operational capabilities and providing skills in force structure and defense planning. There were joint naval maneuvers, land, air and sea exercises between Australia and Indonesia. These links proved extremely beneficial in fostering closer bilateral and multilateral relations, brightening the prospects of confidence building measures, enhance personal relationship through regular discussions, promoting mutual understanding and bridging differing positions and perspectives, reducing the possibilities of misinterpretations and misunderstandings, ensure openness and predictability, reducing conflict potentials and trying to encourage a degree of transparency and cooperation in defense matters. The organizing of conferences and seminars, workshop series, dialogue process facilitated enhanced interactions. The notion of regional interdependence further promoted the concepts of collective training, exchange of data, establishment of Asia-Pacific Security Studies etc.

There are also extensive networks of bilateral intelligence exchange agreements throughout the region. Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) is active and has counterpart agency relations in the regional countries. Exchange of visits at various levels help build closer personal relationships among these officials. There are bilateral programs aimed at cooperation in developing defense capabilities and professional standards

---

appropriate to legitimate defense needs of the countries concerned. The purpose of defense cooperation to assist regional states develop defense capabilities, was most often underwritten by Australia’s security interests at the time; for example to prevent regional communist parties coming to power, to keep Australia’s allies, first Britain and then the United States engaged in the region, and later to keep the Soviet Union out of the Southwest Pacific.119

In the mid-1980s, the introduction of several changes to Australia’s regional security policy paved the way for the increased service to service training, combined exercises, visits and professional exchanges, limited arrangements for the provision of material and in-country training programs. These activities increased mutual trust, reduced the likelihood of misperceptions and misunderstandings, promoted constructive security discourses and modalities, and improved regional security environment, though no explanation has come forward on why building linkages with Southeast Asia will necessarily make Australia more secure.120 The high level dialogue between military staffs over training and defense organizations and force structure planning was extended to include governmental-level talks on logistics, technology and collaborative defense projects. The Defense of Australia 1987 argued that ‘the best contribution Australia can make to the continued stability of the region is an Australian defense force able to deal effectively with the most credible challenges to the nations’ sovereignty.’121

Regional training center for peacekeeping operations, training facilities, joint military exercises, membership of regional and international organizations, membership of APEC, second track approach involving NGOs promoting Confidence and Security


Building measures in the region are some of the means that bind Australia together with the regional countries in security framework.

Bilateral defense cooperation programs have helped Australia to develop and coordinate several cooperative activities. Some of these programs are: the Malaysia-Australia Joint Defense Program of February 17, 1992, the Australian-Indonesian Defense Policy Committee (AIDPC) of 1994, the Australia-Indonesia Defense Coordinating Committee (IADCC) with a number of working groups and the Joint Australia-Singapore Coordination Group (JASINCG) established in 1992. They have been helpful to Australia to capitalize on the exportable skills and products of its homegrown defense industry, which could otherwise have left Australia increasingly isolated from Southeast Asia’s developing regional security dialogue. 122 Though Australia has less formal arrangements with other countries in the region, it is involved with all of them in a comprehensive way, through economic and cultural intersections. With the reduced level of US overseas forces, Australia would come to rely more on its arrangements within Southeast Asia and South Pacific, as a key link in that chain. 123

5.5.5 Other arrangements with the region

Australia’s interests lie in maintaining a positive security and strategic environment in the region. As has been outlined in the Regional security statement of 1989, military capability, politico-military capability, diplomacy, economic links, development assistance, non-military assistance and exchanges of people and ideas constituted as instruments of security plan. Good neighborhood policy and assisting regional countries in environmental sector, international health problems like AIDS, international narcotics trade and unregulated population flows were also being mentioned as a part of the security plan. Australia’s defense policy of self-reliance, regional cooperation and strong alliances

were a part of its new security environment allowing it to both provide for its own defense and to contribute to the security of the region.

Keating–Soeharto agreement of December 15, 1995 on maintaining security was considered important. Labeled as a lynchpin for security, it was seen as a declaration of trust. The agreement recognized their common interests in the peace and stability of the region. Seen as rivaled in importance with those of the US or Japan, Paul Dibb suggested, ‘Australia’s key regional strategic interest in the future may not always coincide with those of the US.’ The agreement contained three main points: to consult on a regular basis at Ministerial level about matters affecting their common security; both countries agree to consult in case of ‘adverse challenges’ to either party or their common security interests, and if appropriate, consider measures which might be taken either individually or jointly in accordance with the process of each party; and to promote beneficial cooperative security activities.124 To Prof. Michael Leifer Agreement on Maintaining Security (AMS) resembled like the ANZUS. Indonesia’s entering into AMS was compared to the act of normalizing Indonesia’s relations with China, as no one wanted to be seen as opposing the President.125 This treaty armed Australia with a new and powerful credential as a state of Southeast Asia, which was long denied by Malaysia and Singapore. However, the attempts to institutionalize the network of defense and security cooperation in the region envisaged in this treaty collapsed on the standoff between Australia and Indonesia over East Timor issue in 1999.

Australia’s security links with Southeast Asia and the Pacific also included formal, written arrangements/agreements and even fast track dialogues. They are Closer Defense Relations, 1991 (CDR) with New Zealand, Joint Declaration of Principles 1987 (JDP) with Papua New Guinea (PNG). Two-track security system included sub regional arrangements


125 Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Indonesia and the Security of Southeast Asia (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and international Studies, 1992), p.43.
of officials in the region to enhance understanding. The proposal of China’s Foreign Minister Qian Qichen to have “multi-level and multi channel dialogue mechanism at both bilateral and regional levels on the questions of security” is worth mentioning here.

Confidence Building Measures included the establishment of building blocks - sub-regional arrangements dealing with various securities issues, bilateral and limited multilateral arrangements to address a common security concern. Timor Gap Treaty between Indonesia and Australia, agreements on joint action against piracy in the vicinity of Singapore and Malacca straits between Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore were purpose oriented interactions and regional confidence and security building. Regular surveillance of flights from Butterworth in Malaysia over South China Sea, the Malacca straits and the Bay of Bengal and occasional exercises with regional forces and ship visits were some of the bilateral arrangements.

Annual ASEAN post ministerial dialogues, regular consultations, exchange of intelligence and some training among its members – both formal, informal, bilateral, trilateral and multilateral were some other arrangements to contribute to a favorable strategic environment in the region.

5.6 Australia, disarmament and arms control

Australia’s interests lie in avoiding destabilizing competition in the region, preventing the emergence of regional hegemony, maintaining stability of Southeast Asia, assisting neighbors to strengthen their security, and preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It has shown its determination to contribute significantly in disarmament process what Prime Minister Hawke called ‘vastly disproportionate to our size or military might’ 126 Australia has remained a prime mover in the reconvening of the Conference on Disarmament. It has been an active proponent of the CTBT and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), for which there exists bipartisan and public support.

126 Bob Hawke, n.11, p.218.
The Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been the corner stone of the international non-proliferation regime in its scheme. Australia worked for its indefinite extension at the NPT Review and Extension Conference (NPTREC) held in 1995. It acted to encourage existing nuclear weapon states (NWS) to continue to reduce their nuclear arsenals. It has equally demonstrated its seriousness to regulate the Missile Technology Control Regime and Counter-proliferation. It has stood for cooperative transparency in arms transfers to reduce mistrust and miscalculation.

Australia has gone at extraordinary lengths to ensure progress in controlling the proliferation of WMD. Prime Minister Bob Hawke launched Chemical Weapons Regional Initiative (CWWRI). It signed Chemical Weapons Convention that prohibited the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer and use of chemical weapons and put into place stringent verification procedures for monitoring the conventions provision. It worked for the establishment of nuclear weapon free zone like a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ). It also lent support of the Treaty of Raratonga that was signed in August 1985 prohibiting the testing, production, acquisition, possession or stationing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific. On these issues, it has differed and disagreed on many issues with the United States.

Bilaterally, Australia has coaxed, cajoled and pestered the superpowers to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles and to press ahead with Strategic Reduction Talks (START) and Intermediate Range Nuclear Range Nuclear Forces Talks (INF). It has sought security for all states at the lowest possible level of armament, stability in the nuclear balance and adequate verification arrangements. It thinks that the cause of peace and disarmament was too important to be left to the superpowers to settle between themselves. This approach thus, brings it closer to the countries in the region – who advocate similar policies.

5.7 Changing perspectives

Australia cannot remain an onlooker at the growing militarization – both conventional and nuclear, and developments in Middle East, Persian Gulf, South Asia, and
Africa, let alone the happenings in the proximate Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific regions. It cannot escape the general worsening of the international security environment. More uncertainties call for better coordination in the foreign affairs, defense and economic policy elements. Paul Dibb warned that Australia cannot keep on stumbling ahead, trusting to luck and short-term compromises.127

Given its small population and large area of defense responsibility, Australia will have to prepare to maintain a technological edge in areas like area surveillance, air defense, combat information and electronic warfare. Pursuit of self-reliance to the exclusion of other dimensions may stimulate certain tensions – 'a potential threat from the same Southeast Asian nations which it is seeking to cooperate more intensively.'128 These two legs of self-reliant defense and regional engagement, although theoretically compatible, are in practical terms contradictory.129 A balance of self-reliance and regional cooperation doctrine requires to be carefully maintained.

A fluid strategic outlook prevails in the Asia-Pacific region. The future of Sino-Russian alliance, militarily resurgent Japan, unstable and territorial ambitious China, the spread of technological advancement and the role of the United States, plus potential strategic role of India in the region will have incalculable effects on the global strategic situation.

The issues of proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological technology remain on the forefront. The territorial disputes in the region remain sharper than ever before. Insurgencies and separatist tendencies have risen their ugly heads. The weakening of ASEAN, division within the ASEAN, an Indonesia engulfed in tensions and separatist proclivities, or some outside powers trying to fish in the troubled waters of the territorial


conflicts in the region for the political, economic and territorial benefits, are likely to pose a difficult dilemma for Australia.

Australia shall have to take into account the changing political, economic and military power equations of China, Japan, India, Russia and the USA. The demonstrations of nuclear capabilities by India and Pakistan in May 1998 have altered the strategic scenario in Asia. Speed of change and uncertainty in the region led to rethinking in both US-Japan and US-Australia alliances that are America’s two key security relationships in the Asia-Pacific. The coming together of India and the United States is being seen as an end to the strategic framework of the Cold War era.

Of all these changes, China’s role will remain crucial in the strategic framework of Asia and the Pacific, though the speculation of China either becoming cooperative or implosive continues. There are some alarmists’ views, which proclaim that by 2020 China would have the world largest economy, and that the focus of the global balance of power would shift from Atlantic to Asia. Australia considers China’s economic growth ‘as the most important strategic development’ and sees its interests best served by a ‘strong and growing China that is active, engaged and influential within the region, as well as being prosperous and cohesive at home.’ At the same time, it need to be watchful at China’s growing power resulting in the ‘diminishing of US strategic influence or by damaging strategic competition between China and other regional powers.’

Australian efforts have been directed towards enmeshing China in cooperative arrangements like ARF and APEC and they are fully consistent with the policies of ASEAN countries. Thus Australia’s security would be more dependent on strategic development in Asia rather than on any global ideological confrontation. Hence the need to work with Asian nations for Australia.


Defense Minister Robert Ray remarks are relevant in this regard: "I am not saying that these Asian powers will become a military threat. Rather I am suggesting that the withdrawal of Soviet and United States forces will create opportunities for change. How China, India and Japan develop their military powers in this new situation will be a particularly sensitive issue." 132 To be an independent voice in the region, Australia is advised to keep a safe distance from the United States and engage itself with the countries in the region.

Australia shares intelligence information with the United States under an agreement called UKUSA that groups Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. Washington assigns a high value to Canberra as a regional military ally. It is a listening post and stronghold of American intelligence collection. Indonesia falls within Australia's zone of responsibility. Its role and geographic position has been an important issue in US-Indonesia relations. Reports at the peak of East Timor crisis and the following months in 1999 and 2000 indicate that Australia withheld intelligence and analytical information from the USA about East Timor. This was interpreted as tense period in US-Australia relations and latter's desire to preserve its interests in the Asia-Pacific. It also demonstrated that Canberra is in the process of changing its perspectives on defence from defending its territory to maintaining regional stability for its economic interests.133

However, Australia led the International Force on East Timor-INTERFRET with logistical and communications support from the United States. Canberra was seen by many as being a US 'deputy' of Sheriff Washington with the main responsibility for the conduct of peacekeeping operation being left to local powers.


133 Stratfor.com/asia/commentary/0104231830.htm