



**Rethinking extended nuclear deterrence in the defence of Australia**

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“Germany has nuclear interests. This statement is as brief as it is problematical.”  
Michael Rühle, *Good and Bad Nuclear Weapons: Berlin's Part in Shaping Nuclear Reality*<sup>1</sup>

“US intelligence also helped us to assess the risk of Soviet nuclear strikes on Australia in the event of global nuclear war. We were able to identify the locations in Australia that were targeted by Moscow and assess likely casualties. 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.”  
Paul Dibb, *America has always kept us in the loop*<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Introduction

In recent years there has been a quite sudden revival of thinking about that most difficult of deterrence concepts, extended nuclear deterrence, in the United States itself, a number of allied countries which are recipients of American assurances of protection through extended nuclear deterrence, and in other countries to whom the United States appears to be considering offering such assurances. A number of reasons for this surge in attention, amongst the most important of which are shifts in the character of nuclear threats to the United States and its allies in the post-Cold War world – both in number and perceived ability to be deterred, perceived doubts about American intent and capacity to honour such promises, and increased weight placed on the value of certainty of extended nuclear deterrence to obviate a drive for indigenous nuclear weapons capacity. Notwithstanding the evident failure of this last factor in dissuading France and Britain from developing substantial nuclear arsenals, the proliferation prophylactic potential of a firming up of Japanese confidence in American extended nuclear deterrence in dissuading Japan to any possible move from heavy hints of a “virtual” nuclear deterrent to a development of an actual weapon has been elevated from a side benefit of extended deterrence to its primary virtue and justification in both Japanese and U.S. writing and policy on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Rühle, *Good and Bad Nuclear Weapons: Berlin's Part in Shaping Nuclear Reality*, Körber Foundation for International Affairs, Körber Policy Paper No. 3, April 2009.

<sup>2</sup> America has always kept us in the loop, Paul Dibb, *The Australian*, 10 September 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Some analysts have also been unkind enough to suggest that the “re-discovery” of extended nuclear deterrence in the United States, and especially the non-proliferation emphasis, has more to do with attempts by interested parties to recover legitimacy for a U.S. nuclear mission structure threatened by the promotion of nuclear abolition. See for instance, Hans M. Kristensen, “Japan, TLAM/N, and Extended Deterrence, *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, 2 July 2009. <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/07/tlam.php>

## 2. Background: shifting ground of deterrence thinking

Contemporary concerns about deterrence in the fundamental sense, are highlighted by the following issues – many of which are contentious and need serious criticism, but have nevertheless had an influence on United States policy:

- In the more complex international system since 1991 characterized by larger numbers of nuclear actors (including the rise of non-state nuclear actors), asymmetries of stakes and resources; and possible cultural limitations on the formation of a stable deterrence relationship<sup>4</sup>, the question arises of how applicable are Cold War models of what is now presented as “stable” deterrence, which were epitomized by the US-Soviet “balance of terror”.<sup>5</sup>
- What are the consequences for extended deterrence of new formulations of the relationship between nuclear deterrence and defence? This is manifest most palpably in United States-led ballistic missile defence systems which seek to deny the possibility of attack by nuclear ballistic missiles. Both Australia and Japan are increasingly closely involved in these missile defence systems.<sup>6</sup>
- What is the consequence of the increasingly explicit reliance by the United States on extended nuclear deterrence to restrain allied nuclear proliferation (Japan), and how does that interact with allied (Japanese) anxiety about North (and in time, possibly South) Korea and China about the reliability of such a deterrence assurance?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction*, Kentucky U.P., 2001; and Colin Gray, “The Reformation of Deterrence: Moving On”, *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 22, No. 5, December 2003, pp. 429-461.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Hayes, “Global Insecurity And Nuclear Next-Use”, *NAPSNet Special Report*, Nautilus Institute, May 2004; J.W. Knopf, “Wrestling with Deterrence: Bush Administration Strategy After 9/11”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 29:2, 229 — 265 (2008); and Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, Cambridge U.P., 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Stephan Frühling, “Ballistic Missile Defence for Australia: Policies, Requirements and Options”, *Canberra Paper*, No. 151, Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 2003; Morton H. Halperin, *The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance*, Nautilus Institute, 1999; Ken Jimbo, “Rethinking Japanese Security: New Concepts in Deterrence and Defense”, in Benjamin L. Self and Jeffrey W. Thompson (eds.), *Japan’s Nuclear Option: Security, Politics, and Policy in the 21st Century*, Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington, DC, 2003; and Richard Tanter, “With Eyes Wide Shut: Japan, Heisei Militarization and the Bush Doctrine” in Melvin Gurtov and Peter Van Ness (eds.), *Confronting the Bush Doctrine: Critical Views from the Asia-Pacific*, New York: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Halperin, *op. cit*; Ken Jimbo, Japanese perceptions of Obama's nuclear 'twin commitments', *Japan Times*, 5 March 2009.

- What are the consequences for extended nuclear deterrence of the multiple contradictory shifts in deterrence policy in response to new strategic circumstances under the Bush administration<sup>8</sup>, followed by allied concern about contradiction between simultaneous goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear deterrence espoused by the current United States administration?<sup>9</sup>

These issues spill over into discussions of extended nuclear deterrence in almost every contemporary case.

### 3. 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 deemed recipients of American extended nuclear deterrence at present. Various estimates have been produced in recent years. In 2007, a group of senior American security officials set the figure at 31: “the 26 nations of NATO, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Israel.”<sup>10</sup> Other estimates differ, with, for example, a 2006 Defense Threat Reduction Agency Study appears to exclude Australia.<sup>11</sup>

In December 2008, a 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.<sup>12</sup>

What is intriguing is not just the variations in numbers, but how unsure even seasoned observers of the American nuclear order are about just who is included in any of the estimates. Hans Kristensen, one of the closest observers of the American nuclear order, for example, takes the Schlesinger-Perry report estimate of “30 plus” recipients, as being made up of 25 NATO countries (not including Britain and France); Japan, Taiwan and Korea; and Australia and New Zealand.<sup>13</sup> Even if the utility of ambiguity in deterrence

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<sup>8</sup> Knopf, *op.cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Jimbo, “Twin commitments”, *op.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Kathleen C. Bailey et al, *White Paper On The Necessity of the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent*, 30 July 2007, p. 6

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Larsen, *Nuclear Baseline: Post-Cold War US Nuclear Policy*, appendix to Lewis Dunn, Gregory Giles, Jeffrey Larsen, and Thomas Skypek, *Foreign Perspectives on U.S Nuclear Policy and Posture: Insights, Issues and Implications*, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 12 December 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management, Phase II: Review of the DoD Nuclear Mission*, December 2008.

<sup>13</sup> “The Minot Investigations: From Fixing Problems to Nuclear Advocacy”, *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, 14 January 2009

<http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2009/01/schlesingerreport.php>

relations is considered in relation to this list, to simply state the obvious, the inclusion of New Zealand would be a great surprise to both the United States and New Zealand governments. The fact that the number of recipients is unclear will be dealt with further below.

It is clear that actual United States and allied country practices of extended nuclear deterrence vary considerably by region. There are roughly four regionally-based models of American extended nuclear deterrence: the NATO nuclear-sharing/wide threat model; the as yet unclear incipient Middle Eastern model; the East Asian model of off-shore deployment addressed to regional nuclear threats; and the distinctive Australian model.

Core NATO countries have the longest and most intimate connection with American extended nuclear deterrence through the combination of deployment of US nuclear weapons in western European member countries<sup>14</sup> 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 United States nuclear weapons under bilateral agreements with the U.S. Needless to say, there are internal NATO tensions: both calls for inclusion in nuclear sharing by the more recent NATO entrants, and thinking about withdrawal, especially in Germany, particularly given the example that the nuclear sharing model sets for other possible providers of extended nuclear deterrence.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> The other is the breadth of its threat spectrum: its purpose remains to deter not only Russian nuclear attack or coercion of NATO states, but also biological and chemicals weapon attacks, terrorism and, as in the Cold War, Russian conventional attack.

While Turkey provides a western-most nuclear-sharing foundation for the NATO model, a new model appears to be under consideration by the United States in the Middle East,

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<sup>14</sup> *Politics around US tactical nuclear weapons in European host states*, Claudine Lamond and Paul Ingram, BASIC Getting to Zero Papers, No. 1, 23 January 2009. For a savage but tendentious critique of perceived German “nuclear conscientious objection” regarding nuclear sharing, see Rühle, *op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Greece withdrew from such bilateral nuclear cooperation with the United States in 2001, and Canada in 1984. *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *NATO's Nuclear Policy: A View from NATO HQ*, Guy B. Roberts, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for WMD Policy, NATO HQ, April 2006. <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/doctrine/natobrief2006.ppt> Roberts lists required participatory elements in this model as including “not obstructing” preparation and planning; actively advocating planning for operations, “providing permission for basing, overflight, logistic support or mission planning”, and “active participation in operations”. Rühle, *op.cit.* expands on one version of the obligations derived from this structure again tendentiously but in a way that needs a strong counter-argument.

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 neighbours, including Iraq, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.<sup>17</sup> 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 realised – whether the United States would introduce more nuclear weapons to the region as in Turkey under NATO; or by off-shore naval deployment, whether distant or nearby; or through direct deployment on United States bases in the region. Needless to say, 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 American extension of such nuclear guarantee in half a century, into arguably the most volatile region in the world.

Other presenters at this workshop will discuss the Japanese example of the East Asian model of American extended nuclear deterrence to Korea, Japan and Taiwan, and its complex history<sup>18</sup>, so I will deal with it only briefly. In its contemporary form, the United States 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 United States – 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 United States 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.

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<sup>17</sup> Egypt has recently moved to signing contracts for its first commercial nuclear power station. Notably, Egypt has not ratified the IAEA Additional Protocol. “Egypt set to join N-club with help from Australia”, *The World Today*, ABC Radio, 19 June 2009. <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2008/s2603177.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Peter Hayes, "American Nuclear Hegemony in the Pacific," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 25, No. 4, December 1988; Peter Hayes, Lyuba Zarsky, and Walden Bello, *American Lake, Nuclear Peril in the Pacific*, Penguin, 1987; and Peter Hayes, *Pacific Powderkeg: American Nuclear Dilemmas in Korea*, Lexington Books, 1990.

#### 4. Australia and United States extended nuclear deterrence

Understanding how the Australian model of extended nuclear deterrence differs from others takes a little exploration. Nobody appears to be in any doubt that Australia is a recipient of United States nuclear protection as a result of the ANZUS treaty of 1952. Before moving to a more detailed examination, let me allow one of the most influential of Australian defence policy-makers over the past quarter century to summarise the situation, speaking to an Australian parliamentary seminar in 1997:

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.<sup>19</sup>

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;
- there is no doubt that Australia is in fact a recipient of American nuclear protection, without necessity of qualification or specification of limits;
- that the alliance regime which locates Australia within the United States global nuclear order also brings what are considered to be indispensable benefits for Australia's otherwise self-reliant defence policy – especially in intelligence and access to military hardware;
- that the entire alliance package, especially including extended nuclear deterrence, is seen by Australian policy-makers of such necessity and value to Australian national interests that any alternative is for practical purposes, inconceivable.

##### *4.1 Documenting Australian nuclear deterrence policy*

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Dibb, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia, 11 August 1997. Note that links to this and many other Australian references in this paper are available at the documentation site *Extended nuclear deterrence – Australia*, Nautilus Institute [updated regularly].

<http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/A-J-disarm/extended-nuclear-deterrence-1/australia/>

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 United States assurance of extended nuclear deterrence in Australia's defence policy. In fact, this is necessary precisely because public statements about that policy are remarkably few in number and notable for their brevity and lack of detail.

The 1994 *Defence White Paper*, issued by the Keating Labor government, offered that appears to be the first formal policy announcement of a key element of defence policy that is presumed to have been in place for many years. For that reason, and because it was to be another thirteen 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 in the extended deterrence of the US nuclear capability to deter any nuclear 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.<sup>20</sup>

Four elements in that first statement are of ongoing importance:

- reliance on deterrence is necessary for the foreseeable and presently unlimited future;
- a nuclear deterrent for Australia is necessary for circumstances which apparently cannot be named, perceived, or even, one might say, 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 American 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 American undertakings in the ANZUS treaty "do not amount to a guarantee", of all American commitments,

[i]n one specific respect the alliance does provide a clearer expectation of US support - that is, defence against nuclear attack.<sup>21</sup>

This is a curious public assertion as it stands, because as we shall see, there is no known public statement by the United States government that gives support for that statement of

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<sup>20</sup> *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Department of Defence, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Department of Defence, 1997.

a high level of certainty. However, such is the strength of the assumption in the Australian public realm, of the palpable character of United States commitment in fact, the authors found no need to provide further support.

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

Australia relies on the extended deterrence provided by US nuclear forces to deter the remote possibility of any nuclear attack on Australia.<sup>22</sup>

A 2006 Defence Department history of the alliance noted two further elements as “a degree of limited protection” against a new threat of “a rogue nuclear missile strike”: namely, “growing cooperation with the United States in missile defence, and the possible development by Australia of significant missile defence capabilities”. However, it concluded,

“only the extended umbrella of US nuclear forces that can provide us with a comprehensive deterrent protection against anything more substantial in terms of nuclear missile strike.”<sup>23</sup>

Significantly, the most recent Australian official statement on extended nuclear deterrence is also the detailed and developed in the six 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 United States assurance of nuclear protection are present, and are expounded at greater length and with more coherence:<sup>24</sup>

- the United States 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”;
- “stable nuclear deterrence” will continue and extended nuclear deterrence “will continue to be viable”;
- “rogue 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

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<sup>22</sup> *White Paper: Defence 2000 - Our Future Defence Force*, Department of Defence, 2000, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> *Founded In History, Forging Ahead*, Department of Defence, 8 September 2006, p.7

<sup>24</sup> *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2020. Defence White Paper 2009*, Department of Defence, 2009.

- 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 defence facilities, especially at the Pine Gap 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 former Australian Minister for Defence Kim Beazley. 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.<sup>25</sup>

Beazley offers nothing further on the subject, and nothing is known publicly about those “two decades of struggle”. 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 United States 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.”<sup>26</sup>

#### *4.2 United States policy on assurance of nuclear protection to Australia*

The fact that a significant aspect of Australian defence 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 six decades becomes more complex and problematic in the face of a second fact.

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<sup>25</sup> Kim Beazley, “Whither the San Francisco alliance system?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 2, pp. 325-338, July 2003, p. 329.

<sup>26</sup> Kim Beazley, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia, 11 August 1997.

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 United States side of the equation. In fact almost nothing can be said on that score. Despite any number of reiterations of American support for the alliance with Australia as a whole, there is no known United States official statement specifically providing an assurance of American nuclear protection for Australia in the face of nuclear threat or nuclear attack.<sup>27</sup>

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

The first possibility is not only absurd, but is also contradicted not only by Beazley's cryptic remark about "two decades of struggle to get to get the United States to clarify its extended deterrence guarantee", but also 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 U.S. officials. The position of the United States is that they would threaten nuclear retaliation against a country that attacked a Australia with nuclear missiles.<sup>28</sup>

In reply to a subsequent (and pedantic) 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 the to that point assumed American nuclear assurance.<sup>29</sup>

It would appear that there has been an understanding between officials to the effect that there exists an American 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. It also implies

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<sup>27</sup> 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 United States 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 any of my interpretations.

<sup>28</sup> Hugh White, Testimony before the Australian Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on the issue of U.S. – Australian defence relations, 26 March 2004. White concluded on the import of the American promise: "That will make people think pretty seriously. I think that will work in the majority of cases."

<sup>29</sup> Pers. comm., 23 February 2009.

that there is – or was at that time – no specific ANZUS alliance bureaucratic or military organisational structure to manage the nuclear deterrence aspects of the relationship.<sup>30</sup>

### 4.3 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?
- If there is such a private formal statement, what is it?
- If there is, when and how was it incorporated into Australian defence planning?
- If there is, what is the nature of the assurance? What precisely does the United States 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 United States or Australian government would expect a nuclear defence 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 discussion of extended nuclear deterrence in Australian defence policy (*albeit*, two pages in length) censures White and other Australian officials for contributing to the view that “constrain the appropriate application of nuclear deterrence to deterring the possible use of an adversary’s nuclear weapons.”<sup>31</sup> This implies that other “applications” not only exist, but are in fact salient, and possibly understood to be a matter of policy by those the author 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?
  - What was the process by which Australian and shared Australia-American bureaucratic “understandings” arose?

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<sup>30</sup> Lyon, *op.cit.* p.43, notes that ANZUS has no Nuclear Planning Committee.

<sup>31</sup> Rod Lyon, “Australia”, in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.) *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asia*, (Stanford U.P., 2008), p. 437.

- When and how did the policy of reliance on the American assurance of nuclear protection commence?<sup>32</sup>
  - 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 ANZUS was the U.S. 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.<sup>33</sup>

At a minimum, the immediate requirement is a cross-national coordinated crossfiling of Freedom of Information Act applications for all Australian and United States documents relating to the formation of the existing implicit and apparently only lately orally confirmed understanding.

## 5. Extended nuclear deterrence and Australia today

If the slim historical materials leave some doubt over almost every aspect of the United States assurance of extended nuclear deterrence for Australia except the fact that those involved in its production believe in its solidity, 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 United States calculation of interests in the face of threats to Australia;
- the range of threats to which the deterrence guarantee is understood to apply; and
- the linkage between the nuclear guarantee, the Australian contribution to the United States maintenance of a global nuclear order by hosting the joint facilities, and the viability of that global nuclear order; and

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<sup>32</sup> 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 – a 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 programmes, it is likely that such understandings were at least mooted in that context.

<sup>33</sup> 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.

- the role of the American nuclear guarantee dampening pressures for either an indigenous nuclear deterrent or compensatory expanded conventional defence spending.

### 5.1 U.S. nuclear calculus about Australia

In the course of one of the few detailed Australian discussions of missile defence options for Australia, Stefan Frühling addressed the beneficial consequences of an autonomous missile defence capacity as a supplement to extended nuclear deterrence.<sup>34</sup> Such a capacity would lower the burden of decision and execution placed on the United States in the event of a nuclear attack on Australia. The alliance, Frühling maintains, “is an element of general deterrence”, and a missile defence 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 American 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.<sup>35</sup>

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 modelling. 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 U.S. interest in any given scenario is impossible to predict, but it is certainly in the abstract possible to envisage reversals of expected commitments.

Paul Davis examined the question how the United States 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.

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<sup>34</sup> Frühling, *op.cit.* The other important detailed discussion is Richard Macmillan, *AEGIS TMD: Implications for Australia*, Australian Defence College Monograph Series, No. 1., 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Frühling, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33. See also Raoul E. Heinrichs, “Australia’s Nuclear Dilemma: Dependence, Deterrence or Denial?”, *Security Challenges*, Volume 4, Number 1, 2008, pp. 55-67.

Not without controversy, Davis speculates about countries which are of importance but not vital interest to the United States as including “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 is unsustainable by simply pointing to either the ANZUS treaty or the hosting of the joint 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.<sup>36</sup>

### *5.2 Threat spectrum and response*

Speaking of the 1980s period 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.<sup>37</sup>

That historical disposition, Lyon concludes disapprovingly, has now solidified to scepticism 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.<sup>38</sup>

The question of just what threats the deterrence guarantee does apply to in official practice is the first matter that needs public clarification. 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

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<sup>36</sup> 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, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. 1997, p. 133. I am grateful to Allan Behm for referring me to Davis, although he would distinctly not agree with my interpretation.

<sup>37</sup> Lyon, *op.cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 448.

intimidation to change policy – that can only be assuaged by extended nuclear deterrence.<sup>39</sup> 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 American extended nuclear deterrence today, the Australian case of extended nuclear deterrence is effectively unique in having no identifiable specific nuclear antagonist.

For most of its history, the Australian reliance on the American 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 which 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 Percovich<sup>40</sup> for United States commitments to extended nuclear deterrence commitments 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?

To this might be added,

- in the context of those questions in relation to the positive security guarantees made to Non Nuclear Weapons States by the Nuclear Weapons State signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?<sup>41</sup>

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 NT 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

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<sup>39</sup> One subtle, and now fascinatingly anachronistic, discussion of a variety of possibilities concerning China in the 1960s was by A.L. Burns in his “Australia and the Nuclear Balance”, in H.G. Gelber (ed.) *Problems of Australian Defence*, Oxford U.P., 1970.

<sup>40</sup> 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 the *Panel on 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.

<sup>41</sup>

extended nuclear deterrence, the NPT positive security guarantees warrant serious attention.

### *5.3 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 United States-orchestrated “system of stable deterrence”. This period roughly began prior to the 1983-85 crisis in ANZUS when the Lange Labor government in New Zealand declared visits by nuclear-armed ships illegal. The United States 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.<sup>42</sup> Certainly at the time of that crisis if not before, Dibb and other Australian defence officials went through a calculation of costs and benefits of the alliance in relation to

*Standing Up Right Here*, Malcolm Templeton’s superb diplomatic history of the crisis makes clear the process by which the United States came to the position that the New Zealand ban on port visits (in New Zealand alone) had to be treated as a threat to its global alliance structure built around extended deterrence. As Beazley summarised 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.<sup>43</sup>

Beazley and his officials sided with the United States, 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.

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

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Pugh’s account in *The ANZUS Crisis, Nuclear Visiting and Deterrence*, Cambridge U.P., 1989, has now be supplemented by the excellent study by Malcolm Templeton, *Standing Upright Here: New Zealand in the Nuclear Age 1945-1990*, Victoria U.P., 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Kim Beazley, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia, 11 August 1997.

intelligence contribution of the Pine Gap joint facility to providing a key element in the verification of U.S.-Soviet arms control treaties outweighed the undoubted costs and disadvantages of Pine Gap (and at that time, Nurrungar).<sup>44</sup> What threatened Australia 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 American extended nuclear deterrence.

Historically there were three problems with this bargain. Firstly, the existence of a policy to willingly anticipate the deaths of very large numbers of Australian citizens was claimed by the peace movement at the time, but known to be true by the government of the day which denied it. Secondly, there was at the time, 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.<sup>45</sup> Thirdly, once committed by hosting the joint facilities, Australian leverage over nuclear issues was in fact diminished rather increased as in the commonly heard “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 to point to by way of evidence of subsequent Australian influence over American 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.

Firstly, if the government believes that the bargain Beazley and Dibb outlined still obtains there is still 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.

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<sup>44</sup> This is not the place for a detailed discussion of this issue. 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, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 9 August 1999, pp 1-16; and 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].

<http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/australian-defence-facilities/pine-gap/pine-gap-intro>

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, the argument concerning C3I in Peter Hayes, Lyuba Zarsky and Walden Bello, *American Lake, Nuclear Peril in the Pacific*, Viking/Penguin, 1987, pp. 189-238.

Second, the argument needs to be re-examined given the vast changes that have taken place since the 1980s in all elements of the American C3(-plus)I apparatus as a system, and in the functions of the joint facility in particular. Key changes are the diminished stovepiping of the major global signals intelligence facilities, and a virtual revolution in production and dissemination of signals intelligence from space-based and other platforms, with profound consequences for Pine Gap's role. The part that the joint facility now plays in United States 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.<sup>46</sup>

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.

#### *5.4 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 is “avoided a discussion in Australia of an independent nuclear deterrent.”<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> The residues of these attempts still linger in Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) force structure and institutional memory<sup>49</sup>, and in Indonesian security community memory.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly the resolution of these issues has multiple potential consequences for Australian strategic policy, especially concerning the claimed linkage .

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<sup>46</sup> 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.

<http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/australian-defence-facilities/pine-gap/Alice%20meeting.ppt>

<sup>47</sup> Kim Beazley, presentation to Seminar on the ANZUS alliance, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia, 11 August 1997.

<sup>48</sup> 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). <http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/reframing/aust-ind-nuclear/aust-prolif/aust-prolif-now/>

<sup>49</sup> “Exploring The Nuclear Option”, *Pathfinder: Air Power Development Centre*, issue 29, August 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Tom Morton, “Australia and the nuclear renaissance”, *Background Briefing*, Radio National, ABC, 3 September 2006.

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. 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 United States 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.<sup>51</sup>

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, defence spending would have to increase very substantially. Again, Percovich's questions are primary: what threat? what probability? what function of armed force?

## **6. Out of denial: two preliminary requirements for democratic will-formation and sustainable security**

There are two inescapable but often ignored preliminary but fundamental considerations to any discussions of extended nuclear deterrence – one moral and political, the other a question of efficacy. The first is that the use of nuclear weapons in any extant form inevitably leads to the deaths of large numbers of people, and that consequently the use of nuclear weapons is always incipiently if not immediately genocidal. Whoever advocates a deterrent role for such weapons immediately either faces a moral calculus of a high level of certainty of avoidance of an even worse future for others to justify the deaths of large numbers of innocents, or lives in denial and bad faith – usually the latter. It may be that some such justification can be imagined. What is striking is how rarely such considerations appear in the casual invocation of the merits of extended nuclear deterrence most commonly seen.<sup>52</sup>

The second consideration is the presumption that nuclear deterrence is strategically effective – that it works. Obviously this is a well worn path, but in a recent review of the main arguments and historical studies usually adduced to support the efficacy of nuclear deterrence in the Cold War period Ward Wilson has argued that

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<sup>51</sup> 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, U.S. Embassy Canberra cable 4842 to Department of State, 6 April 1968, Secret Nodis.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Rühle's robust advocacy of German "nuclear sharing" as a foundation of contemporary extended nuclear deterrence is a partial exception, to be discussed further below. See Michael Rühle, *Good and Bad Nuclear Weapons: Berlin's Part in Shaping Nuclear Reality*, Körber Foundation for International Affairs, Körber Policy Paper No. 3, April 2009.

the problem in all these cases is that proof - the essential ingredient of prudent judgment - is entirely missing. If there were a concrete foundation of fact on which to base our assessment of the usefulness of nuclear deterrence, it might justify our reliance on these threats. As it is, almost all of the conventional wisdom about nuclear deterrence is so speculative and so much of it runs counter to cases from history that any conclusions are doubtful at best.<sup>53</sup>

Ward presents his review as “the beginning of a process of intellectual exploration, not firm and final conclusions”, yet as with the necessity for moral and political assessment of the highest and robust order to justify conceiving of the possibility of mass killing of innocents, the great bulk of contemporary reference to the need for incorporation of extended nuclear deterrence into national defence policies of American allies passes over the question of the strategic efficacy of nuclear deterrence in silence. Taken together, these two forms of denial – moral and strategic – are instances of what Robert Lifton termed the psychic numbing necessary for the functioning of the nuclear establishment.<sup>54</sup> They are however inimical to both democratic will-formation and sustainable security. In itself this double denial is not an argument against extended nuclear deterrence as a security policy, but it is a warning that there is much about the such policies that requires more close and ore public scrutiny.

## **7. Conclusion: a pathway beyond Australia’s “Just in Case” model of extended nuclear deterrence**

In contrast to the extended 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 American 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.

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

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<sup>53</sup> Ward Wilson, “The Myth of Nuclear Deterrence”, *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3, November 2008, p. 435. “Three practical arguments put the efficacy of nuclear deterrence into doubt: 1) the characteristic attack threatened in most nuclear deterrence scenarios - city attack – is not militarily effective or likely to be decisive; 2) the psychology of terror that is supposed to work in nuclear deterrence’s favor actually creates the circumstances for unremitting resistance; and 3) even though the field is mostly conjectural, what little unambiguous evidence does exist contradicts the claim that nuclear deterrence works.” *ibid*, p.421.

<sup>54</sup> Robert J. Lifton, *The Broken Connection*. Simon and Schuster, 1979. See also Joel Kovel, *Against the State of Nuclear Terror*, Free Association Books, 1984.

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 defence spending.