

**Rethinking the West's military presence in Malaysia and Singapore:
British, Australian and New Zealand policy towards the Five Power
Defence Arrangements (1970-73)**

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Introduction

The 1970s were a period of great change and uncertainty in Asia. The early years of this decade saw the problematical American disengagement from South Vietnam and the agonizing reappraisal of America's international role that arose from this ill-fated military campaign in Indochina. America's departure from South Vietnam was expected to leave a significant political and military vacuum, and in various regional capitals this prospect was received with some concern. The early 1970s also witnessed the Sino-American rapprochement and the emerging *détente* between Moscow and Washington. These developments seemed to disclose new diplomatic opportunities as well as introduce new dynamics among the great powers. Bipolar confrontation was giving way to an intense tripolar competition between People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union and the United States. While the key pillars of the Cold War remained in place, enmity between Moscow and Washington was, at least temporarily, moderated by mutual attempts to act with restraint.¹ While the communist leadership in Moscow was eager to avoid the formation of an anti-Soviet axis, the Nixon Administration used the spectre of such axis to push the Soviet Union into seeking a thaw with United States. As for China, Beijing was determined to exploit its improving relationship with Washington in order to contain its principal enemy, Moscow. Tripolarity was to change China's role and position in Asia.² Thanks to the Sino-American rapprochement, mistrust of China somewhat subsided in a number of Asian and Western capitals. In Southeast Asia, for instance, Malaysia was the first ASEAN nation to recognise the

Republic of China in 1974, with Thailand and the Philippines following suit a year later.³ Although Sino-Soviet enmity was to remain intense for the rest of the decade, East-West tensions eased both at global and regional level. All of sudden, the dark days of Cold War confrontation seemed to be over. Alongside *détente* and tripolarity, the early 1970s also saw regional countries adjust to the complete disappearance of European imperial presence in Southeast Asia. Post-1945 history is often seen through the prism of Cold War confrontation, but it should not be forgotten that decolonization also played an important role in shaping the international relations in Asia. The British Labour government's decision in 1967-68 to withdraw most of its troops from 'east of Suez' removed the last remnants of a European politico-military presence in Southeast Asia and brought an end to the long Pax Britannica there.

Against this backdrop, this paper explores how three Western powers, Britain, Australia and New Zealand perceived the changing strategic landscape in Southeast Asia and how they responded to it. More specifically, the paper looks at British, Australian and New Zealand approach to regional security through the prism of their involvement in the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA). Negotiated in 1971, this defence scheme was initially intended to be a mere transitional agreement underpinning the security of Malaysia and Singapore until these two nations strengthened significantly their military capabilities. However, it gradually developed into an on-going defence arrangement that still links Britain to its Commonwealth partners in Southeast Asia and provides a forum for valuable defence cooperation in the region.⁴ Very little has been written on the FPDA;⁵ and it is not accidental that one of the

most recent works on the subject describes it as 'Southeast Asia's unknown regional security organisation'.⁶ This paper, therefore, aims to address this gap by examining, through the use of declassified British and Australian government files, British, Australian and New Zealand policies towards the FPDA in the context of a rapidly evolving regional system. While the focus here is clearly on strategic and security issues, brief mention will also be made to the way in which these three countries saw their role in the region and how their foreign policies adapted to regional dynamics.

Of the three Commonwealth nations, Britain was undoubtedly the one with the longest and most intense engagement with the region. As an imperial power, London had a hold over Malaya until 1957, Singapore and the Borneo states until 1963, and continued to oversee the external affairs, external defence and internal security of Brunei.⁷ Under the Anglo-Malayan/Malaysian Defence Agreement (AMDA), which was signed in 1957, London was also responsible for the external security of Malaya and, subsequently, Malaysia.⁸ At the end of the 1960s AMDA was still in place, despite the rapid drawdown of British forces in the region following the Wilson government's decision in 1967-68 to retrench from east of Suez.⁹ Between the end of the Second World War and Wilson's radical overhaul of British military commitment east of Suez, Britain had maintained a significant military presence in the region centred on well-established bases in Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia. Singapore, in particular, was Britain's largest military establishment in the Far East and underpinned the British military presence. In 1957 British forces in the Southeast Asian theatre included 21,000 Army troops, ten Royal Air Force (RAF) squadrons together with two cruisers, four destroyers and five

frigates that formed the Royal Navy (RN) Far East station. In the mid-1960s the deployment of British forces in Southeast Asia would raise up to some 68,000 British troops, together with a fleet of 80 ships including two aircraft carriers and a commando ship', following Indonesian President Sukarno's decision to launch a campaign of *Konfrontasi* against the newly-established Federation of Malaysia.¹⁰ As a part of Britain's commitment to the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), these forces could also be deployed in SEATO military operations in support of the West's Cold War strategic aims in Southeast Asia.

As for Australia and New Zealand, the two Australasian nations had since the early 1950s become increasingly involved in regional security. The outbreak of communist insurrection in Malaya in 1948 had alerted both Canberra and Wellington to the risk of Southeast Asia falling into hostile hands. With this danger in mind, both governments had decided to assist the embattled British colonial authorities in combating communist insurgents. Anxious to avoid the spread of communism in an area of considerable strategic interest to them, both Canberra and Wellington had also made a small military contribution to the British-led Far East Strategic Reserve in 1955.¹¹ The Reserve's principal role was to deter communist aggression in South-east Asia and to support SEATO military operations around the region in the event that deterrence failed. As a secondary role, the forces committed to the Reserve were also allowed to take part in actions against communist guerrillas in Malaya. In 1957 Canberra and Wellington also associated themselves with AMDA. Then, in the mid-1960s, the main task of Australian and New Zealand forces in the Malayan region became that of

providing a deterrent against any external threat to the newly created Federation of Malaysia (1963). For this reason, both the Menzies administration in Canberra and Holyoake government in Wellington agreed in early 1965 to commit Australian and New Zealand troops to the British-led military operations in Borneo during Indonesia's campaign of *Konfrontasi* against the Malaysian Federation (1963-66).¹²

Southeast Asia's changing strategic landscape in the early 1970s encouraged these three Commonwealth countries to reassess their politico-military presence in the region. Britain, to be sure, was not simply responding to changing regional circumstances, but it had itself been an agent of change in the light of its politico-military retrenchment from east of Suez. British Conservative Prime Minister Ted Heath's very decision to negotiate the FPDA in 1970 and to commit a small defence force to the defence of Malaysia and Singapore in partial reversal of the policy of the previous Labour administration, had less to do with Cold War developments than with the fashioning of a post-imperial role for Britain or with domestic concerns. Heath's overriding foreign policy concern was to end Britain's rather uneasy relationship with the European Communities (EC) and to make membership of this grouping the cornerstone of its foreign policy. But the Conservative government was careful enough not to cast Britain's post-imperial future in purely European terms. Despite Britain's declining interest in Southeast Asia, the negotiation of the FDPA was instrumental in achieving this by ensuring that London would maintain close links with key Commonwealth partners in the Asian region and the United States. In what was an attempt to neutralise potential domestic opposition to EC entry as well as a sign of

British elites' reluctance to do away with the rhetoric of Britain as a leading power with extra-European interests, Heath was eager to show that by making a contribution to the stability of Southeast Asia, Britain had still a role to play outside Europe.

As for Australia and New Zealand, these two countries increasingly came to see their immediate region as an area of vital importance to national prosperity and security. Both countries sought closer political and economic relations with the region. But, while their conservative governments still attached importance to an Australasian military presence in Malaysia and Singapore, their socialist successors had, at the very least, mixed feelings about it. Encouraged by the a climate of emerging *détente* among the great powers, the two Labour government were only too eager to assume that containment was now obsolete and that Australasian military deployments on the mainland of Asia were no longer necessary. But while the Australian Labor government ended up weakening, if not undermining the FPDA, the New Zealand Labour administration soon realised that its small contribution to the FPDA could still play a role in maintaining stability in the region and could be instrumental in strengthening New Zealand's relations with Southeast Asia.

Britain, Southeast Asia and the Five Power Defence Arrangements

As leader of the Opposition, Heath had been strongly critical of Wilson's decision to pull out of Southeast Asia. He had accused Wilson of 'deliberately, openly and frankly opting out of their responsibilities' and declared that 'never before has a British Government exerted less influence on overseas affairs.'¹³ He made it clear that 'when the

time comes ... we shall ignore the time phasing laid down by the Prime Minister and his Government for the Far East and the Middle East. We shall support our friends and allies and we shall restore the good name of Britain'. Upon becoming prime minister in June 1970 Heath was determined to stand by his promise. He immediately instructed Whitehall's overseas departments – the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) – and to look into the various military aspects and financial implication of a continuing British military presence there. Within less than a month, ministers and officials in Whitehall agreed to a small military commitment, which would include the deployment of land, air and naval forces (see table 1). They also decided to have AMDA replaced by a five power defence agreement, which would be purely consultative in nature and be subject to a time limit or to periodic review. In doing so, they intended to achieve two broad objectives: first, to end Britain's open-ended, and thus potentially onerous, commitment to the defence of Malaysia and, second, to limit the scope of any future five power defence scheme. British ministers made clear that the British commitment towards Malaysia and Singapore could not, and would not, be greater than that of Australia and New Zealand. With this brief in hand, Defence Secretary Lord Carrington departed for a tour of the Far East where he consulted with the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Table 1. Britain's contribution to the FPDA

1 battalion group
up to 6 frigates
up to 4 Nimrod aircraft
1 squadron of Whirlwind helicopters
1 submarine in rotation with Australia
combat units, ships and aircraft on visit
<i>total troops: 2,550</i>

Lord Carrington's visit to the Far East ended positively. Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore accepted British proposals and the five nations moved fairly rapidly towards an agreement. In September 1970 and January 1971 officials met in Singapore to iron out differences. They reached significant decisions on the military aspects of the future five power arrangements, including the establishment of an air defence council for the functioning of an integrated air defence system (IADS).¹⁴ On 16 February, it was announced that British, Australian and New Zealand forces would be organised as a single ANZUK force.¹⁵ On 15 and 16 April 1971, ministers representing the five countries gathered in London to conclude the five-power defence arrangements.¹⁶ The understanding included an obligation to consult. Paragraph 5 of the communiqué stated that 'in the event of any form of armed attack externally organised or supported or the threat of such attack against Malaysia and Singapore, their Governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such attack or threat'.

A Joint Consultative Council was established to serve as a forum for regular consultations at senior official level.¹⁷ In November 1971, Australia, Britain and New Zealand formally terminated AMDA with Letters of Exchange to the governments of Malaysia and Singapore. These documents specified the rights and the status of ANZUK forces stationed in Malaysia and Singapore, and the assistance these forces were to provide to these two countries.¹⁸

The influential British weekly, *Economist*, applauded the Conservative government's willingness to play a leading role in the negotiation the FPDA, claiming that Heath's 'new experiment in collective security' was a much welcome 'attempt to look beyond Europe'. And, indeed, an attempt to look beyond Europe it was. As negotiations with the European Community (EC) began in earnest in the autumn of 1970 and British policymakers became increasingly focussed on the all too important goal of securing EC membership, the Heath government was keen to show that Britain was not simply a European power, but had still a role to play outside the European Continent. Heath, it must be said, was a well-known Europeanist – indeed 'the most qualified "European" in Tory politics' in the assessment of Hugo Young – and, in his capacity as leader of the opposition since 1965, he had steered the Conservative party along a distinctly pro-European course.¹⁹ But, although his Europeanism was genuine and would become even more pronounced during the course of his premiership, Heath had been initially quite vocal in rejecting the idea that Britain was simply a regional power, confined in its roles to its own part of the world.²⁰ He rather saw EC membership as a means of ensuring that Britain, by leading a wealthy and influential

European bloc, would remain in the world's top league and, thus, avoid relegation to middle power status.

Heath's willingness to take the lead in the negotiation of the FPDA and commit a small military force to Southeast Asian defence must be seen principally, albeit not exclusively, in this light. Other considerations also played a part. One was certainly his desire to score important political points against the Labour Opposition – since 1968 Heath had tried to persuade the British public of a difference of attitude between the Conservative Party who was determined to face up to Britain's international obligations and the Labour Party who was supposedly irresponsible in its handling of Britain's foreign relations. Another consideration was Heath's determination to do all he could to smooth Britain's path into Europe.²¹ The vision of Britain as an influential power with a role to play in Southeast Asia or the Middle East still resonated strongly within Conservative circles; Heath saw it as a helpful instrument in seeking to appease a largely eurosceptic British public as well as carrying his party with him. As Christopher Hill and Christopher Lord have pointed out, this vision was 'essential to maintain a balancing act within the Conservative Party itself and to assuage a body of opinion that feared the excessive Europeanisation of foreign policy under Heath's leadership'.²²

Yet, this vision was not simply a political stratagem, but it reflected British policymakers' lingering reluctance to cast Britain's post-imperial role in purely European terms. In playing a leading role in the establishment of the FPDA, Heath, for instance, wished not only to recover some ground in Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States after the Wilson-Johnson rocky interlude. It also wanted to show that

Britain was still eager to work in a close partnership with the Americans in Southeast Asia.²³ In British eyes, President Richard Nixon's 'Guam Doctrine' and his policy of 'Vietnamisation' did not foreshadow an American withdrawal from Asia, but were simply attempts to reduce America's military overstretch in the region. In these circumstances, the Conservative government thought that the Nixon Administration would value a continuing British presence in Asia and British officials were hopeful that a British military contribution to Southeast Asia would pay 'substantial dividends in Anglo-US relations'. Along with a strong partnership with the United States, Heath also wanted to maintain close links with Britain's key Commonwealth partners such as Australia and New Zealand. Heath was no Commonwealth man and had little sympathy for the Commonwealth, which he regarded as a largely ineffective association of nations with very limited value to Britain's interests. But he still valued close bilateral ties with major Commonwealth allies and wished to keep those ties in good working order. Furthermore, he wanted London to retain influence in Southeast Asia where he and his officials argued that Britain still had important economic interests despite the fact that trade links between Britain and this region were in decline.²⁴ The British view was that a continuing military presence in the area 'could benefit our relations with [Malaysia and Singapore]' and was 'likely to contribute to keeping in power regimes broadly favourable to our interests'.

Cold War concerns were certainly not absent from British minds. In 1970 Heath and his officials were still in a Cold War mindset, fearing the spread of Chinese and Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. While judging that 'the possibility of China or the

Soviet Union initiating active hostility in Asia is remote' and that, therefore, 'there is at the present no threat in terms of possible external aggression against Malaysia and Singapore', officials in Whitehall believed that 'externally promoted, communist inspired, insurgency' was still a danger for Malaysia, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. FCO officials acknowledged that the capacity of Western powers to contain subversion was limited and the risks of direct Western involvement too high. Thus they saw the actual value of a British contribution as 'essentially political' and believed that only way in which subversion could be 'countered' once and for all was to build up' the ability of the South-East Asian countries to deal with it from their own resources'. Yet, until these nations were capable of resisting subversion without external aid, Western forces had still an important to play – namely, to 'act as a deterrent to external aggression' and to 'hold the ring' by providing, for instance advice, logistical support, air cover. In addition, Western forces could also help local government 'by encouraging continued support for them by elements who might otherwise be tempted to renege with insurgents'. 'There is therefore a case', FCO officials argued, 'for a continued Western military presence in South-East Asia as a deterrent to external aggression and an umbrella for the development of greater regional cooperation and self-reliance'. Prospects for greater regional cooperation were, however, still modest. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), for instance, was not expected to play an effective role in the defence of Southeast Asia for many years to come.

Despite Whitehall's attempts to rationalise Britain's continuing politico-military involvement in the affairs of Southeast Asia, the fact remained that this region played

only a limited, if not marginal, role in British foreign and defence policy calculations. Officials no doubt continued to repeat that Britain had still substantial economic interests in the region, but, in practice, they treated Southeast Asia as an area of secondary importance. Indicative of this attitude was a FCO paper named *Priorities in Our Foreign Policy*. In it, FCO officials placed this region last in Britain's scale of priorities. In terms of value of economic transactions between Britain and selected regions of the world, they ranked Southeast Asia very low, even lower than impoverished Sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of expected GDP growth, they consigned Southeast Asia to the bottom of their list together with Australasia, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. As for its strategic importance, Southeast Asia was ranked second last, with only Latin America, Australasia and South Asia being judged less relevant to Britain's strategic interests (see table 2.) There was no doubt that the Conservative government saw closer relations with its Western European partners as Britain's top priority. Their resolve to look beyond the confines of Europe notwithstanding, British ministers and officials never disputed the primacy of Europe in British foreign and defence calculations nor questioned the wisdom of closer links with Western Europe. Given this premise, a British continuing military presence in Southeast Asia had to be in line with, and commensurate to, the realities of British power and interests in a post-imperial age, which irresistibly pulled Britain towards Europe.

Table 2. British interests by geographical areas

	Volume of Economic Transactions (1967)	Politico/Security Interests	Estimated Gross Domestic Product (1975)	Total	%
	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000	%
<i>Total</i>					
Western Europe	395	230	190	815	27
North American & Caribbean	225	180	370	775	26
Eastern Europe & USSR	35	200	205	440	15
Far East	20	80	105	205	7
Africa (Sub-Sahara)	95	65	15	175	6
Middle East & North Africa	60	90	15	165	5
Australasia	60	30	15	105	4
Latin America	35	30	45	110	4
South Asia	30	30	25	85	3
Southeast Asia	25	40	15	80	3

But, once it decided to make small military contribution to the defence of Malaysia and Singapore, the Conservative government remained strongly committed to the FPDA. The Nixon Administration's attempts to bring to an end the American involvement in Vietnam during 1972-73 and its rapprochement with China did not encourage the Conservatives to change their approach to regional security. While in Australia the changes taking place at systemic level were interpreted as a sign of the waning of Cold War tensions, policymakers in London were less sanguine about the evolution of the Cold War and, in any case, they still believed that 'the arguments for

retaining a British contribution to the ANZUK Force in the context of the Five Power Defence Arrangements are still valid.' Between April and July 1973 London put intense pressure on the Australian Labor government in an attempt to persuade Prime Minister Gough Whitlam to review Labor's plans for a substantial Australian military rundown from Singapore and Malaysia. Correctly, the Heath government saw these plans as gravely undermining the FPDA. In April British Defence Secretary Lord Carrington warned Whitlam that, unless Australia retained, at least, the logistic support group in Singapore, Britain 'might find it impossible' to remain in Malaysia and Singapore. But to British disappointment, Canberra did not give in. In the end, the sole 'concession' made by the Whitlam's Labor government was a pledge to abstain, at least temporarily, from carrying out the withdrawal of Australian Mirage squadrons from Butterworth in North Malaysia.

In February 1974, however, Britain went to the polls and Heath was defeated by a very narrow margin. Faced with a difficult economic and financial situation, the new Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson saw defence as an area where cuts could be made. In October 1974, following the completion of a defence review, Wilson announced a drastic package, which included not only cutbacks in naval forces assigned to NATO and force deployments in West Germany, but also the withdrawal of British ground forces from Singapore. In explaining his government's defence cuts to the American President Gerald Ford, Wilson argued that 'we can no longer spread our forces round the world on the scale we have hitherto done'. To the Australian Prime Minister Whitlam, Wilson revealed that the defence of Southeast Asia was not among

'the things we must do' and added that 'we have been forced to the conclusion that our 1968 decision to withdraw our forces from Southeast Asia should now be carried out'. Wilson did not repudiate the FPDA, but, after the Whitlam government's withdrawal of Australian ground forces from Singapore, he saw no reason to keep a battalion in Singapore. For the architect of Britain's military withdrawal from east of Suez, Southeast Asia was well and truly an area of marginal concern. Britain's foreign and defence policy had to adjust to the new realities of Britain's decline and reorientation towards Europe.

Australia's revisionism

While Southeast Asia was increasingly playing a marginal role in British defence and foreign policy, its importance in Australia's political and strategic calculations had been growing since the 1950s. In a sense, this was an inevitable historical process. What was, for the British, a distant region of Asia, was the 'Near North' for the Australians. As Britain's imperial role in the region was nearing its end and the security umbrella that it had afforded Australia was about to disappear, Australian involvement in regional politics deepened. The Wilson government decision to withdraw all British forces from Malaysia and Singapore by December 1971 had forced Australian policymakers to review their policy options and to decide whether to continue to provide a political reassurance to Malaysia and Singapore or withdraw altogether. In December 1967, Harold Holt's Liberal-Country Party Coalition government had chosen the first option. While aware of the risks that 'a continuing military presence could become a military

commitment of unpredictable magnitude in the event of an insurgency situation developing in Malaysia or conflict with Indonesia', the Holt Cabinet agreed in principle to continue to station Australian troops in that area (see table 3). Australian ministers recognised that a continuing military presence could not only 'enhance Australia's political standing and its diplomatic influence in the region', but it could also 'support confidence and stability in Malaysia and Singapore', 'promote the development of their military capabilities', and 'foster military co-operation between them'. Furthermore, it could serve as an encouragement to the United States to remain engaged in Southeast Asia. In the Australian view, should Canberra decide to disengage, it would send the wrong signal to Washington at a time when America's regional support was 'necessary for whatever strategy Australia decided upon'.

Table 3. Australian military presence in Singapore/Malaysia, 1967

<i>RAN</i> <i>(based in Singapore)</i>	<i>RAR</i> <i>(based at Terendak, Malaysia)</i>	<i>RAAF</i> <i>(based at Butterworth, Malaysia)</i>
2 destroyers/frigates	1 infantry battalion	1 Mirage squadron
1 aircraft carrier (on annual visit of 6 to 8 weeks)	1 field battery 1 field engineer troop supporting signal & administrative element	1 Sabre fighter squadron HQ and supporting units

With these convictions in mind, Australian policy-makers were showing not only a greater inclination to engage with the region, but also an increased awareness that a

deeper Australian involvement was needed if Canberra wished to achieve its aim of a stable Southeast Asian region. Holt's policy was formally endorsed the year later by his successor, John Gorton.²⁵ Then, in 1971, in spite of Gorton's doubts about the desirability of Australia's 'forward defence' strategy, his government welcomed the reintroduction of a small British presence and agreed to commit the Australian military forces already stationed in Malaysia and Singapore to the FPDA (see table 4).²⁶ Notwithstanding concerns that the renewal of the British presence in Southeast Asia might 'introduce influences that could obstruct the independently Australian purposes we had in mind when deciding to leave our own forces in the region', Australian policymakers calculated that Canberra's greater regional responsibilities would be easier to discharge if Britain remained somehow engaged in the region. But, the ink had barely dried on these arrangements that clouds began to gather over the future of Australia's participation in the FPDA.

Table 4. The Australian commitment to the FPDA

<i>Location</i>	<i>Type/function</i>	<i>numbers</i>
MALAYSIA	2 RAAF squadrons	1500
	Technical assistance personnel	30
SINGAPORE	Battalion & Battery in 28 ANZUK Brigade	700
	Other troops in Brigade (ie. Engineers)	180
	RAAF personnel	30
	RAN shore group	20

One problem was the Liberal-Country Party Coalition government's growing domestic unpopularity. William McMahon had replaced Gorton in March 1971, but his government had been riven by factional and leadership rivalries. As a result, he had failed to establish himself as a strong and effective leader, and his administration appeared tired and in disarray. With a federal election due before the end of 1972 there was a distinct likelihood that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) would return to power after a long spell in opposition. Labor's opposition to Australian military deployments in Southeast Asia was a well-known fact. Under pressure from his vociferous left-wing, Labor leader Gough Whitlam had, since 1969, been calling for the withdrawal of Australian forces from Vietnam and the Malaysian region.²⁷

Another problem was Australia's reliance on 'forward defence' – a defence posture, which was looking increasingly shaky even without the ALP's vocal opposition to Australian military deployments in Asia. The Nixon Administration's reassessment of the US role in Vietnam could not be without consequences for Australia. As the American Administration began to withdraw US forces from Indochina – between 1969 and 1972 it would reduce American troops from more than 300,000 to 24,000 – the Australian Liberal-Country Party Coalition governments were forced to review their country's military commitment to Vietnam. As from late 1970, and throughout 1971, both Gorton and McMahon government wound down Australia's presence in South Vietnam, with only a handful of advisers left in that country by the

end of 1971. But, while carrying out a radical disengagement from Indochina, Liberal-Country Party ministers were reluctant to abandon 'forward defence' and 'containment' as the guiding principles of postwar Australian defence policy. Throughout 1971 and 1972 they remained publicly committed to their Cold War outlook. But, unlike their political masters, key officials in Canberra appeared readier to question its value in the changing strategic landscape.

On 2 December 1972 Australia went to the polls and the Labor Party was returned to power after twenty-three years in political wilderness. Despite his party's awkward parliamentary position – the ALP enjoyed a tight 9-seat majority in the House of Representatives but was in minority in the Senate – the new prime minister Whitlam wasted no time, and, in a style described by J.D.B. Miller as 'whirlwind revisionism', he immediately took important initiatives in the field of foreign and defence policy, including the withdrawal of Australia's remaining troops in South Vietnam and the recognition of Communist China.²⁸ Within days, Whitlam reiterated his pledge to begin a phased withdrawal from Singapore, but added that he was prepared to honour the FPDA in 'letter and spirit'.²⁹ Unlike his British counterpart Heath, Whitlam interpreted the American disengagement from Vietnam and the incipient process of *détente* among the great powers as a sign that Cold War tensions were on the wane. 'What an exhilaration it is, what a help it is to be moving on the wave of great events rather than swimming against the tide', Whitlam declared in an early speech in New York.³⁰ Resolved to distance himself from his conservative predecessors and their alleged uncritical support for American and British Cold War policies in

Southeast Asia, Whitlam enthusiastically embraced the idea that, with the advent of *détente*, the worst of the Cold was now over. According to Coral Bell, his foreign policy incorporated ‘a sort of *détente* euphoria’, which ‘was much stronger than it ever was in Washington’s own policies’.³¹ Hence, given his optimistic reading of Cold War developments in Asia, it was not surprising that Whitlam did not believe that there was any significant external threat for the Australian defence forces to meet in the region and strongly doubted that it made sense for Australia to maintain some of its troops there. Instead, he spoke of the opportunities that *détente* opened up ‘for constructive changes and for further initiatives to be directed towards peace and progress in the Asian and Pacific region to which Australia belongs’.³² In his eyes, containment and forward defence were now relics of the past. ‘To meet the new realities and our perceptions of them’, Whitlam claimed, ‘we shall be seeking new forms of regional co-operation’. Southeast Asia was no longer seen ‘as a frontier where we might fight nameless Asian enemies as far to the north of our own shores as possible’, but as an area where Australia could play a greater and more constructive role.³³

Yet, for all Whitlam’s rhetorical transport for Australia’s greater involvement in regional affairs, his government’s defence policy risked undermining one of Australia’s most constructive contributions in support of peace and stability in Southeast Asia – the Five Power Defence Arrangements. In Labor’s circles, little distinction was drawn between the role the Australian troops in Vietnam and the rationale for the maintenance of an Australian contingent in the Malaysian region. Yet, the two deployments responded to a different logic. The Australian military contribution to Vietnam had

been made essentially for two reasons: to support the American policy of containment in Asia and to secure a firmer American commitment to Australian security. Australian troops were in Indochina in a combat role and, in the early 1970s, their withdrawal had become inevitable as a result of the United States' military disengagement. No such pressure for an Australian disengagement from Malaysia and Singapore existed. Australian forces there were deployed not in a combat role, but fulfilled an eminently political function as a contribution to confidence in Malaysia and Singapore and to regional stability while stronger regional relationships were being worked out. But these evident differences notwithstanding, there was an 'an overwhelming feeling' within the Labor Party that the era of Australian military presence in Southeast Asia had to come to an end.

Thus, in spite of British attempts to persuade the Whitlam government to refrain from reducing significantly Australian military presence in Singapore, Canberra remained inflexible. Lord Carrington's visit to Australia in February 1972 produced no results. The new Australian Defence Minister Lance Barnard told the visiting British Defence Secretary that the government's plan to replace the Australian battalion and battery in Singapore was simply 'not open to negotiation' and, hence, the withdrawal of the battalion and the battery would be completed by early 1974. Australia, however, would maintain a small support group in Singapore and retain its naval and aerial forces deployed in Malaysia and Singapore. There was some irony in all this: the government of a country that was swiftly reorienting towards Europe and whose interest in Southeast Asian affairs was rapidly waning, was urging a Labor

administration in Canberra that advocated the strengthening of Australia's ties with Asia as its top foreign policy priority, to remain engaged in that region. The British Conservative government believed that a contraction of Australia's military presence in Malaysia and Singapore would result in the weakening the FDPA, irrespective of the magnitude of the force reductions being planned in Canberra. However, depending on Whitlam's intentions, different scenarios were possible, some more unpalatable than others. The British were particularly alarmed about the prospect of a total or almost total Australian withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore – an outcome that seemed impossible to rule out in the light of Whitlam's rhetoric and continuous left-wing demands for a more radical military retrenchment from in Malaysia and Singapore. The British were concerned that, if Whitlam did indeed do that, the New Zealanders would be under pressure to follow suit while the Singaporeans and Malaysians would also perhaps feel compelled to re-define their approach to the FPDA with disastrous consequences for the latter's existence.³⁴

But almost as soon as Carrington returned to Britain, the Australian position began to slip. In March 1973, the Australian Foreign and Defence Committee of Cabinet (FAD) agreed in principle to a more radical set of proposals. These involved not only a further reduction of the Australian ground element in Singapore: after April 1975 the only troops remaining in the city-state would amount to no more than 150 men, comprising technical aid, training and exercise personnel, and their support. This meant that Australia would not be able to provide logistical support to the ANZUK brigade. As Australian personnel played a crucial role in this area, the ANZUK brigade was in

jeopardy unless the British government was willing to replace the departing Australian personnel.³⁵ But, most importantly, Whitlam's radical proposals also included the withdrawal by 1976 of Australian RAAF element (1,500 men and two Mirages squadrons) from Butterworth with the exception of a small group for technical assistance programs. Understandably, the British response was extremely unhelpful. Malaysian, Singaporean and New Zealand reactions were also negative, if only more restrained. Like the British, the Malaysian, Singaporean and New Zealand authorities did not want the collapse of the FPDA. Although Malaysian foreign policy under Prime Minister Tun Razak was increasingly verging, at least publicly, towards a more neutralist line – in 1971 he was instrumental in pushing the ASEAN foreign ministers to adopt a declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) – no one in Kuala Lumpur believed that the neutralisation of Southeast Asia would be a practical scenario in the short term.³⁶ Razak himself had made it clear that 'until such a time as the neutralisation of South East Asia is realised, countries in the region are free to enter into defence arrangements with outside powers'. As for Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew viewed the idea of neutralisation with concern and remained suspicious of Malaysian and Indonesian intentions. A strong proponent of the balance of power, Lee favoured the continuing involvement of Britain, Australia and New Zealand in Southeast Asia. He continued to see a Western presence as an important factor in maintaining regional stability.³⁷ Interestingly, even the Indonesian government was opposed to any action that could undermine the FPDA. Publicly, Indonesia continued to be in favour of non-alignment and neutralisation, but in private it saw merit in the

FPDA as a reassuring factor in regional politics. In February 1973, during Whitlam's visit to Jakarta, Indonesian officials had told the Whitlam party that Jakarta 'would like the ANZUK force to continue undisturbed and would not thank Australia for rocking the boat'.

In the end, probably realising that the government's radical plans risked unravelling the FPDA and created problems with regional allies, the Australian Cabinet relented. On 2 July 1973, it agreed to postpone any decision on the actual time of withdrawal of RAAF squadrons from Butterworth, but it let it be known that it would again review this matter before March 1975. The Labor Cabinet, however, did not budge on the ANZUK brigade question and confirmed the FAD's earlier decision to withdraw all Australian ground forces from Singapore with the exception of a very small contingent, which, after April 1975, was expected to comprise no more than 150 men. On top of that, Cabinet also agreed that these remaining servicemen would not be assigned to ANZUK, which as a result of these decisions, would be disbanded in 1974.³⁸ Labor's promised defence review, however, never took place. In 1975, as a result of a domestic constitutional impasse, Whitlam would be dismissed by Australia's Governor-General. The new Liberal-Country Party Coalition Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was happy to leave the RAAF squadrons in North Malaysia.³⁹ While in opposition, the Liberal-Country Party Coalition had been attacking the ALP for reneging on ANZUK, for disregarding Southeast Asian views, for underestimating risks and for pandering to its left-wing demands.⁴⁰ Once in office, Fraser's Liberal-Country Party Coalition government did not reverse his predecessor's decisions. With the British now about

to complete the withdrawal of their ground contribution, and Singapore and Malaysia now reconciled with the idea of a reduced Commonwealth military presence in the region, Fraser did not redeploy an Australian ground force in the region. But, at least, he did not dismantle the Australian contribution to the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

New Zealand between revisionism and traditionalism

Across the Tasman Sea, the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP) had fought the November 1972 general election on a political platform not too dissimilar to that of the ALP. Like the ALP, the NZLP favoured greater engagement with Asia and aimed to pursue a more activist regional diplomacy – a diplomacy that, according to New Zealand Labor Leader Norman Kirk, should be determined less by the attitudes of New Zealand's traditional allies, the United States and Britain, and more by Wellington's own assessment of its national interest. Like Whitlam, Kirk rejected 'containment' as outdated. He believed that engagement with the region should not be driven by fear of communism and that, as a result, New Zealand should move away from security-oriented relationships with Southeast Asian states. Greater regional trade and faster economic development, not military pacts, were the best guarantee of security.⁴¹ No longer, Kirk declared in 1972, should New Zealand view Asia 'primarily as a series of possible threats to ... [its] security', but rather as 'a region whose relative stability and economic progress are essential to the well-being of New Zealand, and whose efforts at regional co-operation are also therefore of the closest concern'. Like Whitlam, Kirk was

under pressure from his party's left-wing to bring home the New Zealand troops deployed on the mainland of Southeast Asia. Like its close neighbour, New Zealand had made a military contribution to the American effort in Vietnam and maintained a battalion in Singapore as a part of the ANZUK force.⁴² But unlike its Australian counterpart, the Kirk government would choose to pursue a different strategy in Asia and would not seek to undermine the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

In 1970, Wellington's response to the Heath government's plans for the deployment of a small British force in Malaysia and Singapore had been forthcoming. The National Party government of Sir Keith Holyoake welcomed Heath's electoral victory 'with a sense of relief and elation' because of the promised changes to British defence policy in the region. Holyoake and his ministers showed 'genuine and unreserved satisfaction' over the change of direction in British policy' and let it be known that British proposals were in line with their expectations. Like Australia, New Zealand had decided in November 1968 to maintain a small military presence in Southeast Asia until the end of 1971. Then, in early 1972, Holyoake indicated that New Zealand's battalion-strong contribution would continue to be stationed at Terendak, Malacca, even after that date. New Zealand, Holyoake explained, was determined to 'play a part in the search for regional security and stability in Southeast Asia and the Pacific' even without a British presence in the region. But when Lord Carrington arrived in Wellington in the summer of 1970, he immediately realised that the New Zealand government would be more comfortable with discharging a 'forward defence' role if the British continued to be committed to regional security. In addition, New

Zealand, more than Australia, was determined to maintain close links with Britain – New Zealand’s economic prosperity largely relied on its ability to export significant quantities of its agricultural produce to the British market and British goodwill was needed if New Zealand’s exports were to be safeguarded in the context of Britain’s negotiations with the EC.

Table 5. New Zealand’s contribution to the FPDA

1 battalion
1 frigate
transport aircraft
other air units if needed

total troops: 1,150

Rhetoric apart, Kirk did not depart too much from his predecessor’s foreign policy when he took office in December 1972. Like Whitlam in Australia, he brought to an end New Zealand’s commitment to South Vietnam. But this decision was largely symbolic as by then, the New Zealand military presence consisted of only two training teams.⁴³ But unlike Whitlam, Kirk showed a more robust attitude towards the FPDA. Able to rely on a sizeable 23-seat majority in Parliament as a result of his Labour Party’s landslide electoral victory, Kirk was less amenable than Whitlam to pressure from his party’s left-wing.⁴⁴ Hence, in January 1973 Kirk was able to inform the British High Commissioner in Wellington that unless Whitlam ‘rubbished the whole show’ by announcing Australia’s total withdrawal from the FPDA, New Zealand would ‘stay on’

in Singapore (see table 5). A complete Australian withdrawal, he said, would make impossible for him to hold his party's left-wing. But if the Australians simply reduced their military contingent without withdrawing altogether, New Zealand would be able to maintain its battalion in Singapore. 'Even an [Australian] aeroplane would be enough', Kirk argued. He offered to do his utmost to persuade the Australians to keep a military contribution in Southeast Asia and told Galsworthy as he did not want the FPDA unravel. He regarded the FPDA as the best means of 'keeping Britain in Asia and considered a British presence in the area 'absolutely essential'. In fact, he could 'sleep better at night' if he knew that the British were still there.

Kirk's unexpected desire for a continuing British presence in Southeast Asia was not the only reason why his government was resolved to maintain the New Zealand battalion in Singapore. His belief that New Zealand should not be seen internationally as merely a follower of Australia was also a factor. Kirk 'wanted the separate identities of the two nations well-established politically'. But regional reactions also played an important part. Following his return from a tour of Southeast Asia, New Zealand Defence Minister Arthur Faulkner reported to Kirk that countries in the region still valued New Zealand's military contribution to the FPDA and wished the Labour government to leave it unchanged.⁴⁵ As a result, Kirk abandoned his early opposition to what the leftwing of his party regarded as a military approach to regional security. While the Labor government in Australia behaved as if troop reductions in the Malaysian region could not upset its attempt to deepen Australia's regional engagement, the Kirk administration came to see its commitment to the FPDA as a part

of its strategy aimed at 'strengthen[ing] and expand[ing] New Zealand's bilateral relationships in this area'.⁴⁶ It was not until 1975, when Britain and Australia were completing their withdrawals and Singapore indicated that it would no longer mind if New Zealand also pulled out its units, that Kirk announced that it would bring the battalion home within the next two years.⁴⁷ This decision was reversed by Kirk's successor, Robert Muldoon. In 1976 his National Party government announced that the battalion would be left in Singapore, but this decision seemed to have had less to do with different security perceptions than with economic considerations. As the government pointed out, keeping the battalion in Singapore would still cost less than redeploying it to New Zealand.⁴⁸

Conclusions

As important changes swept through Southeast Asia between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, three Western nations with significant links with the region reassessed their politico-military presence there. But while they shared a common interest in regional stability, their foreign and defence policies appeared to be, more often than not, out of sync with each other. At least initially, responsibility for this lay with Britain, the old imperial power. As Wilson's Labour government in London decided to retrench from east of Suez in the late 1960s, it made Europe the focus of its foreign and defence policy, thus relegating Southeast Asia to a peripheral place in British calculations. By contrast, as London's interest in Southeast Asia waned, Australian and New Zealand interest in the region increased. Unlike London, Canberra and Wellington could ill

afford to overlook their immediate region. Without the British 'security blanket', greater Australasian involvement in regional affairs seemed to be called for if the strategic vacuum left by the departing British were not to be filled by forces inimical to Western interests in the region. As we mentioned above, both Australia and New Zealand chose to continue to station their forces in Malaysia and Singapore even after December 1971 – Wilson's final date for the completion of Britain's withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore. The Heath government's decision in 1970 to maintain a small British military presence in the region in partial reversal of Labour's previous policy ensured, at least for a little while, that British, Australian and New Zealand defence policies were in sync once again.

But as this article has shown, British and Australasian newly-found policy 'synchronisation' responded to different considerations. In London, Heath's 'renewed' interest in Southeast Asia had more to do with Britain's redefinition of its international role and domestic factors than with Cold War concerns. While professing that Southeast Asia was still important to British national interests, policymakers in London regarded this region as an area of marginal significance. Their primary concern was to end Britain's rather uneasy relationship with the European Communities (EC) and to make EC membership the centrepiece of British foreign policy. For domestic reasons, Heath's Conservative government was careful enough not to cast Britain's post-imperial future in purely European terms. Despite Britain's declining interest in Southeast Asia, the negotiation of the FDPA was instrumental in achieving this as it purported to show that by making a contribution to the stability of Southeast Asia, Britain had still a role to

play outside Europe. On the contrary, Australia and New Zealand signed up to the FPDA in the belief that this new defence framework, backed by a British military contribution, would not only enhance the West's military presence in Southeast Asia, but would also make a further contribution to the security of a region that was becoming increasingly important to them.

Western policy convergence did not last long. With the election of Labour governments in both Australia and New Zealand at the end of 1972, British and Australasian defence policies appeared once more out of sync. While conservative governments in Canberra and Wellington had attached importance to a continuing Australasian military presence in Malaysia and Singapore, their socialist successors had rather mixed feelings about it. Encouraged by the a climate of emerging *détente* to assume that Cold War tensions were now over, the two Labour government regarded 'containment' as obsolete and Australasian 'forward' deployments on the mainland of Asia as no longer necessary. But while the Australian Labor government ended up withdrawing its ground forces from Singapore, the New Zealand Labour administration soon realised that its small contribution to the FPDA could still play a role in maintaining stability in the region as well as be instrumental in strengthening New Zealand's relations with Southeast Asia. As for the British, the Heath government never espoused Australia's 'détente euphoria'. In line with its cautious reading of the Cold War, the Conservatives continued to keep British troops in the region while seeking to get the Whitlam government to reconsider its radical plans for withdrawal. In the end, British pressure notwithstanding, Australian revisionism set in train a

process that led to the dismantling of the ANZUK brigade and the weakening of the FPDA. By the mid-1970s the FPDA had lost much of its original relevance and was now destined to play only a very minor role in the defence and foreign policy calculations of its five member states.

Endnotes

Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific, 1945-95* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 78.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 90 and 204.

⁴ Damon Bristow, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements: Southeast Asia's Unknown Regional Security Organization', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1-20.

⁵ The focus of the literature to date is on the development and current functioning of the FPDA. See Carlyle A. Taylor, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Quiet Achiever', *Security Challenges*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2007, pp. 79-96 and Bristow, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements', pp. 1-20. On the diplomacy that led to the establishment of the FPDA see Chin Kin Wah, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore: The Transformation of a Security System, 1957-71* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 144-178; Andrea Benvenuti, 'Shifting Priorities: Australia's Defence Ties to Britain in the Aftermath of Empire', *History Compass* (available at www.history-compass.com), 2004.

⁶ Bristow, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements', p. 6.

⁷ The National Archives, London, (henceforth TNA), PREM 15/338, Moon to Forrester, 29.4.1971.

⁸ For an examination of AMDA see Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia 1941-1968* (London: Curzon Press, 2001), pp. 223-233.

⁹ On the British decision to withdraw from East of Suez see Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice Between Europe and the World?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Matthew Jones, 'A Decision Delayed: Britain's Withdrawal from South East Asia Reconsidered, 1961-68', *English Historical Review*, vol. 117, no. 472, pp. 569-595; John Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70, vol. 2: International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 40.

¹⁰ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p. 290.

¹¹ For Australia's participation in the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve and, more generally in the defence of Malaya during the 1950s see Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, 1948-1965* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 86-102; Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 215-216; Hiroyuki Umetsu, 'The Origins of the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve: The UK Proposal to Revitalise ANZAM and the Increased Australian Defence Commitment to Malaya', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2004, pp. 522-524.

¹² For the Australian and New Zealand involvement in *Konfrontasi* see John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation 1961-5* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); see also Moreen Dee, *Not a Matter for Negotiation: Australia's Commitment to Malaysia 1961-1966* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2005).

¹³ Heath quoted in John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London: Random House, 1993), p. 227.

¹⁴ Chin, *Defence*, p. 175.

¹⁵ David Hawkins, *The Defence of Malaysia and Singapore: From AMDA to ANZUK* (London: United Services Institute for Defence Studies), p. 42.

¹⁶ For the legal basis of this loose consultative framework see Kin Wah Chin, *The Five Power Defence Arrangements and AMDA: Some Observations on the Nature of an Evolving Partnership*, Occasional Paper no. 23 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1974), pp. 17-18.

¹⁷ Chin, *Five Power*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸ Chin, *Defence*, p. 177.

- ¹⁹ Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 215.
- ²⁰ Christopher Hill and Christopher Lord, 'The Foreign Policy of the Heath Government', in Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government, 1970-74* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 286.
- ²¹ From 1972 until his electoral demise in 1974 he would, for instance, increasingly stress the need for greater foreign policy coordination with Britain's EC partners. See Hill and Lord, 'The Heath Government', p. 289. For Heath's attempt to steer the British public along a pro-European path see for instance Paul Gliddon, 'Programmes Subjected to Interference: The Heath Government, Broadcasting and the European Community, 1970-1971', *History*, vol. 91, no. 303, 2006, pp. 401-424.
- ²² Hill and Lord, 'The Heath Government', p. 289.
- ²³ For the evolution of Heath's attitude towards the United States see Hill and Lord, 'The Heath Government', pp. 302-312. For Anglo-American relations under Wilson's Labor government see Jonathan Coleman, *A 'Special Relationship'? Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American Relations 'at the Summit', 1964-68* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Diane Kunz, "'Somewhat mixed up together": Anglo-American defence and financial policy during the 1960s', in Robert King and Robin Kilson (eds), *The Statecraft of British Imperialism* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 213-232; Glen O'Hara, 'The Limits of US Power: Transatlantic Financial Diplomacy under the Johnson and Wilson Administrations, October 1964-November 1968', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2003, pp. 257-278; John Dumbrell, 'The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government: Vietnam, the Pound and East of Suez', *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 30, 1996, pp. 212-213.
- ²⁴ For the decline of Britain's economic links with Malaysia see Nicholas White, 'The Survival, Revival and Decline of British Economic Influence in Malaysia, 1957-70', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2003, pp. 222-242.
- ²⁵ Ian Hancock, *John Gorton: I Did it My Way* (Sydney: Hodder Headline, 2002), pp. 226 and 234.
- ²⁶ The Australian strategic doctrine of 'forward defence' postulated that the defence of Australia was best achieved 'in depth', through forward deployments on the rim of the Asian continent. On Gorton's doubts about 'forward defence' see Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-75* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp. 200-201.
- ²⁷ Rick Khun, 'Laborism and Foreign Policy: The Case of the Vietnam War', in David Lee and Christopher Waters (eds), *From Evatt to Evans: The Labor Tradition in Foreign Policy* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 91; see also Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 350.
- ²⁸ Edwards, *A Nation at War*, p. 320. In 1972 the McMahon government had left 128 members of the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam to help train South Vietnamese and Cambodian forces. On 7 December Whitlam and Barnard ordered the team to return to Australia. For Whitlam recognition of the People's Republic of China see David Goldsworthy, David Dutton, Peter Gifford and Roderic Pitty, 'Reorientation', in David Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 1: 1901 to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 336. J.D.B. Miller, 'Australian Foreign Policy: Constraints and Opportunities - I', *International Affairs*, vol. 50, no. 2, 1974, p. 235.
- ²⁹ See NAA, A7942/1, F59, Australian participation in combined military exercises and training in countries of the Southeast Asian and South West Pacific areas, 22.12.1972.
- ³⁰ Whitlam quoted in Coral Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 117.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² Whitlam quoted in Goldsworthy, Dutton, Gifford and Pitty, 'Reorientation', p. 314.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ On 25 November 1972, a week before the Australian federal election, Norman Kirk's Labor Party had won a large majority in the parliamentary elections in New Zealand on a foreign policy platform similar to that of the Whitlam's Labor Party in Australia. Like his Australian counterpart, Kirk had a strong left-wing to contend with his party. On Kirks' foreign policy see David McCraw, 'From Kirk to Muldoon: Change and Continuity in New Zealand's Foreign-Policy Priorities',

Pacific Affairs, vol. 55, no. 4, 1982-1983, pp. 640-659. On Kirk's approach to Asia see Ian McGibbon, 'The Defence Dimension', in Anthony Smith (ed.), *Southeast Asia and New Zealand: A History of Regional and Bilateral Relations* (Singapore: ISAS, 2005), pp. 224-225.

³⁵ Henry Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor: Content, Process and the National Debate* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1977), p. 243; TNA, PREM 15/1366, Defence consequences of Labor Party victories in Australia and New Zealand, January 1973; Trend to Heath, 8.1.1973.

³⁶ Mokhtar Selat, 'New Directions in Malaysia's Foreign Policy: From Tunku to Abdullah Badawi', in Ruhanas Harum (ed.), *Malaysia's Foreign Relations: Issues and Challenges* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 2006), p. 16; Alf Parsons, *Southeast Asian Days* (Brisbane: Griffith University, 1998), p. 111.

³⁷ Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 64; Narayan Ganesan, *Realism and Interdependence in Singapore's Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 42.

³⁸ the Australian logistic support, the ANZUK integrated command became pointless. As a consequence, New Zealand's ground troops went 'national' in 1974 while the British government had withdrawn all its ground forces by 1976.

³⁹ The Fraser government decided to rotate an infantry company from Australia every three months. RAN destroyers paid frequent calls to Singapore. See Hugh Smith, 'Defence Policy', in P.J. Boyce and J.R. Angel (eds), *Independence and Alliance: Australia in World Affairs 1976-80* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p.49.

⁴⁰ Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor*, p. 244.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² In 1965 New Zealand agreed to send a combat unit to Vietnam. Then, in 1967, the Holyoake government increased the New Zealand contribution to the American effort there by deploying an extra infantry company, a medical team and a SAS detachment. Under renewed American pressure, Wellington dispatched one more infantry company in 1968. See Ian McGibbon, 'The Defence Dimension', in Anthony Smith (ed.), *Southeast Asia and New Zealand*, p. 23.

⁴³ The Holyoake government had withdrawn most of the New Zealand troops deployed in South Vietnam between 1970-71. See McGibbon, 'The Defence Dimension', p. 24.

⁴⁴ David McCraw, 'Normal Kirk, the Labour Party and New Zealand's Recognition of the People's Republic of China', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 4, no.1, 2002, p. 55.

⁴⁵ Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor*, p. 243; McCraw, 'From Kirk to Muldoon', p. 646.

⁴⁶ New Zealand's 1974 Defence Report cited in Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor*, p. 243.

⁴⁷ McCraw, 'From Kirk to Muldoon', p. 646.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 657. The battalion would be eventually withdrawn in 1989.