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Attitude Matters: Public opinion in Australia towards defence and security

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Ian McAllister came to Australia in 1980 to take up a position at The Australian National University and is currently a professor of political science in the Research School of Social Sciences at The Australian National University. He has previously held chairs at the Australian Defence Force Academy and the University of Manchester. His most recent books include *The Cambridge Handbook of the Social Sciences in Australia* (coeditor) and *How Russia Votes* (coauthor). He is currently working on patterns of democratization in Russia and Eastern Europe, and on a book-length study of the post-1968 conflict in Northern Ireland. He has been a co-director of the Australian Election Study since 1987, serves as chair of the 50-nation Comparative Study of Electoral Systems group, and is a coeditor of the *Australian Journal of Political Science*.

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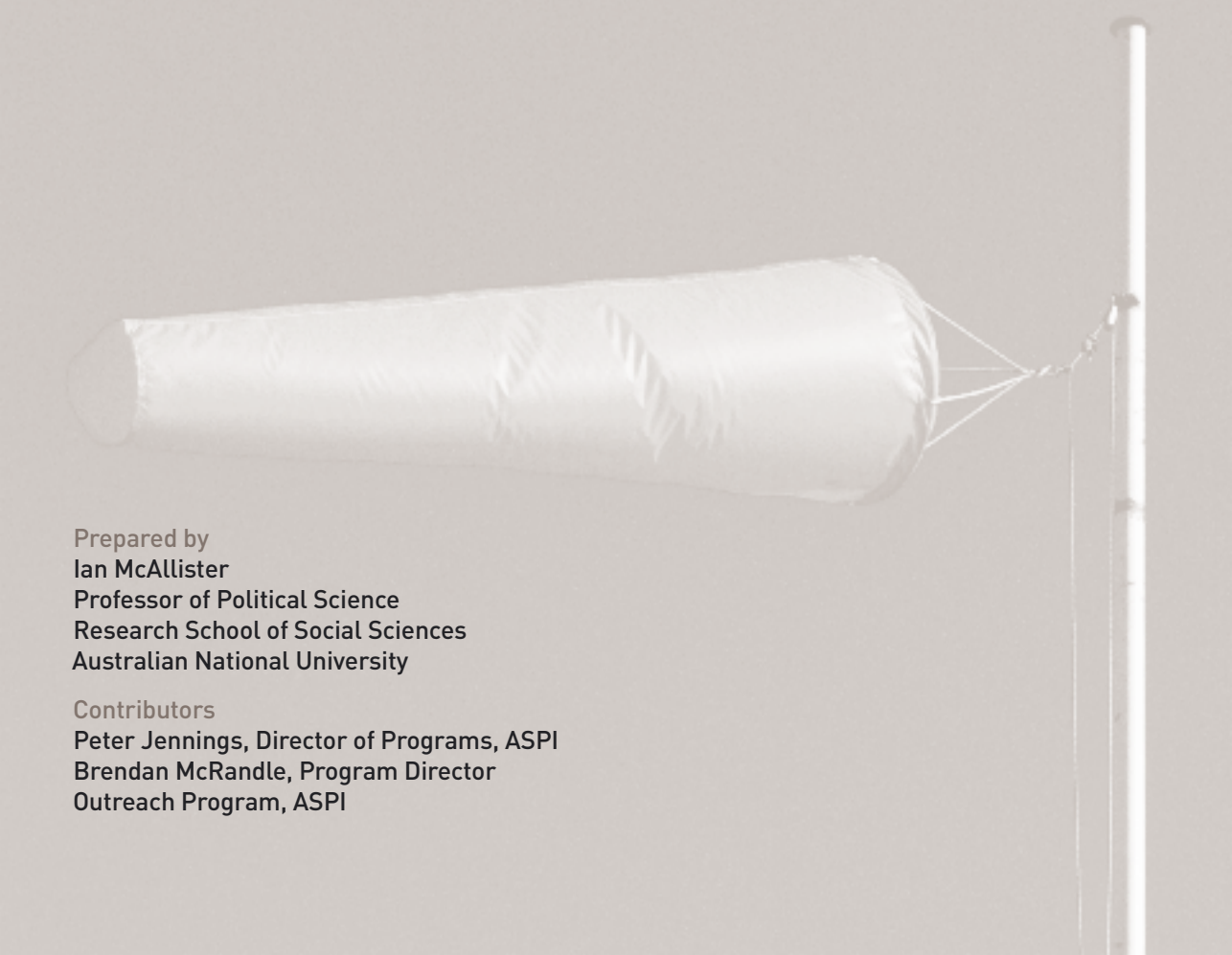

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Contents

Director's introduction

Australians seem to have an abiding fascination with opinion polls. Polls provide insights into how we as a community think about certain issues. They can either help reinforce our own views or challenge us when our views appear to be out of sync with the majority.

Aside from the curiosity we have about opinion polls and the findings they contain, public opinion is itself an important part of policy making in our liberal democratic political system. Public opinion helps to shape public policy and from time to time can bring about large changes in real policy outcomes. In Australia over recent years defence and security has attracted more attention from the pollsters than during the relatively stable decades of the 1980s and 1990s. Their interest in defence as a policy area reflects the profound changes that are taking place in the international environment.

In this paper we have set out some findings about how Australians have responded to questions about our security over more than a quarter of a century. It charts the change in attitudes towards defence since the time of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, through the years to the end of the Cold War, to the contemporary issues facing communities and policy makers today—global terrorism and political change in our region.

Attitude Matters draws on several sources to sketch public opinion on some of the core defence and security issues. The bulk of this study was undertaken by Professor Ian McAllister, Professor of Political Science, at the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. Professor McAllister is one of Australia's leading academic experts on public opinion and he has charted community views on defence and security policy through the Australian Electoral Survey (AES)—a major poll of Australians coinciding with each general election. His work gives us a unique opportunity to take a long view of public opinion, mapping questions asked over several election cycles and reflecting the public mood in the context of major global and domestic events. The data encompasses AES surveys from as far back as the late 1960s through to the last federal election in 2001. I also

want to thank the Department of Defence for allowing us to use data from surveys they commissioned in 2000, and not previously made public.

In addition to these studies, we have included some other more recent work. Over the last year ASPI has visited several regional centres and some larger cities as part of our efforts to engage the community in public debate and discussion about the nature of the security challenges facing Australia today. Brendan McRandle and Brendan O'Loghlin have led this project. The results of our meetings are captured in a separate section of this publication, under the title of *Listening to Regional Australia*. The views of people in the community are provided in a narrative summary and cover some of the major issues concerning Australians today.

We have also included some data from separate polling undertaken by Mr David Collins of Market Attitude Research Services. Mr Collins has provided regular updates to ASPI on some key questions. We thank him for his sustained interest in the defence debate and his generosity in undertaking and presenting his findings to us on a regular and *pro bono* basis.

Finally, I need to acknowledge the work of Peter Jennings and Brendan McRandle at ASPI. They have drawn this work together quickly and presented us with some fascinating snapshots of Australian opinion on defence issues. They will work again with Professor McAllister to provide a further update to this work early next year, taking account of the next Australian Electoral Survey in late 2004 or early 2005.

Responsibility for this paper rests with Peter Jennings, Brendan McRandle and with me.

Hugh White
Director

Executive summary

Defence as a political issue

Following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, defence and terrorism became national election issues in Australia for the first time in several decades. Overall, 51 percent of voters in the 2001 federal election considered defence and national security 'extremely important' issues, compared to 66 percent who mentioned health and 65 percent who mentioned education. This compares with 25 percent mentioning defence as 'extremely important' during the 1996 federal election.

Confidence in defence

Public confidence in Defence is high. Defence attracts substantially higher confidence than comparable public institutions, such as the courts and the legal system. Moreover, public confidence in Defence has increased significantly following the success of the East Timor operation.

While a majority of the electorate believes that Australia would not be able to defend itself if attacked, increasing numbers also believe that defence has become stronger in recent years.

Opinion towards government spending on defence over the past quarter of a century shows that views in favour of an increase in spending peaked at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980, and declined until the collapse of communism in 1990. Thereafter, there has been an increase in those favouring more expenditure, peaking in 2000 following the East Timor crisis.

Perceptions of security threats

The public's perception that there is a security threat to Australia peaked in 1980 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and again in 1990 following the Gulf War. After a low point in 1998, public perceptions of a threat have increased slightly.

Indonesia is viewed by the public as representing by far the greatest potential security threat to Australia, with the proportion naming Indonesia increasing consistently since the 1960s. China is the second most frequently mentioned threat, but the proportion has declined since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Russia was perceived as a major threat following the invasion of Afghanistan, but has declined thereafter. Since the late 1980s, there has been a modest increase in the proportion seeing Japan as a potential threat to Australia.

Support for overseas operations

There was overwhelming public support for ADF's role in East Timor. In 2000, no less than 99 percent of those interviewed believed that the ADF had performed well during the operation.

In general, the public is most supportive of operations that involve defending Australia, either directly (by repelling a foreign aggressor), or indirectly (by stopping illegal immigrants or drugs coming into the country). The public is least supportive of operations that are intended to assist allies and, most particularly, operations that are conducted on behalf of the United Nations.

At the time of the 2001 election, there was widespread support for assisting the fight against terrorism. However, opinion has been more divided over Australia's role in Iraq and while a majority were in favour of participating in the war prior to its commencement, since its conclusion, a majority believe it was not worth going to war.

The United States and the ANZUS Alliance

The public is generally positive in their attitudes towards the United States, and trust in the US to defend Australia increased significantly after the September 2001 attacks. There was least trust in the US at the end of the Cold War, and again at the time of the East Timor crisis.

There is widespread support for the ANZUS alliance as being important to Australia's defence, and that proportion has gradually increased since the early 1990s.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War, the 11 September and Bali attacks, and events in the Middle East, have all combined to undermine many of the certainties which informed the public's long-standing views on defence and national security during the latter half of the twentieth century. There is now greater volatility in public opinion on defence issues than at any time in the recent past.

As defence and security enter mainstream political debate, the public's awareness of the policy options is likely to increase. As a result, the traditional policy freedom that successive governments have enjoyed in the area is likely to diminish.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A decade ago, Australian public opinion was less favourably disposed towards defence than at any time since the end of the Second World War. The mainsprings of this important change were a series of international events that reduced tension: the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, more favourable relations with China and other Asian countries, and moves towards democratisation in the former Soviet Union. But in addition to global events, the change also stemmed from more fundamental shifts in the social and political values held by citizens within the established democracies. This was particularly the case among the young, who were being exposed to fundamentally different experiences and life-chances in the postwar world, compared to their older peers.[1]

In the past few years, feelings about defence have again started to show significant change. Events in East Timor following the referendum on autonomy in 1999, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, 11 September 2001 in the United States and the Bali bombings on 12 October 2002, have all combined to heighten the awareness of Australian citizens about dangerous undercurrents in the region. The net effect has been a change in public opinion in favour of more spending on defence, a greater perception of potential security threats, more confidence in the ability of Defence to deal with any threats that might arise, and greater support for the alliance with the US.

This report traces these changes in public opinion over the past quarter of a century, using a wide range of public opinion polls that asked similar questions of a nationally representative sample of the adult population. Clearly, any report that relies on poll material is likely to be selective in the material that it presents. To permit reliable comparisons over time, one criterion for the choice of polls is that they ask questions relating directly or indirectly to defence in much the

Demonstrators across President Johnson's motorcade, Sydney, October 1966.

same way. This necessarily excludes most commercial polls, which only infrequently ask questions about defence, and when they do, often alter the question or the coding, making it harder to track responses over time. A second criterion is that the survey questions of interest mainly concern current events. There is much longitudinal (time series) data on attitudes towards, for example, such issues as conscription, nuclear weapons or the Vietnam War, but it's now mainly of historical interest.[2]

Applying these two criteria to the wealth of opinion polls that have at different times examined opinions about defence results in a focus on the 1987–2001 Australian Election Study (AES) surveys, the 2000 Survey of Defence Issues, and the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA). All these surveys were based on nationally representative samples of the adult population aged 18 years and over (methodological and other details are provided in the Appendix).

Some earlier opinion polls, mainly by commercial polling organisations, dealt with such issues as the ANZUS alliance and threat perceptions. These are included because they are important in providing an extended longitudinal perspective on major issues, in some cases going back to the late 1960s. A detailed listing of these polls can be found in McAllister and Makkai (1992).

Measuring public opinion

Properly conducted, public opinion polls very reliably measure the views of the population as a whole. The reliability of a poll depends on many factors, but five are most important.

The **size of the sample** is central to reliability. A sample size of about 2,000 people will produce a 95% probability that a finding will be accurate to within about ±2%. For example, Figure 1 shows that 51% of the survey respondents in the 2001 AES considered defence and national security 'extremely important.' Based on the sample size of 2,010, we could be confident that this result would fall within about 2% either side of 51%—that is, between 49% and 53%. Commercial surveys typically sample around 1,000 respondents; their accuracy is usually within about ±3%.

The **type of sample** should always be taken into account: samples based on the national population will reflect the views of the whole country, but samples drawn from a state or a city will limit the generalisations that can be made.

The **question wording** needs to be short, clear and balanced, and on a topic about which the respondents will have sufficient knowledge to provide an informed response. Where a positive or a negative view is being sought—for example, 'Do you think that the government should spend more or spend less on defence?'—both views should be presented in the question.

The **survey method** should be taken into account. Most surveys rely on personal interviews, telephone interviews or mail self-completion; each method has its own inherent biases.

And the **timing of the fieldwork** is important. For example, a survey conducted in August 2001 asking a question about terrorism might have received a different response compared to a survey conducted after 11 September 2001.

Chapter 2

DEFENCE AS A POLITICAL ISSUE

Public opinion on defence originates in three types of lifetime experiences. The first is primary socialisation and personal experience in childhood and adolescence. Since most adults were socialised in the period since the Second World War—a period of unprecedented peace and material affluence for the Western democracies—it is hardly surprising that their value systems have emphasised social equality and the quality of life. This contrasts with the economic and physical security priorities of their parents, who grew up in the Second World War and earlier. For those growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, then, defence has traditionally been a second-order issue, behind such domestic priorities as education and health.

...it's clear that defence and security have now, for the first time in several decades, become major election issues for a significant proportion of the electorate.

A second influence on attitudes towards defence is socioeconomic status: those with better education and higher status are more internationalist and more interventionist (Oldendick and Bardes 1982). Indeed, studies have demonstrated that attitudes towards the use of military force are linked in a complex way to other foreign policy attitudes, with socioeconomic status playing a critical mediating role (Verba et al 1967). As educational attainments have increased across the population, and interest in and travel to other countries has expanded, we might expect that defence and security would become a more important issue for many individuals, other things being equal.

Parliament House, Canberra. Photo courtesy Australian Picture Library

The third influence is voting and elections. Political partisanship, which is held by nine out of ten voters,[3] helps to mould attitudes about many issues. Parties offer policies to the electorate, and this educates voters about existing policy options. Until relatively recently, Australia's traditional bipartisanship on most aspects of defence and foreign policy has limited the politicisation of defence—both parties were, for example, committed to the ANZUS alliance and to the war in Afghanistan. However, the differences between the parties over support for the war in Iraq, as well as the Tampa issue in 2001, have politicised defence and national security much more than at any time since the end of the Vietnam War (McAllister 2003).

Table 1 shows how defence and security rated as an issue in the 2001 federal election. Of the dozen major topics discussed during the campaign, defence ranked sixth and terrorism seventh. The highest rated issues were education, taxation and health, which when combined were the first choice of almost half of all voters. Refugees and asylum seekers ranked fourth—a clear response to the Tampa crisis and its aftermath—followed by the GST. If defence and terrorism are combined, security issues were the top-rated choice of around one in ten of all voters. While this was still a relatively small proportion of the electorate, the shift in concerns is significant when we remember that all federal elections since the Vietnam War have been almost exclusively about economic management.

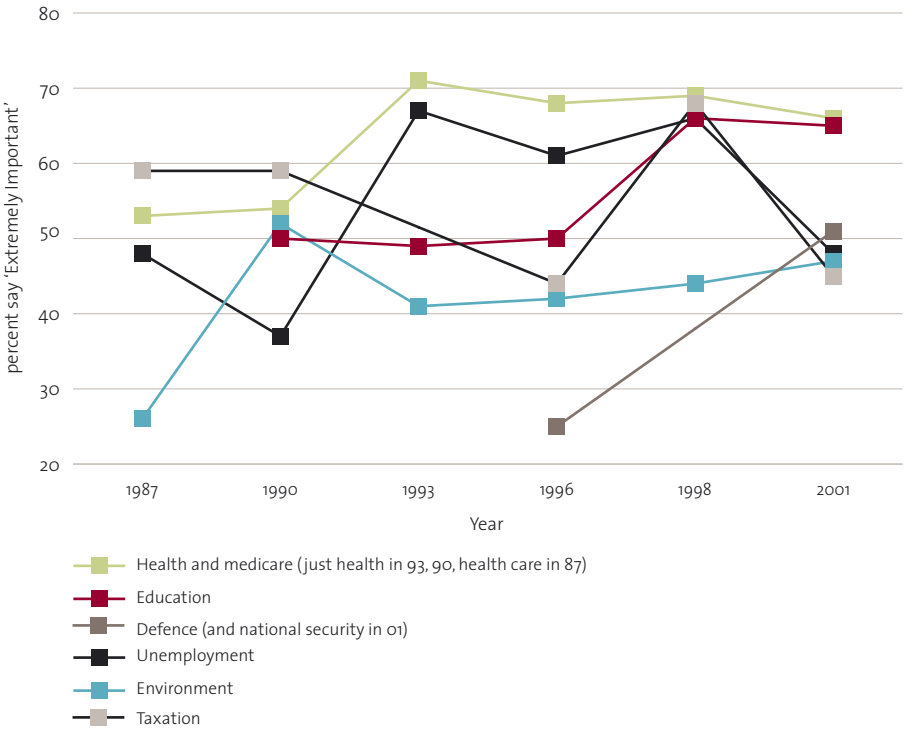
Table 1: The Importance of Issues in the 2001 Federal Election

		Mentions	
Rank		First	Second
1.	Education	17	16
2.	Taxation	16	9
3.	Health, Medicare	16	20
4.	Refugees, asylum seekers	13	12
5.	GST	13	9
6.	Defence, national security	6	6
7.	Terrorism	5	5
8.	Immigration	4	7
9.	Unemployment	4	6
10.	Environment	4	6
11.	Industrial relations	1	2
12.	Works' entitlements	1	2
	Total	**100**	**100**
	(N)	**(1,849)**	**(1,808)**

'Here is a list of important issues that were discussed during the election campaign. When you were deciding about how to vote, how important was each of these issues to you personally?' 'Still thinking about the same 12 issues, which of these issues was most important to you and to your family during the election campaign? And which next?'
Source: AES 2001.

Placing these election issues in a longitudinal perspective shows the significant jump in voters' mentions of defence and national security. Figure 1 shows that in the 1996 election just one-quarter of voters said defence was 'extremely important' to them in making their voting choice. In 2001 (the option wasn't given in the 1998 election) that proportion had more than doubled. By contrast, education and health have varied by just 17 and 18 percentage points respectively, with education being seen as 'extremely important' by an average of 56% of voters across elections, and health by 63%. In this context, it's clear that defence and security have now, for the first time in several decades, become major election issues for a significant proportion of the electorate.

Figure 1: Trends in opinion towards major election issues since 1987 (percent say 'extremely important')



1987: 'Here is a list of issues that were discussed during the election campaign. When you were deciding about voting, how important was each of these issues to you?' 1990–96: 'Still thinking about these same (1990: nine) issues, when you were deciding about how to vote, how important was each of these issues to you personally?' 1998–2001: 'Here is a list of important issues that were discussed during the election campaign. When you were deciding how to vote, how important was each of these issues to you personally? In 1987, four response categories were used; from 1990–2001, three categories.
Sources: AES 1987–2001.

In general, attitudes are less well formed on defence (and foreign policy) because the issues themselves aren't regularly and publicly debated by political elites.

Parliament House, Canberra. Photo courtesy Australian Picture Library

Public opinion about defence and security is complex, not just in how it evolves but in the influence that it can exert on the government of the day and the major political parties. In general, attitudes are less well formed on defence (and foreign policy) because the issues themselves aren't regularly and publicly debated by political elites. In turn, because of the inchoate nature of these areas, governments are much less constrained by voters' opinions about them. This pattern is similar in the US, where recent presidents, ordinarily poll-driven on most domestic issues, have been shown to be much less responsive to public opinion about foreign policy (Foyle 1999). The net effect is that public opinion on defence and national security doesn't dictate or lead what governments decide, at least in the way that public attitudes about health and education, for example, help to shape policy. Nevertheless, public opinion does provide a framework within which defence and national security policy is formulated, and establishes boundaries beyond which a government ventures only at its peril.

Chapter 3

CONFIDENCE IN DEFENCE

Public confidence in most of the major institutions of society has declined over the past two or three decades, as a consequence of media scrutiny and resulting subjective perceptions of performance (Papadakis 1999). In general, support for traditional institutions (church, police, defence forces) comes from older people and has remained relatively stable, while support for national political institutions (government, parliament, the parties) is very much contingent on partisanship, and the standing of the government of the day. Public confidence is therefore a useful summary measure of how the public views an institution or a profession, but it has to be placed in context, since the context may indirectly influence citizens' views. This section examines patterns of confidence in Defence (particularly the ADF), together with some of the components of that confidence—evaluations of the ability of Defence to protect Australia and of its efforts to provide more effective defence. Finally, we examine the public's willingness to pay more for defence.

> ...when people are asked about their confidence in a range of professions or institutions, Defence personnel and the institution of Defence are the most highly rated of all...

Usually, when people are asked about their confidence in a range of professions or institutions, Defence personnel and the institution of Defence are the most highly rated of all, with the possible exception

Defence offices at Russell, Canberra. © Defence Department

of doctors and ministers of religion. At the other end of the scale are members of state and federal parliaments, who are second only to car salesmen and real estate agents in overall public confidence (see McAllister 2000).

The 2003 Australian Social Attitudes Survey asked the respondents how they would rate a series of organisations, and Table 2 shows how Defence stands against three of them—the courts and the legal system, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), and the federal parliament. Defence is by far the highest rated organisation, with more than 8 out of 10 expressing a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence. Second is the ABC, with 71% confidence. At the other end of the scale, the federal parliament enjoys the confidence of just 4 out of 10 respondents, and the legal system, 3 out of 10. These results confirm the generally high esteem in which Defence is held by the general public; the only organisation among the other three that comes close is the ABC, which in any event is an exception to the general low standing of the mass media.

Table 2: Confidence in Institutions, 2003 (percent)

	Defence forces	Courts, legal system	ABC	Federal parliament
Great deal	25	4	17	4
Quite a lot	57	25	54	36
Not very much	16	47	25	45
None at all	2	24	4	15
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(4,055)**	**(4,082)**	**(3,861)**	**(4,022)**

'How much confidence do you have in the following organizations?'
Source: AuSSA 2003.

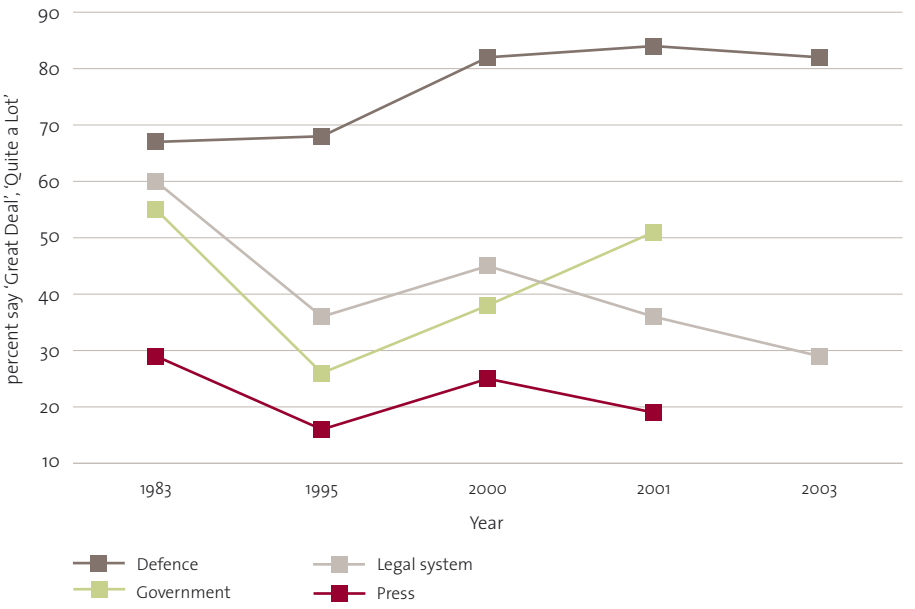
The longitudinal evidence, starting with a survey conducted in 1983 (Figure 2) confirms the high standing of Defence, and places the results in the context of changes in the confidence shown in other organisations. In 1983, 67% of those interviewed had confidence in Defence, compared with 60% in the legal system, 55% in the government and 29% in the press. Between 1995 and 2000 (and largely, we might guess, as a result of the East Timor operation) public confidence in Defence increased sharply to 82%, and it has remained at that level since. The standing of the legal system has been heading in the opposite direction, declining by more than half over the twenty-year period of the surveys.

Opinions about the press and the government were not sought in the same way in the 2003 survey, but the results for the previous surveys up to 2001 chart the slow decline in support for the press (with the exception of the ABC), which by 2001 had the confidence of just one in five. Variations in support for the government in Figure 2 are, of course, irretrievably linked to the fortunes of the incumbent party; the low point of 26% in 1995 marks the unpopularity of the Keating Labor Government at the end of 13 years of ALP governments. With the election of the Howard Coalition Government in 1996, the standing of the government increased to 38% in 2000 and 51% in 2001—a similar figure to 1983, when the popular Hawke Labor Government was entering office.

Confidence is, of course, a summary measure of opinion about defence, encompassing the individual's experiences, perceptions and views in a single figure. Disaggregating that single measure into its components is impossible, since the experiences it's based on vary from individual to individual and combine objective and subjective elements. Nevertheless, for many individuals, at least one component of confidence in defence is likely to be the perception that the Defence establishment can meet its most basic task: defending Australia in the event of an attack. Table 3 shows attitudes to this, along with whether or not the respondents believed that defence was stronger now than in the past. The results are available over three surveys, conducted over a short period (1998 and 2001), spanning the East Timor operation after 1999.

...for many individuals, at least one component of confidence in defence is likely to be the perception that the Defence establishment can meet its most basic task: defending Australia in the event of an attack.

Figure 2: Changes in public confidence in institutions, 1983–2003 (percent say 'great deal', 'quite a lot')



See Table 2 for question wordings; exact wording differs slightly between surveys. Defence is 'armed forces' in 1983, 1995, 2003 and 'defence forces' in 2000. 'Government' is 'government in Canberra' in 1983, 1995.
Sources: *World Values Surveys, 1983, 1995; Survey of Defence Issues, 2000; AES 2001; AuSSA 2003.*

Table 3: Attitudes to Australia's Defence Capabilities, 1998–2001

	Australia able to defend itself if attacked			Defence stronger now than ten years ago		
	1998	2000	2001	1998	2000	2001
Strongly agree	7	7	5	6	8	9
Agree	18	32	15	34	50	44
(Total agree)	*(25)*	*(39)*	*(20)*	*(40)*	*(58)*	*(53)*
Disagree	50	45	54	45	36	36
Strongly disagree	25	16	26	15	6	11
(Total disagree)	*(75)*	*(61)*	*(80)*	*(60)*	*(42)*	*(47)*
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,470)**	**(1,140)**	**(1,510)**	**(1,059)**	**(1,040)**	**(1,174)**

'Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements. ...Australia would be able to defend itself successfully if it were ever attacked. ...Australia's defence is stronger now than it was 10 years ago.' In 1998 and 2001 a 'neither' category was used, which has been omitted here.
Sources: AES 1998, 2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

In 1998, one-quarter of the respondents agreed that Australia would be able to defend itself if it were to be attacked, with half disagreeing and the remaining quarter strongly disagreeing. Just two years later, in the midst of the East Timor operation, the ADF's largest overseas deployment since the Vietnam War, a majority still disagreed with the statement, but agreement had increased from 25% to 39%. By 2001, opinions had returned to close to their 1998 level, with 20% agreeing with the statement but 80% disagreeing. The results suggest two conclusions. First, opinions about defence are strongly influenced by specific events involving the ADF, such as East Timor. Second, a clear majority hold the view that Australia couldn't defend itself if attacked, a view that has implications for Australia's treaty arrangements with the US, examined later in the report.

The second part of Table 3 categorises views about the strength of Defence compared with its strength 10 years before. Respondents were asked the extent to which the ADF was improving its ability to provide adequate defence. Once again, the experience of East Timor appears to have had a positive effect on opinion. In 1998, the balance of opinion (60% to 40%) was that Defence was not stronger at that time than it was 10 years previously. However, by 2000, the balance of opinion had almost completely reversed (58% to 42%) to agree with the statement. In contrast to views about Australia's ability to defend itself, where the 'Timor effect' dissipated quickly, by 2001 the balance of opinion was that Defence's capability had improved significantly in the previous decade.

Defence depends on the ability of government to provide adequate funding, which in turn depends on sufficient public support for that funding to be allocated to it by government, rather than to other government-funded services. Opinions about relative funding are hard to measure in surveys, partly because respondents seldom have firm views about it. It's also difficult to elicit firm views unless there's some form of contingent choice that forces people to choose between different services and prioritise them. Contingent choice questions have rarely been asked in surveys about defence funding, but data does exist on funding for five areas of government responsibility (without setting a fixed amount), and on defence spending over an extended period.

Table 4: Willingness to Pay More Taxes for Government Services, 2003

	Health and Medicare	Schools	Defence, national security	Environmental protection	Welfare benefits
Quite a bit more	16	14	11	11	6
A little more	52	50	44	43	28
(Total more)	*(68)*	*(64)*	*(55)*	*(54)*	*(34)*
Not willing	28	31	40	40	60
Can't choose	4	5	5	6	6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(4,116)**	**(4,067)**	**(4,081)**	**(4,062)**	**(4,066)**

'Here is a list of areas where the federal government spends money. Please tell us if you would be willing to pay higher taxes so the government could spend more in each of these areas?'
Source: AuSSA 2003.

The evidence suggests that just over half of the respondents in the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes believed that defence and national security deserved more funding, with about one-quarter saying there should be 'quite a bit more' funding. However, more respondents (around two-thirds) supported more funding for health and Medicare, and schools—both areas of major concern for voters. At the other end of the scale, just one-third supported more funding for welfare benefits, and only 6% thought that the increase should be 'quite a bit more'. These results are useful in determining the people's priorities for government funding, but because the respondents were not forced to allocate more funding for one area at the expense of another, the implications we can draw from the results are limited.

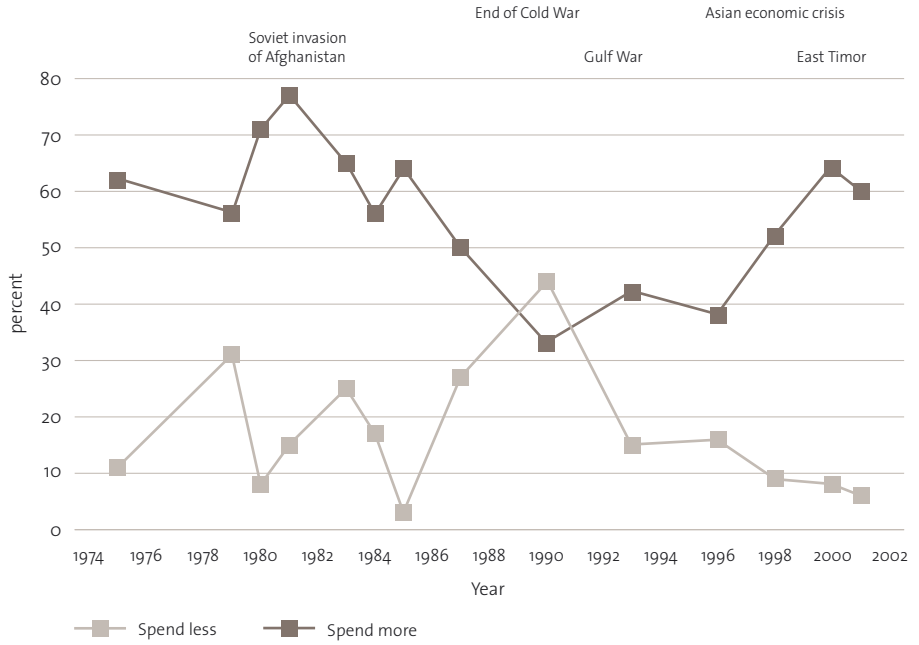
...just over half of the respondents in the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes believed that defence and national security deserved more funding... However, more respondents (around one-third) supported more funding for health and Medicare, and schools...

For the same reason, the conclusions we can draw from a question about whether to increase or decrease defence spending are also limited. However, the question has one advantage: it has been asked consistently over more than a quarter of a century. We can therefore compare support for increases and decreases across time, and by implication evaluate the impact of specific international events on the public's view of the importance of defence. These results are shown in Figure 3, which traces public support for increased defence spending starting in 1975.

The results suggest several findings. First, the changes in opinion are relatively slow and measured: public opinion responds gradually to specific external events. This is as we would expect, because the areas of defence and security were not highly politicised and there was no clear policy division between the major parties, at least until the war in Iraq.

The second observation is that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in 1990 had a profound effect on public opinion about defence. While support for increased defence spending had been declining consistently from the high point of 1981, just after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, by 1990 those supporting decreased spending narrowly outnumbered those in favour of an increase, for the one and only time in the 26-year period covered by the surveys. Thereafter, support for more defence spending has increased as a consequence of such events as the Gulf War in 1991–92, the Asian economic crisis, and East Timor. The last observation in the graph was collected immediately after the November 2001 federal election and just after the events of 11 September in the US; it shows a marginal decrease in support for more spending. However, further data will be required to make an objective assessment of the impact of 9/11 and the subsequent 'war against terror' on public opinion about defence spending.[4] [ASPI will publish a *Strategic Insight* early in 2005 using 2004 data].

Figure 3: Trends in opinion about defence spending since 1975



'Do you think that the government should spend more or spend less on defence? Exact question wordings vary between surveys.
Sources: 1975–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

The survey findings suggest that Defence is well regarded by the public, and while there is a clear view that Australia wouldn't be able to defend itself in the event of an attack (which has foreign policy implications), in the public's view Defence has significantly improved its capability. The extended time-series on defence spending shows dramatically how public views on defence are shaped by external events: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the East Timor crisis in 1999 brought peaks in support for more spending, and reached its nadir with the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War.

Chapter 4

PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY THREATS

Despite Australia having deployed its military forces to operations overseas on several occasions since the Second World War, in each case there was no direct threat to Australia's security. The Australian population has, therefore, not been faced with a direct challenge to the country's territorial integrity since 1945, and relatively few have any direct memory of the pre-1945 period. This undoubtedly has had a major impact on the public's perception of threats to Australia within the region.

The end of the Cold War understandably caused a sharp decline in threat perceptions; by the end of the decade just one in three Australians thought there was a potential security threat.

The period for which survey data are available begins only in 1969, so we know little about how the Korean War, the Malaya Emergency or the Indonesian Confrontation affected public opinion about Australia's security. This period also saw the winding down of the Vietnam War, and Australia's eventual withdrawal in 1972, so the public's perception of a security threat showed a decline from 54% in 1970 to 42% in 1975, at the end of the war. Thereafter, perceived threats increased significantly, peaking at 63% in 1980 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; through the first half of the 1980s, over half of the population saw a threat. The end of the Cold War understandably

caused a sharp decline in threat perceptions; by the end of the decade just one in three Australians thought there was a potential security threat.

Since 1980, the proportion seeing a potential threat to Australia has remained relatively constant, at about one in three of the population, with the major (but short-lived) exception of the Gulf War in 1990–91, when more than half saw a threat (see Goot 1992). It's notable that public opinion didn't react to the Gulf War in the same way as to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The end of the Cold War has clearly resulted in a fundamental change to public perceptions about potential threats to security. Even the events in East Timor caused only a small increase in threat perceptions. In other words, specific events still result in changes in public opinion, but without the Cold War backdrop of East–West confrontation, these opinions are likely to dissipate almost as rapidly as they emerge.

Figure 4: Perceptions of a security threat to Australia, 1969–2001

Responses to whether Australia faces a security threat. Exact question wordings and codings vary between surveys in relation to issues like timeframe for assessing a security threat.
Sources:1969–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Which countries are seen as representing a security threat, and how has the list changed over the period of the surveys? Table 5 shows the public's assessment of the potential threat posed by 7 countries, recorded in the 2001 AES.[5] First in order of importance is Indonesia, which was considered by 31% of the respondents in the survey to be 'very likely' to pose a threat. Overall, only about one in four of those interviewed believed that it was 'not very likely' that Indonesia would be a threat to Australia. Most respondents believed that none of the remaining seven countries was likely to pose a threat, ranging from China (58%) to Singapore (81%). There's a clear view, then, that the major potential threat to Australia is from Indonesia.

Table 5: Countries Representing a Security Threat to Australia, 2001						
Rank		Very likely	Fairly likely	Not very likely	Total	(N)
1.	Indonesia	31	42	27	100	(1,888)
2.	China	9	33	58	100	(1,792)
3.	Malaysia	6	29	65	100	(1,779)
4.	Japan	5	15	80	100	(1,788)
5.	Vietnam	3	17	80	100	(1,777)
6.	Singapore	3	16	81	100	(1,768)
7.	India	4	19	77	100	(1,782)

'In your opinion, are any of the following countries likely to pose a threat to Australia's security?'
Source: 2001 AES.

Figure 5 shows how opinions about Indonesia have changed. In the late 1960s, less than 1 in 10 of those interviewed believed that Indonesia was a threat; indeed, just before the invasion of East Timor in 1975, the proportion had actually declined to just 3%. Over the next three decades, the perceived threat from Indonesia increased consistently, reaching 1 in 5 after the Dili massacre in November 1991 and increasing to 3 in 10 after the events in East Timor following the referendum in August 1999. The only exception to this pattern is a sharp (and unexplained) drop in the late 1980s, registered in two sequential surveys.[6] The threat perceived by significant numbers contrasts sharply with official assessments, which have consistently suggested otherwise; indeed, the 1996 survey—when nearly 1 in 4 saw a threat from Indonesia—was conducted just three months after Australia signed a defence agreement with Jakarta (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998).

China emerges with almost a reverse pattern to Indonesia. Figure 6 shows that at the beginning of the period almost one-third of Australians regarded China as representing a security threat, but that figure declined consistently during the 1970s and 1980s. Contributing to China's decline as a perceived threat were the normalisation of relations between Australia and China in 1973 and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. By the late 1980s, with China's continuing good relations with the West and closer economic ties, just 1 in 50 Australians considered China a potential threat. That changed with the Tiananmen massacre in May 1989, and by 1996 around 1 in 6 thought China was a potential threat. Since then, this proportion has declined and appears to have stabilised again at about 1 in 10 of voters. To all intents and purposes, Indonesia has replaced China as the focus of the public's threat assessment.

In contrast to the citizens of the US or Europe, most Australians have rarely seen Russia as a major threat to Australia's security (Figure 7). At the height of the Cold War, only about 1 in 6 regarded Russia as a potential threat, rising briefly to around 4 in 10 in a short period following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

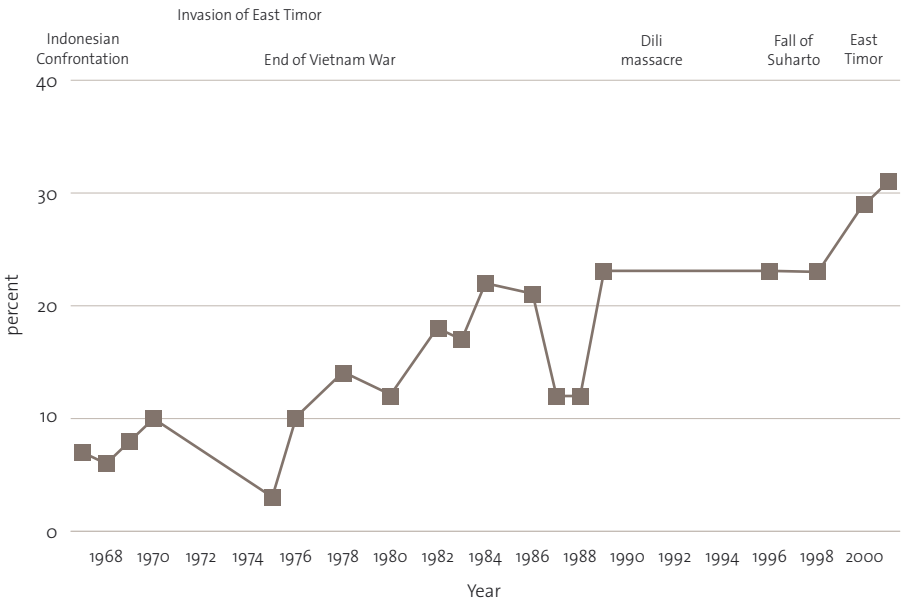
To all intents and purposes, Indonesia has replaced China as the focus of the public's threat assessment.

Similarly, few Australians have seen Japan as a threat to security since its defeat in 1945 (Figure 8). Until 1989, fewer than 1 in 10 perceived a threat from Japan; the trend suggested a slow decline as those with memories of the Second World War died. The quadrupling in the number seeing Japan as a threat in 1990, followed by a slow decline and reversion to the pre-1989 trend is difficult to explain. We might speculate that the death of Emperor Hirohito perhaps raised painful wartime memories for a short period.

Public perceptions of a security threat to Australia have been declining since the high point of the late 1970s. Currently, fewer Australians see an external security threat than at any time in the past thirty years, with the exception of the immediate aftermath of the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. Recent international events that impinged on public opinion in other ways—the East Timor crisis and 11 September being the most prominent—don't appear to have altered that pattern.

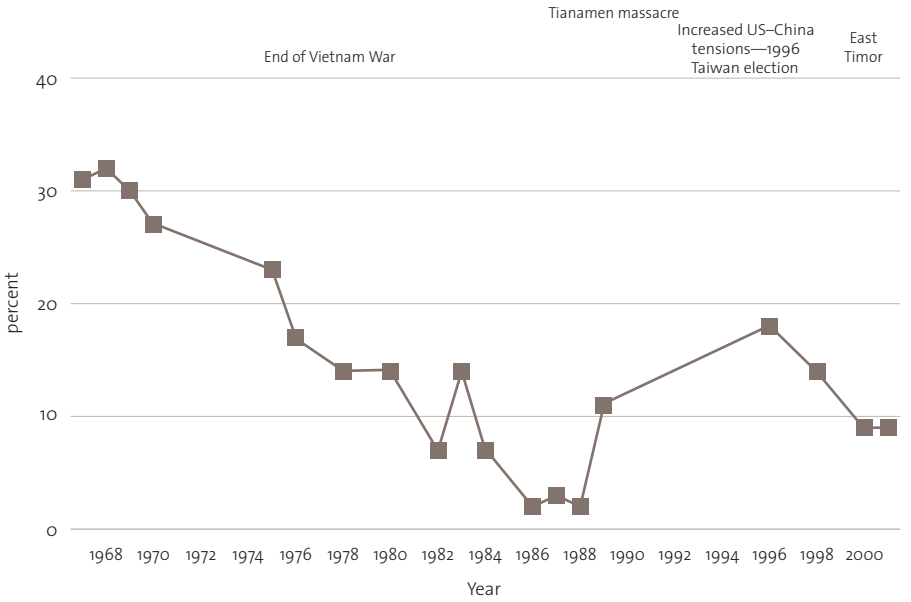
However, to the extent that the public identifies a security threat to Australia, there is a greater consensus than ever before that threat comes from one country: Indonesia. Notwithstanding improving bilateral relations, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, the public's concern about Indonesia has increased almost consistently since opinion polls first began to track it in the late 1960s. Moreover, the long-term trend, combined with recent events, suggests that there will be little change to that pattern in the future.

Figure 5: Indonesia as a security threat to Australia, 1967–2001



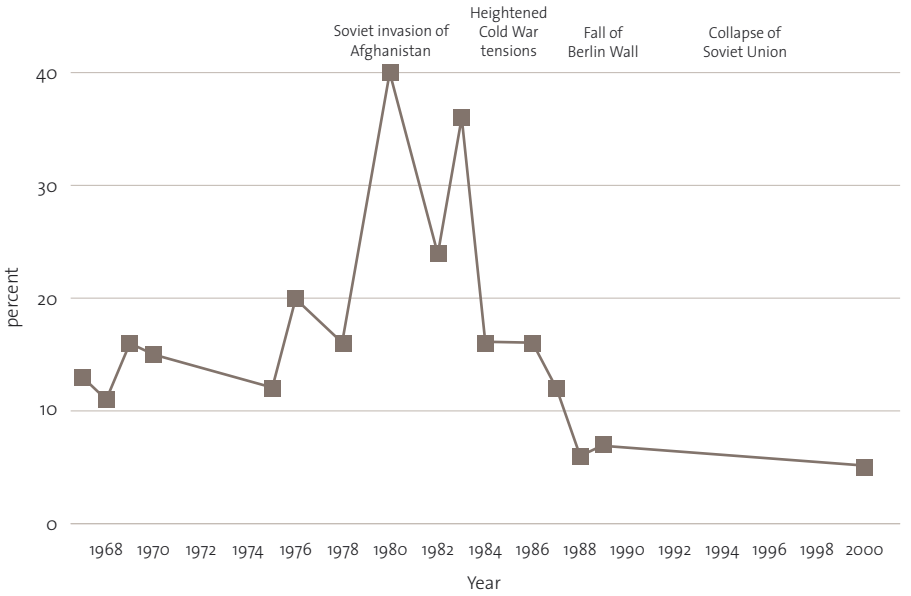
Exact question wordings and codings vary between surveys.
Sources: 1967–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Figure 6: China as a security threat to Australia, 1967–2001



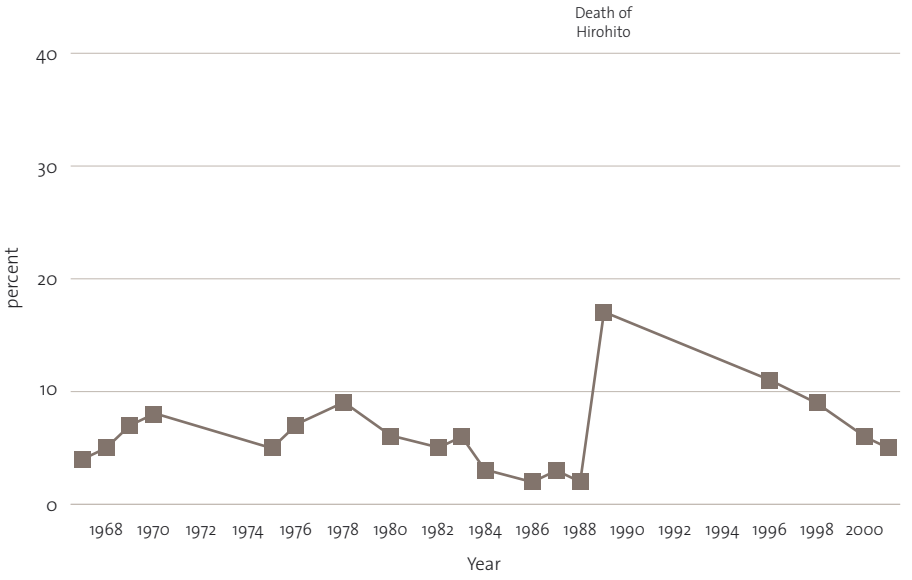
Exact question wordings and codings vary between surveys.
Sources: 1967–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Figure 7: Russia as a security threat to Australia, 1967–2001



Exact question wordings and codings vary between surveys.
Sources: 1967–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Figure 8: Japan as a security threat to Australia, 1967–2001



Exact question wordings and codings vary between surveys.
Sources: 1967–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Chapter 5

SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS OPERATIONS

Usually, the Australian military's overseas deployments since the Second World War have involved some form of conventional warfighting operations—the Korean and Vietnam wars being the most prominent examples. More recently, the nature of these operations has begun to change significantly; they now involve policing and peacekeeping, often under the auspices of the United Nations. The commitment to East Timor after the referendum in August 1999, and the operation to support policing in Solomon Islands, have been the major such deployments in recent years.

...9 out of 10 of those interviewed in the 2000 Survey of Defence Issues were in favour of Defence's participation in East Timor, with most being 'very strongly for' the operation.

The East Timor operation was a major success for Defence. In leading the international force, the ADF fielded and maintained a large contingent. Although they were responsible for operations in the areas most prone to irregular militia activity, they suffered no losses in action. The whole operation, in its goals and execution, was lauded in the mass media, and that is reflected in the opinion poll results. Table 6 shows that 9 out of 10 of those interviewed in the 2000 Survey of Defence Issues were in favour of Defence's participation in East Timor, with most being 'very strongly for' the operation. Similarly, two-thirds of those interviewed believed that the ADF had

Australian SAS in Afghanistan. © Defence Department

'performed very well', with 1% expressing a negative view. By any standards, the East Timor operation was judged by the public as an exceptional success for the military.

The success of the East Timor operation, and the publicity it provided for the value of peacekeeping operations in general, was important in highlighting the different types of operations that the military is likely to mount in the future—from border security to peacekeeping and assisting allies. The public might therefore be expected to have a greater awareness than ever before of the possible range of activities that the defence forces could become involved in. The 2000 Survey of Defence Issues asked respondents how important they judged five types of operations to be.

Table 6: Attitudes Towards Defence Involvement in East Timor

Participation in Timor		Performance in Timor	
Very strongly for	51	Performed very well	68
Strongly for	40	Performed well	31
Strongly against	5	Performed badly	1
Very strongly against	4	Performed very badly	0
	100		100
	(1,164)		(1,181)

'Do you think it was right for Australia's defence forces to participate in the peacekeeping operation in East Timor, or do you think Australia's defence forces should not have become involved? Do you feel very strongly or somewhat strongly about that?' 'Overall, how do you think Australia's defence forces performed during the East Timor operation? Would you say they performed very well, performed well, performed badly or performed very badly?'
Source: Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

As we would expect, the results in Table 7 show that more than 8 out of 10 of those interviewed considered defending Australia to be 'very important'; just 4% regarded it as being either 'not very' or 'not at all' important. Slightly fewer respondents saw stopping illegal immigrants and illegal drugs from entering the country as important (nevertheless, 79% saw it as 'very important' and just 7% as 'unimportant'). The results for these two types of operations are similar because they reflect—at least in the mind of the public—different aspects of defending Australia's territorial integrity.

Table 7: Importance of Various Operations, 2000

	Defending Australia	Stopping immigrants	Regional peace keeping	Assisting allies	Global UN operations
Very important	82	79	67	46	36
Fairly important	14	14	29	46	50
Not very important	3	5	3	6	12
Not at all important	1	2	1	2	2
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,196)**	**(1,192)**	**(1,199)**	**(1,184)**	**(1,187)**

'I will now read out a list of activities. Please tell me how important you think each of these is for Australia's defence forces. ... defending Australia against a foreign aggressor ... stopping illegal immigrants and drugs coming into Australia ... peacekeeping within our region ... assisting our allies against attack ... participating in United Nations operations anywhere in the world.'
Source: Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

The remaining three types of operations attract much less support, but it is perhaps notable that peacekeeping is viewed as 'very important' by two-thirds of the respondents, compared to UN operations, which gain the support of just one-third. This is a clear legacy

of the success of the East Timor operation, and public perception about the importance of peacekeeping operations as a consequence, as well as the low standing of the UN after its major failures in Bosnia and Rwanda. Assisting allies has the support of nearly 90% of those interviewed, divided equally between those who considered it 'very important' and those who saw it as 'fairly important.' Overall, then, Australians see maintaining the nation's territorial integrity as the most important defence activity, followed by peacekeeping, with UN operations the least important.

The public's tolerance for casualties

Governments are especially sensitive to how the public reacts to casualties incurred during military operations. That sensitivity is heightened when the operations have less than total support from the public, as was the case in the Vietnam War and, more recently, the Iraq War. The 2000 Survey of Defence Issues asked the respondents what number of casualties they would be prepared to accept in the five operations listed in Table 7. One-third of the respondents said that they couldn't say, while among those who did provide a response, between one-quarter and a one-half said that they would not tolerate any casualties whatsoever. The public were least tolerant of casualties in operations involving immigrants or drugs, in UN operations, and in peacekeeping. In the defence of Australia, about 4 in 10 were prepared to accept unlimited causalities, while 27% would not accept any casualties. The results suggest that about one-quarter of the population are strongly pacifist. Among those who accept the necessity of casualties, there is public sensitivity to any more than about 100 casualties, unless the operation is defending Australia against a foreign aggressor.

Table 8: Support for the War Against Terrorism, 2001

Support for fight against terrorism		Military support for war on terrorism	
Gone much too far	5	Strongly agree	20
Gone too far	9	Agree	48
About right	64	Neither	19
Not gone far enough	13	Disagree	8
Not gone nearly far enough	9	Strongly disagree	5
	100		100
	(1,952)		(1,953)

'The statements... indicate some of the changes that have been happening in Australia over the years. For each one, please say whether you think the change has gone too far, not gone far enough, or is it about right? ... Australia's support for the fight against terrorism.' 'Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements. ... Australia should provide military assistance for the war on terrorism.'
Source: AES 2001.

The events of 11 September 2001 in the US, and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have brought a new kind of military operation into the public's focus: the war against terrorism. The November 2001 AES was conducted shortly after 11 September, so we have only one snapshot of public opinion on this issue, and subsequent events, such as divisions over the war in Iraq and the failure to find Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, may have coloured popular views since then. Similarly, the Bali bombing in October 2002 will have influenced public opinion about terrorism. Nevertheless, the 2001 AES showed strong public support for the war on terror at the time the survey was conducted. Table 8 shows that Australia's support for the changes was regarded by about two-thirds of those interviewed as being 'about right', while a further 22% believed support hadn't gone far enough—a larger proportion than the 14% opposing support. Similarly, two-thirds of those interviewed supported Australia's military support for the war on terror, with just 13% against.

Iraq War

Australia's role in the American-led Iraq War in 2003 deeply divided public opinion. In the run-up to the war, opinion polls conducted by Roy Morgan Research (www.roymorgan.com) found that a majority of the public disapproved of Australian involvement. For example, in December 2002, in response to the question 'Do you approve or disapprove of Australia being part of an American military force against Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein?', 45% approved and 52% disapproved. Once the war began, however, both the Roy Morgan and the Newspoll surveys conducted for *The Australian* newspaper (www.newspoll.com.au) found that a majority supported Australian involvement in the war. For example, in answer to a question by Newspoll in late March 2003—'Are you personally in favour or against Australian troops being involved in military action against Iraq?'—51% were in favour and 38% against. Since the end of the war, a majority has said that they believed it was not worth going to war. In early May 2004, Newspoll found that in response to the question 'Overall, do you think it was worth going to war in Iraq or not?', 40% believed that it was worth going to war while 50% said that it was not.

The East Timor operation, and even more so the war against terror, have highlighted the many types of operations in which the Australian military can become involved in the post-Cold War international environment. In general, the public is very supportive of operations seen to provide security for Australia itself, and less supportive of other types of operations, notably UN operations. The widespread perception that Defence's involvement in East Timor had been highly beneficial has obviously had a major impact on public opinion, with three-quarters supporting military involvement in peacekeeping operations. The war on terror, too, gained widespread support in 2001, although other, subsequent surveys have shown much less support for the war in Iraq.

Chapter 6

THE UNITED STATES AND THE ANZUS ALLIANCE

Since the Second World War, relations with the US have been pivotal to Australia's security and to the security of the region. In the immediate postwar years, Australian support for the US position in the United Nations and the subsequent commitment of Australian forces to Korea was driven in large part by the desire of the Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, to obtain formal military alliance with the US to guarantee Australia's security. This aspiration was achieved with the signing of the ANZUS alliance between Australia, New Zealand and the US in 1951. Although public support for the alliance in New Zealand during the 1980s became embroiled in controversy over the unwillingness of the New Zealand Labour Government to accept visits by US nuclear vessels (Watts 1991), public opinion in Australia hasn't diverged from official attitudes that continue to regard ANZUS as by far the most important of our defence relationships (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998).

Despite widespread public support for defence links with the US, relatively few Australians held strong views about the issue—at least until the events of 11 September.

Construction of the Australian–American Memorial Canberra.

Despite widespread public support for defence links with the US, relatively few Australians held strong views about the issue—at least until the events of 11 September. The responses to two questions in the Survey of Defence Issues in 2000 exemplify this. A large majority of the respondents to the survey believed that the US improved the security of the region, but relatively few (14%) endorsed that view strongly (Table 9). Just one in four believed that the US did not improve security within the region. Equally, while 72% trusted the US to come to Australia's defence, just 22% said that they had a 'great deal' of trust that help would be forthcoming. In other words, while about three-quarters of the population supports the link with the US, these opinions aren't strongly held.

Table 9: Attitudes Towards the Role of the United States in the Region, 2000

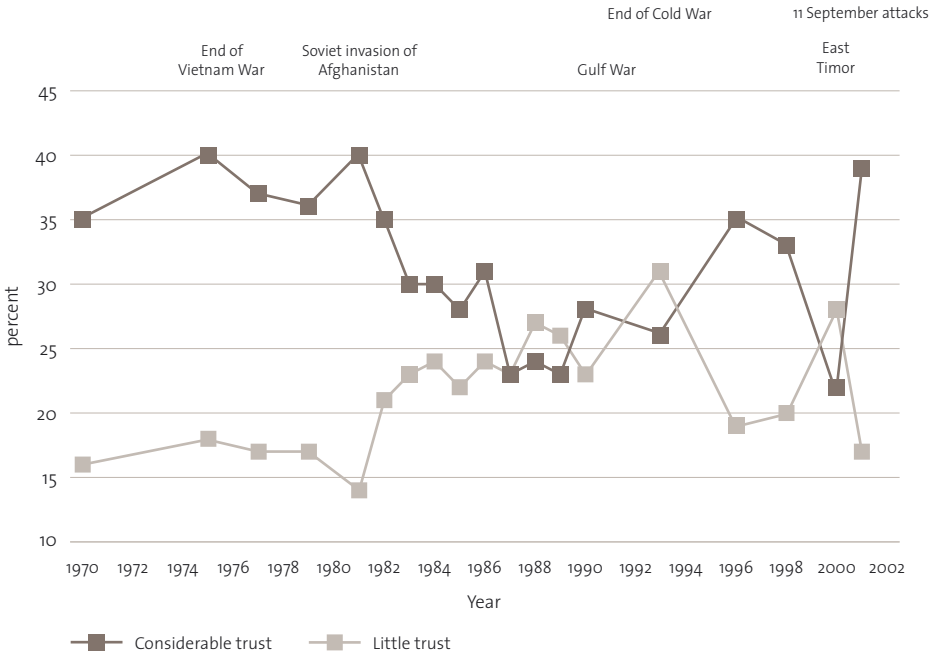
US improves Asia-Pacific security		Trust in US to defend Australia	
Strongly agree	14	Great deal	22
Agree	62	Fair amount	50
Disagree	21	Not very much	24
Strongly disagree	3	None at all	4
Total	**100**		**100**
(N)	**(1,111)**		**(1,176)**

'I will now read out a list of statements. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of them. ... The United States helps to improve security in the Asia Pacific region?' 'If Australia's security were threatened by some other country, how much trust do you feel Australia can have in the United States to come to Australia's defence?'
Source: Survey of Defence Issues 2000

These popular attitudes to the United States' defence relationship with Australia can be placed in context by examining public opinion over an extended period, in this case since 1970, when comparable questions were first asked in opinion surveys. Throughout the 1970s, those expressing 'considerable trust' in the US to come to Australia's defence fluctuated between 35% and 40%. The end of the Vietnam War in 1975 resulted in a small decline, but support peaked once again at 40% following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Thereafter, the decline of Cold War tension, culminating in the collapse of communism in 1989–90, saw the proportion trusting the alliance decline consistently, to a low of 23% in 1989.

...the overall trend has been towards less trust in the US. The latter years of the Vietnam War were the high point, with consistently high levels of trust, but (barring major individual events) these have not been maintained over long periods.

Figure 9: Trust in the US to defend Australia, 1970–2001



'If Australia's security were threatened by some other country, how much trust do you feel Australia can have in the United States to come to Australia's defence?' Exact question wordings and codings vary between surveys.
Sources: US Information Service; AES 1987–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Following the successful liberation of Kuwait in the American-led Gulf War, public support for the US peaked again in 1996, when 35% expressed 'considerable trust'. In the three surveys since 1996, public opinion has fluctuated considerably in response to major international events. By 2000, trust had declined again to 22%, one percentage point lower than the figures recorded at the end of the Cold War. One factor contributing to the substantial decline between 1998 and 2000 may have been the reluctance of the US to commit ground troops in both Kosovo and East Timor, and some respondents may have translated this reluctance into a similar unwillingness to assist Australia if we needed help. Whatever the cause, it has resulted in those expressing 'considerable trust' being outnumbered by those expressing 'little trust' for the first time since the late 1980s.

By 2001, public opinion had again shifted, this time in the direction of more trust in the US. The 2001 AES, conducted immediately after the November federal election and the events of 11 September in New York and Washington, found that around 4 out of 10 voters said that they trusted the US to assist Australia, a figure similar to the previous high point after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan some twenty years earlier. Indeed, the jump in the figures between 2000 and 2001 shows the deep impact that 9/11 and the subsequent 'war against terror' had on Australian public opinion about the US and its willingness to come to Australia's defence.

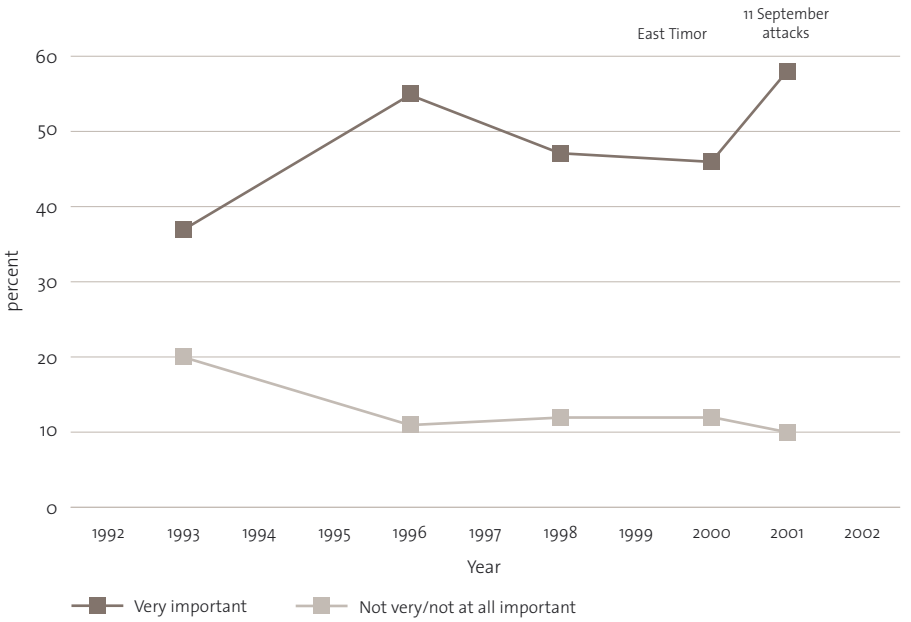
What are the main conclusions that can be drawn from the trends over this period of more than thirty years? First, notwithstanding cataclysmic events such as 9/11, the broad changes in public opinion are gradual and relatively small. The trends suggest a slow decline in trust after 1981, bottoming at the end of the Cold War in 1989–90, and a gradual increase thereafter. Second, the overall trend has been towards less trust in the US. The latter years

of the Vietnam War were the high point, with consistently high levels of trust, but (barring major individual events) these have not been maintained over long periods. Third, events such as 11 September can and do have the potential to fundamentally alter public opinion, albeit for a short period.

To what extent has opinion about the willingness of the US to assist Australia's defence influenced views about the ANZUS alliance? There are no extended trend data, but since 1993 the AES has included a question about the importance of the alliance. Figure 10 shows that Australians' opinions about the ANZUS alliance mirror, albeit imprecisely, their opinions about trust in the US. The proportion of respondents seeing ANZUS as very important peaked in 1996 and declined in the two subsequent surveys in 1998 and 2000. The increase between 2000 and 2001 (from 46% to 58%) is much less than is evident in Figure 9, which depicts trust, but this is perhaps understandable: ANZUS is a formal, institutional relationship, while trust is a more subjective matter.

Although these changes between 2000 and 2001 appear modest—particularly when placed against the more substantial changes in opinion shown in Figure 9—it's important to examine gradients within the strong public support for ANZUS. In 2000, 46% said the alliance was 'very important' and a further 42% regarded it as 'fairly important'; in 2001, the respective figures were 58% and 32%. The overall proportion in favour of ANZUS did not change, but the intensity of support was much more pronounced following 9/11. Indeed, in four of the five surveys, those expressing strong support for the alliance outnumbered those expressing more modest support; the exception is the first survey, conducted in 1993, when 37% considered it 'very important' and 43% 'fairly important'.

Figure 10: The importance of the ANZUS alliance, 1993–2001

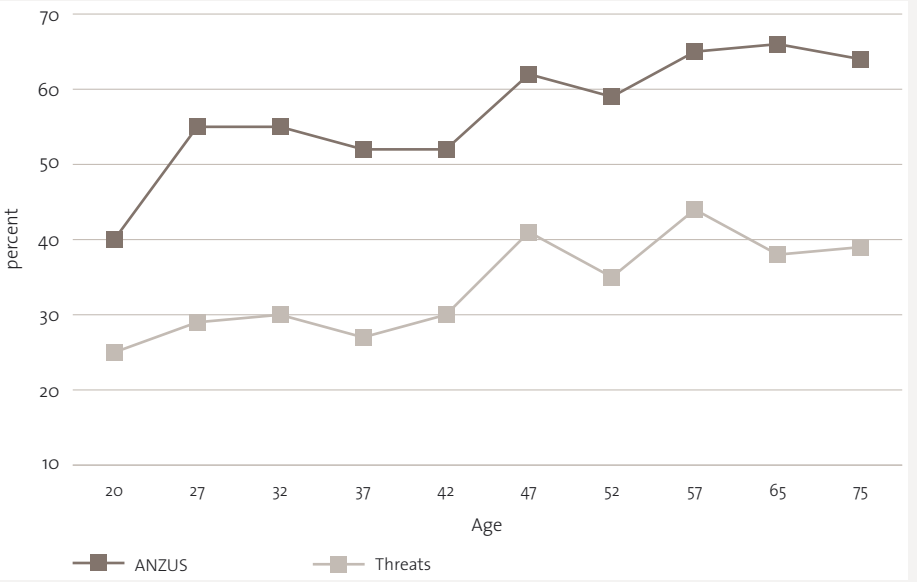


'How important do you think the Australian alliance with the United States under the ANZUS treaty is for protecting Australia's security?'
Sources: AES 1993–2001; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Youth perspective

In general, the public's interest in and awareness of defence increases with age. In part, this is a function of age per se, and a general concern with physical security as people age, which is also reflected in a greater fear of crime. In part, too, the increased concern with defence among older people is a function of that generation's experiences: those who have been socialised in periods of war or international tension might be expected to be more concerned with defence than those socialised in more peaceful times. The figure shows public opinion towards the ANZUS alliance and perceptions of security threats by age, using the 2001 AES.

Figure 11



Refer to Figures 4 and 10 for question wording.
Source: AES 2001.

The responses to both questions vary considerably by age, with the youngest being least supportive of the ANZUS alliance and least likely to see a security threat to Australia. In the case of ANZUS, for example, 58% of the total population believed that the alliance was 'very important' to protecting Australia's security. However, among the youngest age group—those aged 18 to 24 years—just 4 in every 10 took that view, compared to two-thirds of those aged 55 years or over. Those in the older category would have been socialised during the 1950s and 1960s, the period of the Cold War and the Vietnam War. By contrast, the youngest respondents will have been socialised in the period since the collapse of communism in 1990, a period of relative global stability.

Although over-time survey data are available on only two aspects of Australia's defence links with the US—trust in the US to come to Australia's defence, and the importance of the ANZUS alliance—they tell a consistent story. Popular trust in US assistance is relatively modest, and is contingent on international events that demonstrate the level of US commitment to military intervention in different parts of the world. When that commitment appears high, then so is trust; and when the commitment is perceived to be low, then trust, too, declines. But whatever caveats the public may have about likely US support for Australia, there is consistent and overwhelming support for the ANZUS alliance. This support appears more stable than trust in the US, and changes are evident only in its intensity, not in its direction. For the vast majority of Australians, ANZUS remains central to ensuring our physical security.

Construction of the Australian–American Memorial Canberra.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The period of the Cold War saw relatively stable public attitudes towards Australia's defence. It was clear who our allies and adversaries were, and who we had to rely on for international support. At the same time, there was an informal, bipartisan consensus that defence shouldn't become a political issue, and general agreement about the fundamental premises Australian defence was based on. As a result, defence and security issues were rarely debated by political elites, at least publicly, and any changes in public opinion were gradual and the consequence of international events rather than changes in government policy. The Cold War was the crucial backdrop against which events and policies were played out, and was a reference point for Australians as we thought about defence.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism have removed the certainties on which public opinion about defence and security had traditionally been based.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism have removed the certainties on which public opinion about defence and security had traditionally been based. The East Timor crisis, 9/11 and the Bali bombings have highlighted the uncertainties inherent in the new and unstable international environment. At the same time, bipartisan agreement on defence and security has been breached, with the major parties disagreeing about Australia's participation in the war in Iraq. The ADF's recent and current operations are very different from those during the Cold War, with peacekeeping and policing operations prominent among them.

What are the consequences of this new defence and security environment for public opinion?

First, it is evident that there is greater volatility in public opinion on defence issues than at any time in the recent past. Where once change was gradual, an event such as 9/11 can result in a major change in opinion about trust in the US, and the success of the ADF in East Timor can cause a significant increase in support for defence. Without the familiar framework of the Cold War, people are more likely to take their cues from events, and from how the government and the parties respond to them, than from traditional images of friend and foe.

Second, as defence and security become mainstream election issues, the policy debates within the political elite are likely to lead to an electorate that is better informed on defence. The glimmerings of this change are evident in public opinion about the different types of operations that the ADF can become involved in. Since the successful East Timor operation, Australians clearly differentiate between peacekeeping operations and operations conducted on behalf of the UN.

Finally, public opinion has traditionally set broad limits on what it regards as acceptable in defence and security policy, and within those limits governments have been relatively free to enact policy. As defence and security become more politicised and voters develop a sharper awareness of and closer interest in defence, that policy freedom is likely to diminish. In the new century, governments are likely to have to be as accountable for their policies on defence and security as they were for their policies on economic management in the previous one.

Public opinion: some policy implications

By Peter Jennings

The relationship between policy-making and public opinion is complex and often the subject of heated debate. Policy decision-makers cannot afford to be led by opinion polls. Indeed at times our political leaders must try to change public opinion rather than follow it. Equally though, governments ignore public opinion at their peril. Policies that get too far out of step with what the community is broadly prepared to support will not survive in the long-term.

Australians are savvy, well educated, sceptical and want to be involved in debating and thinking about policy choices.

Ian McAllister's analysis of Australian popular opinion shows a growing level of community interest in, and understanding of, defence and security issues. Our more complex and uncertain strategic outlook has made defence policy much more prominent in political debates. Moreover, Australians increasingly expect governments to consult the community and to put substantial effort into explaining and justifying policy settings. Australians are savvy, well educated, sceptical and want to be involved in debating and thinking about policy choices. We can see this increased level of understanding about defence coming through in the more recent Australian Election Surveys—for example in the importance people place on ANZUS, but the more qualified view they have about how Washington might act in future. Different levels of support for peacekeeping as opposed to UN operations again suggest that people are willing to think through complex security choices.

Welcome home parade for ADF members in Townsville 2 August 2004.

What policy implications flow from this study? Here I suggest four initiatives designed to strengthen community understanding of vitally important strategic issues.

A new community consultation on defence

Strong community interest in defence and security policy is a good thing and important for governments to sustain. If the government decides to produce a new Defence White Paper in 2005 (as ASPI recommended in *Beyond Baghdad*, our 2004 strategic assessment), this should be preceded by a community consultation exercise like the one held in 2000. The public consultation was an important part of the process that developed the 2000 Defence White Paper. A bipartisan group of prominent individuals led by Andrew Peacock held a large number of community meetings across the country and took written submissions. Public interest was very substantial.

The consultation process informed community thinking by setting out the key defence policy areas that needed decisions in the White Paper. It lifted the sophistication of public commentary on defence by promoting a detailed consideration of force structure, funding and international security. A much wider cross-section of the community was involved than would have happened if policy-making had been left to Canberra officials.

The government ought to repeat the process in 2005. A community consultation exercise will help to explain key defence policy settings, set out the areas where critical decisions must be made, address areas of popular concern and ensure that policy outcomes broadly meet community expectations.

We need to promote a dialogue between the next generation of Australian and American leaders.

Bolstering the US alliance

Ian McAllister's study shows what he calls a "slow decline in trust" in popular thinking about the US alliance and it is also the case that younger people are more likely to be sceptical about the value of ANZUS. This should be a cause for serious concern. More needs to be done to inform community thinking about the role the alliance plays in Australian defence and security.

Government should consider providing funding support for an ***Australia–US Young Leaders Dialogue***. There is already a prominent annual Australia–US Dialogue involving some leading Australian figures from the public and private sectors. However this is a well-established group of senior individuals. We need to promote a dialogue between the next generation of Australian and American leaders. The aim would be to get young Australians from the private and public sectors engaging with their American counterparts, learning more about each-other's national experience and grappling with the key strategic issues of our time. This would be a valuable long-term investment on the part of the Australian Government and would help to build contacts and networks between the next generation of leaders on both sides of the Pacific.

Informing public understanding of Indonesia

Another concern arising from the poll data is the relatively high level of community suspicion about Indonesia as a potential security threat. This worry does not seem to be justified, either by Jakarta's intent, or by the level of Indonesian military capability. In part the poll data reflects the recent experience of instability in East Timor, but consideration should be given as to how some of this community concern can be overcome. It is a complex question as to how this popular view might be allayed, but the answer is likely to involve a more sustained effort to explain the importance of Australia's strategic relationship with Indonesia, to outline how bilateral links work and to promote closer people-to-people connections.

Sustaining confidence in Defence

Finally, one group that should be well satisfied with the poll data is the Australian Defence Force. McAllister shows that public confidence in Defence has steadily grown—from an already high 67 per cent in 1983 to a remarkable 82 per cent with a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in 2003. No other profession has such high levels of public confidence.

For Defence this high level of community regard is a precious asset and one not to be taken lightly...

For Defence this high level of community regard is a precious asset and one not to be taken lightly or to assume that this simply reflects a natural state of affairs. The reputation of organisations can suffer badly from issues that are neglected or poorly managed. The Defence Department should undertake a very careful study of those factors that underpin strong community support for the ADF. This goes well beyond simply trying to rate how well Defence is doing in the public eye, but to understanding the behaviours and qualities that enhance community perceptions, as well those that have the potential to undermine them.

Listening to Regional Australia

By Brendan McRandle

Over the last 12 months ASPI has undertaken a program of visits to centres around Australia to seek from communities their views about a range of defence and security issues. Our efforts have been directed primarily at larger regional centres, a group perhaps least often engaged directly by the policy makers in Canberra. We ran sessions in Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Albury, Melbourne, Ballarat, Hobart and Wagga Wagga.

Discussions were based on a publication we developed to provide a framework for our discussion. Under the heading "Keeping Australia Secure: what does it mean and how do we do it?", we invited people to think about and give views on security challenges both far and near. You can read our discussion paper at: http://www.aspi.org.au/programsOutreach.cfm#LRA.

Attendance at public events ranged from a handful of people in some locations to larger groups in Hobart, Melbourne and Ballarat. Better supported were the lunchtime roundtable meetings we held in association with local Chambers of Commerce. We thank local Chambers for their efforts to bring together leaders from the local business community to share their views.

Our aim in the meetings was not to put forward our answers to the big questions facing government. Rather, we sought the views of ordinary members of the community. Overall, the people who attended our meetings came with well-formed views, though they were sometimes based on limited or incorrect information or understanding.

What did we hear?

Many of them felt confronted by the apparently relentless war on terror and the general instability that seems more prominent in the news today compared with just a few years ago. The following is a summary of some of the things we were told. We have not attempted

Brendan O'Loghlin and participants at an LRA meeting in Melbourne 2004.

to capture every word spoken, but instead provide a summary of the views of people who attended. Responsibility for the accuracy of this record lies with ASPI.

War on Terror

The community is deeply worried about the new global threat of terrorism presented by Al Qaeda and other groups. Audiences inevitably debated the causes of this new threat, and particularly the rise of fundamentalist or extremist Islam. There were many who considered the root causes more related to non-religious reasons such as poverty and social dislocation and cautioned against the appeal of blaming Islam alone. Nevertheless, fundamentalist Islam was raised often and appeared to be closely associated with terrorism in the public's mind. Opinion on why Australia was a target of terrorists was divided between those who thought our actions made us a more prominent target, and those who thought Australia was a target because of who we are.

There was a strong view that the fight against the terrorist threat would primarily involve our police and intelligence services. Despite the deployment of military forces to Afghanistan and Iraq, the most common view was that the ADF's role in the fight against terrorism was likely to be limited. There appeared to be a clear distinction about the roles and responsibilities of different kinds of security services in the global fight against terrorism and the protection of Australia from direct attacks. That translated into a view that the ADF would respond to challenges abroad, but that the police would be responsible for domestic affairs. Interestingly, the Reserve forces were generally considered part of the domestic response.

Many people in regional Australia felt somewhat removed from the direct threat of terrorism...

Many people in regional Australia felt somewhat removed from the direct threat of terrorism at the personal level. Some thought that the government's campaign, "be alert not alarmed" had little relevance to those outside Sydney and Melbourne. Nevertheless, a sizeable number were of the view that Australia was still too complacent about terrorism, particularly in relation to terrorism in the nearer region. They tended to raise concerns

about the prospect of attacks on vital infrastructure and against the agricultural sector as a form of economic sabotage. There were also questions about the capacity of our various security services to protect the sheer number of potential targets. Some called for greater levels of community vigilance, echoing the thrust of the government's public education initiative: many sensed the need for greater justice at home and attention to national problems rather than conflict abroad.

Terrorism was also expressed as a threat to our lifestyle and our freedoms. Some recognised that measures developed to defeat terrorism could diminish our freedoms, and so governments would need to be balanced in their response to the threat.

Regional Challenges: Asia and the Pacific

Australians overwhelmingly supported being fully engaged in the region as our main area of concern. References were made to how well Australia had handled the crisis in East Timor in 1999 and there was considerable support for being prepared to do the same kinds of operations again—both in terms of a humanitarian obligation and as a way of promoting regional stability.

People were unsettled by the problems that developments in Indonesia might present to Australia. There was clear concern about the rise of fundamentalism and Indonesia's capacity and willingness to deal with this issue. These concerns were also tied up with the often turbulent transition from the Suharto era to an emerging democracy. Indonesia's proximity, its large Islamic population, and memories of Confrontation in the 1960s and East Timor in 1999 underscored a general wariness about our northern neighbour. Despite that, there was still support for engagement with Indonesia, though more along the lines of a mature relationship where frank and critical views can be exchanged. The positive role of police cooperation during the Bali investigation was reflected in broad community support, with some in the audiences clearly preferring this kind of engagement to renewed military links.

There was clear concern about the rise of fundamentalism and Indonesia's capacity and willingness to deal with this issue.

On the Southwest Pacific, views were less strong. Nevertheless, Australia's Solomon Islands intervention was applauded by some as 'money in the bank' compared with the cost of having to intervene when the chance of salvage was much lower. More people expressed concern about Papua New Guinea's (PNG's) prospects. These were often along the lines that Australia had poured money in but had failed to build robust structures during its early years on independence. There were also some voices expressing the worry that PNG's border with Indonesia was a likely place of conflict.

On the whole community views reflected a good deal of support for contributing more aid and assistance to parts of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. There were calls for a new Colombo Plan to help the transition to democracy and to promote the cause of the moderates against extremism. Diplomacy and aid were offered as the best weapons to

deal with the potential crises that might erupt in the region. Diplomacy is on the front line of our efforts to create a more stable and prosperous region. There was also support for a focus on trade and people-to-people contacts (including through the education sector). Some in the audiences thought there was more effort needed to educate the region about Australia and our values in order to build more honest and robust relationships.

Diplomacy and aid were offered as the best weapons to deal with the potential crises that might erupt in the region.

Global Challenges: The United Nations

Two clear views on Australia's engagement through the UN to promote peace and stability were presented during our meetings. Firstly, there was a widely held view that the UN had suffered too many notable failures in its efforts to restore peace and security to trouble spots. Rwanda was mentioned on several occasions as typical of the UN's inability to deal decisively with emerging crises. Some viewed those failures as a direct result of member states' self-interest undermining efforts to forge an effective global coalition. But there was also a common view that the UN suffers from structural weaknesses (including the veto powers of the permanent member of the Security Council) that make its task more difficult than it should be. Some in the audiences pointed out that the UN was a large organisation that is responsible for more than its peace and security role through the Security Council, and that its successes lay elsewhere.

...the UN had suffered too many notable failures in its efforts to restore peace and security to trouble spots.

Nevertheless, while many people we spoke to appeared frustrated by the UN's efforts to promote peaceful outcomes and at the pace of reform, there was an equally strong view that Australia should continue to engage with the UN and work towards improving its effectiveness. The UN was characterised as an institution of 'final decision' and that it was better that disputes between states be resolved in one forum than in armed conflict. The collective nature of UN decision making helped to spread responsibility more widely than just a few states. "No single country can be a substitute for the collective will of the global community." (speaker in Albury, 2004).

"No single country can be a substitute for the collective will of the global community." (speaker in Albury, 2004).

The United States and ANZUS

The power and importance of the United States was clearly acknowledged by the people attending our meetings. On the whole there was strong support for Australia's alliance with the US, although most only viewed the alliance in terms of how the US and Australia might be drawn together in times of military conflict. Few raised the other benefits of the alliance, such as intelligence sharing and access to advanced US military technology.

The power and importance of the United States was clearly acknowledged...

The concentration of global power in the United States, however, was viewed with some reservations. Individuals expressed considerable apprehension at how US power would be used in world affairs and whether Australia was able to make its own judgements independent of Washington's views. Some questioned where the alliance might be taking us and whether our regional ties might be affected adversely by our close relationship with the US. That view was also expressed in terms of whether Australia's close relationship with the United States sometimes compromised our independence in decision making. In spite of the solid support for the alliance, people wondered whether we might sometimes be too willing to support the US, even when Australia's interests were less obvious. Our strong support for the US-led global war on terrorism in general, and particularly our contribution to the coalition in Iraq, appeared to lie at the core of these concerns.

There was also an element of scepticism from some people about whether the US would always come to Australia's aid in times of crisis. The apparent reluctance of Washington to commit forces during the initial stages of the East Timor crisis was raised by some as evidence for their concern. At a practical level there were also questions about whether the US would have sufficient forces available to help Australia, particularly if America was committed heavily elsewhere.

There was also an element of scepticism from some people about whether the US would always come to Australia's aid in times of crisis.

Stop Press: Canberra *really* is different!

Feelings of security in relation to Australia's alliance with the US

Market Attitude Research Services Pty Ltd (MARS) undertook random telephone surveys at various times during 2003 and 2004 with residents of Sydney, Canberra and regional NSW cities (Orange, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo). The surveys explore various defence and security issues.

Among the issues MARS surveyed was whether the Australia–United States alliance made respondents feel more secure. That question was chosen to see how people responded in terms of their personal feelings, rather than a more abstract question about whether the alliance made Australia more secure. The two key findings demonstrate an interesting variation both by geography, and over time.

Is Canberra really different from the rest of the country? According to this data, the answer is yes. Even taking the relatively small sample sizes into account, the MARS data shows that Canberra opinion is significantly different from the other centres polled. Only a minority (30%) of Canberrans surveyed agreed that the alliance made them feel more secure. Indeed, the majority (53%) disagreed, with less than a 20% feeling they were neither more nor less secure (see figure 12).

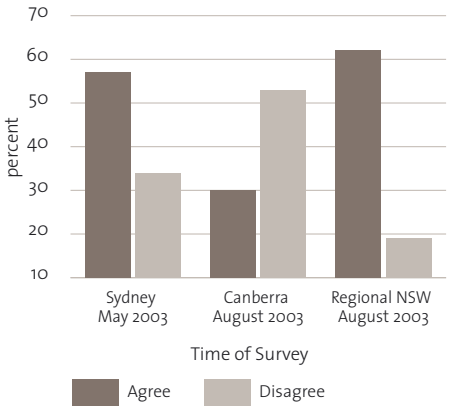
By comparison, the majority of residents in Sydney and in regional NSW feel more secure because of the alliance. In Orange, Wagga and Dubbo only 19% disagreed with the proposition that the alliance made them feel more secure, compared with some 34% in Sydney. Interestingly, the survey also showed that in Sydney some 18% strongly agreed with the proposition, compared with just 6% agreeing strongly in regional centres.

The second key finding is how attitudes to this question have changed over time. Pulse polling was conducted in Sydney in May 2003 and March 2004, and in Canberra and regional NSW on several occasions between August 2003 and May 2004. While in Canberra the percentage agreeing with the question has been relatively stable, in both Sydney and regional NSW the percentage agreeing that the alliance makes them feel more secure has been falling and the number disagreeing increasing. While Canberrans appear to hold some different views from other parts of Australia, those differences have become less pronounced over time. (see figures 13,14 and 15)

What does this tell us?

It may be that while the majority of Australians continue to value the alliance as a strategic pillar of Australia's security (see Chapter 6 of the main report), that may not translate directly into feelings of personal security. However, why this should be true in Canberra and not other centres polled is difficult to explain. By taking account of responses spanning more than a year we see fewer people in other centres agreeing that they feel more secure because of the alliance. It may be that people are becoming increasingly apprehensive about where the alliance is taking Australia a year on from the toppling of Saddam's regime.

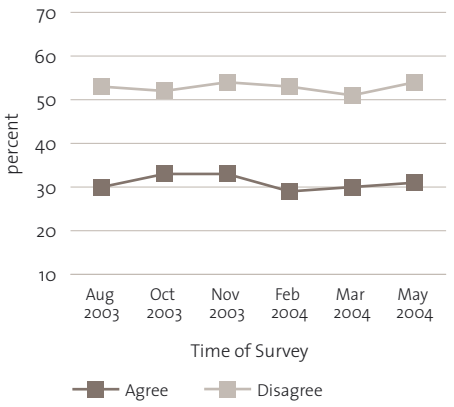
Figure 12: How strongly do you agree or disagree that Australia's alliance with the United States of America helps you feel generally more secure?



Two thousand six hundred (2,600) random telephone interviews have been conducted covering the period May 2003 to May 2004 as part of the MARS research service to assist the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

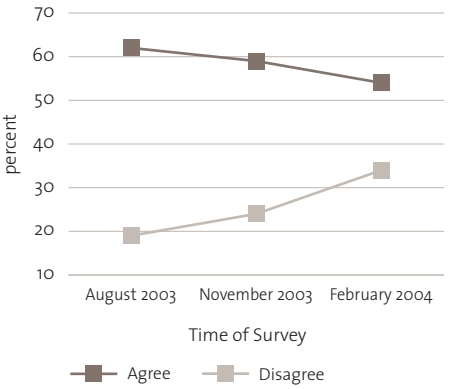
The sample sizes presented for each location provide a statistical error of plus or minus 7% to 10% for each city and regional location depending on the sample size used at the time of the survey.

Figure 13: How strongly do you agree or disagree that Australia's alliance with the United States of America helps you feel generally more secure?



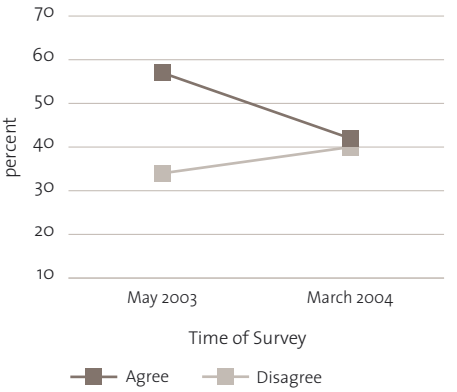
Polling in Canberra conducted between August 2003 and May 2004.

Figure 14: How strongly do you agree or disagree that Australia's alliance with the United States of America helps you feel generally more secure?



Polling conducted between August 2003 and February 2004. Regional centres are Orange, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo.

Figure 15: How strongly do you agree or disagree that Australia's alliance with the United States of America helps you feel generally more secure?



Polling in Sydney conducted in March 2003 and May 2004.

The ADF

Australians we spoke to were overwhelming proud of the skills and qualities of our armed forces. The ADF was frequently characterised as a very professional force, that had demonstrated its qualities and abilities in East Timor and elsewhere in the region and further afield.

The ADF was frequently characterised as a very professional force, that had demonstrated its qualities...

However, there was concern that the public had too often heard reports on major acquisition projects that had been mismanaged and audiences were divided over whether some of our more sophisticated capabilities (submarines and combat aircraft) were becoming too difficult to acquire and too expensive to operate.

The community meetings supported a defence force designed to meet the challenge of defending Australia and able to continue to contribute to regional stability. The most recent deployment of policy and military to the Solomon Islands was seen as typical of the kind of tasks we should be prepared to perform. We also heard that care needs to be taken not to turn the ADF into a policing force (and that the AFP should not be a substitute land force). A few members of the community supported more funding for Defence, particularly while the domestic economy was performing strongly, but most seemed satisfied with current levels of investment.

Some specific concerns were raised. They included that the Army was too small to meet the demands placed upon it today; that commercial outsourcing of ADF support elements had gone too far and our deployed forces were now less well supported than in the past; and that the ADF was losing links with the broader community, particularly in cities like Melbourne.

Army was too small to meet the demands placed upon it today...

The community supported the role of the Reserves, including for enhancing domestic security, but questioned whether they would be able to be used effectively, noting that many had responsibilities in the civilian community that made their availability for call up unpredictable. A few people suggested that a national service scheme would be a better alternative.

Conclusion

The primary preoccupation with the community was the threat of terrorism from Al-Qaeda and the regional groups associated with them. Their perceptions of the threat, at least in regional centres, was not based on any direct feeling of insecurity, but rather a threat to the nation more generally. Despite the rise of this new problem, community views supported a defence force structured to defend Australia and its interests in the immediate region. Indeed, many people were more focussed on responding to terrorism through sound and reliable intelligence and on the role of police forces. In that respect, the community appeared to differentiate Australia's response between the global and domestic fight against terrorism.

At the international level, public opinion sees the turbulent political transition in Indonesia rather pessimistically. There were fewer concerns about the sources of insecurity in other parts of Asia, and particularly in North Asia, which is seen to be further from our area of primary responsibility. The United States is highly valued as a strategic partner. However, there was a good deal of concern about the direction of US security policy and where the alliance might take Australia. Those concerns appeared to be heightened by the recent problems faced by the Coalition in Iraq.

The United Nations is seen as a marginalised player, representing an unachievable ideal. Its past failures have been too important and too frequent to be a reliable forum to resolve international conflict. Nevertheless, people realise there are few alternatives and global cooperation by willing states is still very important; the UN's role in international affairs should be strengthened.

The ADF is rated highly and well regarded. However, the community knows little about force structure issues and finds it difficult to make judgements about how our forces should be equipped to deal with future challenges.

Appendix: The surveys

The Australian Election Study. Conducted at each federal election and referendum since 1987 as a collaborative exercise between several Australian universities, the AES surveys are designed to collect data on Australian electoral behaviour and public opinion. All but the 1987 study have been funded by the Australian Research Council.

The AES routinely collects data among a nationally representative sample of voters and among major party candidates standing for election. All of the data are publicly available from the Australian Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University (http://assda.anu.edu.au/). All the studies are national, post-election, self-completion surveys, with the sample drawn randomly from the electoral roll. Two follow-ups have been used (three in 1987). The overall response rates have varied, with the most recent survey producing a response rate of 55.4%.

Table 10: The 1987–2001 AES voter response rates

	Total sample	Moved/ gone away	Refusals/ non-responses	Valid responses	Effective response
1987	3,061	156	1,080	1,825	62.8
1990	3,606	125	1,461	2,020	58.0
1993	4,950	137	1,790	3,023	62.8
1996	3,000	95	1,110	1,795	61.8
1998	3,502	215	1,391	1,896	57.7
2001	4,000	369	1,621	2,010	55.4

The response rate is estimated as: valid responses ÷ (total sample—moved or gone away).

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes. The 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) is the first in a planned two-yearly series that studies the social attitudes and behaviour of Australian citizens for the Australian and international research community. AuSSA is the official survey of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) and regularly includes ISSP modules. The survey is based on a stratified systematic random sample of voters and uses a self-completion methodology. The 2003 survey was conducted in the latter half of the year. The

data are publicly available from the Australian Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University (http://assda.anu.edu.au/).

The 2000 Survey of Defence Issues. The 2000 Survey of Defence Issues was conducted between 13 and 20 September 2000 by Roy Morgan Research Pty Ltd and funded by the Department of Defence. The survey used a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. Respondents aged 18 years and over were randomly selected from all states and territories, with the selection of households drawn from the latest edition of the electronic white pages. In order to reduce the non-response bias, a minimum of three call-backs were made to each randomly selected household, on different days and at different times. The sample was distributed across states and territories proportionately to the population, with quotas set for each state and territory. The data are weighted using ABS data, so as to represent the national population.

Endnotes

1 This phenomenon is often referred to as the rise of postmaterialism—a set of values that emphasise social equality and quality of life, and are predicated on the satisfaction of goals of physical and economic security. See Inglehart (1990, 1997).

2 For studies of these issues, see McAllister and Ravenhill (1998), McAllister and Makkai (1992), and Matthews and Ravenhill (1987, 1991).

3 The levels of partisanship in Australia are some of the highest among the established democracies, largely as a result of compulsory voting (Dalton et al 2000). While there has been a decline in the strength of partisanship in recent years, the proportions specifying a direction remain at high levels.

4 The 2003 finding that 55% are in favour of increased defence spending is similar to the figure of 61% for 2001, but a firm conclusion about the direction of the trend is difficult because of the different question wordings used.

5 Three countries were included in the survey but are excluded here because of the small numbers who mentioned them as a threat: the United States and Papua New Guinea (2% each); and New Zealand (1%).

6 There is no obvious explanation for the decline. One survey result such as this suggests an atypical poll, but since there are two similar results close to one another, this explanation is unlikely.

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Peter Jennings is the Director of Programs for ASPI. He is responsible for the Institute's research and publications program on defence and international security issues. Peter was previously the Senior Adviser for Strategic Policy in the Cabinet Policy Unit of the Prime Minister's Office. He has held a number of Senior Executive Service level positions in the Defence Department, including heading the Strategic Policy Branch and being deputy head of the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation. Peter was a Sloan Fellow at the London Business School in 2000–01.

Brendan McRandle is ASPI's Program Director for the Outreach Program which undertakes activities to enhance the quality of public debate on defence issues. Brendan was initially seconded from the Department of Defence in 2001 to assist with establishing ASPI. He has now joined the Institute. Brendan is also ASPI's company secretary. Prior to working with ASPI, Brendan worked in the Department of Defence on force structure issues, strategic policy and worked on the government's 2000 Defence White Paper.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AES	Australian Election Study
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand and the United States
AuSSA	Australian Survey of Social Attitudes
ISSP	International Social Survey Program
PNG	Papua New Guinea

About ASPI

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) is an independent, non-partisan policy institute. It has been set up by the Government to provide fresh ideas on Australia's defence and strategic policy choices. ASPI is charged with the task of informing the public on strategic and defence issues, generating new ideas for government, and fostering strategic expertise in Australia. It aims to help Australians understand the critical strategic choices which our country will face over the coming years, and will help Government make better-informed decisions.

For more information, visit ASPI's web site at www.aspi.org.au.

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Each year ASPI will publish a number of policy reports on key issues facing Australian strategic and defence decision-makers. These reports will draw on work by external contributors.

Strategy: ASPI will publish up to 10 longer studies, including a series of annual publications on key topics, such as the defence budget, regional capabilities and Australian Defence Force capabilities.

Strategic Insights: A series of shorter studies on topical subjects that arise in public debate.

Commissioned Work: ASPI will undertake commissioned research for clients including the Australian Government, State governments, foreign governments and industry.

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our higher strategic policy, our approach to new security challenges, and the management of our international defence relationships.

Operations and Capability Program: This program covers ASPI's work on the operational needs of the Australian Defence Force, the development of our defence capabilities, and the impact of new technology on our armed forces.

Budget and Management Program: This program covers the full range of questions concerning the delivery of capability, from financial issues and personnel management to acquisition and contracting out—issues that are central to the Government's policy responsibilities.

Outreach Program: One of the most important roles for ASPI is to involve the broader community in the debate of defence and security issues. The thrust of the activities will be to provide access to the issues and facts through a range of activities and publications.

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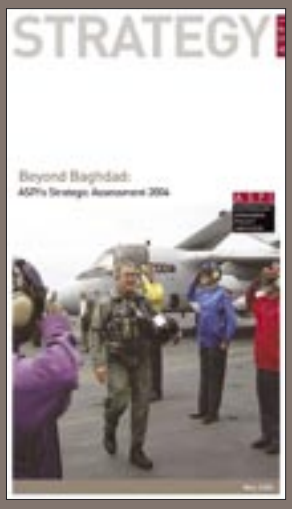

Attitude Matters:
Public opinion in Australia towards defence and security

Public opinion has an important role to play influencing and shaping public policy. In Australia over recent years defence and security has attracted more attention than during the relatively stable decades of the 1980s and 1990s. The heightened interest in defence and security policy reflects the profound changes that are taking place in the international environment.

In *Attitude Matters*, we have set out some findings about how Australians have responded to questions about our security over more than a quarter of a century. This paper charts the change in attitudes towards defence since the time of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, through the final decades of the Cold War, to the contemporary issues facing communities and policy makers today—global terrorism and the sometimes turbulent political changes taking place in our region.

Over the last few years Australian forces have been deployed to East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Solomon Islands. The tempo of operations reflects the new demands of our time. The end of the Cold War, the 11 September and Bali attacks, and events in the Middle East, have all combined to undermine many of the certainties which informed the public's long-standing views on defence and national security during the latter half of the twentieth century. There is now greater volatility in public opinion on defence issues than at any time in the recent past.

Increasingly, defence and security issues grab the headlines. The community is arguably more focussed and engaged in the defence debate than at any other time since the end of the Vietnam War. As defence and security matters become more entrenched in the mainstream political debate, the public's awareness of the policy options is likely to increase. As a result, the traditional policy freedom that successive governments have enjoyed in the area is likely to diminish.

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