

Ministers for
Foreign Affairs
1972-83

Edited by
Melissa Conley Tyler and
John Robbins

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Australian Institute of International Affairs
32 Thesiger Court, Deakin ACT 2600, Australia
Phone: 02 6282 2133 Facsimile: 02 6285 2334
Website: www.internationalaffairs.org.au
Email: ceo@internationalaffairs.org.au

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Foreword

Allan Gyngell AO FAIA

For more than 80 years, the Australian Institute of International Affairs has been helping to collect and record the history of Australian foreign policy in its various publications, including the *Australia in World Affairs* series. This book is the third in a series that looks at the role and influence of individual Australian foreign ministers. It covers the contribution to Australian diplomacy of Gough Whitlam, Don Willesee, Andrew Peacock and Anthony Austin (Tony) Street in the years between 1972 and 1983.

This period included important achievements as Australia developed a new relationship with the People's Republic of China; consolidated its foreign and trading relationship with Japan; maintained a close but more pragmatic relationship with the United States; and supported the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty after ratifying it in 1973. The Whitlam and Fraser Governments were also at one in promoting a closer relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Successive foreign ministers helped drive Australia's heavy involvement in the Third United Nations Conference of the Law of the Sea, culminating in the production of a draft Convention in 1980. In the latter half of the 1970s and early 1980s, Australian foreign ministers also collaborated closely with the Minister for Trade, J. D. Anthony, in negotiating the landmark Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement with New Zealand.

The book draws on the outcomes of a day-long forum hosted at the AIIA's National Headquarters in Canberra on 19 May 2016. The participants included academics, officials and many distinguished diplomatic practitioners. We are grateful to all

of them and I congratulate all those involved in the book's production.

I want to acknowledge and express the AIIA's thanks to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for its support for this publication.

Allan Gyngell AO FAIIA
National President
Australian Institute of International Affairs

Editors' Note

Melissa Conley Tyler and John Robbins CSC

We are pleased to present the third book in the Australian Institute of International Affairs' *Ministers for Foreign Affairs* series. Following on from the two previous publications in the series, the AIIA hosted a forum at Stephen House in May 2016 examining Australian foreign policy from 1972-1983. This publication brings together the papers and discussions from this event.

The AIIA is deeply committed to preserving a record of Australia's foreign policy history and we hope this publication will provide an insight into this intriguing era. As well as seven of the papers presented at the event – by Professor Peter Edwards AM FAIIA, Dr David Lee, Professor Jocelyn Chey AM FAIIA, Trevor Wilson, Emeritus Professor James Cotton FAIIA, Professor Derek McDougall and Di Johnstone AM – this volume includes transcripts of the discussions following each paper by forum participants.

An additional panel discussion on diplomacy in the Whitlam/Fraser era is also included in this volume. The insights and personal reminiscences revealed in these discussions are valuable and well worth reproducing.

In these discussions minor edits were made for clarity, consistency, ease of reading and relevance. As such, it should be noted that the discussions reproduced in this book do not in all instances constitute a word-for-word transcription of proceedings. They do, however, aim to reflect and preserve the intent of the speaker. As editors, we take responsibility for any infelicities that remain.

This publication could not have been completed without the generous support of many individuals and organisations.

We thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Historical Publications and Information Section, in particular Dr David Lee, for supporting the production of this historical record. We thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Gina Dow for locating the archival photographs used.

Thanks are due to the following who assisted with organising the forum in Canberra and with the subsequent editing of this volume: Rory MacNeil, Carolina Dolan, Roman Madaus, Jaidan Stevens, Tarisa Yasin, Leyang Wang, Edward Boettcher, Bobby Wen, Susan Kim, Zoe Glasson, Claire Wong, Trevor Alexander, Breanna Gabbert, Douglas Barnicoat, Tom Bettinson, Joshua Ravenhill and Matt Longworth.

Finally, we would like to thank all speakers and moderators for sharing their expertise. The Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83 drew together an extraordinary group. A copy of the program for the event is included at the end of this volume.

We hope you enjoy this publication.

Melissa Conley Tyler
National Executive Director

John Robbins
Project Officer

Opening Remarks

Zara Kimpton OAM

As National Vice President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) I would like to welcome you all here to the Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs from 1972 to 1983. Unfortunately, our National President, The Hon Kim Beazley AC FAIIA, is unable to be present today but he sends his best wishes for a successful forum. He became a member of federal parliament in 1980 so he is particularly interested in the period which we will review today, and is looking forward to the publication which will result from this dialogue.

The subject of our first forum was just one man: R.G. Casey. The second focused on the work of seven foreign ministers but they were all from the Liberal Party. Today will be different. This nine year period is divided into that of the Whitlam Government from 1972 to 1975, Ministers for Foreign Affairs Gough Whitlam and Don Willesee, and the Fraser Government from 1975 to 1983 with Ministers for Foreign Affairs Andrew Peacock and Tony Street. Although we think of foreign affairs as being an area where there is a high degree of bi-partisanship there will of course be differences which may become more evident during today's discussions. Gough Whitlam was his own foreign minister from December 1972 to November 1973 (as Menzies had been in his own government in 1960). It is well known that Whitlam was very interested in international affairs and had visited China in 1971 as head of a Labor Party delegation, at a time when the McMahon Government was still refusing to open diplomatic ties with the country. This visit took place just before the historic visit to Beijing by President Nixon when the tide started to turn in relations with the West, despite

the fact that China was in the midst of the Cultural Revolution (which incidentally started 50 years ago this month).

Whitlam's visit to China as both Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1973 marked the first period of diplomatic relations between Australia and a communist country after nearly three decades of the Cold War. It is interesting that Whitlam passed the baton of Foreign Minister to Don Willesee immediately after his visit to China. He must have realised that our foreign relationships were becoming both more important and more diverse, so that they needed to be overseen by someone who could devote all his energy to the one portfolio. You will also recall that 1973 was the year when Britain joined the European Common Market, which meant that one of our closest relationships was about to undergo profound change.

As in previous years today's forum has three aims, which are to:

- Reflect on the work and achievements of the individual ministers for foreign affairs during this time;
- Assemble a group of distinguished diplomats of the era and beyond to discuss the challenges faced during that time;
- Provide a forum for papers by distinguished historians of the era.

We are delighted to welcome here today so many distinguished diplomats, historians and academics, many of whom have participated in the previous two forums and other AIIA conferences. There are so many long-term associates of the AIIA among our guests today that I can't even start trying to name you all. However I would particularly like to welcome the AIIA's life members and Fellows and single out

one person, Garry Woodard FAIIA, who is a past National President of the AIIA. It was originally Garry's idea to commence the series and we particularly value his contribution to its success.

We would also like to thank Dr David Lee and his colleagues at the Historical Publications and Information Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which has again partnered with the AIIA in this project. DFAT has also helped fund the publication of the two previous books, as well as the one which will result from today's proceedings.

The Australian Institute of International Affairs was created as a national body in 1933 following the establishment of branches of Chatham House in Sydney in 1924, Melbourne in 1925 and Brisbane a few years later. Ever since, it has been closely involved in creating awareness of international issues both amongst its 1500 members around the country and the wider population. For those of you who are interested in learning more about the history of the institute I recommend obtaining a copy of *Australian Outlook: A History of the Australian Institute of International Affairs* by Professor John Legge FAIIA.

Sadly John Legge died earlier this year after making a magnificent contribution to the AIIA over many years.

The AIIA now hosts around 200 events each year around the nation, with speakers from all parts of the world. Publications are also an important way for the AIIA to achieve its mission of disseminating ideas and educating the public. At the time of our National Conference here in Canberra later this year the latest volume of *Australia in World Affairs*, which we publish every five years, will be released with the title "Navigating the New International

Disorder”. We are also proud of the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, which is now published six times a year and is the Australian leader in its field. Since our last similar forum in 2013 the AIIA has also created a most successful weekly blog known as Australian Outlook which now reaches 26,000 unique visitors per month.

The AIIA is also proud to have been voted the top think tank in South East Asia and the Pacific in the Global Go To Think Tank Index in both 2015 and 2016.

The previous books with both the formal papers and the personal insights and reminiscences were easy to read and should be of interest to both scholars and the general public. I'm sure this will be the same today. Of course people will have different recollections of the same events; this is all part of the rich tapestry of life. However some of you may even change your minds or come to slightly different conclusions as a result of what you hear today.

Before asking Peter Boyce to open the first session I would just like to thank John Robbins and Jaidan Stevens for all the work they have done in organising today's event, Melissa Conley Tyler and Rory McNeil for all their ongoing work surrounding the forum, as well as all of you who have prepared papers and participated in other ways.

Zara Kimpton OAM
National Vice-President
Australian Institute of International Affairs

Australian Foreign Policy 1972-83: An Overview

The Whitlam Government 1972-75: Gough Whitlam and Don Willesee

Professor Peter Edwards AM FAIA

There have been many assessments of Gough Whitlam's legacy in recent years, following his death in October 2014, in addition to various anniversaries marking his career milestones. Although the foreign policy community has had a good deal to say, in wider assessments foreign policy appears rather less prominently than one might have assumed, given the salience that Whitlam himself gave to this field, at the time and in his subsequent writings.¹ This is based on an ambiguity that was observable at the time and in historical commentary.

On the one hand, many have observed that Whitlam brought a visionary new direction to Australian foreign policy. He outlined a policy that would place much less emphasis on Cold War alignments, military alliances and ideologies, with much more emphasis on independent diplomacy. Within days of the election victory, Richard Woolcott, a senior official in the Department of Foreign Affairs, summarised the new government's approach in a widely circulated statement as: 'A more independent Australian stance in international affairs, an Australia which will be less militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism.'² Whitlam envisaged an Australian

¹ Compare, for example, Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Viking, Melbourne, 1985, in which Chapter 2, 'International Affairs', pp. 25-181, is by far the longest chapter; and Gordon Bilney, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', ch. 26 in Troy Bramston (ed.), *The Whitlam Legacy*, Federation Press, Sydney, 2013, pp. 270-9.

² Quoted in Bilney, in Bramston (ed.), *Whitlam Legacy*, p. 292

policy that would give much less emphasis to bilateral ties to our great and powerful friends in London and especially Washington, and much more on multilateral cooperation with many parts of the world, especially in East and Southeast Asia. Any hint of colonialism or racism was to be rejected. Many Australians, not least a generation of young diplomats in Foreign Affairs, found this an inspiring vision. Whitlam fundamentally changed not just policies but the way in which Australian foreign policy would be discussed and debated for decades afterwards.

On the other hand critics, then and later, said that, while many of Whitlam's aims were worthy and often overdue, he was too keen to take bold initiatives and to make grand gestures without adequate preparation. He was, they said, too eager to go too far too fast on too many areas at the same time, too reluctant to consult other nations or to take advice on the implementation of his vision, so that many of his initiatives proved ephemeral or even counter-productive. This forum presents an opportunity to re-examine this longstanding debate from a slightly different perspective, that of the relationship between the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

No-one has ever doubted that, for better or worse, Australian foreign policy from December 1972 to November 1975 was dominated by Gough Whitlam. He held the Foreign Affairs portfolio for the first year after election, then appointed Senator Don Willesee, who had been Minister Assisting the Foreign Minister in addition to several other ministerial posts, to the position. But even then Whitlam held such a tight hold on policy that probably few people, even those who would regard themselves as well-informed on foreign policy, could even name Willesee. Political insiders probably thought of

him primarily as the father of the prominent journalist Mike Willesee.

It is important to note that, long before the current three-tiered ministry, Whitlam was saddled with an unwieldy and ill-disciplined ministry of 27 members, all of whom were in Cabinet and all of whom could, in any case, be overruled by Caucus. A Minister who had been defeated in Cabinet could, and some did, take the matter to the parliamentary Caucus to have the Cabinet decision overruled. Moreover the courage and skill Whitlam had displayed by his mission to China, as Leader of the Opposition, in 1971 naturally strengthened his confidence in his own judgment and abilities in this field. Indeed, Whitlam probably had a greater impact on Australian foreign policy from the Opposition benches than any other Leader of the Opposition, before or since. His authority in the field was in stark contrast to the Coalition led by John Gorton and William McMahon, which was deeply divided on policy and leadership and which was visibly floundering, not least in foreign affairs and related areas. (It is hard to avoid the counter-factual speculation that both sides of politics, and Australian governance in general, would have fared better if Whitlam had won the 1969 election, instead of being obliged to wait another three years.) Given these structures, and Whitlam's dominance in the field, it is not surprising that he to a large extent acted as his own foreign minister, in broad policy and in detail, when in office.

My argument today is that Whitlam's failure to establish a sound and productive working relationship with Don Willesee was both a symptom and a partial cause of the ambiguities in assessments of Whitlam's foreign policy. This paper will look at the relationship between Whitlam and Willesee, and suggest what a better working relationship might have achieved for the foreign policy of the Whitlam Government.

Australian Foreign Policy 1972-83: An Overview



Professor Peter Edwards AM FAIA presenting on “The Whitlam Government 1972-75: Gough Whitlam and Don Willesee” at the Australian Institute of International Affairs Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83, May 2016. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)



Minister for Foreign Affairs Don Willesee (6 November 1973 – 11 November 1975) (DFAT: HIS-0585)

So who was Senator Don Willesee? Like many on the right wing of the Australian Labor Party before the disastrous split of 1954-55, Donald Robert Willesee came from a Catholic family with strong links to the Party and to right-wing unions. When he arrived at the Senate in 1950, he was believed to be the youngest Senator ever elected. When he went to take his seat in the House, an attendant barred his way, saying: 'Sorry, son, only Senators in there'. His principal interests were in social welfare and foreign affairs: in his first speech, he spoke of the need for a more independent foreign policy. A Catholic with socially conservative views – for example, he opposed the modest liberalisation of divorce laws by Garfield Barwick in 1958 – Willesee was close to the 'groupers'. He voted against party leader Dr H V Evatt in the dramatic spill motion in 1954 that precipitated the catastrophic split which kept Labor on the opposition benches until 1972. Nevertheless when the split came Willesee, like most right-wing Labor parliamentarians in Western Australia, took what might be called the New South Wales rather than the Victorian path. He chose not to join what became the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) but to stay within the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and to fight its left wing, especially the influential WA State Secretary F E Chamberlain, from within. His decision not to join the DLP led to his estrangement from the Catholic Church for many years.

As far as possible, Whitlam stayed aloof from the Right and Left factions of the ALP: he became deputy leader in 1960 with the support of the Left and leader in 1967 with the support of the Right. Although Willesee was an ally in the intervention in the 1960s that purged the Victorian party's left wing and made the ALP electable, it appears that Whitlam never really trusted Willesee. There appear to have been three major reasons behind this distrust. First, according to the well-placed observer Clem Lloyd, Whitlam regarded Willesee as a

grouper, who had been disloyal to Evatt and who should have joined the DLP.³ Secondly, to his ultimate cost in 1975, Whitlam had little regard for the Senate, treating the House of Representatives as the only parliamentary chamber of any significance. And thirdly, as the Western Australian historian Geoffrey Bolton once noted, Whitlam ‘could never take the rest of Australia quite seriously and often behaved as if the sun rose over Sydney and set over Canberra’.⁴ It was never likely that Whitlam would establish a close rapport with a right-wing Catholic Senator from rural Western Australia.

This was highly regrettable, because during Labor’s long years on the opposition benches, Willesee gained a reputation as a decent, earthy and reliable Senator, with a safe pair of hands. As a highly regarded leader of the Right in the Senate, Willesee briefly became Leader in the Senate when the Left split their vote, and later served as Deputy Leader for the last years of his career. Keith Waller, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, found Willesee to be an astute judge of Caucus opinion. As Waller later recollected, Willesee ‘would say, “oh, you won’t have any trouble with Caucus on that one,” or, “well, so-and-so will be against it, but we have the numbers” or, “this one simply won’t march; you can’t do that, Caucus would never wear it.”’ Moreover, Waller thought Whitlam should have used Willesee just as Robert Menzies had used Eric Harrison, a ‘man on whose shoulder any

³ Bobbie Oliver, ‘Willesee, Donald Robert, 1916-2003’, in *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, vol. 3, 1962-1983, University of New South Wales Press Ltd, Sydney, 2010, pp. 478-484. The online edition is at

<http://biography.senate.gov.au/index.php/willesee-donald-robert/>

⁴ Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia*, volume 5, *The Middle Way*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, second edition, 1996, p. 174.

backbencher could weep and if the tears were numerous enough and real enough, Harrison would go to Menzies and say: “You’d better have a word with so-and-so, he’s very upset” [so that] ... between this rather aloof Olympian figure in the Prime Minister’s office and rest of Parliament, there was this amiable, not very talented [but] very agreeable figure ... Willesee could have been used by Whitlam in exactly the same way, because nobody disliked him.’⁵ One indication of Willesee’s superior political judgment was that he was appalled by Whitlam’s appointment of the DLP Senator Vince Gair as ambassador to Ireland, in a crude, unsuccessful and counter-productive attempt to gain electoral advantage.

When Labor came to office in December 1972 Willesee was appointed Special Minister of State, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister assisting the Prime Minister and Minister assisting the Foreign Minister: that is, Whitlam with his two hats. By all accounts he performed well in these posts, helping to implement many of Whitlam’s dramatic reforms. He had long opposed the Vietnam War as well as the vestiges of European colonialism, and made effective speeches criticising international policies such as the French nuclear tests. Willesee’s statements and actions, on matters such as foreign aid, the development of the law of the sea, and dissociation from anything that smacked of racism or colonialism, effectively implemented the directions that Whitlam had enunciated. If he did not display Whitlam’s flair and self-confidence, he also refrained from some of his leader’s excesses. While still Minister Assisting the Foreign Minister, for example, he made a tour of sub-Saharan Africa,

⁵ Alan Fewster, *Three Duties & Talleyrand’s Dictum: Keith Waller, Portrait of a Working Diplomat*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2018, pp 219-20.

ably demonstrating that Australia was turning away from its association with white minority regimes; but much of the good he achieved was undone when Whitlam made an unnecessarily provocative statement that the regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa were 'worse than Hitler'.⁶

Whenever Willesee was overseas as foreign minister, Whitlam designated himself as Acting Minister. On one such occasion Whitlam took the decision to give *de jure* recognition of Soviet Union's sovereignty over the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. There were sound technical reasons for this decision, but Willesee knew that it could and should have been handled with such greater political skill and sensitivity. Among other things, it converted Australians of Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian descent into vehement critics of the Whitlam Government. This decision, coupled with the rapid opening of diplomatic relations with East Germany, North Vietnam and North Korea as well as China, and the clumsy handling of an attempted defection of a Soviet musician, laid Whitlam open to the charge that he was not merely altering the balance in the American alliance but was moving to the other side of the Cold War. It did nothing to improve his political standing at home or his reputation in Washington.

The standard claims made by Whitlam's supporters in later years were that 'he recognised China' and that 'he withdrew Australian troops from the Vietnam War'. In fact both are misleadingly over-simplified assertions. Whitlam's visit to China as Leader of the Opposition was genuinely courageous

⁶ Henry S. Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor: Content, Process and The National Debate*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1977, gives a full account, based on contemporary sources and the author's observation, of many of the policy decisions discussed in this paper.

and skillfully handled, but by the time Labor came to office, with the United States moving towards full relations with Beijing, recognition was a matter of course. Similarly, by the time Whitlam came to The Lodge, the only Australian troops still in Vietnam were about 200 advisers and a small headquarters group. The dramatic gesture made by Whitlam within days of the election was to immediately suspend the highly controversial system of selective national service, which had sent about 15,000 conscripts to Vietnam, of whom about 200 had died on active service. Whitlam was essentially taking steps towards which the Gorton and McMahon governments had been edging clumsily.⁷

Nevertheless it is true that the most two important and best documented areas of tension between Whitlam and Willesee were both based on relations with the United States and with Southeast Asia as the Vietnam War reached its tragic conclusion. To end Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, and to seek a new balance in the relationships with Washington and with Southeast Asia in a post-war era, were thoroughly worthy aims: but the transition to a new era could and should have been much better handled. Heeding the advice of Willesee and his departmental officers, in Canberra and in overseas missions, would probably have achieved better and more enduring results.

James Curran has written a fine book about the clash between Whitlam and Richard Nixon, so there is no need to go into detail here.⁸ But as Curran has documented, much of the American fury came not from the recognition of China, but

⁷ Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1972*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1997, ch. 10.

⁸ James Curran, *Unholy Fury: Whitlam and Nixon at War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2015.

from the speed with which Whitlam recognised the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, better known as North Vietnam, while the war was continuing. It was not Whitlam's fault that Labor's return to office coincided with Nixon's decision to bomb North Vietnam; nor was it his fault that three of his ministers made vitriolic comments, although he should have disciplined them more promptly and effectively. Whitlam's principal error was not to realise that timing is everything in foreign affairs, and that seeking a new balance in the Australian-American relationship would require more than simply writing a letter assuring Nixon of his good intentions, while saying that he intended to co-ordinate an appeal by Australia and other Asia-Pacific nations to both Hanoi and Washington. Henry Kissinger made it brutally clear that the Nixon administration did not appreciate being treated on an equal footing with the enemy against which the United States and Australia had been fighting a long and bloody war. As will be mentioned below, Nixon also had a better sense of Southeast Asian concerns over the changes in Australian policy. We can compare this period with the work of the Hawke Government in the 1980s. That government achieved many of its rather similar aims, but only after years of hard work by Hawke and several of his ministers, notably Kim Beazley, starting with considerable efforts to reassure both Washington and the domestic electorate.

Similarly, ending Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and seeking a less military and more constructive relationship with the Southeast Asian region were entirely appropriate aims, but Whitlam did not recognise that handling the transition needed to be more consultative and cautious. The speed with which he recognised North Vietnam, and his increasingly clear sympathy for Hanoi over Australia's supposed ally in Saigon, was coupled with other bold, but not always carefully considered initiatives. He called for a new

regional organisation, which offended all the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei), especially Indonesia, which was widely seen as ASEAN's leader. He abruptly ended Australia's involvement in the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), which was in fact moribund, but was valued by Thailand because it gave multilateral cover to effectively an American guarantee of Thai security. He called for an end to all Western military involvement in the region to not only include SEATO and the Vietnam commitment, but also the Five Power Defence Arrangement, which gave Malaysia and Singapore some comfort at a sensitive time. In short, while proclaiming his intention to form a closer relationship with the countries of the region, he managed to cause offence to all members of ASEAN, both collectively and individually. Politics is the art of the possible, and Willesee often seemed to have a better sense of what was possible, and even desirable, at any given time than did the visionary Whitlam.

The tensions between Whitlam and Willesee came to a head in 1975, to some extent interlocked with the domestic politico-constitutional crisis leading to the government's dismissal by the Governor-General and its subsequent electoral defeat. When Saigon fell in April 1975, a major public issue was the admission of South Vietnamese refugees, particularly those who had worked in the Australian embassy or with Australians in other capacities. Whitlam took a stronger line against admitting South Vietnamese refugees than Willesee and other advisers thought politically wise or morally defensible. Apparently seeking to avoid the mistake of non-recognition of the Chinese communists' victory in 1949, Whitlam uncritically accepted Hanoi's assurances that the defeated South Vietnamese would be well-treated. In the light of what we now know about 're-education camps' and

forced labour, his attitude seems naïve. We also have Clyde Cameron's account of Whitlam telling a distressed Willesee that he did not want an influx of 'f...ing Vietnamese Balts' – that is, a body of anti-communist refugees who would probably vote conservative, like the Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians who had been angered by the decision to give *de jure* recognition to their inclusion in the Soviet Union. The newly-elected Liberal leader, Malcolm Fraser, took a sharply different line, giving him the moral high ground, and the South Vietnamese refugee issue played an important part in the political crisis that culminated in the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. (I have discussed this episode at greater length in my 2006 R.G. Neale Lecture.⁹)

Later in the year came the well-known tensions between Whitlam and Willesee, as Indonesian concerns over East Timor led to the Balibo incident in October and the Indonesian invasion in December. Much has been written on this, and Whitlam's role remains the subject of contention. The volume of documents published in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy* series is the essential guide.¹⁰ Suffice it to say that there was a clear difference between Whitlam and Willesee on a major regional issue close to Australia's shores. Whitlam favoured Indonesian control over East Timor, with the proviso that it should be achieved without violence and by some form of self-determination. (The highly suspect form of self-determination accorded to the inhabitants of West New Guinea in the 1960s may well have been in his mind, if not Jakarta's.) Willesee, by contrast, felt that Australia should

⁹ Available on the National Archives Website, naa.gov.au

¹⁰ Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000.

focus its efforts on persuading the Indonesians that they might have to accept an independent East Timor and giving them confidence that, in the aftermath of the communist victory in Vietnam, Timor would not prove to be a Southeast Asian Cuba. With the wisdom of hindsight, Whitlam would have been wise to pay more heed to Willesee's advice. His subsequent dismissal of Willesee, based on this issue, as a 'forgettable and forgetful' foreign minister tells us more about Whitlam than it does about Willesee.¹¹

We should also note that in two important fields of public policy, both of which overlap with foreign affairs, Whitlam did leave a more positive legacy. In both cases Whitlam chose to act not as a visionary but as a prudent prime minister, laying down the broad directions of policy and leaving the detailed work, the tactics of timing and negotiations – and, we might add, the attendant criticism and controversy – to other ministers and officials. One is defence. It had long been recognised that Australia's defence structures, at ministerial, departmental and service level, needed a major reorganization, as did strategic policy and policy-making. The Menzies government had failed to act on the recommendations of a committee it set up in 1959. Whitlam set the process of defence reorganisation in motion but left the detail to his underestimated Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard, and the formidable Secretary of the Defence Department, Sir Arthur Tange. The reorganisation that Whitlam initiated, although it still has its critics, has been maintained by governments of all persuasions ever since.

¹¹ See <http://www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s182826.htm> for the comments by Whitlam and Willesee on the ABC program AM on 21 September 2000.

The second such area is the intelligence agencies. Just before the Whitlam Government was elected, the ALP Federal Conference came within one vote of adopting, as Labor policy, the abolition of ASIO. Instead of making a grand gesture along those lines, Whitlam appointed a NSW Supreme Court judge, Robert Marsden Hope, as a Royal Commissioner with extraordinarily broad terms of reference, to investigate and report on the legislation, structure, doctrines and culture of the entire intelligence community. Whitlam thus began a process, continued by both Fraser and Hawke, in which Hope submitted 16 major reports over 10 years, completely reshaping the intelligence community in a way which removed the intelligence and security agencies from partisan politics and served the country well for the next 30 years.

In summary, the short but turbulent tenure of the Whitlam Government was undoubtedly a major episode in Australian foreign policy, changing the nature of the policy and the attendant debate. It was both a strength and a weakness that Whitlam kept such a tight personal hold on the area. His grand visions were often well aimed, but his legacy was marred by his insistence that he, and only he, should control both the long-term direction and the short-term implementation. Senator Don Willesee did not have Whitlam's vision, or his extraordinarily broad range of knowledge and interests, but he had sound political instincts and a sense of decency that were complementary to Whitlam's qualities. If the two men had formed a more effective partnership, the foreign policy legacy of the Whitlam years might well have proved less ambiguous and more enduring and substantial.

The Fraser Government 1975-1983: Andrew Peacock and Tony Street

Dr David Lee

There were two foreign ministers in the years from 1975 to 1983: Andrew Sharp Peacock, who served from 11 November 1975 to 3 November 1980 and Anthony Austin (Tony) Street, who succeeded him in the portfolio until the defeat of the Fraser Government in March 1983. Peacock was born on 13 February 1939, the son of a company director. He was educated at Scotch College and then the University of Melbourne from which he graduated with a degree in law. After leaving university, he practised law while also advancing rapidly in the Liberal Party. He was president of the Young Liberals in 1962 and married Susan Rossiter, the daughter of Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, Sir John Rossiter, a year later. Peacock became President of the Victorian Liberal Party in 1965, the year before the resignation of the long-serving Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies.

With Menzies' resignation, the blue-ribbon federal seat of Kooyong was made available. It had been held by Menzies from 1934 until 1966, and before 1934 by Sir John Latham, a former Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, Leader of the Nationalist Party federal Opposition and later Chief Justice of the High Court. Peacock obtained Liberal Party pre-selection for Kooyong and won the seat comfortably in a by-election on 2 April 1966. The eminence of his predecessors in the seat of Kooyong was one reason why some marked Peacock out as a future Liberal Prime Minister. In 1969, Prime Minister John Gorton appointed Peacock Minister for the Army. After Gorton's replacement as Prime

Minister by William McMahon in 1971, Peacock was responsible as Minister for Territories for the highly complex task of bringing self-government to Papua New Guinea.

When the Liberal and Country parties lost office in 1972, Peacock became a senior member of the Opposition frontbench. As a moderate in the Liberal Party, Peacock was a supporter of the Leader of the Opposition, Billy Snedden, who was succeeded in 1974 by Malcolm Fraser. Peacock was not as close to Fraser, in part because Peacock was seen as a rival for leadership of the Liberal Party and also because Fraser, as a grazier and member for a rural seat, had tended to form closer political friendships with members of the National Party than with urban Liberals like Peacock.

Fraser nonetheless made Peacock his spokesperson on foreign affairs, and rewarded him with that portfolio when the coalition returned to power in November 1975. After about five years as Minister for Foreign Affairs, towards the end of 1980, Peacock asked for a change of portfolio and became Minister for Industrial Relations. Friction between Peacock and Fraser on foreign policy issues precipitated the move. But another reason for Peacock's switch to a domestic portfolio was that the requirement to travel as Minister for Foreign Affairs was not compatible with the needs of his young family. More dramatic political conflict with Fraser followed later. In April 1981, Peacock resigned as Minister for Industrial Relations and made an unsuccessful challenge to Fraser in the Liberal party room, but he returned to Cabinet as Minister for Industry and Commerce in 1982 in the lead-up to the election of the Hawke Labor Government, after which he became Leader of the Opposition following Fraser's resignation from Parliament.

Tony Street succeeded Peacock as Minister for Foreign Affairs in November 1980. Street was born on 8 February 1926, the son of Brigadier Geoffrey Austin Street, the wartime Minister for Defence and then Army Minister. Geoff Street had been among the group of senior civil and military leaders who had died tragically in an air crash in Canberra in 1940.¹ His son, Tony, was educated at Melbourne Grammar School and went straight into the Royal Australian Navy. Following his discharge in 1946, he returned to manage the family farm at Eildon at Lismore in Victoria. He was a keen golfer, tennis player, motorcycle racer and Victorian Country representative cricketer. Street entered Parliament in 1966, representing the Victorian federal seat of Corangamite, and became Assistant Minister for Labour and National Service under McMahon from 1971 to 1972. When the coalition returned to office in 1975, Street was Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister in Public Service matters from 1975 to 1978 followed by Minister for Industrial Relations from 1978 to 1980. In 1980, Street and Peacock swapped positions, the former becoming Minister for Foreign Affairs and the latter Minister for Industrial Relations.

Like his predecessors in the office, Malcolm Fraser as Prime Minister played a strong role in foreign affairs throughout the whole period from 1975 to 1983. Peacock had recruited Owen Harries as academic-in-residence in 1976. Located in the department's executive secretariat, Harries was also a speech-writer and policy adviser. Reflecting his increasing closeness to Fraser, Harries transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in 1978. Harries' move to the

¹ 'Street, Geoffrey Austin (1894–1940),' in John Ritchie (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 12*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1990, pp. 117-18.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet reinforced an already strong contingent of external affairs advisers in that department. Fraser increasingly used Allan Griffith as his 'special adviser' and his personal emissary and David Kemp, in Fraser's office, played an important role in the preparation of major speeches and briefs for conference diplomacy.² The diplomat Alf Parsons recorded in his memoirs that he witnessed on a trip to Jakarta in 1976 "my first of what was to be many examples of the rivalry between [Fraser and Peacock] and of Peacock's perception, often right, that Fraser was trying to steal his thunder on foreign affairs."³

China and Japan

One of Peacock's most important achievements in foreign affairs was his role in influencing the Fraser government to confirm the Whitlam government's path-breaking decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. In 1971, the year before the election of the Whitlam Government, the McMahon Government had started a cautious change in Australian policy towards China. It sought to open up a dialogue with Beijing, but this process failed essentially because the McMahon Government was unprepared to disavow its diplomatic relationship with the Nationalist Government in Taiwan as the price of a new relationship with Beijing. In 1972, the Whitlam government acted swiftly to recognise the People's Republic of China and withdrew the Australian embassy from Taiwan. A critical

² P.J. Boyce, 'The Foreign Policy Process' in P.J. Boyce and J.R. Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance: Australia in World Affairs 1976-80*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1983, p. 16.

³ Alf Parsons, *Southeast Asian Days*, Australians in Asia Series, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Griffith, 1998, p. 137.

question for the Liberal and National parties, when they returned to power in 1975, was what to do about China.⁴

The decision was not a *fait accompli*. Divisions of opinion within the Liberal and National parties about the claims of two Chinese governments, one at Beijing and one in Taiwan, did not quickly disappear.⁵ This was why Peacock's 'New Foreign Policy Statement' on 6 October 1975 was so important.⁶ Peacock made it clear in this statement that there would be no significant changes to the policy direction taken by the Whitlam Government on China. As with other younger Liberals, Peacock signalled that there would be no turning the clock back and Opposition Leader Malcolm Fraser confirmed this by issuing a widely-publicised announcement that he intended to visit Beijing on coming to government. One immediate consequence of the coalition parties' change of policy was that divisions in Australian society on China ceased to be an issue of electoral significance, as they had been in the 1950s and 1960s and particularly in the close-run federal election of 1969.

On 17 February 1976, when Governor-General Sir John Kerr opened the first session of the 30th Commonwealth parliament, he indicated that 'bilateral relations with China will be further developed'.⁷ In a later speech on 1 June 1976, Peacock commented: "We are in no way defensive about the fact that we are now approaching that country [China] in

⁴ See Stuart Doran and David Lee (eds), *Australia and Recognition of the People's Republic of China*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2002.

⁵ L.R. Marchant, 'Australia and East Asia: China and Korea', in Boyce and Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 208.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

different terms from those which prevailed a few years ago”.⁸ Prime Minister Fraser visited Beijing in 1976, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Doug Anthony, visited in 1978 and Peacock followed in 1979. Cultural and people-to-people links began to develop, exemplified by the establishment of an Australia–China Council in 1978. From public funding, the Council commenced an immediate programme of activities to promote “mutual understanding and co-operation in culture, science, education, information and sport”.⁹

While cultural ties were strengthened, trade with the People’s Republic of China grew only steadily so that by 1980 Australia was taking a little over one per cent of its imports from China and exporting 4.5 per cent of its exports to the People’s Republic of China. In 1980, the People’s Republic of China was at that time a relatively modest market for Australia. By comparison Taiwan was supplying nearly three per cent of imports and taking almost two per cent of exports.¹⁰ In December 1978, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping launched a program of economic modernisation that Peacock and Fraser warmly welcomed. But in their diplomacy towards China in the 1970s, Fraser and Peacock were generally more concerned with strategic issues such as the global balance, the Middle East and disarmament than with issues of trade. Nonetheless, by 1983 relations had been broadened by the conclusion of bilateral agreements in a number of fields and the emphasis then began to switch to the economic, as would be evidenced later in the 1980s when

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 215; ‘Establishment of the Australia–China Council’; news release issued by Andrew Peacock, 1 June 1979, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 50, June 1979, p. 354.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 216–17

Australia and China cooperated in opening an iron ore mine at Channar in the Pilbara, Western Australia.

Peacock and Street carried through bipartisanship in policy towards Australia's other important North Asian relationship, that with Japan. In the Peacock-Street era, Japan was Australia's largest trading partner. Moreover, in 1979–80 Japan had become the third largest source of foreign investment in Australia after the United Kingdom and the USA, supplying about one fifth of the total.¹¹ Australia exported rural and mineral commodities—coal, iron ore, wool, sugar, grains, meats and woodchips—and imported Japanese manufactured goods, in particular motor vehicles and electrical equipment. Like the Whitlam Government before it, the Fraser Government placed much emphasis on managing the impact of Australia's relations with Japan on the domestic economy. Peacock and Street shared responsibility for the bilateral relationship with Doug Anthony, the National Party Prime Minister and Minister for Trade.

The Whitlam Government had initiated negotiations with Japan through the Nippon-Australia Relations Agreement (NARA). Negotiations over the agreement had foundered in March 1975 on the interpretation of 'most favoured nation' treatment and the wording of the reference to Australia's sovereignty over resources and resource policy. The government saw the treaty through to signature by Fraser on a visit to Tokyo in June 1976. It set guidelines for the future management of the Australia–Japan relationship, establishing political principles for the conduct of bilateral relations over a

¹¹ Alan Rix, 'Australia and East Asia: Japan', in Boyce and Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, pp. 193-4.

wide area. While expressed in form of “best endeavours”, it laid down for the first time standards for entry and stay and the rapidly expanding trade relationship produced increasing people-to-people links.¹² Peacock and the Japanese Ambassador to Australia, Yoshio Okawara, exchanged the instruments of ratification of the treaty in Canberra on 22 July 1977.¹³ To help foster and guide these linkages, the Fraser Government set up in 1976 the Australia–Japan Foundation administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Some of the most important issues in the relationship related to trade, but by 1981, during Street’s tenure, discussion of international and bilateral political matters had become an integral part of the meeting of the Australia Japan Ministerial Committee meeting that had been established in 1972.¹⁴

Southeast Asia

For Australian foreign ministers in the 1950s and 1960s, Southeast Asia was a major focus of foreign policy, defence planning and military engagement. The Southeast Asia that faced Peacock and Street was radically different but no less important to Australia. In the late 1960s, the United Kingdom had begun its phased military withdrawal from East of Suez, and by 1975 the United States had taken away its military presence from South Vietnam.¹⁵ The anti-communist

¹² Moreen Dee, *Friendship and Co-operation: the 1976 Basic Treaty between Australia and Japan*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2006.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 43.

¹⁴ Alan Rix, ‘Australia and East Asia: Japan’, in Boyce and Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 194.

¹⁵ See S.R. Ashton, Carl Bridge and Stuart Ward (eds), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: Australia and the United Kingdom 1960–1975*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2010.

Indochina that Australia had helped to protect in the 1960s and early 1970s was swept away after the fall of Saigon in 1975. North and South Vietnam were unified, the Communists came to power in Laos, and the Khmer Rouge overthrew the Lon Nol regime in Cambodia, bringing to an end a period of civil war between communist insurgents and Western-backed regimes in Indochina. Communist regimes became entrenched in all three states thereafter. Indonesia launched a direct invasion of the former Portuguese colony, East Timor, in 1975. In the years after 1975, moreover, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) came into its own as a regional organisation.

With all these developments, paradoxically, the period from 1975 to 1983 in Southeast Asia “saw the development of problems and frictions more serious than the more overt confrontations of earlier periods”.¹⁶ Under Peacock and Street, Australia became more intensively involved in Southeast Asia, not in a military sense, but in dealing with a much more cohesive and powerful regional organisation and in responding to the breakdown of the fragile post-war order in Indochina and the associated outflow of refugees.

Regional conflict in Southeast Asia had not disappeared. Notwithstanding US and British disengagement from Southeast Asia, there were still three instances of military conflict in the Peacock–Street period. The first was Indonesia’s invasion of East Timor in December 1975 and its subsequent incorporation of the Portuguese colony in July 1976. The second was the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in 1978 and the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime;

¹⁶J.R. Angel, ‘Australia and South-East Asia’, in P.J. Boyce and J.R. Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 223.

and the third was the retaliatory Chinese invasion of Vietnam in 1979.

During 1975 rivalries between contending political parties in East Timor had led to covert Indonesian intervention in the territory in October 1975. When that covert intervention failed to topple the pro-independence party in East Timor, the Indonesian Army launched a direct invasion of the territory in December 1975. Peacock instructed the Australian Mission to the United Nations in New York to vote against Indonesia, and the three ASEAN members supporting it, on a resolution calling for the withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor.¹⁷ This led to some frostiness in the relationship. The challenge for Peacock in 1976 was to avoid further deterioration in Australian–Indonesian relations while maintaining its opposition to the Indonesian use of force.

Australia under Peacock continued to be a major provider of foreign aid to Indonesia. In October 1976, the Australian government seized a pro-Fretilin radio transmitter in Darwin; and in that month also agreed to provide aid to East Timor through the Indonesian rather than the International Red Cross. Fraser and Peacock visited Jakarta in October 1976 during which Fraser was ambiguous on the East Timor situation, noting that “we recognise that this is a complex question, greatly complicated by the rapid changes in Portugal and the breakdown in that country’s control and administration of East Timor”.¹⁸ Alf Parsons, then a Deputy

¹⁷ Cablegram to New York, 16 December 1975 in Wendy Way (ed.), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974–1976*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2000, p. 633.

¹⁸ Speech by the Australian Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Malcolm Fraser, at the Special Session of the House of the People’s Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia on 9 October, Fraser, 9

Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, recalled that over the next two years:

“Finally, Fraser and Peacock decided that they wanted the matter settled, certainly to the point of according *de facto* recognition of the Indonesian occupation. And in the interests of avoiding yet another leak and revival of the anti-Indonesian campaign before the decision was made, and they were prepared to short-circuit the usual Cabinet procedures for the submission of papers; the so-called 10-day rule requiring that much notice of a submission was brushed aside. A submission was prepared in the Department with only two or three of us being party to its draft, and the minimum number of copies were given to the Cabinet Secretariat for distribution at the Cabinet meeting itself. There was no preliminary inter-departmental discussion or even opportunities for ministers to consult their own Departments.”¹⁹

Following the cabinet decision, in 1978, Peacock announced that “the Government has decided that although it remains critical of the means by which integration was brought about, it would be unrealistic to continue to refuse to recognise *de facto* that East Timor is part of Indonesia”.²⁰

The sequence of events leading to regional conflict in Indochina was that on 25 December 1978, Vietnam launched a large-scale invasion of Kampuchea; on 7 January 1979,

October 1976, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol. 47, no. 10, p. 532.

¹⁹ Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

²⁰ Statement by Andrew Peacock, ‘Relations with Indonesia’, 20 January 1978, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 46-7.

Phnom Penh fell to Vietnamese forces; and on 10 February 1979, the Vietnamese-dominated Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS) declared the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Kampuchea. On the issue of the invasion of Kampuchea, Peacock aligned Australia with ASEAN's stance against Vietnam. Though Australia supported the condemnation of Vietnam and cancelled its small UN aid program, this happened when Peacock was out of the country and was announced by the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ian Sinclair, and the Prime Minister without consultation.²¹ Peacock was furious and threatened to resign when he returned to Australia.²² Nonetheless, in a statement on 14 February 1979 Peacock announced "Australia joined in the world-wide condemnation of Vietnam's military aggression and in the call for a cease-fire and withdrawal of Vietnamese troops".²³ But Peacock's withdrawal of aid to Vietnam led to some domestic political controversy as did the Fraser Government's stance against recognition of the Vietnamese-backed Kampuchean Government of Heng Samrin, which, like Indonesia in East Timor, had secured effective control of Kampuchea. Australia followed the United States, the ASEAN countries, China and the United Nations in continuing to recognise the Pol Pot regime.

As increasing reports came to hand of the atrocities committed by the Pol Pot regime, that policy became harder to justify. By 1980 the extent of Pol Pot's genocide had

²¹ News release issued by the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ian Sinclair, on 24 January 1979, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 50, January 1979, p. 42.

²² Parsons, *South East Asian Days*, pp.151-2.

²³ Announcement by Peacock, 14 February 1979, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol. 50, February 1979, pp. 91-3.

become apparent with estimates of up to 2.5 million of the country's eight million people having been murdered or starved between 1975 and 1979.²⁴ Technically, Australia's diplomatic recognition did not signify approval of the Pol Pot regime, but Peacock formed the view that Pol Pot was so evil that he should not be acknowledged in any official relationship. Peacock's stance was based on personal experience as well as political considerations. When in Opposition in 1975, he and coalition frontbencher Ian Sinclair were actually in Phnom Penh when Khmer Rouge forces were encircling the city. The population of 700,000-800,000 had swelled to 2.5 million and the Khmer Rouge was not letting in any food. It was a "horrifying" experience for Peacock and Sinclair who were forced to seek help from the US Ambassador to join the last of the Americans in a flight out of the country.²⁵

Bolstered by his personal experience, Peacock recommended to Cabinet in July 1980 that the government back UN acceptance of the Pol Pot regime's credentials for the forthcoming meeting of the UN General assembly but agree in principle to withdraw recognition afterwards. Fraser disagreed. The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea had received the backing of the Soviet Union and Western concern about its intentions had been heightened by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979. Peacock was so unhappy with government policy that he offered to resign and only relented after Fraser agreed to review policy.²⁶ In September 1980, Peacock again threatened to resign. A revelation of such a split would have been disastrous before a

²⁴Angel, 'Australia and South-East Asia' in Boyce and Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 226.

²⁵ Mike Steketee, 'Andrew Peacock and Malcolm Fraser Split on Pol Pot', *The Australian*, 1 January 2011.

²⁶ Parsons, op. cit., p. 152.

general election. The result was an agreement to de-recognise the Pol Pot regime so far as bilateral relations were concerned but to continue to support the ASEAN position (i.e. recognising it) in the United Nations. It fell to Street to announce the de-recognition of Kampuchea. The conflict between Fraser and Peacock precipitated his change of portfolio in November 1980. On 14 February 1981, Street announced in a statement released on his behalf that: “Australia regarded the policies of Pol Pot and other leaders of the regime as abhorrent, and hopes that its actions now in derecognising that regime will contribute to the emergence in Kampuchea of a Government truly representative of the Khmer people”.²⁷

Peacock was also involved with the related problem of managing the flow of refugees from Indochina. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, the unified Vietnamese government introduced a new social and economic system that led to a steady flow of Vietnamese— particularly former civil servants, military personnel and traders—to neighbouring countries. But as its relationship with China deteriorated, the Vietnamese government adopted increasingly severe measures against its ethnic Chinese minority with a view to persuading them to leave the country. There were large numbers of refugees also fleeing war-torn Laos and Kampuchea. Australia’s response to refugees from Indochina became a major element in its relations with ASEAN. By 1977 the outflow of refugees from Indochina had become serious and the ASEAN states mounted a strong diplomatic offensive to encourage other states to accept the refugees,

²⁷ News release issued by the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, J.R. MacKellar on 14 February 1981, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 52, 1981, p. 94.

reinforced by a preparedness to refuse permission for the boats to land.²⁸

Peacock, Fraser and Minister for Immigration Michael MacKellar at first sought to deter potential refugees by stating that arrivals would be sent back and that a right of abode in Australia was not necessarily automatic.²⁹ The government then sought unsuccessfully to persuade the ASEAN states to prevent the flow of boat people to Australia. In mid-1978, US Vice-President Walter Mondale resolved the impasse between Australia and ASEAN by helping the parties arrive at a “gentlemen’s agreement”. The ASEAN states agreed to hold boats bound for Australia while Australia agreed to an expanded resettlement programme of 9000 refugees per year.³⁰ The Fraser Government was represented in 1978 and 1979 at Conferences on Indochina in Geneva that more than doubled the number of places offered for settlement of refugees from 125,000 to 260,000. The United States took the largest number of refugees with Australia promising to take 14,000 when Peacock attended an ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in 28-30 June 1979.³¹ Peacock drew attention at Bali to the need to stop the problem at source, his belief that Vietnam could exercise control over the outflow if it wished and the inter-relationship of the refugee problem with the wider political and strategic issues in Indochina. Peacock was successful in conveying what the Australian government saw as the root causes of the problem and the need for concerted international action to deal with it. He was also able to

²⁸ See Nancy Viviani, ‘Refugees—the End of Splendid Isolation, in Boyce and Angels (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 133.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 131-41.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 134.

³¹ See extracts from the communiqué issued by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers after their meeting in Bali on 30 June, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 50, June 1979, pp. 380-4.

associate Australia's approach with the general content of the ASEAN communiqué, which was that organisation's strongest statement on the subject calling on Vietnam to amend policies leading to a high rate of disorderly outflow. Australia played its own part in refugee resettlement, taking in 45,000 Indo-Chinese refugees with relatively little public tension in Australia.

Formed in 1967 in the wake of Indonesia's confrontation of Malaysia, ASEAN moved into a more dynamic phase after the ASEAN Bali Summit of 1976. The Bali conference placed heightened emphasis on the need for practical schemes for political and economic co-operation, for devising regional solutions to regional problems and for bilateral co-operation, 'on a non-ASEAN basis', on security matters. The focus on economic co-operation within ASEAN led to some criticism by ASEAN states of Australia's protectionist policies. ASEAN launched a campaign calling for liberalisation in Australian trade policy. These differences notwithstanding, Peacock and Street succeeded in strengthening relations with the region. This was because Australian-ASEAN cooperation on Indochina and refugee problems tended to overshadow occasional economic disagreements. Also important in fostering better relations was Australian aid policy: ASEAN countries were second only to Papua New Guinea as recipients of overseas aid.³² The bipartisan adoption of an immigration policy that was 'universal and non-discriminatory' and Australia's record in settling Southeast Asian refugees helped to some extent to counter-balance an impression in ASEAN countries of Australia as a European outpost.

³²See Nancy Viviani, 'Aid Policies and Programmes' in Boyce and Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, pp. 121-9.

The United States and the Pacific

Australia played a larger role in the South Pacific under Peacock and Street. This was a response to US disengagement from the Pacific and the perceived introduction of great power rivalry in that region when the Soviet Ambassador to New Zealand presented his credentials in Tonga in 1976 and attempted to set up a permanent fishing base there.³³ Fraser, Peacock and Street had hopes that the Pacific should be seen as an 'ANZUS Lake': one in which Australia and New Zealand would have the main influence and whose security would be underwritten by the United States.

However, the Australian government's sense of vulnerability to growing Soviet influence in the Pacific was accentuated when the United States divulged in 1976 that it did not regard its commitment under ANZUS extending to the independent states of the South Pacific. In response, Australia quadrupled its aid to the region while also extending its diplomatic network there. Australia increased its aid from \$15 million for the 1974-76 triennium to \$60 million for the 1977-79 triennium, to \$84 million for 1980-82 and then to \$120 million for the 1981/83 triennium after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.³⁴ Fraser was explicit in 1980 in making a direct connection with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Australia's increase of economic assistance to the South Pacific, noting that it was Australia's duty, on behalf of the West, to keep the South Pacific free from Soviet influence.

In 1975, Australia was third among aid donors to the countries of the South Pacific. By the end of 1980, Australia had

³³ R.A. Herr, 'Australia and the South-West Pacific' in Boyce and Agel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 280.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

surpassed New Zealand as the prime source of external assistance to the region. The period was marked by a recognition that the region was vital to Australia's security and could not be taken for granted as it had been in the past. This led to both foreign ministers expanding Australia's diplomatic network in the South Pacific beyond its Melanesian base to the whole of the region. More independent states came into being: the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu (formerly the Ellis Islands) in 1978 and Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) in 1980. The addition of these new states to five existing independent states—Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa and Nauru—and the two associated states—Cook Island and Niue—created the image of a region that had been substantially decolonised. From the end of 1975 Australia established diplomatic missions in Honiara in 1978 and Vila in 1980 and also extended its diplomatic network by establishing diplomatic missions in the two Polynesian states of Western Samoa and Tonga.

In the years from 1975 to 1983, Peacock and Street operated during a period when Australia's relations with the United States were improving after the turmoil of the Whitlam–Nixon period. In the Australian community during that time, however, vigorous debates were taking place on foreign policy. The debate was influenced by general concern in the Australian community about the dangers of the nuclear arms race, a particular opposition to French nuclear testing in the Pacific and division about whether the Australian government was right in 1977 to permit the commercial exporting of Australia's vast deposits of uranium.

When Fraser won office in December 1975 at the head of a Liberal–National Coalition Government, he was cautious in his initial approach to the Australia–US relationship. Rather than taking his first overseas trip to London or Washington, as his

predecessors might have done, the new prime minister underlined the changing order in Australia's foreign policy priorities by making his first overseas visits to Japan and China. Despite Fraser's initially cautious position on the alliance, the years from 1976 onward saw the Australian government adopt a position that Australia and the US needed to co-operate more closely, an objective on which the embassy in Washington assisted under three ambassadors. These were Sir Patrick Shaw from 1974 to 1976, Alan Renouf from 1977 to 1979 and Sir Nicholas Parkinson, from 1976 to 1977 and again from 1979 to 1982. Reflecting the importance of the position of head of mission in Washington, Renouf and Parkinson, like Plimsoll and Waller before them, were permanent secretaries of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Fraser Government's assessment of the need for closer co-operation with the US after 1977 arose because of its apprehensions about the Soviet Union and particularly about the possibility of Soviet penetration into the Indian Ocean. When, six weeks after he had taken office in 1977, President Jimmy Carter announced that he had suggested to the Soviet Union a plan for the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean, he provoked strong resistance from the Fraser Government. An Australian campaign against Carter's plan began shortly after the president's announcement and continued through to the visit to Australia by US Vice-President Walter Mondale in mid-1978. The Australian campaign against demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean went together with an effort to secure the tacit reinterpretation of the ANZUS Treaty of 1951 to apply to Australian interests and territories in the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific Ocean.

Australian policy-makers had been fearful that the US—through its negotiations with the Soviet Union—might give away its right to commit US forces to the Indian Ocean during

crisis periods or prejudice its right to conduct operations with Australia and New Zealand there. The persistence of the Fraser Government secured the insertion into the communiqué of the ANZUS Council issued in Wellington on 28 July 1977 the wording that arms limitation agreements between the US and the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean ‘must be balanced in its effects and consistent with the security interests of the ANZUS partners’. To further mollify Australia, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance later issued a letter assuring the Fraser Government that any agreement the US secured with the Soviet Union would not ‘in any way qualify or derogate from the US commitment to Australia or limit [US] freedom to act in implementing our commitment under the ANZUS Treaty’.

In 1982, in the lead-up to an Australian federal election, Fraser sought to embarrass the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Hayden, on an issue related to whether or not US B-52s were carrying nuclear weapons. This concerned visits to Australian ports of US ships which might be armed with nuclear weapons. It came to the fore during the time of the ANZUS Council meeting in Canberra on 22 June 1982. After Hayden had seemed to imply that a future Labor Government might prohibit such ship visits, Fraser sought to exploit Hayden’s indecision in the same way that Prime Minister Robert Menzies had exploited Labor Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell’s policy on the North West Cape installation in 1963. The three ANZUS partners—Australia, New Zealand and the US—were able to agree in their 1982 communiqué on the desirability of continued visits to ports of the ANZUS partners by allied ships.

On the same day, Hayden was forced to announce a clarification of ALP policy. Hayden was replaced as Leader of the Opposition in 1983 by Hawke, who made a virtue of his personal pro-American stance, and neutralised opposition in the ALP by promising a review of the ANZUS Treaty. After

the ALP won office on 5 March 1983, Hawke became Prime Minister and Hayden the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The other major achievement of Australian policy in the Peacock and Street era was the government's negotiation of the Australian New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement, eventually signed by the Hawke Government in 1983. Negotiated mainly by Doug Anthony, it commenced in operation in 1983 and proved to be one of the most successful and wide-ranging trade agreements in the world.³⁵

The World Economy, International Law, Multilateral Diplomacy and Trade

In the area of global issues, international law and multilateral diplomacy there were significant developments during the Peacock–Street period. Australia was heavily involved in the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea which culminated in the production of a draft Convention on the Law of the Sea on 29 August 1980.³⁶ One of its most significant consequences was the extension of the exclusive economic zone to 200 nautical miles, which had important ramifications for fisheries of Australia and its Pacific Island neighbours. After Australia's ratification of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1973, Australia was also at the forefront of concluding six bilateral safeguards agreements.³⁷

³⁵ See Pamela Andre (ed.), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy: The Negotiation of the Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement 1983*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 2003.

³⁶ Gerard A. Brennan, 'Australia and International Law', in Boyce and Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance*, p. 59

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Also important was the Fraser Government's 1978-79 Committee of Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Third World countries. This was a report written by Owen Harries dealing substantially with Australia's neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region.³⁸ Street was extensively involved in an issue related to Australia's relations with the developing world: the South African Springbok Rugby Union team's tour of New Zealand in 1981. Fraser believed that New Zealand Prime Minister Robert Muldoon's decision to condemn the tour but not stop it was an abdication of responsibility. He feared the adverse consequence of Muldoon's policies on the Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting held in Melbourne in September 1981 and Australia's own hosting of the Brisbane Commonwealth Games in 1982. Accordingly in March 1981 Street proposed sending a high-level delegation, including British High Commissioner in Australia, Lord Carrington and Commonwealth Secretary-General, Sonny Ramphal, to meet with New Zealand officials to encourage firmer action against the Springbok tour. Fraser eventually decided not to go ahead with the Street's plan. Without it, to the immense relief of the Fraser Government, the Commonwealth Secretariat was able to stave off a boycott of the Commonwealth Games in 1982.³⁹

Conclusion

The era of Peacock and Street may be viewed as very much a period of bipartisanship in foreign policy. After the dramatic developments of the period from 1972 to 1975, Peacock and Street presided over a period of bipartisan consensus on the

³⁸ Ralph Pettman, 'The Radical Critique and Australian Foreign Policy' in Boyce and Angel, *Independence and Alliance*, pp. 300–9.

³⁹ Robert Messenger, 'Tackling Serious Issues in History', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 2012.

most important elements of foreign policy: for example, developing a new relationship with China; consolidating the important foreign and trade relationship with Japan; maintaining a close but more pragmatic relationship with the United States; and supporting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

There was also consensus eventually on accommodating to Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor manifested in the Fraser Government's de facto recognition of the incorporation. On mainland Southeast Asia Peacock and Street pursued the close relationship with ASEAN that Whitlam had also done much to create. Later there were political differences between Government and Opposition over Australia's recognition of the Pol Pot regime and it was also this question which was at the heart of the rupture between Peacock and Fraser. The Fraser Government also promoted a much more welcoming policy to Indochinese refugees than did the Labor Party.

But notwithstanding occasional differences on foreign policy issues, the decade from 1972 was in general a decade of bipartisanship in foreign policy with Peacock and Street hewing to courses set by Whitlam and Willesee. In 1982 the Fraser Government hoped to embarrass Labor leader Bill Hayden on the issue of the visit to Australian ports of US nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered vessels. The accession to the Labor leadership of Bob Hawke neutralised the issue although the ANZUS relationship would become one of the trickiest problems for his government from 1983 to 1985.

Australian Foreign Policy 1972-83: An Overview



Dr David Lee presenting on “The Fraser Government 1975-1983: Peacock and Street” at the Australian Institute of International Affairs Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83, May 2016. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)

Discussion

Moderated by Emeritus Professor Peter Boyce AO

The decade on which we will be reflecting today was characterised by a frenetic initial burst of policy changes, followed by changes in management and sharpened divisions of opinion between and within political parties. Gough Whitlam was clearly the dominant figure in the Labor years, but it's arguable that Malcolm Fraser was the dominant figure during the Liberal years. I defer to Dr David Lee's determination as to whom of these two was the more dominant and at which period.

Fraser certainly made his mark in 1976 with his dramatic "State of the World" statement, and he was very much influenced in the preparation of that statement by Owen Harries. And I wanted to observe that Owen Harries should have been here today, really, because his contribution to the Liberal years, mostly behind the scenes was quite substantial. And yet, he was as I see it, the first academic to come in from the cold and be taken and embraced by a government and allowed to exert considerable influence; although during the Labor years, we have to take account of those political diplomats, if you like, like Steven FitzGerald and Peter Wilenski, who had rather unusual career backgrounds, who in turn were able to influence Whitlam's handling of foreign policy.

Andrew Peacock and Fraser accepted the general direction of Labor, if not the style of foreign policy presentation. But their first year in opposition was quite challenging, and I think that the experience of the transition for being out of office, and having no access to official advice after a period of 23 years, is a very interesting period. I had the privilege of serving on a

committee of about six that was convened by Andrew Peacock in 1973 which worked through 1973 and 1974, advising Peacock on how many of Labor's policy initiatives should be accepted by the Liberals. Our advice was that most of them should be.

Owen Harries was a member of that group, and it was Owen Harries who made the most impact on Peacock. He was forthright and articulate and was clearly identified as a Cold War warrior, one of the few among us who was. He was drafted by Peacock as his foreign policy advisor and later retained by Prime Minister Fraser within the International Relations Division of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, thereby offering him considerable scope to exert influence, especially on Fraser's assessment of the Soviet Union's intentions in the Pacific.

The issues on which there were divisions of opinion, not just between parties but within them, included: Vietnam, in its final phases; United States bases in Australia; East Timor; and Kampuchea, sometimes forgotten. The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea caused stress between Fraser and Peacock, and indeed encouraged Peacock's resignation. But Timor was a very perplexing problem, and I know that Professor James Cotton will be pursuing this theme later. Timor became a source of frustration to both major political parties when in government.

I want to recall briefly the ethical challenges that were presented by the Indonesian military takeover, which inspired that most magnificent dispatch that fell off the back of a truck, or which was leaked, originating with Dick Woolcott in Jakarta, in which he discusses in *The Hot Seat*⁴⁰. I've taken

⁴⁰ Richard Woolcott, *The Hot Seat*, Sydney, Harper Collins, 2005.

that onboard down the years and used it in class as an example of ethical dilemma for a responsible government: there was the statement, which we all recall from Dick in his dispatch, that sometimes pragmatism has to take precedence over principle. But I think Dick does himself, or does the government, less than justice, because I detect in this particular context that there was a principle in the pragmatism and that principle was regional order. It was a case of order versus justice, which is a continuing theme, I think, in international relations theory, and always a source of great interest to the realist school of international thought.

Ross Cottrill:

I'd like to introduce another subject which was carried out from one year to the next, and that was Papua New Guinea (PNG). It was under Whitlam that PNG was brought to independence formally. I was involved very slightly in the process. I remember the cabinet solution coming through in draft, 30 pages of excellent mess really. From the state-of-play reports on about a dozen issues, it was obvious that PNG wasn't ready for independence in a big realistic sense.

In the early years of the Fraser Government, the implications of PNG independence and the state that it was in at the time had to be assessed, and it wasn't assessed as critically and vigorously as it should have been.

I eventually worked for Fraser in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; and we had a visit by the PNG Prime Minister in about 1982 or 1983. We'd lined up a series of concerns to be raised with him in the Cabinet Room about how things were going and what progress is being done. Fraser got pneumonia at the wrong time and Doug Anthony was there, and he didn't give the Prime Minister the issues

we'd prepared. But it was a critical period. By 1985 it was clear that serious problems were emerging in PNG: institutional problems, political problems, corruption. And by the end of the 1980s, these problems were largely set. So, that was the issue that came through, and although Fraser tried to pick up where Whitlam left off and carry the torch, the problems were ongoing.

Jeremy Hearder:

I would add a short comment about Gough Whitlam. Let us remember that Gough Whitlam's father, Fred, was a member of the committee of this branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs. Of all the prime ministers we've had, I don't know of anyone who had travelled as much overseas before becoming prime minister as had Gough Whitlam. It was quite exceptional. He had a son, of course, who joined the Department of Foreign Affairs and another son who went to Harvard. He was international in his thinking, in his knowledge. I once sat in on a conversation with the Indian High Commissioner in Canberra and Gough was able to talk not only about Indian law, but also Punjabi law.

He knew more people in the Department of Foreign Affairs before becoming prime minister than, I think, any other prime minister.

The other thing that I remember very vividly was that after 23 years of Labor being in the wilderness, the newspapers used to highlight, "What the Whitlam Government has done today." And I think this reflected very much what Gough was going to be doing: he wanted to do things; he wanted to do things really badly.

Emeritus Professor Peter Drysdale AO FAHA:

The point that Ross made making the connection between dealing with Papua New Guinea in those early days, and the development of a policy, was a fairly significant part of the Whitlam Government agenda. The marriage of External Territories with Foreign Affairs was a massive initiative and a massive shift in the approach to development policy, which of course has an element of continuity between the Whitlam Government and the Fraser Government, through Peacock in particular, in terms of Peacock's deep involvement in carrying the programs through the aid program on PNG forward.

That was significant, because it involved a fundamental shift in approach in the development of systems policy from Australia, and was occasioned by the need to deal with the Papua New Guinea issue, which of course, came to dominate the aid issue and required a totally different approach to development assistance through budget support to the newly-formed independent government of Papua New Guinea. So I think it's an important story to fold into the account of the Whitlam Government's foreign policy activity. We tend to think of Papua New Guinea as being almost domestic. But in this context, it was really, I think, a significant external issue that institutionally affected policies well beyond the development assistance to Papua New Guinea.

Mack Williams:

Two reflections on the Fraser years. First of all, I was pulled out of the Department of Foreign Affairs to go into the Caretaker Office with Andrew Peacock on day one. And so I was there for the first two or three months. The tensions were there, certainly. Andrew always insisted that it was he who turned Malcolm onto Africa, with a lunch with him and Helen

Suzman.⁴¹ Now, whether that was true or not, who knows. But the tension was there. The other tension, which is not talked about much, is that Suzman played a key role in Andrew's activities, phoning him regularly to find out who he was seeing, what he was talking about.

Both Ross Cottrill and Peter Drysdale talked about PNG. I was in Port Moresby at the time when we went through the Torres Strait Treaty, which was actually a major diplomatic achievement of that period. Because of his earlier experience in PNG, Andrew Peacock was by far the most popular Australian politician in PNG. And so, he had back-channels. Papua New Guineans would get on the phone straightaway to Andrew in Canberra to challenge some of the policy proposals which were being circulated by Fraser and his government. When it got to the Torres Strait, Andrew Peacock actually pulled right back, and it was left basically to Malcolm Lyon in the department to hold the thing together. And that torrid visit of Malcolm Fraser to sign the treaty was an extraordinary exercise, where he threatened to fly home unless PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare was brought, kicking and screaming, to sign in front of him that day. So the tensions on Papua New Guinea between Malcolm Fraser and Andrew Peacock were also quite strong. But the Torres Strait Treaty was a huge exercise and, as I say, I think we can credit much of that achievement to Malcolm Lyon.

⁴¹ Helen Suzman, leader of the Progressive Party in the South African Parliament, was a vigorous anti-apartheid campaigner and visited all Australian states in 1974 as the Dyason Lecturer for the Australian Institute of International Affairs.

Miles Kupa:

David Lee mentioned that during Tony Street's period in office as foreign minister we concluded a number of nuclear safeguards agreements, covering our uranium sales, and that was quite innovative and important. I was present at the signature of the agreement with Sweden at Parliament House. The Swedish Foreign Minister was there, the two ministers signed the document and then the Swedish Foreign Minister made some very worthy remarks about the significance of it, two countries strongly committed to non-proliferation. We all applauded and then we turned to Tony Street, who looked at us all and said, "Another one." And that was his contribution.

I thought it was embarrassing and inept when he had a briefing; I would have thought any politician of some worth would be able to conjure up a few words. It left me wondering just how equipped he was to be foreign minister, and the contrast between Whitlam, who might have been at the verbose end of the spectrum, confined to this rather minimalist observation, was pretty striking.

Richard Broinowski:

Following the mention of the Nara Agreement, and the Australia Japan Foundation being established, which was a huge undertaking, another thing to mention is that Peacock was instrumental in putting forward the Myer reports on coordinating relations within Australia towards Japan, then established the sustaining committee on Japan with seven permanent heads who weren't allowed to delegate. John Stone was very angry about that. I ran the secretariat; I often was the butt of his anger indirectly. And the Consultative Committee on Relations with Japan Sir Gordon Jackson, Sir Arvi Parbo and Sir Rod Carnegie as well as the Commonwealth States

Committee, were bitterly opposed by a number of trade unionists especially.

I often think it's lost sight of that the government did coordinate a great deal of thinking and activity and policy towards Japan. When the Japanese were able to divide and rule between different Australian companies, we were all over the shop, and this brought it together. And I sometimes think it would have been good to have had a similar kind of machinery for China and how to develop relations with China.

The other thing I want to say is that I didn't realise that Fraser and Sinclair had stopped aid to Vietnam, or that Peacock was so angry about it. I was the first Ambassador to Vietnam under the incoming Hawke Government, which had undertaken to restore aid to Vietnam. Under American pressure, that promise was not implemented; instead, Bill Hayden embarked on the Australian initiative to resolve the Cambodian situation, the ostensible reason for the US prohibition in bilateral aid. Meanwhile, I was charged with starting the aid program again through multilateral, NGO and cultural relations channels.

Professor Peter Boyce:

I was on the Consultative Committee on Relations with Japan, but not very memorably, because I shouldn't have been on it. And it adds to Miles Kupa's suspicion that Tony Street was not a particularly strong minister. I received a telephone call from Tony Street asking whether I'd sit on this newly established committee and I said, "But I know very little about Japan." He said, "Oh yes, but you're interested in bilateral relationships." And that was the end of the justification.

Dr Alison Broinowski FAIA:

Owen Harries was mentioned. It's something that has always fascinated me that one of the main achievements that he made for Fraser was to write the report on Australia and the Third World. Now that, it seems to me, would be a really interesting thing now to go back and look at, and I must confess, I haven't read it for years. But when I did read it, I thought then that it was a reactionary document, because it sought, in a way, to undo all the things that Whitlam had tried to do in relation to Asian countries. It took a very definite Cold War approach. It didn't, it seems to me, unless I've forgotten some detail to be justified by subsequent events; the way ASEAN and the other Southeast Asian countries have risen was not anticipated. The idea was that this is a part of the world with which we are stuck. We are very close to it. It's our burden. In other words: we have to take responsibility, it's going to be a pain and it's always going to be like this. And it's a great shame that Owen is not here to defend himself against my, perhaps wrong, recollections, and to say what he now thinks about them.

Professor Bob Bowker:

On Fraser and Peacock and the Third World, I'd just like to note that despite an extraordinary level of resistance from within the ranks of the Treasury - John Stone has been mentioned - the Department of the Prime Minister and the Department of Trade at the time, the position taken by Fraser and Peacock on the issue of the Common Fund and Australia's position on the Common Fund was very much in line with the reviews that were coming forward from Foreign Affairs, which shed a great deal of blood over briefing the government on that. It was Fraser's overriding of Treasury's

advice that enabled us to think and hold our heads up on that particular aspect of things. So perhaps that needs to be held in mind when discussing the position taken in response to Owen Harries strategically.

On the Middle East, I just would like to flag the point in regard to Australia's Middle East policy that it was the Fraser Government - Fraser in 1978, and then Peacock in this building, I think, in March 1980 - that established the Australian position on Palestinian self-determination that stood us in very good stead for the following 25 years.

Fraser was possibly the first serious Western leader to speak of self-determination as a right of the Palestinians. It was the speech that Peacock made here in March 1980 that established the Australian position, that Palestinians were entitled to an act of self-determination, should they so wish. And we took that position three months before it was enunciated in much more qualified terms by the Europeans in the Venice Declaration. So, we actually found this remarkably positive as a means of engaging with Arab countries in the period from 1970 onwards, that we could actually present ourselves as having been somewhat ahead of Western opinion in general on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the position of Palestinians. Most people tend to think it was something that came from Labor, but in fact, once again, it was Peacock and Fraser who brought that position ahead of Labor.

Sue Boyd:

I've got two quick anecdotes, which I think illustrate the points. First on Peter Edward's point that between Gough and Willesee, there were some serious issues of people not

remembering that Willesee was actually our minister. I was in the West Europe Branch at the time when Gough went off to Cyprus for a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, and he came back full of the idea that we ought to have a High Commission in Cyprus. And so, the word came down to our section, "Prepare this and have this happen."

So we worked away and put up a Cabinet submission and sent it off, recommending that the government approve the creation of a new post in Cyprus. And it was sent back to us by the Cabinet Office saying, "Your submission actually has to come up in the name of your Minister, not in the name of the Prime Minister." We'd all in the department forgotten that Willesee was actually our Minister at the time!

I also remember from the West Europe section, we sent up a recommendation to the Prime Minister, because it looked as if Franco was about to die. And so, we put up a form of words that we thought the government might use in its formal condolences in that event. Back came the recommendation with a scribble in the margin from Mr. Whitlam saying, "When and if the old b... eventually dies, we'll keep our condolences to ourselves." Someone could find that paper one day.

And the other little story I'd just like to tell briefly, is that I came back from Lisbon, being the first officer back from the newly-created embassy in Lisbon. And I got back to work in the department the day the Revolution happened in Lisbon. A couple of days later, the word came down that the Prime Minister wanted someone to brief him on what was happening in Portugal, and he didn't want some grey-haired old fogey, he wanted someone who actually knew. So they said to me, "Oh, Sue, you better take yourself over to Parliament House." Well, I was Second Secretary, young, fresh back, quite unsure of things. So I hiked off through the Rose Garden, hitching up

my mini-skirt and adjusting my makeup. And I went by myself, unaccompanied by any other officer into the Prime Minister's office. I remember absolutely what he said to me, "Susan," he said, "Now tell me, what's going on in Portugal? And what does it mean for Australia? And what should we do about it?" And it seemed to me that encapsulated absolutely the role of our diplomatic missions, and our ambassadors around the world. That's exactly what we were all about. So it was a formative moment.

Dr Ann Kent:

Having moved from the China Section in Foreign Affairs to the Parliamentary Research Service and the Foreign Policy Group there, I have a slightly different perspective. I think we shouldn't forget how momentous this period was considered to be when Gough came in and the foreign policy changes that were expected to occur, because there was a slight paranoia about the public service generally, but also some paranoia about the Department of Foreign Affairs. We used to be asked to prepare background briefings on every country that there was a ministerial or parliamentary delegation to, which mirrored the one that the department produced, and they'd compare versions, to see what was more accurate. That went on for about a year. But I remember when Alan Renouf was appointed as Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, I was somewhat puzzled and I asked a member of Gough's staff why that happened, why he had chosen Renouf. He said, "Because he declared himself to be a Labor supporter." That was the reason that was given. Also, at the same time, it couldn't be said that the Coalition took a bilateral approach on this. I kept getting questions from Billy Wentworth about the basis on which we decided to recognise China and the actual culmination; it wasn't accepted.

Professor Richard Rigby:

This is just a brief anecdote, touching on relations with Democratic Kampuchea. Trevor Wilson will remember this too, because when Prime Minister Masayoshi Ōhira died, we were in Tokyo together, and prime ministers from around the world came to Tokyo for the funeral and associated meetings. At the reception, the more junior people from our embassy who were there were told, "Your job, when you're not interpreting, whenever you see the Khmer Rouge [KR] delegation moving in the direction of our Prime Minister, is to get in the way." In other words, we had our policy, but we knew these were awful people and we certainly didn't want the Prime Minister being photographed in their company, which is what their delegation was desperately trying to do. Wherever they went, there were photographers to record the fact that the world was recognising them. And we did succeed, and I recall a definitely uncomfortable feeling when I knew there was a senior KR person pressing quite up behind me.

Professor Peter Edwards:

One quick anecdote on the subject of Whitlam going unnecessarily too far. Withdrawing from Vietnam was a given. He made a speech at that time, a very prominent speech. It might even have been in Washington, but he said, "Who controls Saigon has never been a factor in Australian security." It was grand, sweeping, visionary - and wrong. Because the greatest strategic disaster in Australian history to that point was the Japanese southward thrust, culminating in the fall of Singapore. The Japanese aircraft that gave air cover to that thrust, and that sank the HMS Prince of Wales and the HMS Repulse, flew from airfields in and around Saigon. And that was possible because 'who controls Saigon' was a French Vichy regime which was sympathetic to the Japanese.

Australia's Relations with China and Japan

Australia-China Relations 1972-1983

Professor Jocelyn Chey AM FAHA

Forty years may have passed but when I came to review this period for this forum I was struck by two themes that characterised Australian foreign policy then and are still fresh and current today. The first theme is the relative weighting that should be given to our regional relationships and to our traditional alliances. The second is how to balance human rights concerns and strategic considerations. The following account of the development of Australia's China policy in the period 1972-1983 will illustrate these points, although it is by necessity limited in scope and perspective because it is based on my personal involvement in events. I look forward to its supplementation by others who were also involved in this work through the same decade.

In 1972 I was teaching Chinese history at the University of Sydney. My department was remarkably uninterested in contemporary China. The head of the department believed that Chinese culture had ended with the Qing dynasty in 1911, but there were some others at the University who were interested in what was happening in China and who had maintained contacts in China even through the turbulent decade of the Cultural Revolution. The late Professor Bill Connell of the Faculty of Education put together a delegation to visit China in November 1972. As the China resource person on the delegation I helped prepare materials for the group and in this way I became attuned to current discourse circles about China policy.

Even during the Cultural Revolution, China was the biggest export market for Australian wheat, the chief competitor

being Canada. In the early 1970s there was much discussion in both countries about whether this trade was consistent with non-recognition of the People's Republic; that is, whether trade could be separated from politics. Chinese officials were certainly aware of this debate. Canada accorded diplomatic recognition to China in October 1970 and in 1971 China announced that it would not be buying wheat from Australia or accepting any official trade delegations until Australia followed suit. In July that year Gough Whitlam visited China, a bold indication of his vision of Australia's place in the world and how he prioritised regional ties over ties with traditional great power allies. Malcolm Fraser at this time labelled Whitlam "the Chinese candidate".

Rural and regional Australia exercised great influence in Canberra. "Black Jack" McEwen and Doug Anthony had led the Country Party and held the trade portfolio for more than a decade. Wheat and wool were our prime exports. For the sake of resuming trade with China, Prime Minister William McMahon and Minister for Foreign Affairs Nigel Bowen announced in April 1972 that they were ready to recognise China as soon as the status of Taiwan had been clarified, and in fact sales of wheat resumed in the second half of the year. In his election speech on 14 November, McMahon said, "You will remember the fuss about the cessation of our wheat sales to China. The Labor Party said this was because we would not recognise China on her terms – as it was prepared to do. But Labor was wrong, quite wrong. China has resumed buying our wheat as a normal commercial transaction."

McMahon lost the election to the Labor Party and the Whitlam Government immediately cut ties with the Republic of China and transferred Australia's Embassy from Taipei to Beijing. Although trade prospects were important, the key issue leading to recognition as identified by Gough Whitlam

in his election launch speech was political. Speaking of Vietnam, he said, "Behind those eighteen years of bombing, butchering and global blundering, was the Dulles policy of containing China." This he rejected, as evidenced by his comments on President Nixon's visit to China in February 1972. Speaking to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, he said that Australia "should at long last realise what it really means to be a good ally and a good friend. We should encourage by every means the positive and constructive aspects of American policy, and warn against its negative and destructive aspects."

I was in Beijing with my university delegation in December 1972 when the Australian election results were announced, and it was there that we heard of the establishment of diplomatic relations and sent a telegram of congratulations to the new Prime Minister. I had already determined to move to Canberra and had accepted an appointment in the Department of Overseas Trade to work on trade relations with China. Early in 1973 I joined a cohort of new appointments to the public service. There was a general air of excitement among keen young staffers. After years of the Liberal-Country Party Government, change was in the air. Not everyone in Canberra was happy with the new foreign policy perspectives. Those of us who had to deal with communist regimes were considered suspect by the intelligence authorities. (I was used to this, having been conscious of surveillance even while I was working at the University of Sydney.)

The new embassy in Beijing was established quickly with Ross Cottrill as a most capable chargé d'affaires and Stephen FitzGerald as the first ambassador. Stephen was the captain's pick, having accompanied Whitlam to China and been a close advisor to him and the Labor Party on the development of its China policy. At the same time that they were settling into

Beijing, the Chinese were also finding their way in Canberra, first under chargé d'affaires Zhu Qizhen, working out of the Rex Hotel on Northbourne Avenue and, later, under first ambassador Wang Guoquan in the Carousel Motel in Watson. Zhu later rose to prominence as Vice Minister (1984-89) and Ambassador to the US (1989-1993). He had clearly enjoyed his time in Canberra and was always very helpful to Australia's embassy in Beijing in the 1980s. In 1973 it was not easy for the Chinese diplomatic advance party to find their footing in Canberra, where the Cold War mentality still largely coloured the thinking of the diplomatic community. My husband and I became close to Zhu, Wang and their staff, and involved them in many social functions, taking them fishing and for picnics on the Murrumbidgee. They did operate under strict Party disciplinary rules but they were very open about these and completely relaxed in the company of friends. In retrospect, I am sure that these informal contacts helped to smooth the way for our embassy work in China.

I would like to say something about the Minister for Overseas Trade, Jim Cairns, since I worked in his Department from 1973 to 1975. Jim was an academic economist by background. As Paul Strangio describes in his biography, Cairns was an idealist with an enduring faith in humanism rather than in economic rationalism. Whitlam gave him the Trade and also secondary Industry portfolios, and later he became Treasurer. Strangio quotes Cairns as commenting, "ironically for one who was by conduct and philosophy among the most radical in the government, I had the ministries which most required one to be concerned with jobs and money and private enterprise." He regarded the negotiation and signing of our first trade agreement with China as one of his major achievements—this agreement has been supplemented many times over the years by additional agreements and understandings—and it is unfortunate that he

will probably be more remembered for his unwary engagement with Tirath Khemlani in the infamous “Loans Affair”, and for his infatuation with Junie Morosi, than for his achievements in his various government portfolios.

For the first year of his government, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was concurrently Minister for Foreign Affairs, being succeeded in November 1973 by Don Willesee. In October 1973 he became the first Australian Prime Minister to visit Beijing. Driving into Beijing, loudspeakers played ‘Click Go the Shears’, ‘The Road to Gundagai’ and ‘Waltzing Matilda’ as well as Chinese revolutionary songs. Gough’s discussions with Premier Zhou Enlai centred on international affairs and on regional stability. Whitlam floated his idea for a new regional organisation, an idea that was clearly anathema to some in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Stephen FitzGerald recalls, “Somewhere down our side of the negotiating table I hear someone gulp on their tea.” The proposal never eventuated. There was a meeting with Chairman Mao to which Whitlam invited only FitzGerald and not Secretary Alan Renouf. Again, relations between the Embassy and the Department were soured. At that meeting Mao asked questions about Australia’s relations with Britain and with the US and raised the issue of China’s nuclear tests, which Australia had protested. Recalling this visit in a recent article, FitzGerald wrote,

“In a formal dispatch on where we stand after the visit, I include some messages for Canberra that have the authority of what Whitlam has said to the Chinese. We should not be as tentative about what we can achieve in China. We should also stop protesting that China is not the centre of our foreign policy and relations with China are not at the expense of relations with other countries. Excessive emphasis on

this negative devalues our relations with China and distorts our foreign policy, and should be abandoned. Our friends and neighbours accept our policy and we must approach relations with China as a normal and acceptable part of the pattern of our international relationships.”

As other speakers have noted, disagreements emerged between Whitlam and Willesee concerning Timor policy. On China, there was no fundamental difference between the two. In June 1974 Willesee visited China and North Korea in the first Australian ministerial visit to that country. Like Whitlam, he also had a meeting with Zhou Enlai, but by that time Zhou was seriously ill. FitzGerald has noted that in the intervening months the Chinese side had come up to speed with Australian foreign policy issues. Zhou even assured Willesee that their Ministry of Trade had been out of line in suggesting that trade might be affected by political considerations. Zhou was keen to extend discussions with Australia on a range of international issues including disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. After the visit FitzGerald met with the head of the Southeast Asia Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to follow up on the visit and to discuss regional affairs including China's relations with the Chinese communities of Indonesia and elsewhere. He was rebuked for doing this by Mick Shann, Ambassador to Japan, and by the Department in Canberra. A bilateral dialogue on nuclear issues was discussed between FitzGerald and Willesee but never eventuated, mainly because by 1975 the opposition party had blocked supply and a political crisis in Canberra was looming.

In 1975 I transferred from Trade to Foreign Affairs and was posted to Beijing to take up the newly created post of Cultural Counsellor. My remit was everything apart from politics and trade: that is, education, science, information and culture. It

was a busy role. The small embassy worked well as a team but was often stretched particularly during high-level visits. The first year seemed to speed by. The withholding of supply made life difficult. I recall having to ask my parents to send me money for family expenses. After the dismissal and the election of the Fraser Government, the mood in the embassy was sombre. There seemed to be a real possibility that the embassy could be closed and representation shifted back to Taipei. FitzGerald received private advice that his position was not under threat. In December 1975 Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua accepted an invitation to dinner with the Ambassador and FitzGerald asked Canberra for an urgent briefing on the new government's foreign policy. The reply he received stated that the Department expected stronger relations with the US, support for a US presence in the Pacific, less emphasis on non-alignment and relations with the Third World but some priority for relations with China. The Department expected Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser to make his first overseas visit to China and Japan. The Chinese side had clearly been doing their homework on the change of government, and at the dinner Qiao said they appreciated Fraser's concern about the Soviet Union's expansionist ambitions. This would feature prominently in discussions during his visit.

At this uncertain time Garry Woodard in Canberra was very supportive, but there was no chance for in-depth discussions, between the post and the Department, for instance with visiting senior departmental officers. The embassy had some general understanding of the new government's views but no real clarity. Embassy staff therefore collaborated in the preparation of four dispatches, giving a forecast of how we envisage the relationship developing over the next quarter century. The dispatches covered politics, international relations, the economy and trade and cultural and scientific

exchanges. My main input was to the last, which included a recommendation for the establishment of an advisory body to develop greater understanding in each country of the other particularly through cultural and people to people exchanges. John Fitzgerald's RG Neale Lecture in 2007 gives a good summary of these dispatches, their bilateral and international context and their significance in the development of foreign policy and is useful for its insights into our thinking at the time.¹ The economic dispatch, which forecast sustained and significant growth over coming decades, was received with enormous scepticism in Canberra although it later proved remarkably prescient.

The year 1976 was an extraordinary year in China. It began with a meteorite shower in the northeast that was interpreted by the public as a sign of the impending fall of the government. Zhou Enlai died in February. The public mourning was heartfelt but its expression was suppressed by the government. They obviously feared that things might get out of hand and result in chaos. In July there was a major earthquake in northern China causing the death of hundreds of thousands and flattening buildings in Tianjin and Beijing. In September Chairman Mao died and China fell into the hands of the Gang of Four. To this list of earth-shattering events, one might add the visit in June of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser accompanied by his Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrew Peacock. The visit, which also included Japan, was Fraser's first overseas, which alone speaks volumes as an

¹ John FitzGerald, 'Australia-China Relations 1976: looking forward', R.G. Neale Lecture, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, August 2, 2007:

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/publications/papers-and-podcasts/international-relations-and-foreign-affairs/fitzgerald-transcript.aspx>

indication of his commitment to the development of regional relations. When asked why he was visiting Asia before London and Washington, Fraser replied, “The world changes.” He described China as “the great imponderable” and said that he was visiting “to learn”.

Peacock was a “small L” Liberal, open to concerns about human rights, and as such tended to sympathise with the effective pro-Taiwan lobby in Canberra. When he resigned as Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1981, his resignation speech in Parliament highlighted his differences with Fraser over the gross abuse of human rights by the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia. He also accused Fraser of high-handedness in Cabinet discussions. Possibly he was not prepared to push changes to China policy and preferred to take a back seat. My impression as an embassy staffer involved in the Prime Ministerial visit was that he generally deferred to Fraser. Fraser himself may have been previously ambivalent about the China relationship before his visit, but he appeared to have a road to Damascus road conversion while in the country, possibly on his tour of the pastoral western region of Xinjiang.

There was little discussion of trade during the visit in spite of frequently expressed concerns on both sides over imbalance and Chinese complaints about anti-dumping action and import quotas that disadvantaged them. Fraser was most concerned about aggressive expansionism on the part of the Soviet Union. He did not discuss his thinking with the US before proposing, during his discussions in Beijing with Premier Hua Guofeng, something like a Four Power Pact to include China, Australia, Japan and the US to counter the Soviets. How the record of these talks was leaked to the press is in my view mainly due to the impossible demands placed on the embassy staff, stretched far beyond their limits to service the travelling

party. There is an ineradicable image in my head of Peacock running along the Great Wall to alert Fraser that his discussions had been leaked to the press. The press reaction was one of “shock, outrage and bemusement”, to quote James Reilly’s recent account. The *Australian Financial Review* said that Fraser had “gone all the way with Hua”. Another editorial referred to Fraser as a lone ranger in foreign policy. Setting aside the pact proposal, perhaps the major achievement of the visit was an understanding reached with China that in the future it would conduct relations with Southeast Asian nations at government-to-government level and not Party-to-Party.

After his return to Canberra, Fraser oversaw enactment of legislation establishing the Australia China Council. Geoffrey Blainey was appointed to the Chair with Stephen FitzGerald as his Deputy. The Council held regular meetings in every state over the next few years. Its newsletter is one of the main sources of information on bilateral relations with China during this period from 1980 onwards. For instance, the second issue in May 1980 reports a survey conducted by Radio Australia the previous year of the extraordinary 30,000 letters it received from listeners in China in just a few months following the lifting of the Chinese Government ban on listening to foreign broadcasts. Radio Australia’s music programs and international news broadcasts were particularly welcomed by their audience.

In 1980, two years after Deng Xiaoping began economic reforms, the Fraser Cabinet decided on an expansion of the relationship. This involved negotiating a protocol to the 1973 trade agreement, establishing a development assistance program, furthering exchanges in the fields of agriculture, health and social sciences and committing to a regular series of official talks. Vice Premier Li Xiannian visited Australia in May 1980, the highest-ranking state official up to that time.

A tour of China by the Australian Ballet was announced, as well as a delegation from the Australian Academies of the Social Sciences and the Humanities. The first round of annual officials talks between senior officials of the two ministries of foreign affairs was held in October 1980. During Li Xiannian's visit Fraser also announced the largest-ever bulk sale to China of Australian sugar. It became clear that China's "opening up and reform" period might create exciting opportunities for trade and investment. Tourism began to take off and the public interest in China was huge. Trade interests and political objectives coincided neatly.

In November 1980 Andrew Peacock was succeeded as Minister for Foreign Affairs by Tony Street. Street visited China in January 1981, arriving the day after the sentencing of the 10 defendants related to the Gang of Four. He held talks with Premier Zhao Ziyang as well as with Minister for Foreign Affairs Huang Hua. He also called on Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping. Talks covered regional and international affairs, including Cambodia and Afghanistan. On bilateral issues, they noted the expansion of both official and unofficial contacts and expressed the hope for further development. He initialled a cultural agreement with the Chinese Minister for Culture Huang Zhen that formalised exchanges that had been ongoing since 1974. The agreement was signed during Huang Zhen's visit to Australia in April. Agreement was also reached on the exchange of defence attachés. In a speech to the National Press Club after his return, Street said that there were "wide cultural and political differences between us and China to which we must not blind ourselves", presumably a jibe at the Whitlam legacy, and "to cope with these differences will need patience and understanding on both sides. I believe that we should make the effort." He explained that the exchange of defence attachés did not represent a military relationship but

was to “assist and extend the flow of information of common interest.”

In May 1981 Han Xu, the Director of the Americas and Oceania Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made an extended visit to Australia. His program included talks with BHP and Rio Tinto and a visit to Mount Tom Price, heralding what would become, after many years of complicated negotiations, a major project for cooperation in mineral exploitation and China's first major overseas investment at Channar. He also visited the offices of *The Age* newspaper where several staff members of the *People's Daily* were working on a project sponsored by the Australia China Council that resulted in the launching in June of China's first English language newspaper, the *China Daily*.

In September 1981 the HMAS Swan made a goodwill visit to Shanghai, the Royal Australian Navy's first visit to China for 32 years. HMAS Swan arrived in the middle of a typhoon but fortunately the weather improved during her four-day stay. On her departure, the Chinese Navy held an impressive wharf-side ceremony and escorted her along the Huang Pu and Yangtse Rivers out to the open sea. The Commander-in-chief of the PLA Army-Navy Admiral Fu Jize expressed his hope that greater bonds would be developed between the two navies.

The Director of the Australian Development Assistance Bureau, James Ingram, visited China in November 1980 to establish the scope of a technical assistance program. A technical cooperation agreement was signed in Beijing in October 1981 by Minister for Health Michael Mackellar. One development of particular relevance to China was the establishment of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in 1982. Since that time

ACIAR has been in continuing liaison with China and undertaken several significant joint research projects.

In May 1981 Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony told visiting Vice Minister for Trade Liu Xiwen that Australia would develop its relations with China without prejudice to any other country. There seemed to be some weakening within the coalition of Fraser's earlier strident anti-Soviet policies. In preparation for a second Fraser Prime Ministerial visit in 1982, the Department commissioned a review of relations with China, not because of any difficulties in the bilateral relationship but with a view to laying the foundation for a future ongoing regular relationship. The review found the status to be generally satisfactory with no marked differences in views on international relations with the exception of Cambodia and some aspects of US foreign policy. It noted that China viewed the world in a pragmatic fashion and in multipolar terms.

Fraser's visit in 1982 was affected to some extent by his suffering from flu. It was remarkable also in featuring the first western-style diplomatic banquet in Beijing. This was interpreted by the press as an indication that China was joining the western world (a very superficial observation). Trade was growing fast. Between 1977 and 1984 it more than doubled from \$525.5 million to \$1.2 billion, reflecting an annual growth rate of 12.3 percent. Trade was not at the centre of discussions during the Prime Minister's visit, however, but rather a broad review of the international situation such as the global balance of power, the superpowers, the Middle East, Bangladesh and nuclear disarmament.

One issue that had all along dogged the Department and potentially might have derailed the development of relations

with Beijing was how to handle contacts with Taiwan. There were strict guidelines but they were very burdensome to administer, and some relaxation was clearly required. Trade with Taiwan had been growing steadily and there had been very successful lobbying of the government by pro-Taiwan figures. Bilateral agreements had been signed, for instance regarding fishing; the Chamber of Commerce had opened an office in Taipei; and several trade exhibitions had been held in Taiwan. Beijing did voice concerns about the direction of these developments but it was a mark of China's pragmatism in foreign relations that these were not allowed to affect the development of bilateral relations.

On 5 October 1982 Tony Street gave a speech to the Asia Society in New York. Discussing the dynamism and prospects of the Asian region and Australia's Asian relationships, he gave particular emphasis to relations with China. This provides me with a useful summary and conclusion of my review of the role of our foreign ministers during the period under review and I will therefore quote his remarks at some length. He said:

“This is an appropriate point for me to say that we are also very pleased that you [the United States] have reached some understanding with Peking about Taiwan. A year and a half ago, I visited Peking and Washington and was concerned then about the impact on the United States and Australian strategic interests of disruption to United States-China relations.

As our Prime Minister's visit to Peking in August approached, we were deeply conscious that he would be there at a time when your negotiations were at a critical stage. In the event, the critical decisions on the Chinese side seem to have been taken at high level

meetings at about the time of Mr Fraser's visit. We were thus very glad to carry away both restatement of China's firm views about the Soviet Union and also reassurance that China gave proper weight to the strategic importance of friendship with America.

Our relations with China are first class and expanding. Prime Minister Zhao has told us he wants to visit Australia soon, trade has been substantial (second in Asia after Japan). Consultations on international issues have expanded – discussion of North/South issues was a feature of the Prime Minister's visit. Cultural, academic and sporting ties are substantial. We have an aid program now approaching the scale of those we have with ASEAN countries. All this reflects deliberate policy, accepted by both sides, of broadening a mutually beneficial bilateral relationship. We have been helped, of course, by popular interest. Per capita, more Australians visit China than any other people, including Americans and Japanese.

As regards China's development, let me offer these comments: The plans of China's new leaders are very ambitious. Indeed, for a largely peasant society saturated and suppressed by a backward ideology for many years, they might be called revolutionary. To see free market forces allowed to operate in China, to see great readiness to expand business with the world, to 'First Feed the People, then Build the Country' can give us great heart.

Australian policies are directed at making this turn and development of Chinese policies a continuing viable option for Chinese leaders. There has recently

been a Communist Party Congress in China. On the one hand, this showed the popularity of the change in Chinese policy. On the other hand, it is when [Deng Xiaoping] is able to relinquish control, and a smooth succession can take place, that the road ahead will be clearer. Meanwhile, we share with [China] and other countries of the Pacific, a very great interest in demonstrating that building relations with us represents valuable political and economic options for the next generation of Chinese leaders, not all of whom are known to us yet.”



Professor Jocelyn Chey AM FAIA presenting on “Australia-China Relations 1972-1983” at the Australian Institute of International Affairs Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83, 19 May 2016. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)

Relations with Japan 1972–83

Trevor Wilson

Generally, during this period, relations with Japan were overshadowed by developments in relations with China. They were also directly affected by some major global developments which had direct—but different—impacts on Australia and Japan, such as adverse developments in regional security, fears about growing Soviet influence, and later by pressure in the United Nations and elsewhere for a “New International Economic Order”. From the mid-1970s, the Japanese economy was still seriously affected after the first oil shock. Later, it underwent significant structural change after experiencing an economic downturn following the second oil shock. Not surprisingly, Australian exports to Japan – especially raw materials – were directly affected as Japanese demand declined.

During this period also, the role Australian foreign ministers played in relations with Japan tended to be overshadowed by the role of the two Prime Ministers, Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser, each of whom had a strong interest in Japan, the more so because for one year, 1973, Mr Whitlam served as Minister for Foreign Affairs as well as Prime Minister and indeed visited Japan in his dual capacity. For Japan, at that time, changing governments as a result of democratic elections was a novelty, and they were sometimes “challenged” in identifying where policy continuity applied and where it did not.

Greater Contestability of Policy Making

Overall, this period was marked by greater diversity in sources of advice, and therefore influence, on Japan, so foreign ministers by no means had the field to themselves. For example, other ministers sometimes had a strong stake in relations with Japan, notably Rex Connor, who was Minister for Minerals and Energy 1973-75 and Doug Anthony, who was Minister for Trade and Resources and Deputy Prime Minister from 1977-83. Potentially, Department of Foreign Affairs Secretaries might play a big role; secretaries during this period were: Sir Keith Waller from 1970-74, Alan Renouf from 1974-77, Sir Nick Parkinson from 1977-79 and Peter Henderson from 1979-84. However, none of these secretaries was closely involved with Japan. With the possible exception of Renouf, none is known to have influenced their minister on any particular issue regarding Japan.

The most powerful senior DFAT officer on Japan during the 1970s was Sir Keith Shann, who was Deputy Secretary from 1970-73 and was to become Australian Ambassador to Japan from 1973-77. Shann exercised the most influence on Australia-Japan relations while serving as chair of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Japan. While Shann was in this role it could truly be said that bureaucrats exercised most control over relations with Japan: in Canberra, as well as in Tokyo.

The first example of government policy being more open to contestation was the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Australian Senate, then chaired by Peter Sim, a Liberal Senator from Western Australia. This first subject referred to the restructured committee for a report was simply "Japan". However, both Senator Sim and the Department of Foreign Affairs saw this as an opportunity for cooperation and sharing

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of ideas and information. During 1972-73 work on the committee's report proceeded.

After 1975, the Australian bureaucracy aimed to achieve better policy outcomes in relations with Japan and entrusted this to more complex machinery, which had the effect of making it more difficult for individual ministers to dominate policy towards Japan. By 1971, an Inter-departmental Committee on Japan had already been in operation within the bureaucracy, but it was often riven by disagreements between government departments. The structured soliciting of outside advice began with Prime Minister Fraser's appointment in April 1977 of an Ad Hoc Working Committee on Australia Japan Relations, chaired by Melbourne businessman, Kenneth Baillieu Myer. Among its many recommendations was the creation of additional advisory bodies, namely the Consultative Committee on Relations with Japan and the Commonwealth-State Committee on Japan.¹ In Australia, such complex arrangements existed only in relation to Japan and were not matched by comparable arrangements in Japan, but naturally became the focus of any "lobbying" about the development of policy towards Japan. As Minister for Foreign Affairs during this period, both Andrew Peacock and Tony Street were well aware of the activities of this machinery, and it would not be surprising if they tended not to put forward new initiatives on Australia-Japan relations as a result.

Parties outside the public service were nevertheless a routine source of influence on relations with Japan. Governments and the bureaucracy were in regular contact with the Australian

¹ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Working Committee on Japan 1977*, No. 4381, Media Release, May 1, 1977, viewed October 10, 2018, <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-4381>

National University, in particular, and at this time and later ANU scholars were from time to time commissioned to prepare reports for Australian governments on Japan. The most significant of these took the form of a Joint Report to the Australian and Japanese Governments by Sir John Crawford and Dr Saburo Okita on *Australia, Japan and the Western Pacific Economic Relations* in 1976.² Sir John Crawford, Director of the ANU's Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, and later ANU Vice Chancellor, and Professor Peter Drysdale, Director of the Australia-Japan Research Centre, had unusually close dealings with key policy makers on Japan: across the bureaucracy, across party lines, and equally with government and business. They also had personal connections with Australian parliamentarians and senior bureaucrats in several departments; they made direct submissions to parliamentary hearings and departments; and conducted advocacy with other highly placed scholar, and policy makers from Japan, the United States and other countries. They sometimes benefited from Australian Government funding for their research, publications and reports. At the business level, the Australia-Japan Business Cooperation Committee, originally set up in 1963, with which governments of both persuasions had close relations, frequently advocated its views to successive Australian governments.

Advice on Relations with Japan Broadened

Australian Ambassadors to Japan also tended to exercise considerable influence on policy towards Japan. They were:

² Sir John Crawford and Saburo Okita, (eds) *Australia, Japan and Western Pacific Economic Relations: A Report to the Governments of Australia and Japan, Presented by Sir John Crawford and Dr. Saburo Okita*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976.

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Sir Keith Shann from 1973-77, John Menadue from 1977-80 and Sir James Plimsoll from 1980-82. All three Ambassadors were significant individuals and are acknowledged as having considerable power and influence. Both Shann and Menadue used their positions actively to further Australia-Japan interests, and had more than usual impact on bilateral relations. For example, the Australia-Japan Working Holiday Agreement was an initiative proposed by John Menadue, who obtained clearance to explore the idea while he was back in Australia on leave and consultations. As the Embassy person given responsibility to negotiate the agreement with the Japanese side, I do not recall any ministerial interest in the proposal. Our Ambassadors routinely sought both to influence foreign ministers and others. Plimsoll had less influence than the other two, being at the end of his long diplomatic career, and also constrained by ill health.

One would normally expect some possible impact of, and inter-action with, key Japanese ministerial counterparts. However, between 1972-83 Japan had ten different foreign ministers, many of whom did not speak English, did not stay long in their positions and did not visit Australia. Australia did not necessarily rank high in their thinking, but there were some exceptions. Masayoshi Ohira, Foreign Minister from 1972-74 and Prime Minister from 1978-80, attended the Australia-Japan Ministerial Committee (AJMC) two times. He was a very thoughtful politician, but sometimes deliberately impenetrable; he delivered on his political promises, when some ministers did not! Miyazawa Kiichi, Foreign Minister from 1974-76 attended AJMC two times. He was interested in Australia and was an easy interlocutor for Australian ministers because of his good English. Though he later became Prime Minister, he was not necessarily politically powerful in Japan. And Dr Saburo Okita, Foreign Minister for 1979-80, had many connections with Australia and worked comfortably

with Australians, whom he respected. He was one of the few Japanese ministers appointed from outside parliament. Many of Japan's ambassadors in Canberra were highly effective in expanding bilateral relations, notably during this period: Shizuo Saito from 1969-73, Yoshio Okawara from 1976-80. Later Kazutoshi Hasegawa from 1992-96, Yukio Sato from 1996-98 and Atsushi Hatakenaka from 2001-03.

Departmental Secretaries of Foreign Affairs – namely Sir Keith Waller from 1970-74, Alan Renouf from 1974-77, Sir Nicholas Parkinson from 1977-79, and Peter Henderson from 1979-84 – might potentially have been a source of influence on relations with Japan. But none of these secretaries was closely involved with Japan. With the possible exception of Renouf, none is known to have influenced their minister on any particular issue regarding Japan. The most powerful senior DFAT officer on Japan during the 1970s was Keith Shann, who was Deputy Secretary from 1970-73, and was to become Australian Ambassador to Japan from 1973-77. Shann exercised most influence on Australia-Japan relations while serving earlier as chair of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Japan. While Shann was in this role it could truly be said that bureaucrats exercised most control over relations with Japan, in Canberra as well as in Tokyo. Shann was, for example, responsible for the instructions to Foreign Affairs officials in the early 1970s around the world to substantially expand their contacts with Japanese counterparts.

Another unconventional source of influence in the case of Andrew Peacock, and to some extent Malcolm Fraser, was the conservative academic from the University of NSW, Professor Owen Harries. Between 1976 and 1978, Harries was successively academic-in-residence at Department of Foreign Affairs, Director of Policy Planning at the Department of

Foreign Affairs, and subsequently Senior Advisor and speechwriter for Andrew Peacock as Minister for Foreign Affairs. Between 1978 and 1979, he was appointed by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser to chair an enquiry into Australia's Relations with the Third World, producing a substantive report of that name. Harries was not especially knowledgeable about Japan, and there is little indication that he might have influenced Peacock or Fraser in any special way about Japan.³ However the influence of his conservative thinking on the Fraser Government's view of global affairs during this period is quite apparent.

Significant Bipartisan Frameworks for Australia-Japan Relations 1972-93

Formal bilateral arrangements also provided an effective focus for broader bilateral cooperation, but also perhaps made some unilateral efforts unnecessary. The most important of these was, of course, the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (the Nippon Australia Relations Agreement or NARA Treaty) negotiated under the Whitlam Government during 1973-75, but not formally signed until 1976 after Malcolm Fraser became Prime Minister.⁴ The symbolic importance of this agreement, once in effect, cannot be overstated: it formally removed discrimination against Japan in commercial and business matters and provided assurance about reliability of supply and market access. Other formal agreements included the Cultural Agreement (1974); the

³ Coral Bell mentions Harries in her chapter on "Outside Influences on Foreign Policy" in *Australia in World Affairs 1980-85*, but she does not identify any Japan-related advice proffered by Harries.

⁴ See "Negotiating the Australia-Japan Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation: Reflections and Afterthoughts", Garry Woodard, Moreen Dee and Max Suich", *Asia Pacific Papers No 362*, Canberra, Australia –Japan Research Centre, 2007.

Migratory Birds Agreement (1974, but entry into force delayed until 1981); the Working Holiday Agreement (MOU 1980); the Science & Technology Agreement (November 1980); and the Nuclear Safeguards Agreement (1982). There were also exchanges of high-level visits. From Australia there were Whitlam's state visit in October 1973; there were Deputy Prime Minister Anthony's visit in February 1976; Fraser's state visit in June 1976, with Minister for Foreign Affairs Peacock, and his 'official visit' in May 1982. From Japan, there were Prime Minister Tanaka's visit November 1974; and Prime Minister Ohira's visit in January 1980.

Broadly speaking, there was a continuum of very intensive level of activity and effort between Australia and Japan during the 1970s and 1980s, that is, going beyond the time frame under present consideration. This probably resulted in more direct bilateral engagement than existed between any two other such different countries. Much of this effort was aimed at getting the bureaucratic mechanisms to work effectively, in terms of coordination and balancing a variety of interests. They were remarkable for the cross-sectoral participation. The AJMC was held 14 times altogether from 1972-97 and seven times between 1972 and 1983. Foreign ministers were inevitably deeply, and directly involved on both sides, mostly as chair. Some high-level "second track" activities also occurred such as the Japan-sponsored Australia-Japan Relations Symposiums held in Australia⁵ where Australian ministers were often keynote speakers.

One important initiative, which also received bipartisan support, was the established of the Australia-Japan

⁵ Sponsors varied but included the Australia-Japan Society, Nihon Keizai Shimbun and the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO). They were held at different locations around Australia from 1973-97.

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Foundation under the Fraser Government in 1976. The first institution of its kind for both countries, it not only promoted worthwhile broader bilateral contacts and inter-actions, it also indirectly encouraged Japan to set up its own global 'cultural' institution, the Japan Foundation.

Whitlam ALP Government

Minister for Foreign Affairs Gough Whitlam, 1972-73

Gough Whitlam was intellectually interested in Japan, but apart from insisting on concluding a Basic Cooperation Treaty, Japan was not necessarily high on his personal foreign policy agenda. After his seminal 1971 visit to China, he flew from Beijing to Tokyo where he was met with great interest by Japanese political leaders such as the later Prime Minister Takeo Miki. After that, Whitlam was especially interested in the significance of Sino-Japanese relations, and also in Japan's then tentative interest in new forms of regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

Whitlam was greatly admired by Japanese political leaders for his ideas and his oratorical skills, but his sense of nationalism no doubt worried the conservative Japanese bureaucracy. Indeed, he was possibly the first and only Australian political leader to be widely known in Japanese political circles. At that time, the Japan-Australia Dietmen's Friendship League did not exist. He was always courteous and respectful towards his Japanese interlocutors.

Whitlam led the Australian Ministerial delegation at the first Australia-Japan Joint Ministerial Committee Meeting to be held in Tokyo – the second meeting in the series – in October 1973 in his dual roles as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

The main issues of contention in Australia-Japan relations during the Whitlam Government are sometimes referred to as “resources diplomacy”, although this was a far cry from what the Japanese themselves as “resources diplomacy” as they practised it in resources/oil-rich countries after the oil shocks of the 1970s. There was not much “diplomacy” involved in either case! Minister for Minerals and Energy Rex Connor’s aggressive arguments for commercial arrangements that better reflected improved ownership and control, as specified in the Labor Party’s National Platform, were partly a response to popular perception at the time of highly coordinated positions adopted by Japanese commercial purchasers and the Japanese Government. In Australia’s case exports were subject to receiving Australian Government approval, a policy that was retained under the Fraser Government. The different viewpoints between Australia and Japanese ministers on this were rather clearly set out in the communiqué issued at the end of the 1974 AJMC in Canberra.

Don Willesee 1973-75

Senator Don Willesee is the Labor foreign minister who left no real mark through occupying this portfolio, but he was quite active on Japan. Willesee himself had a lifetime interest in foreign policy as a West Australian and had a reputation for supporting a “fair go” for all, for sympathising with the “underdog” and for being very “down to earth”. He is reported to have had several disagreements with Prime Minister Whitlam, where apparently Willesee’s own democratic grass-roots instincts guided him differently but, not as far as is known, over Japan. Willesee’s Western Australian background may have given him some credibility in Japanese eyes. On more than one occasion, Willesee had to reiterate publicly Australia’s commitment to being a reliable supplier to Japan.

Fraser Coalition Government

As Prime Minister from 1976-83, Malcolm Fraser rather overshadowed his foreign ministers and played an activist and keenly interested role in Australia's international relations. So foreign policy developments under the Fraser Government cannot be adequately considered only through the role of his foreign ministers. Fraser did this not only through international visits he made as Prime Minister, but also through his participation in the increasing number of heads of government meetings, such as the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. In his rather unflattering overview of Malcolm Fraser's role in foreign policy, then Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs Alan Renouf argues that the Prime Minister and his foreign ministers Peacock and Street, rarely referred to Japan in parliament, because "in the political and strategic areas of particular interest to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, Japan posed no special problems".⁶

During 1977-78, the Australian Government was pre-occupied with assessing Australia's bureaucratic machinery for dealing with Japan. This was essentially conducted initially through an appointed Working Committee on Japan (also called the Myer Committee after its Melbourne-based Chair, Baillieu Myer) which reported to Cabinet in 1977, after disagreements between Overseas Trade and Foreign Affairs on which Department should chair any ongoing machinery. There was little practical scope for any Australian foreign minister to understand all the disparate issues involved in Australia-Japan relations at this time, or to circumvent this

⁶ See Alan Renouf. "Malcolm Fraser and Australian Foreign Policy", p. 158.



Trevor Wilson presenting on “Relations with Japan 1972–83” at the Australian Institute of International Affairs Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83, May 2016. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)



Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki, 16 June 1976. (DFAT: HIS-0714)

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bureaucratic brawling and assert the minister's authority. In these circumstances, realistically there was probably also little scope for the foreign minister to launch initiatives in relation to Japan.

Against the background of the Department of Foreign Affairs being at risk of being marginalised in developing a considered policy response to Japan, the Fraser Government persisted in its attempts to force coordination between departments in order to achieve consensus on the policy approach to be taken towards Japan.⁷ These were pursued on the basis of a political understanding that they would produce a united policy reflecting overt nationalist objectives, but not necessarily objectively the best outcomes, including views from outside the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of the Prime Minister. It would have required an unusually assertive foreign minister to intervene in such complex, politically-charged decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, tensions over resources exports to Japan continued during 1977-78, as Japan and other countries entered "post-oil shock" recessions. In these, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Overseas Trade Doug Anthony clearly set policies for the Australian Government.

⁷ Trevor Matthews and Gordon Reid summarise how various competing pressures affected foreign policy making in general, and Japan in particular, in their chapter on the "The Australian Bureaucracy and foreign policy making" in Peter Drysdale and Hironuba Kitaoji (eds.) *Australia and Japan: two societies and their interaction*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1981, The thrust of their chapter is that by that time (the late 1970s) Australian interests with Japan already required a broader participation by bureaucrats and others for effective policy implementation.

This ensured he was the first Fraser Government minister to visit Japan in February 1976. Aggressive public statements by Australian ministers, led by Mr Anthony, would not have seemed very different from those by Labor's Rex Connor to Japanese Ministers a few years earlier. So much so, that the *Canberra Times* was moved to editorialise:

“There has been a steady deterioration in trading relations between Japan and Australia since the signing of the basic treaty of friendship and co-operation between the two countries last year. In retrospect, Australia's uncritical acceptance of the treaty as a symbol of mutual recognition of the need to develop 'political and economic relations' was too uncritical, too gullible”.⁸

Andrew Peacock, 1976-80

In Mr Peacock's case, it needs to be remembered that Japan was not always a centre of attention, in times of what seemed like worrying international crisis, particularly in Afghanistan, China, etc. For him, Japan was essentially a like-minded “developed democracy”. However, in a major policy statement to Parliament in May 1978, Mr Peacock claimed the Fraser Government had reached “a new level of maturity and mutual confidence in the Australia-Japan relationship”, a claim his Labor counterpart Lionel Bowen unsurprisingly challenged. Peacock's comments on Japan in this statement did not seek to break new policy ground, and no initiatives for Australia-Japan relations were announced. It was essentially a review statement, and if there was any passion in it, this was

⁸ “Japan and Australia”, *The Canberra Times* 30 September, 1977: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/110868876?browse=ndp%3Abrowse%2Ftitle%2FC%2Ftitle%2F11%2F1977%2F09%2F30%2Fpage%2F12233931%2Farticle%2F110868876>

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not reserved for Japan. During much of Peacock's time as Minister for Foreign Affairs, the government's complex machinery for relations with Japan was in operation, with fewer opportunities for the minister to intervene. Peacock professed himself to be satisfied with this machinery. At one stage, he told the Japan Secretariat which managed the machinery that "the machinery was going well, just as Ken Myer had planned it" and that the research papers for the Standing Committee on Japan and the Consultative Committee on Relations with Japan were "just what the doctor ordered".⁹

One global initiative of the Fraser Government affecting Japan was the negotiation of nuclear safeguards agreements, on the basis of an Australian model agreement, to allow the export of Australian uranium in accordance with Coalition policy. The Department of Foreign Affairs was the lead negotiator for this agreement and, as minister, Mr Peacock followed this issue closely. Japan was one of the countries with good nuclear non-proliferation standing with which Australia sought to negotiate such agreements. This was the tenth nuclear safeguards agreement concluded under the Fraser Government in 1982, meaning that Japan was neither the first, nor the last, country to sign off on such an arrangement, although in terms of possible sales of uranium, it was potentially the most substantial market for Australia uranium. In a later rare major parliamentary statement by Mr Peacock, in February 1979, entitled "The Geo-political Situation: a Pattern of Instability", Japan was only mentioned once, briefly and in passing. Again, Japan did not seem to attract Mr Peacock's full attention.

⁹ Communication from Richard Broinowski who served as the head of the Japan Secretariat 1977-79

A recurring theme of Andrew Peacock's public references to Japan between 1976-1980 was the need to "diversify" Australia's relations with Japan and China. His actions and initiatives as Minister for Foreign Affairs, albeit under the watchful gaze of a deeply interested Prime Minister, gave effect to these sentiments. The Fraser Government sought to do this decisively by finalising the Basic Treaty in 1976 and setting up the Australia-Japan Foundation in 1978. Peacock actively all supported these initiatives, without being the originator of these ideas. One of his responsibilities would have been to argue for them in Cabinet, which he did successfully, even though his ministerial status in Cabinet at that time was not high.

Peacock's May 1978 statement on foreign policy to the House of Representatives was a major, wide-ranging address, focussed mainly on global strategic developments. However, Japan was given rather perfunctory treatment.

The minister noted the importance of relations with Japan and said that recent meetings with Japanese-leaders had demonstrated a new level of maturity and mutual confidence in Australia-Japan relations.¹⁰

The Coalition had been highly critical of the Whitlam Government's rather crude attempts to use "resources bargaining" against the Japanese, although the Japanese themselves deployed "resources diplomacy". Anthony had succeeded Mr McEwen as National Party leader in 1971 and had clearly determined to be the first minister in the Fraser Government to visit Japan in February 1977 to set the agenda for bilateral relations. Fraser's state visit to Japan –

¹⁰ A summary of his statement was reported in the *Canberra Times* on May 1978.

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accompanied by Peacock as Minister for Foreign Affairs— was not until April 1977.

The Fraser Government's policies eventually coalesced into something rather similar to those of the Labor Government, reflecting the nationalistic political exigencies of the day by asserting Australian ownership and control.¹¹ At the 1977 AJMC in Tokyo, Peacock seems to have sought to show that he too could be tough with the Japanese. At least one Australian journalist chose to dramatise Peacock's opening address as containing "warnings" to the Japanese about their arbitrary actions on imports of beef and sugar from Australia.¹² Peacock was not a frequent participant in AJMC meetings, nor a frequent visitor to Japan. Although his cabinet ranking was not very senior, presumably he ranked tenth or eleventh, he led the Australian ministerial team at the fourth AJMC in Tokyo in March 1977, just a little more than one month after Deputy Prime Minister Anthony had visited Japan in February 1977.

In his opening remarks to the Australia-Japan Relations Symposium in March 1979, Peacock professed his optimism about the future of Australia-Japan relations, while admitting to the existence of a significant language "barrier".¹³ To a reader 30 years later, Peacock's fears seem overdrawn and even negative, taking account of the numerous positive experiences and impressions gained from the multitude of

¹¹ See the chapter by Gary Smith, entitled "Minerals and Energy", Ch 14 in *From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and reaction in Australian politics* ed. by Alan Patience and Brian Head. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1979. (pp. 231-250).

¹² Tony Thomas's article "Peacock Warns Japanese" reported in the *Business Age* of 17 March 1977.

¹³ See News Release "Australia and Japan" issued in his name 29 March 1979.

interactions in both directions between working holiday-makers, the success of two-way high-school exchange, and the plethora of sister city ties. Curiously, only six months later a calculatedly bullish speech by Japanese Ambassador Okawara at an Australia-Japan Society event was reported in the *Canberra Times* 17 October 1979 as portending a “new era” in Australia-Japan relations, the sort of sentiment that was notably absent from Coalition statements about Japan during this period. During the period 1980-83, the only mention of Japan is in an article under Andrew Peacock's name as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the *Canberra Times* in October 1980 which repeated the government's goal to “diversify the character” of Australia's already important economic relationship with Japan. The article, and presumably the Minister, did not go into any details about this.

Anthony Street 1980-83

Tony Street is the Coalition Minister for Foreign Affairs who left no real mark through occupying this portfolio. He should not be blamed for this. A thoroughly decent man, he may not have dreamt of being foreign minister and was probably not intended by his Prime Minister to “leave his mark”. Unlike his predecessor, he had no significant political ambitions. But, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, he made no major mistakes, and was an intelligent and diligent foreign minister. He may not have done much to enhance Australia's international standing, but he did not seem to do anything that harmed it. He left parliament in 1984, the year after the ALP election victory in 1983, and is still living. Most of Tony Street's contributions on policy towards Japan were, as Alan Renouf observed, articulated outside the context of the parliament, but they were nonetheless distinct and quite thoughtful. For example, Tony Street addressed the Australia-Japan Relations Symposium in

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March 1981 and seemed relaxed emphasising how Australian and Japanese interests were closely linked, that mutual trust and stability were all-important and that both sides had to want to improve wider cooperation. He said Australia needed a national consensus in dealing with Japan, and that more people-to-people exchanges would help mutual understanding.

Tony Street had already attended the Australia-Japan Ministerial Committee in Tokyo in January 1981, where he led the Australian delegation in what had become a norm by this point. While urging greater consultations between Australia and Japan, he stressed the need to avoid “false expectations” of each side. Later, writing “Japanese relationship has two important features” in the *Canberra Times*,¹⁴ Tony Street identified these features in Japan’s position as Australia’s major trading partner and Japan’s position as “the second largest western economy”. In the article, he mentioned the July 1982 meeting of the AJMC emphasising the shared interest of Australia and Japan in Pacific regional cooperation and the interdependence of the two economies, by then, after the 1976 Crawford-Okita report, a common Australian theme. He also refers specifically to practical achievements in Australia-Japan relations under the Coalition, namely: the Science and Technology Agreement, signed in 1980; the Working Holiday Agreement concluded in 1980; and the Nuclear Cooperation agreement which entered in force in 1982. His article then discusses Japanese labour market shortcomings at some length, perhaps reflecting an interest from his time as Minister

¹⁴ Tony Street, “Japanese relationship has two important features”, *The Canberra Times*, 28 October 1982: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/12855398>

for Industrial Relations, but nevertheless relevant in Australia-Japan commercial relations. The speech also evidently draws on ideas about Australia-Japan labour relations discussed at an inaugural workshop on this topic held by the Australia-Japan Research Centre at the Australian National University on 26-28 July 1982.

Conclusion

Between 1972-83, Australia's foreign ministers contributed substantively to the development and stability of Australia-Japan relations, but more by steady reassurance than by the injection of innovative policies. There were with a couple of exceptions such as the NARA Treaty and the Australia-Japan Foundation. Arguably, neither the global nor bilateral environments of the time encouraged more distinctive approaches by Australia's foreign ministers. There is evidence that relations with Japan benefited from the steady approach they took, and no evidence that relations were damaged by anything the foreign ministers said or did at the time. Certainly, during the period Australia-Japan relations experienced problems, particularly over trade, but any difficulties were resolved satisfactorily in due course and left no visible lasting scars. However, given the exaggerated publicity given to these differences at times, the presence of credible "steady" influences as Don Willesee and Tony Street was probably important. Bilateral relations were certainly sufficiently developed by the mid-1980s to provide a solid basis for wider regional cooperation through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation initiative when that opportunity emerged in 1989. In other words, by the mid-1980s considerable trust and understanding existed between Australia and Japan, and was generally supported by the people in both countries. This was no mean achievement when the problems of earlier history – World War II and the

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White Australia policy – are considered. Efforts through government-to-government channels also paved the way for the explosion of successful people-to-people ties that occurred later.

One is left wondering about Andrew Peacock's personal views about Japan, which seem to be more of a void than one would have expected. His public remarks as foreign minister, while always appropriate, lack passion and feeling. If there is a pattern in his behaviour towards Japan outside the platitudes, it is probably of some antipathy on his part. Much later, in 1990, as Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Peacock was to make headlines on his alleged negative attitude towards Japan, by rejecting the Japanese proposal for a "multifunction polis". He was accused by his rival Paul Keating and reported in the Australian media as "deliberately insulting" Japan¹⁵, a claim which does not have seem to have been strongly denied.

¹⁵ "Peacock Insults Japan Deliberately", *Canberra Times* 18 March 1980, available online: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/120885966?searchTerm=>

Discussion

Moderated by Professor Richard Rigby

I have spent most of my life in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Office of National Assessments, but in more recent years at the Australian National University. Looking around this Forum I think, "Goodness me, what a gathering of the clans." It makes the Highland games look like nothing at all.

But I was thinking actually, being one of the last of the generation that learnt Latin at school, looking around here, remembering the opening lines of the *Aeneid* Book Two, where Aeneas is called upon to rehearse his tale, and he does so with a degree of reluctance. And he gets up and he says, "*Quaeque ipse miserrima vidi, et quorum pars magna fui*" meaning "... and those terrible things I saw, and in which I played a great part". It applies to many of the people here. I can't claim in my part that I played a great part, but at least a small part. And so, turning to China and Japan, 1972-1983, it just happens that I spent most of my life in those two countries during those years and both at that time and subsequently worked very closely with both of the speakers, from whom I've learnt a great deal. I've also had some propinquity with the ministers of whom we are speaking, not always comfortably. Although, in these particular years, I was very much a junior, particularly in Tokyo, where I think for most of the time I could claim to be the lowest form of animal life in the Embassy.

Nevertheless, because I was a bag carrier for John Menadue and others, I then got to see things at a higher level than would normally be the case for somebody of my modest

status at that time, or indeed now. My first and only real memory of Willesee is, in fact, thanks to Mack Williams, who was still in Canberra before I went off to Tokyo, who sent me over to the Old Parliament House with a document for Willesee. And it was about 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock in the evening, and he sat me down on this long, old, rather battered leather sofa that he had in his office. And he just started talking about Vietnam and Cambodia and so on. And I handed over the documents and he said, "Oh yeah, yeah, this reminds me there's something else. Where is it?" And then from underneath the cushion of the sofa, he produced this great swag of documents with absolutely scaring classifications attached to them. And me being a new freshly-minted trainee, all the warnings from the security people ringing very, very clearly in my head, I thought, "My God...if the Minister can do this". Well, he was the Minister, so he could. He was quite friendly. And Tony Street, I encountered him in Beijing, and he was certainly unassuming, but he was kind to me, and I remember that. When you're a junior, you do remember. I interpreted one of his speeches and he was kind enough to thank me and that doesn't always happen. And he also wasn't very tall, which made me feel good.

Professor Jocelyn Chey has had a very long life starting it off as an academic, but then moving into serving the state in a variety of ways. She's now had three postings in China. She was Consul General in Hong Kong when I was Consul General in Shanghai, and we could deal with each other at that time. And she's now sort of retired, but working still doing a lot on China. She has played a crucial role in the years of the Australia-China Council.

Trevor Wilson was one of my first bosses in Tokyo and, again, a very kind one as well. Not undemanding, as there was a lot that he needed to demand of me. But Trevor, of course, is

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not only a great Japan expert, but also an expert on Myanmar or Burma, as well. And I think in the ANU, to which he's come more recently, we tend to see him more in the Myanmar than the Japan context. But nevertheless, he's recently written a fascinating study of what happened to the people who went through the DFAT Japanese language training programs, asking to what degree was that a good thing? To what degree did the Government get a good return, and what sorts of roles were performed by the people who went through these programs? I can strongly recommend it.

There was one other thing I was going to say, on Japan and China. During this period of time, obviously Japan was hugely important; everybody knew that already by the early 1970s, with people like Peter Drysdale and others, who were working to ensure that the relationship worked. I actually did my best to slow things down, by sending Sir John Crawford to the wrong hotel for a crucially important breakfast meeting. I think, probably, everybody is allowed to make one mistake of that nature, but no more than one. But Japan was very important, everybody knew that.

China was rather less so. China was important because it was China. But in the early years following recognition, I think that not so many people thought in fact it was going to be that important; certainly nobody foresaw what has subsequently developed in terms of the bilateral relationship. But the very first people I think who did have some understanding of that were in fact the people in our Embassy at the beginning, Stephen FitzGerald, Jocelyn Chey and other colleagues who sent cables to Canberra, which at the time were not always fully appreciated but which turned out to be extremely prescient and far-sighted, being able to see beyond the immediate dismal, and in some cases quite awful, reality of China at that time to what China had the potential to become

and is now very much becoming. But as I said, with Japan, it was very plain from the beginning, and Japan of course remains enormously important.

In response to Mike Fogarty's question about translation, the story is about John Menadue. He made a very Australian sort of a joke, which I was totally incapable of interpreting, Trevor probably would have done a better job, but I put on my best most politest Japanese, and said, "Dear people, here you see me in an absolutely desperate situation, the ambassador just said something, I don't know how to translate it, but if you would give me the kindness of laughing, you'll probably save my career," which they all found very, very funny. And in the car on the way back, Menadue said, "Gosh, you did really well today, they even got the joke."

Garry Woodard:

Jocelyn frequently translated to me and did exactly the same.

Professor Jocelyn Chey:

Yes, it's a standard procedure. Talking about translations, Gough Whitlam's name was translated into Chinese as Gao Fu, which literally means "The Tall Man." So at that period when there'd been a change in government, and we had a new Prime Minister, we were getting documents from the Chinese that referred to "Gough Fraser." And we said, "No, no, he's not Gough." They thought it was an honorific title that had been awarded to him. When they actually met Fraser and discovered how tall he was, they said, "Are you sure he's not Gough?"

Dr Ann Kent:

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It might be worth adding a bit of colour to the atmosphere in Beijing at the coming of our embassy. I got the impression that within Beijing our embassy had a very good reputation and was regarded as remarkable, as having very young diplomats, extremely knowledgeable about China, and with the best language skills probably of most embassies.

Professor Jocelyn Chey:

I think you've put it very well, I'm not sure that I could add very much to that. I think that's the case. Also, I think that at that time, we had a lot more to offer to the Chinese, because they had not yet established relations with the United States, so they looked to us, much more than happened later on, as a source of understanding of wider regional and international issues, as a source of technology and of cultural exchanges. Let's just give one example, Daniel Thomas, who is now in South Australia and was then with the Australia Council, coordinated and brought to China an exhibition of Australian landscape paintings. This was the first foreign original art exhibition to visit China. And it caused such great excitement amongst people who were interested in art, who would only have the opportunity to look at reproductions of art in books.

And so, there were students there sketching, to make sure that they had a visual record as they couldn't or they probably didn't have a camera, to take into the exhibition. The negotiation was extremely difficult, I might add. I mean, I led the negotiations and I discovered a lot of rules, for instance you couldn't have nudity, so any picture which had a nude person in it was immediately banned. This made it difficult to get some, for instance, Glover pictures, which had Aboriginal people in colonial times, a very debatable point. But in the end I managed to convince them. We agreed that as long as they were so small that the anatomical details were not easily

distinguishable, they were allowed.

Mack Williams:

On the Japan experience, back in the 1960s, I was a student studying in Japan for a while, and then came back to Australia and half my contacts closed up on me because I was an "ungrateful youth". That was the feeling in Australia. In the country towns that anti-Japanese feeling was very strong, still in the 1960s. It appears to me the 1970s was when this really started to change, and that's a backdrop to those things we've been talking about. The Japanese Embassy did a magnificent benchmark opinion poll of Australian attitudes towards Japan in 1975. I think that sometimes we forget that it's the people-to-people, or it's things like Sony and Toyota that made a huge difference to some of those public attitudes, which have made it rather easier to move on.

Trevor Wilson:

I agree completely. I think the other thing that happened was the amount of exchanges: student exchanges with high school students going off to Japan under Rotary schemes or Lions Clubs schemes or whatever. There was an enormous amount of that going on, probably from the 1970s onwards. And that made a big difference to attitudes in both countries. When I first started studying Chinese and Japanese, particularly Japanese, I suffered the same situation. I came from a country town in the 1960s and came to the Australian National University to study Japanese, and I had to hold my tongue if I went to the pub in my home town, because the men in the pub didn't want to know about anybody studying Japanese or going to Japan. But that did change later.

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Mack Williams:

That poll asked, for example, "What do you like best about Japanese?" And it was innovation. Then five pages before, "What is it that you don't like about Japanese?" The answer was "Copy cat." So you had this incredible sort of flux going on in Australian public opinion about Japan.

Trevor Wilson:

The Japanese Embassy have done a lot of polling, and we've done some polling of our own in Tokyo as well over the years, of attitudes. I have to say, I don't think we used the polls as the basis for forming policy.

Dr David Lee:

A question for Trevor: how important were state governments in Japan during this period?

Trevor Wilson:

Yes, that is something I didn't touch on. They were not unimportant, and sometimes the fact that a state government had a particular relationship, such as a commercial relationship being pursued by their office in Tokyo, sometimes that did cause complications for the Federal Government. Sometimes that was exacerbated by the fact that there were not good personal relationships or dealings. But on the whole, the embassy tried to work as closely as we could with the state governments.

By the end, certainly by my second posting, state governments had very good linguists in their offices as well. And the embassy had regular briefings with them, which they

first didn't want to attend, but then they realised that they were better off coming. We certainly reached out. In terms of Australia's interests in Japan, we were trying to view the interests in totality, and we didn't want to have little, minor sort of problems with states being seized on by the Japanese, or somehow turned against either the Federal Government or against the states. But on the whole, it wasn't a big issue; it wasn't a big problem. It was more a perception sometimes by Canberra bureaucrats that the states shouldn't be there interfering. Certainly sometimes the federal politicians felt that the state premiers got in the way. But it wasn't a real problem, I don't think.

Professor Peter Drysdale:

The first four or five years of this period was consumed by the negotiation of the Nara Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation, which was rather fundamental. Whitlam was deeply committed to this enterprise, partly because he was so ashamed that the Labor Party had voted against the agreement on communism in 1957, and also because it was totally convergent with his mission to change fundamentally the treatment of Asians by authorities in Australia in all respects, particularly commercial and a whole range of other issues such as migration.

From that perspective, many on both sides of the negotiation didn't understand the fundamental purposes of the negotiation. It was a theme that changed the relationship between Australia and Japan deeply, and also affected the way in which we related to other partners in Asia, especially in terms of the affirmations of the fundamental principles at the beginning of the treaty. It's ironic in a sense that this thing was delivered, despite the pressures from the centres of political influence that would resist it through the current period. So it

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was fighting against all the stuff that was coming from resources diplomacy. I wonder if you'd like to reflect, Trevor, about what that looked like from the inside.

Trevor Wilson:

Well, you're right in what you say about the importance of that treaty. The most important fundamental principle that it enshrined was the removal of discrimination: whether in investment, trade, innovation, or whatever. That was utterly important to the Japanese. Some people who didn't really understand that, outside the government, would ask later, "Well, have you had to invoke the treaty? Have you had to use the treaty?" And of course the answer would always be, "No," because once you had removed the discrimination, once both governments had signed onto that, that was all you needed to do. That was the most important step and Whitlam certainly appreciated that, but all the evidence demonstrates that the Canberra bureaucracy was slow to be converted. In the end, it was an extraordinary treaty, and the fact that it's still there, unassailable, is testament to that.

Australia's Relations with the United States and Indonesia

Relations with Indonesia in the Whitlam Era: the Centrality of the East Timor Issue

Emeritus Professor James Cotton FAIA

In his 1973 Roy Milne Lecture to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Gough Whitlam suggested he was seeking new and more effective means to achieve the objectives of Australian foreign policy: instead of forward defence and containment of hostile forces in Asia, national security would be attained by “accepting the political realities of our region and by making a determined effort to remove from it causes of tension and conflict which could directly or indirectly affect Australia’s security.”¹

In light of the Labor Government’s recent diplomatic recognition of the People’s Republic of China, Whitlam clearly had relations with Beijing in mind. However, he then went on, in a passage pregnant with future meaning, to refer to Indonesia. He suggested that there was a sense in which there was a convergence between Indonesia’s governing doctrine of “national resilience” and Australia’s longer-term interests. To many ears at the time, such rhetoric was novel.

Yet this posture of embracing the region was somewhat less radical than it then sounded. Nixon’s ‘Guam doctrine’ was announced in 1969, and thereafter Australian governments were on notice that they would need to be more original and independent in their policies in Asia as there were to be

¹ E G Whitlam, *Australia’s Foreign Policy: New Directions, New Definitions*, AIIA Queensland Branch, Brisbane, 1973, pp. 5-6.



Emeritus Professor James Cotton FAIA presenting on "Relations with Indonesia in the Whitlam Era: the Centrality of the East Timor Issue" at the Australian Institute of International Affairs Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83, May 2016. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)



Andrew Peacock with Indonesian Ambassador Martono Kadri, 17 August 1976. (DFAT: HIS-0716).

stringent limits on future American engagement. Policy had not stood still in the meantime.

Far from persisting in the notion of forward defence, Coalition Governments had already initiated important regional defence arrangements. What was truly novel was Whitlam's desire to build new and comprehensive regional institutions. Some of his statements can be perceived as holding the germ of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and perhaps also the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Earlier in 1973, at the Australian Institute of Political Science Summer School, he had first advanced the claim that "our destiny is inseparable from Indonesia".² He had then gone on to suggest that a new and wider conception of regionalism was required that would draw Australia, Indonesia and the immediate neighbourhood together. Of course, in this objective, he was to be frustrated.

Regarding the management of relations with Indonesia in this period, however, it is policy disruption rather than continuity or innovation that is the major feature. Far from an advance in regional institutionalism, mutual suspicion was the result. And the cause of the disruption, overwhelmingly, was the East Timor issue.

The Legacy of East Timor

East Timor was nothing short of a policy disaster. In the record of Australian foreign policy, it ranks almost with participation in the Vietnam War and the invasion of Iraq. For

² E. G. Whitlam, 'Opening Address by the Prime Minister', in Claire Clark (ed.), *Australian Foreign Policy: Towards a Reassessment*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1973, p. 174.

those latter episodes the excuse of the US alliance was and is advanced; the shaping of East Timor policy was almost entirely the product of domestic calculation and dynamics, though Henry Kissinger was to encourage Suharto when his intentions became known.³

For Indonesia, for Australia-Indonesia bilateral relations and not least, for the people of East Timor, the events of 1974-75 had disastrous consequences. They also were very damaging to Australia's international standing.⁴

For Indonesia and the Indonesian polity, bad habits became further engrained. An unsavoury and unscrupulous military faction rose to prominence, military methods became the reflex response to governance challenges and the plundering of provincial resources—from Irian Jaya to Aceh—by military-linked entities became institutionalised. While Suharto held hopes of becoming an influential figure in the Non-Aligned Movement, following the invasion of East Timor, Indonesia – the pioneer of the Bandung moment – experienced an irreparable loss of reputation. In those years and the decade following the people of East Timor suffered imprisonment, torture and famine. There was also terrible mortality. According to the exhaustive study of East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, at least 102,000 and perhaps as many as 180,000 people suffered

³ East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion, 1975-76, National Security Archive: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/index.html>; 'Memorandum of Conversation, Presidents Ford and Suharto, 5 July 1975: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/doc1.pdf>.

⁴ James Cotton, *East Timor, Australia and Regional Order. Intervention and its aftermath in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, London, 2004, pp. 37-40.

unnatural deaths.⁵ The experience also had other far-reaching consequences. Indonesian occupation entrenched a diaspora Lusophone faction in charge of the resistance, bequeathing eventually the governance costs evident today in the independent state.

The deleterious impact on Australia-Indonesia relations was both direct and indirect. After 1975, no Indonesian President dared to visit, and Australia's most important regional relationship was consequently hamstrung. A vocal East Timor lobby inside Australia laboured to keep the issue before the public, and Indonesia's popular reputation suffered. Meanwhile, with Indonesia as the *primus inter pares* in ASEAN, regional diplomacy confronted some awkward dilemmas.

In this connection it should also be observed that Australia's reputation sustained significant damage. In December 1978 – in an announcement timed to attract the least public attention – the Fraser Government signalled its acceptance of the *de jure* annexation of East Timor by Indonesia. All of Australian policy thereafter was accordingly pursued in defiance of two UN Security Council resolutions (No 384 of 1975 and No 389 of 1976) and also ignored the condemnation of Indonesian policy expressed by the UN General Assembly (notably in Resolution 3485 of 1975).⁶ Later, in the early days of the Hawke Government, Australia was directly instrumental in

⁵ *Conflict Related Deaths in Timor Leste, 1974-1999*: <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org/updateFiles/english/CONFLICT-RELATED%20DEATHS.pdf>. . For a comprehensive overview: Geoffrey Gunn, *Timor Loro Sae. 500 years*, Livros do Oriente, Macau, 1999

⁶ For the texts of these and other UN documents on East Timor, see: Heike Krieger (ed.), *East Timor and the International Community. Basic Documents*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

having the East Timor issue sidelined in United Nations procedures.

The occasion of the Fraser Government's announcement was the decision to begin negotiation on the sovereignty of the maritime zone between Australia and Indonesia's new province. Australia thereby became entangled in what was by any standards a tawdry bargain: recognition of Indonesian sovereignty in exchange for the lion's share of the water column and seabed of the Timor Gap. In due course, Australia was compelled to face a hearing of the International Court of Justice in 1991, brought by Portugal and disputing the circumstances under which the Timor Gap Treaty with Indonesia was concluded in 1989. The legal defence offered, which was successful in a technical sense but constituted a grave and self-inflicted blow to Australian internationalist pretensions, was not to dispute the substance of the case – that Australia had been complicit in the denial of the inalienable right of the East Timorese population to self-determination – but to reject the right of the Court to judge Australian actions without first assessing Indonesia's role, Indonesia not being party to the action.⁷ That this strategy was pursued at a time when the leitmotif of Australian international policy was 'good international citizenship' entailed multiple ironies, not least because the originator and promoter of this conception, Minister for Foreign Affairs Evans, was the minister who had himself initialled the treaty with his Indonesian counterpart in a much publicised flight over the waters concerned. Foreign Minister Alatas himself was also to serve as a 'representative' of East Timor in the Indonesian parliament, though his success as a defender of the rights and interests of his erstwhile constituents cannot be positively appraised.

⁷ 'The Timor Gap Treaty in the International Court of Justice': *East Timor and the International Community*, pp. 371-478.

How much a different policy on the part of Australia might have influenced the final outcome is to engage in a hypothetical. Clearly there were many drivers of Jakarta's policy. At the very least, if the Indonesians had not been informed of the Australian preference for incorporation but had insisted upon carrying it through, Australia would not have been complicit in the unfortunate results. However, careful warnings to Suharto and his entourage and an active policy to press for the creation of conditions conducive to self-determination at the United Nations might well have altered the course of subsequent events.

Policy Execution and Whitlam's Personal Predominance

These matters all have a bearing on the argument developed here because, however it is framed, central to any analysis of Australian policy is the personal role of Prime Minister Whitlam, who from December 1972 to November 1973 also held the foreign affairs portfolio.

As the commanding presence in the foreign policy of his own government, Whitlam can claim many positives, as is widely acknowledged in the literature. Pertinent to the current topic is the fact that in the United Nations especially, Australia took a progressive stance on the decolonisation and development claims of the Third World, which were then the focus of much of the organisation's debate and work. Taking a constructive attitude towards the work of the UN, while in the Security Council as a member from 1973, Australia voted in favour of all the resolutions of the Council. Whitlam was determined that Australia would relinquish its status as a colonial power, working consistently to achieve the independence of Papua New Guinea. Moreover, he was capable of a broad strategic

view, to which his later book, *A Pacific Community*, is testimony.⁸

But for our present topic we need to move from this bigger picture to the specific issue: the management of policy towards Indonesia, and particularly on the East Timor issue.

As is well known, Whitlam's often restated policy contained three elements: he was in favour of incorporation of East Timor in Indonesia, he wished to see decolonisation proceed consistent with the principle of self-determination and he affirmed the need in achieving the end of incorporation to employ non-violent means. In both the conception and the execution of this policy, Whitlam was very much the dominant figure.

Regarding its execution, no mechanism existed to check Whitlam's sense of self-assurance. As Cooksey observes, he insisted that "Foreign Affairs was a matter for the Prime Minister and for his Foreign Minister and for no other Ministers, individually or collectively"; moreover his tight control of the most sensitive sources of intelligence left potential critics uninformed.⁹ East Timor was thus never subject to cabinet debate. As Senator John Wheeldon (a minister in the government from June 1974; he had visited East Timor himself in 1966) later remarked, had it been

⁸ E. Gough Whitlam, *A Pacific Community*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1981.

⁹ Robert Cooksey, "Gough Whitlam: His World View and his Foreign Policy", Whitlam Institute Papers, Item NGF 23429, Box 0250, p. 13. Cooksey further claims that on East Timor Whitlam's control of information "virtually determined the policy outcome", p. 15.

properly considered the policy would have received a withering critique.¹⁰ Furthermore, when Labor backbenchers and branch members took an interest in East Timor as developments unfolded and the prospect of disorder increased, Whitlam regarded their roles as a troublesome distraction.¹¹ When it was suggested, by then backbencher John Kerin and others, that Australia reopen its consulate in East Timor in order to ensure that events there were better understood and promptly reported, Whitlam was happy to accept Department of Foreign Affairs advice that to do so would risk drawing Australia “further into the Timor quagmire” which, it was suggested, was shaping to become “a second Uganda.”¹² In retrospect, it appears extraordinary that if such a potentially dire crisis was emerging so close to Australia, and involving the nation’s principal regional neighbour, that less involvement rather than more was to be recommended. This position, however, was the dominant view in Foreign Affairs in this period.¹³

Finally, on the execution of policy, the documentary record as much as the later impressions of witnesses of these events was that Whitlam was not inclined to take very seriously the views

¹⁰ John Wheeldon, ‘The “Finlandisation” of Australia and the Occupation of East Timor’ *Quadrant*, vol. 28, September, 1984, pp. 24-5.

¹¹ Ken Fry, *A Humble Backbencher. The Memoirs of Ken Fry MHR Fraser, 1974-1984*, Ginnindera Press, Canberra, 2003.

¹² ‘Submission to Whitlam’, 1 April 1975, in: Wendy Way ed., *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Melbourne University Press/Dept. Foreign Affairs and Trade Carlton, 2000, Doc. 120, pp. 238-40.

¹³ ‘Submission to Willesee’, 13 December 1974, in: *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 67, pp. 148-153.

of his own minister, especially when Senator Willesee, in charge of the portfolio from November 1973 began to be alarmed at the blatant Indonesian interference.¹⁴ As Nancy Viviani, who had worked as an advisor in Minister for Foreign Affairs Willesee's office, stated soon after the event, the policy of the Whitlam Government towards East Timor was "indeed Whitlam policy".¹⁵

A further consideration of the dynamics within the foreign affairs and defence bureaucracies reveals greater complexities. Within Foreign Affairs, some more junior officers – notably Geoff Miller and Ross Cottrill – possessed the foresight to question the drift of policy.¹⁶ But there were also strong and consistent voices endorsing or even anticipating that policy.

A full review of these questions cannot be performed here, but several examples may be taken as illustrative. In July 1974, the impact of Portugal's 'carnation revolution' had finally registered in East Timor. Officials in the Australian Embassy

¹⁴ 'Note from Willesee to Whitlam', 20 August 1975, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 173, p. 320.

¹⁵ Nancy Viviani, "Australians and the East Timor Issue", *Australian Outlook*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1976, p. 201. In his 1982 commentary at the United Nations Whitlam unfortunately could not resist belittling 'Miss Viviani' and her lack of expertise in diplomacy: Whitlam Papers, Item 1851, Box 0296; 'Transcript of Statement with Answers by Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC to the United Nations Fourth Committee - Question of East Timor on 9 November 1982', p. 31.

¹⁶ 'Minute from Miller to Renouf', 17 September 1975, in: *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 233, p. 417.

in Jakarta were beginning to learn from their Indonesian contacts of tentative arrangements for the military to repeat, in the territory, the strategies of intimidation and influence buying that had been trialled so successively in West New Guinea. In Canberra, plans were being laid for a visit by Prime Minister Whitlam to Indonesia, which would inevitably entail conversation with President Suharto on East Timor. In a communication with the Department in Canberra, Ambassador Bob Furlonger offered the following suggestion: "Could the Prime Minister not say that he shares the assessment that it would be in the interests of the region that Portuguese Timor unite with Indonesia?"¹⁷

This is some two months before the conversations at Wonosobo. Then, in his deliberations with Suharto in Central Java, Whitlam was to outline his intentions for the territory with candour, stating that these were as yet his personal preferences for policy but that they would most likely become officially endorsed.

Between Wonosobo and Fretilin's assumption of power, following the failed UDT (Timorese Democratic Union) coup in August 1975, and as the tectonic forces within Indonesia moved relentlessly towards military intervention, there were many occasions when the damage that would be done by such an outcome was the subject of cautionary memoranda. But, within the bureaucracy the fundamentals of Whitlam's policy were never challenged.

In this period, so well informed did Australian officials in Jakarta become that there were some fears that they were

¹⁷ 'Letter from Furlonger to Feakes', 30 July 1974, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 17, p. 73.

unwittingly being used to further the intentions of their military and intelligence informants. In late August 1974, Harry Tjan, of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), visited Canberra to convey a candid account of Indonesian thinking, making it plain that the military faction with which he was associated were the principal advocates of the policy of annexation.¹⁸

Relations with the Indonesian military factions subsequently took on a degree of cordiality that even Ambassador Woolcott was prompted to observe that “we are too well informed”.¹⁹ In his cable of 3 September 1975, he was nonetheless able to set out in great and accurate detail the Indonesian plans for the final push to annexation.²⁰

The reaction in the Department to this extraordinary intelligence was instructive. Secretary Alan Renouf suggested that it was important to organise new regional “cover”, in order to “legitimise the Indonesian operation and neutralise opposition. It would enable Australia to support the Indonesian move and portray the Indonesian move in the context of the preservation of regional peace.”²¹

¹⁸ ‘Record of Meeting with Tjan’, 21 August 1974, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 22, pp. 85-87.

¹⁹ ‘Cablegram to Canberra [Woolcott]’, 19 October 1975, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 274, p. 486.

²⁰ Woolcott to Canberra, 3 September 1975: *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 210 pp 377-8

²¹ ‘Submission to Whitlam,’ 4 September 1975, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 211, p. 382.

As late as 28 October 1975, after the Balibo incident revealed the full extension of Indonesian armed subversion in the territory (and with the final overt invasion five weeks away), in a submission to Willesee, Renouf rehearsed all the reasons why the Minister should not express any criticism of Indonesian military action inside East Timor in an anticipated statement in the Senate.²²

In the Department of Defence and the Joint Intelligence Organisation, however, there was a greater preparedness, as can be seen in retrospect, to attend to the longer-term consequences of military action. It was therefore argued that that the use of force might likely result in a possibly prolonged guerrilla struggle that would attract the very foreign interests that such an invasion was apparently designed to eliminate.²³

Regarding the execution of his policy, then Prime Minister Whitlam was unchecked by any strong source of contrary opinion. Moreover, with some exceptions, the higher levels of the policy bureaucracy both accommodated and even reinforced this strategy.

East Timor Policy and its Conceptualisation

In relation to the conception of that policy, it is necessary to undertake a wider inquiry. Advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs was a factor, as has already been

²² 'Cablegram to Canberra [Woolcott]', 28 October 1975, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 302, pp. 520-22.

²³ 'Draft Brief for Barnard', December 1974, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 63, pp. 139-41.

demonstrated. In addition, the Indonesians themselves were probably the source of some of its elements. As Tjan advised his interlocutors in Canberra in August 1974, not only would the issue of East Timor be placed on the agenda for Whitlam's forthcoming visit but Suharto's view was now that integration would be the most advantageous outcome for both Australia and Indonesia. Tjan was also insistent that a favourable regional reaction was the requirement for any successful East Timor policy.²⁴

In his 1963 Roy Milne Lecture, Whitlam's remarks indicated that he had already given some thought to the Timor issue. He warned against the pitfalls of backing the Portuguese and argued the need for an international development effort as a necessary prelude for "the right of self-determination [to be] fully granted." In a pregnant passage, and with the establishment of Malaysia in mind, he cautioned: "We must not get bogged down in another futile argument over sovereignty."²⁵ Clearly East Timor was being viewed through the decolonisation lens.

In endeavouring to understand the development of this policy, as Whitlam came to articulate it, the issue that arises persistently is the potential inconsistency of its three principles: incorporation into Indonesia, self-determination and non-violence.

One line of criticism has been to underline Whitlam's famous use of the term 'obesance', when referring to the need to

²⁴ 'Record of Meeting with Tjan', 21 August 1974, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc 22, pp. 85-87.

²⁵ E. G. Whitlam, *Australian Foreign Policy 1963*, Fourteenth Roy Milne Memorial Lecture, Australian Institute of International Affairs New England Branch, Armidale, 1963, p. 13.

adhere to the norm of self-determination, since such ‘respect’ or ‘deference’ might be feigned rather than genuine. Such an assessment, however, would paint Whitlam in Machiavellian colours. It is preferable, therefore, to proceed on the assumption that he sincerely believed that all three requirements could or would be equally satisfied.

To be sure, some of the same inconsistency could be seen in Garfield Barwick’s position on Timor policy in 1963. In a submission to Cabinet he argued that with Portuguese policy at an utter standstill, there was no realistic alternative to eventual incorporation of the territory into Indonesia. However, it should also be pointed out that Barwick dispensed a standing instruction to Australian diplomats in Jakarta to warn immediately if there were any likelihood of a violent annexation of East Timor being contemplated. He underlined the fact that with Australia’s firm commitment to the principle of self-determination, in the eventuality of any aggressive Indonesian intervention Australia would have no choice but to bring such action to the attention of the United Nations.²⁶

At this time, Arthur Tange, the clearest of Australia’s strategic thinkers, foresaw that what we might call ‘The Whitlam Scenario’ would cause “the greatest harm to Australia’s long-term interests”.²⁷ It had to be conceded that the Portuguese were hopeless, and the territory unviable. But in the study convened under Tange’s direction, his departmental officers were clear on the course to take:

²⁶ Cabinet Submission, 21 February 1963: NAA, A5619, C470 PART 1, pp. 40-48.

²⁷ Memorandum to Waller’, 25 February 1963, in *Timor: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc 10, p. 28.

In talking to the Indonesians we should avoid being over-eager to suggest that inevitably the territory of Portuguese Timor should pass to them and that we don't have any scruples about that eventuality except the use of force. We should make continued reference to the argument of self-determination. Otherwise, we place ourselves in the position of being an accomplice of Indonesia in an exercise of "realpolitik" which, we believe, would earn the reverse of their healthy respect.²⁸

Now, from the point of view of their logical inter-relationship, Whitlam's three propositions are a less than sure guide to policy preference. One states a goal, the other two state requisite means. There is no serial ordering of the three propositions, though according to the conventions of rhetoric a statement referring to ends is likely to be regarded as having greater force than statements reading means.

Even as a hypothetical, it is easy to conceive of circumstances where the three propositions could not be sustained at the same time. At its simplest, one proposition proposes a choice, a second proposition presupposes what that choice should be, and a third proposition rules out a modality that might be the only means available to achieve the preferred outcome. In those circumstances, only the closest attention to the actual opinions of the East Timorese and to the most likely modalities adopted by the Indonesians would have been necessary before the formula could be advanced with any confidence. Unfortunately, as will be shown, Whitlam was naive in his approach to the Indonesians and contemptuous of

²⁸ Background Paper: 'The Future of Portuguese Timor', 4 April 1963, in *Timor: Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc 12, p. 33.

the East Timorese when attention to their opinions was needed.

So the problem of consistency in Whitlam's policy remains. And this is not merely a retrospective judgement by armchair historians. Neither is it simply a case of hindsight. In December 1974 and again in January 1975, Minister for Foreign Affairs Willesee wrote to Whitlam pointing out this inconsistency. There was, he said, "the incompatibility of the two objectives: self-determination is likely to yield a result other than the association of Portuguese Timor with Indonesia."²⁹ At the least, it can be asserted that in his desire to be seen to be taking Indonesia seriously as a regional partner, Whitlam had grievously overstepped.

Whitlam's Classical Worldview

To understand further how this might have been the case, it is necessary to move beyond the single issue of East Timor to the wider question of Whitlam's worldview. Such a consideration requires a small and somewhat speculative excursion in order to view what might be termed Whitlam's mental furniture.

Whitlam was known for his familiarity with the world depicted by the classical authors. In particular, he was intimate with the Roman emperors and their historians. If he had any intellectual guide, it was Tacitus (a well-thumbed schoolboy copy of his *Annals* being a prominent item in

²⁹ 'Letter from Willesee to Whitlam', 14 January 1975, in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc. 71, p. 160. See also the Foreign Affairs submission: NAA, A3038/10/1, 15 December 1974; selections in *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor, 1974-1976*, Doc 67, pp. 148-53.

Whitlam's personal library). He famously coined the apt characterisation of his adversary William McMahon, "Tiberius with a telephone". Whitlam was thus more aware than most of his contemporaries of the instability and bloodshed associated with regimes that combined imperial and praetorian elements. In the case of Suharto's Indonesia, he was clearly dealing with such a regime. And this was a regime that had demonstrated only too well its form.

In coming to power, at least 500,000 people were brutally killed, directly or indirectly. Whitlam had been briefed on this background. In West Papua, moreover, this regime had shown its contempt for self-determination. Whitlam again had been thoroughly briefed that OPSUS (Special Operations) and the same military faction who had been in charge of the annexation of West Papua were now charged with dealing with the East Timor case. In talks in Indonesia as Leader of the Opposition with Foreign Minister Adam Malik in January 1969, he had been informed of the Jakarta government's implacable determination finally to incorporate West Papua.

So it has to be concluded, even if Whitlam had initially taken seriously the three objectives formula, his interlocutors were highly unlikely to have taken any interest in their ensemble. They would have been relieved, or even encouraged, when they heard that Australia favoured incorporation. Whitlam seems not to have considered this possibility.

Tiberius, when he departed for Capri, left Rome in the care of Sejanus. He knew what he was doing. Sejanus brought the praetorians together within the walls of Rome, and launched a

reign of terror against the Senate. As Gibbon says, this strategy thereby “forever riveted the fetters of his country.”³⁰

General Ali Murtopo was the Sejanus of Indonesia. When Suharto turned the “act of free choice” over to Murtopo and OPSUS, no-one seriously entertained the notion that this military faction was interested in fostering the free expression by Papuans of their political opinions. When Murtopo then took charge of the 1971 national elections, a serious student of Tacitus could hardly have believed that in entrenching GOLKAR he wanted to consolidate democratic practices in the Indonesian polity.³¹

In short, if he was not Machiavellian, Whitlam, for all his learning and quick intelligence, was highly naïve. It should be recalled that by early 1975, the possibility of Indonesia acquiring East Timor by the direct application of military force was openly discussed in the Australian media.³² Understanding the path by which this naivety was embraced is now the task at hand.

In Whitlam’s foreign policy rhetoric there were four enduring themes. First, there was the positive embrace of anti-colonialism as a global issue, having far-reaching consequences for Australia’s contribution to international development and to its global responsibilities. Second, came a

³⁰ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Hans-Friedrich Mueller (ed.), Modern Library, New York, 2003, p. 71.

³¹ Harold Crouch, *The army and politics in Indonesia*, revised edn., Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988; Nishihara, Masashi, *Golkar and the Indonesian elections of 1971*, Modern Indonesia Project, No. 56, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1972.

³² Peter Hastings, ‘Jakarta ponders a military “solution”’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1975

strong inclination to relegate to history all past support for colonial causes. Accordingly, the third theme was a determination to adopt policies that took the neighbours, their aspirations and national doctrines, seriously. In addition, and fourthly, Australia should be seen and understood as part of its geographical region.

All four themes prescribed a focus upon Indonesia and its national project. Lesser actors and colonial remnants – with which West Papua and East Timor were classed – Whitlam regarded as mere distractions when they were not reminders of a negative past. Here it should be recalled that in the United Nations Australia had been slow to criticise the Portuguese record in East Timor, and until Washington indicated that such a policy was no longer viable, the Australian Government clung to the hope that the Netherlands would remain in charge of the development of West Papua.

Of his policies Whitlam wrote, soon after the event in 1980: “I was determined to restore the trusting relations with Indonesia which Australia had established in the later 1940s.”³³The result, of course, was the reverse.

Whitlam's strong preference for the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia should be seen in this broader context. East Timor was an illogical fragment, the detritus of a phase of colonialism that was long past. Taking Indonesia seriously entailed accepting the claims of this multi-ethnic state to be devoted to policies of development and improvement, which in time would enhance the standing of the nation in the region and the world.

³³ E. G. Whitlam, ‘Australia, Indonesia and Europe's empires’, *Australian Outlook*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1980, p. 5.

The Civil War and the *Mestiço* Claim

The proposition that Whitlam was unable to entertain any alternative hypothesis regarding the likely relationship between the Indonesians and East Timorese is rendered more plausible by a review of his many statements about the issue after 1975. Self-deception would appear to be a common theme:

The hopes for [the decolonisation of] East Timor which I expressed to the General Assembly in September 1974 were aborted by Portugal's irresponsibility and cowardice and Fretilin's impatience and brutality.³⁴

There were other actors in the drama, notably the Indonesians and the other Timorese political parties, but their contributions were ignored.

In his account of the UDT attempted coup in August 1975 – which in many ways finally set the course for the subsequent tragedy – Whitlam did not mention what was well-known even in 1975 of that party's leaders. By August, an influential group of them were in the pay of the Indonesians, and their coup was instigated – ostensibly as a purging of communists in the independence movement – in order to legitimate Indonesian intervention. Later, the principal UDT figure, Lopes da Cruz, was rewarded – if that is the right term – by being appointed Indonesian Ambassador to Romania.

In short, while Whitlam's personal role in the East Timor disaster is manifest, he never addressed the shortcomings of

³⁴ E. G. Whitlam, *Abiding interests*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1997, 'The Legacy of Empires in Asia', p. 74.

his chosen policies or approach. He even courted a role as a commentator – witness his visit to East Timor in 1982 and his subsequent testimony to the UN – that perhaps he would have been wiser to avoid.³⁵ Speaking in New York at the United Nations, Whitlam presented a narrative of events which made no reference to Indonesian subversion, though he was well aware that without the direct role of Indonesian military officers the murder of the Australian journalists at Balibo would not have occurred. Rather, the point he stressed was the triumph of Fretilin in August 1975 through force of arms – access to which was blamed on Portuguese irresponsibility – and Fretilin's subsequent conduct which drove “40,000 indigenous Timorese to take refuge with their brothers in West Timor”.³⁶ In response to a question, Whitlam addressed directly the issue of where the “fault” lay in relation to East Timor's failure to achieve self-determination. He attributed fault first to the Portuguese and then to the political parties and their “small elites”; it “was not the fault of the Indonesian government.”³⁷ Whitlam persistently articulated the view that the key narrative in East Timor was that of civil war. If the East Timorese were unable to exercise their right to self-determination, then it was the consequence of bickering between the Timorese political parties and their leaderships. Indonesia and Australia were absolved from blame. He was still maintaining this position in his submission on Timor to

³⁵ E. G. Whitlam, ‘East Timor: Facts versus Propaganda’, *The Bulletin*, 30 March 1982.

³⁶ ‘Transcript of Statement with Answers by Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC to the United Nations Fourth Committee - Question of East Timor on 9 November 1982’, p. 3.

³⁷ ‘Transcript of Statement with Answers by Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC to the United Nations Fourth Committee - Question of East Timor on 9 November 1982’, p. 23.

the Senate Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence References Committee in 1999.³⁸

In relation to Timor – as perhaps was the case in respect of some of the other policy objectives he pursued – Whitlam’s self-confidence in his own assessment led him to ignore the evidence basis necessary for really sound judgement.

The reader of Whitlam’s many retrospective statements might find Paul Hasluck’s observation on Whitlam’s mode of argumentation apposite:

He writes history in the same style as the writing of speeches. For example, he does not pay attention to chronology when his interest is to produce one illustration after another to support his theme, or to quote one instance after another to prove his case. The political historian cannot help gasping now and again at his effrontery while at the same time admiring his eloquence.³⁹

Indeed, it can be suggested that there is a pattern to be discerned here. His few references to West Papua generally employ the formula that its status was settled to the

³⁸*East Timor – Final Report of The Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee*, Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2000:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Completed%20inquiries/1999-02/east_timor/report/index .

³⁹ Paul Hasluck, *Light That Time Has Made*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1995, pp. 161-2. Hasluck is commenting on Whitlam’s account of his administration in *The Whitlam Government*, Viking, Ringwood, 1985.

satisfaction of the United Nations. Though technically correct, this is a decidedly lawyerly turn of phrase.

It has been argued so far that Whitlam's keen desire to be associated with what he took to be the post-colonial moment in the region overwhelmed any scruples he might have had regarding the fate of the East Timorese. Perhaps this is a sufficient explanation for his conduct. And his own role has to be the most important element in any account of Australian policy at this time towards Indonesia.

However, there is one last factor to consider. It is also an issue related to mental furniture (or it might be termed quasi-psychological).

Whitlam was a noted aviation enthusiast. He reflected more than once on the geographical insights afforded by his wartime navigation over island Southeast Asia. He saw the region as one. But in doing so, he seems not to have been so interested in conditions on the ground.

A favourite trope in his various Timor analyses is his reference to the role of '*mestiços*' in the emerging political elite. He underlined their apparent haste to assume the ruling role of their former Portuguese overlords, a claim he repeated many times.

Now it is certainly a fact that *mestiços* in the East Timor political elite were, and are, at least as prominent as are lawyers in the Australian parliament. But Whitlam drew attention to their racial background as a way of undermining their claims to a leadership role. He resorted to this tactic repeatedly, including in his evidence given to the Senate in 1999.

The fact is, of course, that these individuals were Timor-born and represented a Portuguese-Timorese story that went back to the sixteenth century: some 300 years before Whitlam's ancestors first sighted Australia, as Ramos-Horta, in responding to Whitlam's testimony at the United Nations, obliquely pointed out.⁴⁰

In his account of the events of 1975, Whitlam makes a point of providing the full name of 'Rogerio dos Reis Lobato', later Fretilin Minister of Defence and brother of Nicolau, the second Fretilin President. In doing so, there is a hint that an individual with such a Portuguese name should be regarded as less than fully worthy to be a member of the political elite. In this case, however, Whitlam gets the full name of 'Rogério Tiago de Fátima Lobato' wrong, and Lobato could and can only claim a single remote Portuguese ancestor. Whitlam also does not mention that all 11 of Lobato's siblings died in the resistance. It is perhaps an irony that in his younger days Rogerio was a noted teacher of Latin, with whom in other more benign circumstances Whitlam might well have exchanged classical allusions.

Whitlam also had some very critical things to say about the Catholic Church in East Timor. He criticised Church authorities for their claims of food shortages and abuses: "churchmen in Timor have despatched more epistles than anybody since the Apostle Paul".⁴¹ We now know, of course, that in the long night of Indonesian occupation the church was almost the sole refuge for Timorese identity: as an

⁴⁰ 'Transcript of Statement with Answers by Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC to the United Nations Fourth Committee - Question of East Timor on 9 November 1982', p. 44.

⁴¹ 'Transcript of Statement with Answers by Hon Gough Whitlam AC QC to the United Nations Fourth Committee - Question of East Timor on 9 November 1982', p. 5.

ecclesiastical province of Rome rather than of the church in Indonesia it was permitted to conduct its services in Tetum instead of Bahasa.

In short, Whitlam was overly reliant upon his undoubtedly confident grasp of geography. He evinced a quite insufficient appreciation of the characteristics of Timorese society. As has been argued, for his formula for East Timor's future to be valid it presupposed the East Timorese having certain opinions, yet he felt it unnecessary to attend to their actual views.

Such was the legacy of East Timor passed on to the Fraser Government. Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser responded, as Barwick and Tange foresaw, by aligning Australia with Indonesia's critics at the United Nations on the grounds that the principle of self-determination had been violated. Yet behind the scenes efforts were soon afoot to prepare the way for acceptance of Indonesia's annexation. Prior to the Prime Minister's visit to Indonesia in October 1976, the Government had shut down the radio link maintained by Fretilin confederates in the Northern Territory, though the East Timor issue still proved so difficult to accommodate that in his public pronouncements in Jakarta Fraser adopted the tactic of refusing to speak about it. In August 1977, while in Kuala Lumpur on the occasion of the ASEAN Summit, in a meeting with President Suharto Fraser "told the President that he would like to see Timor buried as an issue between the two countries as soon as this could be done in Australia."⁴² In the event, in December 1977 *de facto* incorporation of the territory was acknowledged and this soon led to *de jure* recognition.

⁴² Woolcott report, 8 August 1977: NAA, A1838 3034/10/1 PART 48, p. 87.

Conclusions

How, then, is Whitlam's foreign policy thinking in this instance to be characterised?

I have argued, in a previous essay on Australian foreign ministers, that Paul Hasluck straddled two quite different positions on the nature and limits of foreign policy. In short, while in much of his rhetoric he was a self-conscious 'realist', he also held the view that in politics there was an ultimate moral basis. Hasluck was a moral rearmament power politician. He was thus, as is suggested there, a "tragic realist."⁴³ In the curious combination of Whitlam's ideas we have something of a parallel.

On the one hand, we have the boldest affirmation of the highest principles. These were in some part derived from international law, though Whitlam seldom concerned himself with international law as such, but was much more focused upon international human rights and especially upon the obligation to end racial discrimination.⁴⁴ This latter view is not without its ironies, as has been shown.

⁴³ James Cotton, 'Barwick, Hasluck, and the Management of Foreign Policy towards Northeast Asia: the Limits of Australian "Realism"' in Melissa Conley Tyler et al (eds.), *Ministers for Foreign Affairs, 1961-1972*, Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 2014, pp. 109-50.

⁴⁴ Gough Whitlam, 'Australia and the UN commission on human rights,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 45 no. 1, 1991, pp.51-59.

He was also determined to escape what he saw as the confines placed upon Australian foreign policy by the US alliance.⁴⁵ He was no neutralist, but he believed that the definition of Australian policy, while it should begin with the alliance, it should not end there. He believed it could be much more than alignment with “great and powerful friends”.

Like John Burton and other Australian thinkers in that tradition, he believed that geography and history could be made to work together: history had bequeathed a European offshoot to the Asia Pacific region; the region itself could enable Australia to enlarge its vision and role beyond its European roots. Australian security and prosperity would thereby be enhanced. But, simultaneously, Australia would be made a better place and civilisation. In many respects, Paul Keating continued and expanded this discourse in the 1990s.⁴⁶

Yet in the interests of pursuing these larger themes – principally for his country, but also for the world – Whitlam was as contemptuous of ‘colonial remnants’ as any hard-headed realist might have been. These remnants, of course, included the unfortunate East Timorese. It was for this reason that the vision of one so idealistically inclined was able to engage and operate with the strain of realism found in the Australian bureaucracy of the time, of which Ambassador Woolcott was the most eloquent exponent.

While hypothetical outcomes are often mere speculation, there are some grounds for the conjecture that had Whitlam

⁴⁵ James Curran, ‘The Dilemmas of Divergence: The Crisis in American-Australian Relations, 1972–1975’, *Diplomatic History*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2014, pp. 377–408.

⁴⁶ Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2000.

been a little less devoted to the largest principles, and more concerned with local outcomes, his policy in relation to Indonesia might have produced a more felicitous result.

Thus, we have the sad coda of Whitlam's worthy but strangely neglected book of 1981, *A Pacific Community*. This work consists in part of lectures delivered at Harvard while Whitlam was the occupant of the Chair in Australian Studies, the establishment of which was an initiative of his own government. Whitlam's Harvard book – its author listed as 'E. Gough Whitlam' – is focused on Australia's regional mission. From all of his remarks on the record, some of which were considered above, it might be expected that Indonesia would loom large if not largest in its pages, but there is only the slightest of passing references to Australia's most important neighbour. Bilateral relations had become so distorted by the East Timor episode that about them Whitlam preferred to stay silent. The fact that the Timor Gap/Timor Sea issue continues to dog relations with Australia's neighbours is a measure of Whitlam's unfortunate legacy in this area of international policy.



Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 1989 – James Baker and Andrew Peacock, 10 November 1989. (DFAT: HIS-0875)

Discussion

Moderated by Miles Kupa

Phillip Flood AO FAIA:

I just want to make a comment on analysis of Malcolm Fraser's visit to the United States. I was the Deputy in Washington when Malcolm made that first visit to the United States, and the Americans were very concerned about his speeches, the talks he'd made in Beijing and in Tokyo. It was really a very serious issue for them. When he arrived in Washington, within a very short time Henry Kissinger gave him lunch. There were a dozen people around the table and I was fortunate to be there. Kissinger stood up and said, "Prime Minister, I understand your concern about whether I'm sufficiently anti-communist. Let me tell you a story. There was a meeting in Washington of renowned communists that the CIA had decided to infiltrate. Unbeknownst to the CIA, the FBI decided to infiltrate the meeting, and break it up. When the time came to break it up, they broke up the meeting and they came across this CIA agent. This man said to the FBI, 'I'm not a communist, sir; I'm an anti-communist.' And the FBI said to him, 'We don't care what sort of a communist you are, you're still going to be beaten up.'" Poor Malcolm didn't have an answer to this and it took him totally by surprise. But it was a measure of what the Americans thought. Malcolm didn't change his view, but the Americans were quite convinced that he was wrong about it all.

Ross Cottrill:

It was not long after that that the Americans discovered that the head of Counter Espionage of the FBI was a Soviet agent,

and he's still in the job now. He's the worst spy they've ever had.

Professor James Curran:

You were probably involved then in the paper that was done, I think, on the Carter Government's foreign policy. There was an initial assessment at the end of 1976 as to what Carter's foreign policy would look like. The conclusion that Foreign Affairs reached was that "in the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam debacle, the State Department had no clear view of what the future US role in Asia should be." So I think that concern is there for Fraser as well, coupled with, when you read the speeches, this relentlessly pessimistic and quite gloomy view of Soviet intentions and, particularly, Soviet manoeuvring in the Indian Ocean.

When the invasion of Afghanistan occurs, Fraser is almost, in a way exultant. He's basically saying, "I told you so. I have been warning about this for some time." As he said to the Chinese Premier, I think, "The Russians will always be Russians. We know what they will be like." And when Afghanistan occurs, he sees quite a bit of justification, I think of some of the views he's been propounding for some time.

Ross Cottrill:

The subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union proved that Kissinger had historical grounds.

Mike Fogarty:

I think that quite clearly, Nixon and the administration were critical about what Whitlam was doing, and they said worse things about the North Vietnamese. There's some domestic

pressure on both sides, probably more Americans hated Nixon than Australians did, but domestically there was pressure, I understand, in the State Department that Whitlam had to be favoured. My understanding also is that actually Nixon tried to understand Whitlam and vice versa, because they're both educated people. Is that your take of it? That the situation improved for whatever reason towards the end?

Professor James Curran:

Well educated is probably not the expression I'd use for Nixon's knowledge of Australia. I certainly think the reporting that came out of the US Embassy here on Whitlam, both before and during his time in office, was by and large quite accurate. There should have been no surprises in Washington as to what a Labor Government was going to do. Whitlam, throughout his speeches as Opposition Leader, had telegraphed very clearly the kind of change that he envisaged in terms of the coordinates of Australian foreign policy. But I suspect that that message simply didn't get through, even to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, because the very fact that Marshall Green can call Whitlam in the early days of the Whitlam Government, "a whirling dervish." Now fair enough, there was a lot of radical, quickly implemented change. But again, all of that really had been previewed. And Green was complaining about the lack of consultation from Canberra on some of these changes.

So I really question what level of knowledge rose about Australia in the system. Kissinger, for quite understandable reasons, had really not focused that much on Australia under Whitlam until it had become a concern for them, like when Whitlam goes to China in 1971 and tells the US Ambassador in Tokyo that he was very glad to have been a pathfinder for Nixon. And the comments where he says that, "Nixon will be

devoured by Vietnam just as LBJ was." When he's making those to a foreign government as he does in China, these are the things that pop up on the US radar. Now, there was some mollification of US antagonism towards Whitlam towards the end. They started to get used to some of his statements, and they talked about a mellowing of his approach, but this was all because, in their view, they had educated him on regional affairs.

Just a month before Nixon left office, he did order a National Security Study Memorandum, which, had it been implemented, meant taking the intelligence installations out, cutting off the intelligence feed and ending military exercises. Now, in the end, the Americans pulled back from the brink, but had those been followed through then I think the alliance would have been a little more than a brittle chrysalis. So I don't think that there was any real meeting of minds between Nixon and Whitlam, right until Nixon's resignation. Whitlam and Ford had a much better temperature in the relationship.

Mack Williams:

To put that in context, the day before Whitlam was elected, I was in the NSC at the White House talking with them, and they asked me who I thought would win the elections in Australia, because they were confused. I was suggesting that McMahon would win. State Department was a bit ambivalent.

Of course I didn't get involved in what I thought about it. But certainly when you drilled into it, the key feature was the basis, and it was a policy driven analysis to say, "We've got to have him in, now." Let me stop here and say I don't want to go down the next trail that led him to the dismissal. But I think there's a lot still that has to be found out about that.

Whitlam knew they were working against him, and I think that needs to be always borne in mind as well. He was not a person to be fooled with. The other thing is that the rest of the bureaucracy in Washington, except perhaps the Pentagon, was working so hard to try and rein Nixon in. After the bombing of Hanoi, Marshall Green asked could he see Jim Plimsoll at the residence because he was banned from seeing him in the office. Casper Weinberger invited him to the President's Annual Concert at the Kennedy Centre, and he sat in the box with the cabinet members, exactly opposed to what Nixon had said. There were very clear messages put out, that I was privy to.

Kissinger was a different sort of person. I doubt whether any of that would have ever come off, because even the Pentagon would have had to think, "How much is it going to cost us to relocate?"

Professor James Curran:

They did, that's right. Schlesinger was one of the hardest, he was a hard-liner, and he was still pushing for them to find alternative locations for Pine Gap and other facilities. But in the end, they pulled back because they knew it was too expensive and they were going to have difficulty finding other locations. But I do think you're right, that at the very time that this relationship is going through this kind of crisis, the Nixon Administration's entrails are being poured out on the front pages of the newspapers. So I think they clearly had a lot more on their plate, not least as well ending the war in Vietnam.

The CIA stuff is interesting, because in January of 1973, even after the criticisms of the Christmas bombings, the Trade Union boycotts and reports that Whitlam in private was really

sounding off about Nixon and US policy, the CIA are still quite positive about what they call the "New Australian Team" because they say, "Don't worry, Whitlam is a moderate; we know he can control the more extreme left factions. It's Cairns we really have to worry about."

So they're quite positive. Sir James Plimsoll does a lot to reassure in the months prior to the 1972 election to say, "Look, be calm. I know you're a bit unsettled about a social democrat coming to power, a left of centre one at that, but he's a moderate, he can be trusted." I think it is important to keep in mind other US priorities, domestic and international at the time.

Richard Broinowski:

To what extent was Fraser's reputation as a tough man, no patsy, when he was Minister for Defence, impinge upon and guide US thinking when he became Prime Minister? As Minister for Defence I understand, we had a big fight over the F-111, with an enormous escalation of costs over the box that kept the swing wings going, and the price became more and more. Fraser went to the United States and he talked to Melvin Laird, and Melvin said the next week, "You're still here?" And he said, "Yes, I'm staying here until I can get a decision from you guys not to keep expanding the cost of this, and to give us F4 Phantoms as a stopgap until these machines are ready." That really, I thought, did imprint itself upon the collective Washington bureaucratic minds.

Professor James Curran:

I'm not familiar with that episode. It's intriguing. But certainly, Brent Scowcroft was very clear that the idea that Fraser was going to sort of flip the switch back to the Menzies-Hawke-Gorton-McMahon period, there was no sense

of that. The CIA and State Department profiles do talk about Fraser as a very hawkish cold warrior. But they also do mention the difference in Fraser; the change begins, not surprisingly, in the mid to late 1960s. Quite interestingly, he's not one, like many of his conservative colleagues, who goes to pieces when Britain applies for membership of the European Economic Community. He simply says, "This is a fact of life, the Empire is passing into a Commonwealth, it's going to be a multi-racial Commonwealth, it's actually going to be a good thing." Fraser is more alarmed by the Nixon Doctrine, the worsening situation in Vietnam; and he does give quite a lot of interesting speeches around the time that he's Minister for Defence about a new era of instability. He can see that the plates are moving, he's not quite sure where it's leading and he's not quite sure that the US is going to be able to maintain its will and its strength, particularly in Southeast Asia. So all of that goes into making up a fairly complex picture for Washington; but they know they're not dealing with a Menzian, great and powerful friends type.

Iain Henry:

South Korea and Taiwan were very worried about the reversion of Okinawa, which had been in negotiation since 1967, as well as Nixon's unilateral decision to withdraw troops off the Korean Peninsula, Carter's then plans to later abort it, so as not to be out of step with other US allies in the region.

Professor James Curran:

There's more work to be done on Richard Nixon's pivotal article in 1967 in *Foreign Affairs*, which you would know, "Asia after Vietnam." This is the Asia after Vietnam that is unsettling regional allies, including Australia. Whereas

Whitlam had been quite hopeful and idealistic about what this new era would mean for more creative opportunities for Australia and its foreign policy, I think the conservatives saw some of those older anxieties return, along with other regional allies. Some of the memories of the Nixon Doctrine, the China shift in US policy, the talk about withdrawing from Korea and Okinawa. Despite the longevity of the Americans' presence in Asia, and despite their continued reaffirmation that they're there to stay, the pivot and the rebalance. There was a very good analysis by someone in a Washington think tank, Scott Harold, who said that, "Nevertheless, those episodes are still in the memory of America's Asian allies, and it doesn't take much to revive them, which is exactly what we saw now with President Donald Trump's comments about overturning that alliance system. But, there was a broader regional anxiety about the US presence in that period.

Australia and the Third World

Australia and the Third World, 1972-83: Assessing the Role of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs

Professor Derek McDougall

This assessment covers the periods of the Whitlam Labor Government and the Fraser Coalition Government, with the former in office from December 1972 to November 1975, and the latter from November 1975 to March 1983. My task is to assess the role of the various ministers for foreign affairs during this period in relation to Australian policy towards the Third World. There is an interesting comparison between the two governments, given that both prime ministers were strongly engaged in foreign policy. Gough Whitlam was concurrently prime minister and foreign minister for almost the first year of his government (until November 1973). Thereafter, Senator Don Willesee had a relatively low profile as foreign minister from November 1973 to November 1975, thus facilitating Whitlam's aim of maintaining a strong prime ministerial presence in foreign policy. In the case of the Fraser Government, Malcolm Fraser was just as engaged in foreign policy as Whitlam had been, but he had in Andrew Peacock a foreign minister who was also very engaged in foreign policy as well as being a major political player himself. Peacock's successor as foreign minister from November 1980 was Tony Street who, like Don Willesee, had a relatively low profile in foreign policy.

In assessing the role of the various foreign ministers in relation to Australian policy towards the Third World from 1972 to 1983, my focus is on both the substantive issues that arose for each minister and the way in which those issues were handled in relation to the relevant political dynamics at

the time. The assessment begins with an overview of the relevance of the Third World to Australia in the 1972-83 period. The discussion then focuses on the period of the Whitlam Government, followed by the period of the Fraser Government. I conclude with some comparisons between the two governments in relation to the question at issue.

While pointing out various ways in which the Third World was relevant to Australian foreign policy in the period 1972-83, I argue that these issues received more explicit attention under the Fraser Government than under the Whitlam Government. This situation relates primarily to the role played by the respective prime ministers, but the position of the foreign ministers under the two governments is also highly relevant. Whitlam's main focus was on enhancing Australian "independence" and "modernising" Australian foreign policy as he saw it; Third World issues were approached from this perspective. With Fraser, the overall approach as defined by Whitlam was largely taken for granted. Ministerial arrangements relating to foreign policy under Whitlam was largely designed to enhance the prime minister's own influence. In the case of the Fraser Government, Andrew Peacock as foreign minister from 1975 to 1980 was himself in a strong position politically, and therefore more able to exert influence as foreign minister than either Willesee (under Whitlam, 1973-75) or Street (1980-83). This judgement applies to Australian policy toward the Third World, as much as to other areas of policy.

The Relevance of the Third World to Australia, 1972-83

While focusing on the role of Australian foreign ministers in relation to the Third World from 1972 to 1983, it is clear that the Third World received increasing attention in Australian foreign policy during this period. One aspect of the context is

to characterise the general significance of the Third World during the 1970s and early 1980s, with reference to the main ways in which the Third World was relevant to Australia.

In the contemporary world the term “Third World” has fallen from favour. This relates partly to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet-led bloc: the “Second World”, as compared to the “First World” represented by the Western countries. Perhaps more importantly, the Third World has become more differentiated, with the range of countries formerly placed within that group, whether they identified strongly or not, diverging markedly in both political and economic terms; “Fourth World” is sometimes used to refer to the very poorest countries. Alternative terminology such as “developing world”, “developing countries” and “Global South” is now more common. During the 1950s and 1960s ‘Third World’ came into use as shorthand for the various developing countries located in Africa, Asia and Latin America that saw themselves representing a “third way” between the Western and Communist blocs. The French writer Alfred Sauvy, writing in 1952, drew a comparison between the Third World and the Third Estate in France before 1789.¹ The Nonaligned Movement (NAM), founded in 1961, overlapped with the Third World but was not completely identical; Yugoslavia was a leading country in NAM but was not normally included in the Third World.

By the 1970s there was a significant group of countries who could be identified loosely with the Third World. The 1979 report on *Australia and the Third World* listed some 118

¹*Australia and the Third World: Report of the Committee on Australia's Relations with the Third World*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1979, p. 195.

countries, including two countries that subsequently became members of the European Union (Malta and Cyprus).² The emergence of the Third World was related to the decolonisation process that took off in Asia in the late 1940s, extending from there to Africa from the mid-1950s; by the 1970s decolonisation was also occurring in the Pacific island states. Latin America was different from Asia and Africa in that independence had been won from Spain or from Portugal during the nineteenth century; the decolonisation of much of the Anglophone Caribbean occurred in the period from the early 1960s to the early 1980s.

Third World countries were focused on two broad aspects of international policy. One goal was to facilitate the decolonisation of remaining colonial territories on the basis of national self-determination; this goal extended to ending apartheid in South Africa and white minority rule in Rhodesia, formerly the colony of Southern Rhodesia and now Zimbabwe. Another goal was to achieve a more equitable international economic system, most notably through the campaign for a New International Economic Order (NIEO).

In joining the United Nations Third World countries became the majority in the General Assembly, giving them the ability to shape the agenda there in accordance with their broad goals. Achieving greater coordination among the Third World countries was important in maximising the ability of this group to achieve its goals. Third World economic goals underpinned the establishment of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), initiated in 1962. Within the UN the most significant grouping for achieving

²*Australia and the Third World: Report of the Committee on Australia's Relations with the Third World*, Appendix C, 1979, pp. 197-99.

greater coordination was the Group of 77 (G77), which came together at UNCTAD I in 1964. Outside the UN there was the NAM, dating from 1961, although as previously indicated this was not coterminous with the Third World. The oil crisis of 1973 drew attention to the ability of one group of Third World countries, organised as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), to affect the world energy market. In a different and no doubt less significant context, the Commonwealth became transformed into a predominantly Third World organisation: by 1979 only four of the Commonwealth's then 39 members were not from the Third World: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.³

These various developments relating to the Third World affected Australia both globally and regionally. Globally, Australia could be affected by a shift in the focus of the UN. However, the veto power of the Permanent Five (P5) remained a significant obstacle to Third World aspirations on many matters, not to mention the preoccupation of most of the P5 with Cold War issues. Symbolically, Australia's reputation could be affected by the stance it took in relation to issues such as decolonisation and racism. Any shift in the international economic system relating to the NIEO or a specific issue, such as that represented by OPEC, would also have implications for Australia, though not necessarily negative in all cases.

Regionally, Australia was affected by the emergence of the Third World given the many conflicts relating to nationalism and independence that occurred in Southeast Asia in

³*Australia and the Third World: Report of the Committee on Australia's Relations with the Third World*, Appendix C, 1979., p. 169.

particular. A significant number of independent Third World countries were in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. Post-independence issues were just as important in this context as the achievement of independence itself. Such issues could include specific conflicts as well as questions of development more broadly, where Australian foreign aid might be relevant. In the long term, there were prospects for developing Australian trade with Southeast Asian countries, although in the 1970s there was more focus on Japan in this respect, and then later on China.

Given this broad context, we turn now to examine the role of Australian foreign ministers in relation to Third World issues under first the Whitlam Government of 1972-75, and then under the Fraser Government of 1975-83.

The Third World and the Whitlam Government

Gough Whitlam was the most important driving force in all areas of foreign policy. This is not to espouse a “great man theory of history”, but simply to recognise that Whitlam was a very strong leader and that he had an abiding interest in foreign policy. This situation is reflected in Whitlam himself being minister for foreign affairs as well as prime minister in the first 11 months of his administration. Thereafter, Whitlam retained a leading influence not simply by being prime minister, but by having in Don Willesee a foreign minister who would defer to his leader on all major matters.

In the case of Whitlam, it is interesting that in the book he wrote outlining and explaining the record of his government⁴, “international affairs” is the first of the substantive chapters, covering 157 out of 744 pages of text (about one fifth).

⁴ Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Penguin

However, within “international affairs” there is no section on the “Third World” or the “developing countries” as such. The issues arise mainly in the context of different aspects of Australia’s regional policy: the sections on Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the islands of the Pacific are most relevant in this respect. There are also briefer sections on Southern Africa, Malaysia and Singapore, India and the Middle East. Third World issues are also touched upon in the discussion of human rights in the chapter.

Whitlam’s initial press conference as prime minister, (as well as numerous other ministries in the initial two man Whitlam-Barnard government) on 5 December 1972 is often quoted:

[T]he general direction of my thinking is towards a more independent Australian stance in international affairs, an Australia which will be less militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism; an Australia which will enjoy a growing standing as a distinctive, tolerant, co-operative and well regarded nation not only in the Asian and Pacific regions, but in the world at large.⁵

There is no specific reference to the Third World as such in this statement. However, the clear anti-racist stance would have been welcomed by Third World countries and the idea of Australia as “a distinctive, tolerant, co-operative and well regarded nation” would also have been received positively in many quarters in “the world at large”, including the Third World. Jenny Hocking, Whitlam’s biographer, has noted the way in which Australia’s sudden shift away from fence-sitting

⁵ Jenny Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: His Time: The Biography*, vol. 2, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2012, p. 21.

on “postcolonial arrangements, apartheid and other race-related matters” was welcomed by many delegations in the United Nations General Assembly.⁶

In *The Whitlam Government*, Whitlam highlights the stance taken by his government in relation to anti-colonial and racial issues at the United Nations. In December 1972, Australia voted for resolutions critical of Rhodesia in the General Assembly of the United Nations, as well as for resolutions supporting self-determination and independence for colonial territories.⁷ His discussion of human rights issues includes a strong focus on the elimination of racial discrimination. The concern is perhaps less with the Third World than with ensuring that Australia upholds the principles of anti-racism; one aspect of this was to have Australia act as an example to its regional neighbours.⁸

More broadly, Whitlam’s main emphasis in relation to the Third World was on situations in Australia’s own neighbourhood: Papua New Guinea was most important in this regard, followed by Indonesia and East Timor; fewer issues of substance arose with the Pacific island countries and with Malaysia and Singapore.

In relation to Papua New Guinea, Australian involvement did not come under the auspices of the foreign minister. However, that involvement, particularly the transition to independence in 1975, is very relevant to understanding Whitlam’s position in relation to Third World matters more generally. Whitlam

⁶Hocking, *Gough Whitlam: His Time: The Biography*, p.21.

⁷Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1985, pp. 68-69.

⁸Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 181.

points to his 1972 policy speech committing a Labor government to facilitating self-government and independence for Papua New Guinea, “not just because it is Australia’s obligation to the UN but because we believe it wrong and unnatural that a nation like Australia should continue to run a colony.”⁹ Whitlam’s anti-colonial stance is clear in a situation where Australia could play a decisive role. He concludes his discussion of Papua New Guinea with the statement that “if history were to obliterate the whole of my public career, save my contribution to the independence of a democratic PNG, I should rest content.”¹⁰

The discussion of Indonesia in *The Whitlam Government* highlights its importance to Australia given the close proximity of the two countries. The security dimension was to the fore in his thinking, with Whitlam quoting from an article he wrote in *The Australian* on 18 February 1967:

The new Government of Indonesia [under Suharto] is well disposed towards this country. It is our obligation and in our interest to see that we render all

⁹ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 93.

¹⁰ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 101. However, for a more critical perspective claiming that Whitlam acted as a “fashionista” in Papua New Guinea, using the issue to advance his own political career, see Geoffrey Luck, ‘How Gough Whitlam’s self-interest sank Papua New Guinea,’ *The Australian*, 5 November 2014, as reproduced at:

http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2014/11/how-gough-whitlams-self-interest-sank-papua-new-guinea.html (accessed 8 May 2016); for an overview of the decolonisation issue in Papua New Guinea, see Donald Denoon, *A Trial Separation: Australia and the Decolonisation of Papua New Guinea*, ANU E-Press, Canberra 2012, especially Part 2.

the political, diplomatic and economic support we can. If the coup of 18 months ago ... had succeeded, as it nearly did, we would have had a country of 100 million dominated by communists on our border.¹¹

With hindsight, the situation had not been so simple. However, this perspective can also be seen in Whitlam's approach to the East Timor issue, as presented in his book. While Whitlam saw himself as anti-colonial, his attitudes in relation to specific issues were sometimes contradictory. On the issue of West New Guinea, he essentially supported the argument that Indonesia had a strong claim to be regarded as the sovereign power in relation to the whole of the former Netherlands East Indies. In relation to East Timor, his stance was more pro-Indonesian, perhaps reflecting a view that an independent East Timor was not viable; to that end, in the aftermath of the Indonesian occupation Whitlam supported the view that the welfare of the East Timorese was best advanced through supporting the efforts of the Indonesian Government.¹²

Going beyond Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and East Timor, Whitlam also gave attention to India and the Middle East, both of which could be seen as important in a Third World context. In relation to India, Whitlam emphasised its role as "the largest democracy in the world", and drew attention to his own positive evaluation of India as compared with that of previous Australian leaders, particularly Robert Menzies.¹³ In the Middle East, Whitlam's concern was to develop further diplomatic relations with various Arab states while also taking

¹¹ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 102.

¹² Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 113.

¹³ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 123.

an “even-handed” approach in relation to the Israel-Palestine issue. While Labor leaders had enjoyed a good relationship with past Labour leaders in Israel, Whitlam portrays himself as becoming “increasingly aware of the sufferings of the Palestinian people”.¹⁴ The even-handed approach was put to the test most notably at the time of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, when Sir Laurence McIntyre, Australia’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, was President of the UN Security Council.¹⁵

As a prime minister with a strong focus on foreign policy, irrespective of whether he was concurrently foreign minister, it was Whitlam’s views that had the strongest impact on the policies of his government towards Third World issues. However, recognising that he had laid the foundations for the government’s foreign policy and that some devolution of responsibility was necessary, Senator Don Willesee assumed the foreign affairs portfolio from November 1973. Willesee had previously been Minister Assisting the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Willesee had some political significance, with a base in Western Australia, and was Deputy Leader of the Senate. He was also a Whitlam loyalist, although not without some differences, and could be relied on to follow the Prime Minister’s leadership in relation to foreign policy. While Jim Cairns and Lance Barnard were also possible foreign ministers, Whitlam believed that Willesee was “more open to his continuing influence” than the other contenders.¹⁶

While Willesee did follow Whitlam’s lead in foreign policy on most matters, he differed with Whitlam to some extent over the East Timor issue. Willesee believed that more

¹⁴ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 124.

¹⁵ Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, p. 125.

¹⁶Hocking, *Gough Whitlam*, p. 108.

emphasis should have been put on the right of the East Timorese to self-determination, with correspondingly less emphasis on deferring to Indonesia on this matter. Differences over East Timor subsequently led Whitlam to describe his foreign minister as “forgettable”; for his part, Willesee “remained distressed and embittered by the handling of the situation for the rest of his days.”¹⁷

The Third World and the Fraser Government

As with Gough Whitlam in relation to the Whitlam Government’s foreign policy, so it was with Malcolm Fraser in relation to the foreign policy of the Fraser Government. Both were the dominant influence over foreign policy during their prime ministerships, including policy towards the Third World. However, unlike Whitlam, Fraser never concurrently held the position of foreign minister. Fraser had a strong foreign minister in Andrew Peacock, between November 1975 and November 1980; thereafter, Tony Street as foreign minister had a relationship to Fraser that was perhaps comparable in some respects to that between Whitlam and Willesee. It should also be pointed out that Fraser had strong views on the Third World, making this aspect of foreign policy stronger overall in relative terms than it had been under the Whitlam Government.

To make sense of the role played by Peacock and Street as foreign ministers in relation to Third World issues, it is helpful in the first instance to indicate Fraser’s stance. This involved two key elements. In the first instance, Fraser was

¹⁷Bobbie Oliver, ‘Willesee, Donald Robert (1916-2003)’, in *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, online edition, <http://biography.senate.gov.au/index.php/willesee-donald-robert/> (accessed, 4 May 2016).

strongly anti-racist: Western countries, including Australia, should strongly endorse anti-racist positions in the Third World and elsewhere. As related by Ian Macphee, Fraser stated “there are not many issues of conscience you can afford to have if you are to be a successful politician. Race is mine. I will never tolerate racism.”¹⁸ In the second place, and standing alongside his anti-racist position, Fraser’s view of the Third World was influenced by his anti-Soviet stance: Western countries should engage with the Third World in order to counter any Soviet advances in these regions. The two elements complemented each other: strong anti-racist credentials would ensure influence in the Third World, and this would in turn be helpful in restricting any Soviet expansionism. This is not to say that Fraser’s anti-racism was merely an instrument in an anti-Soviet strategy. The anti-racist views were sincerely held as an end in themselves. However, as we shall see, both aspects of Fraser’s perspective on the Third World were important for the role played by Peacock and Street.

While anti-racism was a matter of principle for Fraser, this position was quite consistent with Peacock’s own liberal philosophy. Peacock might not have highlighted this perspective as much as Fraser did but he was quite prepared to work with the Prime Minister in advancing anti-racist goals where they appeared relevant, most notably in relation to southern Africa.¹⁹ As Patrick Weller observes: “most ministers agreed that in a few areas the prime minister could run his

¹⁸Patrick Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power in Australia*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1989, p. 314.

¹⁹Peacock had previously been able to work well with Papua New Guinea politicians such as Michael Somare during Peacock’s tenure as Minister for External Territories from January to December 1972. See Denoon, *A Trial Separation*, pp. 100-3.

own policy; Zimbabwe and South Africa were such cases. Some consistently agreed, particularly the foreign minister, Andrew Peacock; others kept quiet.”²⁰ Given that Peacock was a strong political figure in his own right, it was helpful for Fraser to have the foreign minister’s support in these matters. Fraser himself said of Peacock that “we agreed on almost everything.”²¹ If at any point the leadership of the government had been contested then Peacock would clearly have been a contender, all other things being equal.

Fraser is often given considerable credit for facilitating a settlement of the Rhodesia issue at the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in August 1979, making use of his relationships with Margaret Thatcher and such African leaders as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania; Fraser was also on good terms with Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica and an important Commonwealth leader. However, Peacock also contributed very actively to the groundwork for the settlement, with visits to the British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, as well as to Kenya and Tanzania; Peacock also spoke to Edgar Tekere, a leader of Zimbabwe’s Patriotic Front.²² Peacock was also greatly involved in the detailed and demanding work required at the Lusaka meeting to achieve agreement on ending the conflict.²³ This then prepared the way for the Lancaster House Agreement in December 1979 and the emergence of an independent Zimbabwe based on majority rule in April 1980.

²⁰ Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM*, p. 334.

²¹ Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs*, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2010, p. 479.

²² Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM*, pp. 325-27.

²³ Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM*, pp. 328-31; Fraser refers specifically to Peacock’s role in Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, pp. 506, 509.

The ability of Fraser and Peacock to work together on foreign policy issues, with Third World issues being notable in this context, was highlighted by the commissioning of a report on Australia's relations with the Third World. Announced by Fraser on 6 April 1978 and chaired by Owen Harries of the School of Political Science at the University of New South Wales, the Committee on Australia's Relations with the Third World presented its report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 10 April 1979.²⁴ The committee of 10 included people from academia, government, business and the unions; the secretariat came from the Department of Foreign Affairs. The initiative was clearly in line with Fraser's outlook, but also had strong support from Peacock given that implementation was a matter for his department. The report is significant in attempting a comprehensive assessment of key aspects of the Third World, while also making recommendations as to Australia's future engagement with these countries. The recommendations were sympathetic to Fraser's aim of restricting Soviet influence in the Third World. Engagement with southern African issues and participation in the Commonwealth were in accord with the policy that had been pursued. It is difficult to discern any particular influences coming from Peacock, although presumably he would have shared the sentiment that in the United Nations and other international forums Australia "should seek to be moderate, sympathetic and cooperative in reacting to Third World proposals."²⁵

Fraser and Peacock fell out in relation to a particular Third World context: Cambodia. The Whitlam government had recognised Democratic Kampuchea, the Pol Pot regime, at the

²⁴*Australia and the Third World.*

²⁵*Australia and the Third World*, p. 182.

time the Khmer Rouge had emerged victorious in April 1975. Peacock had been in Phnom Penh at the time the city fell, and was clearly deeply affected; the subsequent experience of the “killing fields” would only have reinforced his distaste for the regime. With the intervention of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia in late 1978 leading to the fall of the Khmer Rouge Government, the issue arose as to whether Democratic Kampuchea should continue to be recognised. In July 1980, Peacock argued before Cabinet that Australia should support recognition of Democratic Kampuchea for the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly but then withdraw diplomatic recognition of that government. Cabinet supported Fraser in opposing de-recognition at this point.²⁶ There was an element of anti-Sovietism in Fraser’s stance given that Vietnam had Soviet support; however, the ASEAN countries and the United States also opposed Vietnam on this issue. Fraser’s assessment in his memoirs was that whereas for Peacock the issue had been one of “principle”, for him “it was a question of timing and emphasis.”²⁷ Peacock commented in retrospect that Fraser had “a narrower perspective of the world” at the time compared with his later more liberal and moderate views; Peacock viewed himself as less of a Cold War warrior than Fraser.²⁸ Ahead of the federal election in October 1980, Peacock was able to win his point, with Cabinet agreeing to withdraw recognition after a short period; Peacock was able to announce this decision before the election. Following the election, Peacock changed portfolios

²⁶ Mike Steketee, ‘Andrew Peacock and Malcolm Fraser Split on Pol Pot,’ *The Australian*, 1 January 2011, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/cabinet-papers/andrew-peacock-and-malcolm-fraser-split-on-pol-pot/story-fn7f6f9t-1225979638440> (accessed 5 May 2016).

²⁷ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 479.

²⁸ Steketee, ‘Andrew Peacock and Malcolm Fraser Split on Pol Pot.’

to industrial relations before going on to resign from Cabinet and challenge Fraser for the leadership in April 1981²⁹; he subsequently returned to Cabinet in October 1982 as Minister for Industry and Commerce.

With Tony Street in November 1980, Fraser had someone taking the role of Minister for Foreign Affairs he could rely on to implement Cabinet decisions in relation to Third World issues, as well as other foreign policy matters. Given that Fraser was the strongest influence over the direction of foreign policy as determined by Cabinet there was little risk for Fraser in having Street as foreign minister, and this is essentially what happened. One commentator suggested that “Mr Street’s main qualification apart from being a Victorian, seems to be personal loyalty to the prime minister.”³⁰ Fraser continued to lead on these issues as before; Street provided support but was far more low profile than Peacock had been. In his memoirs, Fraser described Street as being “thoughtful, conscientious, never pushed himself forwards, but could do any job you asked.”³¹

²⁹ See Peacock’s resignation statement to the House of Representatives on 28 April 1981 as reproduced in ‘Andrew Peacock Resigns From Fraser Government’, AustralianPolitics.Com, <http://australianpolitics.com/1981/04/28/peacock-resigns-from-fraser-government.html> (accessed 5 May 2016). The statement includes reference to Peacock’s position on the Cambodian issue during 1980.

³⁰ Robyn J. Lim, ‘Problems in Australian Foreign Policy, July to December 1980’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 27, issue 1 (April 1981), p. 16.

³¹ Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, p. 602.

At a broad level, the main Third World issue that arose during Street's tenure concerned the government's commitment to furthering North-South dialogue. This issue was particularly important during 1981, when the government had (unfulfilled) hopes of being included in the North-South summit in Cancun, Mexico, in October of that year. The main opportunity for Australia to influence events was through the Melbourne CHOGM, held earlier in October. Street had commented in March 1981 that middle powers such as Australia had "a better chance of getting things moving in the present circumstances."³² However, whatever Australia's aspirations in this direction, the unsympathetic stance of the Reagan Administration in the US made it difficult to make progress.

Comparisons

Overall, both the Whitlam Government and the Fraser Government had a strong emphasis on Third World issues at a time when these were very much to the fore in international politics. In terms of substance, I would argue that the emphasis on broad Third World issues was stronger under the Fraser Government. Whitlam was concerned with issues of anti-colonialism and anti-racism, attempting to project a more sympathetic and modern image of Australia in the world. Fraser was very strongly motivated by anti-racism, with his views on these matters very much to the fore in his approach to southern African issues; his anti-Sovietism also influenced his Third World stance. In terms of the Third World dimension in Australia's neighbouring region, Whitlam's views were most significant in relation to Papua New Guinea

³²Quoted in F.A. Mediansky, 'Problems in Australian Foreign Policy, January-June 1981', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 27, issue 3 (December 1981), p. 294.

and to Indonesia and East Timor. This dimension was perhaps less relevant with Fraser, although issues concerning the post-1978 Cambodian conflict were significant during his government and clearly had a Third World context.

Given the strong prime ministerial involvement in foreign policy, including Third World issues, in both governments, any foreign minister was going to be constrained by the prime ministerial role. In the period from December 1972 to November 1973, this constraint was not an issue given that the prime minister and the foreign minister were one and the same person. Thereafter, Whitlam had in Willesee a foreign minister who would broadly follow his lead, although differences clearly emerged over the East Timor issue. In the case of Fraser, he had a strong foreign minister in Peacock, but Peacock was generally sympathetic to Fraser's position and contributed very effectively to advancing that position. The main difference between Fraser and Peacock was over Cambodia. Peacock's position, based on human rights principles, eventually prevailed; Fraser was more influenced at the time by diplomatic considerations, while not objecting to Peacock's position as a long-term strategy. With Peacock declining the foreign affairs portfolio after the 1980 election, Fraser had in Street a loyalist, somewhat akin to Willesee in the case of Whitlam. Street supported Fraser's position and focused on implementing agreed government policies.

Given that Third World policy was very much led by the two prime ministers, with foreign ministers playing a supportive role, it is interesting to reflect on the international impact of the policies that were pursued. It is difficult to determine whether Australia's international image in relation to Third World issues improved during the period of the two governments. In the UN context, it appears that this was the case under Whitlam, and presumably would have continued

under Fraser. The positive evaluation of Fraser in relation to the Zimbabwe settlement, with Peacock also contributing, has been noted. However one judges subsequent developments, Whitlam certainly ended Australia's colonial status in relation to Papua New Guinea. Willesee's reservations in relation to Whitlam's East Timor policy appear justified in light of how the situation in that territory developed. On the issue of Cambodia, one might say that Australian policy was a relatively minor matter. Peacock had principle on his side, and the shift to that position did not take long to occur; Fraser was not opposed to the principle but preferred a different timing to ensure harmony with other countries opposed to Vietnam on this issue.

Australia's Africa Policies 1973-82: Personal Recollections

Di Johnstone AM

I joined the then Department of Foreign Affairs in 1973, in the first graduate recruit intake after the Whitlam Government was elected. There were 36 recruits and six were women. Many of us came directly out of the universities and had been students during a time of great turmoil on campuses with student protests about the Vietnam War, apartheid South Africa and the 1971 Springbok tour, women's rights and indigenous rights. As youthful new recruits, we were enthusiastically ready to help implement the newly-elected government's foreign policies.

I was at the frontline of policy change when posted to South Africa in 1974. Under conservative governments, white South Africans had been used to a very different relationship with Australia. They saw Australians as "like us" and as friends in South Africa's increasingly bitter battle with the international community. They were angry and perplexed at Australia's newly hostile policy stance under the Whitlam Government, both in bilateral relations—especially Australian sporting sanctions—and in international forums.

As for the Embassy, its focus had largely been on relations with the white administration. I had serious misgivings about a posting to apartheid South Africa. However when leaving Canberra, I understood that, as part of my reporting responsibilities, I was to get to know what was happening in black South Africa, to find out what black South Africans were thinking, and to report on this. The reporting would help

with formulating Australian policy on bilateral relations and in international forums where South Africa was an international pariah. I was also to let black community contacts know of Australia's strong opposition to apartheid. This was, of course, highly confrontational in apartheid South Africa and my activities attracted a great deal of security police attention. Along with Australia's new policies, such activities disrupted the Embassy's previously comfortable relations with the white government and bureaucracy.

During my posting I came to know many black activists, most of whom had links to the Black Consciousness Movement, and travelled frequently into segregated black townships, which were heavily perimeter-patrolled by white security forces. I was appalled by apartheid and the brutal political repression and some activists would become friends and remained so after the posting. I also came to know and support black artists and in 1974 hosted an exhibition of black South African art in my apartment. My lease was cancelled immediately and the fact I was effectively thrown out of my apartment was reported in South Africa under the front-page headline "Blacks in Flat: Aussie Girl told to Quit". As it was also reported in Australia, it was very reassuring to get back-channel advice that Prime Minister Whitlam was aware of my situation and sent his best wishes.

Australia's change of government in 1975 raised hopes in white South Africa. When the Fraser Government did not abandon Whitlam Government policies, it was a great disappointment to them. They had expected a conservative government to bring Australia back on their side.

I left in 1976 just after the Soweto Uprising. Protests had begun erupting in other townships. My successor Bruce Haigh continued to make regular contact with black political

activists, and became a close friend of Steve Biko, who was later murdered by security police. He visited political prisoners in jails and famously assisted in the escape of Donald Woods, editor of the *East London Daily Dispatch* and his family from South Africa, and others. The film *Cry Freedom* represented Bruce but depicted him as a journalist.

Back in Canberra on the desk, South Africa was a high profile area of policy with strong interest by the Prime Minister, international pressure and intense local lobbying, especially from major church groups demanding tougher policies to help end apartheid. The South African Embassy in Canberra ran a determined resistance. However Australian policies were strengthened and Malcolm Fraser played a key role in the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement imposing new sanctions on sporting ties with South Africa.

Malcolm Fraser took control of foreign policy on southern Africa, and Andrew Peacock seemed almost invisible. Fraser's abhorrence of racism was personal and his opposition to apartheid was clear from early in his public life. Following the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, in both public speeches and in the Parliament, Fraser spoke strongly against both racism and apartheid. Majority rule in Rhodesia also became a personal mission. This was high-risk territory as it brought him into conflict with both his conservative base and powerful conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

I became Rhodesia desk officer when my predecessor died suddenly. As the Rhodesia situation evolved, Malcolm Fraser was intensely engaged and frequent briefings required a high level of detail. At the desk level, there was a huge amount of material to absorb. With no Australian mission in-country, this was mostly from our posts in Africa, including South Africa, and from the High Commission in London, which was

in direct contact with British officials, especially about the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and later Lancaster House talks. Our own intelligence was good, as posts in the Frontline States had developed a good knowledge of key players in exiled liberation movements. Australia was also generally trusted as an honest broker, not having the vested interests of a colonial power or a global power, and given Australia's policies on South Africa. High profile engagement on a Rhodesian solution by the Prime Minister was helpful to Australia's credibility and information gathering.

As an end to white rule in Rhodesia loomed, Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Thatcher clashed over possible solutions. She was attracted to recognising Rhodesia's "internal solution" where a government headed by Bishop Abel Muzorewa had been elected under a constitution that preserved white control over key institutions and white privilege. Fraser wanted free and fair elections under a constitution that guaranteed majority rule. The dispute came to a head during Mrs Thatcher's visit to Australia on 30 June - 1 July 1979. I recall being urgently called into work the day Malcolm Fraser was to see her, to immediately produce briefing on yet another complex aspect of the failure of the "internal solution" so that he could use this to persuade Mrs Thatcher. The August Lusaka CHOGM that Malcolm Fraser attended, followed by the very difficult and long Lancaster House talks where he offered Australian troops for a Commonwealth Ceasefire Monitoring Force (CMF), ultimately produced an agreement, signed on 21 December 1979.

Not surprisingly, at this time our relations with some British officials became a bit frosty. However, while somewhat irritated at Australian interventions, official level relationships

with the British, both then and later in Rhodesia, remained professional, and information flows seemed unaffected.

On 23 December 1979, I arrived in Salisbury as team leader with three staff to establish the Australian Liaison Office prior to the ceasefire formally coming into effect. We travelled on a C130 with the advance party of the Australian contingent to the Commonwealth Ceasefire Monitoring Force. As we crossed the Limpopo River border the atmosphere in the aircraft was quite tense. We were in a military aircraft flying from apartheid South Africa into a warzone filled with supporters of the Rhodesian regime. It was not clear that all guerrilla forces in the south would have received the message about the impending ceasefire or that we were friendly, and we knew they had shoulder-carried SAM7s.

On arrival, we set up in the Monomotapa Hotel with the communications equipment in a tiny bathroom. When the equipment was operational, the bathroom door had to be closed. The communicator, Carmel Taheny, received an OAM and she hugely deserved it. Some 10 days later Charles Mott arrived from Lagos to head the Office and liaise with Governor Lord Soames and British officials. At the time Charles Mott was serving as High Commissioner to Nigeria, having come from London where he was Minister for Political Affairs in the High Commission; previously he was Senior Departmental Spokesman at headquarters in Canberra. A later, and a very welcome, arrival was Nick Warner who became the main contact between the Office and the Australian force commander, Colonel Kevin Cole.

It was a dangerous time. Staff travelled to assembly places by helicopter, flying low to avoid fire, and by road in mine-protected vehicles. I was in the Monomotapa restaurant when a bomb went off in the church across the road. The plate glass

window blew out and patrons were showered with shards of glass. I was nearly trampled in a huge, excited crowd at the return rally for Mugabe. There was the ever-present danger of unruly Rhodesian forces staging a coup.

For the 152 Australian troops in the CMF the dangers were magnified, whether they were in remote areas surrounded by nervous and skittish guerrillas who had reluctantly come in from fighting in the bush, or with fearful and often angry Rhodesian forces. Among the latter were Australian mercenaries who paid an unexpected visit to us at the hotel, in their uniforms, to ask if they could come home without being arrested. Others in-country included Australian members of the Commonwealth electoral observer team, Australian national electoral observers and Australian journalists.

It could all have gone horribly wrong and Malcolm Fraser would have worn it. Sending Australian troops had been a huge risk. It is a miracle none were killed or badly injured. If they had been, there could well have been a nasty backlash in Australia; the Vietnam War was still fresh in our memories.

In my next posting, to Kenya, I was sent to dissuade Commonwealth foreign ministers, then attending an Organisation of African Unity meeting, from agreeing to an African boycott of the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. Australia's record in South Africa and Malcolm Fraser's personal engagement in Rhodesia were very influential in preventing that boycott.

As a postscript, Malcolm Fraser was later co-Chair of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on South Africa. In 1994, I returned to South Africa as a United Nations observer of the freedom elections. For 11 years I have been closely involved with the Ifa Lethu Foundation that is returning

apartheid-era “struggle era art” to South Africa. Until his recent death Malcolm Fraser was a highly valued member of the Global Advisory Council of this Foundation.



Andrew Peacock addresses United Nations General Assembly, 6 October 1978. (UN Photo/DFAT: HIS-0762)



Tony Street with Richard Woolcott and President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos. (DFAT: HIS-0780)

Discussion

Moderated by Melissa Conley Tyler

Jeremy Hearder:

I had two postings in Africa: first in Dar-es-Salaam in the 1960s and then in Nairobi in the early 1970s. And it was just like chalk and cheese to me. I've experienced a call from all of Zimbabwe President Mugabe's ministers as well as Mugabe himself. Every single one of them made it his or her business to say the name of the Australian Prime Minister. Now you wouldn't get that very often.

I remember I saw Malcolm Fraser before I went. I only had 10 minutes with him. He said to me, "If you think we're not giving enough aid to Zimbabwe just say so." It took me three weeks to work that out, and I said so and the aid doubled. And about nine months later it was doubled again.

Ross Cottrill:

I was in the Justice Department in 1979 to 1983. And looking back it's hard to imagine the extent of which all of the interest in the Third World was really related to the Cold War. The Third World was seen as an arena for the Cold War. The other arena that mattered particularly was the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Malcolm Fraser took it upon himself to organise a regional meeting of the Commonwealth. Of course the Commonwealth countries in Southeast Asia included Malaysia and Singapore and India as well. Those two things pushed on and the idea of Africa as an arena for Cold War competition was not Fraser's alone but it got to Washington later and the State Department thought so too. The countries in play were

Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia and so on. It looks quaint when you look back from our current position to think whether they took it seriously as a Cold War concern.

Colin Milner:

I was posted in South Africa in the late 1980s. I think it's fair to say that the dichotomy of maintaining cool but cordial relations with the apartheid regime, and still developing meaningful contacts and dialogue and information-gathering and knowledge of the federation, was maintained right through to the release of Nelson Mandela and the transition through to majority rule in 1994. I was there at the end of the process but I think it's fair to say it was a very effective period of Australian diplomacy in that regard.

Diplomacy in the Whitlam/Fraser Era

Panel Discussion: Diplomacy in the Whitlam/Fraser Era

Moderated by Geoffrey Miller AO FAIIA

The Hon Tony Street, former Minister for Foreign Affairs (via correspondence)

Dr Sue Boyd FAIIA

Philip Flood AO FAIIA

Allan Gyngell AO FAIIA

Mack Williams

Garry Woodard FAIIA

Richard Woolcott AC FAIIA

Geoff Miller:

I very fortunately have a special prologue to give in the form of a letter from Tony Street, former Minister for Foreign Affairs. I'm particularly interested, because it relates to a journey that I accompanied him on to China.

The Hon Tony Street:

Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend as I cannot undertake travel these days. Please register an apology for me. However, as you were kind enough to offer the opportunity to say a few words, perhaps the following maybe of some interest. During my official visit to China in 1981 or 1982, which was the first by an Australian foreign minister for some years, I was fortunate to have two sessions with Deng Xiaoping, the then Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, the most

powerful position in China. And incidentally, Deng was the most impressive person I ever met.

During our discussions, I said that while Australia's economy was only a fraction of the size of China's, we had a high degree of expertise in some areas such as science and agriculture, and we'd like to make some contribution to China's development. Deng thanked me for the offer and said he would consult his relevant officials. The next day, he said there were three particular fields where Australia might be able to help: first, and very significantly, teaching their primary school teachers how to teach English; second, reforestation; and third, aerial agriculture. On my return to Australia and in consultation with what was then AIDAB (the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau), we arranged to send some experienced teachers and CSIRO reforestation experts, and offered to train some pilots in aerial spraying and sowing techniques in Western Australia. As far as I know, all three projects, though modest in size, were successful, and certainly established some useful contacts for both countries."

Geoff Miller:

So that I think is a very impressive and constructive letter and it shows what a nice guy he was.

Professor Jocelyn Chey:

I'd like to endorse what Tony Street has written, and to note that 1981 in fact was an enormously significant year in terms of the development of Australia's relations with China. Amongst the things that he hasn't mentioned in that note, he actually initialled a cultural exchange agreement with China that was signed later when the Chinese Minister of Culture

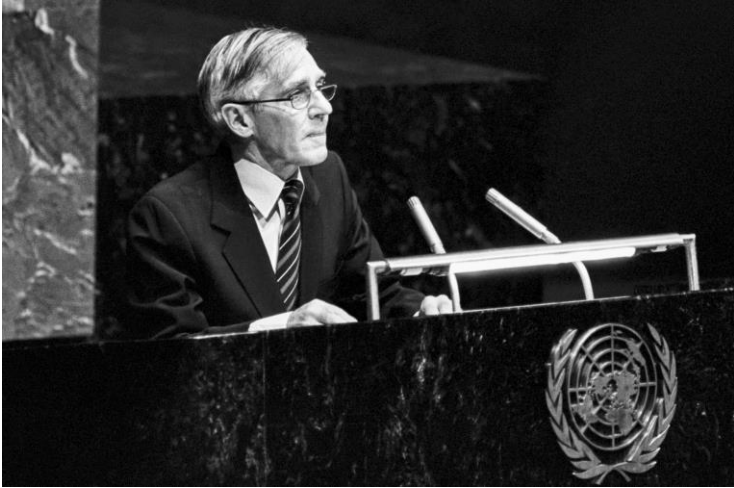
visited, and he also reached agreement on the exchange of defence attachés, which attracted a lot of attention in the Australian press. He invited the Director of the Americas and Oceania Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Han Xu, to visit. He came in May that year and not only visited Canberra, but significantly he went to Perth and to the Pilbara. I think that was the beginning of the major item which continued under discussion for a decade afterwards about the establishment of China's first very important overseas investment in iron ore exploration.

Also, in September 1981, the HMAS Swan visited Shanghai, which was the first time that an Australian naval ship had been to China for 32 years, and that also was a great step forward in relations. So as Tony Street says, the technical cooperation agreement was a very significant development. It led to the establishment of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), which continued over many years with multi-faceted cooperative research programs in agriculture.

Garry Woodard:

Malcolm Fraser raised this question of agriculture in 1976 and agriculture was singled out for us as an area in which to cooperate, and we did a number of programs with the Prime Minister, very small ones. But we were the first Western country to become a valuable donor to China. The first Chinese visitors to Australia after Malcolm Fraser's visit to China were Ulanfu, who was associated with agriculture in Mongolia and who was believed to be a descendant of Genghis Khan, and Tan Qilong, who was the Governor of Qinghai Province. The agricultural element of the relationship is really quite important, and was developed in a lot of ways by individuals: people who grew trees in Australia which

Diplomacy in the Whitlam/Fraser Era



Tony Street addresses United Nations General Assembly, 1981. (UN Photo)



Panel Discussion on "Diplomacy in the Whitlam/Fraser Era" at the Australian Institute of International Affairs' forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs 1972-83, 19 May 2016. (Australian Institute of International Affairs)

were being transferred to China, like cold climate eucalypts, and agricultural uses of wind power. The dung beetle was taken to China, as well.

James Ingram:

I hadn't intended to speak at this interesting meeting but, having just listened to all that's been said, I think I have to expand the record. I was the head of AIDAB for those years and I went to China before Street. I led a high-level mission in 1980 of some of Australia's top scientists, not only agricultural scientists but from the fields of medicine and other disciplines. We travelled widely throughout China. The Chinese were very hospitable; we met with the Prime Minister and other ministers. It was an initiative of which we were very proud. Andrew Peacock was in fact the person who authorised it. In terms of putting the Australian relationship on a substantive aid basis, it was a very important and successful initiative, although it did not lead to the establishment of ACIAR, which had its origin in much earlier initiatives of AIDAB.

I found Tony Street a good Minister to deal with, including in the relation to the creation of ACIAR. As a farmer himself, and with his relationship with another farmer from the Western District, he brought a real enthusiasm.

I'd also like to say that I had a very interesting personal experience with Malcolm Fraser when he was Prime Minister. It was about the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam. If I recall correctly, Ian Sinclair, who was Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, called me in to say that Malcolm wanted to terminate aid to Vietnam. We'd been building up a very nice aid program in Vietnam and Malcolm wanted it terminated. Sinclair asked what I thought about that, and I gave him all

the reasons I thought it was a bad idea. He then turned to me and he said, "I'd like you to come into the Cabinet and represent that point of view." So, I went into the Cabinet, and there's Malcolm dominating the room. So I made my case. I knew it was a fatal mistake, of course. Anyway, when I finished, Malcolm said, "There will be no more discussion. The issue is decided." Just like that. But the next day I was at a lunch and I was sitting next to Tony Robinson, the Minister of Finance, and he said to me, "Oh, you did a wonderful job standing up to Malcolm." But none of them were ready to say a word in support in Cabinet.

Dr Sue Boyd:

Our topic is diplomacy in the Whitlam and Fraser era. There are three things that I'd like to contribute.

One is, first of all, to note that in my career, I served in two of the embassies which were created by Gough. In the Embassy in East Germany, when his government recognised the new state of East Germany, we were one of the first Western nations to do so, leading the pack. We did so after the West Germans started some sort of rapprochement with East Germans, and the way was clearly being paved for normalisation of relations. He grabbed that and we got a huge amount of kudos from having been so early in the field, in recognising East Berlin.

So, in the embassy in Berlin when I got there in 1976, everyone you talked to recognised the fact that Australia was early in the field. We were in a unique situation in East Germany because we were a Western country, but we weren't NATO, and we weren't the Americans, and we weren't the West Germans. We had so many positive things that made it very easy for us to make inroads, and people were very open

to us. Malcolm Morris was the ambassador, and he spoke fluent German, and I spoke fluent German, too. So between us, we managed, and he was a wonderful head of mission. He was the absolute delegator. I had my job, and as long as I did it and kept him informed, that was fine. And he had his bit of the action, and he did that. It was a great team.

When Gough was out of power, he came to visit us in East Germany. And Malcolm Morris thought that really he ought to put the program together without any help from his deputy or anybody else in the Embassy. He came up with this program and I said to him, “Malcolm, this is a great-looking program, but you know, Gough’s really coming because he wants to see the Pergamon Museum.” And he said, “No, no, no, no. He’s coming because he recognises East Germany, and they all want to see him, and they’re very important for the Labor Party and the comrades, and this program’s got to be full of all that stuff.” I said, “Well, let’s keep Tuesday afternoon free, so that if he does want to go to the Pergamon Museum, that’s what we can do.” So then, the time came, and I was sent off to West Berlin to pick up Gough and bring him across the border to the East. He got in the car and he said, “Sue, I’ve seen this program and it’s all very well, but when am I going to see the Pergamon Museum?”. So I said, “Alright, Gough. We’re going Tuesday afternoon to the Pergamon Museum and that’s final.” It was terrific – it was a great visit – and people were just falling over themselves to welcome him and greet him, and it was just a great success.

Then again in Vietnam, because we recognised the North Vietnamese, and because we opened an embassy at the time when we still had Australian troops in the South, we got enormous kudos for being first in the field. Again, we were there ahead of the pack, and so we had a tremendous advantage. Australian explorers were there in the mining

industry before anybody else was there, looking for business. Telstra was there, contributing telecommunication services. The ANZ Bank was there, as the first Western bank, and so it was across the field.

Because the Americans were still not recognising Vietnam – they were still holding on to the MIA issue – they were not there. There was no US Ambassador. This was a time of great opening in Vietnam's openness to the Western world, and it was looking for allies and partners to help it in the Western world. Americans would have been the favourite partners, had they been there, but they weren't and we were, so we became the Vietnamese's natural and favoured partner. It was a wonderful time to be in the Australian Embassy. We had that first mover advantage. Then of course the Americans relented and saw the light and sent Peterson as ambassador¹, who had been, of course, a prisoner of war in the Hanoi Hilton. And he proceeded to snaffle my trade commissioner Vi Le and marry her. The headlines in the paper were all, "American Ambassador marries Vietnamese woman!"

The last little bit I want to contribute comes back to the question of Timor. I was deeply involved with working with our relations on the Timor issue as that evolved in 1975, including going up to Darwin and opening a temporary office there to help coordinate the Red Cross operation, and the missions going in and out, and the efforts of the Portuguese peace mission. When the governor moved to the island of Arturo, he had no telecommunications at all and had no way of communicating with Lisbon, or anybody else. So Lisbon asked Australia if we would provide telecommunications

¹ Colonel Douglas 'Pete' Peterson, USAF, POW during Vietnam War, later US Ambassador to Vietnam, later still became an Australian citizen after marrying Vi Le.

equipment for the governor, and we agreed to do so. And a RAAF plane came up to Darwin and flew in to Arturo and set it all up, including enough cable to be able to reach out and put the antenna in place, since we'd had information that the equipment would only work if an antenna could be put on top of the mountain in Arturo.

Years later, I was posted in Hong Kong, duly accredited to Macao. I speak Portuguese, which was a help there. I went to present my credentials in Macao and I was met by the governor's aide-de-camp. He had been in the military in Portugal at the time that all this stuff was going on in Timor, and he said, "One thing we could never understand is you gave us the telecommunications equipment, and we assumed that you had fixed this equipment so you could read our traffic. And we wondered why Australia never reacted or picked up the clues that we were dropping deliberately for you." Of course, at the time, Gough hated the intelligence services so much, he had instructed that we could not fix the equipment so that we could read it. So, the assumption on the other side was that we could, and we couldn't.

Philip Flood:

I had a somewhat different experience during the decade being discussed, because I spent five years in the Department of Foreign Affairs, part of this time in Bangladesh, and then five years in the Department of Trade. I'll just talk about the period that I had in Trade.

I was fortunate to deal a lot with Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony, Ian Sinclair and Victor Garland, and of course I reported to Jim Scully. I sat in on the Cabinet several times accompanying Doug Anthony. The Cabinet was dominated by Fraser and the most influential ministers were Doug Anthony,

Ian Sinclair, Peter Nixon and then John Howard. My impression was that the foreign minister didn't quite have the influence that he might be expected to have in a Cabinet at that time. National Party ministers – actually at the time it was the “National Country Party” – were very strong ministers, and they had a definite influence on aspects of foreign policy. I don't want in any way to detract from what Andrew Peacock achieved with Papua New Guinea and with China and Japan, where he obviously has substantial achievements to his name. But there were some issues on which those National Party ministers drove the agenda: the European Economic Community, New Zealand and extending relations in the Middle East and Latin America.

New Zealand was very important at the time as the Closer Economic Relations (CER) trade agreement was negotiated. It was signed at the start of the Labor government in 1983, all within the first few weeks. The new Minister for Trade Lionel Bowen consulted his coalition predecessor Doug Anthony and quickly came to the view that his predecessor had done a good job and so convinced new Prime Minister Bob Hawke. The work had been a decision of the Fraser Cabinet, and it was done under Anthony's direction.

At the start of discussions about CER, Peacock wasn't happy that he was not the minister in charge. When this matter initially began in 1979, Peacock wanted to take it over, and argued that as Minister for Foreign Affairs he should be responsible. It was a bit surprising, given their political strength and trade expertise, that he sought to take something back from the very strong National Party ministers. I found Peacock personally a likeable and astute man, but he should have realised that he had no hope at all, that there was no way these ministers were going to yield to Peacock on a major trade initiative. Of course, the matter had important foreign

policy implications but the detailed and complex political issues to be negotiated lay elsewhere.

Besides, there was broad agreement with the then Opposition on the foreign policy and strategic issues involved. The difficult issues were trade, customs, industry, investment, economic issues, issues concerning the manufacturing industry and, particularly, concerning the Victorian dairy industry. It was only a minister of Doug Anthony's strength that could have delivered a positive outcome. Peter Nixon was opposed to the agreement, so the National Party was split. The Victorian Nationals didn't trust the New Zealanders on dairy, and they thought their dairy interests were going to be compromised. Only Anthony could deliver the National Party and get the issues resolved. Andrew Peacock, notwithstanding his fine diplomatic skills, would have had little chance. Of course, the outcome is correctly perceived as a very successful foreign policy initiative. And the outcome was enormously appreciated in New Zealand, as Geoff Miller as a former High Commissioner to New Zealand would know better than me.

Some similar issues arose in policy towards Europe in the late 1970s. Peacock and others were poorly-informed about what Prime Minister Fraser's concerns were. Fraser was very concerned about the development of Europe's agriculture policy. He was not seeking to reverse or undermine Britain's entry into the European Economic Community, which was negotiated in 1971 and took place in 1973. But by 1976-77, the Common Agriculture Policy was having a very deleterious impact on many of Australia's exports: on beef, wheat, dairy and the sugar industries. And Andrew Peacock or his staff didn't seem to appreciate fully the strength of feelings within those industries. Fraser was perceived by the Department of Foreign Affairs as responding in a publicly aggressive way. But Fraser really wanted to make progress with the European



Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Agreement – Signing of the Heads of Agreement of the CER, 14 December 1982.



Andrew Peacock, Malcolm Fraser and Richard Woolcott, 1976. (Courtesy of Richard Woolcott/DFAT: HIS-1531).

Economic Community; he wanted to secure a multilateral trade negotiation with Europe and he did not want to be fobbed off, as he had been in an earlier meeting in Brussels.

My impression is that Andrew Peacock felt he should be dominating policy and how it was expressed publicly. He was not well-advised. Fraser, the powerful National Party ministers and Howard all disagreed with Peacock. Fraser felt very strongly and John Howard understood that well: he was leading at Fraser's request a new, special, small and interim Ministry of Special Trade Representations working for Jim Scully but direct to Howard. I was in charge of that newly-created department.

John Howard made it his business to understand the policy issues extremely well, and to master the complex issues of detail; this impressed Fraser and proved to be enormously beneficial to Howard's subsequent career. He was much junior in politics to Peacock, having only come into the Parliament in 1974, some years after Peacock. When Phillip Lynch as Treasurer got into apparent difficulty with land issues – it was a temporary phenomenon and Lynch was subsequently cleared – the role of Treasurer had to be filled quickly late in 1977. At the time it seemed extraordinary that Howard, who had only been in the Parliament three years, was made Treasurer. He was 38 at the time, a very young age to be made Federal Treasurer. Andrew had seniority on him, but it was a no-brainer from the perspective of the Prime Minister. Howard had done a fine job in dealing with the European Economic Community: he had understood and mastered the issues extremely well and had quickly acquired a feeling for global economic issues while Peacock did not seem up-to-date with the feelings in domestic constituencies.

Howard's work, and the subsequent work by Ian Sinclair and Victor Garland, led ultimately to some modest progress with the Europeans.

So in assessing the foreign policy history of the last few years of the Fraser Government it is important to add more than a footnote about Closer Economic Relations with New Zealand, and more than a footnote about the European Economic Community.

Geoff Miller:

I had a year on secondment to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in that period and went on a couple of trips with Fraser. There's no doubt that those issues of market access and agricultural trade were absolutely in the forefront of his mind, and he spoke about them a lot and for a long time to all kinds of audiences.

Allan Gyngell:

I wanted to say two things about diplomacy under Whitlam and Fraser, which I don't think have come through sufficiently yet, and one broader thing about foreign policy.

On the first thing about diplomacy, I think it is very hard now not to underestimate the enormous effect of the arrival of the social changes of the 1960s on Australian diplomacy. When Whitlam arrived, as a very junior diplomat, it was completely liberating. Two years before, I'd been on my first posting in Rangoon doing immigration work and making recommendations back to Australia about the immigration requests of people of mixed descent, according to similar ability criteria, which were basically the colour of their skin. I found it personally shameful, and the shift which both

Whitlam and Fraser brought on race was enormously important. So was the social shift on women. There was one woman in my entire intake into Foreign Affairs who left very shortly after she arrived. My first personnel assessment report on my posting in Rangoon marked me down seriously because my wife had declined to attend the British Ambassador's wife's monsoon sewing circle, a judgement in which I supported her entirely. But two years later, that would have seemed as astonishing as it does now. So there was a liberating impact on the people who were actually working in the area: you could walk tall; you thought there was an independent Australian view of the world which you were there to prosecute. So, for all the frailties of Whitlam, which we've heard about today – and which are true – that was enormously important.

The second thing is that there was a shift in Australian diplomacy during this period to diplomacy with Asia, as well as diplomacy in Asia. Regionalism began to take off. It wasn't simply Whitlam's ideas about regional organisations, and so on; at a lower level we were doing things to achieve common ends with regional countries, which hadn't been the case before. I was working in the ASEAN area and Australia was the first external dialogue partner with ASEAN. We began to work on a series of common interests in the region that included, of course, the refugee crisis as that went on. We had instructions that Australian missions were to meet regularly with their Japanese colleagues; so, every month, we would set up a meeting with our Japanese colleagues to have a discussion about what was going on in whatever country we were accredited to. That was entirely new. I don't think it has come out either that Prime Minister Fukuda's invitation in 1979 to Fraser to participate in the G7 meeting in Tokyo as the guest of the Japanese fell apart, because the US and the rest of the G7 were unimpressed by it. But anyway, there was

a general shift during this period to diplomacy with, rather than diplomacy in, Asia.

The final point, which is a broader foreign policy point, I make partly because there are three former Directors-General of the Office of National Assessments at the table. Peter Edwards made the point at the beginning of the day about the significance of the work that both Whitlam and Fraser did with Justice Hope in reforming the intelligence community. And James Curran noted Fraser's comments about the need for a continuation of Whitlam's demands for Australia to be able to independently assess its own interests. The capability to do that hadn't existed before. Now it began to exist. Fraser didn't like the independent assessments very much at the beginning, or at least until he appointed Michael Cook to the job. But there was a structural change during that period in the way Australia developed its capacity to think about itself in the world.

Mack Williams:

Allan, your book talked about the change in fashion and process of policy-making. So often you look back and think, "How did we do all this?". It's really hard to understand that those days are well and truly buried where you've got that scope for independent policy making. We used to have policy planning papers, which we did in the department – deliberately always in draft, because you never want to get to a final version – but they all vanished: the chance to have people on the side who sat there and thought about things.

I think if Gough walked back in the door now, one thing I suspect he'd be disappointed with is that we haven't talked about "White Australia." When I was in Manila, he would talk frequently on the phone about things, he would always say,

“Comrade, don't forget to remind them that in 1975, I buried White Australia.” I think he felt very strongly about it. Now, there's been lots of discussion about whether he was the one that did or didn't, and who else might have done it, but he felt strongly about that. So I think in this testimony, he would think it ought to be there.

The other issue I am going to pick up is Papua New Guinea. It was always difficult to understand how Australian politicians understood it, because each of them in their own way had some experience in PNG, and most of them thought that they had good mates in Port Moresby, that they were *wantoks*.² As I said earlier, Andrew Peacock was streets ahead in terms of Papua New Guineans. Gough thought he understood it. Malcolm Fraser certainly didn't. When he came to Port Moresby, he was uncomfortable and he was rude. All the things that you'd expect: you'd see him sitting at a Pacific Forum Meeting around a great square of straw, everyone cross-legged except him. Having these Pacific discussions, where there are these pregnant pauses that go on for minutes, and Malcolm fulminating, "What do I have to say? What am I going to say?" Consensus will emerge over the afternoon, and Malcolm was not there.

I'd also like to mention another name that hasn't come up enough, and I think he was probably more instrumental in managing Malcolm's policies than anyone we've talked about, namely Allan Griffith, Special Adviser in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. He was the guy who really ran Malcolm's show; he was always at the side putting papers in. He played an enormous role as a special adviser and was always there. So on the Torres Strait, he was sent off to settle

² “Wantok” is Melanesian Pidgin for someone from the same tribe or family. Loosely used as ‘close friend’.

Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen down. He was an enormously interesting guy.

Garry Woodard:

A lot of what I say is anecdotal, but you'll see that it does link up with so many things that have already been said. I did try to describe Gough's foreign policy in 800 words in an article in *The Age*. Of course I got the immediate telephone call: "I will circulate the article, just for the magnificent Spooner cartoon." On another occasion, I remember Gough rang on Boxing Day and we had 90 minutes of conversation with Margaret twittering in the background. That started unusually, as my four-year-old grandson answered the phone and they had an animated conversation. When I got to it, Gough says, "Who was that interesting young man?" I explained, and I said that he said, "Who is Mr. Whitlam?" "Oh!", said Gough, "He didn't, comrade, did he?"

Allan Gyngell has touched on the times. It was a wonderful new age of Australia in the arts and media, in open government, in the promise of Freedom of Information Act in the opening up of dialogue with academics – particularly with the ANU and with John Crawford and Peter Drysdale, two of our most important and influential contacts – and in the experimentation in government. It was unruly in many ways, but Gough was a brake on the destruction of the Westminster system, though it was put under some strain. It had to wait for Hawke and Howard to destroy the Westminster system, which I think is going to prove one of the most important things in Australia's slow movement downhill.

It was what got me back into foreign policy. My boss, Robert Furlonger, who regrets he is not here today because of health matters, told me that he'd called on Gough before he went to

Jakarta in February 1972 and Gough was impressive in his intentions in foreign policy, his knowledge of Indonesia and his intention to restore the glory days of the 1940s and that sort of thing.

This is after the seven years of humiliation with “All the way with LBJ”³, and LBJ saying, “When I heard Harold say that, I winced.” And Prime Minister John Gorton being asked what was the general SEATO⁴ policy and he said, “Who is this General SEATO?”. And Prime Minister Billy McMahon coming back from Washington and blowing the top secret US plans to invade Cambodia (but fortunately in Brisbane, so hardly anyone picked it up). I remember on another occasion, Ambassador to the United States Sir Keith Waller went to see Secretary Rusk, and said that, “The government's position on this is this.” And Rusk goes, “The government's response? Do you mean McMahon knows something that only five people in Washington know?”. Well, after all that humiliation, which one was very conscious of in Washington in those days, it was wonderful to have somebody who presented Australia in a different light, and a light we were all waiting for.

I'd been across the lake at that stage, and I was determined to get back into Foreign Affairs to serve Whitlam and the Whitlam foreign policy, as it was articulated, and I was able to negotiate that. I was immediately sent to the second least important post in Asia, but at least it was in Asia. But diplomacy is 99% luck, so I had the good fortune within six months to have a visit from the magnificent Whitlam and to bring the Burmese dictator, General Ne Win, back to Australia.

³ A slogan used by former Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt to support US President Lyndon B Johnson, known as LBJ.

⁴ South East Asia Treaty Organisation.

I could talk at some length about the Whitlam visit to Burma; suffice it to say that the two men had very substantive discussions. Ne Win was no fool; he'd been around for a long time and he had dealt with China for a very long time, and he was generally interested in Gough's ideas, seeing Southeast Asia changing with the defeat in Vietnam looming. They had a general rapport. Ne Win's last words to me as I left Rangoon were, "Tell Mr Whitlam to beware of the CIA."

On the visit back to Australia I recall just one occasion, the dinner at the Lodge. Before Ne Win arrived, and with Lance Bernard not there, there was much discussion led by Jim Cairns and Lionel Murphy about what was going to be done with Lance, who'd finished his 20 years in Parliament and was no longer Deputy Leader and Deputy Prime Minister. It was decided that he loved overseas travel and that an overseas post as far away from Australia as possible was his fate; so, he went to Stockholm. Now that decision was a disaster as the loss of Barnard was disastrous for the Whitlam Government. And the conspirators on that night had no idea of what was going on in Washington at just that time.

After Rangoon, I found myself in almost immediate contact with Gough because we were given the task of evacuating the embassies in Saigon and Phnom Penh. Gough was determined that the RAAF would do this, not the Brits nor the Americans, as in the past. We also had the problem of a baby-lift. Mack Williams and Ric Smith were absolutely great: they worked 90-something hours at a stretch at one stage to get those things achieved. Ric has told the story of that in his oral history, which I recommend. When Gough went down to see the babies at the Reception Centre in Sydney, he rang me from there and he said, "Comrade, I'm going to hold you responsible if I'm arraigned before an International Tribunal,

because one of these babies is 17 years old.”

I then took over the Division, which brought me in close contact with Gough again, because it involved Japan and China, the two Koreas and Indochina: primarily Vietnam, but Cambodia was important too because we persuaded Gough not to open up contact with Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, as so many other countries were doing, until we saw just how that regime was going to work out. That was a big blow to our Embassy in Beijing, but it turned out to be quite a wise decision. I had exchanges with Gough and I saw him around the national days and at other social occasions. I recall on October the 1st, he said to me, “Comrade, they’re only going to get a half-Senate election, not more, comrade.” And then he said, “And who is that chap Malcolm Fraser? I hardly know him.”

Well, that was Gough. Did he have his feet firmly on the ground? In some ways, maybe not; but in other ways, he was a master of detail. I had some experience with him right up until almost the second last day and he had enormous grasp of details. His mind was so much greater than any we had ever encountered. We compared notes on it and remembered back to what people said about dealing with Dr Herbert ‘Doc’ Evatt, but he of course knew much less about international affairs, and never had the responsibilities of prime minister. When the Dismissal took place, Peacock told me that he had talked to Don Willesee and Don had said, “I’m not going to offer you any advice, Andrew; you know more than I do.”

I didn’t have a great deal to do with Don, but he was the most lovable man. I did sit with him one afternoon for a couple of hours while he debated resigning, listing all the things from the appointment of DLP leader Senator Vince Gair as Ambassador to Ireland while he was overseas in the South

Pacific, down to the decision on Bill Robertson and on voting in the General Assembly on North Korea. Well, he decided not to resign. He was just a terrific chap. And he said to me, "You know, Garry, being a politician is awful. You can't walk into a pub and have a quiet beer anymore." So, we were lucky with him; we were lucky with Andrew Peacock; and we were lucky with Tony Street. I don't think there's ever been a period in Australian history when we had three lovable foreign ministers in a row.

I found Andrew Peacock extremely good: he was quick and he was decisive. He decided on bi-partisanship on all the controversial issues that were on the agenda, including Vietnam, continuing with aid program, not giving up on North Korea and one or two others. Mind you, within a short period of time it became apparent that Malcolm Fraser had some different views on some of these issues. On Japan, Fraser was the dominant factor. We spent many hours one night with Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, the legal advisor, briefing Andrew for Cabinet on what he would say about the Japanese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. He made the presentation the next day. Immediately all the litany of people who have been mentioned today from the Country Party and so on expressed disagreement, and Treasury were also saying, "No treaty." Malcolm said, "We're going to have the treaty." That was the end of it.

On China, it was hard to tell exactly what the government's policy was. Peacock had a private meeting with a few people, but we didn't know what it meant. At the end, he just said, "You've got to be as proactive as possible in preparation for the visit to China." We didn't know what Malcolm meant and we were totally ignorant of what was going on and the preparation of the State of the World message, in which the explanation of an anti-Soviet alliance or grouping was

integral. We were flying blind on our way to China not even knowing quite what Malcolm wanted. A lot of discussion on the way up was whether Malcolm would use the word “hegemony”, which was the code word for imperialism in China. And he was in two minds about it, and Allan Renouf said, “Just say Russians will be Russians.” And that’s what he did say when he was there. The Russians totally overreacted: they boycotted the airport reception and they walked out of the banquet. They got it all wrong. But the relationship with China and Japan were, and have remained ever since, the primary prerogative of prime ministers.

I just want to say that the age of Whitlam and Fraser was the age of independence and confidence in Australian foreign policy. In some respects, they got it wrong, but an Australian voice spoke in the world over those 10 years, and it was the essential factor in the relationship between Australia and China. The Chinese came to understand that we were capable of having independent views; they respected them and we had free full exchanges of views, as Jocelyn Chey has mentioned. I think those days have gone. The Chinese now regard Australian as a lackey of the Americans. I hope this position can be reversed; if it cannot, I fear for the future of Australia.

Richard Woolcott:

There were many issues in which I've been directly involved which we've been discussing. On East Timor, because of my continuous involvement being in Jakarta from 1975-78, it wasn't the easiest time, as you could imagine. But things were, I think, rather better than you would probably realise. I don't think people would know, for example, that Ramos Horta tried to get the message across to the Indonesians that they wanted Megawati, who was then the President, to attend the independence ceremonies. That was done; it actually

happened.

When Ali Alatas was Foreign Minister, and General Widodo and other members of the Cabinet wanted Xanana Gusmão to be shot while escaping, it was Alatas who stopped that. Well after I'd left the post, I had lunch with Ali Alatas and Xanana Gusmão, and he was really extraordinarily grateful to Alatas; he was aware that he had arranged for Kirsty Sword, whom Xanana married, to visit him in prison.

I'd like to say a little bit about the US. I had the good fortune in my career to visit the US with two Coalition Prime Ministers and two Labor Prime Ministers. Whitlam was quite correct on Vietnam, and the Americans knew they had gone wrong and they didn't like it. I mean it's a huge country with a very large number of highly-educated people. I've always thought that if you're in an alliance with the United States, if you're a good ally, it's better to tell them when you don't agree. I think that was one of the things Gough had always in mind, the complexity of pursuing an essentially independent Australian foreign policy within the context of an alliance. Gough grappled with that and discussed it many times. In the end I think he was right on Vietnam, and the Americans were wrong, and I think that's the general view now.

I was also interested in a lot of what was said about China, and Jim Ingram's comments that things had been going on even earlier than I had known. I think we're in a way worse off now than we were then, because Malcolm Turnbull is following pretty much what seemed to me to be the Tony Abbott policy. And Bill Shorten is terribly afraid to distance himself from that, because he's frightened he'll be accused of being soft on terrorism. So, I think we are substantially worse off than we were in our day. I'm sure when I was in the department, from the 1970s through to 1975 when I went to

Indonesia, we had, I think, rather more influence than on policy making than we have now. The reason for that, I think, is that ministerial and prime ministerial offices have got larger and larger, and to some extent that's reduced the role of professional foreign affairs officers.

I'd like to say a little bit about postings, because several people have mentioned that. If you look back over this particular decade we're dealing with, 1972-83, there were some bad postings made, particularly by Whitlam. I think the appointment of Senator Gair to Ireland was a shocking mistake. I travelled with Gough on that much-criticised trip to 14 countries in five weeks, and Gair was there. I'd gone to a dinner the night before and sat next to the Foreign Minister of Ireland. He leaned forward and said very softly, "Can I talk to you frankly about a problem we have?". I said, "Yes, of course." And the problem was the behaviour of Senator Gair. We had a press conference that night, and Gair was there. Gough had closed the conference and journalist Laurie Oakes rose and said could he ask one last question and Whitlam foolishly said yes. Oakes' question was, "Senator Gair, Billy Snedden has said that the first thing he will do when the government is changed and he's elected, is to dismiss Senator Gair as Ambassador to Ireland." Gair leapt to his feet and shouted out, because he'd had quite a lot to drink, "Snedden once told me that he was a boxer. I'll tell you, he couldn't go two rounds with a revolving door!" The journalists left, and all of Gough's good comments about relations with Ireland were swamped by this. That can happen very easily with the media.

It was very exciting to be in Canberra as a public servant in December 1972 because, as many people have said, it was a tremendous change, and a draft of fresh air. It really was an exciting time to be there.

On Papua New Guinea, I feel I ought to follow up with a small tale about that. I was near Goroka with Gough on an early visit. There was a big “sing-sing” going on with a lot of Papua New Guineans. There was a small man standing beside me from Goroka. He had very little on, except a hat and a pair of St George football socks. He was looking at Gough, who was twice his height, and pointing at him. I thought, he obviously wants to say something. I didn’t speak Pidgin, but I tried to, and I said to this guy, “Oh, him the world number one big Australian”. Then somebody who spoke the language said to me, “Do you realise you’ve just referred to the Prime Minister as the biggest prick in the country?”. Gough heard that and then turned around and said, “Thank you, comrade. A lot of my abilities are not widely known.”

I think it's been a very useful general discussion. There are all sorts of issues I'd like to go into in a little more depth, but one can only do that in writing if one wants to, and I'll do that.

When Gough travelled, he was immersed in travel, as everybody has said. I remember while sitting in the Netherlands Prime Minister’s house or office with Gough, waiting to be seen. Gough was reading the *London Times*, and there was a report there that three countries had been admitted to the United Nations. Gough said, “Have you seen this, comrade?”. And I said, “No.” And he said, “They're creating these countries faster than I can visit them.”

He was a great traveller and he knew a great deal about places. When he went to Manila, he was taken around one of the Catholic cathedrals by a man with the wonderful name of Cardinal Sin, and Gough pointed out what he said was an error in one of the captions. They checked, and Gough was correct. He did have an enormous cultural knowledge;

hopeless on the economy, of course, and that was really the beginning of his downfall, that he didn't give the attention he probably should have given to the economy and he had a Cabinet who weren't particularly helpful in that field either. In the end, he might have served as Prime Minister for longer and the country would have benefited.

Mack Williams:

The classic example we had of Gough the visitor was when we received a message that he was going to the United States, and he was due in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and Nashville. I thought, "Nashville? Why the hell is he going to Nashville? Is he going to go to the Grand Ole Opry?".⁵ So, we sent a message, very carefully back up the line saying "Did you mean Nashville?". Back came a message: "Nashville, he wants to see the Parthenon." So I rang the US Embassy here, and they had no idea of the Parthenon in Nashville. I rang Washington and they said, "No way". So again, a little bit of paper went up the line again saying, "Nashville, Parthenon?". Back came the message, "Read your Encyclopaedia Britannica, as the Whitlam family did every night at dinner". There's the only life-size replica of the Parthenon in the fairgrounds in Nashville.

Ric Smith:

When he visited there, Gough told them that the number of steps in the replica were wrong by one.

Richard Woolcott:

⁵ The Grand Ole Opry is a long-running Country & Western show in Nashville, Tennessee.

Not only that, I went with Gough to the actual Parthenon and he paced it out and he said it was five feet short!

Just a reference to Allan Griffith: during the protracted and painful Torres Strait Treaty negotiations, I had the privilege of interviewing Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen. He told me he'd severed diplomatic relations with the foreign minister: "I told Malcolm I don't want Andrew in Brisbane anymore. I'll talk to Allan, but Andrew is not to come up here. I'm not going to talk to him."

Richard Woolcott:

Could I make one comment about Tony Street, because I think this will interest you all. After the Hawke Government came into power, Gareth Evans came over and walked around the Department of Foreign Affairs. He saw in Bill Farmer's office a big placard saying, "Bring back Tony Street." Gareth said, "What is that about?". Farmer told him the truth; he said, "Gareth, Tony Street never rejected a departmental submission."

Professor Peter Edwards:

So, to end this session as it began, could I conclude with a Gough story. I'd interviewed him for the official history, and I was in the process of interviewing him for the biography of Arthur Tange. He'd liked the first volume of the official history,⁶ which made him sound prescient. He did not like the

⁶ Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises & Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1965* (Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1992).

later volume⁷ because I had commented on his attitude to South Vietnamese refugees. And we were having a discussion about aspects of his relations with Tange. One day, when I came back to my office, the light was flashing on my phone to show there was a voicemail. I picked it up and listened. No introduction, no ending. The entire message was this: “The trouble with you, Peter, is you take the departmental view.”

⁷ Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1975* (Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1997).



Forum Program

**Australian Institute of International Affairs
Forum on Ministers for Foreign Affairs, 1972-1983**
Stephen House, 32 Thesiger Court, Deakin, Canberra
Thursday 19 May 2016

Arrival **8.30-9.00**

Welcome to the Forum **9.00-9.15**

Zara Kimpton OAM, National Vice-President, Australian
Institute of International Affairs

Session 1: Australian Foreign Policy 1972-83: an Overview
9.15-10.30

Professor Peter Edwards AM FAIIA, Deakin University

Dr David Lee, Director, Historical Publications and Research
Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Moderator: Emeritus Professor Peter Boyce AO Tasmania
Branch President and University of Tasmania

Morning Tea **10.30-11.00**

**Session 2: Australia's Relations with China and Japan
1972-83 11.00-12.15**

Professor Jocelyn Chey AM FAIIA, Department of Chinese Studies, University of Sydney and Council Member, AIIA NSW

Trevor Wilson, former diplomat with postings to Tokyo (1968-71, 1979-83 and Deputy Head of Mission 1996-2000) and Visiting Fellow, Department of Political and Social Change, ANU

Moderator: Professor Richard Rigby, former Assistant Director-General at the Office of National Assessments, former Ambassador to Israel and Founding Executive Director, ANU China Institute

Lunch 12.15-1.00

**Session 3: Australia's Relations with the US and Indonesia
1972-83 1.00-2.15**

Professor James Curran, Department of History, University of Sydney

Emeritus Professor James Cotton FAIIA, Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales

Moderator: Miles Kupa, AIIA ACT Vice-President, former ambassador and former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Afternoon Tea 2.15-2.45

Session 4: Australia and the Third World **1972-83**
2.45-3.15

Professor Derek McDougall, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne (presented by Jaidan Stevens)

Di Johnstone, former diplomat with postings to South Africa (1974-76), Kenya (1980-82) and as Rhodesia desk officer, (presented by Melissa Conley Tyler)

Moderator: Melissa Conley Tyler, National Executive Director, Australian Institute of International Affairs

Session 5: Panel Discussion: Diplomacy in the Whitlam/Fraser Era **3.15-4.45**

The Hon. Tony Street, former Minister for Foreign Affairs (written reflections, presented by Geoffrey Miller)

Dr Sue Boyd, former ambassador and Immediate Past President of AIIA for WA

Philip Flood AO FAIIA, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Allan Gyngell AO FAIIA, Visiting Fellow at the ANU National Security College and former Director-General of the Office of National Assessments

Mack Williams, former ambassador and Past President of AIIA NSW

Garry Woodard FAIIA, former ambassador and former National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs

Richard Woolcott AC FAIIA, former ambassador and former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Moderator: Geoffrey Miller AO FAIIA, former senior Australian diplomat and former National Vice-President, Australian Institute of International Affairs

Closing Remarks

4.45-5.00

Professor Shirley Scott, AIIA Research Chair and School of Social Sciences, University of NSW

John Robbins CSC, Project Officer, Australian Institute of International Affairs

Participants

- Christopher Adam, Department of Defence
- Linda Ambrosiussen, AIIA ACT Branch Member
- Professor Joan Beaumont FAIIA, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University
- Professor Bob Bowker, Adjunct Professor at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University
- Richard Broinowski, former ambassador and AIIA NSW President
- Dr Alison Broinowski, former diplomat
- Ross Cottrill, former diplomat and past National Executive Director of the AIIA
- Emeritus Professor Peter Drysdale AO FAIIA, *Head of the East Asian Bureau of Economic Research at the Australian National University.*
- Ian Dudgeon RFD, AIIA Presidential Associate, former AIIA ACT Branch President
- Brian Ely, AIIA ACT Branch Council Member
- Mike Fogarty, Australian Defence Force Academy
- Dr Meg Gurry, Fellow of the Australia India Institute
- Peter Hamburger, AIIA ACT Branch
- Cam Hawker, AIIA Presidential Associate and former AIIA ACT Branch President
- Jeremy Hearder, Consultant, Historical Publications and Information Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Iain Henry, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, PHD Candidate
- Bruce Hunt, former diplomat
- James Ingram AO FAIIA, former diplomat and former Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme

- Dr Marie Kawaja, School of History, Australian National University
- Dr Ann Kent, Visiting Fellow, ANU College of Law
- Peter Londey, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences
- Geoff Marginson, former Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Officer
- Colin Milner, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and AIIA ACT Branch
- Denis O’Dea, NSW Department of Finance, Services and Innovation
- Dayle Redden, former Officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and former AIIA National Treasurer
- Richard C. Smith AO PSM FAIIA, former Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China, Republic of Indonesia, former Secretary of the Department of Defence, Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Dr June Verrier, AIIA ACT Branch, former Head of the Australian Parliament’s Information and Research Service of the Department of the Parliamentary Library

Organising Team

Jaidan Stevens
Leyang Wang
Tarisa Yasin
Edward Boettcher

List of Ministers 1972-1983

Australian Ministers for Foreign Affairs:

5 December 1972—6 November 1973: Gough Whitlam

6 November 1973—11 November 1975: Don Willesee

12 November 1975—3 November 1980: Andrew Peacock

3 November 1980—11 March 1983: Tony Street

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