
Isotopes and Identity: Australia and the Nuclear Weapons Option, 1949-1999

JACQUES E.C. HYMANS¹

Jacques E.C. Hymans is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Government at Harvard University. In his dissertation, he is analyzing the nuclear policies of a diverse set of middle powers from around the globe. He has presented his work at academic fora in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

One of the most impressive historical transformations in state nuclear weapons policies has been Australia's switch from active supporter of the development and spread of the bomb in the 1950s and 1960s, to world leader in the effort to rein it in from the 1970s to the present day. There is a wide gap, to say the least, between 1950s-era Australia's hospitable welcome to British nuclear tests on its mainland, and its later angry condemnations of French tests thousands of miles from its shores. Moreover, from today's vantage point it seems almost inconceivable that successive Australian governments in the 1960s even toyed with the notion of a sovereign Australian nuclear deterrent, yet in fact the question was a serious one in both domestic politics and state calculations.

In spite of this rich history and Australia's long-standing significance as a military player in the Asia-Pacific region, the Australian case remains largely unknown—and almost totally *untheorized*.² In this article, I provide a new theoretical grounding for understanding Australian nuclear history, together with significant enhancements to the historical record. The goal is not simply to seek a better understanding of the Australian case, but also to use this case to shed light on the general question of what explains states' policies toward nuclear weapons.

As Jim Walsh underscored in his pathbreaking 1997 article on Australia in *The Nonproliferation Review*, if analysts in academic and policy circles have long overlooked the Australian case it is because of their overreliance on a model that assumes states make rational responses to objective threats.³ But from such a perspective, it is hard to see why Australia, a country blessed with a supremely "lucky" geographical position, was so eager to participate in Western nuclear defenses—thereby raising its significance as a Chinese or Soviet nuclear target. More puzzling still from the perspective of "objective threat" is that there was long a strong lobby in Australia for *sovereign* control over nuclear weapons. However, if one contends that Australia's 1950s- and 1960s-era nuclear policies somehow did constitute a rational response to its security dilemmas, then the country's definitive abandonment of its nuclear option in the ambiguous security environment of the early 1970s is hard to understand.

In short, traditional security-materialist variables clearly do not suffice to explain the Australian case. But it is important not to throw out the baby with the bath water. While Australia's objective strategic situation has been quite stable, Australians' *perceptions* of their strategic needs and capabilities have varied widely over time. The main argument of this article is that the changing

security perceptions of the top leadership best explain the policy variation in the Australian case.

From where have these Australian security perceptions come? Australian security policies have had some basis in objective reality, of course, but the *national identities* of various Australian statesmen have also been crucial in shaping their perceptions of Australia's security needs and capabilities. These identities have created a perceptual screen through which external reality has been filtered. The significance of the security-identity nexus in the Australian case, moreover, is hardly a *sui generis* phenomenon; rather, therein lies the key to a fuller understanding of the general question of states and nuclear weapons.

The article is divided into two main sections. I begin with a brief overview of my theoretical approach to the question of proliferation. I then provide an in-depth look at the historical evidence, relying not only on others' careful historical research but also on archival and other primary sources I collected in Australia, Europe, and the United States. Significantly, my historical narrative gives full attention to the entire span of Australian nuclear history, not just to the period in which it maintained and even to some extent pursued the nuclear option. It is impossible to explain the post-1972 transformation in Australia's nuclear policies if one essentially stops the historical narrative before 1972.⁴ Finally, I offer some general suggestions for theory and policy that are underscored by the case of Australia.

GENERAL THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Why and when do states decide to "go nuclear"? This question is very difficult, and space considerations do not permit a complete analysis here. However, in order to expose fully the theoretical significance of the Australian case, it is necessary to summarize certain aspects of my general hypotheses on this and related matters.

Most theories of nuclear proliferation assume that nuclear weapons are so highly valuable that technically capable states will be willing to pay almost any price to get them.⁵ But in fact nuclear weapons are *not* generally useful instruments of foreign and security policy.⁶ Nuclear weapons are essentially only useful to deter a nuclear or other equally total attack. If few states have desired nuclear weapons, it is because few have faced, or have considered themselves to be facing, a clear and present nuclear (or other existential) threat. Moreover,

they have understood that to "go nuclear" could dramatically *decrease* their security by making them targets for nuclear attack. I would thus argue that in the absence of an extraordinary sense of threat, a sense that one's very existence is at stake, states do not seek to acquire sovereign control of nuclear weapons.

Occasionally, albeit rarely, a state's perception of existential threat is justified. More often, it is a misperception. I hypothesize that such longstanding misperceptions of existential threat usually arise from a certain type of national identity (i.e., an understanding of the nature and purpose of the national group that is held by some or all group members).⁷ The national identity that tends to lead to such misperceptions of existential threat can be termed a national identity of "opposition," a great fear and loathing of a competitor nation or group.⁸ I use the term "opposition" for two reasons. First, the "oppositional" identity presents "us" and "them" as polar opposites, which makes one's self-image and self-esteem inextricable from one's image and opinion of "them." Second, it presents recent and often ancient history as a litany of political opposition and even military conflict between the two, implying that to deviate from that history would be an act of disloyalty to the nation. Note that although national identities are always complex and multifaceted, when I use the term "national identity" here I am referring above all to those facets with relevance to international politics.

A perception of existential threat is in my hypothesis necessary but not sufficient to lead a state to attempt to "go nuclear." Certain states with "oppositional" mentalities may feel entirely *powerless* to do anything on their own to counter the great danger they perceive. In such circumstances, the most likely action is "flight"—an attempt to escape the threat by slipping under the "nuclear umbrella" of a great power. Oppositional states with low perceptions of self-efficacy are likely to be perpetually unsatisfied by the credibility of the guarantee, and they are likely therefore to try all sorts of stratagems to promote its greater credibility.⁹ But given their low perception of their own capacities, this "second-best" solution is the best they feel they can hope for.

Add "nationalism"—by which I mean not just love of country, but an exaltation of the nation's "innate" worth, significance, and capacities—to "opposition," and one gets a potent psychological cocktail.¹⁰ State leaders who hold a mentality of "oppositional nationalism" are, I

hypothesize, very likely to want to “go nuclear.” On one level, the link between “oppositional nationalism” and a nuclear bomb decision is quite direct. Assuming that the real situation does *not* entirely merit “going nuclear,” leaders under the influence of “oppositional nationalism” will believe in any case that it *does* merit that response: they perceive an existential threat and also that they are capable of deterring it with a show of force. On a deeper level, however, the “oppositional nationalist” does more than merely misperceive the security situation. The basic emotional state of fear plus pride leads “oppositional nationalists,” like ethnic groups in conflict, to seek symbols of power whose practical utility may be doubtful, but which temporarily assuage the dread of imminent annihilation.¹¹ For leaders of one national group wracked by fear of another, a nuclear bomb can appear to be the ultimate power totem.

“Oppositional nationalism” is not a mere synonym for “nationalism.” A nation can be proud, self-assertive, and desire to stand tall in the world even in the absence of a hated and feared enemy; this is what I call “positive” or “non-oppositional” nationalism.¹² “Non-oppositional nationalists,” I hypothesize, should be against “going nuclear” for the hard security reasons listed above; but they may well pursue advanced nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, and they may seek a high profile in nuclear diplomacy (often as “holier-than-thou” promoters of nuclear disarmament).

The Australian case is a microcosm of all these general points. Efforts to define Australian identity in international politics have had to come to terms with Australia’s geographical anomaly as a “European,” traditionally British culture living in an “Asian” sea. But within those broad parameters, much debate has been possible. I argue that by charting the rise and fall in the political fortunes of certain competing Australian national identities, we can explain the different nuclear policies Australia adopted at different junctures. All of these identities had some basis in the objective situation, and none of these identities had a monopoly on the truth. The point in emphasizing these conflicting identities is not that one was wrong and one was right, but rather that they produced different *interpretations* of reality. Those different interpretations had radically different effects on Australian policies toward nuclear weapons. Note that the identities as defined here are “ideal-types”—the “real world” was far more complicated—but these ideal-types are useful heuristically and

should be recognizable to anyone familiar with the historical literature on Australia.¹³

The traditionally dominant Australian national identity that applied to foreign policy in the postwar era was a combination of a deep fear of the designs of Asian Communists, and a sense that Australia would be powerless against this threat if left to its own devices.¹⁴ In my theoretical terms, this identity can be summarized as “opposition without nationalism.” As I will attempt to show in my historical narrative, Australian “opposition without nationalism” led to a desire for ever-greater nuclear guarantees from Australia’s “great and powerful friends,” but not for sovereign Australian control of nuclear weapons.

Australia’s traditionally dominant identity had always faced some competition from a more minor identity strand that approximated “oppositional nationalism.”¹⁵ Australian “oppositional nationalists” shared the dominant identity’s fear of the Asian Communists, but they argued that Australia could and should rely more on itself to fend off the threat. Their strong belief in Australia as a power to be reckoned with may not have reached the delirious heights of, say, Sukarno’s Indonesia, but in the Australian context their stance was strikingly original. In the late 1960s, as a result of the Vietnam catastrophe, the “oppositional nationalists” made their biggest push for primacy—and for the bomb.

But before either of the two “oppositional” identities could emerge victorious, in the early 1970s a national identity of “non-oppositional nationalism” swept the others aside.¹⁶ Born of the wrenching Vietnam experience, this identity shared a strong sense of Australia’s potential strength and independence with the “oppositional nationalists,” but it lacked the latter’s fear of Chinese and Asian Communism. The rise of this new identity led quickly and decisively to the collapse of the sovereign nuclear arms effort and to a much more independent Australian stance in nuclear diplomacy, a stance that has continued to this day.¹⁷

The following, historical portion of the paper is a chronological account and analysis of most of the major Australian decisions (and non-decisions) on nuclear weapons from the early 1950s to the present day. I claim that a careful analysis of these key decisions serves to underscore the explanatory significance of the national identity ideal-types summarized above. It goes without saying that I have emphasized certain decisions over

others in my analysis. I have in particular explored the period of the 1980s and the 1990s in somewhat less detail than the earlier periods. The main reason for this is that the overall shape of the policies of the 1980s and 1990s conforms quite closely to the new policy direction that was charted in the crucial turning-point period of 1972 to 1975.

AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR HISTORY, I: A VERY BRITISH BOMB

The Decision to Host the British Atomic Tests

The first phase in Australian nuclear history was deeply wedded to the outlook and actions of one man, Sir Robert Menzies of the Liberal Party, who as prime minister from 1949 to 1966 was the main, uncontested architect of Australian foreign policy.¹⁸ The first major nuclear decision Menzies took, almost single-handedly, was to accept in 1950 the notion of using Australian territory for British nuclear testing.¹⁹ Menzies agreed to this without consulting his Cabinet and without requesting any *quid pro quo*, not even access to technical data necessary for the Australian government to assess the effects of the tests on humans and the environment.²⁰ Although not initially consulted, Menzies' Cabinet proved willing, and in some cases eager, to host the tests. The first British atomic test was held in 1952 on the Monte Bello islands off the Western Australian coast; subsequent tests were held at Emu Field and Maralinga in South Australia. The British would conduct major nuclear weapons trials on these sites through 1957, and they continued to perform minor trials, assessment tests, and experimental programs until 1963.

Why did first Menzies and then the rest of the Australian government make this rarest of decisions by a significant non-nuclear state, to offer up its own territory to be used for someone else's nuclear explosions? According to the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia, a 1955 press statement by the Minister of Supply Howard Beale, "illustrates the Menzies Government's enthusiasm for its part in the tests as a whole." Beale stated:

The whole project is a striking example of inter-Commonwealth co-operation on the grand scale. England has the bomb and the knowhow; we have the open spaces, much technical skill and great willingness to help the Motherland. Between us, we shall help to build the defenses

of the free world, and make historic advances in harnessing the forces of nature.²¹

Menzies' government, writes the Royal Commission, chose to "embrace British interests as being synonymous with those of Australia."²²

Menzies' loyalty to the British Crown is certainly an important part of the explanation for hosting the British nuclear tests, and it shows the hollowness of the "Realist" notion that states pursue national sovereignty above all other considerations. But Australia's filial loyalty to a certain degree also reflected perceived self-interest, as is implied in Beale's reference to "building the defenses of the free world." Australian threat perceptions in the early 1950s were at a high peak. China had just "fallen" to the Communists, and Menzies' famous 1950 "call to arms" speech had put the nation (in Australian security expert Ross Babbage's words) on a "pre-mobilization footing for World War III."²³ The next battle for freedom, Menzies thought, would be fought at Australia's doorstep.²⁴ Meanwhile, Menzies' Australia felt incapable of defending itself against encroaching Communism without its "great and powerful friends," in Menzies' famous phrase. Australians also constantly wondered whether their "great and powerful friends" would abandon them. Hosting the tests was Menzies' way of binding Britain and the West fully to Australia's defense. Nuclear explosions in Australia would serve not only to warn the Communists of Australia's importance to Western defense, but also to increase that importance in the eyes of its Western allies—and most particularly Britain.²⁵ The stratagem worked; in 1952 the chief scientist in the British bomb effort, William Penney, remarked, "If the Australians are not willing to let us do further trials in Australia, I do not know where we would go."²⁶

Australian Interest in Nuclear Weapons to 1963

Fearful of growing Communist military might and inroads into Southeast Asia, Menzies clearly wanted to use the tests to bind Britain and the West to the defense of Australia. Wayne Reynolds goes further, arguing that Menzies' decision to host the tests "was motivated in large part by a strong desire to obtain nuclear weapons and their delivery systems."²⁷ Jim Walsh, focusing on a somewhat later period, makes a similar assertion, though in his view Menzies was responding to bureaucratic pressures from below. But is it in fact the case that, as Reynolds writes, "Menzies wanted the bomb"?²⁸ To say

so would be to overstate the case, or at least to leave an inexact implication. The historical record shows that the Menzies government wanted credible nuclear guarantees and was not averse to participating actively in Western nuclear defenses.²⁹ By contrast, there is no evidence of a Cabinet or prime ministerial desire for a sovereign and independent nuclear deterrent.

There were some isolated calls for an independent Australian deterrent during the late 1950s. In Desmond Ball's words, "a relatively small number of individuals within the Armed Services" promoted an Australian bomb, most notably Air Chief (later Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff) Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger.³⁰ Scherger's influence can be seen in the proposal for acquisition of tactical nuclear weapons as part of the 1959 "Strategic Basis of Defence Policy," but the proposal was rejected by the Cabinet.³¹ The two most forceful parliamentary voices in favor of such a deterrent were the Liberals (and close political allies) William Wentworth and John Gorton. Gorton was to play a crucial role in Australian nuclear history as prime minister from 1968 to 1971.³² In a speech to the Senate in 1957, the "oppositional nationalist" Gorton made clear his belief that Australia should

...secure for this country some measure of atomic or hydrogen defense. I realize that a potential attacker of this country might be deterred by the possession of hydrogen bombs by the United States of America or Great Britain, but I think that we should be trusting very much indeed to the help that those great countries could give if we put our faith solely in a deterrent held by them.³³

For a man of Menzies' temperament, Gorton's speech was at once reasonable and unreasonable. Menzies shared Gorton's fear of the weakness of Western guarantees to Australia; that is why he had tried to bind Britain to Australia by hosting the atomic tests. But he clearly could not conceive of Australia's launching itself on a nuclear weapons program. Throughout the 1950s, the Menzies government consistently rejected the notion of a sovereign nuclear weapons capacity.³⁴ Australian Atomic Energy Commission chief Philip Baxter—an "oppositional nationalist" about whom more later—got nowhere in his efforts to promote a weapons-grade plutonium stockpile, first via proposals for a power reactor and later via proposals for a research reactor. The research reactor that the Australian government ended

up purchasing from Britain in 1954 (and that "went critical" in 1958) was a true research reactor, not the plutonium factory that Baxter would have preferred.

But did Menzies perhaps desire an outright transfer of atomic weapons to Australia? If he did and in addition thought the British might agree to it, then a sovereign nuclear program for military purposes might have been considered redundant. Through the late 1950s, the evidence is clear that Menzies did not desire a transfer. The Menzies Cabinet rejected the call for tactical nuclear weapons in the proposed 1959 "Strategic Basis" report, and, as Walsh notes, in 1958 Menzies rejected a *British* offer to discuss the modalities of such a transfer.³⁵ The story for 1961 is somewhat trickier, however. At that time, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was pursuing a global nuclear test ban, and he asked Australia for its support. As Walsh documents, Menzies reacted by arming himself with a Cabinet decision authorizing him on June 13, 1961, to give that support *on condition* that Australia receive "recognition now of the United Kingdom's obligation to provide Australia, if ever necessary, with a nuclear capability."³⁶

Menzies was now asking for an explicit *quid pro quo* for support of British nuclear policy objectives. This stood in stark contrast to his earlier eagerness to host the British nuclear tests, and it shows that simple "Anglophilia" cannot explain his behavior. In this policy shift, we can see that Menzies, just as much as Gorton, was concerned about whether the nuclear guarantees of Australia's "great and powerful friends" were really airtight. However, as is plain to see from the document cited above, Menzies still did *not* agree with Gorton that Australia needed sovereign control of nuclear weapons. At this high point of Menzies' interest in the bomb, what was generally envisioned was an eventual last-minute transfer of British weapons into Australian hands in the context of a major regional or world conflict. The 1961 Menzies request, stark as it was, was still in the realm of nuclear *guarantees*, not in the realm of nuclear *proliferation*.

The Menzies government's 1961 policy shift is worth explaining, but so too is its failure *after* 1961 to *continue* to seek an agreement with the British over the modalities of nuclear weapons transfer. In his narrative of the 1958 to 1961 period, Walsh suggests that the prime minister was pushed by internal forces to make the request against his better judgment.³⁷ But the notion that bureaucratic momentum for the bomb was continuously

building up from the late 1950s does not explain why, in Walsh's words, "[f]rom September 1961 until after the Chinese nuclear test in 1964, it appears that the Australian government took no additional steps to acquire access to nuclear weapons."³⁸

In addition, if international test ban initiatives gave bureaucratic pro-bomb forces a golden opportunity to press their case, why did Australia not ask for a *quid pro quo* in return for signing the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) of 1963? I would argue that the 1963 non-approach, which Walsh does not discuss, provides a crucial third data point for understanding what was driving Australian policy toward the idea of nuclear weapons transfer. In 1961, Australia was being asked to adhere only in *principle* to a test ban treaty that actually had little hope of overcoming both Soviet and American objections. In 1963, by contrast, Australia was being asked to sign an *actual* treaty, which although it left open the possibility of underground nuclear testing, nevertheless made a nuclear testing program more costly and difficult. Certain states that wanted to retain the nuclear option, such as France and Argentina, refused to ratify the PTBT. Yet Australia, in spite of having received none of the assurances requested in 1961, asked for nothing in return for its 1963 treaty accession.³⁹ Why, then, was 1961—while falling far short of an actual decision in favor of sovereign control of nuclear weapons—the high point of Australian interest in nuclear weapons during this period?

I would argue that the best explanation for this variance over time lies in the Australian state elites' changing perceptions of the *imminence* of the Red Chinese nuclear threat. Before 1960, the Chinese nuclear threat was considered a dangerous, but middle- to long-term possibility; hence Menzies' lackadaisical approaches to the British on the subject of transfer.⁴⁰ In 1960, by contrast, the Australian chiefs of staff for the first time requested a report on Chinese nuclear weapons and missile capacity, "because of the reported growth of the military strength of China and the aggressive attitude of the Chinese government."⁴¹ The document stated that China might be capable of "quantity production" of nuclear weapons by 1965 and could conceivably conduct a test by 1961, although it likely would not meet such an ambitious schedule.

A second, much more alarming report on the subject was completed on June 6, 1961. In this report, the chiefs of staff concluded that China was likely to have a major

nuclear program *at latest* by 1965—by 1962 if aided by the USSR—and could well explode a device by the end of the year.⁴² *Only one week after the completion of the report*, on June 13, the Cabinet endorsed Menzies' recommendation to seek, in exchange for Australia's support for the test ban, firm assurances for the eventual transfer of British nuclear weapons. The link between fear of China and the 1961 Menzies approach to Macmillan therefore appears to have been quite direct.

But China did not explode a bomb at the end of 1961, and the Australians became less sure that it was about to do so. While the 1962 report on China's nuclear ambitions still sounded the alarm that the Chinese could soon become a nuclear power, for the first time the mid-1960 Sino-Soviet split was recognized and was considered to be a significant factor in slowing Chinese progress toward the bomb.⁴³ While the chiefs had backed down somewhat from their earlier stance, the prime minister's department believed that China was "unlikely to test a device soon."⁴⁴

The chiefs' assessment in 1963 represented another step down; they reported that the Chinese were unlikely to test a device before 1964, and they even stressed that "it is unlikely that China will acquire any militarily significant advanced weapons capability, either nuclear or conventional during the period under review [1963-1968]."⁴⁵ In other words, when the PTBT came up for signature in 1963, Australia was breathing more easily about the nuclear threat from China. This reduced estimate of the imminence of the Chinese nuclear threat thus appears to be the reason why Australia did not push for explicit British guarantees in 1963.

Summary: An Era of "Opposition without Nationalism"

The preceding historical narrative has made three main empirical points:

- First, top Australian decisionmakers feared for the medium- to long-term survival of their country in the face of Communism, especially Chinese Communism. This sense of threat was generally rising from the 1950s to the 1960s, although the perceived imminence of the threat (or at least of the nuclear threat) was not monotonically increasing throughout the period.
- Second, top Australian decisionmakers attempted to lessen the perceived danger from Asia by binding Australia's Western allies, and in particular Great Britain, to the nuclear defense of Australia. In the ear-

lier period, they mainly attempted to do this by making Australia *useful* to the British nuclear program; in the later period, there was much more emphasis on securing an explicit commitment that nuclear weapons would be available if necessary.

- Third, top Australian decisionmakers did *not* seek sovereign Australian control of nuclear weapons. At most they desired the capability of being able to participate in a nuclear defense effort.

The third point is a real puzzle. If Australia was so fearful for its medium- to long-term survival, why was there no high-level attempt to acquire the weapons that were clearly felt to be its best protection? The answer, as I have already hinted in passing, is that the top decisionmakers did not believe that Australia could defend itself on its own against the Communist adversary, and they therefore wanted to bind themselves as tightly as possible to their “great and powerful friends.” They believed that a push for an Australian nuclear deterrent, far from reinforcing the leaky Western nuclear umbrella, was likely simply to make it more leaky still.

The fundamental basis for the Australians’ complex security calculation is to be found in Menzies’ Australia’s self-perception of weakness, its identity of “opposition *without* nationalism.” The sense of weakness made the Australian government loath to do anything to drive a wedge between its “great and powerful friends,” in particular the delicate British-American nuclear relationship. Until the mid-1960s the Australians, for a combination of affective and practical reasons, looked to the British as their closest ally and, by extension, saw the British deterrent as their “real” nuclear guarantee.⁴⁶ But they also understood that the American link, formalized in the ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, and United States) Treaty of 1951 was vital for Australian security. More importantly still, they understood that the *British* top security priority was to gain access to American nuclear secrets, and they considered that British access was contingent on strict British observance of the US McMahon Act and other early “nonproliferation” measures. This belief was greatly encouraged by the British, whose “concerns about risking US antipathy to the passing on of any US information about nuclear matters were extreme,” according to the Royal Commission.⁴⁷

The desire not to do anything to put the British in an uncomfortable position led the Australian government

to abstain from almost any degree of independence in nuclear matters. Even the 1961 Menzies approaches about nuclear weapons transfer were apologetic in tone, and Macmillan needed merely to mention the McMahon Act for the Australians to quiet down.⁴⁸ In sum, the extreme caution with which Australia approached Britain on the nuclear weapons issue was due to its desire to avoid forcing Britain to choose between its American and its Australian links—for the Australians knew what choice it would make.

Menzies’ choice to avoid at all costs a strain in the delicate alliance was reasonable, although as the Royal Commission points out, if the Australians had taken a less “unquestioning approach” to the secrecy issue they could have found that the Americans “were much less inhibited” about information transfer than the British said.⁴⁹ But the “rightness” or “wrongness” of the Menzies government’s calculation is not the only interesting issue. It is of equal interest to explain *why* Menzies came to that calculation, whereas others, such as John Gorton, were simultaneously concluding that acquisition of an Australian bomb was worth the risk of strains in the alliance ties.

The Menzies-Gorton difference on nuclear policy is best seen as one instance of a deeper clash between two visions of Australia. Menzies—and the Australia he represented—was not nationalistic. In part his reticence to take a more “independent” stance was, in the words of the historian Peter Edwards, due to his “traditionalist... affection for the Crown, the Empire and Australia’s other links with Britain.”⁵⁰ But in the context of nuclear issues, the Menzies policy of deference to Australia’s “great and powerful friends” was even more the result of a sense that “little” Australia simply could never defend itself against its “thousand million neighbors” in Asia.⁵¹ Gorton, by contrast, represented a different, perhaps younger Australia—a “nationalist” Australia that was increasingly sure of its capacity for independent thought and action.⁵² And by the mid- to late-1960s, the wind was in “nationalist” Australia’s sails. In his 1969 valedictory message to the secretary of state, the departing US ambassador grasped this change. He wrote:

Australia is becoming nationalistic. Australians no longer regard themselves as Britons living abroad. ... They see themselves as Australians with a common interest among themselves and a division of interest between themselves and all others—including Britain

(‘God-damned Pommies’) and the US
(‘Bloody Yanks’).⁵³

Gorton’s “oppositional nationalism” was not the only variety of nationalism that this new Australia would foster; but it was he who became prime minister at the end of the 1960s. And with the political rise of the Australian “oppositional nationalists” came a real push for an Australian bomb.

AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR HISTORY, II: AN AUSSIE BOMB?

Australia in the Aftermath of China’s Bomb Blast

In spite of earlier fears about a Chinese bomb, Australian statesmen were caught flat-footed when the Chinese actually did test their first device in October 1964. The unexpectedly high technical sophistication of the Chinese blast made them particularly nervous.⁵⁴ They now expected that at least by the end of the 1960s China would “develop a force capable of threatening a good part of Southeast Asia.”⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the statesmen’s nuclear dilemma was beginning to find echoes in the broader society. Beginning in the months leading up to the Chinese test, there were growing calls from various forces for some form of nuclear protection. As one contemporaneous scholarly account put it, “Whether Australia should have or house a nuclear force is a question that has now come onto the agenda.”⁵⁶ In August 1964, two right-wing members of Parliament called for Australian control of nuclear weapons. In September of that year the influential political scientist A. L. Burns, a foreign policy “traditionalist,” promoted a nuclear weapons “transfer” idea similar to the one Menzies had broached to Macmillan in 1961. More significantly still, during the 1964 Senate campaign the parliamentary leader of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP)—an offshoot of the left-wing Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the third political force in Australian politics—recommended the development of a sovereign Australian deterrent.⁵⁷ The ALP itself, the perennial also-ran of Australian politics, also perceived a need for some response to the Chinese threat and so pursued the chimera of a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear-Free Zone.⁵⁸

In spite of the now undeniable Chinese nuclear capacity and the greater attention in society to the issue, the government hardly changed its stance on an Aus-

tralian bomb. In 1965, it did consider the notion of “an independent nuclear capability” but postponed taking any action.⁵⁹ The following year, the government, now led by Menzies protégé Harold Holt, rejected a new proposal for a nuclear power plant—with a heavy emphasis on its value for an eventual weapons program—that had been put forward by Atomic Energy Commission chief Philip Baxter.⁶⁰ The Holt government did want to ensure that the nuclear option was open, and it only agreed to a 1966 US request to allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections of nuclear facilities after determining that such inspections would not preclude a nuclear weapons program.⁶¹ But it took no positive steps toward an Australian nuclear capacity.

The “failure” of mid-1960s Australia to react to the Chinese test is hardly surprising from my theoretical perspective. The issue of how to deal with the Chinese nuclear threat had been thoroughly debated beforehand, and the conclusion on the notion of an “Aussie bomb” had been negative. An Australian nuclear deterrent was considered both unrealistic and dangerous. Such thinking was still gospel in the Department of External Affairs in 1968, when a note to the minister bluntly stated:

It is not possible for Australia to provide for its own security against nuclear attack. To do this it would not be sufficient to acquire nuclear weapons. It would be necessary also to have a delivery system with inter-continental range. Moreover for Australia to have a plausible deterrent it would need to be able to strike back powerfully after it had been subject to an initial nuclear attack. Apart from the economic cost which any country faces in developing this second strike capability, Australia is faced with the enormous disadvantages of its geographical position, the distance at which it would have to strike at any probable enemy, and the vulnerability of its cities and industrial complexes.⁶²

This document is a perfect example of the continuing “oppositional but not nationalist” character of the dominant Australian identity in this period. Why else would Australia’s geographical isolation be considered only to reduce Australian ability to reply to a nuclear attack, and not to reduce the threat of such an attack? Australia was after all in the process of contracting for US nuclear-capable F-111 aircraft, and it already had forces and nuclear-capable Canberra aircraft based in Singapore.

Other informed Australians of the day, looking at the same facts but with different background perceptions, came to different conclusions.

Although mid-1960s Australia rejected the notion of a sovereign bomb program, this is not to say that it was sanguine about the threat or that it stood idly by. Rather, it acted in line with the historical policy of binding its allies to its security. Efforts now focused more on the United States, as economic problems required the United Kingdom to begin scaling back its contribution to Asian security. The Menzies and Holt governments took two important initiatives in this direction.

First, there was a series of decisions beginning in April 1965 to send combat troops to fight alongside the Americans in Vietnam. As Peter Edwards writes in his official history of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asia:

The Government's Vietnam commitment was the product of two arguments. The first, commonly called the domino theory, rested on the assumptions that Asian communism was spreading, that it threatened Australian security, and that it would be expedient to meet the threat as early as possible and as far away as possible. The second theory, sometimes known as the insurance policy, assumed that the United States had nailed its colors to the mast in Vietnam and that Australia needed to support its great and powerful friend there to ensure that that friend would support it if it were ever threatened with attack.⁶³

The "domino theory" and the "insurance policy" were the natural outgrowths of the still-dominant "oppositional but not nationalist" Australian identity. The tremendous electoral victory of the conservative coalition under Holt in 1966, fought primarily over the question of Vietnam, confirmed "that the majority of electors accepted that the basis of Australian foreign policy was the domino theory."⁶⁴

Second, but no less significant, was the decision to host important elements of the US nuclear defense system in Australia.⁶⁵ Under the Holt government, the United States and Australia established "joint defense facilities" on Australia's North West Cape, in Pine Gap near Alice Springs, and at Nurrungar near the British test site at Woomera.⁶⁶ The North West Cape facility was to serve as one of the two linchpins of the US worldwide submarine communication system, while Pine Gap and Nurrungar were built as part of US satel-

lite surveillance and early-warning systems. The establishment of these facilities likely gave Australia a place, and perhaps a significant one, on the Soviet target list in the event of an all-out nuclear war.⁶⁷ The Australian government accepted this relatively high cost as the price of maintaining US interest in the country's survival.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

By late 1967, the government's policy of association with the United States in Vietnam—Holt famously spoke of "going all the way with LBJ"—was beginning to bear bitter fruit in public and elite opinion.⁶⁸ After nearly 20 years in power, the governing coalition seemed tired and unable to respond creatively to the new situation. Then, in December, a swimming accident killed Prime Minister Holt. Sensing the restlessness of the electorate, the parliamentary coalition elevated the "oppositional nationalist" John Gorton to the post of prime minister. This selection did not represent a mass conversion to Gorton's independent political standpoint, which was in any case hardly a coherent doctrine; but Gorton's elevation did reflect the desire for a "something new."⁶⁹ Gorton came into office determined to shake things up. His Cabinet selections betrayed a tendency to shun Menzies and Holt loyalists in favor of party rebels or young up-and-comers.⁷⁰ More shocking still, less than a month into his term and without first consulting the Cabinet, Gorton bluntly told the press that Australia would not increase its commitment of troops to Vietnam.⁷¹ Thus began what the journalist Alan Reid aptly termed the "Gorton experiment."⁷²

Soon after taking office, the Gorton government was faced with the question of signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In February 1968, the Department of Defence's Joint Planning Committee, faithfully reflecting the "traditionalist" point of view, made a formal recommendation for becoming a party to the treaty. Although this thinking on foreign and security policy was clearly a matter of consensus, after Gorton's elevation to the top job, such traditional assumptions no longer went unchallenged at the high table of the Defence Committee.⁷³

The Defence Committee meeting of March 21, 1968, set the tone for a raging battle that was destined to last for several years.⁷⁴ On one side stood the bearers of the foreign policy tradition, notably the top civil servant at External Affairs, James Plimsoll. On the other side in that meeting stood the "oppositional nationalists," nota-

bly Gorton's principal secretary, C.L.S. Hewitt, and Philip Baxter, the head of the Atomic Energy Commission. The representatives of the Department of Defence and the military were caught in between.

In the March meeting Plimsoll spoke first and predictably maintained a traditional line. He argued in favor of signing the NPT for two main reasons: first, it was important to restrain other countries, especially Indonesia, from going nuclear; and second, it was important to maintain strong ties with the United States—especially since a credible Australian nuclear deterrent was not in the cards.⁷⁵ But these traditional contentions came under heavy fire, apparently for the first time in a major policy meeting. Baxter and Hewitt replied that Australia *could* build a credible deterrent if it wanted, and Baxter warned of the Chinese nuclear threat to Australia.⁷⁶ Baxter and Hewitt also took a nationalist line on nuclear safeguards, rejecting “injection of foreigners in our life as represented by inspectors of various activities at various levels,” to quote Hewitt. Most daringly, they also rejected Plimsoll's argument about the need to respect the wishes of the United States—and in this they were joined by the representative from Defence, Sir Henry Bland. Bland told the Committee that “We could not be expected to go along with the United States on everything.” Plimsoll wrote his minister, the equally traditionalist Paul Hasluck, that he found “disturbing” the notion that Australia should “stand up to the Americans.”⁷⁷

And so the battle lines were drawn. In the following months a possible compromise began to emerge: signature without ratification. This solution was not to Gorton's liking. In a moment of frankness he told the British High Commissioner to Canberra, Charles Johnston (as reported by Johnston to London):

Australia was not going to sign the NPT or, if it did so, that it was not going to ratify it. [Gorton] personally thought it was stupid to sign a treaty with the intention of not ratifying it, and therefore his own preference would be for not signing.... He expected that both [the US and UK] governments would try to ‘twist his arm off’ to get him to sign and ratify. If that pressure became too much the Australian government would resent it, and in any case would not change their decision.⁷⁸

Note that in spite of Gorton's statement, President Nixon for one did not press Australia hard to sign the

NPT.⁷⁹ Indeed, Nixon's 1969 “Guam Doctrine” (which put more of the defense burden on America's allies) seemed to lessen the threat of US repercussions against allies that developed independent nuclear capabilities.⁸⁰ Nixon resisted private entreaties for his intervention by Australian government NPT supporters such as the “traditionalist” External Affairs Minister (later Prime Minister) William McMahon.⁸¹ When Gorton finally did accept the compromise in February 1970, and Australia became one of the last countries to sign before the NPT came into force, it was the result of an internal political battle little affected by American “arm-twisting.”⁸² Hence, although it signed the NPT, Gorton's Australia still considered itself to be maintaining its nuclear option; ratification was nowhere in sight.

The Drive for an Australian Bomb, I: The Jervis Bay Reactor

Gorton and Baxter were working not only to forestall adherence to the NPT, but also to build an Australian nuclear weapons program. Officials at the Department of Supply, with the help of Atomic Energy Commission scientists, made precise cost and time estimates for A- and H-bomb programs.⁸³ They outlined two possible programs: (1) a power reactor program capable of producing enough weapons-grade plutonium for 30 fission weapons (A-bombs) per year; (2) a uranium enrichment program capable of producing enough Uranium-235 for the initiators of at least 10 thermonuclear weapons (H-bombs) per year. The first plan, including additional funds for research and development, was costed at an affordable \$144 million (in Australian dollars) and was thought to be feasible in no more (and likely fewer) than seven to 10 years. The second plan weighed in at \$184 million over a similar period.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, an informal working group of public servants and academics at the Australian National University, notably including the transplanted British Manhattan Project alumnus Ernest Titterton, made a top-to-bottom study of the technical, political, and strategic aspects of an Australian bomb program. They came to similarly sanguine conclusions.⁸⁵

Although not alone in their promotion of an “Aussie bomb,” Gorton and Baxter well understood that they were in the minority on the question. They therefore tried to soft-pedal the security dimension and instead promoted an Australian nuclear program primarily on the grounds of economic development and economic nationalism.⁸⁶ In October 1969, in his national election

campaign kickoff speech, Gorton announced that “the time for this nation to enter the atomic age has now arrived” and proposed the construction of a 500-megawatt (MW) nuclear power plant at Jervis Bay on the New South Wales coast.⁸⁷ The Gorton government took the “economic nationalist” position of requiring “indigenous fuel,” meaning that the reactor should either run on natural uranium or that the bid should include provision of uranium enrichment technology.⁸⁸ This stance also had clear military implications, however. Befitting a man aiming to build nuclear weapons, Baxter was especially strict in applying the “indigenous fuel” criterion to tender offers.⁸⁹ It was the economic nationalist stance that dominated Minister for National Development (and Gorton ally) David Fairbairn’s 1969 recommendation for the reactor. However, he also noted that over 25 years it would produce six tons of plutonium, which would then be available for fast breeder reactors “or other special purposes.” The recommendation also explicitly pointed to the “important long term defense implications” of the project.⁹⁰

After long denying any connection between the Jervis Bay project and nuclear weapons, Gorton finally admitted one at the beginning of 1999. He told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, “We were interested in this thing because it could provide electricity to everybody and it could, if you decided later on, it could make an atomic bomb.”⁹¹ This “later on” decision was a decision Gorton had clearly already made in his own mind but had not been able to impose on the powerful traditionalist forces in his government.

Despite Gorton and his allies’ not-so-secret *motives*, due to the primary *formal goals* of the project, the tender offers were studied from a technical and economic, not a military perspective. The only scientist who knew (and shared) Gorton’s true intent was Baxter. Accordingly, Baxter fought mightily for the Canadian offering, a Canadian Deuterium Uranium (CANDU) natural uranium, heavy water reactor that would clearly have been the most useful for a nuclear weapons program. But as he was deprived of the argument of potential military utility, Baxter’s case for the CANDU reactor was weak. Australian Atomic Energy Commission (AAEC) Executive Commissioner Maurice Timbs wrote a scathing confidential memo to this effect in 1970, bluntly stating that he could not accept Baxter’s draft decision to place the CANDU reactor on the “reduced short list” of two tender offers.⁹² Timbs wrote that the independent Bechtel

Corporation report had “clearly established that on technical and economic grounds two systems only merit further study”: the British Steam Generated Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR) and the German Pressurized Water Reactor (PWR). Yet, Timbs wrote, the draft AAEC report included the CANDU reactor in the reduced short list “merely because it is capable of operating wholly on natural uranium.” The only justification for including CANDU reactor, wrote Timbs, was an over-strict interpretation of the “indigenous fuel” requirement, an interpretation that was in conflict with both the tender documents and public statements by the prime minister. Claiming to represent the interests of the Commission, Timbs’ letter to Baxter lifted the veil on Baxter’s real motives:

If, for other reasons [than “technical and economic merit”], the government decides to negotiate for a CANDU system, the Commission could have no quarrel with such a decision. In this context any responsible government would no doubt wish to give its own weight to a ‘dual options’ policy. It is relevant to note in this regard that SGHW is capable of producing plutonium.

In the end, the assessment by the AAEC scientific team strongly recommended the British SGHWR over the CANDU reactor, which they found to have serious technical and safety drawbacks. Baxter accepted their judgment.⁹³ It is true that, as Timbs had written, the SGHWR was also theoretically capable of producing plutonium, but according to AAEC scientist Keith Alder, “No one in their right mind would try to make plutonium in that system.”⁹⁴

Ultimately, the Jervis Bay reactor was never built at all. The “Gorton experiment” had proven a relative failure among the electorate and parliamentarians of every stripe. Gorton fell in March 1971, before a final Cabinet decision could be taken on the issue. His successor, the “traditionalist” William McMahon, made haste to cancel a project that he considered unreasonable from the point of view of economic cost and incompatible with Australia’s NPT signature.⁹⁵ This stance was in keeping with McMahon’s active role in soliciting American pressure on Gorton to sign the NPT in 1970.

In sum, the Jervis Bay episode serves to underline the difficulties of attempting to “sneak” a nuclear weapons program into existence under the cover of an economic development project. It also shows that it makes no

sense to speak of the “AAEC” as pursuing a “bureaucratic interest” for a nuclear weapons program. Rather, it is necessary to look at the ideas that motivated Gorton, Baxter, and their allies to seek the bomb. But before proceeding to that analysis, I will recount the other major attempt that Gorton and Baxter made to build an Australian nuclear weapons capacity.

The Drive for an Australian Bomb, II: The Uranium Enrichment Plant

Even before the cancellation of the Jervis Bay project, Baxter was making efforts to promote an Australian uranium enrichment plant. In 1970, a discovery of massive deposits of uranium in Australia’s Northern Territory naturally led to consideration of capturing the “value-added” through enrichment.⁹⁶ The Australians had had a minor research project on enrichment since 1965, but they knew that for such a major plant they would need a big partner. After initial discussions with the British and Americans went nowhere, the Australians found a real potential partner in France.⁹⁷

The Australian-French nuclear relationship had been formalized in a cooperation agreement signed in 1969. In 1971, before the Jervis Bay project was scrapped, the head of the International Relations Department of the French Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique, Bertrand Goldschmidt, visited Australia. There he made a small sale to the AAEC, a “critical facility/split table machine” that made possible theoretical measurements of fast neutrons. That this could have been useful for studies of nuclear explosions hardly bothered the French, who were not parties to the NPT, were Western allies of Australia, and were focused on building commercial sales.⁹⁸

Both sides were primarily interested in making a deal on uranium enrichment. The enrichment plant represented a real potential financial windfall for Australia, and it therefore had more chance than the Jervis Bay reactor of gaining approval from the tight-fisted traditionalist Prime Minister McMahon. But Baxter’s interest in the plant was largely military. Between July 1971 and February 1972, an Australian technical team made no fewer than three visits to the French uranium enrichment plant at Pierrelatte, which provided fissile material for military purposes.⁹⁹ Baxter’s contemporaneous and later handwritten notes demonstrate his great interest not only in how much 95-percent enriched uranium such a plant could produce per year, but also, in explicit

terms, in how many nuclear bombs could thus be made.¹⁰⁰ In November 1972, the AAEC team returned to Paris for final completion of the feasibility study for the plant. But in December, the Australian Labor Party came to power for the first time in a generation, and the French project soon ran afoul of Labor’s anti-French nuclear stance.¹⁰¹ Gorton and Baxter had fought mightily, but in vain; their dream of building an Australian bomb had had its day.

Summary: The Hour of the “Oppositional Nationalists”

The historical narrative of this section can be summarized in the following two points:

- First, the Chinese nuclear explosion in October 1964 led the entrenched “traditionalist” leadership of the Australian government to try to bind the Western allies—now especially the United States—ever more closely to the defense of Australia. It did not lead them substantially to shift their stance on a sovereign nuclear weapons capacity.
- Second, John Gorton, elevated to the job of prime minister in early 1968, mounted an unexpectedly stiff challenge to the governing “traditionalist” orthodoxy in security and nuclear policies. Together with AAEC chief Sir Philip Baxter and other allies, Gorton nearly succeeded in launching Australia on a path toward nuclear weapons. This drive met with difficulties, however, from within Gorton’s Cabinet and the AAEC itself. In the end, Gorton failed to see his dream realized before losing his post back to the still-powerful “traditionalist” camp.

What motivated Gorton and Baxter to buck the majority consensus against a bomb program? Was their alliance a mere marriage of convenience, or did it reflect a common vision? It is true that on the surface, everything separated Baxter and Gorton. They were hardly “mates,” and indeed, it would be hard to find two more different personalities. Gorton was a garrulous, earthy, un-intellectual “Aussie,” while Baxter was a meticulous, puritanical, transplanted English scientist. But, both Gorton and Baxter’s predilections for an Australian bomb derived from the combination of a great fear for Australia’s survival in the face of Asian Communism, and a confidence in Australia’s capacity to defend itself if it made a determined effort. In short, both Gorton and Baxter were “oppositional nationalists.”

John Gorton was without question an Australian nationalist. A briefing book prepared for Richard Nixon prior to a summit with Gorton described him as follows: "Gorton is a *distinctively Australian* Prime Minister. In this he contrasts with Menzies, who said he was 'British to his boot-heels,' and Holt, who said he would go 'all the way with LBJ.'"¹⁰² Indeed, Gorton was aggressive about his distinctiveness; in an obvious reference to Menzies' famous phrase, Gorton said, "Me—I'm *Australian* to the boot-heels."¹⁰³ This was not just a question of style or spin; as Reid puts it, "there was nothing synthetic about Gorton's intense nationalism."¹⁰⁴ In foreign policy especially, Gorton (in the words of the historian John Molony) "tried to replace both British and American links with his own brand of attractive, Australian, larrikin nationalism."¹⁰⁵ It is possible that his greater psychological distance from Australia's "great and powerful friends" was due to his facial disfigurement in a plane crash in a dogfight with a Japanese plane during World War II.¹⁰⁶ Be that as it may, the war experience had certainly made Gorton a convinced believer in the "domino theory," with Communist China cast in the role of fascist Japan as Australia's mortal enemy. In this "oppositional" side of his national identity, he was no different from the majority of his Liberal colleagues.¹⁰⁷

Baxter, too, was an "oppositional nationalist." This position cannot be seen as a mere cover for bureaucratic empire-building. Rather, right from Baxter's very emigration to Australia one can see his burning desire to fight what he saw as the battle for the future.

Baxter's worldview, like Gorton's, was derived from his experience of World War II. But for Baxter, who was trained as a chemist in his native England, the crucial experience was the Manhattan Project, not a dogfight high over Singapore.¹⁰⁸ The Manhattan Project convinced Baxter that nuclear energy in its various applications was the key to the next century. After the war, he held a position of significant responsibility and could be sure of further rapid advancement at the British firm Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., but he was deeply disappointed when the company withdrew from the production of nuclear energy.¹⁰⁹ For Baxter, this was the last straw that convinced him that "old" Europe was tired and incapable of defending itself. As he would later tell the Institution of Engineers in Perth, the extensive training of engineers and technologists in Australia was "a fitting subject for a Crusade, the success of which will

be measured by whether Australia is still a white and Christian country in the year 2000 AD."¹¹⁰ It was therefore not personal careerism but rather his sense of the course of history that led Baxter to embark for Australia; in his biographer Philip Gissing's words, his emigration should be seen "not as simply a reaction to thwarted hopes, but as a realization, however inchoate, of a sense of higher purpose."¹¹¹

It almost goes without saying that very quickly upon arriving in Australia, Baxter "discovered" the white race's basic enemy: Asian Communism. In a play Baxter wrote toward the end of his life, entitled *The Day the Sun Rose in the West*, Australia stands alone against the forces of the continent-wide South East Asian People's Republic, which are under the control of a scientific/engineering elite that wants, in Baxter's words, "to make the whole invasion [of Australia] a gigantic experiment in producing a new and better race."¹¹²

In sum, both Gorton and Baxter agreed with their colleagues' "opposition" to Asian Communism, but unlike their colleagues, they believed Australia could and indeed had to stand on its own two feet to face down that threat. It was a greater degree of nationalism, not a more exaggerated threat perception, that made Gorton and Baxter's nuclear stance different from that of Menzies and Holt. Note, however, that the fact that there was a "consensus" among state elites about Australia's "dire" security situation does not mean that this interpretation was necessarily *right*. Indeed, given Australia's isolated geography, it is hard to believe that so many Australians believed for so long that their very existence was hanging in the balance in Southeast Asia. In fact, by the early 1970s, these traditional threat perceptions and the policies they spawned were coming under increasing fire.

AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR HISTORY, III: REJECTING THE PAST, REJECTING THE BOMB

In December 1972, profiting from a worsening economic situation, an apparently "spent" coalition, and growing anti-Vietnam War sentiment, the Australian Labor Party came to power for the first time since 1949. The new prime minister, Gough Whitlam, immediately demonstrated his independence from the United States by condemning the Nixon "Christmas bombing" of North Vietnam and allowing the waterside unions to refuse to unload American cargoes.¹¹³ In nuclear policy, Whitlam also showed a firm hand. The Whitlam government took

several crucial decisions that crystallized a new direction for Australian nuclear policies—a direction that Australia has followed ever since.

Reining in the Push for the Bomb

The preceding McMahon government had certainly blunted the momentum toward the bomb, but it had not been strong or confident enough to deliver a knockout blow to the “oppositional nationalists.” The Whitlam government was. One of its very first acts was to ratify the NPT in January 1973. The reasons for Labor’s adherence to the NPT had been spelled out to a US diplomat by shadow Labor Foreign Minister William Morrison in 1971. He said that the push for Australia to develop a nuclear weapons capability was “irresponsible,” and that “the ALP is opposed to this, and would in fact sign the NPT should it come to power.”¹¹⁴

Apart from ratifying the NPT, the Whitlam government also definitively canceled the Jervis Bay reactor project, which the McMahon government had merely “deferred.” Moreover, the new government removed two of the most vociferous members of the “bomb lobby,” Baxter and Titterton, from their positions of responsibility in various technical advisory committees. Titterton was also removed as head of the Research School of Physical Sciences at Australian National University.¹¹⁵

The Whitlam government was not, however, “anti-nuclear.” It strongly supported not only uranium mining in the country, but also AAEC research on uranium enrichment. The French tie fell through because of the dispute over French weapons testing in the South Pacific (discussed below), but a new tie was established with Japan. In November 1974, there was a formal announcement of Japanese-Australian cooperation in the field.¹¹⁶ The Whitlam government’s interest in promoting this important and potentially lucrative technology was not inconsistent with its opposition to the acquisition or proliferation of nuclear weapons.¹¹⁷ It also demonstrates that at least until the mid-1970s, Labor’s policy on nuclear matters was due more to diplomacy and security concerns than to environmentalism.

The Crusade against French Tests

But the Whitlam government did not merely quietly pull Australia away from the nuclear weapons brink. Pushed by a public opinion that had previously been dormant on the issue, Australia under Whitlam became

one of the most fervent anti-nuclear weapons advocates on the globe. The trigger that began this process was the 1973 French decision to proceed to a series of atmospheric nuclear tests in the South Pacific.

In the past, Australian governments (unlike those of New Zealand) had generally given the French little difficulty over their nuclear testing program in the region.¹¹⁸ Official Australia had focused its efforts on calming public health worries, and the point man on this had been Ernest Titterton, the same physicist who had pronounced the English tests safe in the 1950s.¹¹⁹ But in May 1973, when France announced a new series of atmospheric tests in the region, Whitlam, pushed by the labor unions, turned the issue into a major diplomatic struggle. The government allowed the unions to indulge in a massive boycott of French products and shipping, while Australia and New Zealand asked for and received an injunction from the International Court of Justice (which France ignored) for suspension of the “illegal” tests.¹²⁰ Australia also announced that it would assign a naval supply vessel to refuel a New Zealand Navy frigate that was sailing to the test site, and indeed, the Australian minister of supply himself boarded a boat that steamed off to the test zone to oppose the French policy.¹²¹ Moreover, Australia and New Zealand introduced a resolution in the UN General Assembly for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), a resolution that they would subsequently reintroduce annually until the CTBT was actually negotiated in 1996.¹²² By January 1974, although the boycott had quietly ended some months before, the diplomatic dispute was so entrenched that France and Australia took the remarkable step of publicly freezing their relations. France’s late 1974 decision not to conduct further atmospheric tests in the region finally permitted a thaw.¹²³

What explains the Whitlam government’s vociferous stance on the testing issue? Some of the health and environmental concerns were undoubtedly real, but fierce opposition to French tests was *not* a Labor Party tradition. Indeed, it was only in early 1972 that Labor or the trade unions started to beat the drum over French testing, although the testing had gone on for years.¹²⁴ Nor was this a “top-down” phenomenon. Whitlam’s own tendencies were hardly radical. Indeed, Whitlam told Henry Kissinger in a 1973 Washington meeting that he feared the French tests were raising public awareness and support for a New Zealand plan for the denuclearization of the South Pacific. Whitlam said he did not favor this

“gimmicky” policy and felt that it “would be a dead issue if the French would stop their testing.”¹²⁵

Rather, it seems that the French tests struck a deep chord in a nascent Australian “non-oppositional nationalism,” which Whitlam—ever the politician’s politician—chose to ride rather than fight. The French tests offended Australian nationalism on one level because they were conducted in Australia’s “backyard,” and on a deeper level because they were reminders of the earlier British tests’ much more serious impingement on Australian sovereignty.¹²⁶ On another level, ironically the Australians could criticize the French tests because the Australian-French relationship was a historically *healthy* one. This was not the case with the historically “oppositional” Australian-Chinese relationship, a legacy that Labor was attempting to undo. So, while the government indulged in lurid anti-French rhetoric, it made only muted, almost apologetic criticism of China’s simultaneous atmospheric tests.¹²⁷ I will return to the Whitlam government’s new stance on China—an epochal shift of fundamental importance to my overall argument—at the end of this section.

After Whitlam

Although the Whitlam government fell after three short years, the Whitlam reorientation of Australian nuclear policy proved far more resilient. The successor government, led by the Liberal Malcolm Fraser, did not attempt to reopen the question of a nuclear “option.” In addition, while continuing to permit the mining and export of Australian uranium, it imposed safeguards “more rigorous than that adopted to date by any nuclear supplier country.”¹²⁸ Moreover, it continued to submit the call for a CTBT to the UN General Assembly. And it deepened the discussions with the Japanese over uranium enrichment, in addition to funding its own research on the topic.¹²⁹

When the ALP returned to power in 1983, it took an even higher profile on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation diplomacy. Indeed, in the words of Ambassador Richard Butler, the country’s “new role has been characterized by an unprecedented degree of independence and a higher degree of determination and self-reliance than was the case in the past.”¹³⁰ The ALP government, led by Bob Hawke, announced the appointment of a minister for disarmament, made a major contribution to the success of the 1985 NPT Review Conference, and strongly dissented from the US Strategic

Defense Initiative. Australia also reacted to a new round of French testing (now underground) in the South Pacific atolls by promoting a South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty. This treaty, signed at Rarotonga in the South Pacific in 1985, was essentially directed at France and its continued testing in the region. The treaty did not much perturb the transit of US nuclear ships, and it was therefore considered insufficient by many on the Australian left.¹³¹ Nevertheless, the treaty was a significant, independent Australian initiative that proved “not entirely easy to manage within [the US-Australia] alliance relationship.”¹³²

The 1990s saw an even higher Australian international profile on nuclear issues, not least on the seemingly perennial issue of French testing. In 1995, Australia led a worldwide campaign—with an economic and mail boycott, cutting of defense ties, recall of ambassadors, and so on—against President Jacques Chirac’s decision to hold tests on the eve of the CTBT negotiations.¹³³ This was hardly a partisan issue; opinion polls showed that 95 percent of the Australian people opposed the 1995 French tests and that 60 percent felt the Labor government’s response was “too weak.”¹³⁴ Paris eventually ceded in part to this pressure by reducing the number of planned tests from eight to six and confirming that it would sign the CTBT. True to form, the Australian government remained much more muted on the subject of the simultaneous Chinese tests.¹³⁵

The public’s demand for an even tougher anti-nuclear weapons stance, increased multifold by its anger at the French tests, led directly to the formation of the Canberra Commission for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.¹³⁶ The Commission brought together influential individuals from nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, and notably included Robert McNamara, General Lee Butler (a former chief of the US Strategic Command), and former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard. The Commission Report called on the nuclear weapon states “to give the lead by committing themselves, unequivocally, to the elimination of all nuclear weapons,” and it offered a step-by-step plan for reaching that goal.¹³⁷ In political terms, the Australian government’s intention was to use the Canberra Commission to establish itself as the “bridge” between the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. This reflected a continuing desire for an independent voice on matters of global importance, and it not surprisingly caused some friction with Australia’s American ally.¹³⁸

The right returned to power in 1996 under the leadership of the Liberal John Howard. Under Howard, Australia has to some degree returned to the “American fold.” For instance, in a 1999 joint communiqué, Australia “expressed its understanding of US plans to decide next year on the deployment of a limited National Missile Defense,” although it still “encouraged the United States to pursue amendments consistent with the spirit and intent of the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty.”¹³⁹ The Howard government also promoted the purchase of a new research reactor. But Howard’s Australia remained a fervent advocate of nuclear nonproliferation, as was evident in its very stern words and imposition of sanctions after the Indian nuclear tests of May 1998.¹⁴⁰ Ironically given Australia’s past fear of China, India’s pleadings that it needed protection against the Chinese nuclear threat were scoffed at in Canberra.

Summary: An Era of “Non-Oppositional Nationalism”

The historical narrative of this section can be summarized in three points:

- First, the victory of the ALP in the 1972 elections led to a radical shift in Australia’s nuclear policies. Australia quite rapidly switched from a proliferation threat and unquestioning supporter of the expansion of the West’s nuclear defenses, to a definitively non-nuclear state, a high-profile nonproliferation advocate, and at least a moderate proponent of nuclear disarmament.
- Second, the policies ushered in by the 1972 to 1975 Whitlam government were gradually deepened by successor governments of both parties. There were some partisan shadings between right and left governments, but their policies had much more in common with each other than with the “traditional” policies of the 1950s and 1960s.
- Third, Australia’s nuclear test diplomacy deserves special mention. In this period French nuclear tests in the South Pacific, which had previously passed practically unnoticed, became a focal point for nationalist expression and moralistic outrage in all sectors of Australian society. This anti-French-testing stance was to some degree generalized through Australia’s promotion of the CTBT and condemnation of the South Asian tests of 1998. But Australia was consistently much more circumspect about Chinese tests in this period.

What explains the remarkable transformation in Australia’s nuclear stance from 1972? The most powerful explanation is once again to be found in the nexus of ideas about national identity and national security. The 1972 election represented the triumph of a national identity, forged in the crucible of Vietnam, that was a remarkable departure from the past. The Whitlam government’s rejection of *both* varieties of the “oppositional” Australian national identity proved to be a durable and essentially bipartisan one. It was out of this new, “non-oppositional” Australian nationalism that the new nuclear stance emerged.

The most important change that the Whitlam era heralded was a new understanding and lack of fear of China and Asian Communism. As previously noted, in the early and mid-1960s the Labor Party had essentially shared the dominant view of Asian Communism (and to some extent, Asia in general) as a menace to Australia’s security and its way of life. It is worth mentioning in this context that the ALP had been a bedrock of support for the “White Australia” immigration policy and had only deleted it from its platform in 1965.¹⁴¹ But the Vietnam War engendered a deep rethinking of Australia’s relationship with Asia, first on the left and then in the society as a whole. The leader of the left wing of the ALP, Jim Cairns, was one of the first major political figures to attempt this rethinking. In his 1966 book *Living With Asia*, Cairns wrote that Australia’s fear of Asia was irrational: “There are many ‘ghosts’ in Australia’s attitude to Asia, and we ourselves have created them in the murky depths of our national consciousness....”¹⁴² Cairns called for a confident Australia that could “find a way to live with Asia,” and especially with the major Asian power, Communist China.¹⁴³

Cairns’ hopes found expression in the policies of the Whitlam government, which made haste to recognize both mainland China and North Vietnam.¹⁴⁴ Behind Labor’s change in policy direction was a radically different *perception of the security threat*, which was in turn linked to its underlying “non-oppositional” national identity. To some extent, there had been an evolution in the threat assessments of the official *Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy* series. But, as Alan Dupont writes in his comprehensive historical survey of Australian threat perceptions, this evolution had been resisted or ignored by previous governments:

The LCP [Liberal and Country Party coalition] was dragged, kicking and struggling, into the

new era. Extensive ideological rear-guard actions were fought by senior LCP ministers and Prime Ministers Gorton and McMahon, in defense of Australia's commitment to Vietnam and the need for vigilance about Chinese-sponsored subversion in Asia and Soviet penetration of the Indian Ocean.¹⁴⁵

Labor, by contrast, welcomed these revised assessments and pushed them even further. An American diplomatic telegram noted that in a major December 1973 defense policy address, Labor Defence Minister Lance Barnard sounded like a broken record with his "repetitious" claims "that Australia faces no foreseeable threat to its security for the next fifteen years."¹⁴⁶ The relationship between the belief in Australia's basically secure position and the development of new attitudes about the necessary level of nuclear deterrence is obvious.

While out of power, the right changed too, and when it recaptured the government in 1975, it did not return to the old threat perceptions vis-à-vis China and Asia. Highlighting this new perspective, Prime Minister Fraser made his first foreign visit not to the traditional Washington, but to Beijing. And although Fraser did sound the alarm about Soviet intentions in the area, in general his government's foreign policy was "not radically different from that of its Labor predecessor."¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the 1976 *Strategic Basis* report made a wholesale condemnation of Australia's past threat perceptions:

Australian strategic policy was strongly influenced by anxiety that a substantial external power would come to dominate South East Asia and hence be favorably placed to exert pressure, or ultimately military threat, against Australia. China was the focus of concern. This perception was strongly influenced by the experience of Japan's expansion in the 1940s.... It seems necessary to rid Australian policy of the perceptions and preoccupations of that era.¹⁴⁸

In short, in the 1970s, Australians on both the right and left shook themselves loose from the "oppositional" mentality that had so long governed their behavior in foreign, security, and nuclear policies.

If the end of the "oppositional" identity spelled the end of the old nuclear policy direction, it was the continuing rise of "nationalism" that gave birth to the new direction. The rise of Australian nationalism, noted already in the Gorton era, was inescapable with Whitlam

at the helm. As an American diplomat wrote, Whitlam "talks of asserting Australia's independence as if he had just broken the shackles of slavery. He talks of a 'distinctive' Australian stance as if everything that had been done before was not distinctive."¹⁴⁹

Australia under Whitlam did come to independent conclusions on the nuclear weapons question. The conclusions were that Australia should build a world role for itself as a strong opponent of their development and spread.¹⁵⁰ This stance was not nearly as radical as that of New Zealand: Australia did maintain the American alliance, and it chose to turn a blind eye to China's nuclear tests because of the need to repair the damage of decades of mistrust and ill will. None of post-1972 Australia's actions represented a pure foreign policy idealism, as some critics would have liked.¹⁵¹ Indeed, one could make a strong case for the idea that the post-1972 period has been marked by more "Realism" than the decades that preceded it, and that it is precisely the "Realism" of Australia's post-1972 leaders that led them to the new nuclear policy stance. But clearly the new policy was based on more than "Realism." During the 1995 French-tests crisis, a French newspaper astutely commented that although it is possible to indulge in facile criticism of Australian "hypocrisy" because of past support for British nuclear tests and past "scorn" for "their indigenous peoples," such criticism misses the point. In fact, wrote the paper, it is precisely the sense of shame about the past that "today transforms Australians into flag-bearers of anti-colonialism"—and, one could add, into flag-bearers of nonproliferation.¹⁵²

CONCLUSION

Summary: Australia's National Identities and Nuclear Policies

To recapitulate the main historical findings of the study:

- In Menzies' Australia, an "oppositional but not nationalist" national identity was dominant. Given this identity, it is not surprising that Menzies and his camp were very interested in increasing the credibility of the nuclear defense of Australia by Britain and the United States, but rejected the idea of an independent, sovereign nuclear weapons force.
- During the Vietnam War, and especially under the last conservative governments prior to the 1972 election, the "oppositional nationalists" competed with

the Menzies' camp for primacy. The "oppositional nationalists," led by John Gorton, wanted to acquire the bomb, but their efforts had not yet succeeded by 1972.

- The 1972 elections brought the first Labor government to power since the 1940s. This government, led by Gough Whitlam, ushered in a lasting sea-change in Australian national identity. Whitlam's "*non-oppositional nationalism*" combined a general self-assertiveness with a new, softer view of the Asian neighbors. Given this identity, it is not surprising that Australia not only decided against acquiring nuclear weapons itself, but also became a fervent (if not always consistent) proponent of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Lessons for Theory and Policy

The basic theoretical lesson of this article is that the variation in the Australian case *can* be explained by a focus on traditional security variables—degree of threat and capacity for self-help. But it is necessary to understand that although policymakers tried to respond to these variables, their responses were based not on objective reality but rather on their *perceptions* of that reality. Different Australians could hold different perceptions of threat and capacity at any one time, and the same Australians could hold different perceptions at different times. These differing and changing perceptions were largely the result of clashes and evolutions in deeper national identities. The shifting domestic preeminence of different national identities—or, more precisely, attempts to come to terms with Australia's geographical anomaly as a white outpost in an Asian sea—led to quite radical changes in the direction of Australian nuclear policies over time. The most stunning reversal was from rapidly growing interest in the bomb in the late 1960s, to rapidly growing interest in banning it beginning in the early 1970s.

I have identified the Vietnam experience as the crucial event that permitted the growth of national identities other than the traditional one. But Vietnam's effects on Australian attitudes and policies were neither direct nor inevitable. It is impossible to ignore the relatively independent causal force of ideas in recounting this story. Nuclear decisions are rarely merely reflective of external security needs; in order to understand them it is necessary to investigate not only the security context but also the identity context in which they are situated. The

question of nuclear weapons is such an existential one that it is not surprising that in deciding the issue, leaders express their most deeply held assumptions and beliefs about their nation and the world around it.

This case holds many lessons for policy. In terms of *assessments* of likely proliferants, it shows *the importance of considering political intentions* as well as technical advances. In the Australian case, a focus on technical advances as proxies for "steps toward the bomb" might have placed the late 1970s to early 1980s as the high point of Australian "nuclear ambitions"! The case also shows that *political intentions to build the bomb are the result of more than just high threat perceptions*; other perceptions, notably perceptions of self-efficacy, are equally crucial. And the case highlights the importance of not forgetting that *democratic, culturally "European," American allies might prove just as interested in the bomb as Third World "rogue states."*

In terms of nonproliferation *diplomacy*, the case offers a number of lessons as well. One lesson is that *nuclear guarantees, however credible, may not satisfy political leaders* who perceive their security situation as dire. These leaders may not seek to acquire the bomb to ease their insecurity, but such insecurity may leave the door open to others who will. Another lesson is that *nuclear policies can change even in the absence of explicit diplomatic pressures*. In the case of Australia, the great transformation of policy was the result of a profound internal rethinking of the nation and its relationship with its neighbors. A final lesson is that *naïve idealism is not necessary for a state actively to promote nonproliferation and disarmament*. States, including or perhaps even especially nationalist ones, may well decide that such a stance is in the national *interest*.

Australia is in many ways unique, but the nuclear history of Australia shares much in common with that of many other countries. By continuing to compare general theory with detailed history in other cases, we can develop a clearer understanding of the contexts that lead different states to choose different nuclear weapons policies.

¹ I would most of all like to thank the many Australian academics, scientists, policymakers, and archivists who helped me gather the empirical data for this article. Thanks also to Ross Babbage, Michael Barletta, Jorge I. Domínguez, Stanley Hoffmann, Alastair Iain Johnston, Jeffrey Knopf, Aaron

Lobel, Morris Low, Bill Pritchett, Stephen Rosen, Albino Santos, Michael Tomz, Jim Walsh, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on a draft of this paper. Special thanks to Jim Walsh for allowing me to review documents he collected in Australia. Field research in Australia was underwritten by the Institute for the Study of World Politics, Washington, DC. Additional funding was provided by the Krupp Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Harvard National Scholarships Office. Of course I take full responsibility for any errors herein. This article is dedicated to the memory of my father.

² The country's former nuclear weapons temptation is a well-known fact in Australia, and the official release of historical nuclear policy documents under the 30 years' rule makes waves in the press each January 1. In his recent article in *The Nonproliferation Review*, Jim Walsh has alerted the North American audience to this information and has discovered still more archival documents. Jim Walsh, "Surprise Down Under: The Secret History of Australia's Nuclear Ambitions," *The Nonproliferation Review* 5 (Fall 1997), pp. 1-20. The best history of Australia's atomic ambitions remains that of the Australian Alice Cawte, *Atomic Australia: 1944-1990* (Kensington, New South Wales: NSW Press, 1992).

³ Walsh, "Surprise Down Under," p. 14. Walsh notes that for this insight he is indebted to Michael Barletta.

⁴ I admit that a definitive history of the last three decades must wait for the release of archival documents. Nevertheless, it is possible to make an honorable attempt, as I have done, through interviews, newspaper accounts, and official public sources.

⁵ This type of thinking is clearly in evidence in the famous Carnegie Endowment series, the latest installment of which is Rodney W. Jones, *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation: A Guide in Maps and Charts*, 1998 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998). Other, more explicitly theoretical statements that embrace this general point are John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15 (Summer 1990); Benjamin Frankel, "The Brooding Shadow: Systemic Incentives and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation," in Zachary S. Davis and Benjamin Frankel, eds., *The Proliferation Puzzle: Why Nuclear Weapons Spread* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), and Bradley A. Thayer, "The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Utility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *Security Studies* 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 463-519.

⁶ It is simply wrong to equate the obvious destructive power of nuclear weapons with political power. Even such a staunch Realist as Hans Morgenthau clearly understood this. See Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Fallacy of Thinking Conventionally about Nuclear Weapons," in David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, eds., *Arms Control and Technological Innovation* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), and Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed., revised by Kenneth W. Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), esp. p. 33.

⁷ Note that I distinguish between the terms "national identity" and "nationalism." A "national identity" may but need not be "nationalist."

⁸ This use of the term "opposition" should not be confused with the idea of the parliamentary "Opposition."

⁹ It is not true that all states think that anything that raises the credibility of the nuclear guarantee increases their security. For instance, many states, in Europe for instance, have resisted emplacement of nuclear weapons on their soil.

¹⁰ Cottam's similar conception of this enemy-based variety of nationalism is described in Daniel Druckman, "Social Psychological Aspects of Nationalism," in John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern, eds., *Perspectives on Nationalism and War* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1995), pp. 47-98. The United States during the Cold War is an ideal-type for Cottam's conception, as it is for mine.

¹¹ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), esp. pp. 186-187.

¹² A somewhat similar distinction is often made in the literature between "patriotism" and "nationalism." This vocabulary does not suit my purposes for two reasons. First, "patriotism" is often associated with "love of country," which may exist even in countries that do not consider themselves apt for "standing tall" in the world (which is how I have defined "positive" or "non-oppositional" nationalism). Second, "patriotism" is often presumed to

have only positive effects on a society's goals and achievements, whereas as explained in my theoretical framework, "positive" or "non-oppositional" nationalism may have perverse effects.

¹³ I do not claim that the three identities referred to below were the only three Australian national identities, merely that they were the most powerful in terms of Australia's foreign policy.

¹⁴ This historical interpretation had become a matter of near-consensus by the 1980s, engendering almost inevitably a historical revisionist movement in the 1990s. For an analysis of this debate, see Sean Brawley, "Engaging the Past: Australian Politics and the History of Australian-Asian Relations," *Asian Perspective* 22 (Spring 1998), pp. 157-170.

¹⁵ This stance was much less coherent and "theorized" in its time than the dominant identity of "opposition without nationalism." Perhaps its most systematic exponent was B. A. Santamaria, of whom more later. The general "oppositional nationalist" position was often termed "Fortress Australia," but the term always remained ambiguous and was sometimes applied to the much more marginal position of leftist neutralism. Because of this confusion, I have avoided using the term "Fortress Australia" in this article.

¹⁶ This shift, as I will document below, was widely noted in Australian and American government documents of the time. It is also commonly noted in scholarly work: "The vast weight of historical scholarship has supported Labor's position that it had, when in government in the early 1970s but most importantly in the 1980s and 1990s, transformed Australia's relationship with Asia," Brawley, "Engaging the Past," p. 162.

¹⁷ I should note that although these different national identities ultimately found success or failure in the ballot box, and although it can be surmised that electoral competition was part of the reason for the development of these identities, national identities defined Australia's nuclear weapons policies, not electoral competition. Almost all the debates and negotiations discussed in this paper were internal, secret questions of state. Electoral politics' effect on Australian nuclear history was at most indirect.

¹⁸ In the postwar era there have been two main political formations in Australia that have competed for power. On the right, Menzies' Liberal Party allied with the smaller Country Party, and this coalition dominated Australian politics for decades. On the left stood the Australian Labor Party or ALP, always the "Loyal Opposition" from 1949 to 1972. An important reason for the ALP's long electoral drought on the Commonwealth (or national) level was its postwar schism over the issue of anti-communism. The ALP's right wing left the party to become the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), which although relatively small held key political cards.

¹⁹ This and subsequent information in this paragraph comes from the *Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia* ("McLelland Report"), Parliamentary Paper No. 482/1985 (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Office, 1985).

²⁰ Walsh ("Surprise Down Under") presents an image of Menzies as buffeted this way and that by bureaucratic interests. The fact that Menzies was in control, especially in foreign policy matters where he sometimes even served as his own foreign minister, is however widely accepted by scholars. This is not however to imply that Menzies was a tyrant who could not be swayed by serious argument in Cabinet. See T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations 1788-1977* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 26-7.

²¹ *Royal Commission*, p. 15.

²² *Royal Commission*, p. 11. To underscore Menzies' "Anglophilia," the Commission recalls Menzies' 1939 announcement as prime minister that "as Britain was at war with Germany, Australia was automatically at war with the same enemy" (p. 11).

²³ Ross Babbage, corporate executive, strategic analysis, ADI Limited, Sydney, Australia, letter to author, May 18, 1999.

²⁴ Peter G. Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, 1948-1965* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1992), pp. 70-71.

²⁵ It is important to emphasize that for Australia, the importance of the British bomb blasts went far beyond these relatively "rationalist" concerns. The blasts were a psychological salve, helping Australians to forget for a time the "tyranny of distance": "so close" to the red-yellow peril, "so far" from

mother Britain. For a complex account of the cultural aspects of the Australian nuclear experience, see Noel Sanders, "The hot rock in the Cold War: uranium in the 1950s," in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, *Better Dead than Red: Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1959*, Vol. 2 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 155-169.

²⁶ Cited in Cawte, *Atomic Australia*, p. 59.

²⁷ Wayne Reynolds, "Menzies and the Proposal for Atomic Weapons," in Frank Cain, ed., *Menzies in War and Peace* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 116.

²⁸ Reynolds, "Menzies and the Proposal for Atomic Weapons," p. 118.

²⁹ Walsh amply documents the active Australian interest in nuclear delivery systems, which was already quite significant in the 1950s. I would simply underscore that the acquisition of such systems by members of the Western alliance was hardly rare and should not be taken to imply an interest in sovereign control of the weapons themselves.

³⁰ Desmond J. Ball, "Australia and Nuclear Non-Proliferation," Working Paper No. 4, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1979. Although undoubtedly influential, the outspokenly nationalist and highly political Scherger was hardly representative of the wider military mindset.

³¹ Cawte, *Atomic Australia*, p. 109.

³² This judgment is shared by Cawte, *Atomic Australia*, p. 109.

³³ Speech of John G. Gorton, 8 May 1957, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Senate, Session 1957, Second Session of the 22nd Parliament (Canberra: Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1957), p. 608.

³⁴ This and the following information in this paragraph is based on Roy MacLeod, "The Atom Comes to Australia: Reflections on the Australian Nuclear Programme, 1953 and 1993," *History and Technology* 11 (1994), pp. 299-315.

³⁵ Walsh, "Surprise Down Under," pp. 6-7.

³⁶ National Archives of Australia (NAA): Cabinet Minute, Decision No. 1383 marked "Secret," June 13, 1961, "Nuclear Tests Conference: Control Posts in Australia," Series A5818/2. Document provided by Jim Walsh.

³⁷ Walsh, "Surprise Down Under," pp.2-9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁹ NAA: various documents including "Australian Accession to Nuclear Test Ban Treaty 1963," in Folder "Correspondence between Menzies and Macmillan between July and November 1963," Series A1209/80, Item 1963/6525.

⁴⁰ NAA: "Meeting Between Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Menzies at Parliament House, Canberra on 29th January, 1958," marked "Supplementary Record for strictly limited circulation, Nuclear Weapons (top secret)," Series A7942/1. Document provided by Jim Walsh.

⁴¹ NAA: "Nuclear weapons and guided missiles in Communist China up to the end of 1965," Joint Intelligence Committee Report JIC (60) 28, and "Minute by Chiefs of Staff Committee at Meeting Held on Wednesday, 6th July 1960," Chiefs of Staff Meeting Agendum 41/1960 (5 July 1960), Series A7941/2, Item N12. There had been previous reports on "Progress in the development of nuclear weapons and guided weapons in the Sino-Soviet bloc," e.g., Joint Intelligence Committee Report JIC (59) 4, but the 1960 report was the first to focus on China's independent potential.

⁴² "We believe that China might explode a 'prestige' nuclear device by the end of 1961. The American assessment makes this the end of 1962, but we believe that the Americans have under-assessed the Chinese developments in nuclear research." Given the tremendous intelligence advantages of the Americans, this different Australian opinion is hard to explain without reference to the "oppositional" prism through which Australian state elites tended to view China. NAA: "The development or acquisition of nuclear weapons and means of delivery by Communist China up to the end of 1966," Joint Intelligence Committee Report JIC (61) 28, in Chiefs of Staff Committee Agendum No. 20/1961, June 6, 1961, Series A7941/2, Item N12.

⁴³ NAA: "Advanced Weapon Development in Communist China," Joint Intelligence Committee Report JIC (62) 28, May 1962, Series A1209/134, Item 1961/845.

⁴⁴ NAA: Note from A.T. Griffith to Mr. Bunting (both of the Prime Minister's Department), 16 May 1962, Series A1209/134, Item 1961/845.

⁴⁵ NAA: "Communist China: Advanced Weapons Systems," Joint Intelligence Committee Report JIC (63) 28, July 1963, Series A1945/39, Item 100/2/21.

⁴⁶ Even as late as 1966 the well-reputed political scientist Arthur Lee Burns was writing that the "least unlikely" future for Australia was that "by A.D. 2000 we could well be an independent monarchy, of predominantly British stock, even more closely connected than now, at least in defense, politics, and culture, with the United Kingdom and other centers of British civilization, having lived through one or two temporary alliances and connections with the United States and *their* allies and dependents in the Pacific and Asia." Arthur Lee Burns, "Foreign and Defence Policies: The End of Progressivism," in Max Teichmann, ed., *Aspects of Australia's Defence* (Melbourne: Political Studies Association, Monash University, 1966), p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Royal Commission*, p. 442. The 1946 McMahon Act had prohibited providing any US information about atomic energy to other countries, but was amended in 1958 to grant a special exemption to the United Kingdom.

⁴⁸ NAA: Note from P. R. Heydon, acting secretary, External Affairs, for the Minister (Robert Menzies), August 31, 1961, Series A1838/269 (TS852/10/4/2/3). Document provided by Jim Walsh.

⁴⁹ *Royal Commission*, pp. 449, 453.

⁵⁰ Edwards, *Crises and Commitments*, p. 66.

⁵¹ The reference is to a polemic book of the period. See Lachlan Strahan, "The Dread Frontier in Australian Defence Thinking," in Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce, *Discourses of Danger and Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking After the Cold War* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

⁵² This new "nationalism" was one of the main points of the description of Gorton in the briefing book prepared for President Nixon in 1969. Richard M. Nixon Presidential Materials at the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Md. (RMN-NARA): Briefing Book, folder "Australia—Prime Minister Gorton May 6 & 7, 1969," National Security Council Files, Box 910.

⁵³ United States National Archives (USNA): "Note" marked "Secret" from US Ambassador, Canberra, to Secretary of State, April 10, 1969, in folder "Pol Austl-US," Subject-Numeric Files 1969, Record Group 59. Document provided by Jim Walsh.

⁵⁴ Australian physicist and Manhattan Project alumnus Sir Mark Oliphant told the Joint Intelligence Committee that within two years the Chinese "could produce nuclear weapons probably at the rate of one a week.... His overall impression of the Chinese scientific and technical knowledge and ability was that it was very high. They should *not* be underrated." NAA: "Talk by Sir Mark Oliphant to JIC Representatives, Thursday 3 December 1964," Note by O.L. Davis, Chairman, JIC, Series A1838/269, Item TS695/5/5. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁵ NAA: "Communist China's Nuclear Capability," Record for Department of External Affairs of Conversation with Mr. R. Mathams, Acting Deputy Director Joint Intelligence Bureau, 26 November 1964, Series A1838/269, Item TS695/5/5.

⁵⁶ Anthony Clunies Ross and Peter King, *Australia and Nuclear Weapons: the Case for a Non-Nuclear Region in Southeast Asia* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1966), p. 1. The rest of the information in this paragraph comes from the same source.

⁵⁷ The DLP's main intellectual, B.A. Santamaria, was a strong advocate of an Australian nuclear deterrent. He summarized his basic point of view as follows: "In Australia's situation of the next ten years, there is only one rational principle on which defense policy can be based. It is the principle of self-reliance. We may be left alone; so we need the power to deter attack. We must seek allies in Southeast Asia: power alone attracts allies." B.A. Santamaria, "Adequate and Independent Defence System," June 23, 1968, reprinted in B.A. Santamaria, *Point of View* (Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1969), p. 16.

⁵⁸ The ALP in this period actually shared the dominant Australian identity of "opposition without nationalism." In its role as the loyal Opposition it was thus reduced to carping about the costs of the policies that followed from premises it essentially accepted. As the informed observer David Martin put it in 1966, "The policy of Australia's present Government can be

described as a policy of *alliances without strength*, that of the Opposition as one of *alliances without commitment*. . . . Official Labor shares with the Liberals a conviction that Australia would be lost without American guarantees, yet will do nothing worthwhile by way of reciprocal action." David Martin, "Armed Neutrality," in Teichmann, ed., *Aspects of Australia's Defence*, p. 78.

⁵⁹ NAA: "Minute of the Defence Committee at a Meeting on 28 October, 1965," Agendum No. 59/1965, Series A2031/14, Item 73/1965. And "Report on Overseas Visit by Defence Scientific Adviser," Series A5799/20, Item 59/1965.

⁶⁰ Don Greenless, "Options Stay Open on Nuclear Arsenal," *The Australian*, January 1, 1997, cited in Walsh, "Surprise Down Under." Baxter had a long and continuing interest in the production of weapons-grade plutonium, as is made explicit by a document uncovered in the University of New South Wales Archives (UNSW): AAEC Minute Paper on "Dual Purpose Magnox Reactors," marked "Confidential," July 9, 1964, Philip Baxter Papers (CN 1053) Box 15.

⁶¹ Greenless, "Options Stay Open."

⁶² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Archives: Note on "Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," M.R. Booker to the Minister (External Affairs), March 12, 1968. This and certain other unregistered DFAT documents that I consulted in Australia were originally unearthed by Jim Walsh.

⁶³ Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1975* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin in Association with the Australian War Memorial, 1997), p. 185.

⁶⁴ John Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia: The Story of 200 Years* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books Australia, 1987), p. 337.

⁶⁵ For more information, see Desmond Ball, *A Suitable Piece of Real Estate: American Installations in Australia* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1980).

⁶⁶ Despite the moniker, the Australian role in the activities of these facilities was actually quite marginal.

⁶⁷ Desmond Ball and R.H. Mathams, "The Nuclear Threat to Australia," in Michael Denborough, *Australia and Nuclear War* (Fyshwick, Australian Capital Territory: Croom Helm Australia, 1983), pp. 38-54.

⁶⁸ See Edwards, *A Nation at War*, esp. ch. 8.

⁶⁹ Alan Reid, *The Gorton Experiment* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971), p. 27.

⁷⁰ Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*, p. 35. At first Gorton could not take on some of the party's bigger powers, but he worked quickly to remove them as well. For instance, he sent longtime External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck packing to the ceremonial post of Governor-General.

⁷¹ Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 196.

⁷² See Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*.

⁷³ This type of "revolution from above" is incompatible with the *theory* of "bureaucratic politics," although the *arena* for the battle was certainly within the state.

⁷⁴ DFAT: Note on "Nonproliferation Treaty" from James Plimsoll to the Minister (External Affairs), March 21, 1968.

⁷⁵ Note on "Nonproliferation Treaty," March 21, 1968. The rest of this paragraph is also drawn from the same source. I have paid scant attention in this paper to Indonesia, which was obviously one of Australia's most important security concerns. The reason for this is that Indonesia obviously played a backseat to China in Australian calculations on the particular issue of nuclear weapons.

⁷⁶ A month later, in a top secret letter to Gorton, Hewitt strongly urged continued resistance to the NPT, at least as long as there was no significant increase in the credibility of the American nuclear umbrella. He wrote, "In all this, I am not overlooking the benefits which we should obtain by the agreement of other countries not to indulge in the building up of nuclear weaponry. Nevertheless, even as signatories, they may cheat. And China will not be a signatory. Will the Americans come to our aid, under ANZUS, with nuclear weapons in the event of a threat to Australia by Chinese nuclear weaponry? This year; next year; in twenty-four years from now? Will they???" NAA: Note on "The Nuclear Treaty" marked "Top Secret," C. L. Hewitt to the Prime Minister, April 28, 1968, Series A5619, Item C48, Part 1.

⁷⁷ It is important to note that Gorton's side was not "anti-American" and indeed desired a more credible American nuclear umbrella. In an echo of Menzies' policy of hosting British nuclear tests, Gorton invited the United States to use its nascent "peaceful nuclear explosion" technology to create a harbor at Cape Keraudren. He even announced this intention publicly in 1969. The project was however scrapped by the Americans for economic and technical reasons. RMN-NARA: Briefing Book for Meeting between President and Prime Minister John Gorton.

⁷⁸ Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom (PRO): Letter marked "secret and personal" from High Commissioner to Canberra, Charles Johnston, to Sir Edward Peck, Foreign Office, August 2, 1968. Attached to note marked "Secret" on "Australia and the NPT" from R.C. Hope-Jones to Lord Hood (August 23, 1968), FCO 10/124.

⁷⁹ RMN-NARA: Briefing Book for Meeting between President and Prime Minister John Gorton.

⁸⁰ The Guam Doctrine is briefly described in T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations, 1788-1977* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), pp. 217, 435.

⁸¹ McMahon had been named External Affairs minister in November 1969. USNA: Note marked "Secret" from American Embassy (Canberra) to Secretary of State, January 30, 1970; Folder "Defense Australia-US 1/1/70," Box 1688, State Department Subject-Numeric Files 1970-1973, Record Group 59.

⁸² Even if Australia did not consider its signature of NPT to be legally binding, and even if signature without ratification was the internal compromise, why did it sign the treaty *when* it did? It did *not* wait for Indonesia or China to sign first. Walsh suggests that the decisions of West Germany and Japan to sign may have affected Australia's calculus, though he admits that the evidence for it is weak. There is another potential hypothesis: in a letter to Paris, the French *chargé d'affaires atomiques* in Canberra suggested that signing the NPT may have been one of the "conditions" the British set for Australian participation in their proposed uranium centrifuge enrichment project. Gorton may thus have seen NPT signature but not ratification as a ticket to nuclear proliferation. (See below for the more on the enrichment story.) Archives of the Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, Fontenay-aux-Roses, France (CEA): Louis Dollet to Maurice Schumann, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, Note "A.S. signature par l'Australie du Traité sur la Non-Prolifération des armes nucléaires," 5 March 1970, fonds Haut-Commissaire M2.13.65.

⁸³ DFAT: Annex B to "Note" from J. Plimsoll to Minister (External Affairs), March 20, 1968. Document provided by Jim Walsh.

⁸⁴ "Note" from J. Plimsoll to Minister (External Affairs), March 20, 1968. See also Richard McGregor, "Revealed: Cabinet's N-arsenal plan," *The Australian*, January 1, 1999.

⁸⁵ The results of that study were summarized in Ian Bellany, *Australia in the Nuclear Age: National Defence and National Development* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1972).

⁸⁶ Though his game plan was to focus on the economic implications of "entering the nuclear age," Baxter sometimes slipped into public declarations of military intent. In August 1969 he told the press, "The growth of this industry and the expertise and the facilities which it will create will provide a basis from which an Australian government, at any future date, feeling that nuclear weapons were essential to provide this nation's security, could move with a minimum of delay to provide such means of defense." Cited in Cawte, *Atomic Australia*, p. 127.

⁸⁷ Cawte, *Atomic Australia*, p. 128.

⁸⁸ Keith Alder, *Australia's Uranium Opportunities: How Her Scientists and Engineers Tried to Bring Her into the Nuclear Age but Were Stymied by Politics* (Sydney: Pauline Alder, 1996), p. 41. This is a privately published essay by one of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission's former leading lights.

⁸⁹ USNA: Note marked "Confidential" on "Atomic Energy: US Company Interest in Bidding on Jervis Bay Nuclear Power Station, Australia," from American Embassy, Canberra to Department of State, February 13, 1970, folder "Atomic Energy—Australia," Box 2867 "Science," State Department Subject-Numeric Files 1970-1973, Record Group 59.

⁹⁰ NAA: "Submission by the Minister for National Development on the Establishment of a Wholly Commonwealth-Owned Nuclear Power Station," marked "Confidential for Cabinet," Submission 759, August 1969, series A5868, <http://www.naa.gov.au/COLLECT/cabpaper/1969_cabinet/html/Nuclear/Sub_759_001.htm>.

⁹¹ Pilita Clark, "PM's Story: Very much alive... and unfazed," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 1, 1999.

⁹² UNSW: Maurice Timbs, "Confidential Minute Paper re: Jervis Bay Nuclear Power Station, A.A.E.C. Commission Decision No. 3561," November 16, 1970, Philip Baxter papers (CN 1053/5). The rest of this paragraph is also based on this document.

⁹³ Alder, *Australia's Uranium Opportunities*, p. 49, and Keith Alder (former General Manager of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission), interview by author, Warrawee, New South Wales, Australia, October 1998.

⁹⁴ Alder, interview by author.

⁹⁵ Ann Mozley Moyal, "The Australian Atomic Energy Commission: A Case Study in Australian Science and Government," *Search* 6 (1975).

⁹⁶ Clarence Hardy, *Enriching Experiences: Uranium Enrichment in Australia 1963-1996* (Peakhurst, NSW: Glen Haven, 1996), p. 37.

⁹⁷ Alder, *Australia's Uranium Opportunities*, pp. 52-57. As previously noted, it may have been Gorton's interest in participating in the British centrifuge enrichment project that led him to sign (but not ratify) the NPT.

⁹⁸ Bertrand Goldschmidt, former head of international relations department, Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, interview by author, Paris, France, September 1998. Alder denied when interviewed that the AAEC wanted the machine for the reason Goldschmidt presumed, and anyway remarked that the machine remained a "white elephant" on the AAEC's Lucas Heights campus because the fissile material was never supplied.

⁹⁹ A 1972 confidential AAEC report noted with obvious interest, "The Pierrelatte plant was constructed over the period 1960-67 to provide enriched uranium for the French military program. The plant contains about 2000 stages arranged in a 4-1 cascade.... This number of stages appears low to achieve 90% enrichment." UNSW: W.J.K. Wright, "Report on Visit to CEA, Pierrelatte on 18th February, 1972," Confidential AAEC report, March 1972, Philip Baxter papers (CN 1053/11).

¹⁰⁰ UNSW: Handwritten notes, Philip Baxter Papers (CN 1053/11 and CN 1053/40).

¹⁰¹ Alder, *Australia's Uranium Opportunities*, p. 57.

¹⁰² RMN-NARA: Briefing Book for Meeting between President and Prime Minister John Gorton.

¹⁰³ Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁴ Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁵ Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia*, p. 353. "Larrikin" is an Australian term that can stand for "impish" or "naughty."

¹⁰⁶ Philip Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser: A Biography* (Richmond, Victoria: W. Heinemann, 1987), p. 64; Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ Gorton did however pride himself on puncturing the monolithic views of "Asia" that were common at the time. He contended that the danger to Australia was not Asia but a Communist Asia. See for instance his speech on international affairs, May 1, 1957, *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Senate, Session 1957, Second Session of the 22nd Parliament (Canberra: Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1957), pp. 524-528.

¹⁰⁸ This and following information taken from S.J. Angyal, "Sir Philip Baxter 1905-1989," *Historical Records of Australian Science* 8, 3, esp. pp. 184-5.

¹⁰⁹ Angyal, "Sir Philip Baxter," p. 185.

¹¹⁰ Philip Gissing, "Sir Philip Baxter, Engineer: The Fabric of a Liberal-National Country Style of Thought," unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of New South Wales, March 1998, p. 65.

¹¹¹ Gissing, "Sir Philip Baxter," p. 87.

¹¹² Gissing, "Sir Philip Baxter," p. 244.

¹¹³ Edwards, *A Nation at War*, pp. 323-4.

¹¹⁴ USNA: "Memo of Conversation" between William L. Morrison, shadow Foreign Minister (ALP) and Winthrop G. Brown, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for E. Asian and Pacific Affairs, May 25, 1971, folder "Pol-Austl 5/21/71," Box 2105, State Department Subject-Numeric Files 1970-1973, Record Group 59.

¹¹⁵ "Top atom men to go," *Financial Review* (Australia), April 19, 1973.

¹¹⁶ Alder, *Australia's Uranium Opportunities*, pp. 63-4.

¹¹⁷ It is true, however, that the *Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy* in 1975 argued that Australia should make sure that it maintained enough technical capacity to be able to reopen the issue of a sovereign nuclear deterrent at a later date. Ball, "Australia and Nuclear Policy," p. 325.

¹¹⁸ Bertrand Goldschmidt, interview by author. See also *Le Monde* (Paris), September 18, 1963 on New Zealand's early start as an anti-nuclear campaigner.

¹¹⁹ When Titterton wrote to the Australian Minister of Supply about the French testing program in August 1971, he seemed more interested in the French thermonuclear bomb design than in the possible health effects for Australia. Australian Academy of Sciences (AAS): Letter from Ernest Titterton to the Hon. R. V. Garland, MP, Minister for Supply, August 18, 1971, marked "Confidential," Personal papers of Ernest Titterton (MS 168), Series 12/8 (National Radiation Advisory Committee).

¹²⁰ "France's Futile Test," *The Guardian* (Manchester), May 12, 1973.

¹²¹ The Ministry of Supply had been one of the main proponents of an Australian nuclear deterrent in the past. So much for "where you stand depends on where you sit"!

¹²² M. Hanson and C. J. Ungerer, "Promoting an Agenda for Nuclear Weapons Elimination: The Canberra Commission and the Dilemmas of Disarmament," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 44 (December 1998), p. 537.

¹²³ Whitlam's visit to Paris at the beginning of 1975 repaired the damage. See "Retrouvailles franco-australiennes," *Le Monde* (Paris), January 7, 1975.

¹²⁴ The unions had only begun to mobilize on the nuclear question in response to the French tests of 1972, but the mobilization had started with a bang. The anti-nuclear protests were the largest mass demonstrations of the 1972 election campaign. See Harry and Jill Redner, *Anatomy of the World: the Impact of the Atom on Australia and the World* ([Australia]: Fontana/Collins, 1983). See also "L'Australie mobilisée," *L'Express* (Paris), May 28-June 3, 1973.

¹²⁵ RMN-NARA: John A. Froebe to Henry Kissinger, "Memorandum of Your Conversation with Australian Prime Minister Whitlam on July 30, 1973," document marked "Secret/Sensitive," National Security Council Files, Box 910. Kissinger replied to Whitlam that the French tests did not much bother the United States, thus putting the lie to another popular hypothesis, at least in France—that Australia was the stalking horse for an "Anglo-Saxon" anti-French conspiracy.

¹²⁶ The trend toward reinterpretation of the British nuclear tests as a national tragedy would culminate in the 1985 Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia, referred to earlier.

¹²⁷ E. M. Andrews, *Australia and China: The Ambiguous Relationship* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1985), p. 214-215; Millar, *Australia in Peace and War*, p. 417.

¹²⁸ Quote from *Uranium—Australia's Decision* (Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service, 1977), cited in Desmond Ball, "Australia and Nuclear Policy," in Desmond Ball, ed., *Strategy and Defence: Australian Essays* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 330.

¹²⁹ For details see Alder, *Australia's Nuclear Opportunities*, pp. 64-77.

¹³⁰ Richard Butler, "Australia and Disarmament," Working Paper No. 64, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, February 1989, p. 12.

¹³¹ Michael Hamel Green, *The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty* (Peace Research Center, Australian National University, 1990), esp. pp. 1-4 and 26-7.

¹³² Butler, "Australia and Disarmament," p. 14.

¹³³ See Kim Richard Nossal and Carolynn Vivian, "A brief madness: Australia and the resumption of French nuclear testing," Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 121 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1997). See also Prime Minister Paul Keating, "Pourquoi l'Australie dit non aux essais nucléaires," *Le Monde* (Paris), June 28, 1995; "Gareth Evans: Paris bluffe," *Le Figaro* (Paris), August 5-6, 1995; and "French ties cut by New Zealand and Australia," *Financial Times* (UK) June 15, 1995.

¹³⁴ Tony Barrell and Rick Tanaka, "Australian opposition to French nuclear tests and its confused nuclear stance," July 11, 1995, <<http://www.smn.co.jp/forum>>.

¹³⁵ Foreign Minister Gareth Evans claimed that there was no double standard in the previously cited interview with *Le Figaro* (Paris).

¹³⁶ *Report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1996), <<http://www.dfat.gov.au/dfat/cc/cchome/html>>.

¹³⁷ Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Executive Summary, August 1996, p. 7.

¹³⁸ Marianne Hanson, "Australia and Nuclear Arms Control as 'Good International Citizenship,'" Working Paper No. 1999/2, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, June 1999.

¹³⁹ "Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations: Joint Communiqué," <<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/americas/us/ausmin>>.

¹⁴⁰ The Australian reaction, apart from its verbal tone of outrage, was much more concrete than that of most other countries. It included the following: "Suspension of bilateral defense relations with India, including the withdrawal of Australia's Defense Adviser stationed in New Delhi, the cancellation of ship and aircraft visits, officer exchanges and other defense related visits. Australian Defense Force personnel currently training in India will be withdrawn. Australia will request the immediate departure of three Indian defense personnel currently at defense colleges in Australia. Suspension of non-humanitarian aid. Suspension of Ministerial and Senior Official visits." Statement of Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, May 14, 1998, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/pmb/releases/fa/fa059_98.html>.

¹⁴¹ Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 17.

¹⁴² J.F. Cairns, *Living with Asia* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1966), p. 5.

¹⁴³ Cairns, *Living with Asia*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Millar, *Australia in Peace and War*, p. 406. Note that Labor favored this policy before the US-China thaw.

¹⁴⁵ Alan Dupont, "Australia's Threat Perceptions: A Search for Security," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence*, No. 82, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, p. 66.

¹⁴⁶ USNA: Airgram from US Embassy, Canberra, to Department of State, December 3, 1973, folder "Def Austl," box 1687, State Department Subject Numeric Files 1970-1973, Record Group 59.

¹⁴⁷ Dupont, *Australia's Threat Perceptions*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁸ Cited in Dupont, *Australia's Threat Perceptions*, p. 95.

¹⁴⁹ USNA: Memo from Norman B. Hannah, Consul General, Sydney to the Ambassador, December 17, 1973, Box 2107, State Department Subject-Numeric Files 1970-1973, Record Group 59.

¹⁵⁰ There is a significant theoretical point here: while many analysts claim that "nationalism" or the quest for "national prestige" leads countries over the nuclear brink, in the case of Whitlam's Australia the quest for "national prestige" led it in precisely the opposite direction. On the role of national prestige in nuclear weapons decisions, see Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21 (Winter 1996-1997), pp. 54-86.

¹⁵¹ For instance, see Jim Green, "Australia's Nuclear History," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wollongong, <<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/pgrad/phdthesis/JimGreen/history.html>>; and Hamel-Green, *The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty*.

¹⁵² *La Croix* (Paris), editorial, August 4, 1995.