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Representative Views:

Mass and elite opinion on Australian security

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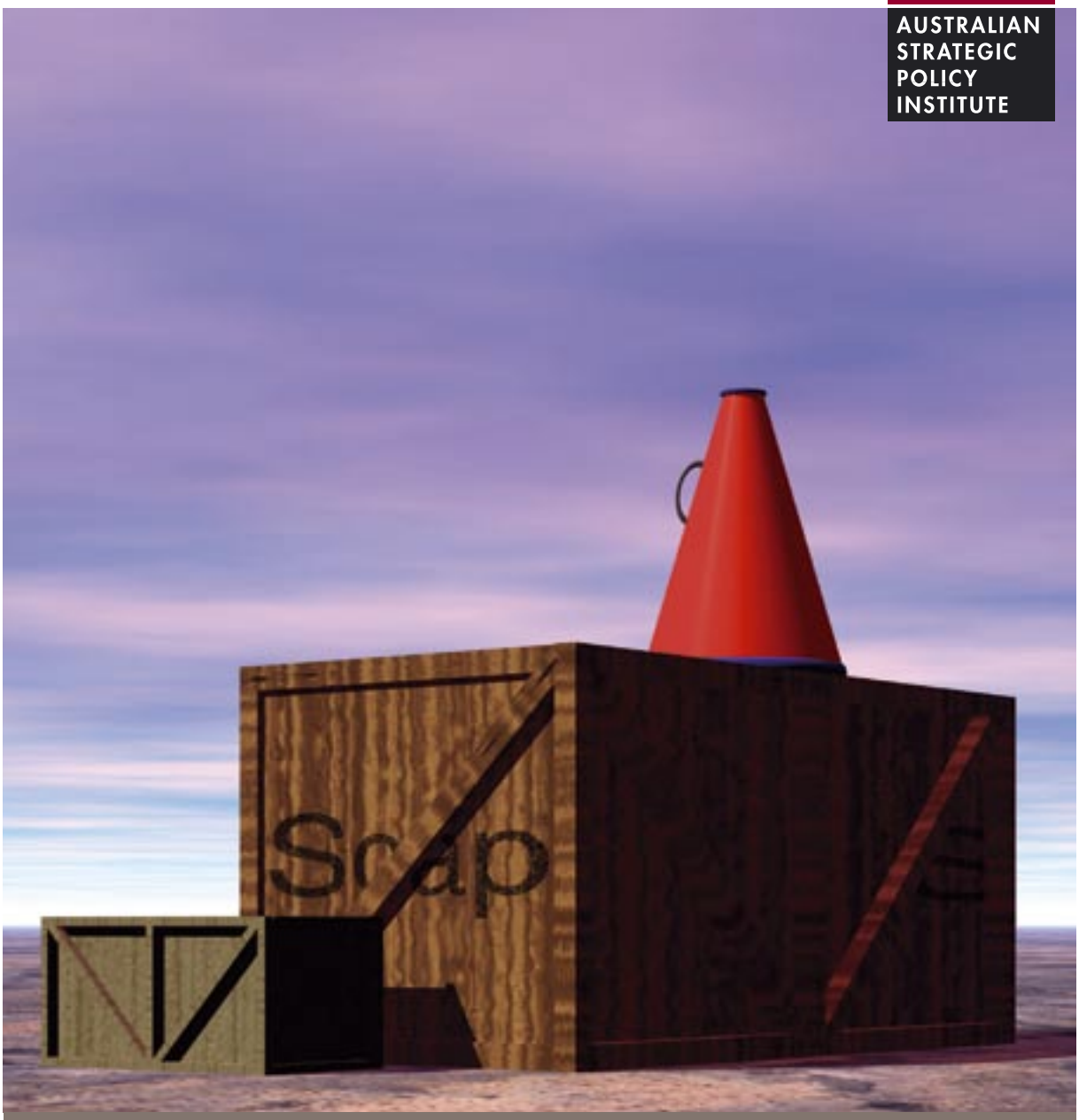

June 2005

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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 Australian Electoral System* (coauthor) and *The Cambridge Handbook of the Social Sciences in Australia* (coeditor). 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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Cover image: Empty soapbox with megaphone. Courtesy of APL

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Director's introduction

Last year ASPI published *Attitude Matters*, setting out public opinion in Australia on a range of defence and security questions. The poll results were informative, and in some cases surprising. This year we have taken the work on attitudes to defence and security a step further. In addition to updating the findings first presented in *Attitude Matters*, we have also compared public opinion with the views of candidates for federal parliament across the same range of questions. *Representative Views* draws on data collected from two surveys: the Australian Election Study (AES) and the Australian Candidates Study (ACS). ASPI commissioned Professor Ian McAllister from the Australian National University to undertake this work for us.

There are a few observations I would like to make about the poll results.

In recent times public attitudes to the United States have been given increased attention. The work presented here, drawing on responses to questions about the Iraq War, attitudes to the ANZUS alliance and opinions about security threats generally shows us that the community has a more sophisticated appreciation of the issues than commentators might sometimes suppose.

What *Representative Views* tells us is that voters are divided over the arguments for the Iraq War, and that there has been increasing concern expressed about the United States' role in global affairs over the last few years. Importantly, however, public opinion distinguishes between attitudes to current US policies and the importance of the Australia–US alliance. As McAllister notes, 'while public opinion was divided on the Iraq War, it doesn't seem to have undermined public support for the defence link with the US.'

Among candidates—the group we define as the political elite—the poll shows some very strong differences between the parties. Predictably, both major political organisations in Australia are strongly supportive of the alliance with the US, but the two minor parties (the Greens and the Democrats) have more divided opinions on ANZUS. For these minor parties, the United States has replaced Asia

as the region most likely to threaten Australia's security. This is a new development, probably reflecting hostile attitudes to issues such as the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Iraq War, but not one shared by the larger community.

On the issue of threat perception it is worth noting that the 2004 AES shows once again that Indonesia is identified by most voters as the country most likely to pose a security threat to Australia. That presents a particular challenge for the government as it attempts to build stronger bilateral ties with Indonesia following the election of President Yudhoyono. It appears that a good deal of work will be needed by government to reverse this trend, which has been developing since the 1970s. The problem of East Timor, the prominence of fundamentalist terrorist organisations, the bombings in Bali and Jakarta, and concerns about Indonesia's justice system have all reinforced some negative views about our near neighbour. Indonesia's remarkable shift to a functioning democracy appears to have been largely overlooked—or overwhelmed—by these other problems. Should the Australian Government wish to formalise a new security agreement with Indonesia, it should also work to build confidence in the Australian community and moderate their concerns.

Also covered in this paper is a section examining attitudes towards globalisation and trade in Asia. Over the last few years Australia has negotiated several important bilateral trade agreements. Almost all have been with Asian nations. Moreover, the Australian and Chinese governments are currently analysing the benefits of a similar bilateral agreement. Chapter 5 looks at attitudes towards diplomatic and trade relations with Asia, and finds that public opinion on these issues have evolved over the last decade. The question now is not whether to have close links with the region, but whether to go even further. As the government in Canberra considers our future relationships within Asia, and more particularly our place in any new economic grouping, it can feel confident that Australians are positive about our place there.

We also examine in this paper the question of whether gender influences attitudes towards defence. From time to time we read that the under-representation of women in the defence and security debate threatens to skew thinking. The results we show here are interesting, and will perhaps challenge some assumptions about gender differences in the defence and foreign policy debate.

What is clear is that women are under-represented in many of the important debates and that is not in the interests of a representative democracy. Only 41 of the 162 candidate responses are from women. That necessarily limits how much we can conclude, but it also highlights the gender gap in public life. This is a challenge for all of us to meet, and political parties have their part to play.

My thanks goes to Professor McAllister for analysing the poll data and for his expertise in drawing out the key findings. His report is a very accessible insight into attitudes to the defence and foreign policy questions, both among the community and from those who sought to represent it at the last federal election. I would also like to thank Brendan McRandle and Vanessa Lai, Janice Johnson and Paula Tychsen for their contributions to this project.

Finally, as is the policy for all ASPI publications, the views presented here are those of the author. Final responsibility for the publication lies with Brendan and myself.

Peter Abigail
Director

Executive summary

Voter and candidate surveys since the 2004 federal election shed light on changing Australian attitudes to defence, national security, foreign policy and trade. On some issues, Australians are more divided than at any time since the Vietnam War, and opinions are more strongly held. A gap exists between the concerns and views of the political elite and those of the public.

Defence as a political issue

Defence and national security were mentioned as the first priority for about one in 10 voters in the 2004 election, a similar figure to 2001. A similar proportion of candidates in those elections mentioned defence and national security as their first priority, more so among Coalition candidates than among candidates of the Australian Labor Party, the Australian Democrats or the Greens.

Security threats

Voters are significantly more likely to identify a potential security threat to Australia from another country than are candidates. In 2004, 14% of candidates identified a threat, compared to more than twice that proportion of voters.

Among voters, Indonesia remains by far the most frequently mentioned potential threat to Australia's security and is mentioned by 29% of voters. Just one in 10 candidates identifies Indonesia as a threat, a substantial decline since the mid-1990s.

Almost one-quarter of Democrat candidates and four in 10 Green candidates identify the US as a potential threat, demonstrating the antipathy of the minor parties towards the US.

Terrorism and Iraq

A majority of voters in 2004 supported Australia providing military assistance for the 'War on Terror', but there was a decline of 10 percentage points since 2001. The level of support among the

political elite is similar. However, there are substantial party differences, with Coalition candidates showing support, ALP candidates showing divided opinions, and Democrats and Greens showing opposition.

The Iraq War polarised both public and elite opinion in 2004. While voter opinion was evenly divided, opponents of the war held their views more strongly than supporters. Three-quarters of Coalition candidates strongly approved of the war, while nine out of 10 Labor and Democrat candidates strongly disapproved of it, as did almost all Green candidates.

Defence and the US

There's strong voter and elite support for the ANZUS Treaty. Minor parties, especially the Greens, generally see the treaty as unimportant. Within the political elite, support for the treaty and trust in the US to come to Australia's defence increased between 2001 and 2004.

While the Iraq War polarised the public and the elite, it appears to have had only a minor impact on public support for Australia's defence link with the US.

Globalisation and engagement with Asia

There's strong public and elite support for the economic and non-economic benefits of globalisation. However, the elite is divided, with Coalition candidates most in favour, Labor candidates split, and Democrat and Green candidates opposed.

On closer engagement with Asia, the public is divided between those who believe that more should be done and those who believe that the current situation is satisfactory. The political elite generally wants to see closer engagement with Asia than does the public, with ALP, Democrat and Green candidates being more likely to take this view than Coalition candidates.

The current levels of support for closer engagement with Asia are similar to those recorded at the end of the Keating Labor Government in the mid-1990s, when the issue had greater prominence.


NG INTEREST RATES LOW

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: POLITICS AND DEFENCE

Since the 1980s, Australia's defence and foreign policies have seen a gradual change in emphasis, away from alliance management and defence, and towards more open trade relations with a wide range of countries. Inevitably, this major change has resulted in the traditional lines of demarcation between defence and foreign policy becoming blurred, and the opening up of new divisions between the political parties on these issues. This new emphasis in Australia's external outlook is reflected in increased efforts to engage with the Asia–Pacific region, the signing of the 2004 Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US and discussions over a similar agreement with China, and in Australia's participation in the 1990 Gulf War and in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

These policy changes began under the Hawke–Keating Labor governments of the 1980s and early 1990s, and have been continued by the Howard Liberal Government since 1996. But while there has been an elite consensus that such a shift in emphasis is in Australia's long-term economic and strategic interests, in recent years there has been division over several major issues. Most notably, Labor opposed Australia's participation in the 2003 Iraq War, as well as key parts of the FTA with the US, and forced changes to the legislation before it could be ratified by parliament. As elite disagreements on foreign and defence policy have become more visible, citizens have become more aware and informed about the issues and taken a position on them.

Political elites have a key role in deciding which issues are placed on the political agenda for public debate. Traditionally, economic policies form the basis for elite competition, since they are bargainable and don't threaten the underlying stability of the political system.

Photo opposite: Australian Prime Minister John Howard stresses the need to continue the war on terror during the federal election campaign September 2004. AFP/AAP/Torsten Blackwood; © 2004 AFP

More contentious non-economic issues, such as immigration, whose 'open and dogmatic expression would create disastrous conflict' (Field and Higley 1980:37), are usually excluded from open, public discussion by the political elite. Foreign and defence policies have usually fallen into this latter category because of their sensitivity. But the recent debates over the FTA and the Iraq War suggest a greater willingness within the political elite to debate such issues publicly than at any time since the Vietnam War era.

This report examines the views of citizens and elites on foreign affairs, defence and trade (the latter reflected in attitudes to globalisation and closer engagement with Asia). The aim is to map the distribution of public opinion on these issues, and to ascertain the extent of the differences between citizens and elites and within the political elite itself. The data comes from the 2004 Australian Election Study (AES) and the Australian Candidate Study (ACS) surveys, each conducted immediately after the November 2004 federal election. Where the questions have been asked in previous AES and ACS surveys, the longitudinal results are also analysed. Appendix B gives full details of the surveys and other technical details. Appendix A updates *Attitude Matters*, an earlier ASPI report on public opinion about defence published in August 2004.

This paper focuses on voters and political elites, but what constitutes a political elite is, of course, a matter of debate. Previous studies in Australia (Higley et al 1979, Graetz and McAllister 1985) have usually defined the political elite as a series of overlapping groups that cover business, politics, the public service, the universities and the mass media. The focus in this report is narrower—on election candidates standing for national political office. While candidates are only one section of the elite, this method allows a close match of elite and public opinion because the views of both groups were sought at the same point in time. Because of the plethora of minor party candidates who stand for office, the analyses are limited to the views of four groups of federal election candidates: the Liberal–Nationals, the ALP, the Australian Democrats, and the Greens.

In line with the elite consensus that defence and foreign policy shouldn't become election issues, they were relatively uncontroversial and little debated from the mid-1970s through to the 2001 federal election. Events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 and the Gulf War in 1990–91 obviously generated debate but they weren't issues of partisan conflict, and public concerns about security and defence rarely surfaced in the elections of the period. This changed in 2001, with the *Tampa* asylum-seeker crisis in August, followed by the September 11 attacks in the US. For the first time since the Vietnam War, security and border protection became national election issues and played a major role in shaping the outcome of the 2001 federal election (McAllister 2003).

In the 2004 election, 6% of voters mentioned defence and national security as their first priority in the election, the same figure as in 2001 (Table 1). Similarly, terrorism was identified by 5% as their first priority, again the same as in 2001, and a further 4% mentioned the Iraq War. These figures show that defence and security concerns remain important for about one in 10 voters, with little change between the two elections. By contrast, the large majority of voters saw socioeconomic issues as their primary election concern: 30% mentioned health and Medicare (almost double the 2001 figure), 16% taxation (the same as in 2001), and 15% education (17% in 2001).

Major party candidates generally reflect the same concerns as voters about the most important problems facing the country. The largest group of major party candidates mentioned health and Medicare, followed by education and interest rates. Similar

Table 1: Importance of issues in the 2004 election (% mentions)

Rank	Issue	Voters	Cand	Lib–Nat	ALP	Dem	Green
1.	Health, Medicare	30	27	16	37	28	15
2.	Taxation	16	8	10	5	4	1
3.	Education	15	18	10	27	18	16
4.	Interest rates	9	18	34	4	3	0
5.	Defence, national security	6	7	11	3	0	1
6.	Environment	6	8	3	13	23	59
7.	Terrorism	5	3	6	1	1	0
8.	War in Iraq	4	2	0	4	5	3
9.	Refugees, asylum seekers	3	0	0	0	6	3
10.	Immigration	2	1	2	0	3	0
11.	Unemployment	2	3	2	1	5	2
12.	Industrial relations	2	5	6	5	4	0
	Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
	(N)	**(1,677)**	**(147)**	**(71)**	**(76)**	**(78)**	**(114)**

The AES question was: 'Still thinking about the same 12 issues, which of these issues was most important to you and to your family during the election campaign?' The ACS question was: 'From the following list, in order of importance what would you say are the four most important problems facing the country?' The combined 'Candidates' figures are for Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 2004. [See Appendix B]

proportions of candidates as voters mentioned defence and national security as primary issues, with slightly fewer candidates mentioning terrorism and the Iraq War. There are, however, significant differences between the parties, with more Labor candidates mentioning socioeconomic issues such as health and education (which they are more likely to be seen as the best party to handle) and more Liberal–National coalition candidates identifying interest rates (where they have an advantage among voters). Not surprisingly, a majority of Green candidates see the environment as being the most important problem facing the country.

... in 2004, 17% of Coalition candidates mentioned defence or terrorism as top priorities, compared to just 4% of Labor candidates.

By any standards, these results suggest that socioeconomic issues remain the central concerns both of voters and of major party candidates. But the fact that about one in 10 voters, and a similar proportion of candidates, gave their first priority to defence or terrorism in both the 2001 and 2004 elections suggests that these will remain important issues in future elections, barring any major change in the international environment. Party candidates' choice of election issues obviously reflects those areas where they have an advantage over their opponents. Thus, in 2004, 17% of Coalition candidates mentioned defence or terrorism as top priorities, compared to just 4% of Labor candidates.[1]

Chapter 2

SECURITY THREATS

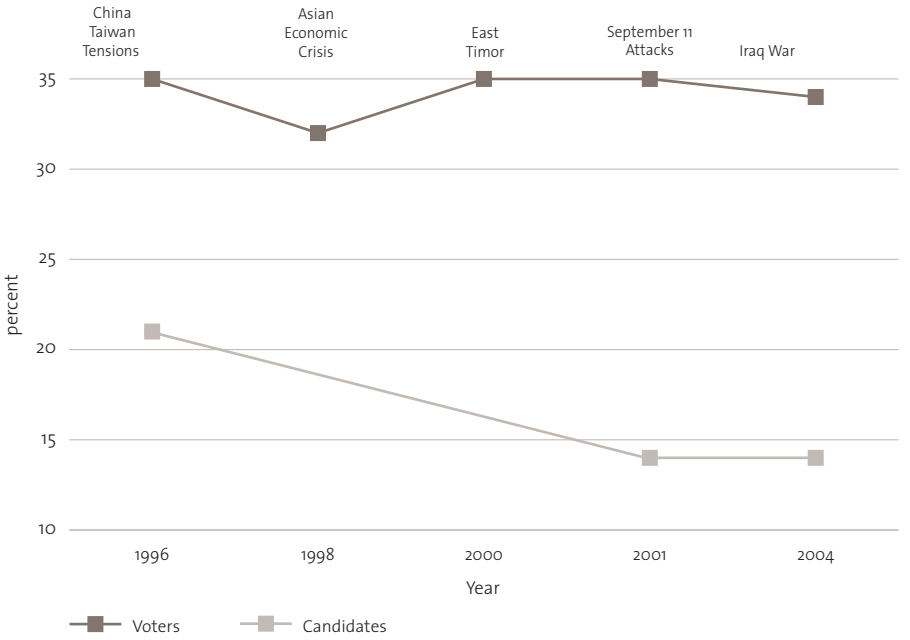
The public's perceptions of potential security threats to Australia depend substantially on the level of stability in the international environment. In the period since the late 1960s (from when reliable survey data exists), public concern about security peaked in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 and again during the Gulf War in 1990–91.

The political elite is, therefore, less likely to see a threat to Australia than are the voters they represent ... in 2004, more than twice as many voters as candidates thought a potential threat existed.

In principle, elite perceptions of security threats should be lower than those of the public, in part because of the elites' closer knowledge of the countries in the region and of the potential threat that they are likely to pose. Results on the elites' perceptions of security threats to Australia are available from 1996, and show a declining belief in the existence of a threat (Figure 1). In 1996, just over one in five major party candidates believed there was a potential security threat from one of the countries listed, compared to more than one in three voters. While the proportion of voters mentioning a threat has changed little over the period, the proportion within the elite has actually declined, to 14% in both 2001 and 2004. The political elite is, therefore, less likely to see a threat to Australia than are the voters they represent, and the difference has become more marked: in 2004, more than twice as many voters as candidates thought a potential threat existed.

Photo opposite: A powerful explosion went off outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, killing and injuring many people and damaging buildings in the area, 9 September 2004. EPA/WEDA/AAP © 2004 EPA

Figure 1: Perceptions of a security threat to Australia, 1996–2004 (% seeing a threat)



'In your opinion, are any of the following countries likely to pose a threat to Australia's security?' Estimates are based on respondents who answered 'very likely' to at least one of the 10 countries listed. Candidates are Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 1996–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

What is Security?

Security eludes a simple definition. However, among the defence establishment it has tended to be concerned primarily with the legitimate use of armed force for the protection of the state from belligerence. That narrow concept has been challenged, particularly over the last decade or so. The change in thinking was encouraged by the altered international security environment after the end of the Cold War, where humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping missions surged, free of the constraints of bipolar deadlock in the United Nations Security Council.

More recently, however, Australia has had to accommodate within its concept of security threat, the existence of the non-state actor. The events of September 11 demonstrated the ability of non-state actors to alter the security environment and challenge traditional notions of defence and armed force. Moreover, in Australia there has been considerable debate about how to deal with an array of non-military security challenges. Border protection was the buzzword of the 2001 election campaign. In 2003, Australia intervened in the Solomon Islands (at that Government's request) to assist with re-establishing law and order and to rebuild the substance of a functioning state entity.

As often today the term 'national security' is used—suggesting both a broader set of challenges, and the 'whole-of-government' approach needed to deal with them. For the general public security has probably always had as much application to non-military threats, as the security of the state. It is likely then, that any threat to personal safety (or even future prosperity) would register as a security threat for some in the community.

Which countries are seen as most likely to pose a security threat to Australia? Table 2 shows that the answer from voters is unambiguous: Indonesia. The popular belief that Indonesia is a threat has increased substantially since the mid 1970s, and it has largely replaced China as the country in our region regarded as most threatening to Australia (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998, McAllister 2004: Figure 5). The proportion of voters mentioning Indonesia as a threat reached one in five after the Dili massacre in November 1991, and increased to three in 10 after the events in East Timor following the referendum in August 1999. In 2004, 29% of voters identified Indonesia as 'most likely' to pose a threat to Australia in the future, a slight decline from the figure of 31% recorded in 2001.

Among the other countries mentioned by voters as a threat[2], China is ranked second (8%), followed by Malaysia (7%). These figures are in line with those from previous surveys and display relatively little change in recent years.

Most notable, however, is the emergence of the US as a potential security threat, just behind Malaysia but ahead of Vietnam. Around 6% of voters mentioned the US as a potential threat, compared to just 2% in 1998 and 2001—a threefold increase, albeit from a small base. The reasons for this appear to be, first, opposition among some voters to Washington's leadership role in the Iraq War and, second, opposition to globalisation in general and the FTA with the US in particular[3]. Clearly, some voters interpreted the survey question about security as much in terms of economic threats as military ones.

Table 2: Countries 'very likely' to pose a security threat to Australia (% nominating countries)

				Candidate's party			
Rank	**Country**	**Voters**	**Cands.**	**Lib–Nat**	**ALP**	**Dem**	**Green**
1.	Indonesia	29	10	14	6	8	4
2.	China	8	3	3	2	1	3
3.	Malaysia	7	1	1	1	1	0
4.	US	6	1	0	2	22	39
5.	Vietnam	4	1	1	0	0	0
6.	Japan	4	0	0	0	0	0
7.	Singapore	3	0	0	0	1	0
8.	India	3	2	3	1	1	0
	(N)	**(1,769)**	**(168)**	**(81)**	**(87)**	**(92)**	**(122)**

'In your opinion, are any of the following countries likely to pose a threat to Australia's security?' Rank is based on the responses by voters. The combined 'Candidates' figures are for Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

The countries mentioned by candidates as potential threats show considerable variation between the parties. The major party candidates as a group display a similar but weaker pattern to voters, with Indonesia ranked first and China second. More Liberal–National candidates (14%) than Labor candidates (6%) see Indonesia as a greater threat. Few of the other countries receive more than a handful of mentions, although the fact that 3% of Coalition candidates mentioned India, placing it alongside China, is notable.

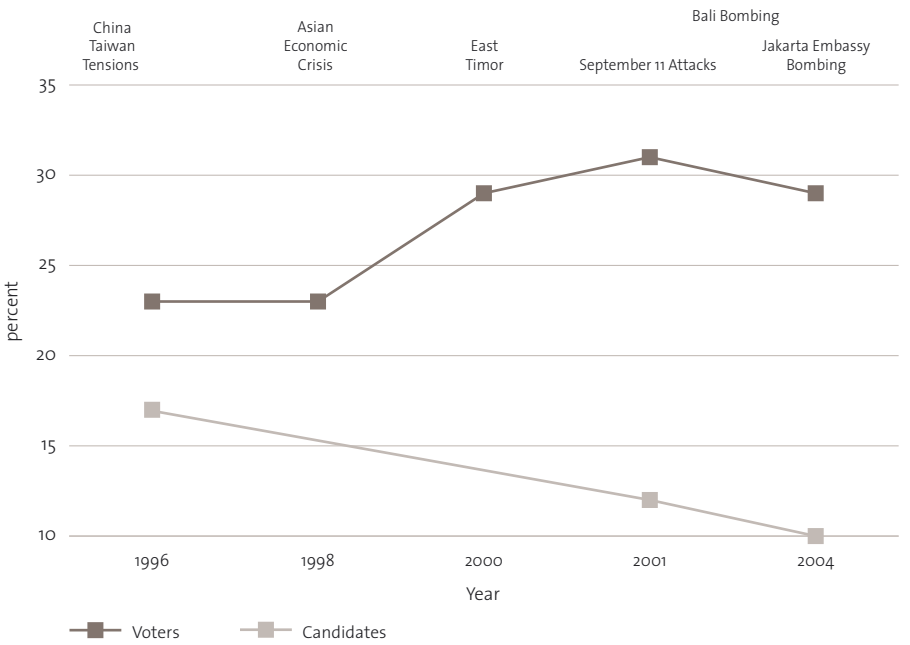
The changes since 1996 in the countries mentioned by Coalition candidates are also worth noting. In 1996, 29% thought it 'very likely' that Indonesia would be a threat, followed by 12% mentioning China. As trade and cooperation with Indonesia and China have increased, Coalition candidates have become less adversarial in their attitudes towards the two countries.

The major party candidates as a group display a similar but weaker pattern to voters, with Indonesia ranked first and China second … although the fact that 3% of Coalition candidates mentioned India, placing it alongside China, is notable.

Among Democrat and Green candidates, by contrast, the pattern is clear: the US is seen as by far the most significant threat to Australia, with almost one in four Democrat candidates and almost four in 10 Green candidates identifying the US as a threat[4]. By contrast, these minor party candidates are much less likely to see Indonesia as a threat to Australia. The results reveal the strength of feeling among some minor party candidates against the US in the wake of the Iraq War. Again, these patterns represent a significant change from the answers of minor party candidates when they were first asked this question in 1996; in that survey, 22% of Democrat and 20% of Green candidates mentioned Indonesia as a threat, followed by China, which was mentioned by 9% and 13%, respectively. Between 1996 and 2004, for minor party candidates, the US has replaced Asia as the main potential source of threat.

Between 1996 and 2004, for minor party candidates, the US has replaced Asia as the main potential source of threat.

Figure 2: Indonesia as a security threat to Australia, 1996–2004 (% seeing a threat)



'In your opinion, are any of the following countries likely to pose a threat to Australia's security? … Indonesia?' Candidates are Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 1996–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Although Indonesia remains the country most likely to be mentioned as a threat by candidates, the proportion nominating Indonesia has been declining since 1996, in contrast to the pattern among voters. In 1996, 17% of major party candidates mentioned Indonesia—a figure that declined to 12% in 2001 and 10% in 2004 (Figure 2). By contrast, the proportion of voters mentioning Indonesia has increased, peaking at 31% in 2001 and averaging about three in 10 voters during the period following the referendum and resulting turmoil in East Timor. The relatively benign elite opinions about Indonesia have undoubtedly been influenced by government efforts since 1999 to mend bilateral relations. These efforts have, however, gained less visibility among voters, who still regard Indonesia as a significant potential security threat to Australia.

Finding Security with Indonesia

In December 1995 the Keating Government announced a security agreement with Indonesia. The announcement of the Agreement on Maintaining Security (AMS) took Australians by surprise. There was no public consultation or forewarning of this bilateral initiative. The agreement appeared to offer a new closeness and trust between the two neighbours—at least at the level of the political elite—and another step forward in Australia's commitment to closer regional integration. If the agreement meant closer ties and stronger military-military links for Australia, for Indonesia it was perhaps as much about securing Australia's cooperation and non-interference in Indonesia's internal affairs.

The AMS proved to be a short lived construct, abrogated by Indonesia as a result of Australia's role in East Timor in 1999. So what are the lessons of the AMS? One is that the bilateral relationship lacked sufficient ballast to carry the different expectations of both countries. Another is that the AMS symbolised rather than bridged the longstanding gap between the Australian public and political elite on the kind of relationship we should seek with Indonesia.

Much has changed since then, not least Indonesia's transformation into a vibrant democracy. There is talk again of a security agreement between Australia and Indonesia, spurred in part by a new warmth between the political leadership. However, the AMS demonstrated that the public needs to be taken along in any new negotiations, and that the final form of any treaty needs to reflect a shared vision. As Prime Minister Howard recently observed, we should not 'make the mistake of benchmarking the relationship according to whether or not we have a treaty'. Governments should remember that treaties without strong foundations and broad support can too easily become hostage to single issues in the bilateral relationship. The merits of a new treaty are debatable, and the public needs to be part of an informed debate.

Chapter 3

TERRORISM AND IRAQ

Of all the defence or foreign policy issues that can emerge in a country, participation in a war is perhaps the best example of a situation where the elite and the public should be united in a common purpose. However, where this involves participation in an overseas operation where the threat to Australia is indirect, or the existence of the threat is contested, experience shows that there are often deep divisions, both within the elite and among the public. This occurred during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with popular opposition eventually leading to the withdrawal of Australian troops in 1972. More recently, there have been deep divisions over participation in the US-led Iraq War, albeit on a lesser scale than those during the Vietnam War.

More recently, there have been deep divisions over participation in the US-led Iraq War, albeit on a lesser scale than those during the Vietnam War.

Public opinion about the Iraq War is also inextricably bound up with views about the broader War on Terror. Following the attacks in the US on 11 September 2001, there was widespread public support for the War on Terror. The 2001 AES found that 68% of voters believed that Australia should provide military assistance for such a war, with just 11% opposed. In 2004, public support for the War on Terror had weakened slightly. Although a majority (58%) still supported military assistance, 20% were now opposed. In other words, there was a shift

Photo opposite: Protesters rally against the war in Iraq in Sydney in March 2003. AFP/AAP/Greg Wood © 2003 AFP

in opinion away from supporting the war, of about 10 percentage points, between the two elections.

The views of the major party candidates are broadly in line with those of the voters, albeit with slightly stronger support for the War on Terror. The 2004 results for the major party candidates are almost the same as in 2001, when 65% agreed with the war and 20% opposed it. However, there are significant differences within the elite. Almost nine out of 10 Coalition candidates supported military assistance. Labor candidates were more divided in their views—while 43% supported assistance, almost all were lukewarm in their support and about one-third were opposed. As we would expect, Democrat and Green candidates were most opposed to the War on Terror: 58% of Democrat candidates and 77% of Green candidates opposed it. These patterns are almost identical to those found in 2001, when 92% of Coalition candidates and 41% of Labor candidates supported the War on Terror, while 56% of Democrats and 80% of Greens opposed it.

Table 3: Attitudes to military assistance for the War on Terror (% holding opinion)

			Candidate's party			
Attitude	**Voters**	**Cands.**	**Lib–Nat**	**ALP**	**Dem**	**Green**
Strongly agree	14	19	39	1	3	0
Agree	44	46	50	42	15	8
Neither	22	18	9	25	24	15
Disagree	14	11	1	20	34	33
Strongly disagree	6	6	1	12	24	44
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,717)**	**(166)**	**(79)**	**(87)**	**(92)**	**(121)**

'Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Australia should provide military assistance to the war on terrorism.' The combined 'Candidates' figures are for Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

... while public opinion was almost equally divided on how the government had handled the war, the war's opponents held stronger views than its supporters.

While popular and elite views of the War on Terror were divided, most voters and candidates (with the exception of Green candidates) did not hold their opinions strongly. Not so with the Iraq War: a large majority of the candidates and almost half the voters expressed strong views about the war, for and against, underlining its polarising influence on political opinion. The first part of Table 4 shows that a narrow majority of voters (52%) approved of the Iraq War, while 48% opposed it; more importantly, however, about one-third of supporters of the war held their views strongly, compared to two-thirds of the war's opponents. In other words, while public opinion was almost equally divided on how the government had handled the war, the war's opponents held stronger views than its supporters.

Of course, the wording of the question—naming John Howard and thereby raising partisan loyalties—is one explanation for these polarised opinions among voters. But even

taking this into account, it's clear that the public was deeply divided over the issue. These divisions were even more apparent among candidates in the election. Three-quarters of Liberal–National candidates strongly approved of the war, while nine out of 10 Labor and Democrat candidates strongly disapproved of it, as did almost all Green candidates.

And did voters and candidates believe that the Iraq War was worth its cost? The second part of Table 4 shows that about six in 10 voters thought not. Once again, the candidates showed extremely polarised opinions on the issue.

Table 4: Attitudes to the Iraq War (% holding opinion)

			Candidate's party			
Attitude	**Voters**	**Cands.**	**Lib–Nat**	**ALP**	**Dem**	**Green**
View on the war						
Strongly approve	17	37	75	2	0	0
Approve	35	11	21	2	5	1
Disapprove	18	3	3	4	7	2
Strongly disapprove	30	49	1	92	88	97
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,728)**	**(167)**	**(80)**	**(87)**	**(92)**	**(122)**
The cost of the war						
Worth it	39	46	90	6	9	1
Not worth it	61	54	10	94	91	99
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,704)**	**(166)**	**(79)**	**(87)**	**(92)**	**(121)**

'Do you approve or disapprove of the way John Howard handled the war in Iraq?' 'Taking everything into account, do you think the war in Iraq has been worth the cost or not?' The combined 'Candidates' figures are for Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

Few contemporary political issues show such extreme polarisation within elite opinion, and to a lesser extent among voters, as the Iraq War.

Few contemporary political issues show such extreme polarisation within elite opinion, and to a lesser extent among voters, as the Iraq War.

Another part of the explanation for the polarisation lies in the nature of the issue itself. Most election issues are socioeconomic—the major ones in the 2004 election were health, taxation and education. Despite the best efforts of the major parties to present distinctive policies on socioeconomic issues, they are necessarily complex and voters hold a range of finely graded opinions. By contrast, the question of war is 'zero sum', either for or against, and this helps to account for the strength of opinions about it.


OPERA
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Chapter 4

DEFENCE AND THE US

For both the public and the political elite, the defence link within the US has remained Australia's most important strategic alliance since the signing of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951. From the outset, the ANZUS Treaty allied Australia with the US during the Cold War, and this view of the world dominated Australian strategic thinking towards the region for the period of uninterrupted conservative government that lasted from 1949 to 1972 (Gurry 1995). The strategic alliance with the US was a primary motivation behind Australia's military commitment to the Korean War between 1950 and 1953, as well as to the Vietnam War from 1962 to 1972.

> ... an overwhelming majority of voters and major party candidates see the ANZUS alliance as important to Australia, the only question being whether they see it as 'very' or 'fairly' important.

The ANZUS alliance has, of course, experienced periods of stress, such as that following the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam in 1972, and the MX missile affair of the late 1980s, when public pressure forced the Australian Government to back down from an agreement to provide support for US missile testing in the South Pacific. There was also tension between the US and New Zealand during the 1980s, when the New Zealand Labour Government refused to accept further visits by US nuclear vessels (Watts 1991). At one point, it appeared that

Photo opposite: One of the newest sections of Arlington National Cemetery is Section 60, where US soldiers killed in Iraq are buried. © APL/Andrew Lichtenstein

the US might withdraw from ANZUS completely, necessitating the negotiation of a new bilateral treaty between Australia and the US.

Democrat and Green candidates take a different view, with Democrats divided on the treaty and Greens overwhelmingly against it.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, an overwhelming majority of voters and major party candidates see the ANZUS alliance as important to Australia, the only question being whether they see it as 'very' or 'fairly' important. Table 5 shows that 84% of voters see the treaty as important, with slightly more (45%) seeing it as 'very important' than 'fairly important' (39%). Election candidates are even more emphatic in their views, with almost two-thirds seeing the treaty as 'very important'. As we would expect, Coalition candidates are the strongest supporters of ANZUS, but it's notable that 40% of Labor candidates also see it as 'very important'. Democrat and Green candidates take a different view, with Democrats divided on the treaty and Greens overwhelmingly against it.

Table 5: Attitudes to the US (% holding opinion)

			Candidate's party			
Attitude	**Voters**	**Cands.**	**Lib–Nat**	**ALP**	**Dem**	**Green**
The ANZUS Treaty						
Very important	45	63	89	40	6	4
Fairly important	39	27	11	41	44	26
Not very important	12	10	0	19	40	49
Not at all important	4	0	0	0	10	21
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,736)**	**(165)**	**(80)**	**(85)**	**(92)**	**(121)**
Trust in the US						
Great deal	33	49	79	20	8	6
Fair amount	40	35	21	49	26	32
Not very much	23	14	0	27	47	45
None at all	4	2	0	4	19	17
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(1,733)**	**(165)**	**(81)**	**(84)**	**(91)**	**(122)**

'How important do you think the Australian alliance with the United States under the ANZUS Treaty is for protecting Australia's security?' '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?' The combined 'Candidates' figures are for Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

Attitudes to the ANZUS alliance generally vary with evaluations of the willingness of the US to intervene militarily around the world. When there are episodes of US military intervention, as in the first Gulf War in 1990 or following September 11, the public is more likely to believe that ANZUS is important and that the US can be trusted to come to Australia's defence. Figure 3 thus shows increased public support for ANZUS in 2001,

following the terrorist attacks in the US, compared to previous estimates. The other notable increase, in 1996, appears to have been the result of increased public concern about the threat posed by China, as well as the less aggressive military posture of the Clinton Administration following the Reagan presidency (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998). Although data on candidates' opinions about ANZUS exists only from 2001, the findings show increased support between 2001 and 2004, in line with views about the treaty.

To what extent do the public and the political elite express trust in the US to defend Australia? The second part of Table 5 shows similar patterns to views about the ANZUS alliance[5], with about three-quarters of the public and 84% of major party candidates saying that they have a 'great deal' or a 'fair amount' of trust in the US. Once again, the trend for the public shows two peaks in trust, in 1996 and 2001, while the level of elite trust increased between 2001 and 2004 (Figure 3). The divergence between elite and public opinion on the US alliance in 2004 is notable—while voters' positive attitudes have dropped 13 percentage points, those of candidates have increased by 11 points. A major explanation for this divergence is the strong support for the Iraq War displayed by Coalition candidates (shown in Table 4), which has translated into stronger support for the US.

... while public opinion was divided on the Iraq War, it doesn't seem to have undermined public support for the defence link with the US.

To what extent have the deep divisions that emerged over the Iraq War reduced public support for the US and the ANZUS Treaty? The evidence in Table 6 suggests that Iraq had only a marginal impact in weakening support for ANZUS. Among those who disapproved of the war, 85% still saw ANZUS as 'very' or 'fairly' important, and even among those who strongly disapproved of the war, 61% still saw ANZUS as important; at the other end of the scale, only one in 10 of this group saw the treaty as 'not at all important'. Therefore, while public opinion was divided on the Iraq War, it doesn't seem to have undermined public support for the defence link with the US.

Table 6: The ANZUS Treaty and the Iraq War (% holding opinion)

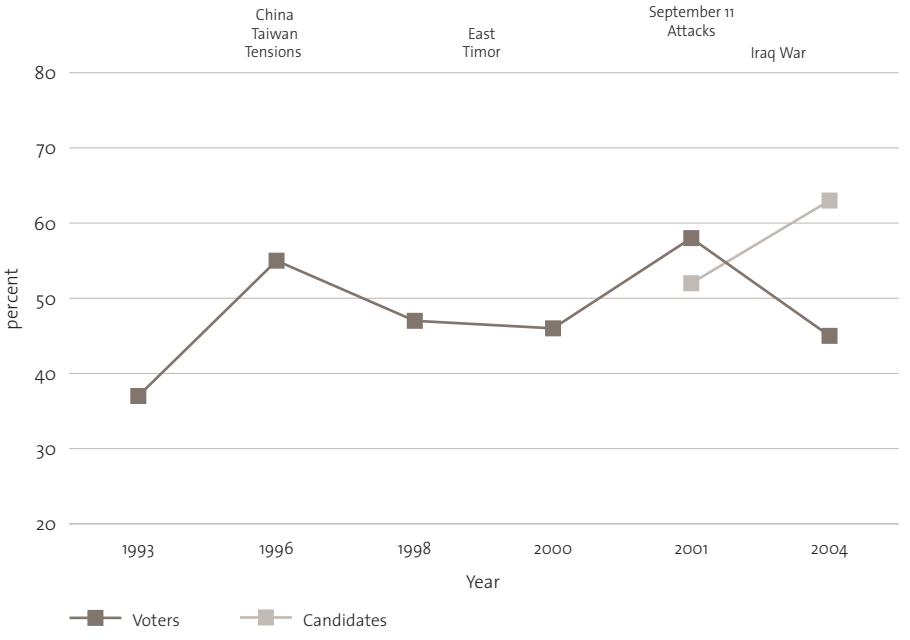
	The Iraq War			
The ANZUS Treaty	**Strongly approve**	**Approve**	**Disapprove**	**Strongly disapprove**
Very important	83	60	30	15
Fairly important	16	37	55	46
Not very important	1	3	13	29
Not at all important	0	0	1	10
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
(N)	**(302)**	**(597)**	**(305)**	**(512)**

See Tables 4 and 5 for question wordings.

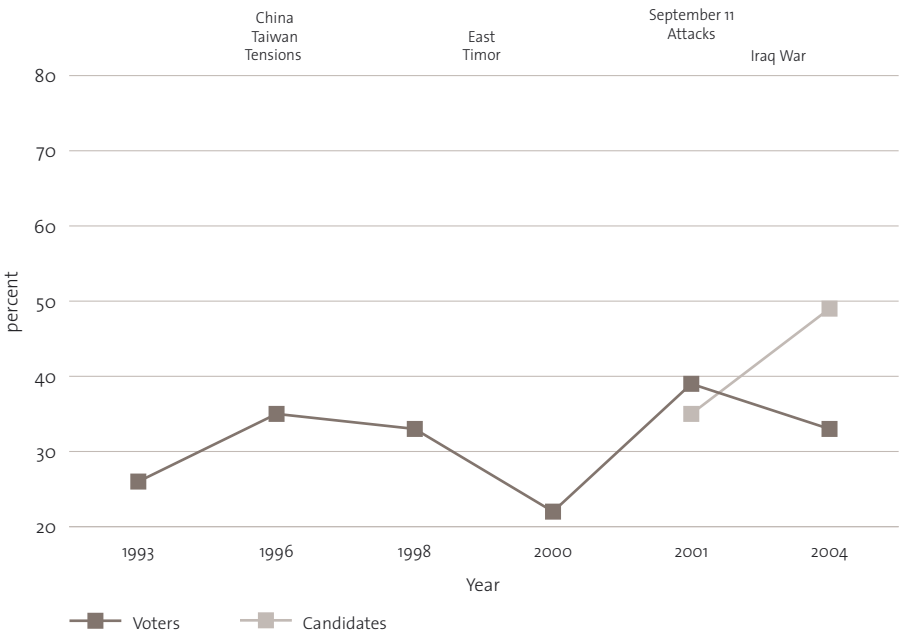
Source: AES 2004.

Figure 3: Defence relations with the US, 1993–2004 (% holding opinion)

ANZUS alliance (% say 'very important')



Trust in the US (% say 'great deal')



See Table 5 for question wordings. Candidates are Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: AES 1993–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

For both major parties, Australia's defence relations with the US are the central plank of our foreign and defence policy, and this is reflected in the strong public support that ANZUS attracts. Indeed, Australians' level of public trust in the US is greater than any time since the 1970s, reflecting the volatile international environment since 11 September 2001. Most importantly, the link with the US appears to have weathered the controversy over the Iraq War and Australia's participation in it. Much of the public support for ANZUS has its roots in the great length of the alliance, stretching back over half a century, but it's also based on strong bipartisan support for the alliance. So long as both major parties value the treaty and communicate that view to voters, it's unlikely that public support will diminish.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Chapter 5

GLOBALISATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH ASIA

The relentless trend towards globalisation over the past two decades has added further complexities to Australia's defence and foreign policies. Throughout the twentieth century, Australia relied heavily on tariff protection in order to protect industry from foreign competition, especially from within the region. As the economic reforms of the Hawke Labor Government gathered pace during the 1980s, tariff protection became more untenable and trade barriers were gradually removed. During the 1990s, Australia became a strong advocate of free trade, which we promoted through the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping; indeed, APEC's Bogor Declaration committed its developed economy members to remove all tariff protection by 2010. As Labor's foreign minister, Gareth Evans, put it at the time, Australia had to transform itself from being the 'odd man out' in Asia to being 'the odd man in' (Evans 1995:99).

The public's reluctance to embrace Asia can be attributed, first, to the absence of informed public debate on the issue by the political elite, and second, to the activities of populist politicians and single-issue groups ...

On these issues of free trade and closer engagement with Asia, the public has always lagged behind elite opinion. Successive opinion polls have found that, while the public accepts that Australia's geographical

Photo opposite: Oriental Pearl Tower and skyscrapers, Shanghai, China. © APL/Steve Vidler

position necessitates more engagement with Asia, underlying fears exist about the impact of such a closer association on our domestic economy (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998). In the AES surveys conducted during the 1990s, for example, a consistent majority of voters agreed that Australia should continue to use tariffs to protect its industry[6]. The public's reluctance to embrace Asia can be attributed, first, to the absence of informed public debate on the issue by the political elite, and second, to the activities of populist politicians and single-issue groups who have often heightened public concerns about the effects of such changes on domestic employment and economic conditions.

The rise of globalisation and its impact on Australia has placed the public debate about closer engagement with Asia in a broader context. On balance, the public sees the economic and non-economic aspects of globalisation in a favourable light[7]. Of the four items that make up the economic aspect in Table 7, there's most support for the beneficial effects of globalisation on the Australian economy and on the respondent's own standard of living. Voters are more sceptical about the potential of globalisation to generate jobs in Australia, but even on that question almost two-thirds take a positive view.

There's also strong support for the potential of globalisation to underpin 'cultural diversity', which is perhaps surprising given the often expressed view that globalisation will lead to cultural conformity ...

There are similarly strong levels of support for the non-economic aspects of globalisation, notably for improving democracy and human rights abroad. There's also strong support for the potential of globalisation to underpin 'cultural diversity', which is perhaps surprising given the often expressed view that globalisation will lead to cultural conformity and the dominance of a mass culture emanating from the US. Voters are more negative about the effects of globalisation on the environment. Overall, however, there's strong public support for the phenomenon, which is perhaps also surprising, given Australia's history of tariff protection.

Table 7: Dimensions of globalisation (% holding opinion)

	Very good	Good	Bad	Very bad	Total	(N)
Economic						
The Australian economy	16	67	15	2	100	(1,635)
Your own standard of living	9	75	15	1	100	(1,626)
Australian companies	16	60	20	4	100	(1,627)
Creating jobs in Australia	9	55	30	6	100	(1,637)
Non-economic						
The environment	8	55	27	10	100	(1,624)
Providing jobs in poor countries	13	66	17	4	100	(1,649)
Democracy and human rights abroad	13	70	14	3	100	(1,639)
Maintaining cultural diversity in the world	13	61	20	6	100	(1,631)

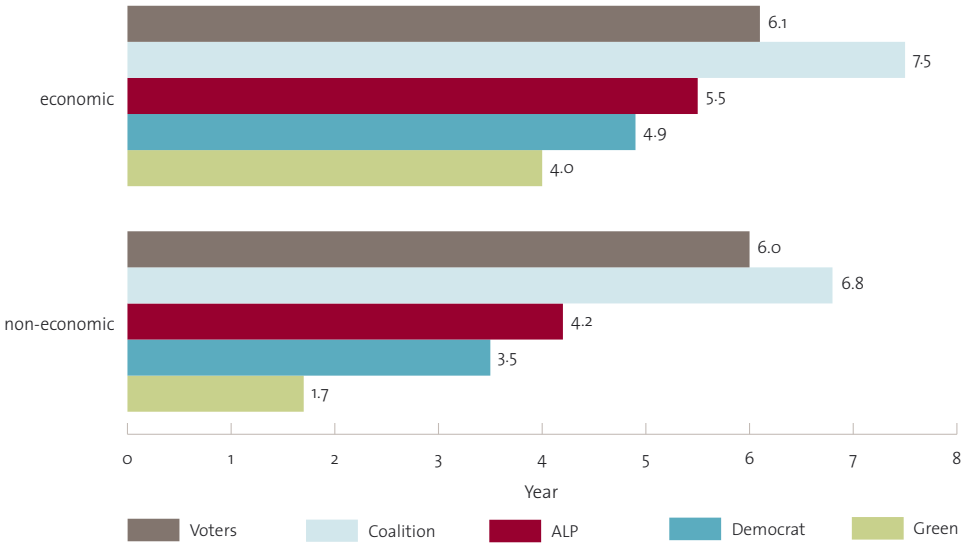
'Do you think globalisation is good or bad for the following?'

Source: AES 2004.

At the other end of the scale, Green candidates are strongly negative, reflecting their view that globalisation harms the environment.

If the public broadly supports globalisation, there are major differences about its benefits within the political elite. Combining the individual items in each dimension into a single scale and estimating the mean values for the party candidates (Figure 4) shows that Coalition candidates are the most ardent supporters of both dimensions of globalisation, but especially of its economic benefits. Coalition candidates score 7.5 on the zero-to-10 scale, compared to 6.1 for voters. Labor candidates take an intermediate position, with a score of 5.5, and Democrats and Greens see the fewest benefits. The differences are even more marked on the non-economic aspects of globalisation. While Coalition candidates score 6.8, Labor candidates are more negative than positive in their opinions, with a score of 4.2. At the other end of the scale, Green candidates are strongly negative, reflecting their view that globalisation harms the environment[8].

Figure 4: Attitudes to globalisation among voters and elites (% supporting globalisation)



Estimates are means based on multiple-item scales combining the items in Table 7 and rescored from zero (opposes globalisation) to 10 (supports globalisation).

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

If globalisation produces divided opinions within the political elite, there are much fewer differences on the issue of engagement with Asia, and also fewer differences between the public and the elite. Among voters, there's majority agreement on the need to foster more trade with Asia; Table 8 shows that 63% agree with the proposition and just 9% disagree, with the remaining 28% taking an intermediate position. However, the belief in the status quo with respect to Asia is more clearly seen in the second part of Table 8, where the respondents were asked their views about closer relations. In this case, while just over one

in three felt that the process had not gone far enough, a narrow majority considered the current situation 'about right'. The results suggest that the division in public opinion over Asia isn't between those who want closer links and those who don't, but between those who want closer links and those who believe that the current situation is satisfactory.

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The Debate on Globalisation?

Like the phenomenon itself, definitions of globalisation are contested, holding a different meaning for different people. Economic issues are central to the process, with trade, investment and financial flows increasingly integrating the global economy. However, globalisation also encompasses equally contentious political and cultural influences, which are increasingly connecting people across the world.

For some, this process is a positive force for growth and increasing economic prosperity worldwide. Those who oppose globalisation represent a diverse set of groups with different grievances, from both the left and right of the political spectrum. Some sections of the population view it as the cause of their economic exclusion and a threat to national identity. Opponents also include a broader group who see globalisation as responsible for an array of ills; an erosion of the state's power by global institutions, damage to the environment, and increasing inequality between the developed and developing world.

Antipathy towards globalisation has resulted in sometimes violent demonstrations, most dramatically in Seattle in 1999, and Genoa in 2001 at the G8 summit. In Australia, anti-globalisation sentiment mobilised thousands of protesters at the World Economic Forum in September 2000, and in protests in several cities on May 1, 2001. It also found expression in the rise of the One Nation Party in the late 1990s. The party, which called for the restoration of tariff barriers and bemoaned the consequences of economic liberalisation, drew its support from the blue collar workforce which had borne the brunt of economic restructuring (Goot 1998).

However, the backlash against globalisation appears to have lost impetus since the beginning of this century, for reasons that remain unclear. In the Australian context, it is interesting to reflect on the possible relationship between globalisation's diminished profile in public debate, and Australia's continued economic expansion, now in its fourteenth consecutive year.

Table 8: Attitudes to links with Asia (% holding opinion)

			Candidate's party			
Attitude	**Voters**	**Cands.**	**Lib–Nat**	**ALP**	**Dem**	**Green**
Trade with Asia						
Strongly agree	14	22	5	38	38	28
Agree	49	48	45	52	47	59
Neither	28	20	37	3	11	10
Disagree	7	6	9	3	2	3
Strongly disagree	2	4	4	3	2	0
Closer relations with Asia						
Gone much too far	5	1	1	1	2	0
Gone too far	8	2	3	1	2	0
About right	51	31	59	6	17	8
Not gone far enough	29	44	32	55	42	56
Not gone nearly far enough	7	22	5	37	40	36
(N)	**(1,717)**	**(168)**	**(81)**	**(87)**	**(92)**	**(122)**

'Please say you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Australia's trading future lies in Asia.' 'The statements below 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 if it is about right ... Building closer relations with Asia'

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

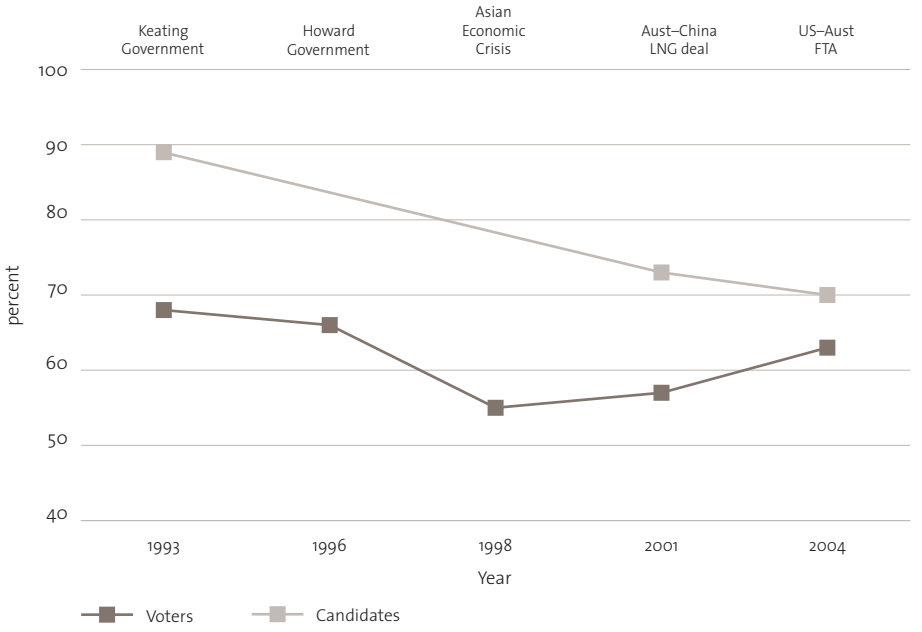
This broad pattern of opinion is repeated within the political elite, with the difference that fewer candidates opt for the status quo and more want to see closer links. Among the major party candidates, 76% believe that Australia's trading future lies in Asia, and 71% believe that closer links with Asia haven't gone far enough. However, again there are differences between the parties. Coalition candidates are much more likely than the candidates of the other three parties to opt for the status quo, while among Labor, Democrat and Green candidates there's overwhelming support for closer links with Asia. To the extent that there is a difference on the question between voters and candidates, and between the candidates of the different parties, it's about whether current policies are satisfactory or closer links need to be forged. In general, Coalition candidates are closer to the public on this issue than the candidates of the other parties.

Coalition candidates are much more likely than the candidates of the other three parties to opt for the status quo ... In general, Coalition candidates are closer to the public on this issue than the candidates of the other parties.

To what extent have these views changed over time, for both the public and the elite? Figure 5 shows that voters were more supportive of trade with Asia in 1993 than at any time since[9]. This was, of course, the period of the Keating Labor Government, when closer

engagement with Asia dominated Australia's foreign policy agenda. At that time, 68% of voters agreed with the proposition, compared to 89% of major party candidates. Public support declined slightly in 1996, when the Howard Government was elected, and declined more substantially to 55% in 1998. This decline is at least partly explained by the Asian financial crisis, which afflicted many of the hitherto best performing economies of the region, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Korea, and exposed fragilities in their economic management and structures. The most recent figure of 63% suggests a significant rise in public support for closer links with Asia, as the issue has taken on greater prominence and many of the financial difficulties that emerged in the late 1990s have been rectified. Nevertheless, public support in 2004 still remains below the levels recorded in 1993 and 1996.

Figure 5: Voter and elite views of trade with Asia, 1993–2004 (% in favour)



'Please say you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Australia's trading future lies in Asia.' Candidates are Liberal, National and ALP candidates.

Sources: ACS, AES 1993–2004.

... socioeconomic characteristics of voters that are most likely to predict support for closer Asian engagement show that tertiary education is by far the best predictor. By contrast, support for Australia's link with the US is negatively related to tertiary education.

Whatever the public support for engagement with Asia, engagement has found most support and has been most debated within the political elite. This was particularly the case during the Keating Government, when the theme of economic and strategic integration with Asia dominated much of the government's foreign policy agenda, but even then many

voters were either unconcerned about the issue or believed that the then current level of engagement was satisfactory (McAllister and Ravenhill 1998). This also remains the case in 2004.

Analyses identifying the socioeconomic characteristics of voters that are most likely to predict support for closer Asian engagement show that tertiary education is by far the best predictor. By contrast, support for Australia's link with the US is negatively related to tertiary education.

The public views engagement with Asia as an elite issue, which they have not yet fully embraced, whereas our tie with the US is a longstanding, widely supported commitment.[10]

Gender and attitudes towards defence

Studies of gender and politics conducted across a range of countries have consistently shown significant differences between men and women in the interest they take in politics, in the parties they vote for, and in the views they adopt on the major political issues of the day. While these differences have been declining, and can usually be attributed to variations in family responsibilities and occupational experiences rather than to gender per se, small but persistent differences remain. To what extent are there important gender differences among voters in views about defence and foreign affairs? And are these patterns replicated within the political elite?

Table 9: Gender differences in defence and foreign affairs

	%		
Voters	**Male**	**Female**	**(Significance)**
Threat from Indonesia 'very likely'	30	28	(.274)
ANZUS alliance 'very important'	49	42	(<.000)
'Great deal' of trust in US	37	30	(.003)
Approve of Iraq War	54	51	(.083)
Agree Australia's trading future in Asia	69	58	(<.000)
(N)	**(835)**	**(895)**	
Candidates			
Threat from Indonesia 'very likely'	8	13	(.456)
ANZUS alliance 'very important'	68	54	(.072)
'Great deal' of trust in US	56	28	(.001)
Approve of Iraq War	53	35	(.038)
Agree Australia's trading future in Asia	67	81	(.084)
(N)	**(121)**	**(41)**	

See Tables 2, 4, 5 and 8 for question wordings. Significance tests are two-tailed t-tests. Candidates are Liberal, National and ALP candidates only.

Sources: ACS, AES 2004.

The first part of Table 9 shows that, using five measures of attitudes towards defence and foreign affairs, there are statistically significant differences between women and men on three of the five questions. Men are more likely than women to see Australia's trading future within Asia, to view the ANZUS alliance as being very important to Australia's security, and to have trust in the United States to come to Australia's defence in the event of an attack. There are, however, no differences in whether or not men and women see Indonesia as a security threat and—perhaps surprisingly—no difference in their judgement about the Iraq War.

The second part of the table shows the same results for Coalition and ALP candidates. While the results should be treated with caution because of the relatively small number of female candidates, and their distribution across the parties, the results largely replicate those that are apparent at the mass level. Women candidates, like their counterparts within the electorate, are less likely to identify with the ANZUS alliance or to trust the United States. However, they're more likely to oppose the Iraq War and to see Australia's trading future within Asia. Nevertheless, only two of the differences—trust in the US, and the Iraq War—are statistically significant. At both the mass and elite levels, then, the evidence for any systematic gender difference in attitudes towards defence and foreign affairs is decidedly mixed.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

In Australia and in many of the other established democracies, defence, foreign affairs and trade have rarely been topics of public debate. One reason for this is simple: the issues are often complex and require considerable background knowledge in order to reach an informed view. But a more immediate reason is that political elites have traditionally viewed such issues as having the potential to undermine the rules of the political game, and as a consequence have systematically excluded them from the public agenda. Also included in this list of mainly non-economic issues are, inter alia, immigration, abortion, capital punishment and euthanasia. All these questions can potentially destabilise the political system and can divide the supporters of the main political parties, with potentially disastrous consequences for the two-party system.

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented move towards public debate about defence and foreign policy in Australia. This has been a consequence of international events, such as the September 11 attacks in the US, the War on Terror, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the FTA with the US. But another explanation has been that political elites have been divided about how to respond to these new issues, most notably the Iraq War and the FTA. The conflict within the elites has led to a greater public awareness of the arguments for and against the respective positions, and the adoption of more forthright opinions by many citizens. The party politicisation of Australia's commitment to the Iraq War, for example, has deeply polarised public opinion.

One consequence of elite debate on defence and foreign affairs is that governments must now inform and educate the public more effectively about the policies they wish to pursue. This necessarily limits the speed and scope of elite decision-making in these areas. A more informed public now expects to be consulted before any major policy is initiated, and this raises particular difficulties for limited military commitments such as Iraq, where decisions have to be taken quickly.

Another implication concerns Australia's closer engagement with Asia. An elite consensus favouring this policy shift has existed since the 1980s, but the public is more circumspect. In principle, more concerted elite debate about our role in Asia should generate more public support because, as the results presented here have shown, relatively few voters oppose the idea.

More public involvement in defence and foreign affairs presents challenges for the political elite … But it also presents distinct opportunities, with the potential to bring about changes in defence and foreign policy that would otherwise take generations to achieve.

More public involvement in defence and foreign affairs presents challenges for the political elite, who have been accustomed to making policy in these areas with minimal public consultation or interference. But it also presents distinct opportunities, with the potential to bring about changes in defence and foreign policy that would otherwise take generations to achieve.

Appendix A

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The tables and figures in this appendix update an earlier ASPI report, *Attitude Matters* (McAllister 2004), using the latest results from the 2004 Australian Election Study survey.

Defence as a political issue

Defence and national security remained a medium-level priority for voters in 2004, as it did in the 2001 election (Table A.1). Six per cent of voters mentioned it as their first priority in 2004, the same figure as in 2001; 8% in 2004 mentioned it as a second priority, up 2 percentage points on 2001. The War on Terror also displayed similar levels of importance in 2004 compared to 2001. The Iraq War was a low priority for voters—just 4% mentioned it as their first ranked issue in the 2004 election.

In 2004, 54% of voters mentioned defence and national security as being 'extremely important', up 3 points on 2001, but this is more than twice the proportion that mentioned it in 1996, the earliest election for which we have results (Figure A.1).

Confidence in defence

Similar proportions of voters in 2004 as in 2001 believed that Australia could defend itself if attacked (19% in 2004 compared to 20% in 2001) and just over half said that defence was stronger now than it was 10 years ago (Figure A.2).

Confidence in Australia's capacity to defend itself increased markedly after the East Timor intervention in 1999. That higher confidence was also reflected in more positive responses to the question of whether Australia's defence was stronger now than ten years ago. However, while Australians have consistently rated our defences as stronger in successive polls, their confidence in Australia's ability to defend itself fell away quickly. In 2000 the government developed a White Paper after a substantial public consultation program. The White Paper also set out an ambitious program of capability development. Despite that, and the increased funding subsequently going into defence, Australians remain relatively pessimistic about our capacity to defend ourselves. That is even though they consider our forces more capable now than in the past. It appears that the very successful INTERFET operation to East Timor increased public confidence in our defence capabilities in ways that our later contributions to Afghanistan and Iraq have not.

Support for more defence spending declined in 2004 (Figure A.3). In a long-term perspective, such support appears to have peaked in 2000, immediately following Australia's successful peacekeeping operation in East Timor. In 2001, support declined to 60%, and it fell again, to 52%, in 2004.

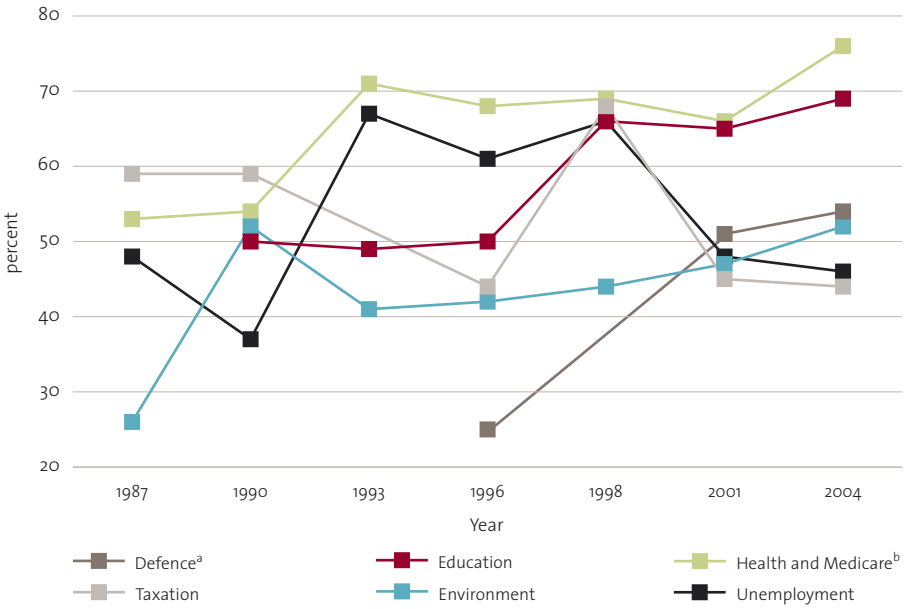
Table A.1: Importance of issues in the 2001 and 2004 federal elections (% mentions)

Rank 2004 (2001)	Issue	First 2004 (2001)	Second 2004 (2001)
1 (3)	Health, Medicare	30 (16)	22 (20)
2 (2)	Taxation	16 (16)	11 (9)
3 (1)	Education	15 (17)	17 (16)
4 (na)	Interest rates	9 (na)	9 (na)
5 (6)	Defence, national security	6 (6)	8 (6)
6 (10)	Environment	6 (4)	8 (6)
7 (7)	Terrorism	5 (5)	7 (5)
8 (na)	War in Iraq	4 (na)	4 (na)
9 (4)	Refugees, asylum seekers	3 (13)	4 (12)
10 (8)	Immigration	2 (4)	3 (7)
11 (9)	Unemployment	2 (4)	4
12 (11)	Industrial relations	2 (1)	3 (2)
	Total	**100**	**100**
	(N)	**(1,677)**	**(1,646)**

'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?'

Sources: AES 2001, 2004.

Figure A.1: Trends in opinion towards major election issues, 1987–2004

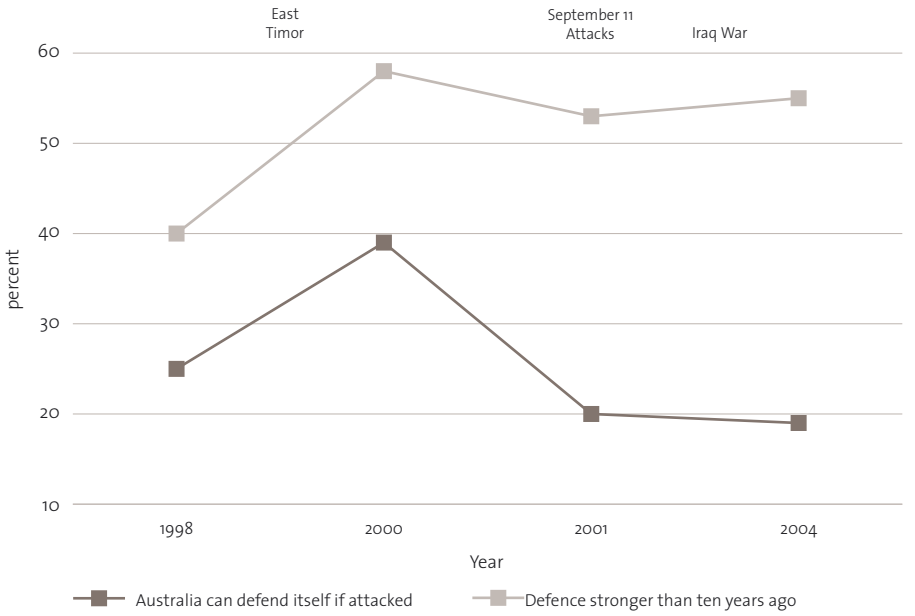


a And national security in 2001
b Just 'health' in 1993 and 1990, 'health care' in 1987.

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?'
1998–2004: '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; in 1990–2004, three categories.

Sources: AES 1987–2004.

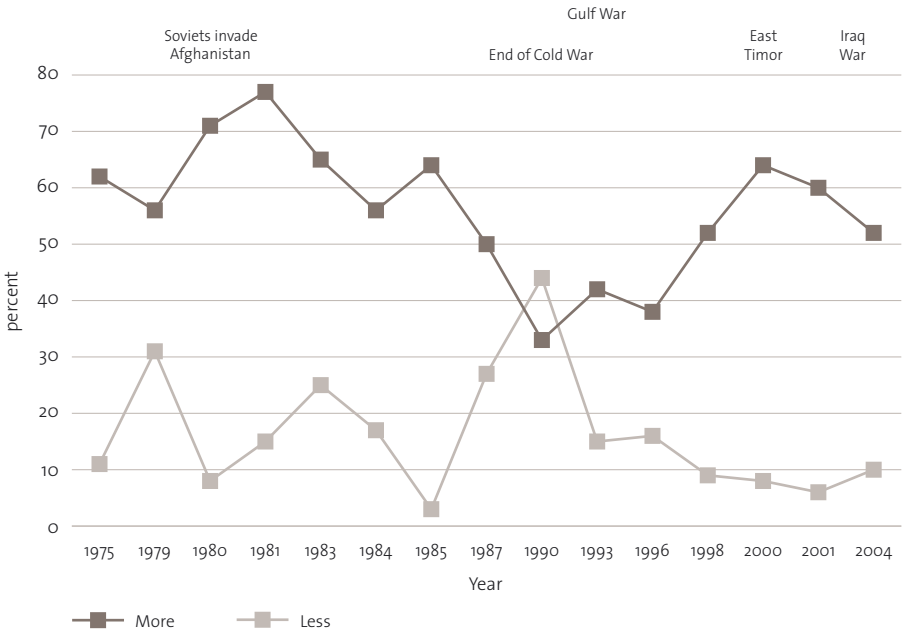
Figure A.2: Attitudes to Australia's Defence Capabilities, 1998–2004



'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 1998–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Figure A.3: Trends in opinion about defence spending, 1975–2004 (% holding opinion)



'Do you think that the government should spend more or spend less on defence?' Exact question wordings vary between surveys before 1987.

Sources: 1975–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

How much do we spend on defence?

While defence is not the biggest consumer of public funds (social security and welfare programs and health and ageing consume more) it takes a substantial proportion of government outlays. For the 2005–06 budget period Defence will receive a budget of $17.5 billion, equivalent to 1.9% of gross domestic product (GDP), or a little under 9% of government outlays.

In 2000 the government undertook a major review of Australia's strategic and defence policies, culminating in the 2000 Defence White Paper. One of the important announcements in that document was the commitment to provide an average 3% real funding increase every year across the decade. That has already seen the Defence budget grow from $14.2 billion in 2001–02. Those who argue that Australia's defence spending is too low often cite percentage of GDP as best indicator of spending. Yet, despite the generous funding commitment from government, defence expenditure has hovered around 1.9 to 2.0% of GDP. The reason of course, is that the economy has grown strongly over the last several years.

Perceptions of security threats

Since the end of the Cold War in 1990, public perceptions of a security threat to Australia have remained at a relatively low level, albeit increasing gradually from their low point in 1990 (Figure A.3). In 2004, 34% felt there was a security threat, compared to 35% in both 2000 and 2001.

Figure A.4: Perceptions of a security threat to Australia, 1969–2004 (% perceiving threat)

Responses to a question asking whether Australia faces a security threat. Exact question wordings and codings (relating to such matters as a timeframe for likely threats) vary between surveys before 1990.

Sources: 1969–85 McAllister and Makkai (1992); AES 1987–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

As in previous surveys, Indonesia is identified by the public as the country most likely to be a security threat to Australia; in 2004, 29% considered it 'very likely' to be a threat, compared to 31% in 2001 (Table A.2). The results show a high degree of stability in the responses to the various countries between 2001 and 2004, with one exception. In 2004, 6% mentioned the US, compared to just 2% in 2001, moving it from eighth ranked position to fourth.

Table A.2: Countries posing a security threat to Australia, 2001 and 2004 (% nominating countries)

Rank 2004 (2001)	Country	Very likely 2004 (2001)	Fairly likely 2004 (2001)	Not very likely 2004 (2001)	Total	(N)
1 (1)	Indonesia	29 (31)	43 (42)	28 (27)	100	(1,652)
2 (2)	China	8 (9)	32 (33)	60 (58)	100	(1,577)
3 (3)	Malaysia	7 (6)	31 (29)	62 (65)	100	(1,565)
4 (8)	United States	6 (2)	8 (6)	86 (92)	100	(1,576)
5 (5)	Vietnam	4 (3)	15 (17)	81 (80)	100	(1,553)
6 (4)	Japan	4 (5)	10 (15)	86 (80)	100	(1,562
7 (6)	Singapore	3 (3)	14 (16)	83 (81)	100	(1,551)
8 (7)	India	2 (4)	13 (19)	85 (77)	100	(1,565)

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

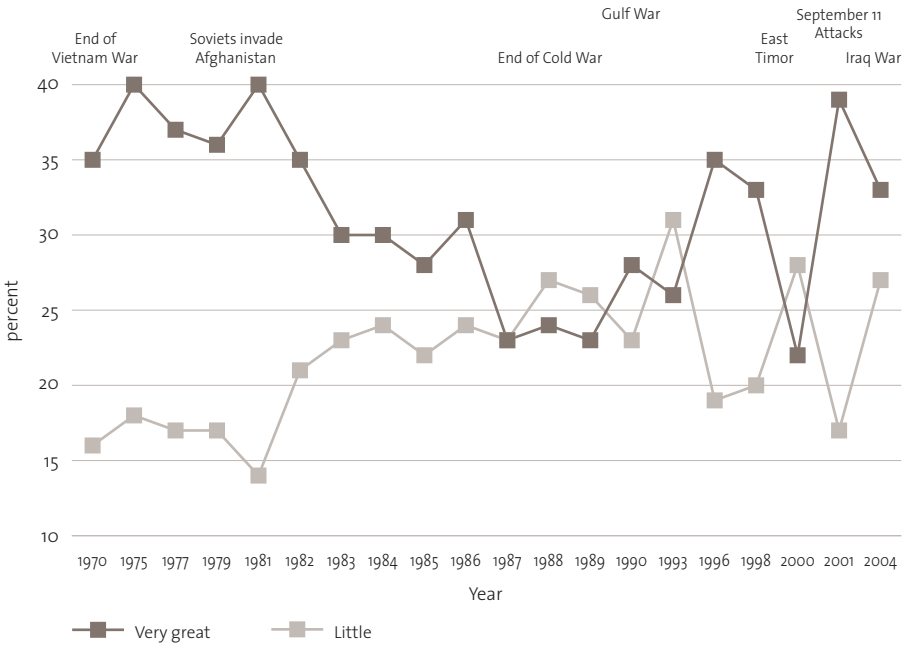
Sources: AES 2001, 2004.

The US and the ANZUS alliance

Trust in the US to defend Australia in the event of an attack declined from 39% in 2001, in the wake of the September 11 attacks in the US, to 33% in 2004 (Figure A.5). Similarly, support for the ANZUS Treaty has also declined, with 45% seeing it as 'very important' compared to

58% in 2001 (Figure A.6). These results suggest that opinion about the US is returning to the levels recorded in the late 1990s, following an increase in support after September 11.

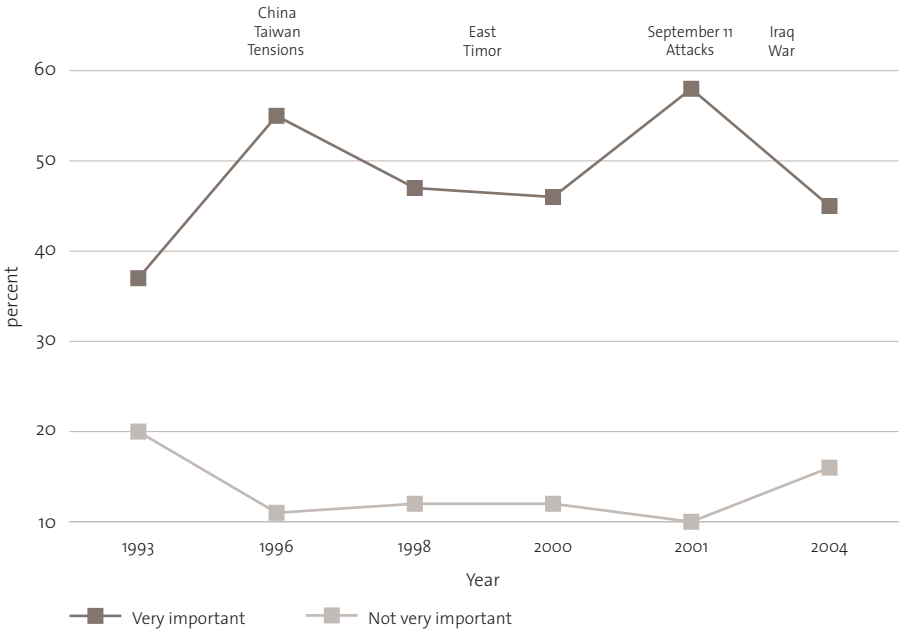
Figure A.5: Trust in the US to defend Australia, 1970–2004 (% holding opinion)



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 before 1987.

Sources: US Information Service; Survey of Defence Issues 2000; AES 1987–2004.

Figure A.6: Importance of the ANZUS alliance, 1993–2004 (% holding opinion)



'How important do you think the Australian alliance with the United States under the ANZUS Treaty is for protecting Australia's security?'

Sources: AES 1993–2004; Survey of Defence Issues 2000.

Appendix B

THE SURVEYS

The Australian Candidate Study

The ACS surveys are conducted in parallel with the AES surveys of voters, and have been conducted at each federal election since 1987, with the exception of the 1998 election. All but the 1987 study have been funded by the Australian Research Council. In 1987, all candidates for the House of Representatives and Senate were sampled. Since 1990, the surveys have been restricted to samples of all major party candidates, identifiable Green and other environmental candidates, and candidates of parties that were expected to win 10% or more of the first preference lower house vote. This restriction is designed to cut fieldwork costs, since about half of the total number of candidates at any federal election are minor party or independent candidates, almost all of whom lose their deposits. All the data is publicly available from the Australian Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University (http://assda.anu.edu.au/).

Table B.1: Australian Candidate Study surveys, 1987–2004

	Election candidates			Australian Candidate Survey		
Year	House of Reps	Senate	Total	Total	Valid response	Effective response (%)
1987	613	255	868	868	612	70.5
1990	782	223	1,005	631	410	65.0
1993	943	266	1,209	593	415	70.0
1996	908	255	1,163	672	427	63.5
2001	1,039	285	1,324	840	477	56.8
2004	1,091	330	1,421	998	535	53.6

The 1987 Senate election was a double dissolution election. Other Senate elections were half Senate elections. The response rate is calculated as valid responses ÷ total.

The questionnaires are mailed to candidates about one week after the election. The mail-out/mail-back methodology is similar to the voters' survey, with the exception that a letter of introduction from the

candidate's political party is usually included. The questions are based on the voters' survey, but an extensive range of additional questions are included about the candidate's political background and experience, and about the election campaign itself.

In reporting results for the candidates as a whole, it's necessary to restrict the estimates to major party candidates so that the views of minor party candidates (who heavily outnumber major party candidates in our surveys) don't bias the results. In reporting party differences, results are shown for Liberal–National, ALP, Australian Democrat and Green candidates. Candidate data is not available on defence and foreign affairs as consistently as it is for voters, because space in the candidate questionnaire is more limited and much is taken up with questions about campaigning and political background and experience. Nevertheless, in many cases we have consistent data from 1996 for candidates, and parallel data for voters.

The Australian Election Study

The AES has been conducted at each federal election and referendum since 1987. The study is 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. All the data is 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 of a 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 44.5%.

Table B.2: AES response rates, 1987–2004

Year	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
2004	4,250	275	2,231	1,769	44.5

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

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 households drawn from the latest edition of the electronic White Pages. In order to reduce the non-response bias, a minimum of three callbacks were made to each randomly selected household, on different days and at different times. The sample was distributed across states and territories in proportion to the jurisdiction's population, with quotas set for each state or territory. The data is weighted using Australian Bureau of Statistics data in order to represent the national population.

Endnotes

1. In the 2004 election, voters rated the Coalition more highly than Labor as the best party to deal with defence and national security (21% favoured Labor, 48% the Coalition) and terrorism (19% favoured Labor, 45% the Coalition).
2. Papua New Guinea and New Zealand are also part of the 10 countries included in the battery, but the numbers mentioning the two countries are negligible and they have been excluded.
3. The correlation between mentioning the US as security threat and believing that the Iraq War was not worth the cost is $r = .18$ ($p<.000$) and with opposition to globalisation, $r = .12$ ($p<.000$).
4. The proportions of minor party candidates identifying the United States as a potential threat has been increasing, and was no doubt fuelled in 2004 by the Iraq War. In 2001, 8% of Democrat candidates and 26% of Green candidates said that the US was 'very likely' to pose a security threat to Australia; in 1998, the same figures were 7 and 12%, respectively.
5. The correlation between the two items is 0.66 ($p<.000$).
6. The question was 'Please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly agree with the following statements. ... Australia should continue to use tariffs to protect its industry.' In 1993, 63% agreed with the statement, in 1996, 57%, and in 1998, 59%. The question was not asked in either the 2001 or 2004 AES surveys.
7. These two dimensions were identified by factor analysis. The battery of items included seven other items which did not load clearly on one or other factor, and these have been excluded here. The mean correlation (Pearson's r) between the economic items was 0.50, and 0.39 for the non-economic items.

8. None of the Green candidates thought that globalisation was 'very good' for the environment, and just 2% said it was 'good'. The remaining 98% said it was either 'bad' (20%) or 'very bad' (78%).
9. The question about 'building closer relations with Asia' was asked of voters in 1996, and 6% said that it had 'gone too far', 49% said 'about right', and 45% said 'not gone far enough.'
10. This conclusion is based on a series of ordinary least squares regression analyses using age, gender, income, population density, birthplace, education, and religion to predict attitudes towards the United States, Asia, Iraq and globalisation.

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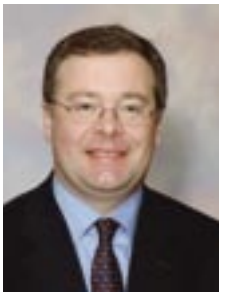

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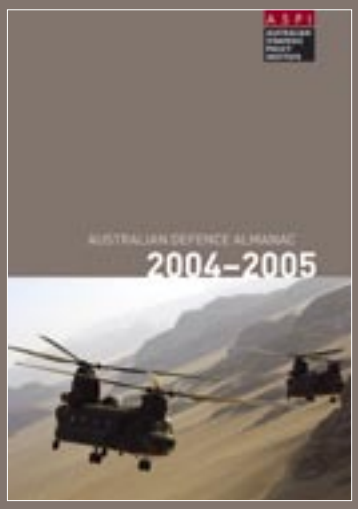

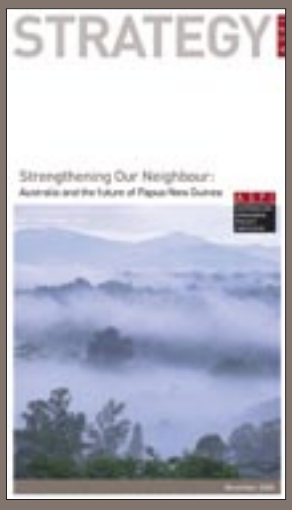

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Mass and elite opinion on Australian security

What are the views of political candidates about defence, security and foreign policy? How well do their views reflect the views of the communities they seek to represent?

In *Representative Views* we present an analysis of elite opinion on these issues. Soon after the federal election in 2004 candidates were sent a comprehensive set of poll questions as part of the Australian Candidate Study. That poll, and its equivalent for voters (the Australian Electoral Study) provide the basis for a detailed comparison of mass and elite opinion on questions of national security and foreign policy.

Professor Ian McAllister of the Australian National University's Research School of Social Sciences has presented us with an insight into public attitudes to defence and foreign policy questions, both among the community and from those who sought to represent it at the last federal election. *Representative Views* gives us the opportunity to test some assumptions about differences in elite and mass opinion on a range of key issues: Has the war in Iraq undermined public confidence in the ANZUS alliance? Do the community and the political elite share similar concerns about threats to Australia's security? What are the attitudes to globalisation and are we comfortable in our relations with our Asian neighbours? What are the differences between candidates for the two major parties on questions of national security? Do candidates for the minor parties view the world differently?

As defence and national security remain firmly in the spotlight, policy differences between the parties are emerging. *Representative Views* provides fascinating data that will assist the student of political science, policy analysts, media commentators and the public alike. It also gives a basis for testing some assumptions about which parties come closer to the community's views across a range of issues.

In addition to presenting a comparison of mass and elite opinion *Representative Views* updates the tables and charts from *Attitude Matters*—ASPI's first publication on public attitudes towards defence and security released in 2004.

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