Region Is Thicker Than Blood?:
The British Empire in Australia's Foreign Relations

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Introduction: Beyond the debates over 'All the way with LBJ' or 'Engagement with Asia'

In the debates over the postwar Australian foreign policy, there have been two different directions. One is the tradition of close strategic cooperation with the 'great and powerful friends,' namely, Great Britain in the prewar era, and the United States since the early 1950s. One of the most well-known statements illustrating such an approach is the remark made by the Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt during the height of the Vietnam War. He promised the US President that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ.' Another direction is the attempts to consolidate friendly networks with Asia by establishing multilateral regional frameworks. This approach is represented by former Prime Minister Paul Keating's famous slogan of 'Engagement with Asia.' The Japanese audience may be familiar with media jargon *datsu-o nyu-a* (getting away from Europe, going into Asia), using the analogy of *datsu-a nyu-o* (getting away from Asia, going into Europe) advocated during the early Meiji period.[1]

There is no denying that Australia's foreign relations have steadily drifted towards the Asia-Pacific direction away from the Anglo-centric one in the past 60 years. But not a small part of the region includes the Commonwealth countries which share with Australia common British influence in political, economic and cultural aspects. It is no wonder if the Australian government leaders who had long been accustomed to the British centred external relations tried to face its neibouring region based on closer links with these countries tied by kinship. So this presentation tries to discuss the questions of how have Britain and its Empire, especially the Commonwealth countries in the Asia-Pacific region been placed in Australia's postwar diplomatic networks and what are the present meanings of the Commonwealth links for Australia's foreign relations.

Commanding question of how to fill the postwar partner vacuum

Let me start from pointing out the basic facts, by making simple comparison with New Zealand which may look very similar, even identical to Australia for the most of the audience. But definitely, Australia has been far more extroverted than New Zealand. Australia has participated in every war fought by the American soldiers throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. New Zealand not only declined to send troops to Iraq, but also has refused entry of American ships which cannot deny carrying of nuclear weapons since the 1980s. This

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[1] For example, see Ken Suzuki, " 'Datsu-o nyu-a' soten ni Kyowasei iko mo uranau Go sosenkyo," *Asahi Shimbun*, January 29, 1996.

contrast derives from the strong sense of threat or insecurity traditionally held by the Australians. Sparsely populated on the vast continent, the Australians who had enjoyed high standard of living were anxious about being swallowed by neighbouring, densely populated, but culturally quite different Asia. The history of Australia's white tribes started with the transportation, sending of convicts. This means that the early white Australians were intentionally taken away by the government authorities from Britain and dumped on the unknown arid island continent thousands miles away from home. It is no wonder that they held strong senses of isolation and anxiety and the resultant sense of reliance on the mother country. Luckily enough, the Australians could establish the rich society sustained by high and relatively uniform standard of living towards the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the chronically small population and the long distance from Britain had always aroused the strong sense of insecurity.[2]

Such geopolitical factors drove prewar Australia into two basic policies in terms of overseas relations. Firstly, it demonstrated the strong allegiance to Britain in order to make it sure that the world's strongest Navy would lend a hand in emergency. In return, Australia sent a large number of troops to the other parts of the world and let them fight and bleed for Britain. Out of 330,000 young Australians sent to Europe and Middle East during World War I, 60,000 could not come back alive home. Secondly, it established White Australia to prevent lower wage labour and social unrest by maintaining Anglo-Irish cultural homogeneity. This notorious policy to prohibit the entry of alien Asia-Pacific immigrants have something in common with Australia's attempts to keep German and French presence away from its neighbouring sphere such as New Guinea and New Hebrides in the late nineteenth century, in that the Australians tried to alienate these relatively smaller threats on their own capacity. However, the Japanese military offensives after the Pearl Harbour undermined the credibility of these traditional security policies. For the first time, the sense of insecurity turned out to be reality. The Australian governments after the Pacific War were thus faced with the imminent task of reorgansing its defence strategy.

The Labor governments of the 1940s tried to reorientate Australia's foreign relations. The 1942 New Year's article by the Prime Minister declared that Australia would 'look to America free of any pangs' arising from its kinship with Britain. Although the Australian soldiers did fight hard side by side with their American friends, diplomatically Canberra's voice was not heard so seriously by Washington. So the Labor government tried to pursue its new security strategy by enhancing regional cooperation through the Commonwealth links. In 1944, Australia concluded the so-called ANZAC Pact with New Zealand and declared that the South Pacific was their region of utmost interest. Its foreign minister looked to India as one of the promising counterparts in regional cooperation. In the advent of the Cold War, however, Australia was too small to turn such new initiative feasible.

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[2] Stuart Ward, "Security: Defending Australia's Empire," in *Australia's Empire*, ed. Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 232–46.

The conservative Coalition governments (1949–72), which maintained its reign for more than two decades, took more realistic approach and it established the alliance with a new 'great and powerful friend' with the conclusion of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951. For some royalists such as Prime Minister Robert Menzies (1949–66) who uncritically supported Britain in the 1956 Suez Crisis, it sounded heartbreaking to endorse alliance documents without British signature, but the anti-communism logic was enough for the conservative politicians to fully accept the strategic realities. They fell into the similar pattern of thinking to their predecessors, by vigourously sending troops to the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Despite those differences, there were some commonalities between the Labor and the Coalition approaches in the early postwar period. Firstly, the Australian politicians of this time, more or less, shared the sentiment called 'British race patriotism.' According to Stuart Ward, 'British race patriotism' is the 'idea that all British peoples, despite their particular regional problems and perspectives, ultimately comprised a single indissoluble community through the ties of blood, language, history and culture.'[3] In Australia, 'British' was embraced by many people as the term to describe themselves as a nation comprised of the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish people in a harmonious manner on the *terra Australis*.[4] British race patriotism led the Australian leaders towards feeling comfortable to foreign relations centred on Britain or the Commonwealth.

When the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement was concluded in 1957, the Coalition government duly accepted to station Australian troops on the Malay Peninsula along with the British and New Zealand counterparts. Australia was also receptive to gradually taking over the British strategic roles in the South-East Asian region. While such moves by the Menzies government was argued in the context of anti-communist forward defence strategy, I would like to emphasise their significance as the emergence of Australia's commitment to regional stability, as Australia's strategic presence on the Malay Peninsula culminated in the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) in 1970 which has been still active today as one of the important regional forums for security dialogue.

Despite their British race patriotism, the postwar government leaders had to realise that they had to seriously consider Australia's foreign relations beyond the familiar framework of the Commonwealth. The experience of the Pacific War compelled them to recognise the strategic significance of the Dutch East Indies for Australia's security. The 1940s Labor government, though at first felt comfortable to take sides with the Dutch, supported Sukarno's independence movement.[5] Although the Coalition politicians were critical against such an

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[3] Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 2.

[4] Neville Meaney, "Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31, no. 2 (May 2003): 126.

[5] Neville Meaney, "The End of 'White Australia' and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945–1990," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (November 1995): 176–77.

anti-colonial move while in opposition, they had to accept the reality and the need to get along with newly independent Indonesia, when they came into office from late 1949. The Coalition government was enthusiastic in setting up the Commonwealth-based aid program, namely the Colombo Plan in 1950. While driven by the Cold War logic of preventing communist infiltration, one of its main objectives was accommodation of Australia's largest neighbour on the north into the multilateral aid forum, as shown by the fact that Australia was quite eager to increase the membership of non-Commonwealth countries such as Indonesia. Australia adopted such careful an approach towards the unpredictable nationalist Sukarno government that it did not prejudice the Colombo Plan aid even when the Australian troops stood face to face against the Indonesian counterparts in the jangles of the Borneo Island during Indonesia's Confrontation against Malaysia, 1963–65.[6]

Shock and luck: Japan's role in reorientation of Australia's foreign relations

Australia tried hard to accommodate another very important non-Commonwealth country in the region into the Commonwealth framework, when Japan gained entry into the Colombo Plan in 1954. But the Japanese question had far more significant strategic, political and economic implications for Australia than the Indonesian one during the 1940s and 1950s. The strong antipathy against Japan due to the ill-treatment of Australian prisoners of war was so widespread that there was a mood not to admit any Japanese presence in Australia. The entry of Japanese fishery vessels even into the northern non-Australian territorial waters was blocked, and normalisation of trade was also out of the question for manufacturers and trade unions which might be exposed to tough competition from cheaper Japanese goods. Driven by the sense of urgency against losing Australia's fair share of trade in Japan due to the American bilateral approach in the advent of the surplus disposal, however, the Coalition government dared to negotiate out the 1957 Commerce Agreement, overcoming the strong wartime antipathy and fear of influx of cheap Japanese goods, in order to cultivate the promising Japanese agricultural market.

This was the victory of Australia's pragmatism to look to Japan free of any pangs arising from its traditional commercial networks with Britain in the name of imperial preference. Due to the careful management of the trade flows by both Japanese and Australian officials and businesses, Japanese exports did not disrupt Australian markets as much as expected, and the reinstalled bilateral economic relations proved mutually beneficial. Incrementally, the sense of mutual confidence as economic partners was built up among those people. However, this economic initiative of Australia sparked a sudden move from the mother country. In 1961, Britain made an application for entry into the European Economic Community. Together with South Africa's breakaway from the Commonwealth, the shock was such that even Menzies had to admit the need for Australia to shake away British race patriotism and seriously to commit itself to Australia's neighbouring region beyond the framework of the

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[6] Daniel Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2004), 94–96, 243.

traditional Commonwealth links.[7]

Luckily enough, the 1957 'economic rapprochement' with Japan paid off, as Japan took over Britain as the largest customer in 1967, after Australia began to export its newly discovered mineral resources to Japan which achieved high economic growth towards the mid 1960s, to symbolise the start of the 'honeymoon period.' It is noteworthy that Australia showed its willingness to extend its regional commitment through the Japanese channel. While the both government officials agreed to have annual review after the Commerce Agreement, in 1963 business leaders agreed to hold the first annual joint meeting of the Australia-Japan Business Cooperation Committee and the Japan-Australia Business Cooperation Committee. The bilateral economic dialogue in this forum brought forward the establishment of a regional business leaders' forum, the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) in 1967. It is Australia's pattern to develop bilateral links with Japan into the Asia-Pacific multilateral networks. Such effort for regional cooperation may be described as 'party diplomacy,' in that it has been done in an incremental manner, by meeting a number of times, accumulating dialogues over drink and dinners and thus building mutual confidence. In other words, this incrementalism was Australia's response to the need for adaptation to the new diplomatic realities. Such an approach may have been fit for the pragmatic Australians, as they repeated the similar pattern in the slow demise of White Australia. The Labor government introduced the large scale immigration intake program under the slogan of *Populate or Perish*, for the sake of strengthening national defence and building up the prosperous economy. As a result, Australia came to accept a number of refugees and immigrants from various non-English speaking European countries, nominally maintaining the White Australia policy. But this was the start of the end of White Australia, because the intake of culturally different ethnic groups, no matter how white they were, meant compromising Anglo-Irish cultural homogeneity of Australia. Towards the mid 1960s, the discriminatory immigration regulations for racial reasons were quietly dismantled.

Whitlam reorientated, Fraser followed and Hawke cemented

While such evolution of Australia's foreign relations away from the Anglo-Commonwealth centred into the Asia-Pacific oriented emerged in a quiet incremental manner, it was the Labor government under Gough Whitlam (1972–75) that introduced symbolic reorientation of Australia's foreign relations. He advocated 'more independent' foreign policy, independent of 'great and powerful friends.' Such an approach was suspected by Washington as anti-American still under the Cold War, and the Australian electorate felt anxiety about alienating the US ally. The hazardous approach to Washington affected the credibility of the Whitlam government so much in domestic terms that the post-Whitlam Labor Party became so cautious as not to be mistrusted as anti-American. By the 1980s, there developed the bipartisan support over the maintenance of friendly relations with the US ally

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[7] Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*, 179.

between Coalition and Labor. On the other hand, Whitlam behaved carefully in an attempt to achieve symbolic independence from Britain, as *Advance Australia Fair* replaced *God Save the Queen* as national anthem without fuss in 1975.

However, another attempt of the Whitlam government for symbolic independence affected relations with Japan. Resource nationalism diplomacy stirred up the national sentiment for 'buying back our farm' to discourage Japanese mining investment. One of the reasons for the trade frictions over cutbacks of coal, iron ore, beef and sugar purchases by the Japanese was Australia's excessive persistence in contract terms and inflexibility to negotiate the economic predicaments out. In other words, this time the Australians adopted too legalistic, un-Asian approaches. In the field of non-economic, cultural and human exchanges, however, Whitlam's symbolic approach proved correct in that the government made attempts to promote institutionalisation of Australia-Japan relations by proposing negotiation for a Nippon Australia Relations Agreement (NARA) and establishment of an Australia Japan Foundation. The deliberate attempts to broaden relations with Japan, the country which was not much familiar to the ordinary Australians, had an effect to demonstrate government's determination to promote exchanges with Asia to the domestic arena. The same logic can be applied to the introduction of multiculturalism by the Whitlam government, in that it conveyed government's message delivered to international as well as domestic audience that Australian could no longer afford to accept racial discrimination. Thus Whitlam's symbolism had the effect of establishing founding stones to give clearer reorientation to the Australians who had felt a bit lost, realising that British race patriotism no longer worked.

The Coalition government led by Malcolm Fraser (1975–83) played a role to settle the changes brought by Whitlam among the Australian public. The Fraser government immediately passed the bill to establish AJF and concluded the Basic Treaty for Friendship and Cooperation with Japan in 1976. The Asia-Pacific multilateral diplomacy since the 1960s was also buoyed when Fraser agreed with his Japanese counterpart Masayoshi Ohira to activate regional cooperation in 1980. Subsequently the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) was established. Although Fraser tried to set up a new direction of Australia's regional cooperation by holding the Commonwealth Head-of-Government Regional Meeting, it was a product of Fraser's sheer idea and did lack the realities. For Fraser, the Commonwealth proved only effective as a forum to raise strong criticism against the apartheid.[8] An extremely important achievement by the Fraser government is the massive intake of Indochinese refugees. Since the Coalition government supported multiculturalism in a quiet manner without fanfare, the Australians could stay calm and could understand the humanitarian needs and the strategic importance of admitting the largest mass of culturally very different ethnic groups, amounting to more than 200,000 within a decade, and they duly accepted further multiculturalisation of their society.

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8) Alan Renouf, *Malcolm Fraser and Australian Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Australian Professional Publications, 1986), chap. 8.

The Labor government led by Bob Hawke (1983–91) further cemented Australia's 'enmeshment with Asia,' in Hawke's words. Its symbol is the successful establishment of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) by hosting its inaugural meeting in Canberra in 1989. But this symbol was sustained by Australia's persistent diplomatic efforts of Asian style through dialogue and persuasion, in collaboration with Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry. By this time, it had become apparent for the Australian public that the Australian economy had no alternative but to develop closer relations with Asia, and otherwise it would not be able to overcome the economic crisis since the early 1980s. In fact, the maintenance of friendly relations with Japan bore fruits, as the 1980s saw the remarkable rise of Japanese tourists and students visiting Australia as handy foreign currency earners. Providing so much employment opportunities with local communities, Japanese resort investments no longer sparked such strong anti-Japanese sentiments as in the 1970s.[9] Although the resources export to Japan started to show the sign of dwindling, this setback was well made up for by the rise of the Asian newly industrialised economies. Since closer links with Asia proved extremely beneficial, the Australians had become receptive to the Hawke government's further pursuit for multiculturalism. Indeed, multiculturalism seemed to attract more tourists and other business opportunities, and it did sound real that racist outlook would affect its Asian business links severely and that Australia desperately needed to shrug off the notorious image of White Australia. Since Hawke's period coincided with Australia's worst economic crisis in the postwar period, such an argument should have sounded more credible.

Overall, during the Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke periods, Australia adopted a careful, non-intermeddling approach towards the Asia-Pacific region. Ironically enough, this approach is specifically illustrated by the fact that all of these governments adopted non-intervention policy towards Indonesia's forceful annexation of East Timor since 1975. Such an approach seems to be in line with Australia's postwar traditional policy of keeping a certain distance with and not antagonising Indonesia.

Keating's symbolism and Howard's symbolic reactions

With the successful launch of APEC, by the early 1990s it looked apparent that the direction of Australia's new foreign relations was firmly oriented towards economically buoyant Asia, irrespective of the Commonwealth links. It was Prime Minister Paul Keating (1991–96) who tried to introduce a new framework of political thinking, founded on Hawke's achievements of the Asia-Pacific diplomacy and multiculturalism. For this purpose, delivering a message of 'Engagement with Asia,' Keating officially proposed a move to a Republic of Australia and introduced the Native Title Act in 1993. He aimed at the political effect to impress both the domestic public and Asia's neighbours that Australia had

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[9] For this topic, see Chris Pocarier, "The Controversy over Japanese Investment in Australia, 1987–1991: Context and Lessons," *Japanese Studies* 24, no. 2 (September 2004).

transformed into a new country which proudly embraced cultural diversity and generosity. Keating extended Hawke's commitment to Asia into security fields, in order to impress the regional leaders with Australia's sincere willingness to be engaged with their people. Australian troops played a central role in the peacekeeping in Cambodia, where they cooperated well with Japan's Self Defence Force (SDF). However, Keating's emphasis on symbolic change was received by the average Australian people as a symbol of political correctness and negativism of Australian traditions, imposed by cultural elites.

Capitalising on such public sentiment, the Coalition government led by John Howard (1996–2007) tried to counter Keating's symbolism with traditional values. Although Howard was compelled to convene the Constitutional Convention in 1998 and it was decided that a referendum for constitutional amendment should be carried out next year, the republicanism movement had lost momentum by the time of the voting, as Howard successfully depicted the republicanism as an elite-led trendy issue which was irrelevant to the daily lives of the ordinary Australians. Moreover, the republican side was divided over the question of how to choose a president of an Australian republic. Not a few of those who advocated popular election voted against the proposed republic model to select a new head of the nation by two-thirds majority of the federal parliament.[10] As a result, to the eyes of the monarchists such as Howard, the republicanism debates were comfortably turned down.

In diplomatic terms, Howard's strong attachment to the US ally was more than apparent, as he described Australia as 'deputy to US sheriff' in the region, in the wake of the East Timorese crisis in 1999, only to offend Asia's leaders. But the advent of the war against terror after 9/11 consolidated Howard's political stance, as he joined the 'coalition of the willing' in fighting side by side with the American soldiers in Afghan and Iraq. The conservative side could enjoy strong domestic support, as the sense of imminent threat and insecurity reemerged within the society, especially against the Muslims. Backed by this strong political position, Howard could remain unequivocal in his refusal of 'symbolic reconciliation' with the Aborigines including apology and his deep scepticism about multiculturalism. Instead, he emphasised Australia's traditional values such as 'mateship' and tried to depict Australia as a country of Western culture. These developments were Howard's symbolic counteraction against Keating's symbolism of newly reborn Australia.

In the fields of pragmatic management of regional affairs, however, the Coalition government recognised the fact that the engagement with Asia was no longer reversible. During the Asian Currency Crises in 1997, Australia alongside with Japan, kept on giving financial assistance to the damaged Asian economies. 9/11 and the 10/12 Bali bombing terror in 2002 made it inevitable for Canberra and Jakarta to develop close regional cooperative networks for counter-terrorism. Furthermore, despite the apparent differences in their

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[10] John Warthurst and Malcolm Mackerras, "Constitutional Politics: The 1990s and Beyond," in *Constitutional Politics: The Republic Referendum and the Future*, ed. John Warhurst and Malcolm Mackerras (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2002), 22–23.

approaches to relations with Asia, Keating and Howard have one thing in common in that both former Prime Ministers achieved institutionalisation of security cooperation ties with Indonesia. In 1995, Keating signed the Australia-Indonesia Agreement on Security Cooperation with President Suharto. Significantly, it reinforced Australia's web of regional security networks founded on FPDA.[11] Although Keating's security agreement with Indonesia was discarded due to the turmoil over mishandling of East Timor's independence, the Howard government reestablished the so-called Lombok Treaty for security cooperation with his counterpart under President Yudhoyono in 2006. From the viewpoint of strategic reality, it was most pragmatic for both Prime Ministers to maintain engagement with the most populated Islamic country in the world neighbouring on the north.

It is also noteworthy that security dialogues and exchanges with Japan started from Keating's period, in response to the end of the Cold War. These emerging security ties with Japan, though not so visible, steadily accumulated solid achievements, and under Howard were institutionalised in the shape of the Australia, Japan and US Tripartite Security Dialogue in 2006 and the Australia-Japan Joint Declaration of Security Cooperation (JDSC) in 2007. It should have been beyond imagination for the Australians of the early postwar period that its Defence Force troops would guard the Japanese engineers of SDF in southern Iraq 60 years on. With Indonesia and Japan firmly integrated into its regional strategic frameworks, now the direction of Australia's contemporary foreign relations seems to have been firmly locked with the Asia-Pacific region.

Conclusion: The meaning of the Commonwealth for Australia's regional diplomacy

The Commonwealth framework did not fully fit well with Australia's postwar Australia regional diplomacy. For it was imperative for Australia to overcome the problems with the two major non-Commonwealth countries, that is, of maintaining security over Indonesia and of forging relations with Japan from wartime antipathy into lucrative trade. Hence, it was most appropriate for Australia to develop regional links that would encompass the familiar Commonwealth countries in the Asia-Pacific and include Indonesia and Japan. Sharing common commercial interests, Australia could expand prosperous economic relations with Japan as early as the mid 1960s, and they became the core of Australia's regional diplomacy, bringing about multilateral economic cooperation leading to APEC. In its quest for such diplomatic direction, Australia adopted careful, incrementalist approach, which proved quite appropriate to the Asian style. Two nations' relatively isolated positions in the Asia-Pacific region may have driven them much closer with each other, as both Japan and Australia shared the "historical debts" in the Pacific War and White Australia. On the other hand, the modest approaches of the Japanese in both diplomatic and commercial arenas, should have helped their Australian counterparts to develop a sense of mutual confidence. Australia's pragmatist

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[11] Nancy Viviani, "Australia and Southeast Asia," in *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs, 1991–95*, ed. James Cotton and John Ravenhill (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 155–56.

tradition was a powerful weapon in mixing with the Asians, making full use of their favourite 'party diplomacy.'

For the postwar Australians, the cultural ties binding the Commonwealth together should have been not only welcome but also indispensable. It is hard to imagine Australian lives without cricket and rugby test matches. It is no wonder that Australia tried to utilise this vestige of imperial framework in their initial trial for regional diplomacy, as was the case in the making of the Colombo Plan. The Australian politicians and officials were pragmatic enough to leave this new forum for regional cooperation as flexible as possible, making the most of 'party diplomacy' at the post-conference dinners and drinks and extending its membership outside the Commonwealth.[12] So it was quite natural development for Australia to pursue regional economic cooperation with Japan when Britain started to show the move to withdraw from the Asia-Pacific region. Then Australia tried to expand and diversify the bilateral relations with Japan, starting from economic relations as benchmarked by the 1957 Commerce Agreement, through cultural and human exchanges as driven by the 1976 NARA Treaty, and into political and security cooperation as symbolised by the 2007 JDSC. In the process of these step-by-step developments, any differentiation of the Commonwealth from the other Asian partners no longer makes sense in Australia's foreign relations nowadays, because they are fully amalgamated in the name of the Asia-Pacific region.

Then finally can I pose a question? Why did Australia need to institutionalise Japanese relations at these turning points as above? In the event, Australia also concluded the security cooperation agreements with Indonesia. My temporary argument is that since Japan and Indonesia are very important for Australia, but not a Commonwealth member. Australia would not need a security 'agreement' with Commonwealth countries. FPDA is not an 'agreement' but just an 'arrangement.' It would be much easier to communicate, without written documents, with Commonwealth members sharing similar cultural backgrounds. But Australia had to confirm the goodwill of Japan and Indonesia to sustain stable cooperative relations by concluding various kinds of agreements, because Australia needed to develop mutual confidence with these countries and these agreements worked well in inspiring confidence. With security agreements concluded, now the links with these two countries seem to have entered the new stages of stability and maturity.

In this respect, it is interesting to point out a new medium for communication between the Australians and the other members of the Asia-Pacific region. From 2006 on, Australia completely entered Asia in the soccer world. Now we see the good rivalry between Japan and Australia for qualification to FIFA 2010. An Australian commentator said, "we look at the Socceroos against Japan in the same context as the Bledisloe Cup, or the Ashes series."[13] Though sounding a bit exaggerated, we should understand that such a remark was not only the outcomes of Australia's successful soccer campaign, including its first World Cup victory

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[12] Oakman, *Facing Asia*, 238.

[13] Michael Cockerill, "Big in Japan," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 21, 2007.

in 2006 but also the sense of intimacy founded on the modest but stable evolution of the postwar Japan-Australia relations. Then another commanding question will emerge: how should Australia accommodate China into its regional diplomatic framework. With fluent mandarin speaking Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2007–) at the helm, again, pragmatic incrementalism will do.