

“Just in Case”: Extended Nuclear Deterrence in the Defense of Australia*

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This paper examines the foundations and rationale for Australian reliance on US assurances of extended nuclear deterrence. The Australian model of extended nuclear deterrence is marked by its lack of public presence, a lack of certainty about its standing and character in US eyes, its lack of a direct nuclear threat, and its resurgence at a time when nuclear abolition possibilities are being embraced by the leader of the deterrence provider. Australian policy amounts to a claim that the nuclear guarantee is necessary “just in case” – though without any plausible specifics. The fundamental questions remain – for Australia as for other recipients of extended nuclear deterrence assurances – what threats, what probabilities, what alternatives?

Key words: *extended nuclear deterrence, Australia, NATO, USA.*

Extended nuclear deterrence is an enduring part of Australia’s official defense policy. Australian policy-makers have for decades asserted that Australia confidently relies on the USA’s promises of nuclear protection in the face of nuclear threat. Australia, so the official story goes, from some unspecified time in the 1950s following the signing of the Australia–New Zealand–United States (ANZUS) Treaty in 1951, has rested secure beneath the US nuclear umbrella. This essay reviews the available information on the understanding both parties have of this arrangement, and sets out the model of extended nuclear deterrence in this Australian case as distinct from those with other US allies. On the basis of publicly available information, much less is certain about these arrangements than appears to be the case on the surface. The paper concludes by setting out a research agenda necessary for greater clarity on key issues, and by challenging a series of elements in the rationales provided by successive Australian governments for the role of US

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nuclear weapons in Australian defense policy. It stresses the need for an urgent review of claims that there are plausible security threats to which only nuclear weapons can provide protection.

Extended nuclear deterrence in Australian defense policy is marked by its lack of public presence, a lack of certainty about its standing and character in US eyes, its lack of a direct nuclear threat, and its resurgence at a time when nuclear abolition possibilities are being embraced by the leader of the deterrence provider. The only time when there appeared to be a serious attempt to develop a rationale for extended nuclear deterrence, late in the Cold War, linking the price of the guarantee in hosting intelligence bases to benefits from global nuclear stability, was flawed at the time, and needs scrutiny even more closely now.

Models of Extended Nuclear Deterrence

Before looking at the main variants of the species, a key question, for which there is surprisingly no authoritative answer, is exactly how many countries, and which countries, are recipients of US extended nuclear deterrence. Various estimates have been produced in recent years. In 2007, a group of senior US security officials set the figure at 31: “the 26 nations of NATO,¹ Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Israel.”² Other estimates differ. For example, a 2006 Defense Threat Reduction Agency Study appears to exclude Australia.³

In December 2008, a US Defense Department advisory committee on nuclear policy for the incoming administration chaired by James Schlesinger stated that

The United States has extended its nuclear protective umbrella to 30-plus friends and allies as an expression of commitment and common purpose as well as a disincentive for proliferation.⁴

What is intriguing is not just the variations in numbers, but how unsure even seasoned observers of the US nuclear order are about just who is included in any of the estimates. Hans Kristensen, one of the closest civil society observers of the US nuclear order, for example, takes the Schlesinger–Perry report estimate of “30

1. Note that there are, as of 2009, 28 member countries in NATO, including the USA, provider of the assurance of extended nuclear deterrence, and the two European NATO nuclear weapons states, France and the United Kingdom, neither of which are recipients of US extended nuclear deterrence assurances.

2. Kathleen C. Bailey, Robert G. Joseph, Gordon C. Oehler, Keith B. Payne, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Charles S. Robb, C. Paul Robinson, James R. Schlesinger, William Schneider Jr, William Van Cleave and R. James Woolsey, *White Paper On The Necessity of the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent* (30 July 2007), p. 6.

3. Jeffrey Larsen, *Nuclear Baseline: Post-Cold War US Nuclear Policy*, appendix to Lewis Dunn, Gregory Giles, Jeffrey Larsen, and Thomas Skypek, *Foreign Perspectives on US Nuclear Policy and Posture: Insights, Issues and Implications*, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (12 December 2006).

4. Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management, Phase II: Review of the DoD Nuclear Mission (December 2008).

plus” recipients, as being made up of 25 NATO countries (not including Britain and France); Japan, Taiwan and Korea; and Australia and New Zealand.⁵ To simply state the obvious, the inclusion of New Zealand would be a great surprise to both the USA and New Zealand governments following the “suspension” of the USA’s obligations to New Zealand under the ANZUS treaty following New Zealand’s banning of nuclear ship visits in 1986.⁶ The significance of the fact that the number of recipients is unclear will be dealt with further below.

It is clear that actual US and allied country practices of extended nuclear deterrence vary considerably by region. There are roughly four regionally based models of US extended nuclear deterrence: (i) the NATO model; (ii) the East Asian model; (iii) the Australian model; and (iv) the as yet unclear incipient Middle Eastern model.

The organization of the nuclear umbrella in each model varies in a number of ways, including: (i) the range of threats against which nuclear protection is offered; (ii) the location and type of forces involved in substantiating the threat; (iii) the physical location of the nominal antagonist nuclear weapons state in relation to the allied recipient country; (iv) the level and type of engagement of the allied recipient country in the provision of the deterrent; and (v) the involvement of the allied recipient country with other allied nuclear weapons states besides the nuclear guarantor.

The NATO Model

Core NATO countries have the longest and most intimate connection with US extended nuclear deterrence through the combination of deployment of US nuclear weapons in Western European member countries⁷ and the practice of “nuclear sharing” in Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Turkey: the Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) provision of dual-capable aircraft to use locally deployed US nuclear weapons under bilateral agreements with the USA. Apart from the nuclear sharing mode of provision, there are two notable features of the NATO model. The first is the explicit articulation of political solidarity through “maximum Allied participation” in nuclear deployment options.⁸ The other is the

5. “The Minot Investigations: From Fixing Problems to Nuclear Advocacy,” FAS Strategic Security Blog (14 January 2009), at <<http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/01/schlesingerreport.php>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

6. See footnote 42 below.

7. Claudine Lamond and Paul Ingram, “Politics around US tactical nuclear weapons in European host states”, BASIC Getting to Zero Papers, no. 1 (23 January 2009); Hans M. Kristensen, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe* (Natural Resources Defense Council, 2005), at <<http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/euro/euro.pdf>> (searched date: 3 February 2011).

8. Guy B. Roberts, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for WMD Policy, *NATO’s Nuclear Policy: A View from NATO HQ* (NATO HQ) (April 2006), at <<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/doctrine/natobrief2006.ppt>> (searched date: 22 December 2010). Roberts lists required participatory elements in this model as including “not obstructing” preparation and planning; actively advocating

breadth of its threat spectrum: its announced purpose remains to deter not only Russian (and potentially, Iranian) nuclear attack or coercion of NATO states, but also biological and chemical weapon attacks, terrorism and, as in the Cold War, Russian conventional attack.⁹

Needless to say, there are internal NATO tensions, but in contrary directions: the more recent NATO entrants have called for inclusion in nuclear sharing, and the new centre-right coalition government in Germany has announced its aim of removing all nuclear weapons from Germany. Germany and others have also raised concerns about the example that the nuclear sharing model sets for other possible providers of extended nuclear deterrence.¹⁰

The Possible Middle Eastern Model

While Turkey provides a western-most nuclear-sharing foundation for the NATO model, a new model appears to be under consideration by the USA in the Middle East, though the matter is far from clear. The Obama administration appears to be considering the offer of an assurance of extended deterrence – nuclear and conventional – to Iran’s Middle Eastern neighbors, including Iraq, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.¹¹ In the case of Saudi Arabia and Egypt at least, a primary purpose would be to dissuade those countries from moving towards indigenous nuclear weapons development. There has been little clarification of just how the putative assurance of extended nuclear deterrence would be realized – whether the USA would introduce more nuclear weapons to the region as in Turkey under NATO¹²; or by off-shore naval deployment, whether distant or nearby; or through direct deployment on US bases in the region. Needless to say,

planning for operations, “providing permission for basing, overflight, logistic support or mission planning”, and “active participation in operations”.

9. See the remarks by Lukasz Kulesa in “Are the Requirements for Extended Deterrence Changing?” Panel discussion at the 2009 Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference: The Nuclear Order – Build or Break (6 April 2009), at <<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/?fa=eventDetail&id=1299>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

10. Greece withdrew from such bilateral nuclear cooperation with the USA in 2001, and Canada in 1984. For the 2009 German shift see Björn Hengst, Roland Nelles and Severin Weiland, “Analysis of the Coalition Agreement: How Merkel’s New Government Intends to Govern,” *Spiegel International Online* (26 October 2009), at <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518657368-6,00.html>> (searched date: 22 December 2010); Martin Butcher, “It’s Official – German Coalition Wants US Nukes Out,” *The NATO Monitor* (25 October 2009), at <<http://natomonitor.blogspot.com/2009/10/its-official-german-coalition-wants-us.html>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

11. Egypt has recently moved to signing contracts for its first commercial nuclear power station. Notably, Egypt has not ratified the International Atomic Energy Agency Additional Protocol. “Egypt set to join N-club with help from Australia,” *The World Today*, ABC Radio (19 June 2009), at <<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2008/s2603177.htm>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

12. William G. Eldridge, “The Credibility of America’s Extended Nuclear Deterrent: the Case of the Republic of Turkey,” Air University, AU/AFF/NNN/2009-XX (April 2009), at <<https://www.afresearch.org/skins/RIMS/display.aspx?moduleid=be0e99f3-fc56-4ccb-8dfe->

the position of Israel in such a possibility is ambiguous – whether the assurance would extend to Israel or whether Israel’s large nuclear arsenal would constitute an element of the deterrence force or be intended to be constrained by it. Moreover, it is not clear precisely what threat the guarantee would apply to, beyond the obvious application to possible Iranian nuclear weapons. Would it also apply to actual or threatened biological and chemical weapons? These matters aside, the most important aspect of the Middle Eastern model is simply the fact of its contemplation – the first US extension of such nuclear guarantee in half a century, into arguably the most volatile region in the world.

The East Asian Model

The history of US nuclear deterrence in East Asia is long and complex, but remains, a generation after the end of the Cold War, basically unchanged.¹³ In its contemporary form, the USA has reassured Japan that, in the context of North Korean nuclear and missile testing, a nuclear attack on Japan would be dealt with by all forces available to the USA – i.e. including nuclear weapons. Such weapons are no longer deployed in Japan, Korea or Taiwan, but are deployed elsewhere in Guam and bases on US territory. The key points for the present purpose are the renewal of assurance following indication of unease in the recipient country; the now explicit role of dissuasion from indigenous nuclear weapons development; and the “off-shore” deployment – in contrast to NATO nuclear-sharing.

The Australian model, I will argue, is very different from each of the other three, and is probably best described as the “Just in Case” model.

Australia and US Extended Nuclear Deterrence: “Just in Case”

Understanding how the Australian model of extended nuclear deterrence differs from others takes a little exploration.¹⁴ Nobody appears to doubt that Australia is a recipient of US nuclear protection as a result of the ANZUS treaty of 1952. One of the most influential of Australian defense policy-makers over the past quarter century, former Deputy Secretary of the Defence Department, Paul Dibb, speaking to an Australian parliamentary seminar in 1997, summarized the situation this way:

670c0822a153&mode=user&action=downloadpaper&objectid=fc2ac6c3-b0de-4e82-a4dd-82ba8616f252&rs=PublishedSearch> (searched date: 3 February 2011).

13. On contemporary issues see, James L. Schof, *Realigning Priorities: The U.S.-Japan Alliance & the Future of Extended Deterrence*, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (March 2009), at <<http://www.ifpa.org/research/researchPages/JpnExtDeterrence.php>> (searched date: 3 February 2011).

14. Stephan Frühling, “The Odd Ally: US Extended Deterrence and Australian Strategic Policy,” paper presented to the Nautilus Institute research workshop on “Strong connections: Australia-Korea strategic relations – past, present and future” in Seoul (15–16 June 2010), at <<http://www.nautilus.org/projects/akf-connections/research-workshop/research-papers/Fruhling.pdf>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

The final point I would make is that ANZUS has both a deterrent role, including an extended nuclear deterrent role, and it has tangible – if you like, real to measure – military and intelligence benefits that are a force multiplier for the ADF [Australian Defence Force] in a changing strategic balance. Although I do not think that multilateralism is the answer, let me make it clear in my final words that certainly we need to work on multilateralism, but in that process let us not go to some cloud-cuckoo-land that pretends that the defence of Australia and the alliance with the United States can be replaced.¹⁵

Dibb's remarks introduce several key elements of the Australian situation:

- The conviction that the ANZUS treaty – or more likely, the accompanying wider alliance regime – carries with it an assurance of extended nuclear deterrence
- The claim that there is no doubt that Australia is in fact a recipient of US nuclear protection, without necessity of qualification or specification of limits
- The assertion that the alliance regime that locates Australia within the US global nuclear order also brings indispensable benefits for Australia's otherwise self-reliant defense policy – especially in intelligence and access to military hardware
- The view that the entire alliance package, especially including extended nuclear deterrence, is of such necessity and value to Australian national interests that any alternative is, for practical purposes, inconceivable.

Documenting Australian Nuclear Deterrence Policy

It is worth taking a little time to set out at length and in detail what is known about Australian policy on the place of the USA assurance of extended nuclear deterrence in Australia's defense policy. In fact, this is necessary precisely because public statements about that policy are remarkably few and notable for their brevity and lack of detail.

The 1994 *Defence White Paper*, issued by the Keating Labor government, offered what appears to be the first formal policy announcement of a key element of defense policy that is presumed to have been in place for many years. For that reason, and because it was to be another 13 years before anything of greater length was officially said on the subject, it is worth quoting *in toto*:

The government does not accept nuclear deterrence as a permanent condition. It is an interim measure until a total ban on nuclear weapons, accompanied by substantial verification provisions, can be achieved. In this interim period, although it is hard to envisage the circumstances in which Australia could be threatened by nuclear weapons, we cannot rule out that possibility. We will continue to rely on the extended deterrence of the US nuclear capability to deter any nuclear

15. Paul Dibb, former Deputy Secretary of Defence, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia (11 August 1997).

threat or attack on Australia. Consequently, we will continue to support the maintenance by the United States of a nuclear capability adequate to ensure it can deter nuclear threats against allies like Australia.¹⁶

Four elements in that first statement are of ongoing importance:

- Reliance on deterrence is necessary for the foreseeable future
- A nuclear deterrent for Australia is necessary for circumstances that apparently cannot be named, perceived, or even, one might say, be able to be conceived
- The only stated contingencies for which extended nuclear deterrence is considered necessary are a threatened or actual nuclear attack on Australia
- These requirements lead the Australian government to support the wider US global nuclear deterrence structure.

Three years later, the 1997 statement of *Australia's Strategic Policy*, the first produced under the Howard Liberal–National Party government, added one more element: an assurance that while the US undertakings in the ANZUS treaty “do not amount to a guarantee” of all US commitments,

[i]n one specific respect the alliance does provide a clearer expectation of US support – that is, defence against nuclear attack.¹⁷

This is a curious public assertion, because as we shall see, there is no known public statement by the US government that provides support for that apparently confident statement. However, such is the strength of the assumption in the Australian public realm, of the palpable character of US commitment, the authors found no need to provide further support.

In a single sentence, the 2000 *Defence White Paper* set out the official statement of policy on the role of US nuclear weapons in the defense of Australia:

Australia relies on the extended deterrence provided by US nuclear forces to deter the remote possibility of any nuclear attack on Australia.¹⁸

The most recent Australian official statement on extended nuclear deterrence is also the most detailed in the 6 decades of the ANZUS alliance. In the 2009 *Defence White Paper* all of the previously mentioned elements of the Australian policy of reliance on the US assurance of nuclear protection are present, and are expounded at greater length and with more coherence.¹⁹

16. *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994).

17. *Australia's Strategic Policy* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1997).

18. *White Paper: Defence 2000 – Our Future Defence Force*, Department of Defence (2000), p. 36.

19. *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2020. Defence White Paper 2009* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 2009).

- The USA will continue to rely on its “nuclear deterrence capability to underpin US strategic power, deter attack or coercion by other nuclear powers, and sustain allied confidence in US security commitments by way of extended deterrence”
- “[S]table nuclear deterrence” will continue and extended nuclear deterrence “will continue to be viable”
- “[R]ogue states of concern” with long-range ballistic missiles will be “the challenge”
- For the first time, specific nuclear threats – “though remote” – are named: Iran and North Korea, and possibly others in the future, will continue to pursue long-range ballistic missile programs that could pose a direct, though remote, risk to our own security”
- The alliance is “indispensable to our security” insofar as it means “that the associated capability, intelligence and technological partnership, at the core of the alliance, is available to support our strategic capability advantage in our immediate neighbourhood and beyond”
- The alliance also “means that, for so long as nuclear weapons exist, we are able to rely on the nuclear forces of the United States to deter nuclear attack on Australia”
- For the first time, an official document articulates a commonly held position that alliance “protection provides a stable and reliable sense of assurance and has over the years removed the need for Australia to consider more significant and expensive defence options”
- Joint defense facilities, especially at the Pine Gap signals intelligence facility, “contribute to the intelligence collection capabilities of both countries, support monitoring of compliance with arms control and disarmament agreements, and underpin global strategic stability by providing ballistic missile early warning information to the United States”.

The only substantial historical comments on the development of the extended deterrence assurance from one involved in it came from Kim Beazley, a former Minister for Defence. Beazley is however, laconic, if not cryptic, on the key issue:

In the 1980s ANZUS was incorporated within an evolving Australian national strategy of self-reliance. Two decades of struggle to get the United States to clarify its extended deterrence guarantee to Australia was replaced with the cheerful Australian assumption that no enemy of Australia’s could not guarantee the United States would not aid its Antipodean ally, and that would do.²⁰

20. Kim Beazley, “Whither the San Francisco alliance system?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 57-2 (July 2003), pp. 325–338.

Beazley offered nothing further on the subject, and nothing is known publicly about those “two decades of struggle”.²¹ The only thing that is made clear is the context of at least the latter part of those developments – the understanding that hosting the joint facilities were the Australian contribution to the US capacity to maintain global nuclear order, and that “we accepted that the joint facilities were probably targets, but we accepted the risk of that for what we saw as the benefits of global stability”.²²

US Policy on Assurance of Nuclear Protection to Australia

The fact that a significant aspect of Australian defense policy that was widely assumed in Australia and elsewhere to be in place was not officially confirmed by the Australian government for a number of decades after its apparent inception is curious enough. But the issue of just what Australian policy and practice actually is and has been over the past 6 decades becomes more complex and problematic in the face of a second fact.

If the rationale for the Australian perspective on policy had become clearer by the sixth decade of the alliance, the same could not be said for the US side of the equation. In fact almost nothing can be said on that score. Despite any number of reiterations of US support for the alliance with Australia as a whole, there is no known publicly available US official statement specifically providing an assurance of US nuclear protection for Australia in the face of nuclear threat or nuclear attack.²³

It is possible that this finding will be falsified by subsequent historical research, but on the face of it, there is no public US formal confirmation of the Australian official public understanding. There are then two possibilities: either that there is no US commitment and that Australian officials have deluded themselves, their government masters, and the public for many years; or that there are US assurances and commitments, but they have never been made public.

The first possibility is not only absurd, but is also contradicted by Beazley’s cryptic remark about “two decades of struggle to get the USA to clarify its

21. For further discussion of one aspect of Beazley’s reference to “two decades of struggle” see Richard Tanter, “North by North West Cape: Eyes on China,” *Austral Policy Forum* 10-02A (14 December 2010), at <<http://www.nautilus.org/publications/essays/apsnet/policy-forum/2010/tanter-bases.pdf>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

22. Kim Beazley, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia (11 August 1997).

23. It is inherently difficult to prove a negative, but the negative results of my own searches of publicly available or open sources have been confirmed by both former Deputy Secretary of Defence Hugh White and US Ambassador Linton Brooks. Personal communications (23 February 2009), and (6 April 2009), respectively. I am grateful to both, though of course, neither is responsible for my interpretations. See also John P. Caves, Jr. and M. Creighton Hottinger, briefing on “Project on U.S. Declaratory Policy toward WMD Threats: Phase 1 Findings,” National Defense University, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Washington, D.C. (9 April 2008) version.

extended deterrence guarantee”. It is further contradicted by two pieces of evidence from one of those responsible for much of what was said in at least two of the Defence statements quoted already, former Deputy Secretary of Defence, Hugh White. In testimony to a parliamentary committee in 2004, White explained the origins of the statement “of principle” in the 2000 White Paper quoted above. That statement, White said,

was based on explicit discussions with U.S. officials. The position of the United States is that they would threaten nuclear retaliation against a country that attacked Australia with nuclear missiles.²⁴

In reply to a subsequent question from this author, White confirmed that the “discussions” were in fact “a purely oral [though not casual] exchange of views between officials”, and initiated by him for the purpose of confirming that point assumed US nuclear assurance.²⁵

It would appear that there has been an understanding between officials to the effect that there exists a US assurance of extended nuclear deterrence for Australia under at least one condition – nuclear attack on Australia – but that little or nothing is in writing, or was available in writing for the principal author of a recent white paper.²⁶ There may well be secret agreements from an earlier period of which White was unaware, or was unable to reveal.

It also implies that there is – or was at that time – no specific ANZUS alliance bureaucratic or military organizational structure to manage the nuclear deterrence aspects of the relationship.²⁷

The Consequent Research Agenda

A number of questions flow from the historical aspects of this situation, some of considerable policy and political – and military – importance for the present:

- If there is no public formal statement of US commitment to nuclear protection of Australia, is there a confidential or private government-to-government formal statement of such a commitment?

24. Hugh White, Testimony before the Australian Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on the issue of US–Australian defense relations, 26 March 2004. White concluded on the import of the US promise: “That will make people think pretty seriously. I think that will work in the majority of cases.”

25. Personal communication (23 February 2009).

26. There may well be secret agreements from an earlier period of which White was unaware, or was unable to reveal as a matter of law. The ongoing revelations about the secret agreements between Japan and the USA for 4 decades about conditions under which US nuclear weapons continued to be brought into Japan contrary to that country’s parliamentary resolution concerning the three Non-Nuclear Principles is reminder enough here.

27. Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 43, notes that ANZUS has no Nuclear Planning Committee.

- If there is such a private formal statement, what is it?
- If there is, when and how was it incorporated into Australian defense planning?
- If there is, what is the nature of the assurance? What precisely does the USA undertake to do? What are the explicit or understood limits?
- Against what threats is the assurance held to be applicable? Under what conditions does whatever assurance accorded Australia actually become actionable?

Is the only circumstance that the US is committed to nuclear-armed protection of Australia “the remote possibility” of nuclear attack, or are there other contingencies in which either the US or Australian government would expect a nuclear defense of Australia? Based on US commitments to other allies, these might include:

- Threat of nuclear attack on Australia
- Nuclear attacks on Australian forces deployed abroad
- Large-scale conventional attack on Australian territory
- Chemical and biological attacks on Australia.

Former Australian intelligence official Rod Lyon, in the most sustained recent discussion of extended nuclear deterrence in Australian defense policy (*albeit*, two pages in length) censures White and other Australian officials for contributing to a public understanding that the “appropriate application of nuclear deterrence” is limited “to deterring the possible use of an adversary’s nuclear weapons”.²⁸ Lyon’s criticism implies that other “applications” not only exist, but are in fact salient to contemporary Australia, and possibly understood to be a matter of policy by those Lyon considers more knowledgeable than White.

- If there is neither a private nor public formal statement, on what precise basis do official assertions of nuclear protection rest?
- When and how did the policy of reliance on the US assurance of nuclear protection commence?²⁹ At what particular conjuncture of the development of regional and global and national politics, and nuclear regime?
- How was it initiated? Was it in the context of the formation of ANZUS alliance, itself tied to the signing of the San Francisco peace treaty with Japan, in which

28. Rod Lyon, “Australia,” in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 437.

29. It is possible, and even likely, that in the 1950s and possibly through the early 1960s there was a parallel development of a comparable understanding with British authorities – something approaching a British assurance of extended nuclear deterrence – at least until the cancellation of the Blue Streak missile project, and the symbolic collapse of British military capacity “east of Suez”. Given the close coordination (if not cooption) of the Australian military with British nuclear authorities in the Monte Bello Island and Maralinga nuclear test programs, it is likely that such understandings were at least mooted in that context.

ANZUS was the US assurance to Australia that it would resist any resurgent aggressive Japan? In which case, were nuclear threats to Japan promised?

The question of who initiated what is also relevant to the polar tensions of abandonment and entrapment inherent in any alliance structure. Australia, like Japan, is an anxious ally, with a record of responding to fears of abandonment by alliance over-performance.³⁰

These questions go to the heart of the extension of the USA's nuclear hegemony into Australian politics. Beyond clarifying the murky historical realities, they also contain a series of challenges to Australian political identity as a democracy in charge of its own fate, especially at a time when the Australian government has announced its commitment to a renewed global disarmament project on an historic scale.

“Just in Case”: Extended Nuclear Deterrence and Australia Today

If the slim historical materials leave some doubt about almost every aspect of the US assurance of extended nuclear deterrence for Australia, except the fact that those involved in its production believe in its solidity, then the contemporary debate is not rich either. Though not in detail, four issues fundamental to the Australian extended nuclear deterrence situation have been addressed:

- The fundamental question of credibility in the USA's likely calculation of interests and commitments in the face of threats to Australia
- The range of threats to which the deterrence guarantee is understood to apply
- The linkage between the nuclear guarantee, the Australian contribution to the US maintenance of a global nuclear order by hosting the joint facilities, and the viability of that global nuclear order
- The role of the US nuclear guarantee dampening pressures for either an indigenous nuclear deterrent or compensatory expanded conventional defense spending.

US Nuclear Calculus about Australia

In the course of one of the few detailed Australian discussions of missile defense options for Australia, Stephan Frühling addressed the beneficial consequences of an autonomous missile defense capacity as a supplement to extended nuclear

30. Richard Tanter, “Anxious Nation: Japanese Perspectives on National Strategy,” Part 1 of Richard Tanter and Honda Masaru, “Does Japan Have a National Strategy?” *Japan Focus*, 610 (4 May 2006), at <<http://japanfocus.org/-Richard-Tanter/1938>> (searched date: 3 February 2011).

deterrence.³¹ Such a capacity would lower the burden of decision and execution placed on the USA in the event of a nuclear attack on Australia. The alliance, Frühling maintains, “is an element of general deterrence”, and a missile defense capacity would “lend credibility to any threat that the United States makes explicitly or implicitly in a particular situation”.

With some understatement, Frühling, who argues for diversification and modernization of the US nuclear arsenal, then goes on to address the issue at the heart of any thinking about extended nuclear deterrence involving missile threats or attacks:

Finding an appropriate retaliatory response to an attack on Australia with conventional or WMD warheads will be highly demanding and politically difficult for both the United States President and the Australian government . . . There is thus a danger that the United States might be perceived as “self-deterred” by the high yield and low versatility of its current stockpile. The aversion of the Australian public towards nuclear weapons makes the problem even graver.³²

This is a particular, missile-defence-inflected version of a common question in every country that is a recipient of a nuclear guarantee – the ultimate fear of abandonment – about which there is little that can sensibly be said one way or the other, beyond avowals of loyalty and abstract-inductive modeling. It is important, however to note that there is a parallel to the ally’s fear of abandonment – namely the fear on the deterrence provider’s side of entrapment in the affairs of an ally that may not amount to a truly vital national interest. The calculus of how vital is the US interest in any given scenario is impossible to predict, but it is certainly within the realm of the possible to envisage reversals of expected commitments.

Paul Davis examined the question of how the USA should

deter invasion or coercion of weak and medium-strong states when the security of the threatened states is important but is not a “vital” national interest of the powers that might be protectors.³³

Countries he mentioned as not of vital interest to the United States included “Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic states, Taiwan, or a unified Korea.” Any such list is arguable, but the point is clear: there is such a category, and the presumption that Australia would not be one such case in any given nuclear threat scenario cannot

31. Frühling, *op.cit.*, The other important detailed discussion is Richard Macmillan, “AEGIS TMD: Implications for Australia,” Australian Defence College Monograph Series, 1 (2003).

32. Frühling, *op. cit.* pp. 32–33. See also Raoul E. Heinrichs, “Australia’s Nuclear Dilemma: Dependence, Deterrence or Denial?” *Security Challenges*, 4-1 (2008), pp. 55–67.

33. Paul K. Davis, “A Provocative Premise: Special Challenges in Extending Deterrence in the New Era,” Appendix G.1 in *Post-Cold War Conflict Deterrence*, Naval Studies Board, Commission on Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Applications, National Research Council (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997), at <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=5464&page=132> (searched date: 7 February 2011), p.132.

be decided by simply pointing to either the general level assurances in the ANZUS treaty or the “protection” offered by hosting of indispensable US intelligence facilities. Davis continues:

In more difficult cases involving non-vital interests, however, we will need to reduce our standards and rely on a wide range of influence factors, some of them distinctly squishy and political.³⁴

Threat Spectrum and Response

The question of just what source and spectrum of threats the US nuclear deterrence guarantee does apply to is the first matter that needs public clarification. Speaking of the 1980s, when public nuclear debate in Australia was at its height, Lyon focuses on the range of threats to which extended nuclear deterrence was seen to apply in Australia – in his eyes, overly narrowly, both in the security policy community and even more so, in the public at large:

The relatively low level of security threat that Australia faced directly meant that nuclear weapons were usually seen as offsetting other nuclear weapons, that the credibility of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrence guarantee was never severely tested within Australia, and that the nuclear debate was often dominated by relatively marginal themes.³⁵

That historical disposition, Lyon concludes disapprovingly, has now solidified to skepticism about extended nuclear deterrence:

On the whole, Australians have moved away from a belief that nuclear deterrence is a central pillar of the global order, and are more likely to question the utility of the doctrine of deterrence across a larger spectrum of security threats.³⁶

In a 2007 review of US nuclear posture, Linton Brooks suggested that “nuclear weapons must deter not only nuclear attack on the United States but also conventional attack on our allies, particularly NATO, Japan, South Korea, and Australia.”³⁷ However, as Ambassador Brooks has confirmed, there is no publicly

34. *Ibid.* I am grateful to Allan Behm for referring me to Davis, although he would distinctly not agree with my interpretation.

35. Lyon, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 448.

37. “The final aspect of our deterrent theory was that nuclear weapons must deter not only nuclear attack on the United States but also conventional attack on our allies, particularly NATO, Japan, South Korea, and Australia.” Ambassador Linton F. Brooks, “America’s Nuclear Posture” in Michael May, ed., *Rebuilding the NPT Consensus* (Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, 16–17 October 2007), at <<http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/22218/RebuildNPTConsensus.pdf>> (searched date: 7 February 2011), p. 69.

available US confirmation of assurance of nuclear protection against nuclear threats to Australia, let alone conventional attack, so it is difficult to know precisely what official U.S policy is at this point.

The present guarantee, whatever it actually is, long antedates the naming in the 2009 White Paper of the “remote” possibility of missile attack from Iran and North Korea. The long-running fundamental assumption has been that Australia faces nuclear threat – whether of direct attack, or intimidation to change policy – that can only be assuaged by extended nuclear deterrence. Yet beyond undocumented appeal to “common sense” understandings of a Korean or Iranian missile threat, there is very little examination of either actual threats, or what might constitute sufficient probability of threat to Australian vital interests – essentially its survival – to warrant even consideration of nuclear deterrence. Amongst the “30 plus” recipients of US extended nuclear deterrence today, the Australian case of extended nuclear deterrence is unique in having no identifiable specific nuclear antagonist.

For most of its history, the Australian reliance on the US nuclear guarantee has been implicit rather than explicit, never confirmed in public by the notional provider, and never justified by more than vague nods in the direction of specific threats that are either implausible or of such low probability as to question the justification for invoking the threat of nuclear attack in response.

The questions posed by George Perkovich³⁸ for US commitments to extended nuclear deterrence apply in particular to the Australian case:

- What are the actual threats to Australia against which extended nuclear deterrence is invoked?
- What are the probabilities attached to such threats?
- Where threats are deemed to be actionable with nuclear response, what alternative responses or means of addressing the issue exist or could be generated?

Despite the ideological power of the Gramscian structures of nuclear hegemony that Hayes outlines,³⁹ Perkovich’s apparently simple questions in fact dissipate much of the miasma that surrounds discussions of nuclear deterrence, extended and otherwise. To date, at least in the Australian case, there has been no significant response by proponents of retention of extended nuclear deterrence in Australian security policy. The most important discussion of threats to Australia that might warrant resort to extended nuclear deterrence for Australia is Arthur Burns’s subtle, and now fascinatingly anachronistic, 1970 analysis of the possibilities of nuclear

38. George Perkovich, “Extended deterrence on the way to a nuclear-free world,” Research Paper, International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (May 2009); and his comments in “Are the Requirements for Extended Deterrence Changing?” Panel discussion at the 2009 Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference: The Nuclear Order – Build or Break (6 April 2009).

39. Peter Hayes, “American Nuclear Hegemony in the Pacific,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 25-4 (December 1988), pp. 351–364.

intimidation by the then predominant “state of nuclear concern”, China.⁴⁰ Since then, by and large it has not been thought necessary to provide an extended justification.⁴¹

In the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime, one more question might be added: what is the standing, in relation to any given putative nuclear threat, of the positive security guarantees made to Non-Nuclear Weapons States by the Nuclear Weapons State signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?⁴² These are usually ignored, or derided as being non-binding, yet they remain the subject of considerable pressure from many non-nuclear weapons states in the NPT review process.

These guarantees, which certainly require careful scrutiny, receive little attention in the Australian security community, even as a matter that may require strengthening and extension in the NPT Review process. Given the flimsiness of the structure around the Australian model of extended nuclear deterrence, this is somewhat surprising. Certainly, in the context of Percovich’s agenda of revisiting foundation questions about all cases of extended nuclear deterrence, the NPT positive security guarantees warrant serious attention.

Extended Deterrence, Maintenance of the Global Nuclear Order, and the Joint Facilities

However, at the heart of the Australian commitment to extended nuclear deterrence for at least the last quarter century is the belief that the only serious nuclear threat to Australia derived from a breakdown of the US-orchestrated “system of stable deterrence”. This period roughly began prior to the 1983–1985 crisis in ANZUS when the Lange Labour government in New Zealand declared visits by nuclear-armed ships illegal. The USA declared that such actions were incompatible with its obligations under ANZUS, and that as a result, New Zealand’s membership of ANZUS was indefinitely suspended.⁴³

Standing Up Right Here, Malcolm Templeton’s diplomatic history of New Zealand’s posture of nuclear rejection, makes clear the process by which the USA came to the position that the New Zealand ban on port visits (in New Zealand

40. Arthur L. Burns, “Australia and the Nuclear Balance,” in Harry G. Gelber, ed., *Problems of Australian Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 144–165. The anachronistic quality especially inheres in the treatment of China, and the parallels with discussions of contemporary “states of nuclear concern”.

41. For a partial exception, see Frühling, *op. cit.*

42. See Rebecca Johnson, “The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: 2008 NPT PrepCom: Decisions taken, Security Assurances debated,” Acronym Institute (6 May 2008), at <<http://www.acronym.org.uk/npt/08pc05.htm>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

43. Michael Pugh’s account in *The ANZUS Crisis, Nuclear Visiting and Deterrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), is now supplemented by the excellent study by Malcolm Templeton, *Standing Upright Here: New Zealand in the Nuclear Age 1945–90* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2007).

alone) had to be treated as a threat to its global alliance structure built around extended deterrence. As Beazley summarized the situation

Basically, the Americans were not worried about the New Zealanders. They were worried about us and they were particularly worried about the Japanese, because the Americans regarded themselves as doing serious business with us and with the Japanese. At the time they were also bracing the Europeans on cruise missiles and, in any case, there was that world view that America was making a sea change shift to a different view of deterrence. . . . The mere cut-off of military relationships with New Zealand was enough to send a signal into our two systems that this would be an unwise course to follow.⁴⁴

Beazley and his officials sided with the USA, in the knowledge that in doing so “we accepted that the joint facilities were probably targets, but we accepted the risk of that for what we saw as the benefits of global stability.” As Dibb, publicly silent at the time on the matter, put it more than 2 decades afterwards:

We judged, for example, that the SS-11 ICBM site at Svobodny in Siberia was capable of inflicting one million instant deaths and 750 000 radiation deaths on Sydney. And you would not have wanted to live in Alice Springs, Woomera or Exmouth – or even Adelaide.⁴⁵

The essential element of the argument sketched above by Beazley and Dibb was publicly expressed by Desmond Ball: that the benefits to Australia’s interests from the signals intelligence contribution of the Pine Gap joint facility to providing a key element in the verification of US–Soviet arms control treaties outweighed the undoubted costs and disadvantages of Pine Gap (and until its closure in 1999, Nurrungar).⁴⁶ What threatened Australia, they argued, was a breakdown in the global nuclear order, and even if it meant that the joint facilities and near-by regions (including Adelaide) were certain nuclear targets as a consequence, this was a price worth paying for the quid pro quo, the protection of US extended nuclear deterrence.

Historically there were three problems with this bargain. First, the existence of a policy to willingly anticipate the deaths of very large numbers of Australian citizens was asserted by the peace movement at the time, and known to be true by the government of the day, which officially denied it. Second, there was at the time,

44. Kim Beazley, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia (11 August 1997).

45. “America has always kept us in the loop,” Paul Dibb, *The Australian* (10 September 2005).

46. The most explicit and developed statements by Ball and Dibb are: Testimony of Professor Desmond Ball to the Joint Standing Committee On Treaties, Reference: Pine Gap, Official Committee Hansard, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (9 August 1999), pp 1–16; Testimony of Professor Paul Dibb to the Joint Standing Committee On Treaties, Reference: Pine Gap, Official Committee Hansard (9 August 1999), pp 17–28. A comprehensive bibliography of materials relating to Pine Gap is at *Joint Australian-US intelligence facility – Pine Gap*, Nautilus Institute [updated regularly], at <<http://www.nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad/defence-facilities/pine-gap/pine-gap-intro>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

argument that the system of “stable nuclear deterrence” – especially the command, control, and intelligence systems including the joint facilities – would not work as expected, especially in relation to the antagonist’s systems, and that “stable nuclear deterrence” was anything but that.⁴⁷ Third, once committed by hosting the joint facilities, Australian leverage over nuclear issues was in fact diminished rather than increased as claimed in the tediously reiterated “a seat at the table” and “punching above our weight” metaphors asserted. Certainly while Australian participation in operations at the Pine Gap Joint Facility has improved greatly as a result of the efforts of Beazley, Dibb, White and others, there is little evidence of subsequent Australian influence over US nuclear decision-making.

Today, the argument is still more in need of close scrutiny, beyond the possibilities of this paper. However, three requirements can be noted before the 1980s trade-off is confirmed.

First, if the government believes that the bargain Beazley and Dibb outlined still obtains, there is still nevertheless a requirement in a democracy that such a basic threat to a good portion of the population on the basis of an abstract calculation be publicly stated and debated.

Second, the argument needs to be re-examined given the vast changes that have taken place since the 1980s in all elements of the US command, control, communication and intelligence (C4I) system, and in the functions of the Pine Gap joint facility in particular. A virtual revolution is required in production and dissemination of signals intelligence from space-based and other platforms, with profound consequences for Pine Gap’s role. The networking of US space-based intelligence collection platforms and processing and analysis facilities has diminished stove-piping of the major global signals intelligence facilities, with tasks formerly performed only at Pine Gap may now shared by other major facilities, such as Menwith Hill in the UK. Conversely, analytical product ultimately derived from Pine Gap and the rest of the US space-based signals intelligence network is now disseminated very widely in the US military system, including to relatively low levels of command in combat theatres. The part that the joint facility now plays in US global non-nuclear operations, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, adds a new element to the political calculation that must be carried out by both government and citizens.⁴⁸

Third, the central claim to an irreplaceable and indispensable arms control contribution by the joint facility needs to be revisited, in the knowledge of both new technical developments, and the changed global nuclear order.

47. See, for example, the argument concerning C3I in Peter Hayes, Lyuba Zarsky, and Walden Bello, *American Lake, Nuclear Peril in the Pacific* (Melbourne: Viking/Penguin 1987), pp. 189–238.

48. For a sketch of an argument about the role of the Joint Defence Facility – Pine Gap in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, see Richard Tanter, “Pine Gap and the Coalition Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq,” Nautilus Institute, at <<http://www.nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad/defence-facilities/pine-gap/Alice%20meeting.ppt>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

“Extended Nuclear Deterrence Relieves Pressure for an Alternative – Nuclear or Conventional”

The final argument for extended nuclear deterrence that emerged a little earlier, according to Beazley, was that it “avoided a discussion in Australia of an independent nuclear deterrent”.⁴⁹ In contrast to Japan as a nuclear abstainer, Australia has had a substantive history of attempted nuclear armament, either by acquisition from allies or through indigenous development.⁵⁰ The residues of these attempts still linger in Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) force structure and institutional memory,⁵¹ and in Indonesian security community memory.⁵² Accordingly the resolution of these issues has multiple potential consequences for Australian strategic policy, especially concerning the claimed linkage.

It may have been true that such discussion practically disappeared, as Beazley maintained, but to attribute this primarily to the embracing of extended nuclear deterrence cannot be substantiated.⁵³ More important were the lack of direct nuclear threats, the change in the Southeast Asian environment, and most important of all, the direct coercion exercised by the USA in the late 1960s during the Gorton Liberal government to cease and desist from what US Secretary of State Dean Rusk called Australia’s “picayune” objections to abandoning its nuclear weapons ambitions and signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty.⁵⁴

A related argument, heard in Beazley’s day and raised today, is that if the extended nuclear deterrence function is done away with, then both for strategic reasons and for reasons of assuaging public anxiety, defense spending would have

49. Kim Beazley, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia (11 August 1997).

50. See, for example, “Surprise Down Under: The Secret History of Australia’s Nuclear Ambitions,” *Nonproliferation Review*, 5 (Fall 1997), pp 1–20. See also “Australia nuclear proliferation history, Re-framing Australia-Indonesia security relations,” Nautilus Institute (updated), at <<http://www.nautilus.org/projects/holding/reframing/aust-ind-nuclear/aust-prolif/aust-prolif-hist-list>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

51. “Exploring the Nuclear Option”, *Pathfinder: Air Power Development Centre*, issue 29 (August 2005), at <<http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/admin/ProductFiles/Publication/Materials/23/Pathfinder%20Vol%201.pdf>> (searched date: 3 February 2011), pp. 137–141.

52. Tom Morton, “Australia and the nuclear renaissance,” *Background Briefing*, Radio National, ABC-3 (September 2006).

53. Though it should be noted that there has been a small flurry of interest by figures on the edge of the contemporary Australian security community. See, for example, Richard Tanter, “The Re-emergence of an Australian nuclear weapons option?” *Austral Policy Forum* 07-20A (29 October 2007); Martine Letts, “A reply to Richard Tanter”, *Austral Policy Forum* 07-20B (12 November 2007); Australian nuclear proliferation – contemporary, Nautilus Institute (regularly updated), at <<http://www.nautilus.org/projects/holding/reframing/aust-ind-nuclear/aust-prolif/aust-prolif-now>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

54. See “Australia’s Prime Minister Wanted ‘Nuclear Option’,” 40th Anniversary of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, National Security Archive (1 July 2008), and in particular, Document 16a: Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, US Embassy Canberra cable 4842 to Department of State (6 April 1968), Secret Nodis.

to increase very substantially.⁵⁵ Again, Percovich's questions are primary: what threat? what probability? what function of armed force? Absent serious open discussion of these questions in the particular contemporary Australian security context, reflex assertions of a requirement, with obvious political disincentives, for greatly expanded conventional armament are untenable and serve mainly to deflect attention from the task of re-assessing the role of extended nuclear deterrence in Australian defense.

Conclusion: A Pathway Beyond Australia's "Just in Case" Model of Extended Nuclear Deterrence

In contrast to the extended nuclear deterrence models in other regions, Australia's is marked by its lack of public presence, a lack of certainty about its standing and character in US eyes, its lack of a direct nuclear threat, and its resurgence at a time when nuclear abolition possibilities are being embraced by the leader of the deterrence provider. The rationale developed for the guarantee during the only period when there appeared to be a serious attempt to do so, linking the price of the guarantee in hosting intelligence bases to benefits from global nuclear stability were flawed at the time, and need scrutiny even more closely now. As it stands, it amounts to a claim that the nuclear guarantee is necessary "just in case" – though without any plausible specifics.

The fundamental questions remain as Percovich has outlined them: what threats, what probabilities, what alternatives? These have never been seriously discussed in public in Australia. What is necessary is that they be addressed in such a way that minimally, a pathway to a non-nuclear alliance – or coalition – is visible, without at the same time provoking a resurgence of support for either an indigenous Australian nuclear weapons capacity, or unjustified greatly expanded defense spending. At root, Australians need to ask themselves whether their country needs to be, or should be, defended by nuclear weapons.

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55. Daniel Flitton, "Disarmament: words don't match actions," *The Age* (4 September 2009), at <<http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/disarmament-words-dont-match-actions-20090903-f9vz.html>> (searched date: 22 December 2010).

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