

**From Howard to Abbott:  
Explaining change in Australia's foreign policy  
engagement with Africa**

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## Statement of originality

This thesis represents my original work unless otherwise acknowledged.

Research from this thesis has also been published in the following journal articles:

Nikola Pijovic, “The Commonwealth: Australia’s Traditional ‘Window’ into Africa”, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 103:4, August 2014, 383-398.

David Mickler and Nikola Pijovic, “Engaging an Elephant in the Room? Locating Africa in Australian Foreign Policy”, *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 61:1, March 2015, 100-120.

Nikola Pijovic, “The Liberal National Coalition, Australian Labor Party and Africa: two decades of partisanship in Australia’s foreign policy”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70:5, October 2016, 541-562.

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I have often found myself reflecting on the nature of the PhD experience. In this three or four year project many things can go wrong and having someone to talk to about them

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\*\*\*

I dedicate this thesis to the under-appreciated gems of Australia's foreign policy-making bureaucracy; to the women and men of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and what once used to be AusAID, who have through the past two decades and beyond helped Australia maintain expertise and interest in African issues. Their hard work and dedication inspired me throughout the research.

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## Abstract

This thesis examines Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states and issues between 1996 and 2015. However, it effectively tells the story of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa in the quarter century since the end of the Cold War. Examining the rule of three ideologically different Australian governments, the thesis argues that Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between the mid-1990s and mid-2010s experienced notable changes.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why these changes came about and what drove them. It argues that in order to understand changes in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa, it is necessary to appreciate both structural and agential factors which have jointly impacted this foreign policy engagement. On the structural side the thesis recognizes issues such as the end of the Cold War and particularly apartheid in South Africa, as well as Africa's post-millennial economic growth and the global commodities boom as highly salient factors underpinning a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa. On the agential side, the thesis recognizes the primacy of the interconnectedness of political party foreign policy outlooks and Australia's key decision-makers (prime and foreign ministers) in affecting that changing foreign policy engagement.

In utilizing the case study of foreign policy towards Africa, the thesis highlights a significant degree of partisanship in Australian foreign policy. This has broader implications for the understanding of Australian foreign policy in general. The thesis makes a distinction between what are perceived as core or fundamental, versus marginal or peripheral areas of Australia's overall foreign policy agenda. It argues that while on core or fundamental issues and relationships, Australian foreign policy may exhibit a great degree of bipartisanship, on what are perceived as marginal or peripheral issues and relationships, the country's' foreign policy can be quite partisan.

This thesis offers a four-fold contribution: firstly, to the understanding of Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states and issues; secondly, to the understanding of Australia's foreign policy more broadly; thirdly, to the field of Foreign Policy Analysis and its emphasis on the importance of agents in foreign policy-making; and fourthly, to Political Science, recognizing the importance of both structure and agency in driving political change.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Acronyms .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Maps .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: Introduction .....</b>	<b>14</b>
I.I Setting the scene: the value of studying Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa .....	14
I.II State of the literature .....	16
I.III Research Question .....	20
I. IV Structure, Agency, and Australia’s changing foreign policy engagement with Africa .....	21
I. V Contributions of the study.....	24
I.VI The study and its three ‘-ologies’ .....	25
I. VII Scope and Delimitations .....	40
I. VIII Thesis Structure .....	43
<b>CHAPTER II: Understanding Foreign Policy (change) – A Framework for Analysis .....</b>	<b>49</b>
II.I What is foreign policy? .....	49
II.II What is foreign policy ‘engagement’?.....	51
II.III What determines foreign policy? .....	56
II.IV A general model of foreign policy change .....	62
II.V Interpreting change in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa 1996-2015.....	67
II.VI Conclusion.....	81
<b>CHAPTER III: Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa until 1996 .....</b>	<b>83</b>
III.I Australia and Africa before the end of World War II.....	83
III.II Australia and Africa after the end of World War II .....	85
III.II.I The Menzies Era 1949-1972: Setting the foundations for Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa.....	85
III.II.II Gough Whitlam 1972-1975: a changing approach.....	95

III.II.III Malcolm Fraser 1975-1983: sustaining Whitlam's changes .....	102
III.II.IV Bob Hawke and Paul Keating 1983-1996: the end of an era .....	108
III.III Conclusion.....	115
<b>CHAPTER IV: Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa 1996-2015 .....</b>	<b>120</b>
IV.I The Howard Government (March 1996 – November 2007): 'episodic' and 'reactive' engagement with Africa.....	121
IV.I.I Diplomatic, Security, and Economic cooperation.....	122
IV.I.II Development Cooperation .....	130
IV.II The Rudd/Gillard Government (November 2007 – September 2013): towards a more strategic and 'proactive' engagement with Africa .....	132
IV.II.I Diplomatic, Security, and Economic cooperation .....	133
IV.II.II Development cooperation.....	147
IV.III The Abbott Government (September 2013 – September 2015): lack of interest and a return to 'episodic' engagement with Africa .....	151
IV.III.I Diplomatic, Security, and Economic cooperation .....	151
IV.III.II Development Cooperation .....	154
IV.IV Conclusion .....	156
<b>CHAPTER V: Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa 1996-2015.....</b>	<b>159</b>
V.I Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa: diplomatic and security cooperation .....	161
V.I.I Diplomatic cooperation .....	161
V.I.II The Howard Government.....	165
V.I.III The Rudd/Gillard Government .....	171
V.I.IV The Abbott Government.....	182
V.I.II Security cooperation.....	186
V.II Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa: economic and development cooperation .....	192
V.II.I Economic Cooperation.....	192
V.II.II The Howard Government .....	193
V.II.III The Rudd/Gillard Government.....	200
V.II.IV The Abbott Government.....	211
V.II.II Development Cooperation .....	219



V.III Conclusion.....	233
<b>CHAPTER VI: Contextual factors underpinning change in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa .....</b>	<b>236</b>
VI.I The Decline of Africa.....	237
VI.II The Rise of Africa.....	244
VI.III Conclusion .....	263
<b>CHAPTER VII: Agential factors affecting change in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa .....</b>	<b>266</b>
VII.I Foreign policy outlooks and Australia’s place in the world .....	267
VII.I.I The Coalition foreign policy outlook.....	269
VII.I.II The ALP foreign policy outlook.....	271
VII.I.III Degrees of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy .....	274
VII.II Key decision-makers and Australia’s place in the world .....	279
VII.II.I The interplay between foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers	281
VII.II.I.I The Coalition documents and speeches .....	281
VII.II.I.II The ALP documents and speeches .....	301
VII.II.II Key decision-makers and personal idiosyncratic factors relevant to foreign policy engagement with Africa .....	308
VII.III Conclusion.....	322
<b>CHAPTER VIII: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>335</b>

## Acronyms

AACES	Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme
AAMIG	Australia Africa Mining Industry Group
ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADU	Africa Down Under
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANC	African National Congress
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASX	Australian Stock Exchange
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
Austrade	Australian Trade Commission
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOD	Department of Defence
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis

FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
JMC	Joint Ministerial Commission
JSCFADT	Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
LDC	Least Developed Country
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCAAP	Special Commonwealth Assistance Plan for Africa
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WA	Western Australia
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

# Maps

Map 1. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 1940-1950.



Source: All of the following maps of Africa are taken from the UN Geospatial Information Section (formerly UN Cartographic Section), and have been further customized by the author.

Note: Australia's High Commission in South Africa was opened in 1946, and the Embassy in Egypt in 1950.

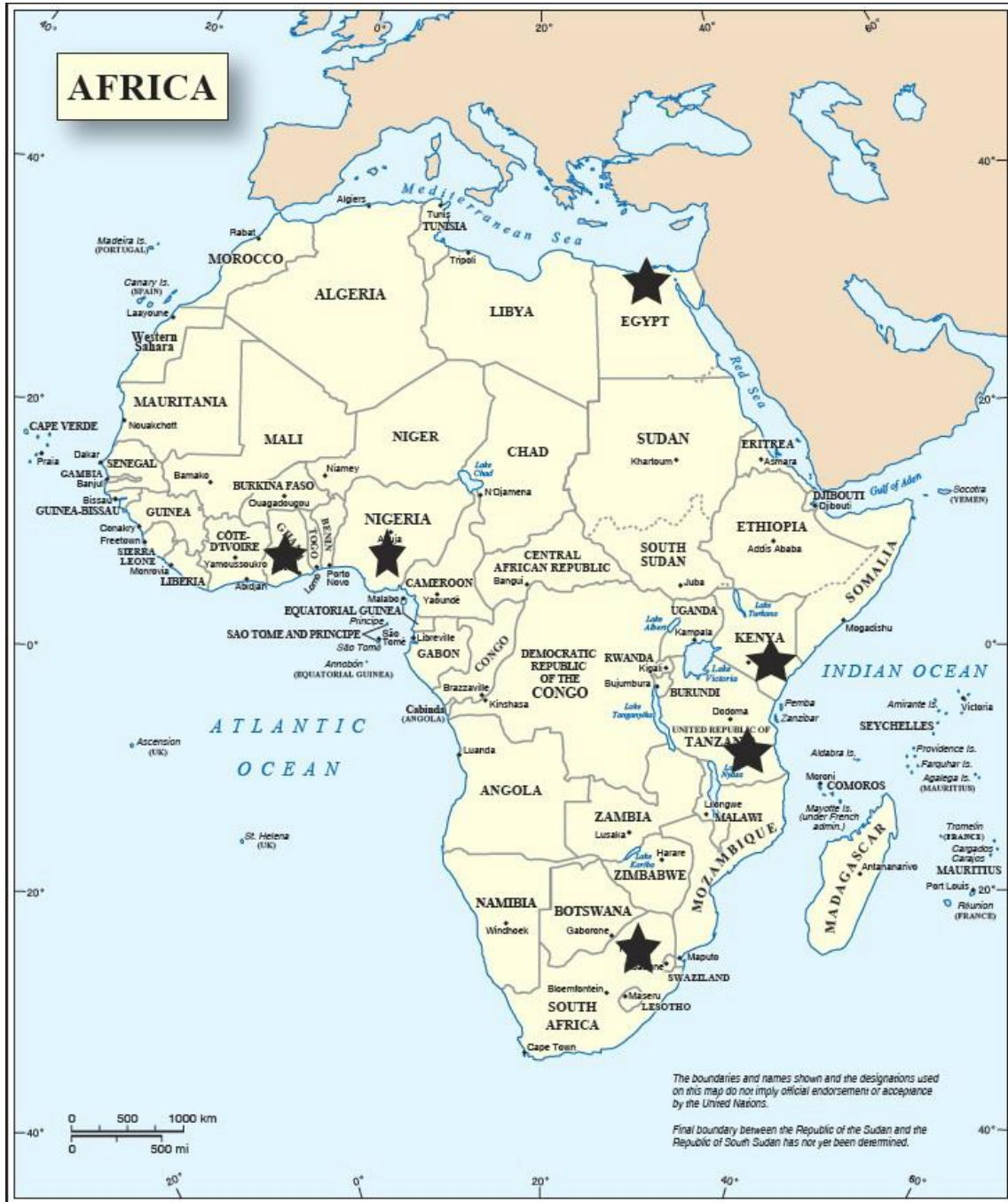
**Map 2. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 1950-1960.**



Note: Australia's High Commission in Ghana was opened in 1958.



**Map 3. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 1960-1970.**



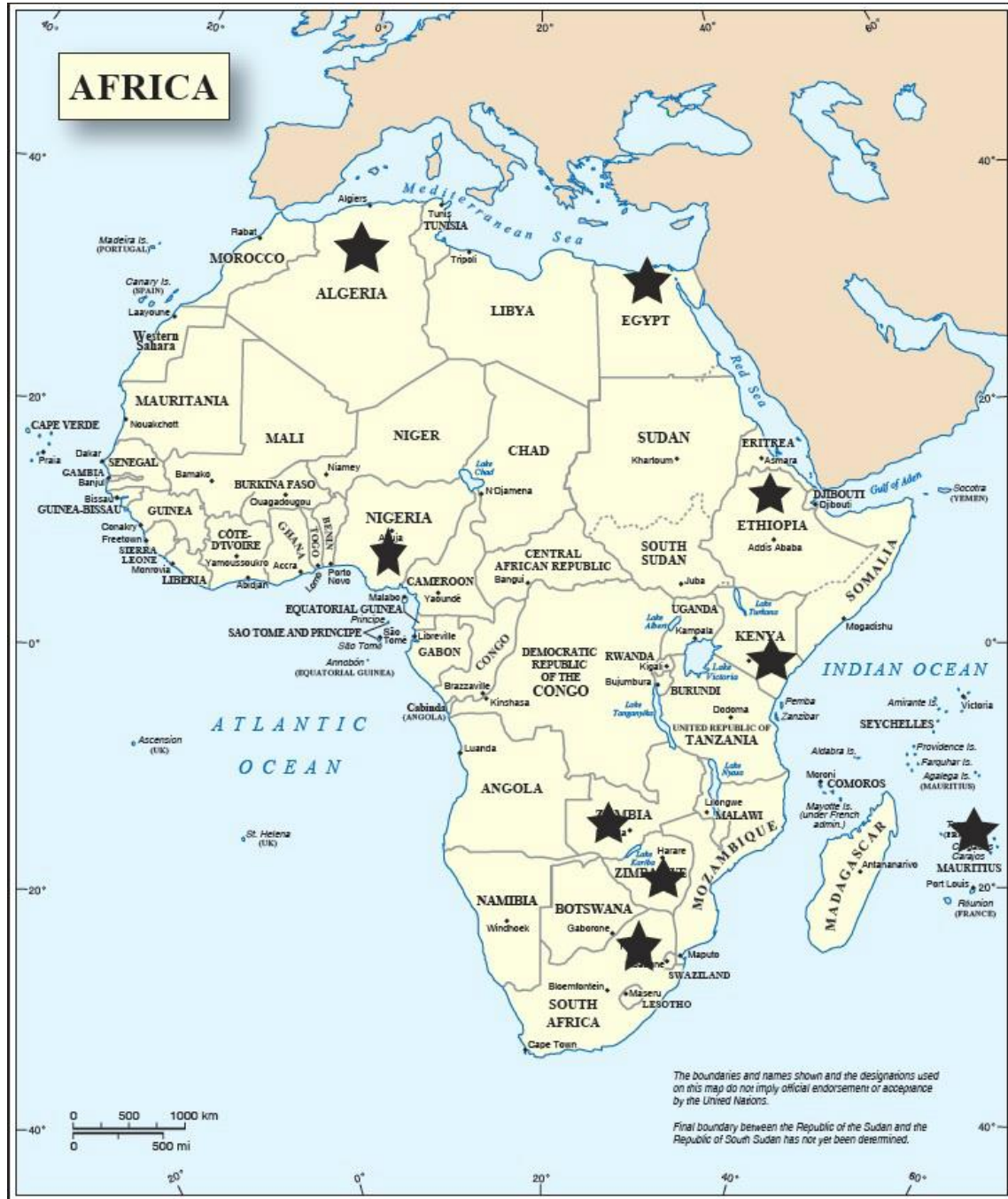
Note: Australia's High Commission in Nigeria was opened in 1960; the High Commission in Tanzania was opened in 1962; and the High Commission in Kenya was opened in 1965.

**Map 4. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 1970-1980.**



Note: Australia's Embassy in Algeria was opened in 1976; and the High Commissions in Zambia and Zimbabwe were opened in 1980.

**Map 5. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 1980-1990.**



Note: Australia's High Commission in Mauritius was opened in 1984; the High Commission in Ghana was closed in 1985; the High Commission in Tanzania was closed in 1987; and the Australian Embassy in Ethiopia was opened in 1984 and closed in 1987.

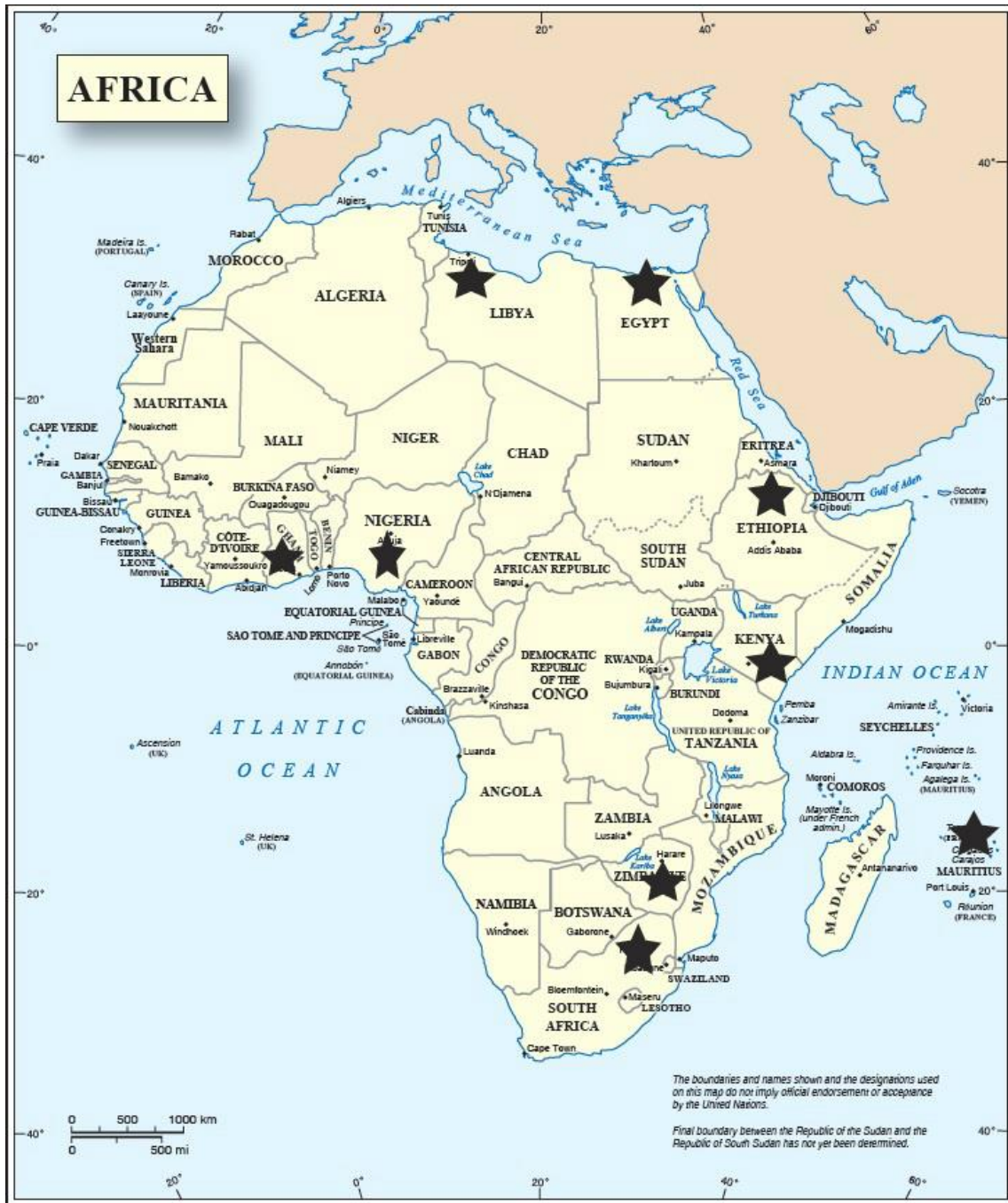


**Map 6. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 1990-2000.**



Note: Australia's Embassy in Algeria and High Commission in Zambia were both closed in 1991.

**Map 7. Australia's diplomatic missions in Africa, 2000-2016.**



Note: Australia's High Commission in Ghana was re-opened in 2004, and the Embassy in Ethiopia was re-opened in 2010. Australia's Consulate-General in Libya was opened in 2005, and closed in 2013.

## CHAPTER I: Introduction

This is a study of a largely neglected field of Australian foreign policy, and one that has traditionally been perceived as fairly marginal to Australia's overall security, economic prosperity, and international reputation. It is a study I undertook because of my interest in Australia's engagement with African states, rather than a desire to develop hypotheses and generalizations about Australian foreign policy more broadly. Nevertheless, as the study progressed I began to appreciate its broader impact on my understanding of how foreign policy is made and why it changes. Hence, proceeding in a traditionally inductive fashion, this study has brought me to some inferences and generalizations applicable to foreign policy-making in general, and Australia's foreign policy in particular.

### **I.I Setting the scene: the value of studying Australia's foreign policy towards Africa<sup>1</sup>**

By the time he was done with his late January 2012 visit to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Kevin Rudd had marked a unique and largely unnoticed record in Australia's foreign affairs: he had become Australia's foreign minister with the most visits to Africa in history. Australia's longest serving foreign minister, Alexander Downer, had visited Africa four times in his almost 12 years in office, while Rudd had, in the space of only one year, visited the African continent on six separate occasions.

Between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s Australia did not appear to pay much attention to African issues. There were episodes of high-profile activity, such as John Howard's role in the suspension of Zimbabwe from the councils of the Commonwealth in 2002 and 2003, but overall the government appeared content with a reactive approach to African issues. Between 2007 and 2013 the Labor government initiated what it termed a 'new engagement' with Africa, seeking to 'broaden' and 'deepen' ties with the continent. Kevin Rudd made his flurry of visits to Africa, even the Governor General Quentin Bryce toured nine African countries, and Australia's development cooperation with the African continent grew significantly, roughly quadrupling as compared to their highest levels under the Howard government, reaching almost 10% of the country's total Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget in 2011-12. Then, when it seemed that a closer focus on, and engagement with Africa would become a more durable

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<sup>1</sup> Terminology and what is meant by 'Africa' are covered in the 'Delimitations' section (p. 39).

feature of the country's foreign policy agenda, in 2013 Tony Abbott's Coalition government came to power, and Australia's engagement with Africa appeared to fizzle out. A planned opening of a new embassy in Senegal was abandoned, proposed membership of the African Development Bank (AfDB) was rejected, and the country's aid to Africa severely cut. Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa had come full circle: from Howard's neglectful, episodic and reactive engagement, across Labor's proactive 'new engagement', to Abbott's return to a neglectful episodic and reactive engagement. Or did it?

This sketch of Australia's engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015 is overly simplistic. It is reminiscent of headline grabbing analyses producing catchy sound bites: 'Labor-good', 'Coalition-bad'. But there are some anomalies here. Australia's engagement with African issues never enjoyed the same foreign policy prominence after the dismantling of apartheid in the early 1990s and even the Keating Labor government appeared to display little diplomatic interest in it. The Howard government did in its long tenure attempt to enhance engagement with Africa, as evidenced by its opening of a new High Commission in Ghana in 2004, and Consulate General in Libya in 2005. For all its rhetoric, even the Labor government during its two terms in office opened only one new Australian diplomatic post in Africa (an embassy in Ethiopia), while adding two new Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) offices to existing High Commissions in Kenya and Ghana. Even if appearing uninterested in engagement with Africa, both Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and his Foreign Minister Julie Bishop had in their first year in power each travelled to Africa once, something no other Australian prime and foreign ministers had done before.

The complexities of this apparently simple foreign policy engagement make the study of Australia's engagement with Africa very interesting. On the one hand, this is a study attempting to go beyond superficial explanations in accounting for the foreign policy behavior of three ideologically different Australian governments, and seeking to explain how their engagement with Africa unfolded. On the other, it is a study highlighting a significant degree of change in that foreign policy engagement which problematizes the seemingly accepted bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy.

While this study temporally begins in 1996, it effectively tells the story of Australia's engagement with Africa in the post-Cold War era. The image of Africa in this era has shifted dramatically since the early 1990s, and Australia's engagement with the



continent to an extent followed those shifts. But it would be simplistic to say that this foreign policy relationship has been conditioned by only global trends or what one might refer to as contextual or structural factors.<sup>2</sup> It was the active policy-making of Australian governments, and the agency of the country's key decision-makers that were just as much, if not more, responsible for the changes in this engagement. Hence, similarly to problematizing the idea of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy, the other broader contribution of the study is its recognition of the dynamic interrelatedness between structure and agency in the making of foreign policy.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain how and why Australia's foreign policy towards Africa has changed in the two decades since 1996. It examines the time period of three Australian governments: the Howard Coalition government (1996-2007), the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments (2007-2013), and the Abbott Coalition government (2013-2015). It is at the same time a study of the wider contextual and structural factors underpinning the direction of foreign policy, as well as a study of political rhetoric, foreign policy outlooks, and the role key decision-makers play in affecting change in foreign policy. This study should be of interest not only to scholars interested in Australia's engagement with Africa, but also those interested in Australian foreign policy more broadly, and foreign policy-making generally.

## **I.II State of the literature**

The study of Australian foreign policy has generally concentrated on accounts of the country's relations with the region (Asia, South Pacific), or its relationship with key strategic allies and trade partners (United States (US), China, United Kingdom (UK), Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand). The consequences of this study-focus have been profound for students interested in African studies, and Australia's relationship with the African continent in particular. African studies in Australia are a much understudied field, and the study of Australia's foreign policy towards African states follows this trend.

While it may be easy to criticize the paucity of Australian scholarship on the country's foreign policy towards Africa it must be acknowledged that this is to an extent influenced by a lack of empirical study material. Africa's marginal status in Australia's overall foreign policy context has influenced its marginal status in Australia's scholarly writing. Academics cannot be criticized for not paying much attention to an area of

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<sup>2</sup> The terms 'context' and 'structure' are used synonymously throughout the thesis.

foreign policy which has traditionally received little attention from policy-makers, and it is hardly surprising that one would find it quite difficult to sustain an academic career in Australia by focusing only on the relations between Australia and African states.

Nevertheless, even with these limitations in mind, the dearth of scholarly studies of the topic is concerning. In the period between 1980 and 2012 Australia's most prominent journals of international affairs, political science, and history published just over a dozen scholarly articles dealing with Australian foreign policy towards Africa (Mickler and Lyons 2013, 7-8). While there have been a few book chapters over the past 20 years dealing with aspects of Australian-African relations, most of Australia's recent (or recently revised) prominent foreign policy textbooks pay marginal attention to Africa. For example, Smith, Cox, and Burchill's *Australia in the World: An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy* offers a topical and geographical examination of Australia's place in the world, with only a few passing references to Africa (Smith, Cox, and Burchill 1996). Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant in *Australia's Foreign Relations In the World of the 1990s* have a chapter devoted to the Middle East and Africa, but their discussion of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa spans less than 15 pages (Evans and Grant 1995, 285-297). Derek McDougall's *Australian Foreign Relations: Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* gives chapter-length discussions of Australia's main bilateral and regional relations, with no similar discussion of Africa (McDougall 2009), while Carl Ungerer's *Australian Foreign Policy in the Age of Terror* focuses predominantly on the region and relations with key strategic and trade partners (US and China), with no interest in Africa (Ungerer 2008). Stewart Firth's *Australia in International Politics: An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy* discusses Africa only a few times and with reference to humanitarian issues and aid, or Australia's role in supporting the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa (Firth 2011). More recently, Baldino, Carr, and Langlois' *Australian Foreign Policy. Controversies and Debates* examines important controversial foreign policy questions, devoting several chapters to engagement with the region and key bilateral relationships, with no examination of Australia's engagement with Africa or African issues (Baldino, Carr, and Langlois 2014). While this is by no means an exhaustive review of all noteworthy

foreign policy textbooks, it is broadly representative of the peripheral status accorded to Africa in discussions of Australia's foreign policy and place in the world.<sup>3</sup>

The country's pre-eminent flagship publication on *Australia in World Affairs*, published by the Australian Institute of International Affairs since the 1950s, includes only two chapters specifically devoted to Australian foreign policy towards Africa, one published in 1983, the other in 2011 (Higgott 1983; Lyons 2011). This is not to suggest that the series did not engage with African issues, rather that most discussions of Africa were usually within the context of a broader discussion of Australia's relations with the Commonwealth, United Nations (UN), or Indian Ocean, with only a few chapters more directly engaged with particular African affairs, such as the Suez crisis of the late 1950s. These works have proved indispensable in surveying Australia's engagement with African issues until the 1970s, and to them should be added Goldsworthy's (2002) *Losing the Blanket* which also covers more substantively Australia's early engagement with Africa during the 1950s and 60s.

The overall dearth of scholarly attention to Australia's engagement with Africa has also partially resulted in a lack of rigorous understanding of the factors influencing this foreign policy engagement. Aside from a few academic articles, written mostly in the 1970s and 80s, there has been very little work aimed at examining the motivations and factors influencing Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. To try and understand why and how Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states has evolved over time, one has to turn to unpublished PhD theses.

A search of Australian PhD theses will display only two monographs that examine Australia's foreign policy towards Africa, both of which start their examination with 1972, and end with 1983 and 1996 respectively (Jansen 1998; Osei-Amo 2004).<sup>4</sup> Both studies have attempted to at least partially explain the factors influencing Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa, and have proven indispensable in researching this topic.

In his 1998 study Robert Jansen argued that Australia's foreign policy towards Africa during the tenures of Prime Ministers Whitlam and Fraser was effectively driven by the

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<sup>3</sup> One could mention Gyngell and Wesley 2007 as a popular Australian foreign policy textbook that does not mention Africa. However, that monograph is devoted almost exclusively to the process of foreign policy-making and not describing Australia's relations with other regions and states.

<sup>4</sup> There has also been David Cox's 1994 PhD thesis on Australia's foreign policy towards South Africa during the Bob Hawke government. However, this thesis did not examine foreign policy engagement with the continent in general, but focused only on Australia's relations with South Africa.

agency of the individual prime ministers. Jansen's argument was that both Whitlam and Fraser were key figures driving this foreign policy engagement, and that both prime ministers were central "to the setting of Australia's international agenda and the implementation of Australia's foreign policy initiatives" (Jansen 1998, 312). Hence, in explaining the factors influencing Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1972 and 1985, Jansen emphasized the agency of key decision-makers, and their ability to exert a large degree of influence in driving this foreign policy engagement.

On the other hand, in accounting for the nature of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa during this time period, Yaw Osei-Amo was critical of Jansen's thesis, arguing that an explanation of the drivers of foreign policy engagement which focused solely on the agency of key decision-makers was inadequate. At the same time Osei-Amo did not actually fully reject Jansen's argument, but rather expanded on it, arguing that the shift in Australian foreign policy towards Africa which followed Whitlam's election to government, and its continuation under Fraser's Coalition government cannot only be attributed to the personal inclinations of Australian prime ministers. He argued that Australia's shift in foreign policy towards Africa and its continuing engagement with the continent, particularly on the struggle against apartheid and racism in Southern Africa, during the tenures of Prime Ministers Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke, and Keating "should be seen in the wider context of Australian political leaders' attempts to re-conceptualize Australia as a significant middle power" (Osei-Amo 2004, 276). In fact, the reason why his study ended with 1996 even though it was compiled in the early 2000s was because the Howard government that was elected to power in 1996 explicitly moved away from conceptualizing Australia as a middle power (Osei-Amo 2004, 9).

In Osei-Amo's study the factors driving Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa did not shift from agential to structural, but from narrower to broader agential factors. Although Osei-Amo argued for a broader policy-making context, his emphasis was on political party foreign policy outlooks (the concept of middle powers), as shaped by individual leaders, rather than an emphasis solely on the agency and personal preferences of those leaders. In both Jansen and Osei-Amo's studies structural factors featured in the discussion but were not perceived as highly salient drivers of foreign policy engagement with Africa, certainly not as salient as the agency of key policy-makers and their conceptualization of Australia's place in the world.



It was only in 2013 that the first ever scholarly monograph on Australia's foreign policy towards Africa was published: David Mickler and Tanya Lyons' *New Engagement: Contemporary Australian Foreign Policy Towards Africa*. This edited monograph overwhelmingly focused on the period of the Labor government's revival of foreign policy engagement with Africa (roughly 2007-2012), and while it proved indispensable for the present study, it also highlighted the gap in the literature examining the Howard government's engagement with Africa.

In their introduction, Mickler and Lyons argued that Australia's commercial and political interests were central to debates about the motivations behind Labor's foreign policy engagement with Africa. On the commercial front the government was keen to support substantial Australian interests, involvements, and investments on the African continent in particularly the resources sector, while on the political front the country was eager to gain support from African countries for its upcoming 2012 United Nations Security Council (UNSC) membership bid (Mickler and Lyons 2013, 4). The emphasis in Mickler and Lyons' monograph was somewhat evenly on both structure and agency, and this thesis seizes the opportunity to build on those insights in developing a robust and systematic analysis of both structural and agential factors that have influenced engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015.<sup>5</sup>

### **I.III Research Question**

The central research question of the thesis is:

*What has driven the changes in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015?*

In order to build on existing efforts aimed at explaining what drove Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa this research begins with 1996. One of the reasons for this is because that is where Osei-Amo's study left off. Another reason for beginning with 1996 is because it offers a neat two decade timeframe covering periods of both major Australian political party governments, and highlights significant variations in their approach to engagement with Africa. While the research question is explicitly interested in the time period beginning with 1996, in order to situate the Howard government's foreign policy engagement with Africa in the broader context, it will be necessary to examine and understand engagement with Africa prior to 1996. Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> Although Mickler and Lyons do not necessarily explicitly address the issue of UNSC membership as either a structural or agential factor driving foreign policy change, the overall tone of the discussion implies it is perceived as more of the former.

this research primarily addresses changes in foreign policy towards Africa between 1996 and 2015, at the same time recognizing wider trends that transcend such neat temporal distinctions, particularly stemming from the end of the Cold War.

Each chapter of this thesis attempts to answer particular sub-questions, all of which together help answer the central research question. Since the structure of the thesis is outlined in more detail below, it will suffice here to outline the sub-questions and chapters that address them:

- What is foreign policy (engagement), how can it change, and what factors have influenced its changing nature in the present case study? (chapter 2)
- How has Australian foreign policy towards Africa evolved historically? (chapter 3)
- What happened in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015? (chapter 4)
- How did Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa change between 1996 and 2015? (chapter 6)
- What contextual factors helped underpin change in Australian foreign policy towards Africa between 1996 and 2015? (chapter 6)
- What agential factors helped affect change in Australian foreign policy towards Africa between 1996 and 2015? (chapter 7)

## **I. IV Structure, Agency, and Australia’s changing foreign policy engagement with Africa**

The purpose of this section is to outline how the interplay between structure and agency helps explain Australia’s changing foreign policy towards Africa between 1996 and 2015 (discussed in greater detail in chapter 2). When developing any model which seeks to illustrate a real-life situation, scholars have to consider issues of parsimony and complexity. As Colin Hay has suggested, the choice or trade-off “between parsimony and complexity is central to the selection of analytical strategies in political science and international relations” (Hay 2002, 29). Researchers attempting to pose explanations of political and social ‘happenings’ make an active choice between how much detail and

complexity they will incorporate, and how that can be reconciled with the simplicity, elegance, and neatness of their explanatory models.

In inductive approaches to political science, parsimony is understood as “getting value for one’s variables”: including as few variables as possible which explain or have the potential to explain as much as possible (Hay 2002, 31-32). Social Science, “should seek to build elegant models that minimize the number of explanatory variable used”, keeping in mind that “the simplest theory that fits the facts of the problem is the one that should be selected” (Burnham et al. 2008, 5). As James Rosenau has argued with regards to the study of foreign policy in particular, while “everything can seem relevant as an independent variable” explaining foreign policy behaviour, the analyst “has to be selective and focus on those dynamics that account for most of the variance conceived to be relevant to the analysis” (Rosenau 2012, viii).

However, highly abstract models may become over-parsimonious, holding very little connection to the real world and reflecting little empirical complexity. Striking the balance between neatness and parsimony, and detail and complexity is often arbitrary and subjective but inevitable; it is up to the researcher to make up her/his mind as to how that balance will be struck. The arbitrary nature of this exercise opens the researcher up to critique and contestation, but it is through the process of discussion, debate, and refinement of ideas and propositions that science in many ways advances.

The model used in this thesis to explain why Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa experienced change between 1996 and 2015 is developed with an eye on the ‘eternal’ debates on structure (what Colin Hay calls ‘context’) and agency in social science. Discussions about context and agency revolve around the relationship between political actors and the extent to which their conduct can shape and is shaped by the political context and environment they find themselves in. *Contextual factors* emphasize the context within which political events, outcomes, and effects occur and are beyond the immediate control of the actors directly involved, while *agential factors* emphasize the conduct of those actors, implying that their behaviour and choices are responsible for the effects and outcomes we are interested in explaining (Hay 2002, 95-96).

The history of debates on structure and agency will not be repeated here, and it will suffice to say that there are explanations which give primacy to each aspect, but one of the advances of contemporary political science has been the realization that both can

and do affect each-other in a dynamic relationship.<sup>6</sup> The work of Colin Hay and others on the ‘strategic-relational’ approach to the understanding of the dynamic interplay between structure and agency has in recent years been highly prominent, and informs the model of foreign policy change developed in this thesis (Hay 1995, 201-202; Hay 2002, 115-135).

The strategic-relational approach transcends the dualism between structure and agency by outlining the dialectic interplay between the two, which are seen as completely interwoven. Agents find themselves in certain circumstances and internalize perceptions of their context, consciously adopting strategies which are informed by their assessment of that strategic context which is in itself selective, i.e. favouring certain choices over others. While the outcome of a situation is not structurally pre-determined, due to the bias of the context, it can over the longer-term exhibit certain regularity (i.e. appear pre-determined). On the whole, whatever choices the actors make exercising their agency will serve to support or challenge that strategic context. Agency can and does play a role in changing structures, albeit it has to be strategically exercised recognizing the selective and biased nature of the context to begin with (Hay 2002, 129-131). Simply put, *both* structure and agency are important in influencing political decision-making. While suggesting this may seem as nothing new, as Hay contends, “good political analysis is often a case of stating and re-stating that which is obvious but all too rarely reflected upon” (Hay 2002, 129). Hay’s work on critical political analysis in general has been adapted to the study of foreign policy (Williams 2005, 5-7), and in support of it, Walter Carlsnaes has argued (2012, 124) that “it is generally recognized that in real life actors and structures do not exist” in a zero-sum relationship, but that “human agents and social structures are in a fundamental sense dynamically interrelated entities”.

As outlined in the literature review above, Robert Jansen and Yaw Osei-Amo’s studies of Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa from 1972 to 1996 explained that engagement through an emphasis on the agency of key decision-makers. Although contextual factors did feature a discussion in these studies, the primacy in explaining the drivers of that engagement was accorded to agential factors. On the other hand, Mickler and Lyons’ study of foreign policy engagement with Africa between roughly 2007 and 2012, implicitly swung the pendulum slightly towards contextual factors in that the contributors to their monograph broadly recognized both contextual and agential factors driving this engagement. My study expands on that contribution by explicitly,

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<sup>6</sup> For an introduction to such debates see Hay 2002, Chapter 3; Giddens 1979, Chapter 2.

systematically, and in great detail tracing both the highly salient contextual and agential factors driving Australia's engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015.

## **I. V Contributions of the study**

This thesis offers several contributions to the study of Australian foreign policy, field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and Political Science more broadly.

The most important empirical contribution of this study is to the understanding of Australian foreign policy engagement with Africa in the post-Cold War era. It represents an original contribution to a much understudied field and one which particularly fills the gap in academic studies of the Howard government's foreign policy towards Africa.

An important empirical and analytical contribution of this study is in problematizing the issue of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy (Pijovic 2016). This study represents an original contribution in that it highlights the partisan differences driving a high degree of change in this foreign policy engagement, as well as offering insights into the types of foreign policy spaces which may receive more or less bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy. While it may be nothing new to broadly suggest that some areas of Australian foreign policy are more or less prone to exhibit bipartisan continuity, this thesis offers a narrower and more specific conceptualization of such areas and issues. Such conceptualizations are not immutable and can change, and this thesis at least offers a theoretically and analytically informed contribution to other research into bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy.

This study also offers an empirical contribution to the field of FPA, in that it widens its scope by not focusing on a US and/or crisis-based case study, which has been one of the downsides of the field (Hudson 2012, 32). The study offers an analytical contribution to FPA in focusing on the importance key decision-makers have in conceptualizing their country's role and place in the world, and affecting change in foreign policy. It suggests that in areas of foreign policy which are perceived as marginal or peripheral to a country's overall foreign policy interests and agenda, and which are not characterized by significant security and economic interdependencies or subject to effective lobbying by politically powerful pressure groups, change in foreign policy behaviour is more agency prone. By implication, this then identifies areas of foreign policy which due to significant interdependencies and more accentuated structural obtrusions such as the

incursion of powerful political interests in policy-making may be less agency prone and slower or more difficult to change.

The last significant contribution of the study is to the broader field of Political Science. This thesis recognizes the most relevant *contextual and agential* factors which have *both* proven highly salient in driving change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. It acknowledges the 'strategic-relational' interplay between these factors and how they are dynamically inter-connected. This helps bring further empirical weight to the need to move beyond the 'structure vs. agency' debate and understand that both factors affect change in society, and as Karl Marx (1852) once stated, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already...".

## **I.VI The study and its three '–ologies'**

This section acknowledges the ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings of this study. I hope that such an explicit expose will contribute to the analytic robustness of the present study in at least allowing the reader to examine the consistency of my thinking and validity of conclusions drawn. In short, "ontology relates to the nature of the social and political world, epistemology to what we can know about it and methodology to how we might go about acquiring that knowledge" (Hay 2002, 63). Our ontology shapes our epistemology, which influences the methodology we adopt, and this relationship between theory, methodology, and data helps produce our findings (Hay 2002, 62-64; Burnham et al. 2008, 331; Brinkmann 2013, 92).

### Ontological and epistemological underpinnings

In his *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, Colin Hay highlights several questions highly prominent in the discipline's ontological debates, two of which are particularly important for this study: the fundamental question of appearances and reality in the social and political world and whether things can be 'objectively' known; and the issue of structure and agency in shaping that social and political world (Hay 2002, 62).<sup>7</sup>

On the first and fundamental question of 'objectivity', my thesis subscribes to a significant scepticism towards positivism. The positivist outlook is shaped by the desire for social sciences to emulate natural sciences in developing hypotheses (usually in a

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of these key ontological issues also see Wight 2006, 14-22.

deductive fashion) that are testable and falsifiable, treating the social and political world as a laboratory where experiments can be made, and 'objective' knowledge can be found. This line of thinking was largely influenced by the perception that social and political science needed to become more 'scientific' by adopting epistemological and methodological approaches found in natural sciences, and could in turn offer predictions about the social and political world.<sup>8</sup>

However, there are some problems with this outlook. The "subject matter" of social and political science is qualitatively very different from that of the natural sciences, in that the rules of the game (structures) that govern the natural sciences are universal and independent of the 'subjects' they govern, while the rules of the game that govern the social sciences are not universal, can change over time, and do not exist independently of the 'subjects' they govern (Hay 2002, 85-86).<sup>9</sup> The laws of physics cannot change because plants, humans, and animals might want them to, while the rules of social and political life, "in so far as they can be identified...are themselves subject to constant reproduction, renewal, and transformation", being "culturally, spatially, and historically specific"( Hay 2002, 86).

This fundamental difference has important implications for the positivist desire for 'objectivity' and predictability in social science. In his famous reflections on the philosophy of history, E.H. Carr (2008, 12, 73) noted that "the belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy", arguing that "the social sciences... since they involve man as both subject and object, both investigator and thing investigated, are incompatible with any theory of knowledge which pronounces a rigid divorce between subject and object". As Carr made clear, it is the ability of humans to reflect and act in different ways in similar circumstances that negates the ability of social sciences to offer concrete predictions about human behaviour (2008, 69-71). This view is echoed by Hay who argues that human "agency" is what not only renders the social sciences qualitatively different from natural sciences, but also problematizes (or negates) positivism's adherence to generating testable and predictive hypotheses: "in the search for a predictive science of politics we are bound to be disappointed because there is no

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<sup>8</sup> This is a brief sketch; for a more developed and in depth discussion of positivism see Hay 2002, 59-88; Sanders 1995, 58-74; Burnham et al. 2008, 30-37; Dessler 2002, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Wight 2006, 53 has questioned this division, raising the issue of whether even natural structures exist independently of the activities they govern.



predictive science of the political to be had” (Hay 2002, 50; see also Burnham et al. 2008, 34; Wight 2006, 52).

The ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research accept these ‘limitations’ of social science, and have instead followed the analytic tradition that can broadly be described as interpretivism (APSA 2003). Interpretivism is hardly a new approach in social science. It focuses on “meanings and beliefs”, would broadly include approaches to the study of political science such as “decentred theory, ethnography, poststructuralism, practical philosophy, and social constructivism”, and overlaps with “other approaches such as the constructivist and ideational forms of institutionalism” (Bevir 2003, 19). Interpretivism is arguably best conceptualized as standing in opposition to ontological and epistemological positivism in that it rejects the notion of there being a ‘reality’ than can ‘objectively’ be known, thereby also rejecting the emulation of natural sciences and search for predictability, and tends to utilize methodological tools of a more qualitative nature (although it has been utilized in both qualitative and quantitative studies) (Gerring 2003, 2-4; Laitin 2003; Dessler 2003, 22-23). Interpretivism is more concerned with particularizing than generalizing, and its central pillar is the commitment to incorporate intersubjectivity into the way meanings are conceptualized:

... meanings should not be conceptualized solely in *subjective* terms as something that exists in the minds of individuals considered in isolation from one another, but also need to be understood in *intersubjective* terms as something bound up with concrete contexts of shared social practices and interacting individuals (original emphasis, Adcock 2003, 16).

In contrast to positivist approaches, interpretivism starts from the assumption “that bias cannot be reduced or avoided”, but this should not imply that in studying intersubjective meanings and people’s perceptions anything goes, and “interpretive” means “impressionistic” (Yanow 2003, 10, 12).<sup>10</sup> What distinguishes positivism and interpretivism is the extent to which within the latter approach’s “research formulations, choice of observational sites and persons interviewed, analytic frame, and writing all constitute the subject of study, rather than objectively reflecting it”(Burnham et al. 2008, 1; Gaskarth 2013, 11; Yanow 2003, 11). Another feature distinguishing positivism and interpretivism is the primacy or value each places on generalizing versus particularizing. Positivist social science in its modern form is “the search for causal

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<sup>10</sup> What distinguishes “the academic study of politics from political journalism” is critical reflection on method and analysis (Burnham et al 2008, 1).



generalizations”, while modern interpretivist approaches place an emphasis on reconstructing “detailed historical episodes” which can lead to generalizable knowledge but of a different kind (Dessler 2003, 22). Interpretivism is not so much concerned with whether to generalize, but to what extent, and interpretivists are “unabashed generalisers” (Gerring 2003, 4).

Given its emphasis on studying intersubjective meaning, interpretivism is often perceived as primarily interested in gaining understanding rather than offering causal explanations. This is a false dichotomy, which would “only make sense if interpretivists... employ the information they gather with little or no interest in explanation”, but in the interpretivist tradition understanding is a “prerequisite of explanation rather than an alternative to it” (Adcock 2003, 17). A detailed understanding of a particular case will allow the researcher to develop causal explanations; as Clifford Geertz (2003, 27) has suggested, “if you get interpretation right”, the “causes will fall out”.

So how are all of these general interpretivist ontological and epistemological propositions relevant to this thesis? This research can be understood as interpretivist in that it seeks to explore the beliefs and interpretations of policymakers who practice and develop foreign policy in Australia. It is interested in how the ideas and perceptions of relevant policy-makers have influenced changes in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa in the time period under study. Interpretivism, much like the field of FPA to which this study lends itself to, is “self-consciously actor-centred”, although in the present study this is tempered with a recognition and outline of the dynamic interplay between structure and agency in explaining human behaviour in general, and policy-making in particular (Hay 2002, 54). Hence, this study is concerned with “the central controversy of contemporary political analysis”; that of the “dynamic relationship between conduct and context, agents and structure” (Hay 2002, 54).

#### Methodology, Method, and Data Collection

Good social science is problem driven and not methodology driven in the sense that it employs those methods that for a given problematic, best help answer the research questions at hand (Flyvbjerg 2006, 242).

Given that my thesis presents an in-depth comparative case study of Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015, Flyvbjerg’s argument has been central to the development of its methodology. This section will outline how the above

discussed ontological and epistemological underpinnings have influenced my methodology, the limitation of my approach, and how I have gone about organizing the research.

As noted at the outset of this introduction, what *did not* attract me to this topic was a desire to pose and test hypotheses about Australian foreign policy in particular, or a desire to develop new theoretical approaches for the understanding of foreign policy in general. What *did* attract me to the topic was a simple question of why the Labor government between 2007 and 2013 decided on a ‘new engagement’ with Africa, and whether that engagement was indeed anything ‘new’. As the research progressed I realised that the more important and broader issue was explaining why this foreign policy engagement had experienced such changes over the past two decades. As a result, my research proceeded in traditional inductive fashion in that it was largely data-driven, and the aim has essentially been to “fit a theoretical model to a set of empirical data” which helps answer the central research question (Hay 2002, 31).<sup>11</sup>

Interpretivist and inductive approaches to the study of political science tend to be more qualitative in nature, and my study follows this trend. This is a comparative case study which utilizes the methods of archival research and elite interviewing to trace policy-making processes and conduct content analysis in order to help answer the research question. It explores previously understudied or unstudied issues and offers detailed descriptions complemented with interpretation to produce a causal explanation.

#### *Merits of the Case Study approach*

The most important reason why I have adopted a case study approach is because it is exceptionally well suited for answering the research question, and my focus has been on a very specific and narrow area of Australian foreign policy. Hence my proposition is that only a detailed case study of Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa between 1996 and 2015 will allow me to explain how this foreign policy has experienced change, and what drove it. Since this case study examines foreign policy towards Africa under three ideologically different Australian governments, and draws on more widely applied theories and models of foreign policy-making, it can also be considered a comparative case study.<sup>12</sup> Such comparative in-depth case studies have traditionally

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<sup>11</sup> On induction in general see Brinkmann 201, 53, 62; Burnham et al. 2008, 51.

<sup>12</sup> On why ‘single country’ case studies can still be considered comparative see Burnham et al. 2008, 70, 88, 95.

fallen within interpretivist approaches to social science, and as Geertz (2003, 27) noted, “the enterprise of social science is inherently comparative. What you learn about one case you then try and look at [in] another to illuminate both the differences and similarities”. This has important implications for drawing inferences and contingent generalizations from the present study.

In the positivist political science tradition there has been an aversion to take the explanatory properties of case study research seriously. As Robert Yin (2009, 6) argues

Many social scientists still deeply believe that case studies are only appropriate for the exploratory phase of an investigation, that surveys and histories are appropriate for the descriptive phase, and that experiments are the only way of doing explanatory or causal inquiries. This hierarchical view reinforces the idea that case studies are only a preliminary research method and cannot be used to describe or test propositions.

However, scholars have noted the importance and value of applying case studies in explaining specific social phenomena and occurrences (Flyvbjerg 2006; Tansey 2007; Thacher 2006; Yin 2009). Bent Flyvbjerg (2006, 221, 222) has argued that “the case study produces the type of context dependent knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts”, further noting that common to all experts “is that they operate on the basis of intimate knowledge of several thousand concrete cases in their areas of expertise”. Case studies are important to develop context in which theoretical consideration can be applied. As Flyvbjerg (2006, 224) concludes “Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals”.

In analysing what questions are best addressed by differing research methodologies, Robert Yin (2009, 8-9) has argued that the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions are more explanatory in nature and more likely to lead to the use of case studies, histories, and experiments as the preferred research methods because such questions “deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence.” On the other hand, in discussing the utility of conducting case studies David Thacher (2006, 1631) argues that “case studies can help to identify causal relationships, and case studies can help to understand the worldview of the people they study”. In summary, this paragraph best explains why I have adopted a case study approach; it will allow me to identify how and why Australian foreign policy towards Africa has changed

between 1996 and 2015, and how the key decision-makers involved in designing this foreign policy shaped its development and direction.

The strengths and limitation of case study research are representative of the overall strengths and limitations of qualitative research in general. Often voiced criticisms are that case studies lack rigour because researchers do not follow systematic procedures, allow equivocal evidence or biased views to influence their findings, and/or tend to omit the findings that do not fit well with the preferred conclusion (Yin 2009, 14). Another central criticism is that such research does not allow for generalisations (is not representative enough and/or is impressionistic or even idiosyncratic) (Devine 1995, 141; Yin 2009, 14-16).

As mentioned above, interpretivist research can be generalized, the question is only to what extent. Two main points can be made here. Firstly, as Robert Yin and Bent Flyvbjerg both argue, generalizations have been made on the basis of only one experiment (famously Galileo's rejection of Aristotle's views on the laws of gravity), and like case studies, experiments are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes (Yin 2009, 15; Flyvbjerg 2006, 225). We generalize "on a theoretical understanding of the subject matter", which means that even one case can suggest that certain theoretical propositions can be expected to be applicable in other cases under similar circumstances (Brinkmann 2013, 144).

Secondly, that case studies do not allow for 'grand' generalisations is not really a problem as long as the researcher is aware of this. As Steve Smith (1987, 347) has argued, case studies remain the dominant way of writing within FPA, which is not a problem "as long as it is clear that case studies *per se* cannot lead to the construction of theories of foreign policy". I embrace this caution because I do not seek to offer 'grand' theoretical generalisations about how all foreign policy is made. I am interested in one specific case of Australian foreign policy towards one specific region of the world. However, since humans could be described as to a large extent pattern seeking individuals, contingent generalizations have arisen from this study. My study has aimed to contribute to FPA's affinity for 'middle range' theory building which has the advantage of "being grounded in manageable slices of empirical reality", thereby avoiding "both excessive abstraction and narrow empiricism", and concentrating on "specific aspects of a generalized foreign policy system, such as decision-making

structures, belief systems, or implementation” (Stuart 2008, 577; Smith 1987; 347; Smith, Hadfield, and Dunne 2012, 4-5).

### *Archival Research and Elite Interviews*

This thesis relies on many of the same techniques of research as the writing of history, but adds two important sources of evidence usually not available to the historian: direct observation of the events studied, and interviews with the persons playing key roles in those events (Yin 2009, 11). In addition to my own observations of the events studied, I employ two more methods of research: the review and analysis of archival, primary, and secondary sources; and in-depth interviews with key individuals involved in the events studied. The combination of these two methods improves the robustness of the analysis and confidence that can be placed on its conclusions, especially given the potential weaknesses of each method adopted individually.

What I mean by archival research and the distinction between primary and secondary sources is the following.<sup>13</sup> Given that this is a study of official government policy-making, primary sources refer to original sources, that is the documents and information that dates to the time of the events studied and was often of an official nature. They are usually, but not exclusively, documents in the public domain, and would include the online archives of speeches and media releases by Australia’s foreign and prime ministers, departmental and parliamentary reports and documents, recordings and transcripts of interviews with public officials, correspondence, official governmental websites, and newspapers. Throughout this research I have only dealt with two documents that were not publicly available (but provided by interviewees), and have based the analysis of the thesis on information available in the public domain. Secondary sources refer mainly to books, academic articles and monographs, unpublished theses, political diaries, memoirs and biographies.

Archival research inherently implies a certain degree of content analysis. Content analysis is “a technique for analysing the content of communications” and refers to “a family of analytic approaches ranging from impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive” to systematic and strict textual analyses (Burnham et al. 2008, 259; Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1277). “Whenever somebody reads, or listens to, the content of a body of communication and then summarizes and interprets what is there, then content analysis can be said to have taken place” (Burnham et al. 2008, 259). The two main approaches

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<sup>13</sup> On document and archival research in general see Burnham et al. 2008, Chapter 7.

to content analysis are qualitative and quantitative, with the former involving the importance of the content being determined by the researcher's judgement, and the latter employing tools such as computer software to analyse coded text.<sup>14</sup> My research has employed qualitative content analysis, specifically in the examination of Australian foreign policy speeches and documents.

Unfortunately, there are weaknesses involved in relying solely on archival research materials. Such materials can sometimes offer a misleading account by presenting only the official version of events, which can conceal the informal processes and considerations that precede decision making. As Tansey (2007, 767) argues, written documents "may also imply consensus and agreement with a decision, when in reality disagreements may have been widespread and that other, undocumented, decisions may have been considered extensively", and "in cases where there is an abundance of documentation, the wealth of primary data can become a liability, as the difficulty of sorting through the evidence and prioritizing the most important documents increases". Furthermore, there are problems with utilizing biographies and memoirs in that memories fade, and individuals (particularly politicians) can have a tendency to exaggerate or minimize their roles in policy-making, as well as offer unreliable and biased accounts of events (Burnham et al. 2008, 190-194). These are only some of the reasons why archival research and the review of primary and secondary sources is "most effectively employed in combination with elite interviewing" (Burnham et al. 2008, 195).

Since the emphasis in this study, as in the wider field of FPA, is on individual decision-makers, the most effective way to study and understand the ideas and perceptions of key decision-makers and how they shape and influence the development and focus of foreign policy is to conduct in-depth interviews (Burnham et al. 2008, 231, 246; Brinkmann 2013, 47, 49). As noted already, the main aim of combining the two research methods is to overcome the weaknesses of each individual approach. For example, while there may be an overwhelming volume of source material on a certain topic, interviewees can aid in cutting through the surplus of data by distinguishing the most significant or accurate sources from those that may be marginal or present a selective account of events (Tansey 2007, 767). While the subsequent section will detail how interview data collection was undertaken, this section will reflect on the broader strengths and weaknesses of this method.

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<sup>14</sup> See Burnham et al. 2008, 259-264; Berg 2001, Chapter 11.

I use the terms ‘elite’ and ‘in-depth’ interview interchangeably because for the purpose of this study they mean the same; interviews with informants which were semi-structured in nature, and lasted generally between one to two hours. While there might be a distinction between ‘elite’ and ‘non-elite’ interviews in that the former would target high-profile decision-makers and politicians, and the latter everyone else, I do not utilize that distinction.

A major impediment and weakness in utilising elite interviews for data collection is the difficulty of accessing the world of high politics (Devine 1995, 139). Foreign policy-making in Australia in particular is not a highly transparent process and the lack of studies dealing with this subject is perhaps indicative of the difficulties in gaining access to relevant informants. This problem of access is directly related to the problem of sampling. With elite-interviews in general, and studying policy-making in particular, the researcher usually has an idea of whom to initially approach (because the sampling is data-driven), but then tends to proceed by referral (‘snowball sampling’) (Brinkmann 2013, 62; Devine 1995, 142). There are however, three major issues to be aware of: ‘gate-keepers’ might need to be negotiated; there might be an inherent bias in the sample of interviewees in that the main reason they talk to researchers is because of their interest in the topic; and one needs to be aware of the pitfalls of overreliance on only one informant no matter how informed, articulate, and intelligent they appear, and how much their insights accord to the researcher’s hunches.<sup>15</sup>

There is also the issue of sample size. Here it is important to remember that the “aim is not statistical representativeness” and quantity does not trump quality. Elite interviewing is about the quality of information sourced and how much it aids in addressing the research question. As Burnham et al. (2008, 231) argue “one of the defining characteristics of elite interviewing is that some respondents may count more than others in terms of their influence on the decision-making process”. Hence, researchers should try and “draw a sample that includes the most important political players who have participated in the political events being studied” (Tansey 2007, 765). The overall goal of elite interviewing “is not to impress the reader with *how much* you have done (e.g. huge number of interviews), but with *how well* you have conducted and analysed the interviews” (Brinkmann 2013, 90). It is hoped one can interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what is needed, and once a ‘saturation point’ is

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<sup>15</sup> Burnham et al. 2008, 292, 294, 235, particularly 246 for overreliance on one informant; Berry 2002, 680.



reached, and relatively little or no new information and data is provided it is appropriate to cease interviewing.<sup>16</sup>

Other problems include issues directly related to the act of interviewing, questions asked, and information received. Interviewers need to be aware that notwithstanding their utmost efforts, the interview is a “co-construction” process where information is produced because of (and might be influenced and biased by) their presence (Devine 1995, 143-144; Brinkmann 2013, 36-42). Since, as Brinkmann (2013, 19) argues, there “are no such things as non-leading questions” researchers need to be aware how the questions they ask could bias the information they receive. This could lead to ‘confirmation bias’ in that researchers (unconsciously) guide the interviewees to tell them what they want to hear.

The issue of credibility also arises, especially when interviewees exaggerate or minimize certain aspects of their roles in the event studied because sometimes

... interviewees misrepresent their own positions in ways that raise questions over the reliability of their statements. In particular, politicians may attempt to slant their accounts and inflate or minimize their own role in an event or process depending on whether there is political capital to be gained or lost (Tansey 2007, 767; also Berry 2002, 681).

It is highly questionable whether high-level political figures who have spent life-long careers in the public eye would reveal information about their decision-making which did not promote their legacy or present it favourably. As one commentator has argued, politicians

... for electoral reasons as well as to satisfy the personal vanity of their leadership, usually desire to emphasise the originality of their contribution to public policy. Rivalries—and, indeed, hatred—between individuals on opposite sides of politics (and sometimes within the same party) also are expressed in a search for differentiation (Ravenhill 1998, 323).

Due to all of these reasons the most robust way of dealing with bias, credibility, and reliability issues is to use multiple sources and triangulate information, with the key guideline being “not to base any piece of work entirely on elite interviewing” (Burnham et al. 2008, 232; Berry 2002, 680; Tansey 2007, 768).

Notwithstanding all of the issues raised above, and for the purpose of the present study, elite interviews offer the researcher many advantages over other empirical research

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<sup>16</sup> Burnham et al. 2008, 234. Some put the numbers of interviews between 20 to 30, with Brinkmann 2013, 58 arguing that 15 interviews should represent the rule of thumb.



methods. Tansey (2007, 766) argues that “interviewing, and especially elite interviewing, is highly relevant for process tracing approaches to case study research”, and that particularly in political science, “process tracing frequently involves the analysis of political developments at the highest level of government, and elite actors will often be critical sources of information about the political processes of interest”.<sup>17</sup> Process tracing itself refers to an examination of a multitude of sources for the purposes of identifying causal processes and intervening variables which link an independent variable and the outcome of the dependent variable.<sup>18</sup>

Elite interviews can be used to great effect when coupled with other research methods, particularly to corroborate what has been established from other sources; establish and understand what people think and how they perceive; make limited and contingent inferences about a larger population; and help reconstruct a set of events (Tansey 2007, 766). However, as some have argued, and with direct relevance for the present study, one of “the strongest advantages of elite interviews is that researchers can interview first-hand participants of the processes they are investigating and obtain accounts from direct witnesses to the events in question”. As Tansey (2007, 767) concludes, when interviewees “have been significant players, when their memories are strong, and when they are willing to disclose their knowledge of events in an impartial manner, elite interviews will arguably be the most important instrument in the process tracer's data collection toolkit”.

In summary, several observations about the nature of the present study should be made. The value, reliability, and validity of this research and its conclusions cannot be judged against a positivist approach to the study of social sciences. The whole purpose of this study has never been to produce testable hypotheses that can be falsifiable, and it accepts the limitations inherent in interpretivist approaches. This research has employed the methodology and methods best suited for examining the topic at hand and answering the research question. While aware of the limitations of drawing causal inferences from one case study based on archival research and elite interviews, this research will offer robust and systematic analysis which does conclude in causal explanation. The main point to remember about causality in social sciences is that regardless of what ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings one adopts, the “impossibility of controlling the research environment” coupled with the impossibility

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<sup>17</sup> For similar arguments see also Devine 1995, 138.

<sup>18</sup> Tansey 2007, 766; see also in general Collier 2011 and Mahoney 2010.

“to observe the difference a cause makes”, make it impossible to know “for sure that a purported cause really is the cause of an effect” (Burnham et al. 2008, 71, 178).

### *Data Collection*

In his work on qualitative research Svend Brinkmann (2013, 89, 98-100) outlines several issues that should be covered when writing a methods chapter, the minimum of which include the contested theoretical underpinnings of qualitative methodologies; the often contingent nature of qualitative data; the likely non-random character of the cases studied; and the actual process of data collection. Most of these have already been expanded on in the previous section, and the purpose of this section is to explicitly elaborate on the last point, while implicitly reflecting on the rest. As the discussion has so far made clear, the crucial point in conducting qualitative research and attempting to mitigate against the many issues outlined above is to maintain “reflexive objectivity”; “being reflexive about one’s contribution as a researcher to the production of knowledge” (Brinkmann 2013, 108).

My study began with archival research of primary and secondary literature for the purposes of understanding the topic as well as developing a preliminary list of potential interviewees. The empirical, but particularly theoretical research resulted in a list of possible independent variables which in general help influence foreign policy and its continuity and change. After several explorative interviews I was able to re-shape the list of interviewees so as to include those with potentially the most helpful information, and closest to the policies and events studied. As I conducted interviews, I also maintained archival research which helped a great deal in crystallizing the content of questions asked and information required, helping prune the list of independent variables influencing foreign policy to only those with a high salience in influencing change in Australia’s engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015.<sup>19</sup> After reaching a ‘saturation point’ in that little new or previously unheard information was being produced I ceased interviewing. This was the data collection process which was conducted prior to, and concurrently with data analysis and writing. The final and

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that while many factors were recognized as broadly ‘relevant’ and salient, only a handful were recognized as ‘highly salient’ in driving policy change. For example, (in accordance with literature on foreign policy in general) it was expected that the role of domestic pressure groups (such as African diaspora groups) could be an important factor in driving engagement with African issues. However, interviewees involved in policy-making from both the political and public service side argued that any such advocacy (as minimal as it was) would have entered the broader political/policy equation, but that such groups in Australia did not have much political clout which would have helped drive foreign policy engagement with Africa in the time period under review. Therefore, while this factor was broadly relevant and salient, it was not highly salient in driving or influencing foreign policy-making.

arguably most important point to make regarding the reliability of the data collected from interviews is that most of that information was (and still is) publicly available, although not in the same detailed form, and I have largely relied on this data to trace the processes of decision-making, and confirm or refute hypotheses and ideas formed during research. This should ensure the replicability of my findings.

The sampling of interviewees was data-driven. Through my research, and particularly after the exploratory phase, I knew who I would have to interview to find out specific information that could help answer the research question. I conducted 22 formal interviews (12 in person and 10 over the phone), most of which lasted around 60 minutes, with only a few lasting 90 or 120 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted on a non-attributive basis and I have only attributed information to specific interviewees (ex-politicians) who were interviewed 'on the record'. Consent for participation in the research was obtained prior to the interviews, either through signed consent forms, or oral consent. I recorded or took notes of the interviews depending on the preferences of the interviewees, and transcribed all of the interviews myself, always within a few days after the interview.<sup>20</sup>

The interviewees included three former Australian foreign ministers, one former Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, four senior Australian non-governmental organization (NGO) officials with past and current operations in Africa, two senior officials from the Australian private sector with past and current company interests and operations in Africa, one senior official from the Western Australia (WA) Department of Minerals and Petroleum, and 11 current or retired Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) officials occupying various senior positions.<sup>21</sup> Of the 11, six had been Australian High Commissioners and Ambassadors in Africa prior to and/or during the interviews.

In making the interview process as rigorous and systematic as possible I attempted to maintain uniformity of both questions asked and style of questioning adopted. Although not all questions were relevant to all interviewees, there was a set of generic questions about policy towards Africa and policy-making in general. The former included

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<sup>20</sup> The research received Human Ethics approval by the Australian National University, protocol: 2013/586.

<sup>21</sup> The label 'senior' is applied because such officials either had close access to the foreign minister's office and/or occupied senior management roles within DFAT and AusAID.

questions about foreign policy towards Africa and the influences on its development over the time period under study. The latter included questions about the roles context and agency play in policy-making in Australia. The analytic style of interviewing was in the phenomenological tradition in that I perceived interviews as “research instruments”, approaching interviewees as resources of data, asking short questions and usually receiving long answers, with minimal interruption, and an overall neutral and dispassionate stance (Brinkmann 2013, 17, 37-40; Burnham et al. 2008, 241). I adopted a receptive rather than an assertive stance to asking questions, empowering interviewees to exercise a large degree of control in which way they offer answers, and found this to be an especially useful approach when discussing sensitive information particularly about contemporary policy-making.<sup>22</sup> However, when issues required further clarification and there were inconsistencies and contradictions, I would ask follow-up questions.

There was a general bias in the sampling in that most of the people interviewed had worked on Australian foreign policy towards Africa and/or were interested in it. This would be a problem if my sampling required general representativeness, but as outlined in the previous section, that is not the case. Yes, my interviewees were predominantly more rather than less interested in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa and as a result they might overall be more interested in Australia leading an active, multilateralist, and internationalist foreign policy; the type of foreign policy traditionally producing more rather than less engagement with, and interest in Africa. Hence, they might be more inclined to favour a government more interested in engagement with Africa, which in the time period under review was led by the Australian Labor Party (ALP).<sup>23</sup>

These interviewees are all highly educated and well experienced individuals, very closely associated with working in and/or attempting to influence the development of Australia’s foreign policy, and able to exhibit a certain degree of self-reflection on this potential political bias. Furthermore, they represented the very small group of individuals with detailed knowledge of Australian foreign policy towards Africa in the time period under review. Hence, for an inductive and interpretivist qualitative study of this type, this bias is unavoidable. But unavoidable does not mean insurmountable, and I

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<sup>22</sup> On differences between the receptive and assertive interviewing style see Brinkmann 2013, 30-32. The assertive style of interviewing could resemble an interrogation or something similar to an active debate.

<sup>23</sup> Interviewees’ personal political preferences were never discussed.

have kept to good practices of triangulation and crosschecking to guard against the potentially problematic repercussions of this bias.

As my research sought to highlight the potential influence personal idiosyncratic factors of key decision-makers (prime and foreign ministers) may have had on Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa, a final note of caution is necessary. In attempting to reconstruct and gauge the extent to which such factors could have influenced Australia's foreign policy I have attempted to interview the individuals directly involved, or get a best second-hand account. Direct and unrestrained access to prime and foreign ministers is immensely difficult, and this situation does not necessarily improve after they leave political office. I was fortunate enough to interview previous Foreign Ministers Gareth Evans, Alexander Downer, and Stephen Smith, but notwithstanding best efforts, was unable to gain access to former Prime Ministers John Howard, Kevin Rudd, and Tony Abbott, and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.<sup>24</sup>

Hence my study of key decision-makers exhibits certain limitations. Given everything that the field of FPA has revealed about the influence relevant personal idiosyncrasies of key decision-makers can have on foreign policy decisions and direction, the inability to personally access and interview such individuals can be a serious handicap in studying the potentially relevant personal aspects influencing the direction of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa. I have attempted to mitigate this problem as best as possible, by interviewing those who had advised and worked closely with such individuals, and/or utilizing political biographies and memoirs.

## **I. VII Scope and Delimitations**

Although this thesis draws on the threads of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa from the end of World War II and beginnings of an independent Australian foreign

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<sup>24</sup> I contacted the offices of John Howard, Kevin Rudd, Julie Bishop, and Tony Abbott (after he was displaced as prime minister by Malcolm Turnbull) with requests for interviews but they were unable to participate in the research. Labor's key decision-makers from the time period under review that are not extensively studied here are Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and Foreign Minister Bob Carr. By the time both of these individuals had attained these respective offices, Labor's foreign policy towards Africa was very much set in place. As the following analysis will highlight there was very little observable divergence in this foreign policy under Julia Gillard's prime ministership, partially because of her lack of foreign policy expertise and appointment of Kevin Rudd as foreign minister, and partially because Bob Carr for the most part helped implement policies that were already 'in the pipeline'. Two major policy initiatives that Carr announced shortly after becoming Australian foreign minister in March 2012 (Australia's planned opening of a new embassy in Senegal, and intention to join the AfDB) were, according to a senior DFAT official, announced at that specific time for maximum visibility in support of the upcoming October 2012 vote for UNSC membership, but were already 'in the pipeline'; correspondence with senior DFAT official, 18 December 2015.

policy, the temporal scope of this study is from the election of the Howard government in March 1996 to the replacement of Tony Abbott as Australia's prime minister in September 2015. However, understanding change in foreign policy is only possible in a relational and contextualized fashion, and this is why the thesis pays particular attention to the period immediately after the end of the Cold War. The thesis effectively explains changes in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa from the end of the Cold War, especially as the end of apartheid in South Africa in the early 1990s was a highly salient factor driving a changing engagement with Africa well into 1990s.

The first delimitation concerns terminology. The thesis refers to Australia's foreign policy towards 'Africa', while acknowledging that Africa is not one country. This terminology is utilised only for a measure of simplicity. Unfortunately, within Australian political and public discourse the country's engagement with the African states is generically referred to as engagement with 'Africa'. This terminology of speaking about 'Africa' as opposed to specific African countries is indicative of the limited volume of diplomatic, trade, aid, people-to-people links, and cultural relations between Australia and most African countries, as well as general ignorance about African issues and countries. Simply put, Africa is still a blank space for many Australians, or better said it is so unknown that generalisations about the politics, trade, and cultures of the continent are the norm rather than the exception. While this may be difficult to believe in a time of growing globalisation and interdependence, it is precisely because of such a limited engagement between the two continents that Australians can still perceive and talk of 'Africa' as if talking about one country. In an effort to 'pluralize' the terminology the thesis will refer to 'African issues' and 'African states' interchangeably and synonymously with engagement with 'Africa'.

Another caveat related to terminology is the distinction between North and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Although this thesis has sought to examine Africa in a pan-continental sense, this was not always possible. Specifically, because of the distinctions made between North Africa (often lumped in with the Middle East) and SSA in Australian (and international) official publications, particularly pertaining to development assistance and trade, it was impossible to consistently apply the pan-continental approach. Wherever possible the thesis refers specifically to data provided for SSA as well as the whole of Africa.



In discussing Australian development assistance in this thesis, the emphasis is on bilateral aid. Bilateral aid to African countries is more easily measured than multilateral aid. Australia would have contributed aid to multilateral funds such as those operated by UN agencies, and some of that aid would have been delivered to African states. However, measuring multilateral aid to Africa is beyond the scope of this thesis, mostly because multilateral aid is not as visible a tool of foreign policy engagement with Africa as bilateral aid (difficult for national governments to claim ownership over), and the way it is utilized is largely beyond the control of the Australian government.

The second delimitation concerns the broad field of study. This is a study of Australian 'foreign policy', not 'foreign relations' between Australia and African states. The thesis does at times refer to 'foreign relations' or 'Australian-African relations', and 'foreign policy' interchangeably, but there is an important distinction. 'Foreign relations' or 'Australian-African relations' imply a two way relationship between Australia and African countries. To specifically study 'Australian-African relations' would entail examining foreign policies of both Australia and particular African countries. However, this thesis presents a study of foreign policy-making from the Australian side, and not a study of international relations. While there is some overlap between the two fields of study (foreign policy and international relations), as studying Australia's foreign policy towards the African continent will inevitably include examining Australia's relations with particular African countries, the distinction has important repercussions for the focus and methodology of this thesis. As K.J. Holsti (1995, 18) noted

*The student who analyses the actions of a state toward external environment and the conditions - usually domestic - under which those actions are formulated is concerned essentially with foreign policy; the person who conceives of those actions as only one aspect of a pattern of actions by one state and reactions or responses by others is looking at international politics, or the processes of interaction between two or more states (emphasis added).*

The final delimitation concerns the (non)normative character of the study. The present research interprets and examines the changing nature of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. However, it does not seek to offer normative evaluations of those changes. It is not interested in binary labels of 'good' or 'bad' changes in foreign policy, but utilizes terms such as 'proactive' and 'reactive' in a descriptive manner to indicate a government's broad levels of interest in engagement.

The reasons why different Australian governments between 1996 and 2015 engaged with African issues in the way they did was because they perceived it as the best possible course of action under the circumstances they believed they were in (both of someone else's and their own making). Both Coalition and ALP governments tend to place a different emphasis on different foreign policy priorities and this is what allows them to justify what they perceive as differing approaches to foreign policy. Because foreign policy is complex, and seemingly different and unconnected policy spaces and issues can actually be substantially interrelated, what may appear as a decision which impedes or hinders the country's interests on one front, could result in a substantial promotion and advancement of interests on another.

In the end, this was not a study seeking to offer judgement on the value of different approaches to the direction and content of Australia's foreign policy, but one which sought simply to understand why that direction and content has changed, at times quite substantially, in the time period studied.

## **I. VIII Thesis Structure**

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. This introduction is followed by chapter 2 which does two things. Firstly, it establishes what foreign policy is and how it can be understood, outlining the three aspects of foreign policy engagement: diplomatic and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and development cooperation. This division is not definitive and significant overlap exists between the three aspects, but is utilized for the purpose of offering a systematic and comparative analysis of foreign policy engagement across the three governments under review. Secondly, the chapter outlines a framework for analysing change in foreign policy. The model of foreign policy change developed in this chapter guides the following analysis of change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. The central argument here is that in order to understand how and why Australia's foreign policy towards Africa changed between 1996 and 2015, it is necessary to take into account both contextual and agential factors driving that change.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer historical background to Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. Chapter 3 outlines how Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa up until 1996 unfolded. Its main objective is to tease out and highlight several important themes which contribute to an understanding of Africa's place in Australia's foreign policy. The chapter outlines how the perception of Africa as marginal to Australia's

overall foreign policy interests and agenda developed over this time period, and how because of this, and the broader context of the Cold War, Australia's contacts with African issues took place largely through multilateral settings such as the Commonwealth and the UN. Throughout this period and particularly between the 1970s and 90s, Australian foreign policy towards Africa was dominated by the anti-apartheid struggle, and this had important repercussions for a changing foreign policy engagement in the post-Cold War era.

Chapter 4 charts developments in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. Its purpose is to offer empirical detail to that engagement upon which the following analysis of change in foreign policy is based. While it is not the objective of the chapter to provide an overview of every foreign policy issue that took place in this time period, the emphasis will predominantly be on high-profile and substantive foreign policy issues and initiatives. The chapter combines a chronological and thematic approach in narrating how the three Australian governments under review maintained foreign policy engagement with African states.

Chapter 4 argues that while the Howard government's engagement with Africa was not monolithic, it can overall be described as a time of 'episodic' and rather reactive engagement. Overall, the Howard government did not conceptualize Africa as a policy space with much relevance past the Commonwealth and South African connection. Up until the mid-2000s the Howard government maintained only a steady interest in economic engagement with South Africa, and its diplomatic engagement with African issues was confined to the Commonwealth forum. Between 2004 and 2007 the government did react to the growth of Australian commercial and consular interests across Africa by opening an Australian High Commission in Ghana in 2004, and an Austrade run Consulate General in Libya in 2005. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the Howard government on the whole did not seek proactive engagement with Africa or African issues.

The Labor government's engagement with Africa displayed a visibly strategic and proactive approach. It was proactive in seeking to expand and strengthen diplomatic links with African states beyond South Africa and the Commonwealth. The Labor government opened an Australian embassy in 2010 in Ethiopia (also accredited to the African Union (AU)), two new Austrade offices in Ghana and Kenya, committed itself to joining the AfDB, and committed itself to opening a first ever Australian Embassy in

French speaking West Africa (Senegal). The Labor government's approach to engagement with Africa was more strategic rather than episodic because of two key policy drivers: the increase in Australia's ODA budget, and the country's pursuit of a UNSC seat. These two drivers helped 'super charge' engagement with Africa and the government worked strategically in utilizing its expanding aid budget and growing commercial interest across the continent to engage with a host of African countries to not only broaden bilateral engagement but also successfully lobby for a UNSC seat.

Between 2013 and 2015 Prime Minister Tony Abbott exhibited no interest in African engagement, but his Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, with her WA based electorate and constituents, was at least more rhetorically inclined to support engagement with Africa. However, this was confined to economic and commercial engagement only. The Abbott government abandoned the planned opening of the Australian Embassy in Senegal, and decided against pursuing AfDB membership, all of which coupled with its response to the 2014 Ebola episode in West Africa and successive cuts to the Africa aid budget highlighted a return to a more reactive and episodic engagement with Africa.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 form the analytical part of the thesis. The purpose of chapter 5 is to track the changes in foreign policy towards Africa across all of these aspects of foreign policy engagement and offer a comparative interpretation of that change across two levels: adjustment and attitude change. Adjustment change is largely based on quantitative parameters and examines the level of effort or input into policy initiatives, while attitude change is largely based on qualitative parameters and examines the changing perception towards engagement with Africa, as well as changing methods of pursuing that engagement. Overall the chapter argues that while on the issue of security cooperation there was a significant degree of continuity in foreign policy engagement with Africa, across the aspects of diplomatic, economic, and development cooperation, this engagement exhibited substantial changes.

Chapters 6 and 7 each in turn examine the drivers of these changes in foreign policy engagement with Africa. Chapter 6 focuses on the contextual factors which have underpinned a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa since roughly the end of the Cold War. The first highly salient factor underpinning change is broadly termed the 'Decline of Africa'. There were several issues contributing to this 'decline': the end of the Cold War and specifically end of apartheid in South Africa, changes in Australian

political leadership and an increasing focus on engagement with Asia, and the wider global narrative of a troubled Africa.

The end of the Cold War in Africa in the late 1980s allowed for greater international pressure to be exerted on the South African government which in the early 1990s helped bring about the end of the racially segregated governance system of apartheid. Since the anti-apartheid struggle was so central to Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa for over two decades, this influenced a diminished intensity in that foreign policy engagement. At the same time changes in Australia's political leadership from Bob Hawke to Paul Keating also signalled a lessening interest in the Commonwealth as well as an increasing focus on regional Asian engagement. This too took some of the intensity out of engagement with Africa. More broadly, the end of the Cold War took away much of Africa's overall international strategic value generating a global deflation of interest in Africa, and further exposing some of the long-standing development issues prevalent in many African countries. This coupled with a string of highly publicized conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, and the Sudan contributed to a global narrative of a 'hopeless Africa'. It was this global as well as Australian declining interest in engagement with Africa which underpinned a changing foreign policy engagement with the continent in the first decade of the post-Cold War era.

The second highly salient factor underpinning a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa is broadly termed the 'Rise of Africa'. From roughly the turn of the millennium, the continental trend of Africa's greater political stability and macroeconomic growth, coinciding with the global resources boom emerging in the early-2000s, all contributed to a growing recognition that things in Africa were changing for the better. This recognition in turn fed the 'Rise of Africa' narrative as propagated by some of the world's most prominent media outlets, international financial organizations, banking groups and research institutions. It was this recognition of the beneficial changes and greater stability across the African continent coupled with growing Australian business interests there that helped underpin a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa from the mid-2000s onwards.

Chapter 7 analyses the agential factors that have affected change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. In examining agential (cognitive and policy-making) factors, this chapter discusses two issues: the interconnectedness of Australian political

party foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers in affecting foreign policy change; and the role individual personal idiosyncratic factors may have played in affecting foreign policy decisions.

The chapter firstly highlights how foreign policy outlooks frame politicians' thinking about Australia's place in the world, and how such thinking, as espoused in relevant foreign policy documents and speeches, in turn supports and perpetuates foreign policy outlooks. This represents a mutually reinforcing cycle: Australia's key decision-makers use their party's foreign policy outlooks to frame and justify their foreign policy direction and priorities, thereby also creating traditions of foreign policy outlooks for future generations to invoke in justifying their own foreign policy direction.

Chapter 7 argues that the Coalition and ALP's foreign policy outlooks, as adhered to and interpreted by Australian prime and foreign ministers have been highly salient drivers of partisan change in foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. The Coalition subscribes to a foreign policy outlook which conceptualizes Australia as a significant regional power, overwhelmingly interested in regional engagement and maintaining links with key strategic and economic allies, preferring bilateral management of foreign affairs, and labelling itself as highly pragmatic and realistic in the pursuit of Australian foreign policy. Coalition governments are comfortable following the dictates of great powers and in conservative fashion strive to maintain the status quo. Due to this foreign policy outlook Coalition governments led by John Howard and Tony Abbott have been less compelled to proactively seek out foreign policy engagement with African states past traditionally established links with South Africa and the Commonwealth, and find it easier to justify a lack of interest in engagement with Africa.

On the other hand, the ALP subscribes to a foreign policy outlook which conceptualizes Australia as an active middle power which while equally as interested in regional engagement, is also open-minded to actively seeking engagement with issues and countries outside the region, favouring a multilateral management of foreign affairs, and labelling itself a 'good international citizen' which sees a place for values as well as interests in foreign policy. Labor governments seek to transcend the dictates of great powers by actively fostering coalitions of like-minded states to try and influence global affairs and build a stable and rules-based international order. Due to this foreign policy outlook the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments found it easier to seek out a greater



engagement with African states (moving beyond traditionally established links), and justify that engagement both in its own right as well as in the context of a pursuit of UNSC membership and an expanding Australian aid budget.

Secondly, chapter 7 outlines the idiosyncratic and highly personal factors that affect the agency of key decision-makers. While such idiosyncratic factors are random and individual, and therefore difficult to theorize, they nevertheless are important in informing an empirically rich analysis of foreign policy decision-making, and do offer additional insights into ‘what else’ drives foreign policy (change). In this context the chapter examines idiosyncratic factors relevant to Prime Ministers Howard and Rudd, as well as Foreign Ministers Downer, Smith, and Bishop and how they could have affected foreign policy engagement with Africa.

The overall argument presented in this chapter is that although contextual factors underpin a changing foreign policy engagement, it is the active decision-making and agency of specific policy-makers that fundamentally affects those changes by determining their shape and course.

Chapter 8 summarises and concludes the thesis.

## **CHAPTER II: Understanding Foreign Policy (change)**

### **– A Framework for Analysis**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline an interpretive framework which will be utilized in the following analysis of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa. The two overarching fundamental questions this chapter seeks to answer is how do we conceptualize foreign policy, and how do we analyse change in foreign policy. The chapter begins by offering a general definition of foreign policy, and proceeds to discuss what is meant by foreign policy 'engagement'. The next section examines what determines or drives foreign policy, while the final section offers a general model of analysing foreign policy change, outlining how such a model can be applied to the present study.

#### **II.I What is foreign policy?**

Of all the policy spaces a government will engage with, the space of foreign policy (or foreign affairs) is arguably the most difficult to define. One could say the same about any policy space, and yet with foreign policy there is so much overlap in policy spaces and agendas that it is difficult to give a definition most foreign policy practitioners and scholars would agree on. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why many works on foreign affairs and international relations do not even attempt a definition of foreign policy.

It is best to start with two examples which highlight the difficulties of developing a definition of foreign policy that would be acceptable to most foreign policy practitioners and scholars. George Modelski's 1962 *A Theory of Foreign Policy* remains one of the few and rare monographs solely devoted to a theoretical study of foreign policy. In it, the author defines foreign policy as "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment" (Modelski 1962, 6). In a similar vein, and around the same time, Fred Sondermann (1961, 15) defined foreign policy "in a way which is similar to the definitions usually attached to international politics" as the study of "activities of individuals and groups within states, and involving the governmental machinery of states, which are designed to have an impact on the policies of other states or on individuals and groups within them".

Taken in the context of the time of writing, Modelski and Sondermann's predominant focus on 'states' is understandable. The 1950s and 60s were in many ways the golden

age of ‘state-centric’ explanations and analyses of foreign policy and international relations. However, Modelski’s, and to a lesser extent Sondermann’s, state-centrism is problematic as it does not allow for foreign policy to be directed at other players in the international community. To be fair, the two authors may have also had international organizations in mind (e.g. the UN), but their definitions of foreign policy can still be considered relatively narrow. While in the 1950s and 60s non-state actors may not have been a significant concern for the field of International Relations, today it seems almost impossible to examine and analyse foreign policy without at least some regard to international organizations and regimes, and non-state actors.

In his textbook on *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, K.J. Holsti (1995, 83) broadly states that foreign policy is made of

Ideas or actions designed by policy makers to solve a problem or promote some change in the policies, attitudes, or actions of another state or states, in non-state actors (e.g., terrorist groups), in the international economy, or in the physical environment of the world.<sup>25</sup>

This is a reasonably well constructed definition which conveys the idea that foreign policy is generally aimed outside of the country’s borders, and deals with states and non-state actors alike. Following Holsti and other scholars this thesis proposes three main features of foreign policy. Firstly, foreign policy constitutes all intentional actions undertaken by a government directed outside the boundaries of the state. Secondly, foreign policy is made by the actions undertaken on behalf of the state by its government, bureaucrats, and other accredited government representatives. Thirdly, ‘policy’ is understood as including the whole policy-making process, from identifying issues, to formulation, evaluation, and implementation activities (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 18-19).

After having offered a definition which sets the parameters of what can be understood as foreign policy, it is also important to point out what foreign policy does not entail. It is relevant to highlight that foreign policy is not consistent over time and across issues, and its goals are not set in stone. What today constitutes a country’s foreign policy is not, in all of its aspects, the same as it may have been 50 years ago, and the focus of foreign policy can change over time. Furthermore, the goals of foreign policy often

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<sup>25</sup> Holsti’s definition puts an emphasis on promoting change, but it should be observed that foreign policy also encompasses actions that seek to maintain the status quo.

change and need not be considered compatible or even coherent in all time periods or across all issues and geographical regions.

In fact, foreign policy for the most part is not even long-term policy (although there can be much continuity in foreign policy over long periods of time), but rather short-term oriented and often merely reactive to domestic and international circumstances and events. As Holsti (1995, 84) argues, some states have little or no observable foreign policy goals, simply “muddling along” and dealing with issues as they are thrown their way. Two broad sets of problems influence this state of affairs: one is the often reactive nature of foreign policy, as international occurrences influence and obtrude the aspirations of a country’s long-term foreign policy plans; and the other is the general difficulty in conceptualising, outlining, and realising a ‘long-term’ foreign policy strategy. As Hew Strachan (2011, 1281) observed “once strategy moves beyond the near term, it struggles to define what exactly it intends to do”. This is because the often substantial uncertainty of international and domestic events prohibits policymakers from realising goals set too far in the future.

Finally, foreign policy is *not only* concerned with foreign issues, and it is *not only* aimed at foreign audiences. Although Holsti’s definition quoted above generally conveys the idea that foreign policy is aimed at issues outside the state’s borders, it is important to point out that this is not exclusive. The sources and drivers of foreign policy are both domestic and international, and its goals are often aimed at appeasing and/or influencing both a domestic and international audience (Rosenau 2012, vii). Hence, a country may declare war on another in order to appease a strategic ally, and enhance its international status and prestige, or to deflect attention from domestic issues to international ones for the sake of political expediency. As Cotton and Ravenhill (2007, 14) have noted

Foreign policies may also be pursued as much for domestic political reasons as for the expected benefits they generate in the external realm. Governments ultimately are concerned about securing re-election: to the extent that foreign policies contribute to this outcome, they may be deemed successful from a political perspective even if they fail to secure the desired outcomes in the external realm.

## **II.II What is foreign policy ‘engagement’?**

The literature on foreign policy offers extensive and detailed discussions of the determinants and drivers of foreign policy and its objectives, but is often quiet on what foreign policy engagement consists of. That is to say, foreign policy activities are

discussed and described quite often, but from a perspective of assumed knowledge about what they actually are; hence, it is not often that one finds an explicit classification of what foreign policy engagement actually consists of. The purpose of outlining the following aspects of foreign policy activity is to be able to trace and interpret foreign policy engagement in a systematic and comparative way across different time periods (chapter 5).

Foreign policy consists of problem-oriented activities undertaken by “authoritative policymakers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policymakers’ political jurisdiction” (Hermann 1990, 5). Such activities take many shapes and forms, some more, or less visible. Foreign policy consists of the full range of activities from identifying issues and problems, to the formulation, evaluation, and implementation of policy initiatives. Therefore, foreign policy consist of not only major policy-direction speeches by prominent government officials, but also diplomatic contacts and negotiations, periodic reviews of policy direction, international development cooperation, opening new High Commissions and Embassies, visits by foreign dignitaries, entering strategic alliances, and many other activities.<sup>26</sup> The host of activities that constitute foreign policy engagement can often be very difficult to comprehend, and the multitude of foreign policy activities will be better understood if categorised into three main and overlapping aspects of foreign policy.

The three main aspects of foreign policy engagement include diplomatic and security cooperation, economic cooperation, and development cooperation.<sup>27</sup> These three aspects have overlapping qualities as they do not exist in isolation, but they do exhibit important individual properties as each aspect is concerned with relatively specific issues and types of foreign policy activity. In the same way that governmental ministries stand separate for administrative purposes but find it difficult to successfully pursue effective policies without a certain degree of cooperation and communication, so can these three

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<sup>26</sup> Not all actions and activities constitute foreign policy-making: “much of the work of Australia’s overseas missions has little to do with foreign policy making” (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 110). It would be problematic to assume that all activities undertaken by state officials and their representatives constitute foreign ‘policy-making’, and a distinction should be made between what can generally be considered ‘policy-making’ related activities, and ‘other’ activities. Activities such as high-level ministerial speeches and visits, reviews of policy direction, and the opening of new embassies can be considered as ‘policy-making’ related activities, while consular support, visa issuing, tourism promotion and the like can be considered day-to-day ‘other’ activities. There may be a certain overlap between the two, such as for example holding a tourism promotion event or changing a visa regime for the purposes of improving relations between states and serving a certain policy-making initiative.

<sup>27</sup> The terms ‘cooperation’ is used generically in this thesis and should not imply only a beneficial engagement between two parties, but also encompasses competition and confrontation.

aspects of foreign policy appear independent, but interact constantly. A microcosm of this interaction can be best understood if one imagines an average modern-day embassy and the way in which its staff are functionally differentiated : the main purpose of the embassy is (generally speaking) that of foreign policy advancement and consular support, and it is staffed with individuals from a wide variety of specialisations: foreign affairs and political officers, aid coordinators and development officers, defence attaches and military liaison officers (perhaps even an intelligence officer), trade and tourism promotion officers, and consular support officers.

### Diplomatic and security cooperation

The aspect of diplomatic and security cooperation is arguably the oldest aspect of formalized foreign policy activity. From ancient times right to the present day, societies and groups of people have been concerned about their safety and security, which has often led them to explore previously little or completely unknown territories and societies, and when necessary strike deals on some form of cooperation with other groups of people.

Diplomacy is also the most visible and widely recognisable aspect of foreign policy engagement; in fact it is almost synonymous with foreign policy itself. When one is examining foreign policy engagement through the aspect of diplomacy, one is primarily concerned with issues such as the location and opening and closing of diplomatic missions, major diplomatic initiatives (such as peace or trade negotiations), domestic and overseas visits by official dignitaries (and in some cases high-profile unofficial individuals), activity within international fora (such as the G20, the UN, or the Commonwealth), major foreign policy speeches and attention given to foreign policy issues by relevant policy-makers, important developments within the foreign policy-making bureaucracy, and any other issues of particular relevance for foreign policy engagement which fall within the aspect of diplomatic activity.

Security as an aspect of foreign policy is often difficult to conceptualize because it overlaps significantly with defence policy.<sup>28</sup> However, it is important to note that a

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<sup>28</sup> In this aspect of foreign policy one could also include general intelligence and even immigration issues. Immigration issues can have a significant foreign policy property or relevance, but would generally primarily fall within the realm of domestic policy. They will be noted in this thesis only to the extent of their relevance for foreign policy issues (for example in the subsequent chapter when referring to the 'White Australia' immigration policy). Intelligence issues may have foreign policy properties but aside from situations of allied collaboration, they are only relevant as foreign policy issues when their secrecy is breached. Such issues are usually covered by extensive confidentiality legislation (hence difficult to



country's defence policy has important foreign policy properties. Activities which fall within the realm of defence policy have repercussions for foreign policy; the buying or selling of weapons systems, for example, can have particular beneficial or adverse effects on a country's relationship with other states (and non-state actors), and it is crucial to remember that defence policy in general has a domestic as well as an international aspect.

In examining the security aspect of foreign policy engagement, one would be looking for issues such as the location of a country's military personnel operating abroad, major defence initiatives and cooperation agreements (alliances), arms sales, defence policy statements, and multilateral defence force cooperation (such as troops in UN missions abroad). While this is not an exhaustive list, it should convey a reasonable picture of what issues constitute the security aspect of foreign policy.

It is also important to highlight that the importance and relevance of the security aspect of foreign policy can vary significantly depending on the region or issue a foreign policy has to deal with. For example, foreign policy towards some regions and issues is traditionally more concerned with participation in security complexes and communities, and mitigating potential security threats, even to the extent that it can become heavily 'securitized'.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, and highly relevant to the present study, other areas of foreign policy activity which are perceived as traditionally peripheral or marginal to a country's security interests, can have a much lesser emphasis on security issues, requiring the deployment of few substantial resources.

### Economic cooperation

Foreign policy is often driven by two main considerations: physical security and economic prosperity. The primacy of one consideration over the other will change depending on many factors, both international and domestic. While traditionally, in the past, foreign policy was often understood as the area of 'high-politics' concerned primarily with security, sovereignty, and survival, since the late 1980s (at least in many Western countries) things have become somewhat more openly two-dimensional. In the Australian case, "economic interests have been a critical driver" of foreign policy, and

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unearth), and on the whole not much heard about. Again, this thesis will note them to the extent of their potential relevance for foreign policy (for example in chapters 4 and 5 where the issues of ADF troops operating in Africa during the Labor government is discussed).

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of security complexes see Buzan 1991, 186-229; for security communities see in general Deutsch 1968; for 'securitization' see Buzan, Weaver, and de Wilde 1998.

since “the amalgamation of the departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1987, the linkages between trade and foreign policy have been strengthened” (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 153).

The pursuit of economic well-being is no longer seen as being secondary to, or easily distinguishable from the pursuit of security. As Mintz and DeRouen (2010, 130) have observed, “foreign policy decisions are often influenced by the state’s economic interests”, offering as an example the first Bush administration’s marketing of the Gulf War of 1991 as being “about jobs, about oil, and about economic security”. Many states today place a great emphasis on promoting foreign policies which can benefit their country’s economic well-being, and internationally this trend has developed in importance over the past three decades; one need only look at the growth in World Trade Organization membership, or the numerous negotiations of free or preferential trade agreements between states.

Economic Cooperation is an aspect of foreign policy which takes many forms, and may serve as a generic term not necessarily implying actual active and official ‘cooperation’ between states. Rather, it should be seen as the aspect of foreign policy mostly concerned with trade and commerce activities, which can include official ‘cooperation’ between governments (such as negotiating trade agreements), but also includes promoting, fostering, and helping facilitate trade and commerce relationships between businesses and industries both within the country, and abroad. Hence, this aspect of foreign policy would include issues such as international trade negotiations, governmental activities designed to support and promote, or suppress trade and commerce abroad, and all other similar activities of a predominantly trade or commercial nature undertaken by governments and their representatives.

#### Development cooperation

Development Cooperation as an aspect of foreign policy is perhaps the easiest one to understand. It basically entails a country’s preference for providing foreign aid to the rest of the world, and the distribution of that aid.<sup>30</sup> It is relatively easy to survey as it

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<sup>30</sup> The terms ‘foreign’ and ‘development’ aid are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. There is a difference between ‘foreign aid’ which is a broader term encompassing all aid given to foreign countries, and ‘development assistance’ which is a narrower term outlining a specific type of aid as defined by the OECD which needs to have a concessional component to it, and be aimed at the “promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries”. For the full definition see OECD n. d. However, for the purposes of this thesis such a distinction is not necessary as it is the aim of this research to highlight all foreign aid initiatives towards African states as they can be used to interpret and measure

mostly requires an examination of levels and destinations of aid funding. However, one would also look at aid policy documents which have a great capacity to reveal foreign policy preferences and directions.

There is so much literature on development and aid in foreign policy that the topic itself has become a separate field of study. What is perhaps most relevant for understanding the place of aid in foreign policy is that it is often perceived as a ‘tool’ of foreign policy, or merely another ‘weapon’ in the political armoury of the nation. “As military policy is too important a matter to be left ultimately to the generals, so is foreign aid too important a matter to be left in the end to the economists” (Morgenthau 1962, 309). This is to say that often development cooperation is utilized as a tool for advancing foreign policy interests. It is in this context, for example, that we can see the Australian government’s move in late 2013 to amalgamate its administratively independent international development agency (AusAID) into DFAT (Abbott 2013a).

Outlining these main aspects of foreign policy allows one to qualitatively and quantitatively measure and interpret the levels of foreign policy engagement. As the present study aims to explain the changes in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa, it is important to establish some systematic parameters of that engagement which will be comparatively examined for the different Australian governments under review between 1996 and 2015.

### **II.III What determines foreign policy?**

The making of foreign policy is a highly complex process of human activity. Such complex processes involving a multitude of individuals, organizations, ideas, concerns, and influences do not lend themselves easily to simplifications. However, for the purposes of any academic inquiry into complex societal processes, a certain dose of simplification is necessary. Perhaps the most comprehensive, yet simple way of understanding foreign policy in general is to understand that it is made up of determinants, processes, and goals. While this tripartite distinction may be useful for analytical purposes, it is rather difficult to maintain in reality. The three components are overlapping because goals are often also the determinants of foreign policy activity, and the process of foreign policy-making can also determine the goals of that policy. Since foreign policy-making in reality is not a linear process with clear separation between

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overall levels of foreign policy engagement. Whether that engagement is for only ‘development assistance’ purposes or something else is irrelevant.

determinants, processes, and goals, when one is examining the determinants and influences on foreign policy decisions and behaviour, one is also concerned with the processes and goals of foreign policy.<sup>31</sup>

### The determinants of foreign policy

The literature on the determinants of foreign policy generally distinguishes between many independent variables influencing foreign policy decisions. Although this much is rarely highlighted explicitly, all of these variables are of a contextual and agential nature. As some have argued, "...almost unavoidably, any type of explanation offered in political science will adopt a position on structure and agency, though usually only implicitly", and "...the question of structure and agency lies at the heart of the philosophy of the social and political sciences", and particularly foreign policy studies (McAnulla 2002, 272; Hay 1995, 192; Carlsnaes 1992, 245).

Some scholars distinguish between environmental and predispositional determinants of foreign policy (Wolfers 1962, 37-45), to which are related discussions of external and domestic factors (Holsti 1995, 252). Others discuss 'currents of thought' and paradigms influencing the thinking about a country and its role in the world as motivators of foreign policy activity (Wesley and Warren 2000), to which are partially related ideas about the motives and ideologies of political leaders and governments as the essential determinants of foreign policy (Macridis and Thompson, 1967, 1). None of these approaches are mutually exclusive; what they highlight is the overlapping and interconnected nature of so many factors which determine foreign policy. It is key to point out that there may very well be contextual factors which influence foreign policy regardless of the profile of individuals tasked with the development and implementation of foreign policy (the policy-makers), but that such factors will influence the content of foreign policy differently depending on the profile of those individual policy-makers. As Matt McDonald (2013, 182) has noted "Governments make choices about how to view and approach the world, and how to prioritize and frame particular issues."

In line with such arguments, it is important to acknowledge the literature in political science which posits that structure and agency, while theoretically separable, are in

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<sup>31</sup> For example, the Labor government's goal of securing UNSC membership for Australia could have motivated the direction of its foreign policy activity, therefore in effect determining its foreign policy behaviour. However, this goal of foreign policy was in itself determined and motivated by the party's foreign policy outlook which envisions Australia as an internationalist middle power, attempting to play a proactive role in shaping the international environment.

practice completely interwoven and related (Hay 1995, 200; Hay 2002, 116; Hodgson 2006, 8; Fleetwood 2008, 244). This recognition is also exhibited in the long tradition of literature highlighting the interplay between various contextual and agential determinants of foreign policy. Arnold Wolfers (1962, 37-45) stated that some of the environmental determinants of foreign policy would include the global economic system or a country's geographic situation, while predispositional determinants would include the agency, preferences, and psychology of individual leaders, which might, in turn be influenced by their understanding of environmental determinants. Related to Wolfers' ideas, Harold and Margaret Sprout (1961, 112) have argued that environmental, or 'milieu' determinants of foreign policy are only relevant if, when, and how policy-makers perceive them to be relevant: in policy-making "what matters is how the policy-maker imagines the milieu to be, not how it actually is".

Arnold Wolfers also covers both international and domestic factors which are further complemented by Holsti's discussion of foreign policy determinants. In terms of international issues Holsti (1995, 252-267) discusses the structure of the international system and the latitude of choice, purposes and actions of other actors, and global and regional problems; while in relation to domestic issues he examines socio/economic and security needs, geography, national attributes, the structure of the government, public opinion, and the policy-making bureaucracy.

Narrowing further down at domestic determinants of foreign policy, Wesley and Warren examine the different currents of thought about foreign policy, and although their examination is specifically focused on Australia, there are many parallels that could be drawn regarding other countries. Wesley and Warren (2000) examine the 'Traditionalist', 'Seclusionist' and 'Internationalist' ways of thinking about foreign policy and there is much in their discussion about the influences of conservatism, colonial history, cultural affinities, realist thinking, and neo-liberalism which could be applied to other countries even with markedly different historical experiences.

Related to this discussion of contextual and agential determinants of foreign policy is also the issue of the 'national interest'. The national interest is the foreign policy equivalent of the 'public interest'; "a notoriously difficult concept to define in concrete terms" which represents a "normative claim" by the government outlining its supposedly soberly and rationally determined objectives necessary for maintaining the collective good of the national community (Wesley 2003, 164). While national interests

can be determined by contextual factors, they are at the same time framed and conceptualised by agents in charge of formulating foreign policy. Herein lies a large part of the problem in defining the national interest; it may exhibit significant durability to the extent that it is perceived as an 'objective' pillar of foreign policy – usually related to 'material national interests' (Kaplan 1961, 165; Krasner 1978), but is not immutable, and can at times change fairly rapidly, especially in the conceptualization of different policy-makers (often as a result of fundamental domestic political restructuring).

Arguments have been made about the (lacking) utility of the concept of national interest due to its analytical fuzziness, with some concluding that because of its current (over)usage, 'the national interest' is a term largely "devoid of substantive meaning and content" (Burchill 2005, 206). Others have argued that the national interest could be seen as "another linguistic device" which conveys a particular "culturally and ideologically charged view of the world" and a country's place in it (Kratowich 1982, 2; Camilleri 2003, 449). Whatever the case may be, the 'national interest' as a variable influencing foreign policy appears to sit somewhere between contextual and agential factors.

#### Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and the 'processes' of foreign policy as its determinants

The process of making foreign policy can in some cases 'hijack' and substantially change the initial intention and purpose of a policy, so much so that it turns out to be in effect yet another determinant of foreign policy. This component of foreign policy is such a rich field for interdisciplinary study that it has become a distinct area of academic study in itself. The process of foreign policy-making is studied by political scientists, international relations scholars, historians, diplomats, psychologists, and statisticians, among others, and much of this work has given rise to the field of FPA. Although the following brief overview cannot do justice to the variety and wealth of interdisciplinary studies active in the field of FPA, it will review some of the key ideas that are of significant relevance to the present discussion of what determines foreign policy.

At its core, FPA promotes the idea that the very process of foreign policy-making can determine the content and goals of foreign policy, and as such offers a greater insight into understanding why and how states make certain foreign policy decisions. The forefathers of the FPA approach, Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin published an article on



*Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* back in 1954 setting the foundations for the utilization of the decision-making process as the key independent variable in explaining foreign policy. As Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin (1962, 65) argued “State action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state. Hence, the state is the decision-makers”.<sup>32</sup>

More recently, Valerie Hudson has reiterated this idea noting that FPA is an actor-specific approach to the study of foreign policy, which studies the individuals making foreign policy decisions and the process of how such individuals interact with each other (Hudson 2005, 2, 3). This statement in itself presents arguably the greatest strength and weakness of this approach to the study of foreign policy. Opening the ‘black box’ of the state by not treating states as unitary actors in international relations, but rather examining the human agents and bureaucratic processes which shape states’ decisions, FPA’s greatest strength lies in its ability to offer a more comprehensive, detailed, and empirically grounded account of the ‘why’ states undertake certain foreign policy actions.<sup>33</sup> This echoes Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin’s argument (1962, 33) of more than 60 years ago that “if one wishes to probe the ‘why’ questions underlying the events, conditions, and interaction patterns which rest upon state action, then decision-making analysis is certainly necessary”. On the other hand, arguably the greatest weakness of FPA is that it does not lend itself easily to abstractions and general theorising primarily because it is so specific, detailed, and empirically grounded in individual case studies (Hudson and Vore 1995, 212-213).<sup>34</sup> This situation is characteristic of the broader field of political science and its debates on the trade-offs between parsimony and complexity (Hay 2002, 30-37).

FPA’s ‘actor-specific’ approach is highly significant for understanding foreign policy because of the ability of the policy-making process to determine the content and goals of foreign policy. Arnold Wolfers (1962, 42), in discussing the predispositional determinants of foreign policy, argued that

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<sup>32</sup> However, as many authors have made clear, FPA is not only about the study of ‘decision-making’, but foreign policy more broadly; see in general contributions in Smith, Hatfield, Dunne 2012.

<sup>33</sup> On the ‘black box’ of the state see Singer 1961; Wolfers 1962, 25-36; Checkel 1998.

<sup>34</sup> This perceived limitation is also debatable. FPA can produce what is referred to as ‘middle-range’ theories, which as Stuart (2008, 577) notes “have the advantage of being grounded in manageable slices of empirical reality. They avoid both excessive abstraction and narrow empiricism”. Steve Smith (1987, 347-348) also notes the strengths of FPA’s ‘middle-range’ theory concentrating on “specific aspects of a generalised foreign policy system, such as decision-making structures, belief systems, or implementation”, while noting that its limitations stem from it being “almost exclusively US in origin” and that the “cumulative findings from these middle-range theories are not that extensive...”.

There is no doubt that the predisposition of the actors enters into the stream of antecedents to any policy decision; the question is whether predisposition is the predominant factor accounting for the particular mode of behaviour of some actors or merely one of the variables. After all, factors external to the actor can become determinants only as they affect the mind, heart, and will of the decision-maker.

One can argue, as Wolfers and the Sprouts did, that environmental determinants of foreign policy, such as geography or the international capitalist system, influence foreign policy decisions only to the extent of how individual policy-makers perceive and interpret such conditions. Such ideas correspond to a constructivist outlook which posits the socially constructed nature of social 'reality' (Wendt 1992; Hay 2002, 199-204). It is reasonable to suggest that similar environmental determinants such as the structure of the international trading system or a chain of mountains and rivers bordering a country can have a different influence on the perceptions of policy-makers, and in turn the foreign policies of different countries. This is one of the reasons why FPA abounds in academic studies of individual policy-makers and decision-making units, and the psychology of individuals and groups tasked with policy-making.

Irving Janis (1982) examined instances of 'groupthink' where decision-makers working in highly cohesive and collegial groups would reinforce their own biased thinking and mental insulation from contrary evidence or opinion in order to preserve the cohesion of the group. More recently, Margaret Hermann (2001) has explored how different decision making units involved in developing policies actually shape the nature of those policies, at times producing varied and different policies depending on the nature of the decisions making unit; while Renshon and Renshon (2008) have explored how the psychology of individual policy-makers influences their ability to deal with decision making processes.

The above reviewed literature on some of the proposed determinants of foreign policy highlights the wealth of issues one could examine in order to pin down what influences foreign policy. The most important thing to remember is that foreign policy is seldom influenced by a single determinant. As Arnold Wolfers (1962, 38) argued half a century ago

No serious analyst would contend today that behaviour in the international field, or for that matter in any other field of human activity, could be satisfactorily explained by reference to a single determinant.

Or as Holsti (1995, 251) noted, “Few policies are chosen for a single reason; monocausal explanations are therefore seldom satisfactory”, and Alexander George and Andrew Bennett (2004, 98) cautioned

Scholars sometimes succumb to the common cognitive bias toward univariate explanations-explanations in which there appears to be a single clear and dominating reason for the decision in question. Instead analysts should be sensitive to the possibility that several considerations motivated the decisions. In fact, presidents and top-level executives often seek multiple payoffs from any decision taken.

It is quite right to point out this complexity of the determinants of foreign policy. Human beings are complex individuals, and often our choice-making is determined by numerous psychological, physiological, and contextual factors. To expect that a policy-making process usually involving more than one individual would be any less complex than an individual’s choice-making would be highly misguided. Given that there exist so many possibly relevant determinants, the task of those studying foreign policy is to highlight the most salient factors that have determined a particular policy choice, and tie them into a model that explains how foreign policy can change.<sup>35</sup>

## **II.IV A general model of foreign policy change**

The following framework for analysing foreign policy change draws on the work of Jakob Gustavsson (1999). In reviewing analytical models which account for the multiple independent variables that can determine foreign policy, Gustavsson (1999, 77) discusses what he terms the “checklist” model of foreign policy change. This model is based on the important work of several scholars; most notably Holsti (1995, 250-288) and Hermann (1990), but shares commonalities with Macridis and Thompson’s (1967) ‘analytical approach’ to the study of foreign policy.

Gustavsson’s “checklist” model accounts for many of the possible factors which could have an influence on, and determine foreign policy change without offering a hierarchy of importance between them. Thus, a general model of foreign policy change firstly identifies various important background factors (of a contextual nature), which are then filtered through an intermediate cognitive and policy-making process so as to finally produce foreign policy change. Gustavsson (1999, 84) makes clear “that structural conditions can have no independent impact on foreign policy decision-making”, arguing

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<sup>35</sup> It is also completely legitimate to study continuity in foreign policy. However this thesis subscribes to Colin Hay’s (2002, 138) argument that for critical political analysts the question of change is in essence the “very *raison d’etre* of political inquiry” (original emphasis).

in the FPA tradition noted above, that “it is not the objective reality that counts, but how this is perceived and reacted to by the decision-makers”.

In this line of inquiry the various factors influencing foreign policy change are often divided into international (issues emanating from beyond the state’s borders), and domestic (emanating from within the state’s borders). However, as Robert Putnam (1988) argued, diplomacy (or foreign affairs) and domestic politics represent the “two-level game” in which one aspects affects the other and vice versa. Putnam concluded that “The most portentous development in the fields of comparative politics and international relations in recent years is the dawning recognition among practitioners in each field of the need to take into account entanglements between the two” (1988, 459).

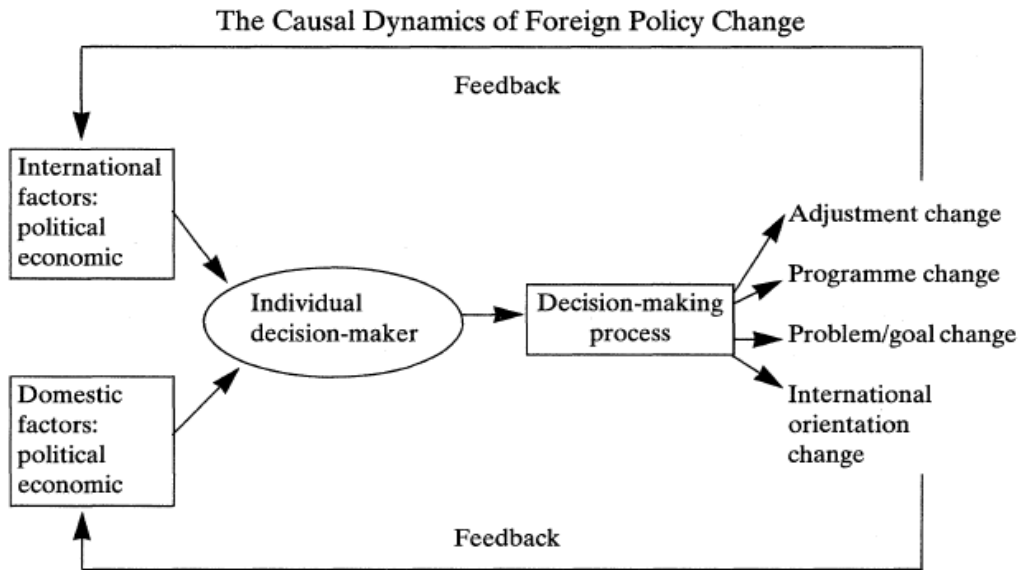
Gustavsson identifies a number of ‘sources’ that can influence foreign policy change and represent “structural conditions”: on the international front they can include other states, international organisations (regimes and treaties), the structure of the international political and economic environment (both regional and global), non-state actors, and external shock (man-made or *vis major*); whilst on the domestic front they can include the country’s political system, economic circumstances, pressure groups, the media, and public opinion (1999, 83). Naturally, many of these factors have overlapping properties: international events are interpreted by international media outlets which can then influence local media outlets and their news content; similarly, domestic interest groups which lobby for foreign policy change may be closely connected and/or ideologically aligned with international elements (multinational companies, non-governmental organisations, etc.).

In this general model of foreign policy change, contextual factors influencing foreign policy are filtered through cognitive factors and the processes of foreign policy-making which could be said to include political parties and their foreign policy outlooks, key decision-makers, and the foreign policy-making bureaucracy. The following step can then result in foreign policy change, which is connected via a feedback loop to the contextual factors, indicating that once foreign policy change takes place it can affect those factors, and the cycle runs again. The causal dynamics of such a model are illustrated in Figure 1.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The model is taken from Gustavsson 1999, 85. Although in his own ‘alternative’ model of foreign policy change Gustavsson adopts an almost identical causal process to that of the above model, he explicitly emphasizes that the main distinction between the two is his ability to predict the timing of foreign policy change. Whilst the ‘checklist’ model describes how foreign policy change can come about,

**Figure 1. Refined model of foreign policy change**



This model is useful in understanding the general determinants of foreign policy and how the process of foreign policy change can come about. A key criticism to it, as Gustavsson (1999, 80) observes, is the logical inconsistency from a methodological point of view in that some authors treat decision-makers as independent variables and at the same time intervening variables, which alongside contextual factors are to be fed into the intervening decision-making process. This implies a degree of analytical overlap which could potentially confuse the analysis; however, is arguably only dangerous if the analyst is unaware of it.

Building on Gustavsson's work, this thesis utilizes a more parsimonious model of foreign policy change. At one level of analysis there are contextual factors which can *underpin* change or continuity in foreign policy and are filtered through the (agential) cognitive and policy-making factors which *affect* foreign policy change or continuity, and *both* can in turn be influenced by a feedback loop.<sup>37</sup> Although they are empirically dynamically interwoven there is an important qualitative difference between the two sets of factors. Contextual factors *underpin* but do not by themselves mandate change in

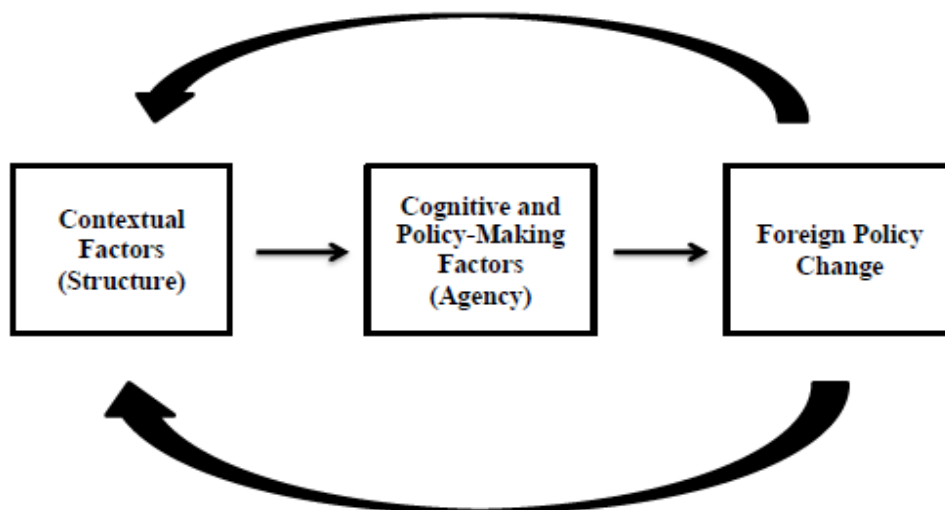
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it is silent on when it will happen. Gustavsson (1999, 85) observes specifically the role of 'policy windows' and 'policy entrepreneurs' in bringing about foreign policy change, and argues that foreign policy change is most likely to succeed if it can be tied to a crisis of some kind.

<sup>37</sup> In graphic depiction (Figure 2.) there is only one set of feedback loops. One could include another set of feedback loops going back to agential factors which could inform future agency. However, for the sake of parsimony it is assumed that such feedback is automatically transferred by the feedback which helps transform or reinforce contextual factors which are then perceived by agents as the cycle repeats. This is why the term 'both' is italicized in this sentence.

foreign policy; they “do not determine outcome *directly*, merely helping define the potential range of options and strategies” offering an “unevenly contoured terrain” which may favour change or continuity (Hay 1995, 200; Hay 2002, 164; Hodgson 2006, 2; Fleetwood 2008, 243-244). Cognitive and policy-making factors, on the other hand, *affect* continuity and change because it is up to those in charge of developing and executing foreign policy to actively pursue certain decisions based on their perceptions which are also informed by contextual factors. As Hay (2002, 265) concludes, “In the final analysis... it is agents who make history”. Hence, both contextual and agential factors are salient in explaining foreign policy decisions. The causal dynamics of this parsimonious model are illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Parsimonious model of foreign policy change**



The issue of ‘change’ and how it is defined is also important. Not many authors offer a definition, and of those who do some focus on gradual levels of change, whilst others emphasize more dramatic or extreme change in foreign policy (Gustavsson 1999, 76-77). Different authors define change differently depending on their case studies and/or conceptual models of foreign policy change, and it would appear that there is a need for definitions which can be empirically measured and interpreted. Any such measure and interpretation will be based on qualitative and quantitative indicators found in the data and research material. This thesis assesses change against two interconnected indicators



which can be interpreted quantitatively and qualitatively, and systematically applied across the three aspects of foreign policy engagement:<sup>38</sup>

- *Adjustment change* – refers to changes in the level of effort of foreign policy engagement (tends to be informed by predominantly (but not exclusively) quantitative or quantifiable parameters);
- *Attitude change* – refers to changes in the methods and attitudes (or perceptions) through which foreign policy engagement is addressed (tends to be informed by predominantly (but not exclusively) qualitative parameters).<sup>39</sup>

Whilst this parsimonious model does not necessarily introduce new features in the study of foreign policy change it does dispense with the potential analytical overlap mentioned above. It also subsumes Gustavsson's two factors of *individual decision-maker* and the *decision-making process* into one category of cognitive and policy-making factors, accepting that both are ultimately agential rather than contextual factors. The model does not elevate one factor above the other but recognizes their joint importance for determining foreign policy decisions, echoing Hay and Jessop's 'strategic-relational' approach which offers an exposition "of the relationship of structure and agency which resolutely refuses to privilege either moment (structure or agency) in this dialectic and relational interaction (Hay 2002, 134).<sup>40</sup>

A possible caveat to the joint importance of contextual and agential factors in determining change in foreign policy is that it can generally be posited that areas and issues situated on the margins of a country's foreign policy (traditionally perceived as having limited and little importance for a country's security and economic well-being) suffer from relatively lesser contextual restraints such as (trade or security) interdependencies, (historical and cultural) connections and ties, and the crowdedness and political saliency of pressure groups attempting to influence foreign policy direction, as compared to areas and issues considered of primal and central foreign policy focus and importance. On such areas and issues on the margins of a country's foreign policy agenda there may be more room for agential factors to exercise their

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<sup>38</sup> These indicators are loosely based on Charles Hermann's (1990, 5) definitions of change in foreign policy.

<sup>39</sup> The analysis of change is explained in more detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>40</sup> The reason why the contextual factors are posited in the first box in Figure 2 is because we are all born into a pre-existing society and policy-makers are thrust into a certain context upon entering positions from which they are expected to direct foreign policy. This thinking is supported by the literature on structure and agency which argues that structures pre-date agency and "pre-exist any particular episode of human action" (Fleetwood 2008, 244; Hodgson 2006, 7; McAnulla 2002, 285-286).

primacy in affecting foreign policy change. After adopting this parsimonious model of foreign policy change it will be necessary to refine it into a framework which goes beyond the general and helps explain the particular case study at hand.

## **II.V Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa 1996-2015**

The easiest way of explaining change in foreign policy in general is by a change in government, and change in individuals tasked with making foreign policy decisions. FPA, with its actors-specific approach which refuses to treat states as unitary actors in international relations, focuses on human agency and bureaucratic processes which shape states' decisions, offering a more comprehensive, detailed, and empirically grounded account of the 'why' states undertake certain foreign policy actions (Hudson 2005, 2, 3).

While it may be parsimonious to suggest that a change in government is what influences a change in foreign policy, such a suggestion is rather generic and at first glance emphasizes only the agential factors driving change in foreign policy. While FPA might be actor-centric, that does not mean it should abandon or discard examining potential contextual factors helping underpin change in foreign policy. Yes, it is actors who in the end make foreign policy decisions, but they do so, as Marx suggested, in circumstances which shape, and obtrude or promote their choices and options. To better understand why and how a change in government can (but does not have to) result in a change in foreign policy, one also needs to examine the highly salient contextual factors helping underpin that change.

### Contextual factors underpinning foreign policy change

As the above review outlined (section II.III), contextual factors have traditionally been seen as highly salient determinants of foreign policy. Contextual factors “emphasize the context within which political events, outcomes, and effects occur – factors beyond the immediate control of actors directly involved”, which present agents with an “unevenly contoured terrain” of opportunities and constraints in which some strategies and choices are biased against and in favour of (Hay 2002, 95-96, 164). “The preferences, strategies, and relative power of the relevant actors are defined by” the context “in which the political game is played.” (Thelen and Steinmo 1992, 14)

In the time period under review there have been two highly salient contextual factors helping underpin change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. The first is broadly termed the 'Decline of Africa', while the second is termed the 'Rise of Africa'.

### *The Decline of Africa*

The end of the Cold War (more broadly) and the end of apartheid in South Africa (specifically), coupled with Australia's growing emphasis on regional engagement and an overall global Afro-pessimist narrative all set the scene for a recalibration and change in Australia's engagement with Africa during the first half of the 1990s.<sup>41</sup> The end of the Cold War and apartheid heralded and influenced an era of general global deflation of strategic and foreign policy interest in Africa, and this was accentuated by widely publicized conflicts in several African countries which all contributed to an overall pessimistic narrative about Africa's prospects.

The final disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s had significant repercussions for countries around the world. Most specifically to Australian foreign policy engagement with Africa, it had as a knock-on effect the final demise of apartheid in South Africa. As the need for counter-balancing Soviet and communist forces in Africa, and specifically Southern Africa slowly disappeared from the mid-1980s onwards, Western countries moved more forcefully to condemn and sanction South Africa's apartheid regime (previously a long-time partner in the Cold War).<sup>42</sup>

As chapters 3 and 6 will make clear, and as Gareth Evans, Australia's foreign minister between 1988 and 1996, argued in an interview for this thesis, Australia's focus on the fight against apartheid had at least since the early 1970s been a key pillar of the country's engagement with African issues. Given that the struggle against apartheid was for so long so central to Australia's overall foreign policy engagement with Africa, its dismantling and ultimate demise forced a recalibration of the nature and intensity of that engagement in the early 1990s.

The change of prime ministers from Bob Hawke to Paul Keating did not help matters given the latter's overwhelming and primary interests in deeper regional engagement,

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<sup>41</sup> For Afro-optimism and Afro-pessimism in general see Okumu and Makinda 2013, 21-24. Broadly speaking, these two positions tend to emphasize or focus on either the (security, development, political etc.) opportunities or challenges facing Africa.

<sup>42</sup> This brief analysis should not be read as discounting the importance of domestic factors (such as the ANC's struggle) for the final fall of apartheid.

and lacking regard for the Commonwealth (Australia's traditional 'window' into African affairs). Also, the 1990s were a period of an overarching pessimistic narrative about the African continent, with a general perception of Africa as relatively 'hopeless'. This was evidenced to an extent by generally decreasing levels of aid reaching the continent throughout the first post-Cold War decade, and a broadly Afro-pessimist media discourse, encapsulated in *The Economist* magazine's May 2000 headline titled "A Hopeless Continent", which epitomized the perception of African prospects through the 1990s (The Economist 2000). In sum, these are the contextual factors that helped underpin Australia's changing foreign policy engagement with Africa during the 1990s.

### *The Rise of Africa*

A decade later, in its December 2011 issue, *The Economist* ran a markedly different headline: "Africa Rising" (with a subtitle – The Hopeful Continent). This aptly summarised the significant changes taking place within Africa through the 2000s, and which contributed to the global narrative of the 'Rise of Africa' (The Economist 2011; Roxburgh et al. 2010; Radelet 2010; Severino and Ray 2011).

Africa's rise, as remarked by *The Economist's* headline, and further observed by another headline from March 2013 ("Aspiring Africa") was due to two main factors: the protracted political and economic stability experienced by large parts of the continent since the turn of the millennium, and the rising global demand for primary commodities such as oil and minerals (The Economist 2013). Australia's growing foreign policy engagement with Africa was largely connected to the second factor which resulted in the rapid growth of Australian commercial interests in Africa, almost exclusively in the resources sector.

As the Labor government's top foreign policy-makers such as Stephen Smith, Kevin Rudd, and Bob Carr made clear in public pronouncements, the private sector was ahead of the Australian government in engaging with Africa. The number of Australian resources companies doing business across Africa experienced a boom during this time, rising from some 60 to 70 Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) listed companies in 2003, to around 220 in 2013.<sup>43</sup> The overall growth of Australian commercial interests in the

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<sup>43</sup> Phone interview with senior Paydirt Media official in charge of organizing the ADU, 31 July 2014. The actual number of Australian resource companies operating in Africa is difficult to ascertain for several reasons such as: a high volatility of investments (many projects never actually move past exploration phase), or the difficulty in identifying 'Australian' companies, which may still be headquartered in Australia and run by Australian citizens, but may not be listed on the ASX because they find it easier to

resources industry across Africa was also evidenced by the sustained growth of the annual Africa Down Under (ADU) mining conference held in Perth. This conference, which showcases predominantly small and medium Australian mining and services companies, had grown from 2003 and an “at best” attendance of about 100 delegates, to a peak attendance of some 2500 delegates in 2012.<sup>44</sup>

All of these changes—the greater political and security stability in Africa, steady and consistent economic growth of many African countries, booming global demand for commodities, and expanding Australian commercial interest in Africa—led to what several interviewed senior DFAT officials termed a ‘new discourse’ on Africa; one that was much more about opportunities than challenges, and one which made it easier to promote engagement with Africa.<sup>45</sup> The overall global narrative on Africa in the late 2000s shifted from an Afro-pessimist to an Afro-optimist one, and this also helped convince the Labor government of the virtues of a growing and widening engagement with Africa. This is the second highly salient contextual factor underpinning change in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa in the 2000s.

#### Agential (cognitive and policy-making) factors affecting foreign policy change

Although contextual factors are important and have the capacity to limit and obtrude, or liberate and promote foreign policy change, their salience fluctuates depending on how those tasked with foreign policy-making (agents) perceive and conceptualize such opportunities or constraints. Agential factors “emphasize the conduct of actors directly involved” in developing foreign policy “implying that it is their behaviour, their conduct, their agency that is responsible for the effects and outcomes” we are interested

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raise funds on other stock exchanges (such as Toronto or Johannesburg). Capital in the resources industry is highly international so one of the variables used to identify ‘Australian’ companies, according to one senior DFAT official who had previously served as an Australian High Commissioner in an African country is to look “at companies that have a substantial Australian connection such that they would expect the Australian ambassador to make representations on their behalf...” Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 8 April 2014. These observations about the difficulty in defining ‘Australian’ companies were made to the author by several interviewees from both the private and public sector, most of whom were intimately involved in collating the numbers on Australian investments and companies operating in Africa, and which were also used in ministerial speeches on engagement with Africa during the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments.

<sup>44</sup> Phone interview with senior Paydirt Media official in charge of organising the ADU, 31 July 2014. For research purposes the author was present at the 2014 and 2015 ADU conferences. The 2014 conference was attended by around 1500 delegates. The make-up of the delegates attending the conference, according to the organizers was around 50-60% Australian based, 30% African, and the rest Asian, European, or North American. The conference organizers did not publish a similar attendance breakdown for 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

in explaining (Hay 2002, 96). As Colin Hay (2002, 166) has argued, “actors matter” but they “may matter in different ways and to different extents”.

The most salient agential cognitive and policy-making factors which have affected change in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa in the time period under review can be separated analytically, but are empirically highly interconnected. They represent ideas and individuals: political party foreign policy outlooks, and key decision-makers.

The ‘constructivist turn’ in Political Science and International Relations has resulted in an increasing appreciation of the need to study the interplay and interconnectedness of ideas and individuals. This has been especially relevant for the study of ‘change’ because “empirically, changes in policy are often preceded by changes in ideas” a key reason why, as Hermann suggested, foreign policy change comes about most obviously with a change in government (Hay 2002, 166, Hermann, 1990, 4-5). Because “ideas provide the point of mediation” between actors and their environment (context), actors “routinely rely upon cognitive short-cuts” or particular policy paradigms to make sense of the context they find themselves in (Hay 2002, 209, 211). Hence, political analysis needs to be sensitive and attuned to the importance such paradigms and frames of reference (in the present study-foreign policy outlooks) coupled with key decision-makers can have on affecting change in policy direction.

#### *Political Party Foreign Policy Outlooks*

Labor’s engagement with Africa was a consequence of a differing worldview, not a cause of it.

Bob McMullan, June 2016<sup>46</sup>

The importance of political parties in affecting foreign policy depends on several factors, most importantly, the nature of a country’s political system. In some multiparty democratic political systems, several parties band together to form large coalition governments, and in such cases, foreign policy formulation could depend on negotiating (at times difficult) compromises. On the other hand, in Westminster style (two-party) political systems such compromises on foreign policy rarely happen, and the party that wins office is for the most part free to implement its own foreign policy outlook.

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Bob McMullan, Canberra, 1 June 2016.



In Australia's political system, the Labor Party and the Liberal-National Party Coalition are the two main political forces and both are fond of promoting their distinct foreign policy outlooks.<sup>47</sup> Although foreign policy achievements are built on the work of successive governments, differing foreign policy outlooks can and do affect foreign policy decisions. As Labor's former Foreign Minister Stephen Smith noted

...Australian foreign policy and international engagement is a series of building blocks where successive governments of whatever political persuasion build on and add to the work done by previous ones....having said that there are emphases and areas of focus which you get out of one political party but you will not get it out of another.<sup>48</sup>

Gareth Evans put the argument more forcefully, stating that there were "significant party differences" in Australian foreign policy, and that on some issues, such as an adherence to multilateralism, there was "a fundamental difference, a difference of worldview".<sup>49</sup> This 'difference of a worldview' was also reiterated by retired Labor politician and Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance (2007-2010), Bob McMullan.<sup>50</sup>

A foreign policy outlook is in essence an adherence to certain ideas about a country's place in the world, and the direction and objectives of its foreign policy. As Macridis and Thompson (1967, 12) have noted, ideas about a country's place in the world in themselves apply "not only to the manner in which objectives are shaped", but also "how the given objectives will be pursued". As such, these paradigms and frames of reference are closely connected to K.J. Holsti's (1970) national role conceptions. How states imagine themselves, and how others perceive that imagining influences the making of foreign policy (Patience 2013, 211).

As noted above, K.J. Holsti has argued that a national role conception was based on policymakers' own definitions of actions suitable for their state (their place in the world), but also buttressed by role prescriptions coming from the state's environment

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<sup>47</sup> The Liberal Party holds a traditional coalition with the National Party of Australia. In this sense, regardless of the predominance of the Liberal and Labor parties, Australian politics also experience a necessity for coalitions to form government. However, given the National Party's junior status in the Coalition and its traditional focus on domestic issues (which has admittedly been changing in the past two decades due to greater trade liberalization and globalization), as far as foreign policy is concerned the Liberal Party's outlook and direction are usually the ones adopted by the Liberal-National Coalition governments. This is further evidenced by the fact that traditionally Coalition government foreign ministers will come from the Liberal Party (in the time period under review Alexander Downer and Julie Bishop).

<sup>48</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Bob McMullan, Canberra, 1 June 2016.

(expectations of the role that state would play in the world) (Holsti 1970, 245-6). He cautioned that “role conceptions and prescriptions cannot dictate every aspect of foreign policy behaviour” and that the relevance of national role conceptions as a factor influencing foreign policy decisions “may vary from issue to issue” (Holsti 1970, 298).

Both Labor and the Coalition claim to embody differing understandings of Australia’s place in the world, and differing approaches to advancing that status. These outlooks can be considered traditions and ‘myths’ largely based on the foreign policy behaviour of previous party officials (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 150). However mythical they may be, as this thesis will argue, they are still highly salient in influencing foreign policy. Whilst there is a large degree of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy on the fundamentals of the country’s engagement with the world (towards issues and geographic areas perceived as holding high and immediate economic and security importance for the country), it is mainly on the margins of the foreign policy agenda that we can see substantive foreign policy differences. In discussing the different approaches to foreign policy engagement with Africa every public official interviewed for this research highlighted the importance of foreign policy outlooks for understanding why certain governments may be more or less interested in foreign policy engagement with Africa. The foreign policy outlooks of particular Australian governments, as based on the traditions or ‘myths’ about their political party’s distinct understanding of Australia’s place in the world, have been highly salient enabling factors in changing engagement with the African continent. Simply put, these foreign policy outlooks *as interpreted* by key decision-makers have provided a frame of reference for why such changes could take place.

Generally, the Coalition and Labor’s foreign policy outlooks run as follows: the Coalition would be focused more strongly on regional issues, conceiving of Australia as a significant and pragmatic regional power concerned primarily with fostering traditional partnerships with ‘major’ countries, and preferring bilateral management of foreign affairs; whilst Labor although still regionally minded, would be more internationalist in outlook, conceiving of Australia as an active middle power and ‘good international citizen’ keen on utilizing multilateral architectures for the management of foreign affairs, and looking beyond just the immediate region for foreign policy engagement and relationships.<sup>51</sup> Whilst these categories can be considered as ‘myths’

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<sup>51</sup> For a basic outline of these positions see Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 208-226; Wesley and Warren 2000; Renouf 1979, 492-493.

because the two major parties employ similar means in the pursuit of often similar foreign policy objectives, and as far as the fundamentals of Australia's foreign agenda are concerned, follow similar patterns of foreign policy engagement, they are terms of reference for understanding the world and Australia's role in it.

Coalition governments have traditionally been mostly interested in fostering greater engagement with areas of the African continent with traditional connections; most notably white-settler communities in Southern Africa. Prime Minister Robert Menzies and his successors in the 1950s and 60s were not overly enthusiastic in condemning South Africa's apartheid system and exhibited a large degree of sympathy for white minorities in South Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe; Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in the 1970s and 80s stood in many ways in direct opposition to his own party when professing a strong and explicit condemnation of the apartheid system in South Africa;<sup>52</sup> Prime Minister John Howard's government was for the greater part of its four terms in power only interested in strengthening commercial links with South Africa, and the Abbott government's tenure exhibited a distinct lack of interest in African issues, past the South African connection.

On the other hand, Labor's Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was very quick in condemning minority and race-based rule in Southern Africa, and moving to strengthen relations with African states during the mid-1970s; Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating whilst closing down several Australian diplomatic posts in Africa in the 1980s and early 90s still pursued a vigorous anti-apartheid stance promoting financial sanctions against the apartheid regime; and Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard sought to expand diplomatic links with African countries, moving towards greater pan-continental engagement.

It can be observed that foreign policy outlooks of particular Australian governments, as based on the traditions or 'myths' about their political party's distinct understanding of Australia's place in the world, have been a key enabling factor in guiding a changing engagement with Africa. Whilst contextual factors have made promoting and adopting those changing engagements easier, foreign policy outlooks *as interpreted* by key decision-makers have provided a frame of reference for why, and to an extent how, such

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<sup>52</sup> In 1977 Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser actually dismissed his own Minister-elect for Veterans' Affairs Senator Glenister Sheil just before he was sworn into office, due to the latter making favourable statements about apartheid in South Africa which were contrary to the government's policy; see *SMH* 2008; also for opposition to Fraser's anti-apartheid policy within his own cabinet see Fraser and Simons 2010, 505.

changes would take place. As such these outlooks are a matter of agency and leadership by key decision-makers who exercise choice as to whether and on what terms they become more or less involved in certain foreign policy issues (Jordaan 2003, 173). It is in this context that we can understand the apparent ease with which the Howard government in its first two terms in power ‘retreated’ from African engagement maintaining only commercial links with South Africa, or the motivation of the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments to increase Australia’s aid budget, and pursue membership of the UNSC; both of which to a significant degree helped drive greater engagement with African states continent wide. It is also in this context that we should understand the Abbott government’s lack of interest in maintaining Labor’s engagement with Africa.

### *Key decision-makers*

...individuals matter enormously... I am not saying it is all Nietzschean ‘great man’ theory of history, that only individuals matter and nothing else, but they do matter a great deal and certainly have been important in setting the whole shape and direction in Africa policy.

Gareth Evans, September 2015<sup>53</sup>

The role of key decision-makers in driving foreign policy engagement and change is very much related to foreign policy outlooks, especially in the Westminster political system. While there are important decision-makers at every level of the foreign policy-making bureaucracy, what is meant in this thesis by ‘key’ decision-maker is a person who sits atop the highest level of the foreign policy-making machinery, and has the political authority to commit state resources to the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This refers primarily to Australian prime and foreign ministers.

In his study of why governments choose to change foreign policy direction, Charles Hermann (1990, 11) noted that major foreign policy change often occurs with a change in government accompanied by the appearance of new leaders, and that leader driven change “results from the determined efforts of an authoritative policy-maker, frequently the head of government, who imposes his own vision of the basic redirection necessary in foreign policy”. In support of such arguments, Gyngell and Wesley (2007, 84-93) have recognized the central role Australian prime and foreign ministers have in the formulation of the country’s foreign policy. Even if one is not convinced of the

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

importance of individual decision-makers for the development of foreign policy, one would do well to remember T.B. Millar's (1969, 62) argument that although the "proportion of a policy which is directly dependent upon an individual is usually slight", it is, however, impossible to assert that "the policies would have been adopted irrespective of the personalities involved".<sup>54</sup>

While it may be more parsimonious to leave individual personalities out of the study of foreign policy-making, for an empirically more informative study, it is important to be aware of some relevant issues which can have a bearing on decision-making and the direction of a country's foreign policy. As Gareth Evans suggested in the passage highlighted above, in the example of the present study, the role key decision-makers have played in affecting foreign policy change has not been insignificant. This is not to suggest that some policy options would not have been adopted regardless of the person performing the role of key decision-maker, but that the interests and personalities of relevant officials have made a difference in the overall shape of foreign policy engagement with Africa. Depending on the issue and foreign policy space at hand, some decision-makers (prime and foreign ministers) will be able to exert more or less influence over the foreign policy agenda. As noted already, given the often marginal focus and importance foreign policy towards Africa merits in Australia's overall foreign policy agenda, the agency of such key decision-makers can be quite a significant factor in influencing foreign policy direction. This much has already been established by both previous PhD studies of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa since the early 1970s.

#### *John Howard and Alexander Downer 1996-2007*

Both Prime Minister John Howard and his Foreign Minister Alexander Downer remained in their respective portfolios for the full four terms of their Coalition government. Although in the early years of their government Howard may have exerted less influence over Australia's foreign policy, he appeared to have asserted his influence around the turn of the millennium, partially because he became more comfortable with

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<sup>54</sup> The importance of political leaders as key decision-makers in foreign policy has also been highlighted in the literature on diplomacy. Traditionally such individuals were perceived by professional diplomats in a largely negative light particularly around international summits where their egotism, vanity, ignorance of foreign policy matters and cultural considerations, and addiction to publicity (among other factors) would mark them as poor negotiators; see Berridge 2010, 164-165; for similar criticisms see Macridis and Thompson 1967, 19.

foreign affairs issues, and more interested in them. In either case, both Howard and Downer were two central figures of Australia's foreign policy-making.

It has been observed by many government and non-government officials interviewed for this research that John Howard largely exhibited a lack of interest in foreign policy engagement with Africa. Howard's foreign policy focus was very firmly on the region, and building closer ties to the US. He only really engaged with African issues on two notable occasions, both within the Commonwealth context and both related to Zimbabwe. Howard had a particularly bruising experience with South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki over the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2002 and 2003 Zimbabwe issue (see chapter 7), which he partially described in his autobiography as "just about the most demoralising foreign affairs issue" he touched in his time as prime minister (Howard 2011, 526). As this review of Australian foreign policy towards Africa during the Howard years will reveal in later chapters, aside from the 2002 and 2003 CHOGMs, Howard did not deal with any substantive Africa-related foreign policy issue during his whole four terms in government.

In an interview for this research Alexander Downer strongly argued that personalities have little to do with foreign policy-making and that if the contextual factors had mandated it, he too would have followed a similar kind of foreign policy engagement with Africa to that of the succeeding Labor government. He certainly did not want to leave this author with the impression of having no affinity for Africa or African issues, noting that Australian interests in Africa during his time in office were thin, and foreign policy focus on the region followed that pattern.<sup>55</sup> However, when quizzed about where Africa fitted in his conceptualization of Australia as a 'significant country' and 'pivotal power' (a key foreign policy outlook of his government) Downer simply argued that "... as a significant country we obviously have global interests, and Africa is included in our global interests", without elaborating any further.<sup>56</sup> Without wishing to be unfair to the former foreign minister, this did sound like a generic formulation rather than a strategic understanding of Australia's interests vis-à-vis Africa. In any case, while it may be that Australian interests in Africa during Downer's tenure were slim, it can also be argued that his government did not make much of a proactive effort to enhance them (past the South Africa connection), at least until the mid-2000s and the aforementioned opening of Australian diplomatic posts in Ghana and Libya.

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<sup>55</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.



### *Kevin Rudd and Stephen Smith 2007-2013*

Although the Labor governments in power between 2007 and 2013 had two prime ministers and three foreign ministers, it was really during the tenures of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, and then Rudd's stint as foreign minister, that Australia's changing foreign policy engagement with Africa was established and implemented. Kevin Rudd was central in setting a twofold agenda that would help drive foreign policy engagement with Africa. As Opposition Spokesman for Foreign Affairs and International Security between 2001 and 2006, Rudd was a central figure in developing his party's foreign policy outlook, as highlighted by the ALP's 2004 Foreign Policy Statement, and its 2007 Constitution and National Platform, both of which contained references to a necessity for renewed engagement with African states. Kevin Rudd's announcement (while in opposition) in 2007 of a planned increase in Australia's overseas development assistance budget to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015, coupled with his announcement (when in government) in 2008 that Australia would run for UNSC membership, were to become two important drivers of Labor's greater engagement with Africa foreign policy.

Kevin Rudd was a firm adherent to the ALP's foreign policy outlook of conceptualizing Australia as an active 'middle power with global interests' seeking to proactively engage with the world and utilize the UN and other multilateral fora for advancing Australia's interests. This inclination to be more internationalist and multilateralist in outlook was one of the key factors affecting foreign policy engagement with Africa, and it was one of the reasons why Rudd's government decided on pursuing a seat at the UNSC in the first place. Overall, in his foreign policy pronouncements Rudd exhibited a high dose of Afro-optimism, and as Australia's foreign minister, made a concerted effort to visit Africa multiple times, both to lobby for multilateral support (e.g. UNSC votes) and help strengthen bilateral links (Lyons 2010).

The other key decision-maker that was central to driving change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was Stephen Smith as Australia's foreign minister between December 2007 and September 2010. When queried about affinity for African issues, Stephen Smith stated "...I will not over-egg my affinity for Africa, but there were a number of preconditions which made it easier naturally for me to say 'this [greater engagement with Africa] is well worth doing'".<sup>57</sup> Some of the preconditions Smith was

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<sup>57</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

referring to included the already noted growth in the aid budget and Australia's pursuit of UNSC membership, but also his own WA background. As a politician from Perth, Smith was well aware of the great number of WA based resource companies operating across Africa, and it was easier for him to 'look west' across the Indian Ocean towards India, the Middle East and Africa as natural connections for Australia's commercial and foreign policy engagement.

#### *Tony Abbott and Julie Bishop 2013-2015*

Prime Minister Tony Abbott and his Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, much like their Coalition predecessors Howard and Downer, did not espouse a great amount of interest in African issues during the two years of the Abbott government. Tony Abbott had in some ways been forced to exhibit more than a passing interest in foreign affairs during his tenure, but it was only on high profile issues regarding the fundamentals of Australia's relations with the world that he had engaged more substantially in Australia's foreign affairs. Aside from travelling to South Africa to attend the funeral memorial for Nelson Mandela in late 2013, Prime Minister Abbott showed no interest in African issues setting the general tone of his government's lack of interest in this policy space.

As the Abbott government's foreign minister, Julie Bishop made one visit to mainland Africa, visiting South Africa in 2014. While her government in 2014 arguably sat at the pinnacle of global multilateralism, having a seat at the UNSC and chairing both the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and G20 meetings, this did not translate into the country exhibiting much interest in high-profile African issues. For example, as the US, UK, and many other countries moved quickly to provide medical personnel and troops to help fight the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in March 2014, Australia limited its contributions to funds for the World Health Organization, and took some eight months to finally dispatch a small force of health workers to the region (Jabour 2014; The Australian 2014; Bishop 2014g). Like Stephen Smith, Julie Bishop was a Perth based politician and well aware of her constituencies' interests in closer engagement with Africa. While she may have personally held more interest in African engagement than her prime minister, this did not appear to affect her terms of reference for understanding Australia's place and role in the world, and she made it clear in a number of foreign policy pronouncements that Australian foreign policy was and should overwhelmingly

be focused on the region. All of this helps explain her government's changing foreign policy engagement with Africa between 2013 and 2015.

### Where does the Commonwealth fit?

As the subsequent chapter will make clear, the Commonwealth has traditionally, from the development of Australia's more independent foreign policy in the post-W.W.II period, represented the country's main 'window' into African affairs (Pijovic 2014). Membership of the Commonwealth has over the past six decades mandated Australia's regular engagement (annually or biannually) with African states and issues, particularly when such issues were high on the Commonwealth's agenda. This was especially the case in the decade of decolonization in Africa (1960s), but also throughout the 1970s and 80s with the Commonwealth's support for the struggle against white minority rule and apartheid in Southern Africa.

It is for this reason, coupled with the fact that as far as this study is concerned agency is not associated with organizations, that the Commonwealth should be regarded as a contextual factor rather than an agential one.<sup>58</sup> However, placing the Commonwealth neatly in the parsimonious model of foreign policy change is more difficult than it may at first appear. Although Australia's membership in the Commonwealth has historically helped underpin foreign policy engagement with Africa, it was the agency of individual Australian prime ministers that affected that engagement and its shape.<sup>59</sup>

In the time period under review, the Commonwealth may have been a salient contextual factor underpinning Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa only between 1996 and 2003. During this time Australia's membership of the Commonwealth may have 'forced' the Howard government to engage with the Zimbabwe issue in 2002/3, and the repercussions of that episode may have resulted in John Howard's (and by extension his government's) lack of interest in engaging with African issues. However, it is also important to note that the Howard government exhibited a lack of interest in engaging in African issues even before that. Therefore, while it may be possible to argue that John Howard's 'bad' experience with African members (particularly South

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<sup>58</sup> If the purpose of the study was an examination of the Commonwealth as an organization and unitary player in international affairs, then it could be examined as an 'agent', i.e. exercising collective agency. For debates about the treatment of organizations as structural or agential factors see Lowndes 2002; Fleetwood 2008; Hodgson 2006.

<sup>59</sup> During Australian federal election periods Australian prime ministers do not normally attend CHOGMs. Although happening much less frequently, sometimes they even altogether decline to attend the event, as Robert Menzies did in 1966 (see below Chapter 3).

Africa's Thabo Mbeki) at the 2002/3 CHOGMs influenced his government's subsequent lack of interest in engagement with Africa, it can also be argued that Howard's 'bad' experience with African members at these CHOGMs was a consequence of Howard's own cognitive factors, personality, and overall agency, rather than its cause.

For the remainder of the period under review (2003-2015), the Commonwealth was not a highly salient factor underpinning change in this foreign policy engagement. After the Zimbabwe issue, there were no politically and diplomatically high-profile African issues on the Commonwealth's agenda. Given the Labor government's pursuit of greater pan-African engagement between 2008 and 2013 and the opening of an Australian embassy in Ethiopia, accredited to the AU, Australia utilized other multilateral avenues for pursuing greater foreign policy engagement with Africa.

These are the reasons why the Commonwealth does not feature in the parsimonious model. This should not be taken to indicate a disregard and lack of interest in the Commonwealth as it featured in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. The following chapters will give due attention to Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa as it happened through the Commonwealth and outline how it fits into the broader story of change in this foreign policy engagement, especially during the Howard years.

## **II.VI Conclusion**

The first two sections of this chapter discussed how foreign policy can be conceptualized and what its aspects are. It was argued that much, if not most of what goes on in foreign policy engagement would fall within three main aspects: diplomacy and security, economic, and development cooperation. These three aspects of foreign policy have overlapping properties and do not exist in isolation, but have been highlighted separately for the analytical purposes.

It was also argued that foreign policy is best understood as a policy space with a central international tendency, and commonly thought to be aimed outside of the borders of the state, but one that entails important domestic concerns and goals (McDonald 2015).

The third section of this chapter outlined the determinants of foreign policy. This section established that there is a multitude of factors which can determine the direction of a country's foreign policy, and their importance will vary depending on the case

study at hand. This discussion further established that there is almost always a multitude rather than a single reason why specific policy options and directions are adopted, and that both structural and agential factors shape why, which, and how foreign policy decisions are taken.

The fourth section offered a general model for understanding how foreign policy changes. This section utilized Jakob Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change, and then offered a slightly more parsimonious one. Both models highlight how foreign policy change is affected by both structure and agency. Whilst structural factors in many ways help highlight the parameters of what is possible in foreign policy, it is the agency of actors involved in developing and implementing that policy that determines how such structural factors will be differently interpreted. This differing interpretation then leads to foreign policy change, which in turn helps shape structural and agential factors, and the cycle of foreign policy change (or continuity) repeats itself.

The last section of the chapter outlined how this model of foreign policy change can be applied to the present case study of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. This section identified two main contextual factors which have underpinned change in Australian foreign policy towards Africa since the end of the Cold War, and then identified two agential (cognitive and policymaking) factors which have proven central to affecting that foreign policy change. What this thesis will establish is that it is only when *both* structural and agential factors are examined in unison that a more complete and informed understanding of why Australia's foreign policy towards Africa has experienced change in this time period can emerge.

## **CHAPTER III: Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa until 1996**

After having outlined an interpretative framework for analyzing changes in Australia's foreign policy engagement with the African continent from 1996 to 2015, it is important to offer some background to the analysis that will follow in the succeeding chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to outline and discuss the historical context of Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states from roughly the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1996. Although such a long period cannot be done justice in one chapter, it is not necessary to examine in detail every foreign policy activity towards African states. Such an analysis would fall well beyond the scope of this thesis, as for the purposes of the present study it will suffice to outline the most prominent foreign policy initiatives and issues which dominate the historical record of Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states.

In outlining the historical context of Australia's foreign policy toward Africa the main objective of this chapter is to tease out and highlight several important themes which contribute to an understanding of Africa's place in Australia's foreign policy. The chapter will outline how, over the past century or more, the perception of Africa as marginal and peripheral to Australia's foreign policy interests developed. It will also establish the main contours of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa, explaining why Australia's traditional contacts, and conduits for engagement, with African issues have taken place through multilateral settings such as the Commonwealth and the UN.

### **III.I Australia and Africa before the end of World War II**

When examining Australian foreign policy towards the African continent in general, it is important to distinguish between the period before World War II and after. To be blunt, although Australia was relatively independent as a dominion of the British Empire since 1901, before World War II it did not actually have much of an autonomous and independent foreign policy. Rather, Australia's 'independent' pre – and during World War II foreign policy was closely aligned and guided by British (imperial) foreign policy. Although an Australian Federal Department of External Affairs existed since 1901, the present-day contours of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade were set in 1935 when the Department of External Affairs gained full



administrative autonomy (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 59). However, it was only after World War II that Australia developed a growingly autonomous and self-sufficient foreign policy bureaucracy and direction.

This caveat is important as it can be very clearly distinguished in the case of Australian foreign policy towards Africa. Prior to, and during both World Wars, Australian military troops campaigned in Africa largely due to colonial links with Great Britain. During colonial days (prior to 1901) Australia's first officially organized contact with the African continent was a military one; in 1885 a 770 man strong military contingent of troops from New South Wales took part in the British led campaign in the Sudan (Coulthard Clark 2001, 52-53). The second officially organized contact with Africa came in the late 1890s in South Africa. During the Boer Wars (1899-1902) between Great Britain and South African Afrikaner settlers, Australian troops were mobilized on a more significant level than in the Sudan (numbering over 16 000 men), and fought alongside the invading British army (Coulthard Clark 2001, 57-96; Cuttell 2008, 31; Odgers 2000, 15-32). Although there may have been other, less visible trade or immigration links between the two continents, these military engagements constitute the most prominent officially organized contacts between representatives of Australia and African territories.

Australia's next official foreign policy contact with the African continent was again in the realm of war making, this time during World War I. Australian troops were deployed largely in North Africa and the Middle East, and their campaigns in the former were almost exclusively restricted to Egypt (Coulthard Clark 2001, x). At the outset of the war Australia mobilized and sent some 20 000 troops to fight Germany (Firkins 1973, 38). Between the two world wars there did not seem to have been any significant or noteworthy bilateral Australian foreign policy initiatives towards African states and issues.

The next time Australian foreign policy would engage with Africa would be through military troop deployment during World War II; again, Australian troops operated mostly in North Africa (present day Libya and Egypt). An anecdotal exception to this is the fighting by three Australian soldiers in support of British troops in Berbera (British Somaliland), and the operations of the Australian heavy cruiser *Australia* in support of French and British forces' attempt at an invasion of Dakar in French West Africa (present day Senegal) (Coulthard Clark 2001, 174-176).

Prior to the end of World War II, except for military excursions and Australian engagement in the Allied effort during the two World Wars, Australia did not pursue any official foreign policy engagement with African states outside what appeared ‘mandated’ by British foreign policy.

## **III.II Australia and Africa after the end of World War II**

### **III.II.I The Menzies Era 1949-1972: Setting the foundations for Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa<sup>60</sup>**

The foundations of a distinctly ‘Australian’ foreign policy agenda can be discerned from the mid-1940s, particularly exhibited by External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt’s active role at the 1945 San Francisco Conference, which gave birth to the UN (Hasluck 1980, Chapters 15-20). In 1949 Robert Menzies was elected prime minister (his second stint in office), and ushered in a Coalition reign that was to last over 20 years, with himself as Australia’s longest serving prime minister (1949-1966). Even though Menzies may not have been as independently minded in foreign policy terms as for example Evatt, Australia’s foreign policy did eventually develop a more independent agenda. On the whole, Australia’s foreign policy toward African states did not exhibit a very independent position from that of Britain during this time, and for some more tangible changes to take place, Australia was required to wait for the Labor party to win government in the early 1970s.

#### The Suez Canal episode in 1956

As David Goldsworthy has observed “Until the 1950s Australia had no diplomatic ties with, let alone coherent and thought-out policies towards, any of the countries of tropical Africa” (Goldsworthy 2002, 73). In terms of diplomatic representation, Australia did have contact with the African continent, albeit, only the extremes; north in Cairo, and south in Pretoria (Harper and Greenwood 1957, 20). Australia’s first major foreign policy engagement with an African state came with the 1956 Suez Canal

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<sup>60</sup> For clarity and brevity this period is referred to as the Menzies Era, largely because there is great continuity between Menzies’ approach to foreign policy and those of his Coalition successors, Prime Ministers Holt, McEwen, Gorton, and McMahon. In the context of the present study, this continuity is especially highlighted by their (dis)regard for the Commonwealth, Australia’s ‘traditional’ conduit for involvement with African affairs (Miller 1974, 431).

crisis.<sup>61</sup> The breakdown of negotiations between Britain, the US, and Egypt over the financing of the Aswan Dam was followed by the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company by Egypt's President Nasser on 26 July 1956. However, the Suez Canal crisis was not a foreign policy initiative of Australia's choosing; although at the time the Suez Canal was of great importance for Australian trade (900 million pounds of which flowed through it), the country's foreign policy activity was aimed at supporting the British cause (Harper and Greenwood 1957, 342).

In an August 1956 speech in London, Robert Menzies left no doubt about Australia's position: "We in Australia applaud the statement made by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States... We cannot accept either the legality or the morality of what Nasser has done" (Menzies 1958, 86). A month after delivering this speech, Menzies led an unsuccessful five member delegation to Cairo (3-9 September 1956) which attempted to persuade President Nasser to accept international control of the Canal. Upon returning to Australia Menzies expressed the government's support for the British position which ranged between the use of unilateral force to regain control of the Canal; use of force sanctioned by the UN; or use of economic sanctions to force Egypt's surrender of the Canal (Harper and Greenwood 1957, 343-346). As Menzies (1958, 142) argued in a September 1956 debate in the Australian Parliament

So far as Australia is concerned, I need hardly say that an open Canal is essential to British prosperity, and that a closed Canal could mean mass unemployment in Great Britain, a financial collapse there, a grievous blow at the central power of our Commonwealth, and the crippling of our greatest market and our greatest supplier.

Australia supported Britain's subsequent military intervention in the Suez, and Egypt severed diplomatic relations with Canberra (Menzies 1958, 156-170). However, the Australian Cabinet was itself split between those who supported Britain's use of force (centred on the prime minister), and those who opposed it (centred on his External Affairs Minister Richard Casey). Prime Minister Menzies ignored the advice of his External Affairs Minister who rightly judged that Australia's support for Britain's 'neo-colonial' excursion would jeopardize its friendly relations with Asian countries (Harper and Greenwood 1957, 350-351). As Alan Watt (1968, 303-304) concluded, Menzies' support for Britain's "disastrous policy" represented "the most serious mis-judgement

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<sup>61</sup> During this time, there was a slowly growing recognition within the Department of External Affairs of the need for an 'Africa' foreign policy, especially as decolonisation became a tangible reality (Goldsworthy 2002, 73-80).

of Australian post-war foreign policy”, which was “not only ineffective, but damaging to vital Australian international relations with other countries.”

### The Commonwealth, UN, South Africa, and Rhodesia

From the early 1960s until the early 1990s, Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa in general, and through the Commonwealth forum in particular would be dominated by issues of apartheid and racism in Southern Africa. During the Menzies era this foreign policy focus presented the Australian government with more challenges than opportunities mainly related to the country’s reputation within the Commonwealth (and UN). The Menzies era stands out as a time in which Australia’s international reputation was somewhat diminished largely due to the sympathy the Australian government harboured towards white settler minority governments in Southern Africa.

It is important firstly to begin the discussion with a brief account of Prime Minister Menzies’ attitudes towards the ‘new’ Commonwealth.<sup>62</sup> Menzies was a loyal proponent of the British Empire and the ‘old boys club’ composition of the Commonwealth prior to decolonization. As a result, he had problems accepting the rapidly changing and growing Commonwealth. As David Goldsworthy (2002, 18) has observed “It was never a secret that Menzies felt little or no sense of familial attachment to the leaders and peoples of the British dependent territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere”. Menzies (1950, 2) voiced his opposition to the changing face of the Commonwealth as early as 1950, discussing India’s admission to the organization, arguing that “we remain in the old dominions, the King’s subjects and the King’s men” while India, with its Presidential republican system was “severed from allegiance to the Crown”. As he put it, he was “... too deeply royalist at heart to live comfortably in a nest of republics” (quoted in Goldsworthy 2002, 111). In addition to the ‘republican’ flavor of the ‘new’ Commonwealth, Menzies was also critical of some of his Commonwealth colleagues. A lengthy quote from his memoirs fully captures his attitude:

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<sup>62</sup> The ‘old’ or ‘crown’ Commonwealth was a body of ex-British Colonies banded together by allegiance to the British Crown, and in the early 1930s constituted a handful of members (UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa). By 1960 the Commonwealth had grown by six more members, all of which were not previous white settler colonies. Menzies’ attitude to the ‘new’ commonwealth, in which the young members were republics and not necessarily as enamoured of the British as he was, is summarized well in his letters to Britain’s Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1962: “When I ask myself what benefit we of the Crown Commonwealth derive from having a somewhat tenuous association with a cluster of Republics some of which like Ghana are more spiritually akin to Moscow than to London, I begin to despair” (Goldsworthy 2002, 111).

The precedent thus established has been followed, as it inevitably had to be, with the result that modern applications by former British colonies to be members of the Commonwealth ‘as Republics’ have become a commonplace, and are accepted, save in the case of South Africa, as almost matter of routine. Nkrumah of Ghana emphasized how much a matter of routine it was when he went to London, was sworn in as Privy Councillor—and, as I know, the Privy Councillor’s oath is just about the most royalist expression in the world—then promptly returned home and declared for a Republic, of which he would be the first President! After that cynical performance, it was not possible for me to have any personal respect for him; but at least he did make it clear that the old Commonwealth bond had gone. When we were all related by a common allegiance, our relationship was organic and internal; it still is for most of the older members. But for the Republics, the relationship is in a sense functional and certainly external. J.C. Smuts was opposed to this, and, for that matter, so was I (Menzies 1967, 188).<sup>63</sup>

To begin with, Robert Menzies did not welcome all the changes in the ‘new’ Commonwealth, and things did not get much better in the 1960s when the issue of South Africa’s apartheid system of government arose for discussion in the Commonwealth. In the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting in London, South Africa first tabled its application to join the Commonwealth as a Republic, but due to vocal opposition of some leaders (notably Ghana’s Nkrumah and India’s Nehru), it then withdrew the application staying out of the organization. Menzies (1967, 201) had warned South Africa’s Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd a year earlier in a private letter that “ I do not regard it as quite certain that an application by a Republic of South Africa will be accepted by all Prime Ministers...I am afraid in particular of what attitude may be of Nehru and Nkrumah”.

In trying to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth, the Australian government took a legalistic position on the apartheid question, arguing that apartheid was “a domestic matter and that we in other countries should not interfere” (Menzies 1967, 192). Menzies did not favour apartheid, which he made clear in a speech to the Australian Parliament in 1961, but firmly believed that once the door was open to debating domestic politics and governance in the Commonwealth, no country could be beyond reproach (Menzies 1961). As Menzies argued immediately after the Commonwealth meeting in 1961

Even though there has been a great deal of international agitation, this [apartheid] is still a matter of domestic policy in South Africa which South

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<sup>63</sup> Such attitudes were shared by many of Menzies’s front-benchers in the late 1950s; notably Alexander Downer, “by far the most Anglophile” of his senior officials (Goldsworthy 2002, 166; Watt, 1968, 287).

Africa does not seek to apply to any other country. It is as much a matter of domestic policy to South Africa as Australia's migration policy is a matter for us... We may object very strongly to racial discrimination practiced in one country, we may equally object very strongly to the absence of any form of democracy in another... any of these things lend themselves to examination if we adopt the attitude that one of our tasks is to examine each other's policies (quoted in Watt 1968, 282-283).

As highlighted, in supporting South Africa Menzies had Australia's own situation in mind, and wrote to the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan arguing "that the South African precedent meant it would henceforth be "quite legitimate" for the Commonwealth to discuss, for example, the Australian immigration policy which is aimed at avoiding internal racial problems by the expedient of keeping coloured immigrants out. I hope my fears are not justified" (Goldsworthy 2002, 26-27). Menzies' legalistic position on apartheid presented a challenge for Australia's international reputation, and as one commentator noted, "Mr Menzies was, in 1961, a kind of living embodiment of attitudes which the new African members of the Commonwealth regarded as out of date" (Miller 1968, 428).

Australia's relatively 'sympathetic' attitude toward South Africa did not win her many friends within the Commonwealth forum, and this situation persisted within the UN as well. UN members had for years debated the legitimacy of South Africa's administration of South-West Africa (present day Namibia), its treatment of people of Indian origin in South Africa, and its racial discrimination of native Africans arising from apartheid policies. On the issue of South West Africa, Australia had, under both Labor and Coalition governments throughout the 1940s and 1950s defended South Africa (Miller 1968, 242). However, its position was slightly amended from the 1960s onwards, and within the UN Australia became more critical of South Africa's role in South West Africa, which was reflected in voting patterns on resolutions dealing with the South West African question (Miller 1968, 242).

With regards to apartheid, as noted above, the Australian government adopted a largely legalistic and somewhat rigid position arguing that South African matters brought for consideration before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) were a matter of domestic concern for South Africa. The result of this approach was that from 1956 to the early 1960s, in terms of UN voting, Australia found itself either in a small group of countries opposing resolutions against South Africa, or an equally small group abstaining from voting on such resolutions.



The next major foreign policy engagement issue regarding Africa was again related to 'white' Southern Africa. The issue of racism in Rhodesia was on the Commonwealth and UN agenda since the early 1960s, but really culminated when the white minority Rhodesian government unilaterally declared independence from Britain in November 1965. The Commonwealth countries called a conference to be held in early 1966 in order to discuss Rhodesia. Australia refused to attend on the grounds that it had already publicly refused diplomatic recognition to Rhodesia; felt that the responsibility and lawful sovereignty of dealing with the Rhodesian question rested with Britain; did not agree with some Commonwealth members' calls for use of armed force against Rhodesia; and felt the Commonwealth should not concern itself with intervening in the internal policies of member states (in this case Britain's) (Menzies 1967, 221-222).

Officially, Australia considered Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence illegitimate, but there seems little doubt that the highest echelons of the Australian government were sympathetic to Rhodesia's cause. As the diaries of Liberal politician Peter Howson reveal, there was considerable sympathy toward Rhodesia exhibited by both Prime Minister Menzies and his successor Harold Holt. In a diary entry for 28 September 1965, Howson (1984, 175-176) noted:

Dull evening in the House. We rose at 10.30. Had a nightcap in the ante-room with PM [Menzies], etc. At times the PM exhibits a series of violent prejudices. Tonight these included: (a) Antipathy to psychologists and arithmetic tests. (b) The UN (he hopes it will fold up). (c) He hopes we will never alter the White Australia Policy. (d) He hopes Rhodesia will delay self-government in any form, especially to Africans. (It is no use arguing when he is in this sort of mood.) Bed at midnight.

Two months later, the day after Rhodesia declared independence, Menzies called a special Cabinet meeting. Howson (1984, 185) noted in his diary:

Cabinet on Rhodesia. Although we have to nominally support the UK there was a general feeling that for too long we have been 'swimming with the tide of majority opinion' on the winds of change. The time has now come when we should support our white brethren in Southern Rhodesia even if it means that we are going to suffer at the UN. We agree that Smith [Rhodesia's Prime Minister] has been ill advised to move so soon, but now that he has, we won't move very rapidly to impose sanctions as requested by Britain... Found that Les Bury [Minister for Housing] and Ceb Barnes [Minister for Territories] agree whole-heartedly with my views on supporting Rhodesia.

Finally, on 18 November 1965 Menzies addressed the Parliament on Rhodesia outlining the government's reservations about, but adherence to, economic sanctions against

Rhodesia, while Howson (1984, 186) stated in his diary: “We talked about PM’s speech. Some of us (Gorton, Fairhall, and me) felt he had leant too far forwards supporting UK. But in general we agreed that he couldn’t have done much less. It is obvious our sympathies are with the Rhodesians”. Even the British Foreign Office was “not entirely satisfied with the Australian attitude towards sanctions” arguing that the Australian collaboration with the UK on this issue was “less close than we would have expected” (Goldsworthy 2002, 91).

A few months after this speech, Menzies retired, and his successor as Prime Minister, Harold Holt, seemed not to differ too greatly on the question of Rhodesia. On his visit to London in mid-1966, Holt expressed his view that conceding majority rule would be committing racial suicide for white Rhodesians, and the British Foreign Office concluded that there “was no doubting Mr. Holt’s sympathy for the Smith regime” (Goldsworthy 2002, 92).

Menzies’ successors, Prime Ministers Harold Holt, John McEwen, John Gorton, and William McMahon largely maintained Australia’s position on Southern African issues. Australian foreign policy did not, in their terms in office (1966-1972) deal with any prominent African issues, save for the ‘usual’ issues regarding apartheid, South West Africa, and Rhodesia. In June 1968 the UNGA passed a resolution proclaiming that South West Africa be known as Namibia, and urgently requesting the Security Council to take measures for the removal of South Africa from the territory. Australia, alongside Britain, Canada, and the US abstained from voting (Harper and Greenwood 1974, 17). As some scholars have observed, in the late 1960s and early 1970s Australia “voted in very limited company against massively supported [UN] Assembly resolutions demanding the use of force against Rhodesia,” and demanding aid for Rhodesian rebels, and sanctions against Portugal and South Africa for having allegedly supported the Rhodesian government (Harper and Greenwood 1974, 219).

#### Diplomatic representation and development cooperation

During the Menzies era, Australia’s diplomatic representation in Africa grew steadily, especially after many African states gained independence from Britain. Australia’s first official diplomatic mission in Africa was a High Commission in South Africa (Pretoria) opened in 1946. The fact that Australia’s first diplomatic post in Africa was opened in South Africa can be seen as highly indicative of the country’s colonial, cultural, immigration, and Commonwealth links with the African nation, and indicates the focus

of Australia's only foreign policy interest in Africa at the time. Australia's second diplomatic post in Africa was an embassy in Egypt (Cairo), opened in 1950, followed by a High Commission in Ghana (Accra) in 1958, and then followed by a High Commission in Nigeria (Lagos) in 1960, a new consulate in South Africa (Cape Town) 1961, a High Commission in Tanzania (Dar es Salaam) in 1962, and a High Commission in Kenya (Nairobi) in 1965 (DFAT 2010b, 24-25). However, this increase in diplomatic representation was not necessarily matched by an increase in bilateral ties with African countries. Australian strategic rather than episodic foreign policy towards African states seems to have been non-existent, certainly outside the Commonwealth and UN fora.

In this time period, and up until the early 1970s, Australia's bilateral aid toward Africa was negligible. The main channel for transferring aid to Africa was through the Special Commonwealth Assistance Plan for Africa (SCAAP), set up during the 1960 Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting. The idea was to set up a 'Colombo Plan for Africa' with an emphasis on educational and technical assistance. Australia's contribution was modest, and Menzies stated that the country would commit up to £200 000 a year (Goldsworthy 2002, 87). A survey of Australian aid budget statements delivered by Coalition ministers during the late 1960s and early 1970s reveals that SCAAP funding between the years of 1967 and 1972 hovered around AUD 400 000 to AUD 500 000, but the estimated annual increases in SCAAP funding were repeatedly not met.<sup>64</sup>

### Strategic perceptions of Africa

To suggest that the perception of Africa as a place of little interest in satisfying Australian foreign policy goals has traditionally been a hallmark of Australian strategic thinking about the continent is nothing groundbreaking. As the review of foreign policy engagement with Africa during the Menzies era has highlighted, Africa did not feature as a space of foreign policy interest at all outside Southern Africa (and Egypt during 1956), and even this limited engagement with Southern African issues was not of a bilateral nature, but rather thrust upon Australia through the Commonwealth and the UN. This is not to say that Africa was not, at some point, perceived as potentially more significant for Australian strategic interests than the above discussion would suggest.

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<sup>64</sup> The author analysed archives of development aid budget statements beginning with the 1967/68 budget. These archives are not open to the public and were at the time of the examination housed within AusAID's internal library.

In the mid-1950s, and amid Australia's wakening awareness of African decolonization, there were officials from the Department of External Affairs who viewed Africa as quite significant for Australia's foreign policy interests. In a briefing composed by Paul McGuire, Australia's then newly appointed Ambassador to Italy, Africa was recognized as a space of increasing strategic importance for Australia (in terms of fighting Communism); a space where decolonization might give rise to notable opportunities for developing economic relations; and a place that could teach Australia important lessons on colonial administration (Australia was at the time administering Papua New Guinea) (Goldsworthy 2002, 75).

In terms of strategic interests in Africa, Australia was particularly concerned with communications and defence. As many African countries came closer to independence, in 1959 Australia's Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Arthur Tange, commissioned the Department of Defence to provide an assessment of the British and non-British military bases in SSA, and their importance for Australia. Australian officials were concerned that "if sea and air bases in Africa were controlled by an enemy, Australian communications with Europe could be seriously disrupted, and that tanker traffic through the Persian Gulf could also be threatened" (Goldsworthy 2002, 81). Such concerns should be understood in the context of the Cold War, as Goldsworthy (2002, 81) notes that the "threat to airfields, ports and communications" was generally perceived not to emanate so much from new African states, but rather from "the Soviet Union and China, which were both thought to be mounting major efforts to win Cold War allies in the continent".

However, Australia, with its quite limited diplomatic and military resources could not do much to secure such strategic interests in Africa. The policy that was agreed on, and that seemed the most opportune in terms of resources and abilities, was to try and foster goodwill towards Australia and cultivate a good image of the country. Strategies for cultivating this goodwill were few; a 'gifts policy' for offering presents to newly independent African state leaders; cultivating personal relations between the Australian prime minister and his African counterparts, and providing aid (Goldsworthy 2002, 82-86).

This good-will policy, if one may call it that, came to an end quite quickly. Or to put it more accurately, it was subject to some significant setbacks which were not easily remedied. Gifts can carry only so much good-will and Australia's aid to Africa in

general was fairly minimal during this time. Furthermore, given Robert Menzies' personal views on 'natives' and pro-imperialist reasoning, it was difficult to expect him to establish let alone cultivate personal links with new African leaders (Goldsworthy 2002, 22, 24, 83; Menzies 1967, 190-191). On the other hand, the issues of apartheid and racism were, as highlighted above, highly contentious for Australia and the government's legalistic stance did not do the good-will policy any favours. In fact, a rift was evident between the prime minister and his Department of External Affairs, especially concerning the question of Rhodesia. External Affairs officials indicated that Australia would not support Rhodesian independence and Commonwealth membership prior to majority rule, while the Prime Minister's department indicated that Rhodesia should be given independence perhaps at the same times as other neighboring states (such as Nyasaland, modern day Malawi), and that it should be eligible for Commonwealth membership. As one official from the British High Commission in Canberra reported back to his superiors in 1962 concerning Rhodesia:

... On the one hand there is the Department of External Affairs view, preoccupied with Australia's position at the United Nations, at times it seems to me almost pathologically keen to take a line independent of British leads, and unhappy at seeing Australia lined up in world opinion (which, in fact, seems to mean Afro-Asian opinion) with unrepentant colonial powers... On the other, there is the feeling, more typical of Ministers, which instinctively welcomes the prospect of an additional voice in the Commonwealth sympathetic to Australia's policies in such matters as New Guinea, immigration etc., unlikely to criticize her and willing to play her part to defend the West against Communism (quoted in Goldsworthy 2002, 91).

### Summing up the Menzies Era

The predominant influence on Australia's foreign policy towards Africa during the Menzies era was the perception of Africa as a place of important interest to British foreign policy and well-being, and mainly by that connection relevant to Australia. This much can be inferred from Menzies' speech to the Australian Parliament in the wake of the Suez Crisis where he firstly noted the adverse effects the closure of the Canal could have on the British economy, and only by extension the Australian one.

The Coalition government displayed a marked pro-imperialist attitude well into the 1960s, with Robert Menzies continuing "to endorse the virtues of empire in all its senses", and his government not sharing Britain's commitment for accelerated decolonization (Goldsworthy 2002, 23-24, 46). Menzies and many of his ministers shared strong views of support for white settler communities in Southern Africa, which

some African states interpreted as defending South Africa's apartheid system, and even the efforts of Australia's External Affairs Department could not persuade the Australian government to shed its pro-South African mentality (Goldsworthy 2002, 89-90).

Overall, in addition to perceiving Africa as marginal and peripheral to Australian interests (outside reputational interests periodically affected by multilateral discussions of racism and apartheid), in terms of bilateral foreign policy, the continent was very much a blank map for Australian foreign policy-makers, and aside from the Suez Crisis, the Commonwealth and the UN were Australia's two main points of contact with African affairs.

### **III.II.II Gough Whitlam 1972-1975: a changing approach**

Australia's foreign policy towards Africa took a discernible turn in the 1970s. After over two decades of Coalition governments, in late 1972 Australia elected a Labor government headed by Gough Whitlam. Whitlam's election had important repercussions for Australia's foreign policy, which almost immediately became distinct from that of his predecessors (Whitlam 1985, 25-182; Albinski 1977). In terms of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa, Whitlam ushered an era of more assertive and independent foreign policy-making towards the African continent, and one which gained the country much friendship amongst African states.

It is also worth stating that Whitlam's more independent foreign policy focus largely adhered to the ALP's traditional foreign policy outlook of middle power activism, with a high degree of foreign policy proactiveness. As Whitlam (1985, 26-27) himself argued

It is true that there is a certain inevitability about all great movements in history. It is equally true, however, that there was nothing inevitable about the principal decisions made by my Government, either in their specific terms or their general thrust. Nor does the fact that most of those decisions and the principles behind them were endorsed by the Government which followed ours diminish this truth. My Government did not respond to mere inevitability; rather, we had created the inevitability.

Although one should always exercise a healthy scepticism towards a politician's self-proclaimed achievements while in office, the following discussion will highlight the significant departure of the Whitlam government from previously long held Australian foreign policy positions on African issues.



## The Commonwealth, UN, South Africa, and Rhodesia

As in the Menzies Era, Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states during the Whitlam years was primarily conducted through the Commonwealth and to a lesser extent the UN. The great novelty of the Whitlam years was not a change from a largely multilateral to a bilateral foreign policy engagement, notwithstanding the efforts Whitlam's government did undertake in attempting to establish a greater bilateral relationship with some African states, but rather in its changing attitude towards African states and issues. As J.D.B. Miller observed, Whitlam's predecessors (the Coalition prime ministers) viewed some Commonwealth members (mostly African states) with a degree of suspicion, and because of this dislike of a large number of member states, the forum itself was neglected as a tool of Australian foreign policy. There was, Miller (1974, 431) stated, a

...growth of an orthodoxy amongst other Liberal-Country Party ministers and some senior civil servants, to the effect that the Commonwealth had become a sham, that Australia might be led by it into policies which conflicted with its interests in Asia (and especially the role of the United States in Asia), and that, in particular, any schemes for economic aid to under-developed countries because of this membership of the Commonwealth should be sceptically scrutinised.

Whitlam recognised the opportunity the Commonwealth and other multilateral fora presented for Australian foreign policy, and used them to change and enhance Australia's reputation particularly with the developing countries of Africa and Asia. In fact, back in 1961 Whitlam had been a vocal critic of Prime Minister Menzies' stance on South Africa, apartheid, and his dislike of the 'new' Commonwealth. When debating South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth, Whitlam (1961) reminded the prime minister of the Commonwealth's importance for Australia:

The fate of the Commonwealth is a matter of very great sentimental as well as practical significance to Australia. The Commonwealth is the best bridge - in many ways it is the only bridge - between the European type countries on the one hand and the countries of Asia and Africa on the other hand. It is the only bridge between countries which have a complex industrial society and long-established political institutions and on the other hand countries which are seeking to establish industrial and political societies along the lines which Britain did so much to transmit to them. The Australian Prime Minister has gone out of his way to suggest that the Commonwealth has been weakened by the defection of South Africa. We should make it quite plain in this Parliament and in this country that the Commonwealth is stronger for South Africa, under its present outlaw government, leaving the Commonwealth.

When in office, Whitlam's moves in multilateral fora were aimed at shedding Australia's racist image in the world; an image influenced to a large extent by his predecessors' sympathy for minority white Southern African governments, and Australia's own restrictive immigration policies. In an address to the UNGA in 1974 Whitlam (1974) stated that

We must be unremitting in the efforts sanctioned by the Assembly to break the illegal regime in Rhodesia, to end South Africa's unlawful control over Namibia and to end apartheid. We should all make determined efforts to see that the momentum which launched the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination is not lost. My Government - conscious that Australia's own record is seriously flawed - is determined to remove all forms of racial discrimination within our own shores, notably now, as notoriously in the past, against our own Aboriginals.

In his first year in office, at the CHOGM in Ottawa in August 1973 Whitlam made common cause with general Third World complaints about the activities of multinational corporations, linked Australia's interest in commodity prices and resource development with that of the under-developed countries, and generally showed himself to be more receptive to their viewpoint than his predecessors (Miller 1974, 431). Furthermore, Whitlam's desire for establishing a new reputation for Australia could also be inferred from the guest list for his three official Commonwealth summit dinners, which "included neither Britain, nor Canada, nor even Malaysia; instead, one was for Pacific leaders, one for Caribbeans and one for Africans" (Goldsworthy 2002, 64). Finally, Whitlam's sympathy for Third World and particularly African issues could be seen from his support for the Afro-Asian position on Rhodesia which called on Britain to impose economic sanctions on South Africa and Rhodesia, and proclaimed desire to aid liberation movements in Southern Africa in their fight against white minority governments.<sup>65</sup>

Prime Minister Whitlam was an outspoken critic of apartheid and racism, at times even perhaps too outspoken. In a late 1973 television interview he went as far as comparing the leaders of South Africa and Rhodesia to Adolf Hitler (Albinski 1977, 102). By that time, the leader of South Africa J.B. Vorster had already expressed his dislike of Whitlam by reportedly stating "I say to Mr Whitlam: When you are just an unpleasant memory in Australia, we'll still be governing South Africa" (quoted in Loshak 1973).

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<sup>65</sup> Whitlam's support for these proposals brought him into direct and vocal conflict with Britain's Prime Minister Edward Heath, see Ramsey 1973.

In late 1973 Australia began a term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, and used the forum, in addition to the UN in general, to establish itself as a vocal critic of apartheid and South Africa. On the domestic front the Whitlam government finally dismantled the country's 'White Australia' immigration policy, which paved the way for a changing attitude towards racism in foreign affairs. Australia had, in December 1972 banned South Africa's racially selected teams from traveling to or passing through the country (Whitlam 1985, 70). From 1973 onwards Australia supported and co-sponsored a number of anti-South Africa resolutions in the UN, and most significantly, in 1974 the country supported a UNSC resolution calling for South Africa's expulsion from the organization (Clark 1980, 149, 153; Albinski 1977, 116).

On the issue of Rhodesia Whitlam's government quickly moved towards the side of Afro-Asian nations in the Commonwealth and UN, and while it did not favour an armed intervention against the white minority government, it did support sanctions against the country, arguably with more vigor than the Menzies era governments. Whitlam also attempted, unsuccessfully though, to close down the Rhodesian government's Information Centre in Sydney, but his government was successful in banning any further sales of wheat to the country and clamping down on issuing visas to Rhodesians (Albinski 1977, 113, 114). Considering that according to Whitlam his predecessors, Prime Ministers Holt and Gorton, had actually issued Rhodesian officials and diplomats with valid passports, his government's tough policy on Rhodesian travel documents arguably saved the country from international embarrassment. As Whitlam (1985, 68), taking aim at his Coalition predecessors noted "Since no other Government recognized Rhodesia's purported passports and the British Government would not issue passports to rebel residents of Rhodesia, the regime's contacts with the outside world had been conducted by courtesy of the Australian Government".

#### The South African trade dilemma

Although Whitlam's government had at least rhetorically done much to change Australia's reputation and image in the world regarding apartheid and racism, it still came under some serious criticism regarding its trade dilemma vis-à-vis South Africa.

Several scholars had at the time pointed out the discrepancy between Australia's anti-racist rhetoric on the one hand, and its beneficial trade relationship with South Africa on the other. In an article examining Australia's trade and business ties with apartheid South Africa, Ron Witton (1973, 31) proclaimed: "Whether the Australian Government

is prepared to back up its laudable anti-racist sentiments with far reaching economic measures such as economic sanctions and barriers to Australian investment in southern Africa may well prove to be one of the strongest tests of its moral commitment". On a more general note regarding Australia's policies towards Southern African states, David Goldsworthy (1973, 70) pinpointed the discrepancies clearly:

But it is clearly in relation to Southern Africa that the three principles of anti-racism, anti-colonialism and adherence to UN decisions all flow together, and the discrepancies between utterance and action appear most significant. Abhorrence of apartheid goes hand in hand with the maintenance of economic ties with enterprises that profit by apartheid. Resolutions on sanctions against Rhodesia go hand in hand with an unwillingness to pass legislation which would make sanctions an integral part of Australian law, and thereby enforceable. Hostility towards Portuguese colonialism in Africa goes hand in hand with silence on Portuguese colonialism in Timor. Condemnation of white minority regimes goes hand in hand with a reluctance to offer more than token support for black liberation movements and, in particular, a reluctance to condone their use of force.

Australia's trade with South Africa had flourished since the late 1960s, and its position on possibly suspending that trade was quite clear. By the end of 1972 South Africa was the fourth largest market for Australia's manufactures, and in 1974-75 Australia's trade with South Africa was heavily in the former's favour (Australian exports to South Africa for that year were valued at AUD 98 975 000, and its imports at AUD 43 930 000) (Hudson 1980, 150, 310; Witton 1973, 18). The Australian government was not interested in bilaterally imposing sanctions or a trade embargo, and statements by Australia's Minister for Overseas Trade, Dr Jim Cairns, explicitly shunned the idea of disrupting trade with other countries, regardless of how unsavory their governance seemed: "You can't stop trade with countries just because you don't like their policies. If we did that, we would stop trading with just about every country except Sweden and Switzerland." As Cairns noted, Rhodesia was still the only country Australia did not trade with, and that was because of UN sanctions (quoted in *The Australian* 1973).

Although bilateral trade sanctions would have most probably proved quite ineffective at forcing the South African government into abandoning apartheid, Australia could inflict more serious damage on South Africa's economy through the International Wool Secretariat. As J.D.B. Miller (1974, 433-434) had pointed out at the time, the secretariat

...is financed by Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, but has been largely run by Australia. It provides worldwide publicity for wool, and encourages scientific research and improved marketing. It is the one

international organisation in which Australia could strike an effective blow at vital South African interests; but, since these interests are largely identical with Australia's, any blow at South Africa would create opposition within Australia itself, and would weaken the combined front of wool exporters struggling against the advance of synthetic fibres.

Australia's decision to not hurt itself and South Africa via the International Wool Secretariat was, as Miller (1974, 434) aptly surmised, "a clear case of economic interests overriding political interests".

In the end, Australia's dilemma regarding trade with South Africa, while noticeably controversial, was not an overly difficult one. Without UN sanctioned embargos against South Africa Australia was under no obligation to stop trading with a very beneficial trading partner. Australia did during Gough Whitlam's prime ministerial reign continue to promote trade with South Africa (Witton 1973, 19, 22, 29, 30), and as one commentator has concluded "in every major instance of economic and commercial liaison with South Africa, the ALP government refused to damage" that relationship (Albinski 1977, 119). However, Whitlam's government, in stark contrast to its Coalition predecessors, engaged very actively through multilateral fora in isolating and criticizing racist Southern African regimes.

#### Bilateral relations and development cooperation

Although during this period Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was again largely restricted to the Commonwealth and UN fora, the Whitlam government attempted to build more bilateral relationships with African countries. In this light several episodes are notable. In March 1973 Tanzania's Foreign Minister Mr John Malecela visited Canberra and publicly stated his government's approval of Australia's changed foreign policy approach towards African issues (Goldsworthy 1973, 59). Then, between June and July 1973 Australia dispatched several high-level delegations led by Senator Willesee (Whitlam's soon to be External Affairs Minister) to Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mauritius. According to Prime Minister Whitlam, Willesee's trip was aimed at helping "consolidate the improvement in Australia's standing with African countries resulting from the government's new policies against racism and colonialism", and was indicative of the Australian government showing "a more positive interest in African affairs" (AFAR 1973a, 356-366). In the end, if Australian newspapers are to be believed, the trip was a success in promoting Australia's reputation and gaining good-will and support from African

countries against French nuclear tests in the Pacific, and according to Willesee Australia received a number of requests for aid, with numerous Africans informing him that trade was the best form of aid, and expressing their appreciation “for the assistance given to developing countries to penetrate the Australian market” (Webster 1973; AFAR 1973b, 471-472).

During this period, and in the context of Willesee’s trip to Africa, the Australian government tried to foster greater economic relations between African countries and Australia. To this effect, and in the aftermath of Willesee’s trip, the government announced a 25% reduction in tariffs for developing countries’ exports to Australia (AFAR 1973b, 491). However, it would appear that during the Whitlam period this decrease in tariffs only had marginal effects on promoting Australia’s overall trade with African countries (Osei-Amo 2004, 155).

In terms of development cooperation, Australia under the Whitlam government greatly expanded its contribution to SCAAP, and its first aid budget statement outlined some new multilateral funding arrangements. In the aid Budget Statement of 1973/74 the government increased its estimated contribution to SCAAP from AUD 576 000 to AUD 1 144 000 for 1974/75, of which AUD 1 016 000 was actually contributed (Crean 1973, 7). Australia also from 1973/74 started contributing modest resources to various UN funds for Southern Africa, Rhodesia, and Namibia, and these pledges were repeatedly met in following budgets. A great novelty of the foreign aid program during this time was Australia’s contribution of humanitarian assistance to African national liberation movements to the sum of AUD 150 000, which was to be channeled through multilateral organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Albinski 1977, 102, Crean 1974, 14).<sup>66</sup>

#### Summing up the Whitlam years

Compared to the Coalition governments and their 23 years in power, the ALP’s three years in government saw a noticeable perception shift in Australia’s foreign policy agenda towards African issues, most notably apartheid, and there was a serious attempt to foster enhanced bilateral ties with African states. This should by no means suggest that foreign policy towards African states suddenly became a cornerstone of Australia’s

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<sup>66</sup> This novelty in the aid program may have been spurred on by a March 1974 speech delivered in Canberra by Tanzania’s President, Julius Nyerere, who called on the country “to use economic, social and military measures to oppose apartheid and colonialism in South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies in Africa”; see *SMH* 1974.



broader foreign policy agenda. After all, even a casual glance at Whitlam's own monograph on his time in government betrays how in the greater context of Australian foreign policy, Africa was very much on the periphery. Of a total of 158 pages devoted to International Affairs, Whitlam devoted only five substantive pages to foreign policy towards Africa.

Perhaps the greatest change in foreign policy engagement with Africa during the Whitlam years was a change in perceptions and interests. Whitlam saw clearly that foreign policy engagement with African issues had the capacity to promote Australia's international reputation and that it was in Australia's interest to change tact on highly contentious issues such as apartheid. This change in perceptions was underpinned by the ALP's traditional foreign outlook which favoured greater engagement with more than just Australia's immediate region, and perhaps most importantly favoured a respectful attitude towards the UN and the Commonwealth, and international opinion as exhibited through the work of such multilateral fora.

### **III.II.III Malcolm Fraser 1975-1983: sustaining Whitlam's changes**

After Gough Whitlam's government was dismissed by Australia's Governor General in November 1975, a December federal election saw Malcolm Fraser elected as prime minister and Australia returned to a conservative Coalition government. Fraser's foreign policy in general, as one commentator observed, exhibited a relatively unique mixture of combining "hard lined conservatism on East-West issues with quite radical liberalism on North-South issues" (Renouf 1986, 132). Notwithstanding the vast differences and potentially personal dislikes between Whitlam and Fraser, Australia's foreign policy towards African states during the reign of the latter exhibited strong continuities with the Whitlam period. Fraser did not reverse Whitlam's anti-apartheid policies, and as Richard Higgott (1983, 245) has suggested "Australia's African policies under the two Prime Ministers had more in common than either would perhaps care to admit...".

Some of the many things the two prime ministers had in common regarding their foreign policy agendas were a personal dislike of racism and apartheid, and a clear recognition of the importance of Third World countries for advancing Australia's

foreign policy.<sup>67</sup> Both prime ministers utilized multilateral fora to advance Australia's international standing and reputation, and Malcolm Fraser used the Commonwealth forum to significantly engage with African countries. Herein lies the other central feature of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa in the Fraser period. Unlike Whitlam it appears that Fraser did not attempt a greater bilateral engagement with African countries during his time in power, and his major foreign policy engagement with the continent came largely through the Commonwealth. This, as has been established so far, follows the traditional contours of Australian foreign policy towards Africa, and may be a further indication of a conservative foreign policy outlook which did not traditionally look beyond the Commonwealth, and bilateral South African issues for greater engagement with Africa. Malcolm Fraser did conceive of Australia as a middle power, and his strong and proactive preference for engaging with Commonwealth issues (particularly African ones) was at the time at odds with the foreign policy of his Coalition predecessors, and to an extent his own party room. As Fraser's former chief of staff and later Federal Director of the Liberal Party Tony Eggleton (2014, 1, 4) observed, to date, Malcolm Fraser has been "the most committed Australian Prime Minister in support of the 'modern Commonwealth' whose 'liberal and progressive positions' on the Commonwealth and fight against racism and apartheid 'did not please all members of his Government'".

#### The Commonwealth, South Africa, and Rhodesia

During the Coalition's time in opposition, Malcolm Fraser was critical of Gough Whitlam's domestic and foreign policy. Fraser did not support Whitlam's anti-racist policies such as Australia's changes in immigration and naturalization, and in 1975 he was vocally critical of Australia's tough stance on South African apartheid and its provision of humanitarian aid for African national liberation movements (Renouf 1986, 133). However, keeping in mind Fraser's continuation of many of Whitlam's policies, this criticism should be perhaps seen as a reflection on domestic political calculations and the potential of winning an election, rather than Fraser's personal dislike of Whitlam's policies.

In line with this 'domestic constituency' argument, during this time there was still a significant degree of sympathy for white Southern Africans in Australia. As some have

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<sup>67</sup> Hawke 2014, 12: "He [Fraser] was absolutely, totally impeccable on the question of race and colour." Evans 2014, 9: "But one thing I did actually always like about Fraser – and which was absolutely genuine – was his non-racism. He really did not have a racist bone in his body...".

observed, during this period “racism was an issue which sat lightly with many Australians” and even the authors of the government’s 1979 report on relations with the Third World also noted that “developments in southern Africa and our official response towards them are issues of considerable public interest and controversy with Australia. Many Australians feel ties of kith and kin with white populations of southern Africa and sympathize with their predicament...” (Bolton 1990, 197; Harries 1979, 164). Malcolm Fraser (Fraser and Simons 2010, 505) himself noted that some of his own party room members questioned his support for the communists and terrorists in the ANC against “our blood brothers, the Afrikaners”. It is quite possible that because of such sympathies towards white Southern Africans, while Fraser was in 1979 and 1980 internationally lauded as a statesman due to his role in helping broker Zimbabwe’s independence and black majority rule, at home he was “greeted with considerable hostility” with his personal approval ratings plummeting below 30% (Higgott 1983, 239).

Notwithstanding such public and political support and sympathy for white minority regimes in Southern Africa, once prime minister, Fraser did well to utilize the Commonwealth as the forum in which his most prominent and arguably best known diplomatic engagement with African states would take place. In fact, Fraser, much like Whitlam, had years earlier proclaimed his support for the Commonwealth in general. In the 1961 parliamentary debate following South Africa’s withdrawal from the Commonwealth, in which Whitlam (as noted above) criticized Menzies outlining the importance of the Commonwealth for Australia, Fraser too defended its importance. Fraser (1961) was out of step with many in his own party at the time by openly attacking apartheid and racism, and he concluded his speech noting that “I regard the Commonwealth as a bridge between the people of different races and colours, and we must try to maintain this bridge”.

Several scholars have noted that Fraser’s support for the Commonwealth stemmed from various reasons not necessarily directly related to issues of racism. It was the forum through which Australia could have access to Third World leaders it normally had little bilateral contacts with; it was a forum in which Australia was considered a ‘big player’ and could exert some influence; it was also a forum through which Fraser’s government could try and counter the Soviet Union’s growing influence particularly in southern Africa (a major foreign policy concern for Fraser); and finally, as Richard Higgott (1983, 248) suggested “the Commonwealth offered an arena for those kinds of gestures

that cement relationships at a political level without costing a great deal in practical or financial terms”.<sup>68</sup>

As one Australian diplomat noted, Australia’s connections with Africa in general were primarily through the Commonwealth; with the exception of former Commonwealth member South Africa “all Australian diplomatic missions in Sub Saharan Africa were in fellow Commonwealth countries” and for this reason policy towards South Africa “tended to be developed in a Commonwealth context” (Neuhaus 1989, 162). It was in this forum that Fraser established his reputation as a vocal and internationally renowned opponent to apartheid and racism, and through this forum that his diplomacy most directly engaged with fighting racism. Fraser’s most famous anti-apartheid speech came a few days prior to the June 1977 CHOGM in London where he also appears to have for the first time publicly referred to Rhodesia as Zimbabwe:

Policies based on the false and pernicious premise of one race's superiority over another, one race's right to subjugate another, are the most flagrant violation of fundamental human decency. They offend the moral sense of every person, every nation, concerned about the dignity and quality of man. Their continuance diminishes the humanity of every one of us. Apartheid cannot succeed even in terms of its own logic. A policy that pretends to foster equal social development but which involves permanent separation of the races and imposes permanent political inferiority on one race will not, and cannot, succeed. The proponents of apartheid claim that they are pursuing policies of educational and economic equality. Even if this claim is taken at face value, apartheid must fail. The more people achieve educational and economic equality, the more they will reject political inferiority. There should be a rapid move towards majority rule in Zimbabwe. A failure to achieve this and achieve it quickly will most likely lead to disaster (Fraser 1977).

Fraser’s continuity of Whitlam’s proactive attitude towards the Commonwealth, and his policies towards South Africa generated much goodwill, and due to that goodwill Fraser was accepted by African leaders within the Commonwealth as a mediator between them and the British government on the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe question. In the late 1970s Rhodesia enacted limited internal governance reforms which led to a general election with a limited number of black voters participating. The newly formed government included a black prime minister, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, but was not seen as democratic or representative of the black majority, and rebel leaders such as Robert Mugabe continued the struggle against the government. The major fear amongst Commonwealth member states (at least the Third World ones) was that Muzorewa’s

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<sup>68</sup> Also see Harries 1979, 170; Renouf 1986, 139.

government might win international recognition, especially since Rhodesia's nominal colonial administrator (the UK) had just elected a new prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, who was known to favour an internal solution to Rhodesia's problems (Renouf 1986, 140-141).

Australia's most famous and prominent foreign policy initiative regarding African issues during Fraser's time in office came with his role in mediating the 1979 CHOGM Lusaka Agreement (Neuhaus 1989). Australia's diplomacy was fully mobilized for the Lusaka meeting and Fraser spent most of his time mediating between the Afro-Asian Commonwealth leaders and Margaret Thatcher (Fraser and Simons 2010, 503-512; Higgott 1983, 249-251).<sup>69</sup> Fraser's effort in brokering a deal which paved the way for the signing of the December 1979 Lancaster House Agreement, in turn bringing about Zimbabwe's independence and black majority rule, was highly publicized by Australian media, and he was widely presented as a 'peacemaker' central to the deal.<sup>70</sup>

However, the importance of Fraser's role in brokering the Lusaka Agreement and by extension Zimbabwe's independence has been questioned, and some scholars have downplayed Fraser's and even the Commonwealth's importance in the affair (Higgott 1983, 250; Renouf 1986, 141). Overall, it is not that important how decisive Fraser's role in brokering a deal for independence and majority rule in Zimbabwe was. He was prominently involved in the affair, and Australia's foreign policy towards Africa was dominated by events in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe for much of Fraser's time in office.

#### Diplomatic representation and development cooperation

During Fraser's tenure in office Australia opened three new diplomatic missions in Africa. Firstly, a new Embassy was opened in 1976 in Algeria (Algiers), and then two new posts followed in 1980; one in the newly independent and black majority ruled Zimbabwe (Harare), and one in Zambia (Lusaka). The Algeria mission was run by Austrade for several years and was opened "primarily for commercial reasons"; the post in Zimbabwe was opened because of the government's interest in the country's independence; and the post in Zambia was opened largely to support frontline states in the struggle against apartheid (DFAT 2010b, 24-25).

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<sup>69</sup> For the full mobilization of Australia's diplomacy at Lusaka, some "two dozen Australian diplomats and officials" who went there to support the prime minister see Simson and McDonald 1979.

<sup>70</sup> See for example *The Australian* 1979 which quotes the British *Financial Times* as referring to Fraser as a statesman arriving on the world's stage. Also see Walters 1980 and Colless 1979.

Australia's foreign policy towards Africa in the late 1970s should also be seen in the context of the country's desire for stability on the continent and limiting Soviet expansion, particularly in Southern Africa (Higgott 1983, 259). In this context we can also understand the government's significant increases in development aid, particularly to Zimbabwe post-independence. Overall Australia's bilateral aid to Africa during the Fraser years grew from roughly AUD 7 million in 1976/77 (2% of total bilateral aid), to AUD 56.2 million in 1982/83 (10.2% of total bilateral aid) (Gertzel and Goldsworthy 1986, 113).

An analysis of Australian aid budget statements from Fraser's time in office reveals that Australia in 1976 dumped aid to African nationalist liberation fighters (there is no mention of it in any of the documents), which would have been in line with Fraser's critique of that assistance during Whitlam's time in power. Fraser's government continued Whitlam's support for various UN Funds for Southern Africa. Other issues of interest include the government's pledge in the 1980/81 budget to provide AUD 10 million of development assistance to newly independent Zimbabwe, a pledge increased in March 1981 to AUD 20 million. Australia also provided during the early 1980s significant amounts of food aid to Uganda, Sudan, and the World Food Program to be used in East Africa (Peacock 1980, 1, 9; Street 1981, 8, 9).

#### Summing up the Fraser years

In summing up Fraser's foreign policy towards Africa several points can be made. Firstly, Australian foreign policy towards Africa in this period was largely confined to multilateral fora (mostly the Commonwealth), and Fraser did not follow Whitlam in attempting to foster greater bilateral ties in terms of diplomatic or trade relations with African countries. Secondly, Fraser's foreign policy towards Africa perceived the continent as mostly peripheral to Australia's interests, and the only time that changed was when Africa was viewed in the context of Soviet expansion in Southern Africa, largely through the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR) support for black liberation movements. When viewed through this lens, Australian foreign policy did try to engage with Southern African issues as a way of containing Soviet influence, but the other underlining aspects of this engagement were also the fight against apartheid, desire for political stability in the region, and Fraser's interest in Zimbabwe's settlement.



At the diplomatic level, Australia's links with black Africa were quite high post the 1979 Lusaka Agreement and Australia's reputation in the Commonwealth was greatly enhanced by Fraser's role in brokering Zimbabwe's independence. However, good bilateral relations were difficult to sustain for a longer period. As Alan Renouf (1986, 153) remarked writing in the mid-1980s, it was questionable whether the new pitch of relations between Australia and Southern African states could be maintained over time, especially since "the material interests, such as trade, which are generally necessary to sustain and reinforce a close relationship, do not really exist and will not do so for an indefinite period". Or as Richard Higgott (1983, 259) observed, diplomatic camaraderie and rhetoric aside, it was unlikely that Australia's relations with black Africa "will undergo major consolidations at the more concrete trading and commercial level", and if "trade is the primary spur to more permanent relationships then prospects are, generally speaking, not favourable". As it would turn out under Bob Hawke's ALP governments in the mid and late 1980s, this lack of stronger Australian economic and strategic interests outside South Africa would eventually result in a decrease in Australia's diplomatic representation across Africa.

### **III.II.IV Bob Hawke and Paul Keating 1983-1996: the end of an era**

In 1983 Malcolm Fraser was defeated at the federal election, and the Labor Party, under the leadership of Bob Hawke came into power. Bob Hawke served as prime minister of Australia from 1983 until late 1991, when he was replaced by Paul Keating who went on to serve as prime minister until 1996.

Australia's foreign policy towards Africa remained dominated by the apartheid South Africa issue well into the early 1990s, when the independence of Namibia, and then the end of white minority rule in South Africa in 1994 removed Southern Africa and apartheid from the forefront of Australia's Africa foreign policy agenda. This in many ways represented an end of an era for Australian foreign policy towards Africa as the fight against apartheid had been central to much of Australia's high-profile foreign policy engagement with Africa. Without such high-profile political issues on the horizon, engagement with Africa was largely sustained during the Keating years by Australia's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions in Western Sahara, Somalia and

Rwanda in 1993-94, and to an extent development cooperation (DFAT 1994, 104).<sup>71</sup> The fall of apartheid set the scene for a decrease in the intensity of Australia's engagement with Africa, particularly on the diplomatic and development cooperation fronts, especially visible in the second half of the 1990s (discussed in greater detail in chapter 6).

### The Commonwealth and South Africa

Bob Hawke was a noted critic of apartheid from his union leadership days in the early 1970s, and under his government Australia maintained its opposition to, and criticism of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Notable Africa foreign policy decisions in the early years of Hawke's reign included the banning of South African sporting teams in Australia in 1983; the 1984 opening of regular refugee quotas for Africa (200 persons per annum), and the 1985 banning of certain exports to, and imports from South Africa (things such as agricultural produce, oil, uranium, coal, iron, military hardware) (Osei-Amo 2004, 221-228).<sup>72</sup> Aside from Australia's bilateral decisions aimed at forcing Pretoria's hand in ending apartheid, the country utilized the Commonwealth for some of its most trumpeted Africa related foreign policy initiatives.

In his memoirs, Bob Hawke (1994, 317) proclaimed his support for the Commonwealth forum:

My faith in the Commonwealth was repaid throughout the period of my prime ministership. During this time CHOGM became the powerful, leading force in mobilizing world opinion against apartheid and, through the application of sanctions, in bringing to an end that evil system.

Indeed, it was through the Commonwealth that, according to Hawke, Australia would initiate the idea of financial sanctions against South Africa, which in the end influenced the apartheid government to allow free universal suffrage elections. As Hawke tells it, he realized that economic sanctions were ineffective against South Africa, and what was needed was investment (financial) sanctions which would make it almost impossible for the apartheid regime to finance its borrowing and debts. Hawke noted South Africa's

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<sup>71</sup> Australia's involvement in Somalia between 1992 and 1994 was the largest deployment of Australian troops in Africa since World War II, whilst the deployment in Rwanda in 1994 involved some 638 ADF personnel (Cuttell 2008, 36, 37).

<sup>72</sup> It is questionable how much some of these decisions were really effective at anything more than highlighting Australia's anti-apartheid credentials. For example, as newspapers from the time reported, the Hawke government's decision to ban South African athletes from traveling to Australia really affected mostly South African amateur athletes while leaving the professionals to travel to the country freely, and represented a policy "marginally different from the Fraser line". All of this was apparently much softer than what the country's Foreign Minister Bill Hayden agitated for (Grattan and Davis 1983).

Finance Minister Barend du Plessis publicly stating that sanctions were hurting his country, and this he thought was a blow to arguments (advanced by Margaret Thatcher amongst others) that sanctions would not have an effect on South Africa. “Against this background I conceived an initiative which, when accepted and implemented, finally broke apartheid (Hawke 1994, 331).”

The initiative Hawke came up with played out at the 1987 CHOGM in Vancouver. Hawke invited a New York based Australian banker, Jim Wolfensohn, to meet with Commonwealth leaders and further discuss Hawke’s financial sanctions ideas. According to Hawke (2014, 2) and his Foreign Minister Gareth Evans (2014, 1, 3-4), it was Australia’s initiative through the Commonwealth that paved the way for other important international players such as the US and European Economic Community to adopt financial sanctions against South Africa, and bring an end to apartheid. Evans and Grant (1995, 294) stated that Australia played a “not unimportant” role in developing the financial sanctions against South Africa, firstly by initiating a study on the impact such sanctions could have, which became “widely influential in international financial circles”, and secondly by proposing and funding the establishment of a study centre at the London School of Economics to assess the role of international capital flows in and out of South Africa. In fact, it was apparently “conceded in discussions Gareth Evans had with a number of ministers and officials during his visit to South Africa in June 1991...that it was the financial sanctions more than any other form of external pressure that had ultimately forced South Africa to the negotiating table” (Evans and Grant 1995, 294). Gareth Evans (2014, 3) reconfirmed this arguing that “...when I visited South Africa in 1991, I spoke to the Governor of the Reserve Bank and others about this [the impact of the financial sanctions] and they all left me in absolutely no doubt that it was the financial sanctions... that was the crucial tipping-point factor in bringing them [the apartheid regime] to the negotiating table”.

This view of Australia’s prominence in bringing about financial sanctions, and their effectiveness in bringing the apartheid regime to an end appears to also have been supported by Nelson Mandela. South Africa’s first black president, apparently, during his 1990 visit to Australia (before becoming South Africa’s president), told Prime Minister Hawke “I want you to know, Bob, that I am here today, at this time, because of you” (Hawke 1994, 335; Hawke 2014, 10). However, again it is important to adopt a dose of healthy scepticism towards politicians’ self-proclaimed achievements while in office. Certainly Nelson Mandela may have been grateful for Australian support for the

liberation struggle, and the country's sanctions against the apartheid regime. But whether his comment implies direct responsibility for bringing apartheid down as opposed to 'usual' diplomatic niceties is difficult to tell.

Moreover, some scholars have criticized Hawke and Evans' interpretation of Australia's importance in this affair, referring to it as "myth-making". Dave Cox (1997, 139-140), who wrote a PhD thesis on Hawke's foreign policy engagement with South Africa, has argued that Australia could have applied sanctions bilaterally, but chose not to because it would hurt its beneficial trade with South Africa, and that Australia actually lagged behind other states, such as the US, in applying sanctions against South Africa. In short, Australia's role in the affair was not one of leadership:

The efforts of the Hawke government at the United Nations and the Commonwealth were not as they have been portrayed by Hawke and Evans. The Hawke government cannot take credit for facilitating political change in South Africa...The Hawke government's role within the international sanctions movement cannot be claimed to be one of leadership. The government did show itself willing to argue the case for selective sanctions within the United Nations and the Commonwealth. But this activism was limited and lagged well behind a number of other states.

Australian newspapers from the time of the 1987 CHOGM only report Hawke's proposal for a study of the impact international financial sanctions could have on South Africa as one of several proposals in the debate on South Africa, and even James Wolfensohn in his own autobiography in which he is anything but shy about highlighting his own professional and personal achievements does not once mention Bob Hawke or the 1987 CHOGM, or South Africa (Wolfensohn 2010; Steketee 1987a,b). One would expect that if he had played such a significant role alongside Bob Hawke in helping broker the ultimate demise of apartheid, Wolfensohn would have at least mentioned it once.

Whatever the case may be about the effectiveness of financial sanctions in bringing down apartheid, according to the ANC and Nelson Mandela, although they were in favour of them, they would have also hurt black South Africans as well (Wren 1990). Highlighting financial sanctions as the "tipping-point" bringing about an end to apartheid significantly under-appreciates the importance of the internal and domestic struggle against apartheid (Osei-Amo 2004, 224-225). In the end, whether Australia was key in developing financial sanctions or not matters little; the point is that Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was wholly dominated by the apartheid issue,

and its high political profile would in some ways help mask the country's slow on-the-ground diplomatic disengagement from Africa during the 1980s.

### Diplomatic representation and development cooperation

The mid 1980s saw the publishing of two important government reports which in many ways set the course for Australia's foreign policy towards Africa in the future. In March 1984 the *Report of the Committee to Review The Australian Overseas Aid Program* was published (known as the Jackson Report after the committee's chairman, Gordon Jackson), and in 1986 the *Review of Australia's Overseas Representation* was also published (known as the Harris Report, after the report's author Stuart Harris). Some of the findings and recommendations of both of these reports would have important implications for Australia's foreign policy towards African states both in the Hawke/Keating era, and beyond.

#### *Jackson Report and aid to Africa*

The Jackson Report (1984, 7) on Australia's overseas aid program recommended that project (development) aid should not be directed towards African countries, and that food (emergency) aid, technical assistance, and training should "continue to be the principal forms of assistance for Africa". Although the report carefully pointed out that this should not imply a complete withdrawal of Australian aid to Africa, it did disadvantage the region. Most importantly, the report's recommendations were accepted by the Hawke government, and the Jackson Report influenced the thinking of successive Australian governments about aid to Africa. Australia was by that time already withdrawing funding for major development projects in Africa, financing only one large scale project (the Magarini settlement project in Kenya), after having already pulled out of its only other major project on the continent (the Singida water supply project in Tanzania) (Gertzel and Goldsworthy 1986, 114, 123, 124).

The overall argument of the Jackson Report was that Australia should focus its aid on its neighbourhood, implying that this was where Australian aid could make the most difference and satisfy the country's foreign policy interests. Australia's aid, post the Jackson Report did refocus on Australia's own region, but remained relatively engaged with Africa, at least Southern Africa. In the decade between 1984/85 and 1994/95 almost 90% of Australia's total aid to Africa was given to Southern Africa (44%) and Eastern Africa (43%) (AusAID 1995, 14). In support for the fight against apartheid and

southern African frontline states, the Australian government instituted two three-year funding programs in Southern Africa, the first from 1987/88 to 1990, worth around AUD 100 million, and the second from 1990/1991 to 1993, worth some AUD 110 million. Both these programs were aimed at supporting Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states, and from the 1990s Namibia and the ANC (Evans 1990, 29-20). In 1994, with the formal end of apartheid in South Africa, Australia announced a new three-year aid package of around AUD 30 million but directed only to South Africa, and noticeably smaller in volume to what had been provided before (Bilney 1995, 41).

After the fall of apartheid, the Jackson Report's recommendations were revisited and a new review of aid to Africa was instigated. The new document did not recommend an expansion of aid to Africa, or better said, of its geographic scope. The 1995 *Australian Aid to Africa: A New Framework* recommended that aid should be focused on the areas where Australia had already for the past decade been providing aid, that is Southern and Eastern Africa. It stated that only Southern African states (South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe) should be eligible for the full range of developmental aid assistance, and then went on to argue that Australian aid should also focus on the Horn of Africa, especially with regards to nation-building initiatives. The report further recommended that aid to West Africa be phased out, and, contrary to what the Jackson Report recommended but the Hawke government never accepted, that Australia should not join the AfDB (AusAID 1995, xi-xiv). Regardless of the recommendations of these two reports, for much of the late 1980s and first half of 1990s total ODA to SSA hovered around AUD 100 million a year which represented a significant development engagement with Africa, particularly when compared to what followed after 1996 and the election of the Howard government.

#### *The Harris Report and Australian diplomatic representation in Africa*

Stuart Harris' report on Australia's diplomatic representation was notable for several reasons. Harris was an economist by training, and Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1987 when he oversaw the merger of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade. That merger was itself a good indication of the changing understanding of foreign policy priorities, and the higher primacy given to economic relations in the pursuit of foreign policy advancement (Harris 2002).



At the time of the writing of the Harris Report, Australia had 10 diplomatic missions in Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Mauritius). Arguably, the reason why the Harris Report is so notable for Australian foreign policy towards Africa is that it predicted (and possibly influenced) the closure of several diplomatic posts in Africa. While Australia's representation in Cairo was deemed "appropriate to prosecute Australia's political and commercial interests", Harris (1986, 205) noted that it would be difficult to maintain and justify the mission to Algeria due to limited economic prospects. Australia's mission in Algeria was eventually closed in 1991 "owing to budgetary pressures," the declining significance of commercial interests, and "civil conflict in Algeria"(DFAT 2010b, 24). Harris further noted that essential Australian interests in Africa were limited, and outlined which posts were of limited or little significance (places such as Lusaka, Harare, Dar Es Salaam, Lagos). As Harris (1986, 208) argued "The Commonwealth connection, Australia's opposition to apartheid and involvement in the Rhodesian settlement have led to a pattern of representation in black Africa beyond that essential to Australia's immediate interests".

The Harris Report highlighted how economic interests and not necessarily political ones serve the best basis for opening and closing diplomatic posts. This is clearly seen in the case of Africa. A year before Harris' report came out, Australia closed its post in Ghana after operating in the country since the late 1950s, partially because of political instability and partially due to lacking economic interests in West Africa and Ghana. Australia also closed its posts in Ethiopia in 1987 (due to budget cuts, and probably the loss of interest in the East African famine — the post was initially opened in 1984 to coordinate the humanitarian relief effort there), in Tanzania in 1987 (again due to budget cuts and low economic interests), and in Zambia in 1991 (due to lacking economic and political interests, the latter influenced by the fall of apartheid in South Africa). On the other hand, Bob Hawke's government opened a diplomatic post in Mauritius in 1984 but that mission effectively replaced Tanzania as the center for diplomatic representation for the Indian Ocean, and was part of the reason for the closure of the post in Tanzania three years later (DFAT 2010b, 24-25). As one senior Australian diplomat noted, at least from the 1980s onwards, there was always a "zero-sum" game with regards to diplomatic posts in Africa, exhibited in a pattern of opening a post in one place but having to close in another, all of which "has been a real problem for Africa policy development, and one of the consequences of that was that no one

wanted to make their career in Africa because it was quite clear that this was not going to be an area of expansion”.<sup>73</sup>

### Summing up the Hawke and Keating era

Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa during the Hawke and Keating era followed the already established tradition of being conducted mostly through the Commonwealth forum, and mainly concerned with apartheid in South Africa. However, this was not a monolithic period of foreign policy engagement. Australia’s engagement with African affairs during the 1980s was dominated by the high-profile apartheid issue, and this only became more prominent in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to the Hawke government’s initiatives in bringing about financial sanctions against South Africa. The high-profile of the apartheid issue and general poverty and famine challenges within Africa served to sustain a degree of development cooperation with Africa during the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s, which would not be surpassed until another ALP government came to power in 2008.

The prominence of the apartheid issue, and the devastating civil wars in Somalia and Rwanda in the early 1990s all served to in some ways mask the change in the overall diplomatic intensity of engagement with Africa during the first half of the 1990s. In terms of Australia’s overall foreign policy agenda, the Keating government in the early 1990s made it clear that Australia’s foreign policy should have a significant regional and economic focus. This did not mean that multilateral avenues were abandoned, as the ALP’s foreign policy outlook of maintaining engagement with multilateral fora was still very prominent during those years. After all, it was because of multilateral engagements through the UN that Australia experienced its largest military deployment in Africa since World War II (Cuttell 2008, 36-38; Odgers 2000, 377-383). Nevertheless, the focus on the region, coupled with a growing emphasis on commercial interests in foreign policy worked in favour of a changing nature of engagement with Africa, and this was further underpinned by contextual factors such as the end of apartheid in South Africa.

### **III.III Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to broadly outline the historical context of Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa prior to 1996. The chapter has charted the

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<sup>73</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 9 April 2014.

evolution of Australia's foreign policy engagement with African issues through successive Australian governments. It highlighted how continuity and change in that engagement unfolded, and was on the one hand underpinned by wider contextual factors, while on the other, ultimately shaped by the decisions undertaken by those Australian governments. The overall objective of the chapter was to highlight several important themes and recurring issues which have helped establish Africa's 'place' in the wider Australian foreign policy agenda. Ironically, although this wider foreign policy agenda has experienced some significant changes in the time period under review, such as for example Australia's changing foreign and strategic relationships with the UK, US, and its broader Asian region, Africa's place in it has remained relatively constant. It began its life in Australia's autonomous and independent foreign policy as a space of rather marginal interest, and more than sixty years later, notwithstanding limited efforts to the contrary, it largely remains in that same policy space.

The first section of the chapter briefly examined Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa prior to the end of World War II. An argument was made that because Australia did not really have an autonomous and substantially independent foreign policy during this time, contacts with Africa and African issues were usually mandated by British (imperial) interests. Save for military expeditions in support of British interests in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and two campaigns fought during the two World Wars, Australian official foreign policy contacts with Africa were largely non-existent.

The second section of the chapter was devoted to a chronological examination of Australian foreign policy engagement with Africa from the 1950s onwards. Largely after World War II and in the early 1950s, Australia began to develop a substantive autonomous and independent foreign policy of its own. However, during much of Robert Menzies' long reign as Australia's prime minister, this foreign policy with regards to Africa remained relatively 'in tune' with British interest on the African continent. This section argued that Menzies' long reign in many ways set the foundations for Africa's place in Australia's wider foreign policy agenda. Engagement with African issues was almost exclusively multilateral (either through the UN or the Commonwealth), and focused on the only area of the continent inhabited by large white settler communities-Southern Africa. An argument was also made that due to the Coalition governments' sympathy for these communities and to a degree their racial

exclusion governance systems, Australia's reputation and standing in the world suffered.

Gough Whitlam's Labor party entry into government in 1973 marked a noticeable change in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa. Although Whitlam was in power for only three years, he instituted changes that were not reversed by his successor, the conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Whitlam openly and vigorously opposed the apartheid system and changed many of Australia's voting patterns on the issue within the UN. Both Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser utilized international fora, particularly the Commonwealth, to advance Australia's reputation and standing in the world by siding with Third World governments in condemning the apartheid system and this gained the country much friendship amongst many of the world's decolonized countries. It should be noted that during their tenures in power, both Whitlam and Fraser were to a large extent out of step with Australia's major strategic allies and partners, such as the UK and US, who were not as vociferous in condemning apartheid and siding with African grievances on the issue.

The section examining the reign of ALP Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating argued that it was in this time period that Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa experienced a slow recalibration of the intensity of diplomatic engagement, and this change was underpinned by contextual factors such as the end of the Cold War and apartheid's ultimate demise in 1994. However, whilst the focus of Australia's foreign policy agenda during the Hawke and Keating years was becoming more economically minded and region-specific, their governments still maintained a high-profile engagement with at least the apartheid issue. Although contextual factors were at play in underpinning the changing intensity of this foreign policy engagement, it is important to note that both Hawke and Keating's governments maintained a serious development cooperation engagement with Africa, albeit mostly Southern Africa. Those levels of engagement were only again reached and surpassed under another ALP government after 2007.

Several observations must be made about the foundations of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. Firstly, Australian foreign policy engagement with African issues has traditionally been more multilateral than bilateral. From this perspective, while the UN has been important, it was really the Commonwealth that proved to be Australia's traditional window into Africa. What all of these various episodes of

Australian engagement with African issues through the Commonwealth demonstrate is that the organization has been an almost invaluable forum for the development of Australian diplomatic expertise on African issues, and the advancement of the country's reputation internationally. As argued elsewhere

It is very difficult to imagine Australia not only substantially engaging, but also exercising a significant amount of influence over issues such as anti-racism and the fight against apartheid, or the settlement of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's international status, outside of the Commonwealth forum. African issues within the Commonwealth have provided Australia with significant opportunities in advancing its international reputation as a Middle Power and Good International Citizen... and at least since the early 1970s, repeated Australian government's seized such opportunities to cement Australia's internationalist credentials (Pijovic 2014, 394).

Secondly, Australia's foreign policy engagement with African issues has by and large been focused on apartheid and racial segregation in Southern Africa. From at least the days of South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth in 1961, to the final demise of apartheid in 1994, the prism through which successive Australian policy-makers have seen the African continent was the struggle against apartheid. The anti-apartheid struggle was for good and for bad the principal driver of Australian foreign policy attention in Africa, and this was highly evident in Australia's development cooperation with the continent, particularly from the early 1970s onwards. The long term effect of this preoccupation with apartheid was that it in many ways excluded any discussion about other possible interests in Africa. This in turn resulted in a foreign policy focus vacuum in the 1990s, and this is why the Keating government presided over an end of an era of Australian foreign policy engagement with Africa. This is also one of the reasons why it was quite easy for the incoming Howard government in 1996 to perceive Africa as a place with almost no observable foreign policy interests or objectives for Australia.

Lastly, one of the central pillars of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa has been the perception of Africa as marginal to Australia's overall foreign policy interests and agenda. In light of the very limited commercial, immigration, cultural, and defence and strategic links between Australia and African states this may seem as self-evident, but it was not necessarily destined to be so. As noted in the section on the Menzies era, there were perceptions of Africa as a space of potential commercial, strategic, and foreign policy opportunity and interest during the late 1950s and especially in the wake of the mass decolonization movement which by the early 1960s

gave birth to so many African states. However, it was the active decision-making of successive conservative Australian government that failed to foster any substantive links with African states past the already established interests in and connections with Southern African white settler societies or the broader Commonwealth connection. Yes, during the Menzies era Australia opened its largest number of diplomatic missions in Africa, but except for Egypt, all of them were in Commonwealth member states (South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya). Hence, aside from some strategic perceptions of Africa's importance in the wider Cold War struggle against communism, the continent has hardly ever in the time period under review figured as a place of particular note for Australian foreign policy interests. Although this will remain a historical hypothetical, perhaps if Australia had been governed by a less conservative party in the 1950s and 60s its foreign policy-makers would have perceived Africa somewhat differently, and would have made concerted efforts at engaging African states beyond Southern Africa to help build more durable foreign policy connections.



## **CHAPTER IV: Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa 1996-2015**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline how Australia's foreign policy engagement with the African continent evolved between 1996 and 2015. While it is not the objective of the chapter to provide an overview of every foreign policy issue that took place in this time period, the emphasis will be on high-profile and substantive foreign policy issues and initiatives which have marked Australia's overall foreign policy engagement with African states. The chapter combines a chronological and thematic approach in narrating how the three Australian governments under review maintained foreign policy engagement with African states. The chapter is divided into three main sections, each examining in turn the Howard Coalition government (1996-2007), the Rudd and Gillard ALP governments (2007-2013), and the Abbott Coalition government (2013-2015).

These three sections are further subdivided into thematic subsections which focus on the three aspects of foreign policy outlined in chapter 2: diplomatic, security, and economic; and development cooperation. There are three broad reasons for this division. Firstly, the portfolio in charge of foreign policy in Australia is titled 'Foreign Affairs and Trade' and since the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade were merged in the late 1980s, Australia's external economic or commercial cooperation is often difficult to disentangle and examine separately from 'purely' diplomatic cooperation. That is to say that diplomatic initiatives are often taken in a bid to support commercial or economic interests, and economic initiatives support the country's diplomacy. Secondly, since there was no substantive security cooperation taking place during the examined time period, or better said it was never a major focus of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa, security cooperation initiatives will be noted within the same examination of diplomatic and economic cooperation. Thirdly, although Australia's development cooperation was, and continues to be an important tool of the country's foreign policy, it was for the most part of the past two decades and up until late 2013 administered through a nominally independent and autonomous executive agency, AusAID, and as such will be discussed in a separate subsection.

The chapter has a dual aim: provide a detailed empirical description of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015, thereby also offering background for the subsequent three analytical chapters which will examine the changes

in this foreign policy engagement, before proceeding to analyse the factors underpinning and affecting those changes.

#### **IV.I The Howard Government (March 1996 – November 2007): ‘episodic’ and ‘reactive’ engagement with Africa**

As a first point in introducing the Howard government’s foreign policy engagement with Africa, and as already noted in the discussion of contextual factors underpinning foreign policy change in chapter 2, it is important to observe that Australia’s engagement with Africa during the early and mid-1990s was already experiencing subtle changes. As highlighted in the previous chapter, Australia’s engagement with Africa, or better said mostly Southern and Eastern Africa and the Commonwealth countries, largely revolved around supporting the struggle against apartheid. Relations with the rest of the continent took a back seat in that engagement, except when multilateral cooperation mandated Australian participation, such as with Australian Defence Force (ADF) contributions to UN operations. With the fall of apartheid, the substance of the engagement started to slowly shift towards primarily commercial and trade issues.

When asked how he would describe Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa during his tenure as foreign minister, Alexander Downer observed that “it was a low priority... we did not give it a high priority, and our policy towards Africa was more episodic than strategic”.<sup>74</sup> Between 1996 and 2004 Australia’s diplomatic engagement with Africa did not experience any new or reinvigorating initiatives for greater foreign policy engagement (save for trade engagement with South Africa). The South Africa trade link was the only relationship the Howard government proactively cared to sustain, and this was consistent with its approach to establishing diplomatic contacts only following the establishment of sufficient economic links (Ford 2003, 31). Overall, as Geoffrey Hawker (2004, 1) suggested, the Howard government exhibited a “politics out, trade in” approach to engagement with Africa which was overall reactive rather than proactive.

The high point of diplomatic efforts and interests in Africa in this period took place during the 2002 and 2003 CHOGMs which were dominated by the suspension of Zimbabwe. This was at the same time the culmination of Australian diplomatic

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<sup>74</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

mobilization in support of a prominent foreign policy issue relating to Africa, and a low point in its overall relations with its largest African trading partner, South Africa. The paradox here was that while the Howard government's contact with African issues came wholly through the Commonwealth, as Alexander Downer has argued, that same government was "pretty sceptical about the Commonwealth" and "did not invest a lot of time and energy" in it.<sup>75</sup>

Engagement with Africa did appear to pick up some traction in the last few years of the Howard government, coinciding with the strengthening of Australian commercial interests in Africa, and the global resources boom. The Howard government, whilst largely reactive in fostering foreign policy engagement with Africa was not completely blind to changes on the continent, and in 2004 and 2005 moved to support growing Australian commercial and consular interests in Africa. The following section will seek to chart the 'episodes' of this engagement across the three aspects of foreign policy.

## **IV.I.I Diplomatic, Security, and Economic cooperation**

### Africa and the failed 1996 UNSC bid

Soon after being elected to government, and in the context of Australia's UNSC campaign launched by the previous Labor government, the incoming foreign minister, Alexander Downer, attended a meeting of the OAU in Cameroon in early July 1996 (Downer 1996a). This was one of Downer's first overseas trips as foreign minister, but proved to be a relatively low key affair. Downer also appointed Malcolm Fraser as Australia's special envoy to Africa in an attempt to lobby African governments in support of the country's UNSC campaign (Downer 1996b).

Although the Coalition government made an attempt to support the UNSC bid, the campaign ended terribly for Australia. In the lead up to the October 1996 vote there was a high degree of confidence in Australia's chances of winning a UNSC seat, and Australia's ambassador to the UN spearheading the campaign, Richard Butler, was highly optimistic (Stewart 1996). However, as the vote got closer reports started indicating it would be a very close race and there was a hint of possible African vote buying.<sup>76</sup> When the vote took place on 21 October 1996, Australia's bid fared disastrously. The country ran against Sweden and Portugal, and in the first round polled

<sup>75</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>76</sup> For example, some UN member states such as Chad and Sao Tome and Principe, who had been in arrears with their UN dues for two or more years, suddenly paid those dues and were eligible to vote; see Littlejohns 1996.

91 votes (as compared to Sweden's 153, and Portugal's 112), whilst in the second round runoff with Portugal, it polled only 57 votes compared to Portugal's 124 (UN 1996).

The loss was somewhat shocking, not only for the diplomats and foreign affairs staff involved but also for Australia's foreign and prime ministers (Daily Telegraph 1996a). Alexander Downer admitted his surprise by stating "I don't know what went wrong with the calculations, I have to be honest with you", whilst a day after the vote, Prime Minister Howard requested DFAT to explain the gap between the predictions of a successful vote and what had transpired in New York on the day (quoted in McPhedran 1996; Murdoch and Baker 1996; Daily Telegraph 1996b). In the post-election analysis a variety of issues were raised as to why Australia was unsuccessful in its UNSC bid, but Richard Butler's own assessment of the situation was that "we lost this vote in Africa" (quoted in Attwood 1996b).<sup>77</sup>

Some commentators at the time observed that lobbying African votes for the UNSC was a "lesson in failure", even though it was recognized by DFAT during the campaign that Africa was a "potential weakness":

In the two-year campaign for the security council, Africa was always assessed by officials as a potential weakness. Consequently, both the Keating and Howard-led governments invested a lot of time and energy winning the Africans over...But the effort put into Africa does not seem to have paid off. Senior officials conceded yesterday this had been the region where the greatest drift in support for Australia probably occurred (Greenlees 1996).

The shocking failure of the UNSC campaign, and the overall narrative dominating the post-election analysis which pinpointed a large part of the blame on shifting (or bought) African votes may have had an effect on the Australian government's foreign policy engagement with the African continent. Although in the wake of the UNSC election failure some within DFAT appear to have been prompted "to question not only the style of Australia's campaign but also what weight needs to be given to cultivating [relations with] regions outside the obvious foreign policy priorities", there were concerning reports that Australia was set to close down four diplomatic posts, one of which was in

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<sup>77</sup> Some of the other issues identified in media reports included Portugal's vote buying, Australia's running on a dual ticket with Sweden which did not seem to favour the former, the Australian government's stance on East Timor (recognising Indonesia's sovereignty in contrast to Portugal's support for East Timor's independence), Richard Butler's own personal style of 'diplomacy' which may have alienated other UN diplomats, strained relations with France over opposition to its nuclear testing in the Pacific, and Australia's unflinching support for the US especially with regards to the Middle East and airstrikes on Iraq, see *The Canberra Times* 1996; Attwood 1996a. Richard Butler did admit that his own style may have been an issue, but still emphasized Africa as a crucial factor, see Attwood 1996b.

Nigeria (Greenlees 1996; Miranda and Mckenzie 1996). The closure of a post in Nigeria did not eventuate, but neither did the reconsideration of the importance that should be given to cultivating relationships with regions outside the government's obvious immediate foreign policy priorities.

When asked about Australia's ability to secure African votes for the UNSC bid, Alexander Downer noted that Australia would have received some votes from Africa, but that in overall terms of UNSC campaign support, Africa "was not our heartland."<sup>78</sup> The perceived and possibly quite substantial lack of support from Africa for Australia's UNSC bid may have had the effect of further entrenching in the minds of Coalition leaders the idea that engagement with Africa offered little foreign policy rewards.

Alexander Downer's next trip to Africa came two years later in June 1998, during his first visit to the Middle East where he stopped off in Egypt for a few days to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Trade and Consultations (Downer 1998b). Following this, the next high-level diplomatic engagement with African issues took place through Australia's 'traditional' window into Africa, the Commonwealth. In 1999 Australia's Prime Minister John Howard, participated in the CHOGM in South Africa, thereby becoming the first sitting Australian prime minister to have actually visited the country (Howard 1999).<sup>79</sup> Finally, the last notable foreign policy engagement in this period was Downer's visit to South Africa and Kenya in April-May 2001, which "advanced dialogue on Commonwealth issues" in preparation for the upcoming CHOGM in 2002 (DFAT 2001, 64).

At the same time, Australia's security engagement with Africa was quite low as compared to the mid-1990s when the country's military forces experienced their largest deployment in Africa since World War II. In the late 1990s Australia's security engagement with Africa extended to cooperation on illegal fishing (mainly with South Africa), and support for de-mining as part of a UN mission in Mozambique, represented by one or two ADF engineering staff (DOD 1998, 186; 1999, 182; 2000a, 9).

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<sup>78</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>79</sup> No serving Australian prime minister visited South Africa during the apartheid days. Malcolm Fraser, as a member of a Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, was sent to investigate apartheid in the mid-1980s, but that was after his prime ministership.

## Economic cooperation and focus on South Africa

In August 1996, some five months after entering government, Australia's Minister for Trade, Tim Fischer delivered a major speech on trade with Southern Africa which spelt out his government's strategy for enhancing trade and commercial links with the southern end of the continent. That speech also constitutes the only major speech on trade with Africa delivered by an Australian Minister for Trade during the Howard government's four terms in power. It was only in October 2000 that another similar, although less strategic and more descriptive speech on trade opportunities with South Africa was delivered by an Australian Minister for Trade, this time Mark Vaile. The fact that throughout the tenure of the Howard government the only two speeches on Australian trade with Africa focused almost exclusively on South Africa provides a good indication of the Australian government's trade priorities in Africa.

In his 1996 speech Fischer first noted the trade and investment opportunities between Australia and South Africa, and then outlined his government's strategy for "helping the business community make the most of Southern Africa's trade and investment opportunities" (Fischer 1996). Fischer stated that his government was doing this in four ways: promoting trade and investment (such as holding 'Australia week' functions in South Africa); strengthening the framework for trade and investment (such as signing a Double Taxation Agreement); strengthening economic consultation between the two governments (such as establishing a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC)); and closely cooperating with South Africa on the Indian Ocean regional initiative (which eventually became the IORA) (Fischer 1996). These policies were recommended by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade's (JSCFADT) *Inquiry Into Southern Africa*, launched by Gareth Evans in 1995, and re-established after the election of the Coalition government in 1996 (JSCFADT 1996, xxvi-xxix).

In July 1997 Fischer visited South Africa for the inaugural JMC with South Africa, co-chaired with South Africa's Minister for Trade and Industry, Alec Erwin (Fischer 1997). Australia's next ministerial engagement with African trade issues came again via the JMC with South Africa, which was held in Canberra in December 1998. This meeting saw Australia committing to finalize its Double Taxation Agreement with the country, and also signing an Extradition Agreement (Fischer 1998). As part of the CHOGM taking place in South Africa in 1999, Trade Minister Tim Fischer also



participated in the Commonwealth Business Forum in November 1999 (DFAT 2000, 64).

The next visit to Africa by an Australian Minister for Trade was in October 2000 when Mark Vaile visited India, Egypt, and South Africa. Vaile led a delegation of Australian businesses to Egypt where he signed a new agreement on Investment Promotion and Protection, and discussed various multilateral and bilateral trade issues particularly relating to agriculture (Vaile 2000b). Then, during his visit to South Africa, Vaile commemorated the opening of a Monash University campus in Johannesburg, and co-chaired the third JMC with South Africa (Vaile 2000a). This was the second and last occasion during the Howard government that an Australian Minister for Trade delivered a major speech on Australia's economic engagement with a part of Africa, where Vaile simply reiterated the growing strength of the bilateral economic relationship between Australia and Africa (Vaile 2000c).

In July 2002 Mark Vaile again visited Africa, this time Libya. Vaile was the first Australian minister to visit Libya since Australia suspended diplomatic relations with the North African country in 1987. As Vaile (2002a) noted at the time, Libya offered numerous opportunities to further enhance Australia's reputation as a supplier of high-quality and value-for-money products and services, and "as a valued trading partner in meat, livestock, wheat, milk powder, and services in the water, oil and gas and civil aviation sectors, Libya is now a prospective customer for Australian oil exploration services". In the background of the visit, and coming to fruition a year or so later, was an AUD 140 million investment in the Libyan oil sector by the Australian company Woodside Energy Ltd (currently named Woodside Petroleum) (DFAT 2004, 67; Vaile 2002b; Downer and Vaile 2004).

#### The peak of John Howard's engagement with Africa: 2002/3 CHOGMs and the suspension of Zimbabwe

During the Howard government's time in office no foreign policy issue relating to Africa was more high-profile and demanding of the prime minister's focus than that of Zimbabwe and its 'flawed' presidential election in 2002. It represented, as already noted, simultaneously the culmination of Australia's diplomatic efforts in Africa (DFAT

2002, 56), and at the same time a low point in Australia's overall relations with Africa (particularly South Africa).<sup>80</sup>

In 2002 John Howard was chair of the CHOGM taking place in Australia, where he played a prominent role in also chairing the appointed 'Troika of Leaders' (including South Africa's President Mbeki, and Nigeria's Obasanjo) whose job was to engage Zimbabwe's President Mugabe and "respond to the expected report of Commonwealth election observers, in order to help find a solution that would benefit all the people of Zimbabwe" (McKinnon 2004, 406). The Zimbabwean election itself took place a week after the CHOGM in Australia, and the Commonwealth election observers' team "expressed concern about the high level of politically motivated violence and intimidation which preceded the poll" concluding that "the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for a free expression of will by electors" (McKinnon 2004, 406-407).<sup>81</sup>

In March 2002, the Troika announced Zimbabwe's suspension from the councils of the Commonwealth, stopping short of suspending the country's membership of the organization (DFAT 2002, 85). The Troika of Commonwealth leaders met again later in Nigeria in September 2002 where John Howard was highly prominent in calling for Zimbabwe's full suspension from the organization. As Howard (2002a) stated at the time, "I was arguing that the Troika...should move immediately to fully suspend Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth because of the failure of Zimbabwe to show any sensitivity at all to Commonwealth opinion arising out of the observer group finding on the election". Howard's hard lined stance caused a rift within the Troika and he was unable to secure Nigeria and South Africa's support for full suspension, but Australia nevertheless moved to institute 'smart' sanctions against the Zimbabwean government (Ford 2003, 27-28; McDougall 2005, 345).

Australia's sanctions did not have a great impact on President Mugabe's ability to hold onto power, but Howard was successful in advocating for an extension of Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth. In December 2003 at the CHOGM in Nigeria Howard's hard line stance caused a further rift between Australia and prominent African members of the Commonwealth, but the Commonwealth did announce Zimbabwe's

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<sup>80</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 8 April 2014.

<sup>81</sup> In terms of Australia's future foreign policy engagement with Africa it is worth mentioning that two of Australia's future foreign ministers, Kevin Rudd and Julie Bishop, participated in these Commonwealth observer teams, see Neuhaus 2013, part 1, 13.

suspension, upon which President Mugabe withdrew his country from the organisation altogether (Neuhaus 2013, part 1, 14). When the suspension was announced, another member of the Troika, Nigeria's President Obasanjo stated that it could be a matter of months and not years before Zimbabwe was re-admitted into the Commonwealth, while Howard publicly espoused a notably contrasting view stating that he was "at the more pessimistic end of the scale" (quoted in *SMH* 2003).

Howard's intransigence on Zimbabwe's suspension alienated particularly South Africa's President Mbeki, causing a significant strain between the two states, with Mbeki stating publicly days after the meeting that Howard in particular was to be blamed for the disintegration of the Troika and Zimbabwe's suspension by unilaterally calling for sanctions against the country, against the advice of Nigeria and South Africa (Mail & Guardian, 2003). According to John Howard's autobiography, the whole 2002/3 CHOGM Zimbabwe issue "was just about the most demoralizing foreign affairs issue that I touched in my time as Prime Minister" (Howard 2011, 526).

#### Engagement with Africa 2003-2007

In 2004 Australia re-opened its High Commission in Ghana, thereby increasing the country's diplomatic representation in West Africa to two posts (Ghana and Nigeria) (DFAT 2005, 67). In the same year, Alexander Downer visited Libya, where he announced Australia would open a Consulate-General in the country in 2005 (Downer and Vaile 2004). In December 2005 Australia opened that Austrade-run Consulate-General in Libya, highlighting its predominant role as supporting the country's commercial interest in North Africa.

In October 2006 Australia hosted another JMC meeting with South Africa, where DFAT also "hosted senior officials' talks with South Africa, deepening dialogue on key regional and strategic issues relating to Africa, counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation" (DFAT 2007, 77-80).

In terms of security engagement with the African continent, the early 2000s saw a slight rise in Australia's participation in international peacekeeping operations on the continent. Although the aforementioned participation in the UN de-mining operation in Mozambique finished in March 2002, the ADF contributed forces to newly established UN missions in Africa. 'Operation Pomelo' in Ethiopia/Eritrea was from 2001 supported by two ADF officers stationed at the UN headquarters, and 'Operation

Husky' in Sierra Leone was from the same year supported by two ADF staff providing training and advisory to the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (DOD 2001, 82; 2002, 76). Australia's support for 'Operation Husky' ended in February 2003 (DOD 2003a, 98), while its support for 'Operation Pomelo' ended in June 2005 (DOD 2003a, 149). Around that same time Australia also responded to the political and humanitarian crisis in Darfur by increasing its humanitarian aid to the region, and also contributing some 15 ADF personnel to the UN Mission in Sudan (DOD 2006, 95).

*The global resources boom and slow recognition of Australian commercial interests continent-wide*

In surveying Australia's economic and commercial cooperation with African states from the early 2000s onwards, it is worth again reiterating that much of it should be seen in the context of global forces and changes within Africa itself. Many African countries were experiencing prolonged periods of political stability, and governments were keen to exploit their countries' mineral and resources opportunities. With this background in mind, and coinciding with the beginnings of what would later be termed the global resources boom, there were attempts to change the economic narrative about Africa from a traditionally pessimistic one to a more optimistic and opportunity focused one. In this context the Economic Analytical Unit of DFAT published a report on emerging business opportunities in several African countries titled *African renewal: Business Opportunities in South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, Mozambique and Kenya*. As the executive summary of the report noted

Perceptions of Sub-Saharan Africa in the business community and the wider public are dominated by images of poverty and political instability. But change is underway in this region, just as it is in less developed parts of East and South Asia. Some economies in Sub-Saharan Africa have either grown quite strongly for a decade or more, or have undertaken reforms which suggest a capacity to do so. These warrant closer examination by Australian business. Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda, which are the subject of this report, have good economic growth prospects. The five economies account for most of Australia's trade and investment with Sub-Saharan Africa; they account for 76 per cent of Australia's trade with the region while South Africa alone receives 64 per cent of its investment...their improved performance is generating new investment and to some extent trade opportunities for Australian business (DFAT 2003b, xiii).

Within the spirit of Africa's growing appeal as a destination for investment and the global resources boom driving up prices of primary commodities and minerals, in its last few years in office the Howard government moved to react to such forces. As

already noted, Australia opened a diplomatic post in Libya and a High Commission in Ghana, and this was partially driven by growing commercial interest in West and North Africa, particularly in the resources sector.

The Australian government maintained its primary focus on enhancing commercial links with South Africa, and in March 2005 the country was visited by Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade Bruce Billson (DFAT 2005, 70-71).<sup>82</sup> In February 2007 Australian posts in Africa jointly with Austrade hosted a major promotion of Australian mining expertise at the annual African Mining Indaba conference in Cape Town. As the DFAT annual report suggested, Australia's involvement at the Mining Indaba conference "highlighted the growing presence of Australian resource companies in Africa and showcased their expertise in the field" (DFAT 2007, 207). As the global resources boom and Australian companies' interest in Africa continued to grow over the coming years, attendance at this event would under Labor become one of the pillars of the government's support for Australian commercial interests in Africa.

## **IV.I.II Development Cooperation**

### Africa off the menu

In order to understand the broader context of the Howard government's development cooperation with the African continent it is important to keep in mind the nature of this cooperation during the last few years of the Keating government. As the previous chapter highlighted, in 1995 AusAID published a review of development cooperation with Africa, outlining the rationale for a more focused and specific aid program towards Africa. The major points included a geographic focus on Southern and Eastern Africa; a focus on reconstruction, training, and humanitarian relief funding; a phasing out of development assistance to West Africa; and the decision not to join the AfDB (AusAID 1995, x-xiii).

As the report noted, in the decade between 1984/85 and 1994/95 Australia provided aid to 51 African countries, but the vast majority of it went to Southern Africa (44%) and Eastern Africa and the Horn (43%) (AusAID 1995, 14). The trend of providing a large chunk of development assistance to Southern Africa, especially since the early 1990s was driven by international and domestic political considerations. According to AusAID

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<sup>82</sup> The Trade Minister Mark Vaile also visited Kenya in March 2005, but that was for the purposes of World Trade Organisation talks and not a bilateral visit to Kenya as such, see Vaile 2005.

(1995, 12) there were increasing expectations that Australia would match its high political profile on opposition to apartheid with a commensurate aid contribution to those countries whose economies were suffering from anti-apartheid sanctions.

Hence, in the last years of the Keating government the trend was set for Australian aid in Africa to focus specifically on primarily Southern and to a lesser extent Eastern Africa. Whilst this would be continued under the Howard government, the overall levels of that development assistance would be cut, as would Australia's total ODA budget in general.

The Howard government made it clear early on that the aid program would focus "on the Asia Pacific, with Papua New Guinea, Pacific island countries and the poorest regions of East Asia the areas of highest priority", and that it would "respond selectively to development needs in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East" (DFAT n.d.a). Then in 1999, AusAID published a new framework for aid to Africa, which further narrowed the geographic and sectoral focus of development assistance towards the African continent. Henceforth, Australia would focus on a handful of African countries, primarily South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, and on capacity-building ('good governance') programs, and humanitarian assistance (AusAID 2005, 6). This focus was clearly visible in AusAID annual reports and budget statements which year after year specified funding for only two countries, South Africa and Mozambique. These two would between themselves receive roughly two thirds of Australia's total annual Africa-designated bilateral programme funding (AusAID 2000, 52; AusAID 2001a, 42-43; AusAID 2001b, 56-57).

As one senior Australian Council for International development (ACFID) official noted, this "retreat from Africa" to a few "focal countries" was in part due to South Africa's status as the continent's largest economy and having the most economic potential and interest for Australia, and Mozambique's importance for Australian commercial interest (and in particular BHP Billiton's Mozal smelter).<sup>83</sup>

The Australian NGO community, headed by its peak industry body the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (today's ACFID), published in September 1999 a position

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with senior ACFID official, Canberra, 28 August 2014. The focus on Zimbabwe may have been increased in part because of Alexander Downer's close friendship with the then Australian High Commissioner in the country, Kerry Sibraa, who was apparently quite interested in HIV and AIDS issues, at least according to the ACFID official interviewed. In any case, Australia had a steady focus on development in Zimbabwe dating back to at least Malcolm Fraser's prime ministership.



paper titled ‘*Ubuntu*’ *An Agenda for Australia’s Involvement in Africa*, which according to an official involved in its drafting was an attempt to “raise awareness of the importance of the relationship” and “push-back” against the funding cuts applied to development cooperation with Africa.<sup>84</sup> As the paper highlighted, the Howard government was out of step with the Australian public in its retreat from Africa, in that while the Australian community provided on average over 40% of public donations to NGO programmes in Africa over the period between 1987 and 1997, and Australian NGOs directed some 34% of their funding to programs in Africa, the Howard government directed less than 6% of AusAID funds to the continent in that period (ACFOA 1999, 5-6).

The Howard government did slowly increase aid to Africa beginning roughly in 2003, but that increase only peaked in 2004/05 after which aid to Africa decreased again. Overall, bilateral aid to Africa during the Howard years never exceeded AUD 100 million annually, and for the most part stayed just above AUD 50 million.

#### **IV.II The Rudd/Gillard Government (November 2007 – September 2013): towards a more strategic and ‘proactive’ engagement with Africa**

In many contacts with African governments and officials during its two terms in power, the Labor government made a point to rhetorically highlight its ‘re-engagement’ with Africa. On a number of occasions Labour’s first Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith, highlighted that Africa had traditionally received less attention and focus than it deserved by Australian foreign policy-makers, and that his government was dedicated to ‘broadening’ and ‘deepening’ its foreign policy engagement with the African continent (Smith 2008c; 2009b,c,f,g).

Smith’s rhetoric was in some ways building on what had already been expressed in the ALP’s 2004 Foreign Policy Statement, and its 2007 *Constitution and National Platform*. As the latter document stated

Labor will rectify the emerging pattern of Australian disengagement from the African continent. Africa lies front and centre in the international community’s global development challenge. Australia must re-engage with Africa and, to this end, Labor will establish an Africa-Australia Council as a vehicle for deepening this country’s commitment to some of the poorest

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with senior ACFID official, Canberra, 28 August 2014.

countries on the planet. Africa also presents significant opportunities for Australian business—as well as enhancing Australia's multilateral leverage through the UN system (ALP 2007, 236).

Hence, the Labor party appeared to be, at least rhetorically, dedicated to more foreign policy and commercial engagement with African states, and this dedication was further strengthened by the July 2007 pledge to, if elected, work towards increasing Australia's total ODA to 0.5% of GNI by 2015, and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's March 2008 announcement that Australia would bid for a temporary seat at the UNSC in 2012 (Rudd 2007b; 2008a).

In contrast to the Howard years, Labor's foreign policy engagement with Africa is difficult to break-down in distinct episodes and events. In many ways there was much more happening on the Africa foreign policy front, much of which was of a substantively bilateral nature. This meant that Australia's traditional window into Africa, the Commonwealth, was not the scene of highly prominent Africa related foreign policy engagement, as it had been during John Howard's tenure in office. Overall, and as hinted above, much of what happened in terms of foreign policy engagement with Africa during the Labor years could be seen in the context of two significant policy drivers: the UNSC membership campaign, and the increasing aid budget.

While that may be the case, the overall bilateral as well as continent-wide focus in Africa during the Labor years had a distinct rhetorical and policy feel to it. Regardless of what other policies helped drive it, it was arguably a rather uniquely strategic foreign policy engagement in that there was a short and long-term vision of why greater engagement with Africa was beneficial for Australia, and that vision was largely absent during the Howard years.

#### **IV.II.I Diplomatic, Security, and Economic cooperation**

##### Stephen Smith sets the foundations for foreign policy engagement with Africa

Soon after entering office in late 2007, the Labor government made rhetorical moves to enhance its foreign policy engagement with Africa. Perhaps taking cue from what was stated in the ALP 2007 *Constitution and National Platform*, DFAT noted in its 2007-08 annual report outlook that “Africa will become a more significant focus of the department's attention as we move to enhance Australia's relations with the continent's institutions and nations, through broadening and deepening government and economic

linkages” (DFAT 2008, 78). Although Stephen Smith did, in 2008, deliver a major foreign policy speech which outlined his government’s desire to ‘broaden’ and ‘deepen’ relations with African states, the flurry of high-level official visits to and from Africa did not really take place until 2009.<sup>85</sup>

In January 2009, Stephen Smith became the first Australian foreign minister to attend and address the Executive Council of the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Smith 2009a). Whilst he was technically the first Australian foreign minister to attend a meeting of the AU (which had been in existence from 2002), as noted before, Alexander Downer had visited a meeting of the OAU in 1996. Smith’s visit was a high-level affair which set the precedent for Australian diplomatic representation at the summits of the AU.

Whilst at the AU, Smith used the opportunity to, as he noted do “a bilateral meeting with any other minister who was there”.<sup>86</sup> Smith met some 40 African ministers and in his own words came back to Canberra “basically saying we have just done 30 to 40 bilaterals and we now need to hit the ground running and start opening up dialogue with all of the people who we had a conversation with, to try and get this thing [greater engagement with Africa] going”.<sup>87</sup> With the help of the Africa branch’s cabinet submissions, and a small Africa Task Force active over the next few months of 2009, DFAT came up with an overall strategy for greater foreign policy engagement with the continent.<sup>88</sup> Part of the strategy involved producing over 40 ministerial letters which provided “a firm bilateral basis for taking forward these differing African relationships with Australia”, with each letter “produced in targeted fashion, providing information on the impact of Australia’s new development assistance programme for Africa as well as economic engagement with the country concerned, and highlighting opportunities for further engagement” (DFAT 2009b).

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<sup>85</sup> There is a striking resemblance in the way Rudd’s Labor government used similar rhetoric to that of Whitlam’s Labor government in justifying closer engagement with Africa. Stephen Smith used the opportunities of delivering Africa Day speeches to outline how previous Coalition governments had not given enough attention to engagement with the continent, and how his government was harbouring a more positive outlook on Africa. In the early 1970s, as Gough Whitlam re-defined Australia’s foreign policy on many fronts, he too delivered at least one Africa Day speech in a bid to highlight his government’s efforts in re-engaging with African states, especially in their shared opposition to apartheid, and Whitlam too employed the rhetoric of previous Coalition governments neglecting engagement with Africa, while his government was looking for a more positive engagement with the continent. It appears unlikely though that Stephen Smith was aware of this. For Whitlam’s announcements see AFAR 1973a, 356-366.

<sup>86</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>88</sup> According to one senior DFAT official, it was in 2009 that the department was also given more funds to expand the Africa section into a whole branch; phone interview with senior DFAT official, 15 October 2014.

Australia also at the time formalized diplomatic relations with several African countries such as Liberia, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Republic of Congo (DFAT 2009, 73-74), giving further weight to the government's proclaimed strategy of 'broadening' engagement with African states. Following Smith's January visit to the AU, Australia's Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, also visited the organization in February of the same year in order to open the way "for increased dialogue with the African Union on peace and security issues"(DFAT 2009, 74). However, this does not seem to have resulted in a markedly enhanced level of security cooperation between Australia and the AU during the Labor years.

The flurry of high-level visits to and from Africa initiated by Smith in early 2009, was further evidenced by the Governor General Quentin Bryce's high-profile visit to nine African countries between mid-March and early April 2009. The Governor General's tour of Africa included mostly areas of traditional Australian interest and links with Africa, namely Eastern and Southern Africa: Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Seychelles (Governor General 2009).<sup>89</sup>

Stephen Smith and the Governor General probably left a positive impression on at least some African ministers during their visits to Africa, as following their trips (and in a matter of four months) Australia experienced a rather unprecedented flurry of high-level bilateral visits by African delegations. In late May 2009, Bernard Membe became Tanzania's first foreign minister to visit Australia since the late 1980s (Smith 2009d). A few weeks later, Kenya's Minister for Foreign Affairs Moses Wetang'ula led the first official bilateral visit to Australia by a Kenyan foreign minister (Smith 2009e). At roughly the same time Australia was visited by Rwanda's Minister for Foreign Affairs Rosemary Museminali, and a few days later, Botswana's Foreign Minister Phandu Skelemani also became his country's first ever foreign minister to visit Australia (Smith 2009g). This flurry of high-level African delegations visiting Australia was rounded off with a September 2009 visit to the country by Mozambique's Foreign Minister Oldemiro Baloi, the first such visit from Mozambique in almost two decades (Smith 2009j). In the space of one month, Australia had been visited by more high-level

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<sup>89</sup> The trip was interesting because the Labor government sought to utilize the Governor General in a 'head of state' role in promoting Australia in Africa. One of the problems with this was that there were difficulties in explaining to African officials what the Governor General actually stood for and her formal relationship with the Queen; interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 10 September 2014.

African ministers than during the whole almost twelve year tenure of the Howard government.

Stephen Smith's second visit to Africa came in July 2009 when he visited Egypt; and in January 2010, he visited Africa for the third time, this time Botswana and South Africa (Smith 2009h; 2010a,b). Smith became the first Australian foreign minister to visit Botswana bilaterally, and also the first foreign minister to visit the headquarters of SADC. His visit to South Africa was certainly not a first by an Australian foreign minister, but it had been the first visit since Downer's trip there in 2001.

During 2010 DFAT facilitated the establishment of further diplomatic relations with African states, this time Sao Tome and Principe, Togo, Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, and Somalia (DFAT 2010a, 62). After Stephen Smith's visit to South Africa and Botswana, Australia again experienced a few high-level diplomatic visits from Africa. In March 2010 Botswana's President, Ian Khama visited the country, which was two weeks later followed by visits from Erastus Mwencha, the Deputy Chairman of the African Union Commission, South Africa's Deputy Foreign Minister Susan van der Merwe, and Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Tendai Biti (Smith 2010d,e; University of Sydney 2010). In late June 2010, Australia was visited by Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni, Ghana's minister for foreign affairs, who also became the first foreign minister from his country to officially visit Australia (Smith 2010h).

In between all of these visits, and in commemoration of the 2010 Africa Day celebrations, Stephen Smith announced in a speech before African ambassadors and High Commissioners in Australia that his country would open a new Embassy in Addis Ababa, accredited to Ethiopia and the AU (Smith 2010g). This gave further muscle to the government's proclaimed foreign policy of 'broadening' and 'deepening' engagement with Africa. An embassy and diplomatic representation at the AU would allow Australia to keep abreast of continent-wide issues, and maintain regular contact with diplomats from more than just a handful of African countries (in which it has diplomatic posts), but perhaps more importantly it represented a commitment to long-term engagement with not only Ethiopia, but also the AU.

#### JSCFADT's "Inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa"

At this time of Australia's growing interest in furthering foreign policy engagement with Africa, and with the support of Prime Minister Rudd and Foreign Minister Smith,

the Australian Parliament officially launched an *Inquiry Into Australia's Relationship With The Countries of Africa* on 30 October 2009 (Foreshaw 2013, 53-54).

Although as noted in the previous section of this chapter, there had been in 1995/96 an *Inquiry into Australia's relations with Southern Africa*, JSCFADT had never prior to 2009 held an inquiry into Australia's relations with African countries continent-wide.<sup>90</sup> The inquiry provided further parliamentary 'publicity' and interest in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa which was welcomed by the Labor government as it "was consistent with the government's increased focus on Africa" (Foreshaw 2013, 53). This inquiry and its recommendations provided the government with further strength in justifying its policy of 'broadening' and 'deepening' engagement with Africa as it could argue that this was not just a Labor policy, but one also receiving bipartisan support from the Parliament.

An argument in favour of the view that furthering engagement with Africa was a foreign policy that the Labor government would have pursued on its own merits, and not *only* for the purposes of securing a UNSC seat was expressed by the Chairman of the JSCFADT, Senator Michael Forshaw, who was at pains to point out that

...despite assertions and attempts at political point scoring, Australia's refocus on Africa and the holding of this inquiry was not motivated by our campaign (since successful) to be elected to the UN Security Council. I raised the proposal for an inquiry into our relations with Africa when I became chair of the JSCFADT in February 2008, prior to the [March 2008] announcement of Australia's bid for a seat on the Council...it is clearly in Australia's economic and political interests to increase our engagement with the African continent (Forshaw 2013, 57).

The Committee presented its report in June 2011, and offered seventeen recommendations (JSCFADT 2011). Whilst it is not necessary to expand on all of them, it will suffice to say that whilst the government supported or agreed with all of them in principle, two were not acted upon. Recommendation 10 which advised that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations help fund a Centre for African Studies was not taken up by the government due to lack of funds in that

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<sup>90</sup> There were only a handful of previous Australian Parliamentary inquiries into African issues, none of which had a pan-African character but were either regional, country-based, or regarding Australian overseas diplomatic representation and aid. These are: the 1980 *Inquiry on Zimbabwe*; the 1982 *Inquiry on Namibia*, the 1983 *The provision of developmental assistance and humanitarian aid to the Horn of Africa*, and *Some observations on Australia's diplomatic representation in Africa and adjacent Indian Ocean island states* inquiries; the 1984 *Regional conflict and superpower rivalry in the Horn of Africa* inquiry; the 1996 *Australia's relations with Southern Africa* inquiry; and the 2006 *Australia's Trade and Investment Relations with North Africa* inquiry.



department, and in the same way recommendation 16 which advised that DFAT fund an Africa-Australia Council was also rejected for a lack of departmental funds (Australian Government 2012).<sup>91</sup>

### Kevin Rudd's African safari

In September 2010 Kevin Rudd became Australia's minister for foreign affairs, having been replaced as prime minister by Julia Gillard in late June of the same year. What followed in terms of high-level diplomatic engagement with Africa was in many ways unprecedented. In a single year (2011) Kevin Rudd visited the African continent six times; only one trip less than his two predecessors (Stephen Smith and Alexander Downer) had done together in roughly 14 years (1996-2010). Not all of Rudd's trips to Africa were primarily of a bilateral nature, and some of the trips should more properly be seen in the context of actively campaigning for the UNSC seat and pursuing multilateral as well as bilateral engagement. However, even if the primary motivation for many of these trips may have been the UNSC campaign, such high-level diplomatic representation would have at the least a residue effect on enhancing foreign policy engagement with Africa, and would provide further strength to the government's rhetoric of 're-engagement' with the continent.

Australia's diplomatic engagement with Africa during Rudd's tenure as foreign minister began on a relatively high note when in September 2010, at the UN Summit in New York, Rudd signed an MoU with the Chairman of the AU, Jean Ping (Rudd 2011b). This was followed by Australian aid support for South Sudan's upcoming January 2011 Independence Referendum, where AusAID also provided funding for South Sudanese in Australia to vote in the referendum (Rudd 2010c). Then, in December 2010 Kevin Rudd made his first bilateral visit to Africa, where he helped celebrate the 60th anniversary of Australia-Egypt diplomatic relations in Cairo (Rudd 2010e).

In a month's time, Kevin Rudd was back in Africa, this time in Ethiopia. Rudd used the opportunity to engage with the country bilaterally, marking Australia Day celebrations, meeting with the country's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and Foreign Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, but also fronting the AU's Executive Council to deliver a speech (Rudd 2011a,c).

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<sup>91</sup> What is peculiar here is the rejection to act on recommendation 16, which was something that the Labor party itself had argued for in its own 2007 *Constitution and National Platform* (ALP 2007, 236).

The following month (late February and early March 2011), Rudd undertook a tour of several countries in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. The tour started with a visit to South Africa in a largely multilateral context given that the purpose of the visit was to attend the UN High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability. Rudd's visit to Egypt and Tunisia was for the purposes of discussing the security and governance transition in both countries, and the situation in Libya (FOI 2011).

The foreign minister's next visit to Africa should be seen in a multilateral and UNSC campaign context. In June 2011 Kevin Rudd visited Equatorial Guinea for the opening session of another AU Executive Council Meeting (Rudd 2011f). Rudd's visit to the AU, his second of the year, would have served the purpose of highlighting to African diplomats and ministers Australia's commitment to fostering greater engagement with the continent, and further strengthening its candidature for UNSC membership. A month later, and in the context of the famine affecting the Horn of Africa, Kevin Rudd visited Kenya and Somalia where he travelled with the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Josette Sheeran. Since Rudd was accompanied by such a high-level executive from a key UN agency, this trip would have further highlighted Australia's seriousness in not only caring about development and humanitarian issues in the Horn of Africa, but also its commitment to working through the UN to help mitigate them. Adding more credibility to Australia's standing, Rudd's ministry also made announcements it would provide further humanitarian assistance to the famine affected regions of the Horn (Gillard and Rudd 2011).

Another important Africa-related diplomatic cooperation initiative in 2011 included Australia's formal recognition of South Sudan's statehood (Rudd 2011g). In addition to recognizing South Sudan, Australia had by that time established diplomatic relations with 53 African states. As DFAT's annual report observed, this reflected "growing economic interests, particularly in minerals and energy, along with Australia's commitment to a more prosperous, stable and democratic Africa, and recognition of the role the region now plays in an increasingly interdependent world" (DFAT 2011, 62).

In late October 2011 Australia hosted a CHOGM in Perth. The choice of venue in more than one way symbolized the country's awareness of the necessity for its foreign policy to 'Look West' if it was to be successful in achieving its short-term goal of UNSC membership, and its long-term goal of enhanced foreign policy engagement with Africa. Unlike the Zimbabwe issue which dominated the last CHOGM taking place on

Australian soil, this time there were no substantive African issues to debate, and the Commonwealth was not during the Labor years a prominent and highly relevant conduit for Australia's engagement with Africa.

Perhaps the most notable Africa-related issue at the 2011 CHOGM was the launch of the Mining for Development initiative (Gillard 2011b). The scheme was aimed at helping "developing countries use their natural resources to improve their economies in a sustainable manner", and its centrepiece was the International Mining for Development Centre, based at the University of Western Australia, and operating in partnership with the University of Queensland. While the initiative itself was global in focus, a large number of countries it aimed to help were African. To further highlight the importance of this initiative, Foreign Minister Rudd, and Australia's Minister for Resources and Energy Martin Ferguson, made a point to mention their consultations with specifically Australian companies operating in Africa and the overall support of the resources industry for the scheme (Rudd and Ferguson 2011). At CHOGM Kevin Rudd used an opportunity to address the Australia-Africa Foreign Ministers' Mining Breakfast, where he again highlighted his government's commitment to furthering development and economic cooperation with African states (Rudd 2011i).

Rudd's final visit to Africa in 2011 was a December trip to Libya. Throughout his time as foreign minister, Rudd had maintained a high profile on Libya's governance transition and used this opportunity to meet with the interim government and "reinforce Australia's strong support for the country's democratic transition" (Rudd 2011k).

Kevin Rudd's term as Australia's minister for foreign affairs ended in late February 2012, and as fate would have it, one of the last overseas trips on his agenda turned out to be a trip to Ethiopia. In late January 2012 Rudd visited Ethiopia for a second time, and there he formally opened the new chancery building of the Australian Embassy (which had up to that point operated from a hotel), signed a bilateral development agreement with Ethiopia, and again attended the AU Summit (Rudd 2012a).

In the year and a half of his tenure as Australia's foreign minister, Kevin Rudd followed in Stephen Smith's footsteps in further contributing to the enhancement of Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states. Although given the context and nature of Rudd's trips to Africa it can be argued that his engagement with African issues should to a large extent be seen in the context of supporting the country's UNSC campaign, it was still important in terms of 're-engagement' with Africa that the next

Australian foreign minister after Stephen Smith maintained his links with, and interest in African issues.

#### Bob Carr following the established path

From March 2012 until the end of the Labor's time in government in September 2013, Bob Carr held the position of Australia's minister for foreign affairs. Carr followed Kevin Rudd's lead in actively promoting Australia's UNSC membership campaign, and he followed Stephen Smith's lead in enhancing engagement with African states. Both are perhaps best evidenced by his May 2012 announcement of a planned opening of a new Australian embassy in Senegal, a first ever Australian embassy to a French speaking African country (Carr, Bob 2012b).

In June 2012 Bob Carr also made the first of his two trips to Africa. His trip to Libya came in the context of the ongoing civil strife there, but in particular the detainment of an Australian citizen working under the auspices of the International Criminal Court (Carr, Bob 2012c; 2014, 83-89). This 'detour' came whilst Carr was visiting Algeria and Morocco. Carr became the first ever Australian foreign minister to visit Algeria where he met President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and signed an MoU "establishing regular policy consultations between the two countries" (Carr, Bob 2012d). During this time, and in further support of Australia's attempts at enhancing economic cooperation and trade between the two continents, Austrade, for the first time, created a Trade Commissioner position for Ghana, from which the new Trade Commissioner would cover the whole of West Africa (Emerson 2012).

The following month, Bob Carr made another announcement which in addition to the planned establishment of a new embassy in Senegal signalled a more durable foreign policy engagement with African countries: Australia would pursue membership of the AfDB (Carr and Swan 2012). Membership of the AfDB can be an indicator of interest in longer term development and foreign policy engagement with African states due to several reasons. Most notably, the AfDB is the primary multilateral financial institution participating in the development of African states, and the rather significant size of initial membership contributions indicates a country's more durable interests in African development. Australia was prepared to invest around AUD 88 million to join the AfDB, and also make an initial contribution of around AUD 161 million to join the African Development Fund (Ripoll 2013). Such a serious expenditure, in itself worth more than half of what the total Australian ODA to SSA was at the time, is unlikely to

have been contemplated purely for short-term expediency. The Australian government had been advised to become a member of the AfDB since at least 1984 and the Jackson Report on Australia's overseas aid, and such a move was also advised by the 2011 *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness* (Hollway et al. 2011, 11-12, 141).

Foreign Minister Carr's second and final trip to Africa came in early September 2012 when he visited Egypt and discussed various regional and bilateral issues with its president Mohamed Morsi (Carr, Bob 2012g; 2014, 153-157). After the October 2012 UNSC vote and Australia's triumph in securing a two-year seat at the Council, the country's foreign minister did not make any more visits to Africa. However, Australia's diplomatic engagement with African states did not end there. In both July 2012 and January 2013, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Richard Marles made visits to the Executive Council of the AU Summit. In July 2012 and in the lead up to the October UNSC vote Marles visited the AU and gave a speech highlighting Australia's pledges and commitments in enhancing engagement with African states (Marles 2012a,b,c). Six months later, and after Australia had secured the UNSC seat, Marles was back in Africa on a visit to the AU, Seychelles, South Sudan, South Africa, and Kenya. At the AU he delivered another speech outlining Australia's gratitude for African support for the UNSC campaign, whilst at the same time reiterating his government's dedication to building links with the continent by highlighting Australia's repeated official attendance at AU summits since 2008 (Marles 2013a,b,c).

Australia was in 2012 visited by Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, and its Finance Minister, Tendai Biti, and in early 2013 it conducted a review of 'smart sanctions' against Zimbabwe (DFAT 2013a, 46-47). In early March 2013 Richard Marles visited the Comoros and Mauritius, and later that month signed an MoU with the Mozambican Minister for Foreign Affairs on Mining for Development (Marles 2013c). It was at this time that the Mozambican President, Armando Emilio Guebuza conducted a five day tour of Australia, and met with the country's Governor General Quentin Bryce (Governor General 2013). In June 2013 Australia was also visited by Mauritania's foreign minister (DFAT 2013a, 46-47).

#### Security cooperation during the Labor years

Much like during the Howard years, there is very little of substance to report with regards to Australia's security cooperation with African states during the Labor years. A detailed review of the past 17 Department of Defence (DOD) annual reports highlights

that Australia's strategic goals and interests in Africa appear to be exclusively confined to the realm of non-military and peace-keeping affairs. Within this one can cite issues such as membership of the UNSC, or support for famine relief, or a passing interest in piracy issues. However, most such issues were dealt with almost entirely within the confines of diplomatic, economic, or development cooperation.

A survey of DOD annual reports indicates that with regards to security cooperation the Labor government, for all of its rhetoric about 'broadening' and 'deepening' engagement with Africa, did not much surpass the Howard government's levels of engagement. Following in the footsteps of the Howard government, the Labor government also maintained a very thin focus on UN operations in Africa, providing mostly monetary support.

Even after Defence Minister Fitzgibbon's already noted visit to the AU in February 2009, Australia's security cooperation with African states remained largely unchanged. The greatest novelty was the appointment of an Australian Defence Attaché to the AU (DOD 2011, 81; Mickler 2013, 162). Australia continued supporting AU/UN missions in Sudan; there was some activity in supporting anti-piracy initiatives off the coast of the Horn of Africa; some funding for the UN trust fund for the African Union Mission in Somalia, and the UN trust fund for Mali; and grants for educational and training activities of African peace keepers.

Throughout the Labor years, the government kept supporting the UN mission in Sudan through operation 'Azure', initiated during the Howard government in mid-2005. The operation was supported with some 17 ADF staff, and in 2011 the operation was renamed 'Aslan' as it was supporting the UN in South Sudan, after the latter gained independence from Sudan (DOD 2012, 122). However, it is unclear whether this support included actual ADF staff on the ground since the DOD 2012-13 Annual Report does not mention any troop numbers and the following year's report speaks only of legal advice support (DOD 2013a, 170; DOD 2014, 46).

During the Labor years, the government also from 2008 supported an AU/UN mission in Darfur (Sudan), through two ADF staff stationed at the UN headquarters, and this operation 'Hedgerow' lasted until July 2011 (DOD 2011, 168).<sup>92</sup> DOD also supported

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<sup>92</sup> The interesting thing here is that the DOD still listed supporting the operation in its annual reports, even though it explicitly stated that no actual staff were deployed in Sudan since August 2009 due to visa delays; see DOD 2010a, 146; DOD 2011, 168.



AU/UN missions in Somalia and Mali, by financing grants for the two operations in 2011-12, and 2012-13 (DOD 2012, 326; DOD 2013a, 170).

Perhaps the most high-profile security (and intelligence) issue related to Africa during the Labor years was what Stephen Smith, at the time of the event Australia's Defence Minister, described as a "shock horror story about our SAS [troops] doing a lot of work in Africa".<sup>93</sup> In March 2012 Australian journalists (Epstein and Welch 2012) broke a story about a squadron of Australian Special Air Services (SAS) soldiers operating in several African countries (such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Kenya) for the purposes of "gathering intelligence on terrorism and scoping rescue strategies for Australian civilians trapped by kidnapping or civil war". The major argument was that such clandestine operations by military personnel were conducted "at the outer reaches of Australian and international law".

At the time Smith would not confirm whether SAS troops were in fact in Africa, but stated that "the suggestion...that somehow we've got Australian Defence Force personnel or SAS personnel operating at large in Africa, rubbing up against the boundaries of the law is just wrong...everything which occurs in that general area is done in accordance with our domestic law", and international legal obligations (Griffiths and Bourke 2012). Smith noted in an interview for this thesis that he "debunked" the story at the time, although it should be observed that he merely argued that Australian military personnel operating anywhere in the world do so in accordance with international and domestic laws and legislations. This would fall somewhat short of denying such operations were actually taking place. In any case, in an interview for this thesis Smith made it clear that no substantive or prominent Africa related issue ever came across his desk while he was Defence Minister, and much of the same could be said about the whole term of the Labor government.<sup>94</sup>

### The rise of the 'Africa Down Under' as a key pillar of Australia's economic cooperation with Africa

As noted with regards to the latter years of the Howard government and coinciding with the global resources boom (from roughly 2004 onwards), Australia's foreign policy-makers slowly recognized the vast commercial opportunities for particularly the

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<sup>93</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>94</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014. Naturally, even if any intelligence or security related issues did come across Smith's desk, he would be unlikely to recount this to the author because of at the least confidentiality legislation.

resources industry in Africa. Building on the support provided by DFAT during the dying years of the Howard government, the Labor government moved vigorously to support Australian commercial interests in Africa as widely as possible. As argued elsewhere, Labor's policy of expanding diplomatic contacts with African states, which could in turn "foster or support an environment more conducive to economic activity" may yet prove to have been the "newest" aspect of Labour's 'new engagement' with Africa (Pijovic 2013, 112). This proactive stance in attempting to help foster greater economic links through a widening diplomatic engagement with African states stood in stark contrast to the Howard government's overall 'reactive' approach in waiting for substantial economic links to justify greater diplomatic contacts.

An important aspect of Australia's enhanced diplomatic and economic engagement with Africa during the Labor years was the ADU mining conference held annually in Perth. Whilst the ADU had been running since 2003, it was only from 2007 that DFAT started to recognize its strategic importance for enhancing Australia's commercial interest in Africa, and this was exhibited by the move to have all of Australia's African based Heads-Of-Mission attend the conference.<sup>95</sup> In the years after 2007 the ADU was to become a key focus of Australia's enhanced diplomatic engagement with Africa. As Richard Marles, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade noted during a 2013 public workshop at the University of Melbourne, Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was led by the private sector and particularly WA based mining companies.<sup>96</sup>

Stephen Smith noted in an interview for this thesis that he had not been to an ADU conference before becoming foreign minister, but that attending the conference helped him understand how the various strains of foreign policy towards Africa could work together:

...from my perspective a lot of this stuff did crystallize with conversations that took place in and around the Africa Down Under event. You would have a half a dozen of our ambassadors there...you would have African ministers, and you would have mining companies wanting to engage, and so for a day you could have any number of conversations about what people are doing and thinking about Africa and out of that things would emerge in

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<sup>95</sup> Phone interview with senior Australian diplomat and DFAT official, who was in 2007 heading an Australian diplomatic mission in an African country, 13 October 2014. Still, it was only in DFAT's 2009-2010 annual report that the department for the first time explicitly mentioned the forum; see DFAT 2010a, 68-70.

<sup>96</sup> *Building Sustainable Peace in Africa: Engaging Australians* public workshop at the University of Melbourne, 3 May 2013, author notes.

discussions with High Commissioners and ambassadors, such as: yes it would be a really good idea to go to the African Union Ministerial Conference, or yes it would be a really good idea if when you went to the United Nations General Assembly in September you sat down and did a bilateral meeting with all these people...the Africa Down Under thing certainly enabled a bit of good old-fashioned teambuilding where people thought they were all trying to move in the same direction. Mining companies who wanted to enhance engagement for their industry or commercial reasons, ambassadors who wanted to enhance the relationship between a particular country, and then it became a more general thing which is, well it just makes sense to do all these things because we need to enhance our engagement with Africa generally...<sup>97</sup>

In addition to the ADU as an important aspect of the government's attempts to support economic cooperation with Africa, DFAT and Austrade had also since February 2007 co-hosted Australia's representation at the world's largest Africa-focused mining conference, the Mining Indaba conference in Cape Town. This event allowed Australia to further showcase its government's interest in supporting economic cooperation between the two continents, but also support Australian companies operating or wishing to operate in Africa.

As far as economic cooperation on the foreign policy front is concerned, it was in the context of the Mining Indaba conference in February 2010 that Australia's Minister for Trade, Simon Crean, made the only visit to Africa by an Australian Minister for Trade during the Labor years. During his time at the Mining Indaba in South Africa, Crean held bilateral meetings with mining Ministers from South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana, Senegal, Eritrea and Namibia (Crean 2010). But Crean's presence at Mining Indaba was also important for another reason; it was during his visit that DFAT organized a round table with Australian-based industry stakeholders in which they were for the first time formally asked by the Australian government what kind of support it could offer.<sup>98</sup>

One of the organizers of that round table from the industry side explained that it was a "terrific meeting" in which he was asked to help organize a more formal structure that could work with the government from the industry side, which was how the Australia Africa Mining Industry Group (AAMIG) came about.<sup>99</sup> AAMIG represents mainly the Perth based small and mid-tier mining and services companies operating across Africa

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<sup>97</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with retired DFAT official, Canberra, 7 April 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Phone interview with senior Paydirt Media official, 31 July 2014.

and its activities include advocating for greater engagement with Africa as well as particular support for companies operating in specific African countries.

Around September 2010, the importance of the ADU conference for Australia's high-profile foreign policy engagement with Africa was further highlighted when the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Dennis Richardson, formally opened the conference, and DFAT "established a partnership with the newly created Australia Africa Mining Industry Group whose existence highlights the priority Australian industry places on the region" (DFAT 2011, 70). Thus in a matter of roughly three or four years, and in the context of the global resources boom and growing Australian commercial interests in Africa, the ADU had become an important conduit for the pursuit of Australia's foreign policy goal of greater engagement with Africa.

Bob Carr also followed the custom set by Stephen Smith of ministerial attendance at the ADU, which he attended both in August 2012, and the same time in 2013 (Carr, Bob 2014, 149, 451-453). Whilst Kevin Rudd did not attend the ADU conference when he was foreign minister he did attend and deliver a speech as a government backbencher in 2012 (Rudd 2012b). This overall high-profile ministerial representation at the ADU could be seen as a strong indicator of the government's support for enhancing commercial and trade links with Africa.

## **IV.II.II Development cooperation**

### Africa back on the menu and in bigger serves

On the whole, during the Rudd and Gillard Labor years, Australia's aid to Africa experienced an almost unprecedented expansion. When Kevin Rudd's Labor government entered office in late 2007, it brought a stated dedication to increasing Australia's total ODA to 0.5% of GNI by 2015, which at their time of entering office was just below 0.3%. In addition to this, a year into his first term as prime minister, Kevin Rudd also announced Australia would bid for a UNSC seat in 2012. These two factors combined to, in many ways, drive a 'supercharged' development engagement with Africa which saw a four-fold increase in Australia's aid to the continent, from roughly AUD 88 million in 2007/08 to AUD 436 million in 2011/12.<sup>100</sup>

The Labor government framed its focus in providing aid to Africa as a matter of supporting "Africa's progress towards the MDGs in areas where Australia has a

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<sup>100</sup> These aid figures are dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

comparative advantage and experience...” (AusAID 2009, 55). This framing was further consolidated by Australia’s overall approach to development cooperation with Africa as outlined in the *Looking West: Australia’s strategic approach to aid in Africa 2011-2015* document, published in December 2010. There, the government justified its expanding development engagement with Africa as being “informed by Australia’s interests as a middle power, situated on the rim of the Indian Ocean, in the stability, security and prosperity of the region” (AusAID 2010, 3). As far as Australia’s focus was concerned, it would concentrate on providing aid mainly to Eastern and to a lesser extent Southern Africa and would focus largely on areas of comparative advantage for Australian expertise, such as maternal and child health, water supply and sanitation, agriculture and food security, and providing Australia Award scholarships (AusAID 2010, 8-15).

As one senior DFAT official noted in an interview for this thesis, part of the reason why such an increase in Australian aid towards Africa was evident during the Labor years, was because much of ‘our region’ was already saturated with Australian aid, and Africa was the natural choice for any expansion, especially given the pursuit of MDGs.<sup>101</sup> A survey of AusAID annual development budget statements from the Labor years highlights how Australia’s aid to Africa ‘exploded’; while many Australian governments in the past had problems even spending their estimated budgets for aid towards Africa, the Labor government mostly overspent them. As Table 1 below indicates, with the exception of the 2009/10 budget, Australia’s estimated aid budget to Africa was consistently overspent, from a low of AUD 6.8 million in 2008, to a high of AUD 102.7 million in 2012.

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra 30 May 2014.

**Table 1. Australia’s budget estimates for total ODA to Africa during the Labor years, AUD Million.**

<b>Budget Year</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Estimated Outcome</b>	<b>Difference</b>
2007/08	94.4	101.2	+ <b>6.8</b>
2008/09	116.4	132	+ <b>15.6</b>
2009/10	163.9	157.3	- <b>6.6</b>
2010/11	200.9	290.7	+ <b>89.8</b>
2011/12 (SSA)	286.3	389.0	+ <b>102.7</b>
2012/13 (SSA)	354.8	385.6	+ <b>30.8</b>

Source: Author calculations based on AusAID development budget statements, Table 2. *Total Australian ODA from all agencies and programs to partner countries and regions*. The column ‘Budget Estimate’ shows estimates provided in the particular May budget of the first budget year; the column ‘Estimated Outcome’ shows outcomes of actual funds spent as estimated in May of the second year.

Note: (SSA) refers to data that is provided particularly for Sub Saharan Africa. The last budget data (2013/14) from the DFAT 2013/14 Annual Report is not comparable to this data.

The Africa aid program also exhibited a noticeable pan-African aspect which was largely driven by Australia’s UNSC campaign. This in turn led to some tension between high visibility and identity on the one hand, and aid effectiveness on the other. In a February 2011 *Study of Australia’s approach to aid in Africa*, commissioned as part of the *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*, the authors noted that

The overriding tension dominating the design of the African aid program is that between identity and/or visibility and aid effectiveness. On the one hand is the government’s foreign policy imperative to drive a continent-wide approach (including in North Africa) that seeks to build relationships, visibility and Australia’s role as an internationally strong ‘middle power’. On the other hand is the aid effectiveness agenda, to sharpen focus and promote depth and delivery of aid with a light footprint (Negin and Denning 2011, 13).

While this tension may never have been fully resolved during the Labor years, it did help indicate Australia’s preparedness to be a more active development partner in Africa. This sentiment was further strengthened by the Labor government’s willingness to join the AfDB, which was also recommended by the 2011 *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*, stating that joining the organization would represent value for money and



a high-level indication of Australia's commitment to development in Africa"(Hollway et al. 2011, 11-12).

In addition to the overall growth in aid to Africa and the government's willingness to join the AfDB, there were two other development initiatives which displayed the government's interest in a more long-term development engagement with Africa. In 2010/11 AusAID launched the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES); a funding cooperative program between the government and 10 Australian NGOs, worth around AUD 90 million over five years.<sup>102</sup> AACES indicated the government's support for working with Australian NGOs and by extension the broader Australian community which favoured greater development engagement with Africa, and also its willingness to remain engaged with African development issues past the UNSC campaign.

The other notable initiative was the growth in the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research's (ACIAR) focus on operations in Africa. ACIAR's projects and programs "link Australian scientists with their counterparts in developing countries of the Asia-Pacific and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, to increase agricultural productivity and sustainability", and as such were an important component of AusAID's key focus on agriculture and food security in Africa (AusAID 2011, 117). In 2008/09 ACIAR's expenditure in Africa constituted only 1% of the organization's overall expenditure; by 2012/13, it was up to 24% (AusAID 2008, 60; AusAID 2012, 131; ACIAR 2009, 5; ACIAR 2013, 5).

If it can be argued that the Howard years stood out as indicating a time period of Australia's low interest in development cooperation with the African continent, then the Rudd and Gillard years would stand out as indicating the opposite. However, this should in no way be taken as an argument that development cooperation with Africa was swiftly becoming a key component of Australia's overall development program or that the Labor government was predominantly interested in increasing development cooperation with only Africa. As the following chapter (V.II.II) will make clear, Australia was during the Labor years on the whole more generous towards other regions of the world as well, and this growth in the country's global development engagement was to some extent driven by expediencies required by the UNSC campaign as well as

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<sup>102</sup> See AusAID 2011, 61. AACES was actually built on another similar scheme initiated during the Howard years from 2004 to 2010, and known as the Australian Partnership with African Communities.

the overall commitment to grow Australia's ODA budget. Nevertheless, between 1996 and 2015 Australia's development cooperation with Africa was never higher in terms of overall aid levels than during the Rudd and Gillard years, and whilst this could have been motivated by a variety of short-term factors, Australian's development cooperation with Africa did in this time period exhibit an interest in possible long-term engagement.

#### **IV.III The Abbott Government (September 2013 – September 2015): lack of interest and a return to 'episodic' engagement with Africa<sup>103</sup>**

The Abbott-led Coalition came to government in September 2013 with a foreign policy outlook and agenda reminiscent of, and actively reinvoking the Howard years. While the Labor years may have given rise to a notion that Australia had enduring national interests in Africa which would not simply disappear with a change in government (Makinda 2015, 55), the actions undertaken by the Australian government during the two year tenure of Prime Minister Tony Abbott strongly implied that even if such interests could not be wished away, they could be at best selectively pursued, and at worst ignored. The Coalition under Abbott's leadership made it clear even before being elected to government that it would not maintain Labor's established levels of interest in engagement with Africa, and the only caveat to this generalisation was the Coalition's traditional focus on maintaining commercial links with South Africa.

##### **IV.III.I Diplomatic, Security, and Economic cooperation**

Days before the September 2013 federal election the Coalition released its final election commitments document which cut the planned opening of Australia's first ever embassy in Senegal (Hockey and Robb 2013). In the context of the Coalition's pre-election narrative of "budget emergency" this move appeared to make sense, especially if Labor's 'new engagement' with Africa was seen as only mandated by Australia's pursuit of a UNSC seat (Insiders 2013). Furthermore, It would not be unfair to suggest that Tony Abbott exhibited no interest in African engagement. He did travel to South Africa early on during his tenure as prime minister but this was only due to the passing of Nelson Mandela in late 2013, where a host of world leaders were present for Mandela's memorial service (Abbott 2013c).

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<sup>103</sup> This section is partially based on work already published in Mickler and Pijovic 2015.

In early 2014, Western Australia's Premier Colin Barnett travelled to the Mining Indaba conference in South Africa and signed an MoU with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) on cooperation in the fields of mineral and petroleum resources, agriculture, vocational training and capacity building (Barnett 2014). Interviews with both WA Department of Mines and Petroleum and DFAT officials clearly indicated that such a move was primarily a state initiative with no coordination with the federal government. A senior official from WA's Department of Mines and Petroleum noted that any 'lobbying' Premier Barnett may have conducted on the issue of engagement with Africa vis-à-vis Foreign Minister Julie Bishop would have been informal and on a personal level, and that the MoU with COMESA would not have much impact on the state of Australia's overall engagement with Africa.<sup>104</sup> This view was confirmed by a senior DFAT official working closely with Bishop on African issues, who argued that the activities of WA do not 'drive' federal policy towards Africa, and that there were no consultations between the federal and WA governments on the issue of engagement with Africa.<sup>105</sup>

In September 2014 Foreign Minister Julie Bishop made her only trip to Africa during the Abbott government. Bishop visited Madagascar, Mauritius, and South Africa, for the purposes of strengthening bilateral cooperation, as well as highlighting the importance her government placed on Indian Ocean Rim cooperation, as Australia was chairing a meeting of the IORA in October of the same year (Bishop 2014f). The Minister's first trip to mainland Africa was to South Africa because this was the country with the strongest commercial and historical links with Australia. A trip to Ethiopia and the headquarters of the AU which might have indicated the government's continued support for pan-African engagement was not contemplated, partly because it was questionable whether Bishop would have received an invitation for such a visit from the AU's Chairperson (AU Summit sessions are closed to non-AU members unless such an invitation is granted).<sup>106</sup> However, Australia did have diplomatic representation at both AU summits in 2014 and 2015 (DFAT 2014, 64; DFAT 2015a, 71).

Julie Bishop did maintain support for the ADU as Australia's highly prominent vehicle for engagement with Africa, especially as her emphasis on 'economic diplomacy' as a key pillar of Australia's foreign policy made such an approach logical. She did not

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with senior official from the WA Department of Mines and Petroleum, Perth, 3 September 2014.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 10 March 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 10 March 2015.

attend the 2014 ADU in person, but sent a video message to the opening session. In her video address Bishop reiterated the high number of Australian resource companies operating across Africa (around 220 ASX listed companies, operating in almost 40 African countries, in over 1100 projects), and emphasized her government's belief in the private sector being central to the mission of poverty reduction.<sup>107</sup> Although she had made similar remarks at the May 2014 Africa Day celebrations in Canberra, this was Bishop's first major public Africa-related foreign policy announcement.<sup>108</sup>

Overall, Julie Bishop maintained her rhetorical support for the ADU and Australian commercial ties with Africa. In a speech delivered to the May 2015 Africa Day celebrations in Canberra she recounted the number of Australian companies operating across Africa in the resources sector (Bishop 2015), and she attended the 2015 ADU also presenting a speech in which she again noted the vibrancy of Australian commercial interests in the resources sector which would continue to underpin "the expansion of trade and investment links between Australia and Africa". As Bishop stated, the value of Australian investments across Africa in the resource sector was "in the order of tens of billions of dollars" (Bishop 2015f). It was at this time that Bishop also announced the creation of the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations which being headed by the CEO of Woodside Petroleum Peter Coleman, clearly indicated an emphasis on 'economic diplomacy' in engagement with Africa (DFAT n. d. f).

However, and notwithstanding Bishop's rhetorical support for maintaining commercial engagement with Africa, there were clear indications of the Abbott government's lack of interest in engagement with Africa past the rhetoric of 'economic diplomacy'. The aforementioned abandonment of the planned opening of an embassy in Senegal may have made sense in the constrained fiscal conditions of the 'budget emergency' the Coalition inherited from Labor, but when the government found resources to open five new diplomatic posts in the 2015 Budget (none of which were in Africa) it became clear it was not interested in greater diplomatic engagement with African states (Bishop 2015c). Simply put, if the argument for not opening a post in Senegal was lack of funds, then why not open a post there when the funds became available?

Furthermore, there was also the 2014 Ebola episode which highlighted the Abbott government's reluctance to engage with African issues. As the outbreak of Ebola in

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<sup>107</sup> Author notes ADU 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 15 September 2015.

West Africa intensified from March 2014, and the US, UK, and other countries moved quickly to provide medical personnel and troops to help fight the disease, Australia limited its contributions to funds for the World Health Organization, taking some eight months to finally dispatch a small force of health workers to the disease stricken region (Bishop 2014g).

On the security cooperation front, Australia maintained its long standing financial support for multilateral UN peacekeeping missions in Africa (DFAT 2014, 279; DFAT 2015a, 274). Aside from this there was minimal security engagement with African countries. DOD annual reports for 2013/14 and 2014/15 contain literally 3 and 5 references to 'Africa' and none to specific African countries, highlighting Australia's continued support for operation 'Aslan' (in South Sudan) but without offering any clues as to the number of personnel actually deployed (DOD 2014, 4, 81-82; DOD 2015, 5, 82, 191). In March 2015 and in the context of anti-piracy and fighting the illegal narcotics trade, Australia joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) operation 'Ocean Shield' in patrolling the Gulf of Aden and waters off the coast the Horn of Africa, for the period of two weeks (DOD 2015, 82).

#### **IV.III.II Development Cooperation**

The Abbott government from its early days made clear there would be significant cuts to Australia's overall aid budget, and development cooperation with Africa was cut severely. Firstly, and as an overarching indication of the government's thinking about the place of development cooperation in foreign policy, Tony Abbott (2013a) announced that AusAID would be integrated into DFAT "enabling the aid and diplomatic arms of Australia's international policy agenda to be more closely aligned".

Secondly, in January 2014, the government issued a revised aid budget which saw a 38% cut to total ODA to SSA (Mickler and Pijovic 2015, 117). The May 2014 Budget delivered new cuts to Australia's aid budget, and the total ODA budget to SSA was cut again, this time by 9%. The final Abbott government Budget in May 2015 saw total ODA to SSA cut by some 50%, and bilateral ODA (administered by DFAT) cut by 70%.

Thirdly, if this was not indication enough of the Abbott government's disengagement from development cooperation with Africa, and a lack of interest in more durable development and foreign policy engagement with the continent, there was also the issue

of AfDB membership. As noted above, the Labor government had indicated its interest in joining the AfDB, an issue long supported by governmental and independent reviews of Australia's overseas aid program, and moved to introduce Parliamentary legislation to enable the country's membership. The Bill to join the AfDB lapsed at the dissolution of Australia's 43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament before the September 2013 federal election, and was not reintroduced. In its 2014 report on *Australia's overseas aid and development assistance* the Senate's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee recommended that "the Australian Government reintroduce and support legislation to enable Australia to become a member of the African Development Bank Group" (SFADTRC 2014, 95). The government did not agree with this recommendation, responding that it had already "advised the President of the African Development Bank Group that it would not pursue Australian membership of the African Development Bank and the African Development Fund" (Australian Government 2014, 3).

The Abbott government's overall cuts to Australia's ODA budget proved to be consistent with its "tendency to view foreign policy through the lens of domestic politics, even undermining core foreign policy commitments in the process", something not entirely new in Australian foreign policy, but particularly acute during this time period (McDonald 2015, 664). Development cooperation disengagement from Africa was consistent with the primacy the government accorded to focusing development cooperation on Australia's own region. This regional focus was in itself consistent with the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook, and the perception within the Abbott government and particularly the foreign minister's office that Labor's 'new engagement' with Africa was really and only all about winning the UNSC campaign.<sup>109</sup>

Foreign policy engagement with Africa under the Abbott government was experiencing a return to Howard era principles of episodic engagement, and an interest in only maintaining ties with Australia's principal commercial partner in Africa, South Africa. DFAT's 2014-2015 annual report stated that the government's engagement in Africa "focused on strengthening relationships with key bilateral partners", concluding with a subtle hint at the government's cynicism over Labor's 'new engagement' with the continent that 'in line with the Government's consolidation agenda and the end of

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 10 March 2015. After all, the Labor government did in its 2012-13 development budget cut aid to SSA by around 10%, and in its last development budget (2013-2014) forecast a further 8% cut, which could be seen as further evidence that its aid commitment to SSA was 'all about' the UNSC campaign; see DFAT 2015b, 11, and Mickler and Pijovic 2015, 117.



Australia's term on the UN Security Council, the department's engagement in Africa will become more targeted" (DFAT 2015, 71, 74).

#### **IV.IV Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was twofold: offer a detailed description of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015, and set a context for the subsequent analysis of change in this foreign policy. The first section of the chapter examined the Howard Coalition government's engagement with Africa arguing that this engagement was not monolithic, and while overall it can be described as a time of 'episodic' engagement with African issues, the overall nature of that engagement varied with time. Up until roughly 2004, the government's interest in commercial engagement with Africa was confined to South Africa, Australia's main trading partner in Africa. On the diplomatic front the government was active in engaging with African issues very briefly through the 1996 UNSC membership bid, but on the whole engaged primarily within the Commonwealth context. It was only within this forum that John Howard substantially engaged with African issues, and at the same time the pinnacle and low point of that engagement took place through the 2002/3 CHOGMs.

From roughly 2004 to 2007 the Howard government began to understand the need for greater diplomatic engagement with Africa largely as driven by the widening of Australian commercial (and to an extent consular) interests across the continent. In this vein, the government reacted to such necessities with the opening of an Australian High Commission in Ghana in 2004, and an Austrade run Consulate General in Libya in 2005. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the Howard government on the whole did not seek proactive diplomatic engagements with Africa or African issues.

The second section of the chapter examined the Rudd/Gillard Labor governments' engagement with Africa arguing that on the whole it displayed a visibly strategic and proactive approach. Labor's engagement with Africa was proactive in that the government sought to expand and strengthen diplomatic links with African states beyond South Africa, and did this in a high profile diplomatic fashion by having Australian foreign ministers travel to African countries more often than was the case for any Australian government historically. It was also proactive in that it actively sought to utilize diplomatic links to help foster economic linkages, a practice contrary to the Howard years where only, and primarily, substantial commercial links would force the government to try and foster greater diplomatic links. This was most obvious in the

expansion of Australian diplomatic relations with all 54 UN member African states, and the commitment to open a first ever Australian embassy in French speaking West Africa (Senegal).

Labor's approach to engagement with Africa was strategic rather than episodic because of two key policy drivers: the increase in Australia's ODA budget, and the country's pursuit of a UNSC seat. The ALP had in its pre-election foreign policy announcements committed itself to enhancing engagement with Africa, but as far as policy development and implementation were concerned, the UNSC bid and increase of aid, helped 'supercharge' this commitment. Australia had a clear foreign policy goal of winning the 2012 UNSC membership and it worked strategically in utilizing its expanding aid budget and growing commercial interest across Africa to engage with a host of African countries. Hence, in achieving the goal of UNSC membership the government was to a large extent aided by the increased development funds for Africa, and the expanding network of Australian commercial interests helping explore, develop, and exploit the continent's many resources.

The third section of this chapter examined the Abbott Coalition government's foreign policy towards Africa, arguing that in a very short period of only two years, it highlighted clear indications of a return to the Howard era's more 'episodic' engagement with the continent. Tony Abbott exhibited no interest in African engagement but his Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, with sensitivities for her WA based electorate and constituents, was more rhetorically inclined to support at least economic engagement with the continent. Julie Bishop did travel to mainland Africa once (South Africa), and offered her support for Australia's commercial engagement with Africa on several occasions, most notably during Africa Day celebrations in 2014 and 2015, and while attending the ADU conference in Perth in 2015. However, Bishop's support for greater engagement with Africa was confined to economic and commercial engagement (consistent with her devotion to 'economic diplomacy') and not diplomatic or development cooperation.

Overall, as the Ebola episode, Julie Bishop's trip to South Africa, and the abandonment of the planned opening of an Australian embassy in Senegal, and AfDB membership clearly indicated, the Abbott government was returning to a more reactive and episodic nature of engagement with Africa, and one which would be 'targeted' at major political and commercial bilateral partners, i.e. South Africa.

This chapter should offer the reader enough empirical detail to be able to easily understand the discussion in the following chapters which will analyse the substance of changes in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa during these three governments, before proceeding to analyse the factors underpinning and affecting those changes.

## **CHAPTER V: Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa 1996-2015**

The previous chapter set out the background context for understanding Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. While it already observed the changing nature of this foreign policy engagement, the purpose of this chapter is to offer a more systematic analysis and interpretation of that change. After analysing how engagement with Africa changed over this period, the following two chapters will examine what drove (underpinned and affected) this changing foreign policy engagement.

The term 'change' in foreign policy remains poorly defined. Many of the models examining foreign policy decisions and direction rely on an implicit understanding that change is observable and at its most basic implies an absence of status quo. While some authors do not provide an explicit conceptualization of change in foreign policy, others offer definitions of graduated levels, moving from minimal incremental change to complete overhaul of foreign policy direction (Gustavsson 1999, 76).

Moving beyond the 'absence of status quo' approach, it is difficult to define what is meant by change in foreign policy. As outlined in chapter 2, foreign policy is a complex field of governmental activity that does not lend itself to easy comparison with other areas of public policy.<sup>110</sup> Because of the sensitivities involved in managing foreign relations, and international and domestic pressures obtruding and promoting the abilities of decision-makers to enact and implement policies, changes in foreign policy can be subtle, nuanced, and difficult to make out.

Nevertheless, in order to interpret levels of foreign policy engagement and compare them across governments, it is important to establish some relevant parameters. The nature of the source materials informs a primarily data-driven analysis of change in foreign policy, which can be interpreted by examining certain quantitative and qualitative criteria. Such parameters will aid in observing how Australian governments since 1996 have discharged their foreign policy engagement with Africa, and also the spirit and tone or attitude of that engagement. On the one hand, it is imperative to engage critically with perceptions and pronouncements that frame foreign policy

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<sup>110</sup> The extent to which 'foreign policy' is perceived as arguably so different, and hardly considered as 'public policy', can also partially be gauged from the fact that it is largely taught within International Relations rather than Public Policy departments at universities.

direction if we are to understand why foreign policy choices are made, and how change is justified. On the other, it is also imperative to move beyond only rhetoric in assessing change. Rhetoric can be seen as mainly symbolic and while not without its value in understanding the largely subtle and nuanced nature of change in foreign policy, if unaccompanied by change in activity, it can be dismissed as mere ‘rhetorical flourish’.

In order to combine the examination of qualitative and quantitative parameters that highlight change in foreign policy this thesis has developed a simple way of conceptualizing foreign policy change. Foreign policy change can be understood as taking place on two levels: ‘adjustment’ and ‘attitude’ change. *Adjustment change* refers to variations in the levels of effort in foreign policy engagement and would to a large extent (but not exclusively) be based on quantifiable parameters. *Attitude change* refers to a change in the attitude towards, and methods of foreign policy engagement and is to a large extent (but not exclusively) informed by qualitative parameters.<sup>111</sup> Such a conceptualization of change can serve to allow parsimonious generalizations about the overarching willingness and interest of a government in foreign policy engagement, and should offer a rigorous systematic analysis which unambiguously highlights how Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa changed between 1996 and 2015.

Before outlining the structure of this chapter it is necessary to flag two issues. Firstly, an examination of *both* ‘adjustment’ and ‘attitude’ is necessary to gauge actual change, particularly when there are discrepancies between rhetoric and action in foreign policy. Simply put, while nuances matter and rhetoric has a value and place in foreign policy, it is difficult to accept ‘change’ as actually taking place if not accompanied by a consistent and relatively commensurate change in levels of activity. Hence, if there are inconsistencies between rhetoric and action, there is a need to discuss them and what they might indicate.

Secondly, change is relational and relative. For the purposes of the present study changes in foreign policy engagement while also taking place within the terms of one government (particularly if in power for a long time), are primarily compared across the three different governments. Hence, the unit of analysis is an individual government, and changes in foreign policy during the Abbott government are compared to the Labor government, which are in turn compared to the Howard government. Although the lengths these governments remained in power varied significantly, they all offer enough

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<sup>111</sup> This model owes a great intellectual debt to Hermann 1990, 6.

empirical material to highlight adjustment and attitude change in their overall foreign policy engagement with Africa.<sup>112</sup>

This chapter is divided in two main sections. The first and more extensive examines adjustment and attitude change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa as pertaining to diplomatic and security cooperation. This section is more extensive because it offers an in-depth qualitative analysis which represents one of the key parameters for interpreting attitude change in foreign policy engagement with Africa.

The second section of the chapter is to a large extent based on quantitative parameters of foreign policy engagement with Africa in areas of economic and development cooperation. This emphasis on quantitative parameters is undertaken to avoid excessive overlap and repetition of issues discussed in the previous chapter which has already examined qualitative data on economic and development cooperation, and indicated more extensively the attitude change in Australia's development (and to an extent economic) cooperation with Africa over the period studied.

## **V.I Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa: diplomatic and security cooperation**

### **V.I.I Diplomatic cooperation**

The aspect of foreign policy engagement termed diplomatic cooperation is highly significant because, in addition to security and development cooperation, it is firmly under the control of the government, and highlights a great deal about its interest in and attitude towards, foreign policy engagement with certain issues and regions. However, because it is not easily quantifiable, it requires more extensive analysis, particularly of foreign policy speeches which underpin adjustment change and are key sources of information on attitude change.

There are four substantive parameters which inform the interpretation of change regarding diplomatic cooperation in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. Whilst they are not exhaustive, they do, taken together, allow for a well informed and robust systematic interpretation of change.

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<sup>112</sup> The Abbott government's two years in power were rather brief as compared to say Howard's almost 12, and on some aspects of foreign policy engagement (such as security and economic cooperation) it might be difficult to interpret change. However, as the following discussion will attempt to make clear, even the two years of the Abbott government offered enough overall empirical material for assessing the direction of that government's engagement with Africa.



- **Volume and context of visits to African countries by Australia's highest level foreign policy-makers.**<sup>113</sup> This parameter should inform us of the frequency of high-level visits to Africa, as well as their context which may be highly important in discerning levels of change in foreign policy engagement.
- **Volume and context of substantive Africa-focused speeches, or major foreign policy speeches touching on African issues by Australia's highest level policy-makers.**<sup>114</sup> This parameter allows us to observe the attitude changes in levels of interest in engaging with Africa, but also the conceptualization of Africa in Australia's foreign affairs.
- **Number and location of Australian diplomatic missions opened or closed in Africa.** The number as well as the location of opened or closed diplomatic missions can be an important factor for gauging the level of foreign policy focus or interest.
- **Volume and context of visits to Australia by ministerial and other high-level African delegations.** This is an indirect and supplementary indicator of the level of foreign policy engagement between Australia and a particular African country, in that it offers an insight in the priority and focus African governments place on foreign affairs with Australia (which can in itself be a reflection of Australia's changing foreign policy engagement with Africa).

As Table 2 (below) should make clear, looking only at adjustment change through purely quantitative parameters represents a rather inconclusive and messy picture, which requires further qualitative interpretation to inform our understanding of change in this foreign policy engagement. Raw numbers alone can tell us something about the levels of effort put in diplomatic engagement but they can be misleading and do not

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<sup>113</sup> As already observed, 'Australia's highest level foreign policy-makers' are primarily taken to be the prime and foreign ministers of the country; that is people who sit at the pinnacle of the foreign policy-making machinery and have the legitimacy and power to make foreign policy decisions and commit political and state resources towards enacting those decisions. Where it will be necessary for the purposes of the analysis this definition may be expanded to include the activities of other high-profile governmental figures active in the foreign affairs portfolio; primarily the country's trade minister, and possibly the governor general. This examination focuses only on visits to African countries while acknowledging that important work on African issues which can highlight change in foreign policy with Africa can be done outside of African countries, e.g. at the UN in New York or other multilateral fora. However, if not reported to the public, it is often difficult to ascertain information about such efforts and this lacking transparency can bias the analysis. Where relevant, this chapter will highlight such engagement taking place outside of Africa.

<sup>114</sup> Throughout this review the terms 'Africa' and 'African issues' or 'countries' are used synonymously. That means that when it is stated that a speech does not contain a reference to 'Africa', this includes references to specific African countries as well.

‘speak for themselves’. For example, Prime Ministers Howard and Abbott each visited Africa during their tenures, yet Prime Ministers Rudd and Gillard did not. This could be taken to imply that the Labor government was comparatively putting less diplomatic effort into engagement with Africa. Yet the only reasons why Howard and Abbott visited Africa during their tenures were either because of CHOGMs (Howard), or Nelson Mandela’s funeral and memorial service (Abbott). On the other hand, Labor’s foreign ministers made twelve visits to Africa, compared to Alexander Downer’s four and Julie Bishop’s one. How should that be rated against the lack of visits to Africa by Labor prime ministers? And what should we make of the number of speeches delivered on African issues, in which Labor ministers overwhelmingly outnumber their Coalition counterparts?

**Table 2. Adjustment change in Australia’s diplomatic cooperation with Africa 1996-2015<sup>115</sup>**

Parameter Examined		Howard Government (1996-2007)	ALP Government (2007-2013)	Abbott Government (2013-2015)
<b>Visits to Africa</b>	Prime Minister	3	0	1
	Foreign Minister	4	12	1
	Governor General	2	1	0
<b>Substantive Africa-focused speeches, or major foreign policy speeches touching on African issues</b>	Prime Minister	0	Rudd-0, Gillard-1	0
	Foreign Minister	1	Over 10	2
<b>Diplomatic Posts opened and closed</b>		Opened 1 High Commission in Ghana, and 1 Austrade run Consulate General in Libya	Opened 1 Embassy in Ethiopia, and 2 Austrade posts in Ghana and Kenya, committed to opening 1 Embassy in Senegal. Closed Austrade run Consulate General in Libya.	Abandoned planned opening of Embassy in Senegal.
<b>Visits to Australia by ministerial or other high-level African delegations</b>		6 (independently of the 2002 CHOGM hosted in Australia), plus ADU	12 (independently of the 2011 CHOGM hosted in Australia), plus ADU	0, plus G20 and ADU ministerial attendance

<sup>115</sup> The information in this table is based on publicly available sources. On two parameters — ‘substantive speeches’ and ‘visits to Australia by African delegations’ — it is possible that values could vary. This is because not all public speaking engagements by Australian prime and foreign ministers are always made publicly available, and not all visits by African delegations are always reported (both in the media as well as official government documents).

When it comes to diplomatic cooperation, and to a large extent in contrast to development or economic cooperation, quantitative parameters alone cannot help us fully understand change in foreign policy. Saying that there was adjustment change is not necessarily saying much. Governments do not open embassies every day, so it may very well be expected that none or only one (at best) is opened during a term of a government in a specific geographic region (especially Africa). And visits to foreign countries can be planned for years, but become derailed and abandoned because of unexpected circumstances and domestic or international crises, while at the same time visits that were never planned eventuate because of such pressing issues and necessities.<sup>116</sup>

In order to understand change in a more informed way, context is important and so is a certain degree of interpretation. Hence, the following discussion attempts to examine these raw numbers in their diplomatic context, making it easier to understand why adjustment change happened in the way it did. This section will conclude with a discussion of attitude change.

## **V.I.II The Howard Government**

### Volume and context of visits to African countries by Australia's highest level policy-makers

During his tenure in office John Howard made three visits to Africa. All three were undertaken entirely in the context of CHOGMs. Howard's first visit to Africa came in November 1999, when he visited Durban in South Africa for the 1999 CHOGM. His next two visits to Africa happened in the span of one year. Firstly in September 2002, en route to London, Howard stopped over in Abuja, Nigeria, for a scheduled meeting with the other two members of the CHOGM appointed Troika of Leaders (Nigeria's Obasanjo and South Africa's Mbeki) to discuss Robert Mugabe's governance in Zimbabwe (Howard 2011, 525). His last trip to Africa took place in December 2003, when he again visited Abuja for the 2003 CHOGM.

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<sup>116</sup> The Abbott government offers a good example of this. Tony Abbott was not scheduled to visit Africa, but did so because Nelson Mandela's funeral and memorial service was an event of international significance. On the other hand, his Trade Minister Andrew Robb was scheduled to visit the Mining Indaba conference in South Africa in February 2015, but did not proceed with the visit because of a Coalition leadership vote taking place in Canberra at the same time; interview with senior DFAT official, Melbourne, 28 October 2015.

Alexander Downer visited Africa four times as Australia's foreign minister. Downer's first visit to Africa was in July 1996 when he visited the OAU Heads of Government Summit taking place in Yaounde, Cameroon. His subsequent visit to Africa came in the context of Middle Eastern issues, where he made a stopover in Egypt in June 1998 to discuss trade issues. In April and May 2001, Downer visited South Africa and Kenya in relation to Commonwealth issues in preparation for the CHOGM meeting that was supposed to take place later that year in Brisbane, but ended up taking place in March 2002 in Coolom. Foreign Minister Downer's final visit to Africa happened in May 2004 when he visited Libya to announce an opening of a diplomatic post there.

It is worth noting that Australia's governors general undertook one visit each to Africa during this time period, both to Egypt. In October 2002 Governor General Peter Hollingworth visited Alexandria to commemorate the opening of the new library there, and in April 2006, Governor General Michael Jeffery visited Egypt for the rededication of the ninth Division Memorial at El Alamein (Governor General 2002, 2006; DFAT 2006, 74, 136).

Quantitatively, the number of visits by Australia's highest level policy-makers certainly did not imply a 'neglect' of Africa, especially as compared to the later Rudd and Gillard Labor government. However, the context and location of those visits was largely (and until the mid-2000s) indicative of an attitude which appeared to have conceptualized Africa as a policy space without much relevance past the Commonwealth or South African connection. John Howard's visits to Africa only occurred in the Commonwealth context, and Alexander Downer's visits until his last one in 2004 were undertaken either in the context of necessity inherited by the previous government (1996), or the Commonwealth (2001). His visits in general followed the pattern of Australia's traditional interests in Africa, which were always strongest at the extremes of the continent, Northern and Southern Africa.

#### Volume and context of substantive Africa-focused speeches, or major foreign policy speeches touching on African issues by Australia's highest level policy-makers

John Howard never delivered a substantive foreign policy speech focusing on Africa. Of the public speaking engagements he delivered related to Africa, a search of online archives of prime ministerial transcripts, interviews, and media releases reveals seven

such engagements with the term 'Africa' in the title. All of these were delivered in the context of CHOGMs; five during the 1999 CHOGM in South Africa, and two during the 2003 CHOGM in Nigeria.<sup>117</sup>

The only major foreign policy speech mentioning Africa Howard delivered was his August 2001 *Australia's International Relations-Ready for the Future* address (Howard 2001). In the speech Howard outlined the most important focal points of Australian foreign policy (Japan, China, US, Indonesia, Pacific, EU), making a short reference to the upcoming CHOGM meeting, and briefly noting the "deteriorating" situation in Zimbabwe. Howard's only reference to Africa in a major foreign policy speech was through the Commonwealth lens, and in a rather negative light (discussing governance challenges in Zimbabwe).

Alexander Downer, during his almost 12 years as minister for foreign affairs delivered several major foreign policy speeches, but African matters were either never touched on, or when discussed echoed Howard's overall negative tone. The handful of times Downer did invoke Africa in his speeches it was almost always to highlight something negative rather than positive (a challenge rather than an opportunity).

In his March 1997 *Looking West: Australia and the Indian Ocean* speech, delivered shortly after the establishment of what is today the IORA, Downer outlined his vision for the new organisation and then focused on two Indian Ocean markets of particular opportunity for Australian businesses: India and South Africa (Downer 1997a). This represents a rather unique speech in that Downer focused on an African country, and did so in the context of opportunity rather than challenge.

In the early 2000s, Alexander Downer delivered several major foreign policy speeches with minimal references to Africa. In January 2000 he delivered a speech on *Australia's Global Agenda*, where he again outlined his government's primary focus on the region, stating that Australia did have broader, more global interests:

Let me start by saying that the facts of geography tend to determine naturally enough where any country concentrates its foreign policy efforts. In Australia's case the primary focus is the Asia-Pacific Region. But that's not to say we don't have broader interests. We do. I think I've reasonably articulated our interests in France. We have broad interests in the European Union. We have interests in Africa. We have interests in Latin America. So

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<sup>117</sup> Speeches containing the term 'Africa' in the whole text (and not only the title) were all related to the Commonwealth, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and sporting issues arising from CHOGM and Zimbabwe related matters.



we do have a broad range of interests. Nevertheless, like any country, the primary focus of our foreign policy is by necessity on our own region, in our case, the Asia-Pacific region (Downer 2000a).

However, given that this was the only reference to Africa in the whole speech, and that the rest of his speech focused again on Australia's region and changes brought on by globalisation, it can be argued that such references to Africa were largely tokenistic. During an interview for this thesis Alexander Downer again abstractly reiterated that Australia did have interests in Africa, but did not identify any concretely.

Towards the end of 2000 Downer delivered a major speech on *Australia's International Response to HIV/AIDS* which in all fairness was focused on South East Asia and the Pacific. Africa featured with two references regarding the devastating effects the virus has had on the continent (Downer 2000b). While it would be unfair to say that Alexander Downer was singling out Africa in particular as somehow more susceptible to HIV/AIDS than Australia's neighbourhood, such references to Africa did contribute to a largely Afro-pessimist attitude present during the Howard years.

In four major foreign policy speeches Alexander Downer delivered between 2001 and 2003, Africa did not feature one reference. Firstly, in his March 2001 speech titled *Australia – Meeting our International Challenges*, Downer spoke at length of globalisation, trade, regional issues, Indonesia, and East Timor, making no reference to Africa (Downer 2001). Then, in May 2002 in a speech titled *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge* Downer spoke about the initiatives his government was undertaking, and future challenges in foreign policy, again making no reference to Africa (Downer 2002a). In August 2002 Downer presented a speech titled *Australia's Foreign Policy and International Relations*, in which he again outlined the government's foreign policy achievements and spoke at greater length about future foreign policy challenges to global and regional security, trade and investment, and trans-national issues, again not mentioning Africa (Downer 2002b). In November 2003 Downer delivered his *The Myth of Little Australia* speech (Downer 2003). Although his purpose was not to give an overview of the government's foreign policy focus and achievements, he touched upon many issues and regions of significance to Australia's foreign policy, but again Africa did not feature a single reference.

In the last term of Howard's government Alexander Downer delivered several major foreign policy announcements, with again no or scant reference to Africa. In an article published in 2005 and titled *Securing Australia's Interests – Australian foreign policy*

*priorities* Downer again outlined his government's foreign policy focus. While the paper featured issues such as the US alliance, focus on the Asia and Pacific region, the fight against global terrorism, and the strengthening of trade (with the EU, US, Asia), there were again no references to Africa (Downer 2005).

A year later, in July 2006, Downer delivered two major foreign policy speeches. The first one, *Should Australia think big or small in Foreign Policy?* outlined Downer's conceptualization of Australia as a "considerable power and a significant country" which should think and act big in foreign policy (Downer 2006a). Downer highlighted four key global challenges where Australia's foreign policy had an expansive agenda to pursue: climate change, democracy and freedom, trade, and focus on the region. The whole speech contained no references to Africa.

A day later, Alexander Downer delivered a speech titled *40 Years of Australian Foreign Policy – Democracy, Liberalism, and Australia's National Interests* where he gave an account of how Australia's pursuit of liberal values in foreign policy benefited many regions of the world. As Downer (2006b) noted

Liberal democracy is the soundest basis for peace and prosperity. It's the basis for dynamism and innovation. It's in Australia's national interest for democracy to spread. And so it's a core value of our foreign policy. These are powerful and enduring principles on which to base the pursuit of Australia's national interests...These principles put us on the right side of history. Sixty-seven dictatorships have fallen since 1972. A billion individuals - in eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America - have been emancipated from tyranny in one generation.

However in highlighting the advances in good governance achieved in Indonesia, Downer chose to contrast that example with Africa in particular:

And in Indonesia we have seen the emergence of a vibrant democracy and institutions are increasingly accountable. No doubt, we have a long way to go. But compared to other parts of the world - Africa for example - we have been successful in our efforts to support democratic outcomes.

In August 2007 and the full swing of upcoming federal elections Alexander Downer delivered another two major foreign policy speeches which should be viewed in the context of electoral differentiation between the Coalition and the ALP. Both speeches outlined the achievements of the coalition government's foreign policy and its differences with the ALP, both spoke of Australia's regional and global interests, and both failed to mention Africa or African issues (Downer 2007 a,b).

This analysis of Alexander Downer's major foreign policy speeches and their (lack of) references to Africa allows for several observations. Firstly, although Downer on several occasions made reference to Australia's global interests, these appear to have been conceptualized as mostly relating to the global war on terror, nuclear non-proliferation, and trade, having very little to do with the African continent. Secondly, the few references to Africa contributed to the overall negative narrative which emerges regarding the continent in the Howard government's foreign policy outlook. It would appear that the conceptualization of Africa was never that of a place of opportunity (aside from one speech on South Africa), rather that of a problematic and troubled foreign policy space, which the government mostly ignored, and only invoked when describing global challenges.

#### Number and location of Australian diplomatic missions opened or closed in Africa

During the four terms of the Howard government Australia did not close any diplomatic missions in Africa. On the other hand, the government opened one High Commission in Ghana in June 2004, and an Austrade run Consulate General in Libya in December 2005. Qualitatively these two posts can be assessed as having value in extending the country's diplomatic, consular, and trade network, and (given the lack of multilateral organizations in these countries) being primarily of a bilateral nature, and consistent with the Coalition's foreign policy outlook of preferring bilateral management of foreign affairs.

#### Volume and context of visits to Australia by ministerial and other high-level African delegations

Outside the CHOGM taking place in 2002, Australia did not experience many high-level visits by African officials between 1996 and 2007. During the four terms of the Howard government, there were only a handful of bilateral visits to Australia by African officials.

Two such visits took place during Australia's JMCs with South Africa; in December 1998 when South Africa's Minister for Trade Alec Erwin visited Australia, and again in 2006 when the country was visited by the South African Minister of Trade and Industry,

Mandisi Mpahlwa (Fischer 1998; Truss 2006). Concurrently with the latter visit, Australia was also visited by South Africa's Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka (DFAT 2007, 78). The obvious context of these visits was supporting bilateral foreign policy and trade ties between Australia and South Africa.

There were another three high-level African visits to Australia during the Howard years: in 1997 Angola's Vice-Minister for Petroleum visited Australia, and in November 1998 Tanzania's Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Mines and Energy also visited the country. Both visits were in the context of DFAT's attempts to "promote Australian private sector awareness of commercial opportunities in Africa", and expanding "links between Australian mining companies with interests in Africa" (DFAT n.d. a,b). A decade later, in August 2007, Australia's Prime Minister John Howard met Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change leader Morgan Tsvangirai, for the purposes of discussing possible "solutions to the crisis facing Zimbabwe" (DFAT 2008, 76).

### **V.I.III The Rudd/Gillard Government**

#### Volume and context of visits to African countries by Australia's highest level policy-makers

Both Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard as Australian prime ministers never visited Africa, but Gillard, like John Howard before her, hosted several African government officials in Australia during the CHOGM in 2011.

Stephen Smith, Labor's first foreign minister visited Africa on three occasions, starting with a visit to the AU in January 2009, followed by a visit to Egypt in July of the same year, and finally a visit to Botswana and South Africa in January 2010. Australia's Governor General, Quentin Bryce also visited Africa once in 2009, when she undertook a tour of nine African countries.

After Kevin Rudd became Australia's foreign minister in September 2010, Australia experienced its highest ever volume of official high-level visits to the African continent. During Rudd's tenure as foreign minister he visited Africa on seven occasions, once in 2010, and six times in 2011. His first visit was to Egypt in December 2010, which was followed by visits to Ethiopia in January 2011, South Africa, Egypt, and Tunisia between February and March, Equatorial Guinea in June, Kenya and Somalia in July, and Libya in December 2011. Kevin Rudd's last visit to Africa was to Ethiopia in January 2012.

Kevin Rudd's successor as Australia's foreign minister, Bob Carr, visited Africa twice, both times North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, and Libya, and then Egypt) in 2012.

Volume and context of substantive Africa-focused speeches, or major foreign policy speeches touching on African issues by Australia's highest level policy-makers

During his tenure as prime minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd never delivered a major foreign policy speech on Africa. A search of online archives of prime ministerial transcripts, interviews, and media releases reveals one media release with the term 'Africa' in the title, delivered in the lead up to the Governor General's visit to the African continent in early 2009.

A search of the same online archives for references to 'Africa' and African states in general yields various scattered references in around 50 media releases and transcripts, but only one of a substantive African focus; a Joint Statement Plan of Action between Australia and Botswana issued during the visit of Botswana's president to Australia in March 2010 (Rudd 2010a).

Julia Gillard as Australian prime minister delivered only one substantive speech on African matters, and this was her speech to the AU Permanent Representatives in New York, delivered in March 2011. This speech was titled *Making a difference for the small and medium countries of the world* and due to its title, contents, and location of delivery (UN headquarters in New York) can be seen in the context of Australia's UNSC membership campaign (Gillard 2011a). Gillard's speech mentioned challenges on the continent, but also recognised opportunities and attempted to highlight Australia's openness to engage with, learn from, and not only aid, but do business with African countries.<sup>118</sup>

The other 50-odd references to Africa or African issues in transcripts and media releases during Julia Gillard's tenure as prime minister do not cover any substantive issues. Most of them are scattered references where Africa is only mentioned once or twice, and the only substantive references to Africa are found in the media releases or statements

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<sup>118</sup> If this was a one-off speech by Australia's highest foreign policy-makers on African issues, it could be dismissed as rhetorical flourish in the context of soliciting UNSC membership votes. However, while the speech may still be regarded as nothing more than rhetorical flourish delivered in the context of securing UNSC membership votes, placed in the broader context of Labor's other foreign policy speeches on African issues it helped build an Afro-optimist narrative of focusing on opportunities in Africa, and exhibiting a commitment to closer foreign policy engagement with the continent.

issued during the President of Gabon's visit to Australia in March 2012, or the President of Mozambique's visit in March 2013 (Gillard 2012, 2013).

In contrast to Alexander Downer, Labor's Foreign Ministers Smith, Rudd, and Carr, delivered numerous Africa focused speeches, and here the change is acute.

Stephen Smith, the foreign minister who set the foundations of Australia's broadening foreign policy engagement with Africa delivered a speech to commemorate Africa Day celebrations every year whilst foreign minister. In 2008, Smith's first year as foreign minister, in addition to his Africa Day speech, he also delivered a major foreign policy speech which outlined the government's approach to engagement with Africa. Both speeches highlighted 'broadening' and 'deepening' engagement with Africa, and both were Afro-optimist in outlook emphasizing opportunities on the continent which were already being seized by the Australian private sector (Smith 2008b,c).

In 2009 Smith delivered three major Africa focused speeches: one to the Executive Council of the AU, one at the celebrations commemorating Africa Day in Canberra, and one at the ADU conference in Perth. By now Smith's major foreign policy speeches regularly contained repetitive references to 'broadening' and 'deepening' engagement with Africa. In his AU address Smith pointed out that "in the past, Australia has not given Africa the priority it requires and deserves" and proceeded to outline his government's strategy for supporting greater security, economic, and aid engagement (Smith 2009b). Addressing the Africa Day celebration in Canberra, Smith (2009c) again outlined what his government was doing to "broaden and deepen our engagement with Africa" by strengthening diplomatic, economic, and aid links with the continent. Smith's (2009i) addresses to the ADU conference highlighted the role Australian companies were playing in driving greater economic engagement between the two continents and reiterated his government's resolve to further support that engagement.

In his final year as Australia's foreign minister before being transferred to the position of minister for defence, Smith delivered another three major Africa focused speeches: one whilst visiting South Africa and Botswana, one for Africa Day celebrations in Australia, and a third speech on relations with the African continent. During his visit to South Africa Smith's speech recognized and reiterated the country's importance for Australia as a major trading partner, and suggested mutual priorities in foreign policy such as pursuit of UNSC reform, commitment to the MDGs, dealing with the global



financial crisis, support for nuclear non-proliferation, and a resolution of Zimbabwe's political situation (Smith 2010c).

Smith's address to the University of Sydney International Forum on Africa in March 2010 represents a major speech cataloguing how far his government had gone in fostering greater engagement with Africa. Smith began by reiterating the government's dedication to broadening and deepening engagement with Africa making the point that "from Perth, there is a somewhat different perspective on our region, seeing Australia both as a country of the Indian Ocean, as well as a Pacific nation. Australia needs to look west to Africa. For too long Australia had not given Africa the priority that it deserved". He then, in Afro-optimist spirit, focused on the beneficial changes in Africa: "Africa is changing for the better and this is under appreciated in Australia as it is internationally. It is a more stable, free and prosperous continent than it was a decade ago.... the many positive changes I have mentioned herald enormous opportunity not just for Africa but for Australia". All of this was invoked to highlight the growing Australian private sector presence in Africa, almost exclusively in the resources and mining sector. Smith also pointed out that "just as there are sound economic reasons for enhancing our engagement with Africa, there are also good strategic and geopolitical reasons", noting that "African nations have an important and growing influence in multilateral fora. They comprise more than a quarter of the membership of the World Trade Organization, the United Nations and the Commonwealth. As Smith added "for Australia it makes strategic sense to engage with Africa bilaterally, regionally and through the African Union" because "it is difficult to imagine progress on issues such as climate change, the millennium development goals, trade liberalisation, disarmament, and United Nations reform without working closely with Africa, African countries and the African Union". The rest of the speech was dedicated to highlighting enhancement of diplomatic relations with African states, and the flurry of high-level visits between Australian and African leaders in 2009. As Smith concluded, all of that amounted to more high-level visits in "one year than the previous 10 years combined." Stephen Smith concluded his major Africa foreign policy review speech by stating that "Australia is committed to Africa for the long term. This commitment is based neither on sentiment nor short term expediency but on the mutual economic, social and political interests Australia and Africa can advance together" (Smith 2010f).

The major feature of Smith's last substantive Africa related foreign policy speech, delivered at the May Africa Day celebrations in Canberra, was the announcement that

“in recognition of the African Union's vital role and growing global influence, Australia will open a new embassy in Addis Ababa” (Smith 2010g).

Kevin Rudd's roughly year and a half long tenure as Australia's foreign minister saw him travel to Africa more than any other Australian foreign minister in history, and follow in Stephen Smith's footsteps in delivering a plethora of Africa focused foreign policy speeches.

Although Kevin Rudd had been foreign minister for only about three months in 2010, he still managed to deliver one major foreign policy speech with a large Africa focus. In a November 2010 speech to the University of Western Australia, Rudd outlined his vision of *Australia's Foreign policy Looking West*. The speech exhibited a strong degree of Afro-optimism and Rudd made it clear that although there were many development challenges in Africa, his overall focus was on the opportunities ushered in by changes on the continent: “and as many nations within the continent of Africa resolve long-standing security problems, proceed down the path of economic development, and open their significant energy and resources markets to the world, Africa's economic significance is growing as well”. Rudd recognized the importance of WA based resource companies in driving economic engagement with the African continent and declared that

The Australian Government is going to be increasingly called upon to advance these economic interests in Africa, and to provide diplomatic and consular support to its companies and its citizens. To maximise the returns to Australia and to pursue our growing national economic interests, the Australian Government and the private sector need to work together on these challenges. I hear one message from the Australian mining industry, and that is that they want Australia to be more engaged with the affairs of the continent, not less. And that too is the resolve of the Australian Government (Rudd 2010b).

Over the course of 2011, Kevin Rudd delivered several major speeches on Australia's engagement with Africa, and was active in promoting African issues with opinion pieces published in Australian newspapers. As he visited Ethiopia in January 2011 Rudd delivered two speeches; one to mark the opening of the Australian embassy there, and another whilst attending the AU Summit (Rudd 2011b,c). Both speeches espoused optimism about Africa's future and development and repeated Australia's achievements in supporting greater foreign policy and economic engagement with the continent.

Like Stephen Smith before him, Rudd also used the opportunity of the University of Sydney's International Forum on Africa to deliver a major review of Australia's enhanced engagement with the continent. In his speech titled *Building Bridges between Africa and Australia* Rudd outlined a great degree of optimism about the future development and business prospects in Africa summarising that "quite simply, Africa's economic and political reforms, its wealth in agriculture and minerals, and its economic potential have turned the continent around in the space of a decade". Rudd reiterated Australia's efforts in enhancing diplomatic and economic links with the continent and argued that it was in Australia's interest to give more aid to Africa, not only for development reasons but also because it would benefit the Australian economy: "the Australia Africa Awards will also have benefits for the Australian economy. It's estimated that the 1375 African students who come here as long-term scholarship recipients in the next three years will contribute \$130 million to the Australian economy — with \$63 million of this going to our tertiary institutions" (Rudd 2011d).

Fronting the National Press Club in June 2011, Kevin Rudd delivered a major foreign policy speech titled *Australia's foreign policy priorities and our candidature for the UN Security Council*. In the speech Rudd outlined various foreign policy priorities such as sustaining the political momentum of the G20, engagement with UN institutions, commitment to the sustainable relevance and significance of the Commonwealth, support for nuclear non-proliferation and the US alliance, working with the private sector in enhancing the country's economic engagement with various regions (especially Africa and Latin America), increasing ODA to 0.5% of GNI by 2015, undertaking "fresh engagement" with both Africa and Latin America, and pursuing a seat at the UNSC (Rudd 2011e).

In the lead up to the 2011 CHOGM in Perth, Rudd published an opinion piece on African issues. His late October 2011 piece in *The Australian* newspaper further shaped the narrative of optimism about the African continent, highlighting the Australian resources sector's investments in Africa. As Rudd concluded "Africa is changing. While there are risks, business opportunities are on the rise. Our miners have worked this out, and are making a real impact. What they offer to Africa is world class and uniquely Australian. It's worth a closer look. And it's worth the continuing support of the Australian government" (Rudd 2011h).

Several days after this piece was published, during the Perth CHOGM, Kevin Rudd delivered a speech to the Australia-Africa Foreign Ministers' Mining Breakfast. There he expressed his government's support for African development and Australian mining companies operating on the continent and promoted the newly launched Mining for Development initiative, which was "designed to assist more than 30 developing countries, most of these in Africa, to ensure sustainable development through the mining industries, also providing education, job opportunities and improving governance" (Rudd 2011i).

Kevin Rudd's last major foreign policy speech delivered in 2011 was his Charteris Lecture to the Australian Institute of International Affairs titled *The Australia we can all be proud of*. In the speech he catalogued his government's objectives and achievements in foreign policy, highlighting that Australia's relations with its immediate region were at the core of the country's foreign policy, "but the Government has also deliberately set out to strengthen our relations with regions where our engagement in the past has been thin and where our contemporary interests require a greater engagement in the future". As Rudd further noted such regions included the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America (Rudd 2011j).

Bob Carr's tenure as Australia's foreign minister also lasted roughly a year and a half. During this time he delivered two major foreign policy speeches focusing on Africa. At the 2012 ADU conference in Perth, Carr delivered a major speech cataloguing Australian commercial engagement with Africa. Whilst all speeches delivered by Australian foreign ministers on foreign policy engagement with Africa often cited numbers of Australian mining companies' projects and investments in Africa as a whole, this remains the only speech which actually highlighted particular African countries and Australian companies operating in them. After reviewing Australia's growing engagement with Africa through his government's increasing aid to the continent, enhancement and broadening of diplomatic links, and pursuit of AfDB membership, Carr turned to highlighting what Australian mining companies were doing in Africa. He noted Rio Tinto's half century old Alucam smelter project in Cameroon, Paladin Energy's large uranium mine in Malawi (contributing around 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)), Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton's iron ore and alumina projects in Guinea, the Australian government's technical advisory to Liberia's Ministry of Finance in establishing a Natural Resources Tax Unit, BHP Billiton's aluminium smelter in Mozambique, Rio Tinto's Rossing uranium project in Namibia,

and the vast number of Australian mining projects in South Africa. In concluding his remarks Carr again highlighted the changing narrative of opportunity and optimism surrounding Africa and stated that "...on what we've seen since 2000, this could well be an African century" (Carr, Bob 2012f).

Bob Carr's other major foreign policy speech with a focus on Africa came in June 2013, and should be read in the context of the upcoming September federal election. Addressing the National Press Club Carr delivered a speech titled *Australia's foreign policy directions*. Carr reviewed his government's foreign policy achievements, making specific references to the successful UNSC campaign. In talking about the UNSC campaign Carr made a point to mention Australia's success in securing African votes:

Among the first nations to congratulate me was Mali. Now, of all the nations there — a civil war, millions of refugees, a tiny struggling nation in the Sahel — but he thought it appropriate to thank Australia....Mali is a long way from Australia but they identified with us. Indeed, when it comes to Africa, when we engage in the exercise of seeing who in Africa, who among the nations of Africa didn't vote for us, after one or two obvious choices — I'm too much of a diplomat to name them — it was very hard to come up with any others. Australia has resonance there. When Kevin said to them, to the African Union, on one occasion: we're not America, we're not Europe, we're Australia, and we look across the Indian Ocean at you and engage with you, that carried a lot of weight (Carr, Bob 2013c).

This analysis highlights a distinct and prominent change in the attitude towards, and perception of, Africa. Labor's first foreign minister, Stephen Smith, in total delivered at least triple the amount of speeches on African matters compared to his Liberal predecessor Alexander Downer. Furthermore, the tone of those speeches changed drastically from what had been the standard during the Howard years. While Alexander Downer overall made scant or no references to Africa in his major foreign policy speeches, and largely exhibited an Afro-pessimist tone in the few references he did make to the continent, Labor's foreign ministers (Smith, Rudd, and Carr) made a point to note Australia's enhanced engagement with Africa in many major foreign policy direction speeches, and present it as a substantive foreign policy on its own. These speeches also exhibited a greatly changed tone and emphasis on opportunities in Africa rather than focusing solely on challenges, and overall displayed a great degree of Afro-optimism which were in tune with the wider global narrative of the 'Rise of Africa'. Certainly, as far as rhetoric was concerned, the Labor government made a clear point of

differentiating itself from the previous Coalition government in substantially changing official discourse on foreign policy engagement with Africa.<sup>119</sup>

#### Number and location of Australian diplomatic missions opened or closed in Africa

The Labor government formally closed down Australia's Consulate General in Libya in June 2013, although due to the civil war there, the operations at the post had been suspended since February 2011, with Austrade coverage of Libya managed out of the United Arab Emirates, and diplomatic and consular issues out of Australia's embassy in Italy (DFAT 2013b).

On the other hand, the government opened an Australian Embassy in Ethiopia in 2010, the Chancellery building of which was opened in 2012. It also opened two new Austrade posts in Kenya (Nairobi), and Ghana (Accra). The government announced it would open another Australian Embassy in Africa; a first ever Embassy in Senegal.

The Australian Embassy in Ethiopia holds bilateral value in advancing relations with Ethiopia, but is also accredited to the AU which is headquartered in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, allowing Australia regular diplomatic representation at the highest echelon of pan-African political and security governance. This multilateral dimension was consistent with the ALP's multilaterally minded middle power foreign policy outlook, as well as its pursuit of UNSC membership.

#### Volume and context of visits to Australia by ministerial and other high-level African delegations

Contrary to the experience of almost 12 years of the Howard government, which hosted one CHOGM in Australia but outside of that saw only a handful of high-level bilateral African visits, the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments, while also hosting one CHOGM in Australia in 2011, saw more high-level bilateral visits by African officials than at any other time in Australia's modern history.

In 2009 alone Australia was visited by five high-level African delegations. In May the country was visited by Tanzania's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International

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<sup>119</sup> The changes in this official discourse on engagement with Africa are also evident in DFAT's Annual Reports between the Howard and Rudd/Gillard years.



Cooperation Mr Bernard Membe; a visit conducted in the context of broadening bilateral ties between the two countries, specifically with a focus on growing development cooperation, and support for Australian resource and mining companies operating in Tanzania (Smith 2009d).

In June 2009 Australia was visited by Kenya's Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Moses Wetang'ula, who was accompanied by his country's Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources, Mr John Michuki. Their trip provided an opportunity for the two countries "to explore further bilateral trade and investment, particularly in the minerals and petroleum resources industries", and discuss development and security cooperation issues (Smith 2009e).

Concurrently with this visit, Australia was also visited by Rwanda's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Mrs Rosemary Museminali. Her visit came in the context of exploring "potential for bilateral trade and investment, particularly in the agricultural and minerals resources industries" and discussing Australia's development cooperating with the country. Australia also supported Rwanda's goal of becoming a member of the Commonwealth, which it did in November 2009 (Smith 2009f).

A few days later, Botswana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mr Phandu Skelemani visited Australia. The purpose of the visit was to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation in sectors such as education and development, and talk about Zimbabwe's political reform (Smith 2009g).

The last high-level visit to Australia by an African delegation in 2009 was the September visit by Mozambique's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Mr Oldemiro Baloi. The main discussion related to opportunities to build commercial links between the two countries, Australia's development cooperation with Mozambique, and security and political matters related to Zimbabwe (Smith 2009j).

The next five high-level African visits to Australia occurred in the first half of 2010. In early March Australia was for the first time visited by Botswana's President, Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, who was accompanied by his Foreign Minister Phandu Skelemani. While in Australia, the delegation met with the country's Governor-General Quentin Bryce, and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (Smith 2010d). The visit allowed a discussion of further enhancing bilateral cooperation in trade and

development, and produced a Joint Plan of Action on the situation in Zimbabwe and Australia's growing development assistance to Botswana.

In mid-March, in the context of Sydney University's International Forum on Africa, Australia was also visited concurrently by Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairman of the African Union Commission, South Africa's Deputy Foreign Minister Susan van der Merwe, and Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Tendai Biti.

In June 2010 Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni visited Australia. This visit provided an opportunity for Australia to discuss further enhancing trade and commercial engagement with its third largest export market on the African continent, as well as furthering development cooperation between the two countries (Smith 2010h).

Australia was also visited by two high-level African delegations in 2012 and 2013. In March 2012 it was visited by Gabon's President Ali Bongo. At the time Australia's thirst for oil made Gabon the country's third largest two-way trading partner in Africa, and the meeting focused on the bilateral relationship as well as regional African security and development issues (Gillard 2012). A year later, in March 2013, Julia Gillard hosted the President of Mozambique, Armando Emílio Guebuza and his delegation. The two countries used this meeting to discuss strengthening ties, particularly with regards to economic interests in the mining resources sector (Gillard 2013).

All of these visits appear to have resulted from the Australian government's active solicitation of greater bilateral links between Australia and African states. This much is exemplified by Australian foreign ministers' interactions with African leaders at the UN and AU (particularly Stephen Smith) as well as interactions at the CHOGM in 2011.<sup>120</sup> Taking into account the aforementioned dearth of high-level bilateral African visits during the Howard years, it is highly questionable if these visits would have taken place in the absence of Australia's adjustment as well as attitude change in foreign policy engagement with Africa during the Labor years.

Lastly, a note should be made of the general rise in African ministerial delegations visiting Australia for the purposes of the ADU conference. As noted in the previous chapter this event grew significantly from the last years of the Howard government, and

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<sup>120</sup> Most of the government's media releases announcing these visits by African delegations explicitly mention that Stephen Smith first met the relevant ministers in either New York or Addis Ababa, or that they were present in Australia for the CHOGM in 2011.

during the Labor years represented a key foundation for official governmental contacts and support for economic and commercial engagement with African states. While not many of these African (predominantly resources portfolio) ministers would extend their visit to Canberra, their presence in Perth allowed the Australian government to further bilateral ties and discuss various issues with a range of African officials it would normally have little opportunity to engage outside the UN or Commonwealth. As such the ADU represented an important conduit for greater foreign policy engagement with Africa.

## **V.I.IV The Abbott Government**

### Volume and context of visits to African countries by Australia's highest level policy-makers

During his time in office Prime Minister Tony Abbott made one visit to Africa; in December 2013 he visited South Africa for the purposes of Nelson Mandela's funeral and memorial service. His Foreign Minister Julie Bishop also made one visit to Africa; in September 2014 she visited Mauritius, Madagascar, and South Africa. This was consistent with Bishop's emphasis on promoting engagement with IORA, as well as the Coalition's traditional predominance accorded to maintaining (economic) links with South Africa.

### Volume and context of substantive Africa-focused speeches, or major foreign policy speeches touching on African issues by Australia's highest level policy-makers

As prime minister, Tony Abbott did not make any substantive Africa related speeches, or speeches touching on African issues.

On the other hand, Julie Bishop made several major foreign policy speeches, but only two substantive speeches on engagement with Africa. In order to avoid repetition as chapter 7 analyses her major foreign policy speeches in detail, this section will focus on the two Africa related speeches. Suffice it to say that, as chapter 7 will make clear, Julie Bishop's references to Africa in major foreign policy speeches were overall scant, and when made, served to further highlight her government's focus on Australia's neighbourhood, particularly with regards to the country's development cooperation, but economic and strategic interests as well.

Julie Bishop's two major Africa related foreign policy speeches were delivered in 2015, firstly at the May Africa Day celebrations in Canberra, and then the ADU conference in September.<sup>121</sup> In her brief Africa Day address, Bishop reflected on the significant role her government was playing in funding multilateral peacekeeping operations in Africa, noting that economic partnerships and not outdated "aid donor-aid recipient" relationships were key for tackling poverty across the continent. She then reiterated the strength of Australian commercial interests across Africa, particularly in the resources sector, noting the overall growth in trade between the two continents over the past decade. The speech ended with her recognition of the "very good working relationship" with African ambassadors and high commissioners in Australia (Bishop 2015d).

Fronting the ADU conference in September 2015, Julie Bishop delivered a more substantive address, again making the case for economic partnerships being of key importance to development, arguing that "today, the relationship between Australia and Africa has matured well beyond aid and development. Now flows of trade and investment in a wide variety of sectors underpin a burgeoning economic relationship". This was followed by Bishop's defence of Australia's diminishing bilateral aid budget to Africa with a claim that "at its peak, in 2012 Australian aid to Africa amounted to 0.7 [%] of the total aid budget", which was too little to make a significant impact in the region. Bishop however argued that currently close to half a billion AUD was provided largely through multilateral institutions to support "Africa's development and security". Notwithstanding the inflated numbers of Australian funded multilateral aid reaching Africa, which easily lend themselves to such generous estimates,<sup>122</sup> Bishop's claim of Australia's peak 2012 budget to Africa making up only 0.7% of the country's total aid budget was incorrect. As the subsequent section on development cooperation makes clear, the figure was closer to 10% of the total aid budget in 2012, which constituted the highest Australia's bilateral aid to (Sub-Saharan) Africa had ever been between 1996

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<sup>121</sup> Interviews with DFAT officials suggest that Julie Bishop had delivered another speech to the Africa Day celebrations in 2014, and the author was present at the 2014 ADU where a brief video address by Julie Bishop was played. However, these occasions apparently did not require 'speeches' but 'speaking notes'. According to interviews with DFAT officials, since these 'speaking notes' were not considered 'speeches' by Julie Bishop, they were not released into the public domain. I was able to source Bishop's address to the May 2015 Africa Day celebrations even though it is not in the public domain, but the other two speeches or speaking notes (2014 Africa Day and ADU) remained unavailable.

<sup>122</sup> These estimates are 'generous' for many reasons, but most importantly because such funds are given to multilateral bodies to spend on programs they see fit, and while it is quite possible that much of their budgets is spent on programs in Africa, DFAT does not publish actual numbers of the proportion of Australian donated funds spent in Africa. Hence, it is impossible to know exactly how much of the DFAT supplied funds are actually spent on multilateral programs in Africa, and prove or disprove Bishop's statement.

and 2015. In any case, Julie Bishop again reiterated the vibrancy of Australian resource interests across Africa, and the numbers of Australian companies and their projects on the continent, before announcing the creation of the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, made up of “eminent representatives from business, civil society and the public sector”, tasked with informing “the Australian government’s thinking and policies on Africa”. Overall, Bishop’s speech was upbeat and Afro-optimist in tone, and she argued that “Australia and Africa have a bright future together”, and that her government was “committed to making sure our partnership with the countries of Africa continues to grow” (Bishop 2015f).

#### Number and location of Australian diplomatic missions opened or closed in Africa

The Abbott government did not open or close any diplomatic posts in Africa. It did however abandon the planned opening of a first ever Australian embassy in Senegal announced by the Labor government.

#### Volume and context of visits to Australia by ministerial and other high-level African delegations

As far as can be ascertained from documents and information in the public domain, as well as interviews with DFAT officials, during the two years of the Abbott government, Australia was not visited by any official African delegation outside multilateral events. In the context of the G20 meeting held in Brisbane in October 2014, Australia was visited by the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma; Chair of the AU, President Aziz of Mauritania; and Chair of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, President Macky Sall of Senegal (DFAT 2015, 71). There was also the usual ministerial attendance for the 2014 and 2015 ADU in Perth, although perhaps in lesser numbers than previous years, and attendance of African delegations for the IORA meetings also held in Perth in 2014 and 2015. However, the exact numbers and profile of these delegations is not in the public domain.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The potentially decreased numbers of African ministerial delegations to the ADU should not be seen as primarily influenced by a change in Australian foreign policy engagement with Africa, but more in the context of the changing global commodities cycle and international economic circumstances.

## Interpreting change in diplomatic cooperation with Africa

An examination of just raw numbers of visits to Africa implies that Coalition prime ministers have been more interested in engaging with Africa than their Labor counterparts. However, Labor foreign ministers appeared more interested in that engagement than their Coalition counterparts. Howard's Governors General Hollingworth and Jeffery visited Africa twice as many times as Labor's Governor General Bryce, but in her one trip Bryce visited nine countries compared to Hollingworth and Jeffery's visits to only Egypt in their two trips. None of Australia's prime ministers between 1996 and 2015 made major foreign policy pronouncements on African issues, but Labor foreign ministers were much more interested in doing so than their Coalition counterparts. With regards to diplomatic posts on the continent, the Howard and Rudd/Gillard governments were equally as interested in diplomatic cooperation, while the Abbott government appeared less interested. African delegations appear to have been more inclined to visit Australia during the Labor years, than during Howard or Abbott's Coalition governments.

This is all that can broadly be stated about adjustment change, but what can the context of these numbers tell us about attitude change? An observable change in attitude, and particularly the methods of pursuing diplomatic cooperation was noticeable during the Labor period. A new method of pursuing diplomatic cooperation was required because of the Labor government's desire to secure UNSC membership, and this to an extent drove the growing intensity of that cooperation. However, there was also a change in perception during the Labor years; the government was more interested in highlighting opportunities than challenges emanating out of Africa; more Afro-optimist than Howard's government had been; and more proactive in seeking diplomatic cooperation than both Howard and Abbott's governments. On the other hand, at least rhetorically and on issues of economic cooperation, there was a certain degree of continuity in diplomatic cooperation from the Labor government to the Abbott Coalition, evidenced by the latter's Afro-optimist tone in its few Africa related foreign policy pronouncements.

These attitude changes can be seen as highly indicative of a government's broader foreign policy outlook. The Howard government was in traditional Coalition fashion more interested in bilateral than multilateral cooperation, and at that, mainly only with South Africa. It was in (true) conservative fashion more interested in maintaining the



status quo, and sustaining existing links with traditional contact points with African issues, such as economic links with South Africa and membership of the Commonwealth. The Labor government was not necessarily uninterested in this, but on the diplomatic cooperation front at least attempted to move beyond these existing links by fostering new ones. Hence, (and partially driven by its UNSC campaign) the effort to engage with more countries bilaterally, and particularly with the AU multilaterally. The Abbott government maintained a focus reminiscent of the Howard years, most prominently indicated by its abandonment of Labor's plan to open an Australian Embassy in Senegal, and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's only African visit to South Africa.<sup>124</sup>

## V.I.II Security cooperation

Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa with regards to the domain of security cooperation is arguably an easy task. As noted in the previous chapter all Australian governments, not only in the past two decades but well beyond that have perceived Africa as a space of little direct defence and strategic concern for Australia's immediate well-being. Africa has only figured more prominently on the radars of Australian defence and strategic thinkers and policy-makers in the context of other, broader concerns, the most prominent of which was the spread of communism during the Cold War.

Since World War II, Australian defence and strategic cooperation and activity in Africa has been exclusively multilateral, either in support of the UN, or the AU.<sup>125</sup> Since 1996 this cooperation has been minimal, and usually limited to financial or technical advisory support. Therefore it is rather futile to compare quantitative parameters of Australian troops serving in support of multilateral missions in Africa. As the discussion in the previous chapter made clear, such numbers are very small, and it is unclear whether troops listed as operating in support of African issues were actually deployed in those operations. What may prove more fruitful is an attempt at interpreting attitude change through a review of DFAT and DOD strategic thinking as espoused by key documents. This review will at least provide a good indicator of the level of continuity in

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<sup>124</sup> Given the noted emphasis Labor placed on engaging with the AU, a visit to Ethiopia and the AU headquarters would have been much more indicative of the Abbott government's continuity with Labor's agenda.

<sup>125</sup> I note 'almost exclusively' as it is possible that Australian defence forces have been active on the African continent outside of these multilateral operations, but such activities if they exist (as possibly indicated by the SAS episode from 2012) have not been made public.

Australia's strategic perceptions of Africa, and its utility or lack thereof in advancing Australia's strategic and foreign policy interests.<sup>126</sup>

In 1997, the Howard government produced a foreign policy White Paper titled *In the National Interest*, which offers an example of strategic thinking, predominantly within the domain of foreign rather than defence policy. With regards to engagement with Africa it made a few scattered references, none of which dealt with any substantial security or strategic issues. There was a two paragraph discussion of population pressures globally (mentioning Africa as well), and how Australia would help ensure population issues do not undermine regional security and economic development, by continuing the provision of assistance "on the basis of a noncoercive family planning policy" (DFAT 1997, 30).

The 2000 Department of Defence *White Paper* is notable for two references to Africa. The first reference enumerated the ADF's past participation in multilateral missions around the world, and the second assessed the global strategic setting, concluding that "Africa will continue to suffer from crises which may require international engagement to minimise suffering and help towards solutions" (DOD 2000b, 10, 17). This conclusion highlights the traditional perception of Africa as a strategic space with which Australia engages only when mandated by wider global security concerns.

The DOD's 2003 *National Security Update* contained one reference to Africa; in the context of global terrorism, recognizing that Al Qaeda had cells and operatives in Europe, the Middle East, South East Asia, the US, and Africa (DOD 2003b, 11). There were no references in the update to any African country, and the emphasis of the document was largely on threats emanating from Southeast Asia.

In the same year, the Howard government published its second foreign policy White Paper, titled *Advancing the National Interest*. References to Africa and African countries were again few and scattered, with the only substantial concern being that of regional security issues driven by potential state collapse in amongst other places, Africa:

The international community could also face challenges from states that collapse into disorder, possibly producing humanitarian crises that could threaten to involve their neighbours, as has happened in the former

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<sup>126</sup> This review is also heavily indebted to the work done by Mickler 2013.

Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DFAT 2003c, 46).

As one commentator concluded "...aside from these brief mentions, and a discussion of Australia's position on Zimbabwe, Africa was again not characterised as a source of any national security concern to Australia" (Mickler 2013, 156).

In the last few years of the Howard government, Australian foreign policy-makers became increasingly aware of the threats posed to regional and global security from the nexus of weak and fragile states, transnational terrorism, and weapons proliferation, all of which constituted in many ways non-traditional strategic concerns. This is evident from the DOD's *National Security Updates* published in 2005 and 2007 (DOD 2005b, 2007). Although these reports recognized non-traditional threats to regional and global security, they did not mention Africa or African countries at all, highlighting the enduring perception of the continent as quite peripheral to Australia's national security concerns.

Such perceptions of Africa did not change much in the first year of Kevin Rudd's Labor government. In 2008 Rudd delivered Australia's first *National Security Statement*, which much like the last few strategic documents produced by the Howard government, did not mention Africa (Rudd 2008c).

In 2009, the DOD published a new White Paper titled *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*. This document provided a basic strategic consideration of Africa, which was partially related to the Labor government's foreign policy of broadening and deepening engagement with the continent. While the paper overwhelmingly identified Australia's primary strategic and security concerns in the broader region, there was some discussion of interests and concerns emanating out of Africa. The document stated that

In Africa, there are reasonable prospects for better economic growth, governance and reduced frequency of conflict. Africa is also growing in relative importance as a source of the world's energy supplies. At the same time, economic development is likely to be uneven and insecurity and instability are likely to continue in some countries, exacerbated by environmental pressures. This will lead to calls for international assistance in addressing intra- or inter-state conflicts, either directly or through support for African peace-making and peacekeeping. The growth of Islamist extremist groups in North Africa and the Horn of Africa poses a risk to security regionally and beyond (DOD 2009, 36).

However, this recognition of security interests in Africa should not be taken to imply a willingness to more directly engage ADF troops on the continent. The document made it explicitly clear that the Australian government had

... decided that it is not a principal task for the ADF to be generally prepared to deploy to the Middle East, or regions such as Central and South Asia or Africa, in circumstances where it has to engage in ground operations against heavily armed adversaries located in crowded urban environments. This entails a requirement to engage in high-intensity close combat which brings with it the risk of an unsustainable level of casualties for an army the size of Australia's (DOD 2009, 56).

Australian foreign and defence policy-makers were in some ways paying lip-service to the potential security considerations emanating from Africa, but these were of insufficient concern to require Australian 'boots on the ground'. The Labor government, while giving more consideration to security concerns emanating from Africa than seemed to be the case with the Howard government, still largely perceived the continent as a traditionally peripheral theatre of strategic importance. As the document concluded, it "will remain in Australia's interests to encourage peace and stability in Africa" as part of Australia's contribution to global security "through targeted defence cooperation and capacity building in areas such as peacekeeping", but that would be the extent of security cooperation with African states (DOD 2009, 99).

The Australian government's 2010 *Counter Terrorism White Paper* offered the usual recognition of the threat terrorism posed to regional, global, and Australian security. As far as Africa is concerned, the paper recognised as an area of particular concern the Horn of Africa, and specifically Somalia. Although much of the paper dwelt on Australia's strategies in battling terrorism, there was a brief analysis of threats emanating from Africa:

The challenges seen in the Middle East also occur in North Africa. Groups such as al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb have proved particularly adept at reinventing themselves, adopting local grievances and extending their field of operation into other parts of Africa, particularly the Sahel countries such as Mauritania, Mali and Niger. Terrorist operations against Western interests there will recur and North Africa's greater connection to Western Europe allows local al-Qa'ida-inspired groups to pose a recurring threat to the European continent. Terrorist activity in Somalia has intensified in recent years with the growth and consolidation of the al-Shabab group. No early return to stable government is in sight in Somalia and terrorist activity within the country and the adjoining region can be expected for years to come (DOD 2010b, 12).

The 2013 DOD *White Paper* echoed the 2009 one in its perception of strategic and security interests and concerns in Africa. As the most pressing indirect security concern for Australia emanating from Africa, it recognized that the “bulk of Islamist terrorist presence and activity – to recruit, train, plan and attack – will remain in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia”, further arguing that

Australia’s direct interest in Africa’s stability will grow as our businesses increase their investment there, particularly in mineral resources, and place more Australian nationals on the ground. Australia will remain committed to supporting international peacekeeping within our capacity and providing targeted defence cooperation to enhance regional peacekeeping capabilities on the African continent (DOD 2013b, 17-18).

The document observed that “Africa remains important for international security efforts, including supporting Africa’s own regional peacekeeping, stabilisation and counter-terrorism efforts” and these included “international efforts to address the transnational criminal threat posed by piracy off the east and western coasts of the continent, the African Union Mission to Somalia, and the African-led International Support Mission to Mali”. Australia would continue supporting these efforts through UN contributions, and the development of “defence relations that support regional security efforts, both with bilateral defence partners and multilaterally through the African Union and other African institutions” (DOD 2013b, 66).

The Labor government’s two defence White Papers offered a greater awareness and appreciation of possible regional and global security threats emanating from Africa, than had been the case with the Howard government. This led the 2011 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade (JSCFADT) (2011, 196) *Inquiry into Australia’s relationship with the countries of Africa* to proclaim, in apparent bipartisan support, that

It is clear that there has been a significant change in Australia's security relationship with Africa in recent years. Although the wider stage has been set in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, Australia's specific interests have been put in train by policy changes of the new government in 2008.

However, regardless of the raised awareness of Africa’s growing strategic and security importance in fighting transitional issues such as piracy and terrorism, under Labor Australia did not perceive itself as any more directly threatened by such issues than was the case during the Howard years, and this is perhaps the best illustration of continuity in terms of security cooperation in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa.

The two years of the Abbott government maintained this continuity. The Abbott government was scheduled to issue a Defence White Paper but never got around to it (it was eventually published in February 2016), and the only documents offering any form of strategic perceptions of Africa are DOD annual reports. Again, and as noted in the previous chapter, they tell the familiar story of financially supporting multilateral peace keeping operations in Africa, with minimal ADF deployments.

#### Interpreting change in security cooperation with Africa

As far as security cooperation within foreign policy engagement with Africa is concerned, there has been a great degree of continuity across governments between 1996 and 2015. There is no evidence of any serious adjustment change; all three governments have tended to support multilateral peacekeeping operations in Africa through training and financial donations, and the differences in the level of effort appear to have been minimal.<sup>127</sup>

With regards to attitude change, although the Labor government did appear in a few strategic documents to be more aware of possible security and strategic threats emanating from Africa, these were still perceived as peripheral to Australia's overall security concerns. The one clear instance of attitude change was a new means by which Labor could pursue security cooperation with Africa, and that was the aforementioned establishment of an Australian defence attaché accredited to the AU in 2010. However, the Labor government, much like the Howard government before it, maintained funding and limited participation in support of multilateral peace operations in Africa, and notwithstanding the new defence attaché, did not entertain any more substantial security cooperation engagement with Africa beyond what already existed. The Abbott government between 2013 and 2015 largely maintained support for what was already in place.

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<sup>127</sup> DOD annual reports do not even offer figures for funding of such multilateral operations. Some reports, notably DOD 2014 and 2015 offer some information in terms of grants given to UN operations in Africa, but aside from that other data is unavailable in the public domain.



## **V.II Interpreting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa: economic and development cooperation**

### **V.II.I Economic Cooperation**

There is an inherent difficulty in analysing a government's influence on change in levels of economic cooperation between countries. Since Australia's economy is not a centrally planned one, but largely subscribes to free-market principles, regardless of what the government does in order to foster greater economic cooperation between countries, businesses will seek trade and commercial opportunities only where they are profitable. Simply put, whether Australian companies and businesses engage in more economic activity in Africa may not necessarily be indicative of whether the Australian government actively wants them to do more business there.

There are some tools a government can use in helping promote an environment more conducive of economic cooperation, primarily tariff reductions and the conclusion of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). FTAs in particular could be highly indicative of a government's willingness to foster economic cooperation, and enable trade and commercial activities between countries. Unfortunately, that parameter is not available in the present case as Australia has no such agreements with any African country.

Therefore, the best that any analysis of change in levels of economic cooperation between African states and Australia can do is focus predominantly on attitude change, and concern itself with assessing a government's proactiveness or reactivness in helping foster enhanced commercial and trade environments. However, the variables of proactiveness and reactivness are difficult to interpret and may seem arbitrary. In the absence of FTAs as more robust indicators of a government's proactive ability to foster greater economic cooperation between countries, proactiveness and reactivness are primarily qualitative variables and can only be relatively interpreted. Drawing on foreign policy contacts between Australian and African governments reviewed in the previous chapter, as well as Australian trade data, this section will seek to interpret if there appears to have been a change in governmental attitude towards economic cooperation with Africa, and if so, how Australian governments acted in fostering economic engagement with Africa.

## V.II.II The Howard Government

As highlighted in the preceding chapter, the Howard government's overall focus on economic cooperation in Africa was by and large centred on the extremes of the African continent; South Africa and Egypt. The rest of the continent was for the most part forgotten until the mid-2000s.

The Howard government moved early in its first term in power to institute regular meetings between Australian and South African Ministers for Trade and their respective business delegations: the JMCs. This would have hopefully had an effect on supporting economic activity. In the context of this commercial relationship, the Australian government continued to support promotions of Australian businesses with 'Australia in Africa' promotional events, and the conclusion of a Double Taxation Agreement between South Africa and Australia (DFAT n.d.,a,b; DFAT 2002, 63).

On the other hand, the Howard government, from roughly 2002 onwards tried to promote greater trade with North Africa, Egypt and Libya in particular. The beginnings of this trend can be seen in Trade Minister Mark Vaile's trip to Libya in July 2002, and culminated in the opening of an Austrade post in the Libyan capital Tripoli in 2005. Alexander Downer confirmed this much by stating that "...we opened the Austrade post to help Australian companies that were investing in Libya at the time".<sup>128</sup> It was also in this context of supporting enhanced commercial links with Africa that in May 2005 the JSCFADT initiated an inquiry into expanding Australia's trade and investment relations with North Africa.

Aside from its engagement with South Africa, the Howard government was rather reactive to market forces and contextual developments. One such significant development was the global resources boom and the uptake of a sizeable number of Australian resource companies of investment opportunities in Africa, especially West Africa.

One could make the argument that it was in this context of responding to contextual factors that the Australian government re-opened its High Commission in Ghana after a twenty year hiatus in 2004. As one DFAT official noted, the opening of the post "was about the expansion of our mining interests" in West Africa.<sup>129</sup> However, there were also other reasons for re-opening this diplomatic post. When interviewed for this thesis

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<sup>128</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

Alexander Downer was asked if he remembered anything about the reasons for opening the post in Ghana. His answer was that “we did not have enough coverage in Africa” and that the post was opened to broaden diplomatic coverage which was seen as too limited.<sup>130</sup> This much was confirmed by another senior DFAT official who had served in the newly opened High Commission in Ghana.<sup>131</sup>

The Australian High Commission in Ghana was probably opened for a variety of reasons, as diplomatic posts often are, and it can reasonably be assumed that both supporting Australian commercial interests and a wider diplomatic coverage were some of the factors behind it. Nevertheless, the perception of the Howard government as lacking interest in helping support Australian commercial engagement with Africa outside the extreme North and South was notable, and as one senior industry official who helped organize ADU conferences since their inception in 2003 argued, there may not have been any “active disinterest” by the Howard government in supporting economic cooperation with Africa, but “there was no particular interest” in it either.<sup>132</sup>

Something that could have been the most notable direct economic cooperation-related initiative during 2002 and 2003 was the Howard government’s decision to grant tariff and quota free access to the Australian market for all Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and East Timor. This initiative, although not framed as solely aimed at African countries could be seen as a step in the direction of trying to proactively foster greater economic cooperation with Africa, as the majority of LDCs were then, and still are African countries (Vaile 2003; Howard 2002b).<sup>133</sup> However, an examination of LDC classified African countries’ exports to Australia highlights that for the vast majority of them the initiative had absolutely no effect in helping increase exports to the country.<sup>134</sup> This initiative can be interpreted as the Howard government’s proactive attempt to foster greater economic engagement with Africa. However, the government would have been aware that no imports from these countries existed historically, and while the initiative was most welcome in highlighting Australia’s desire to help LDCs better integrate into the global economy, it can be seen as a largely symbolic gesture. A more practical gesture and one which could have had much more effect on integrating African

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<sup>130</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014

<sup>131</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 15 October 2014

<sup>132</sup> Phone interview with senior Paydirt Media official, 31 July 2014.

<sup>133</sup> For a list of current LCDs see DIBP n. d., Schedule 1.

<sup>134</sup> The examination is based on author calculations of ABS 5360.0 table 14b, December 2015. Of the LDCs only Malawi, Mali, Niger, Togo, Uganda, and Tanzania could be said to export anything to Australia, and most of these countries were already exporting to Australia before the tariff reductions. Their exports did not increase significantly after 2003.

states into the global economy and Australian market, would have been to grant such tariff free access to all African countries.

#### Australia and Africa merchandise trade trends during the Howard years

As Table 3 below shows, during the Howard years South Africa remained Australia's most important export market in Africa. Exports to South Africa rose steadily from AUD 947 million in 1996 to AUD 2.5 billion in 2007, with only one drop in 1999. While it is impossible to prove causality, it could be argued that the Howard government's focus on promoting and supporting economic cooperation with South Africa was beneficial in helping this trade relationship grow. It is worth noting that the Howard government's formalization of high-level trade meetings with South African ministers and business delegations was an important feature of trying to foster greater economic cooperation with South Africa.

During the Howard years, the trade relationship with Australia's second largest export market in Africa, Egypt, was much more complex than with South Africa. Exports to Egypt rose from 1996-1998, and again in 2000 and 2001, but dropped in 2002, and then dropped threefold in 2003. Exports then continued to go up and down each year from 2004 to 2007. Australia's Trade Minister Mark Vaile did visit Egypt bilaterally in 2000, and once for the purposes of a World Trade Organization Doha Round in 2003, meeting with Egypt's Foreign Trade Minister Dr Youssef Boutros-Ghali at the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Council Meeting in Paris in May 2004, after which it was announced that Australia would negotiate a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Egypt. However, with such a volatile export market, it is difficult to say whether Vaile's initiatives and visits to Egypt had a decisive effect on boosting trade between the two countries.

In general, of Australia's top 10 export destinations in Africa during the Howard years, South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius, and Kenya held permanent Australian diplomatic missions, whilst the High Commission in Ghana was opened in mid-2004, and the Austrade diplomatic mission in Libya was opened from December 2005. The opening of these two diplomatic posts does not seem to have had a significant effect on boosting exports to those countries, although in the case of Libya, it may have been helpful in boosting exports to neighbouring countries such as Algeria. Exports to Ghana in the few years following the opening of the Australian High Commission rose slightly in line

with the general trend of overall rising exports there, whilst in Libya, exports to the country were much more significant prior to 2002.

As has traditionally been the case, Australia's strongest export markets on the African continent were on the extreme north and south. Of the top 10 export destination countries in Africa, two were from Southern Africa (South Africa and Mozambique) and by value of exports most important for Australia; three were from North Africa (Egypt, Algeria, and Libya), with another four from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean (Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, and Mauritius), and one from West Africa (Ghana).

**Table 3. Australia's top 10 largest merchandise export markets in Africa 1996-2007, in AUD Million.**

Year	Country by ranking 1 <sup>st</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>									
	South Africa	Egypt	Mozambique	Sudan	Mauritius	Ghana	Tanzania	Algeria	Kenya	Libya
1996	947	435	8	10	101	34	12	19	44	19
1997	1020	453	14	36	91	73	38	28	43	91
1998	1064	534	21	38	102	54	48	55	41	90
1999	912	471	23	61	106	57	82	55	76	47
2000	1263	554	93	87	120	57	93	44	94	34
2001	1298	740	191	128	137	67	130	70	94	40
2002	1295	667	181	146	139	59	111	78	81	88
2003	1328	236	226	148	99	67	54	52	28	9
2004	1593	646	354	193	123	93	76	70	39	13
2005	1868	355	423	218	101	98	40	90	41	14
2006	2292	417	419	294	118	94	30	113	56	12
2007	2535	353	418	140	86	104	31	67	50	15
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>17416</b>	<b>5861</b>	<b>2371</b>	<b>1499</b>	<b>1323</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>472</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14a. December 2015.

Notes: Figures have been rounded. Shaded are countries with Australian High Commissions or Embassies.



In terms of Australia's imports of merchandise from Africa, as Table 4 below highlights, during the Howard years South Africa was by far the largest source market for African imports. As far as imports from other African countries are concerned, their value was fairly small during the Howard years, and given the diversity of the countries involved and varying value of imports it is difficult to make any generalizations.

Of the top 10 largest import source countries in Africa, only South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, and Nigeria held Australian diplomatic missions. The reason why Libya has been included in this table is because of the opening of the aforementioned Austrade post there in 2005, which as it would appear did not have much impact on the volume of imports from Libya. It is probable that the spike in imports from Libya recorded in 2005 would have happened regardless of the opening of the Austrade post which was opened only in December of that year. As for Ghana, it is not included in the table as it did not even rate as a top 10 import source country during the Howard years. However, the opening of the Australian High Commission there in 2004 may have had a positive effect on imports from the country which did grow in the following few years, albeit from an extremely low base.

The largest sources of merchandise imports from Africa during the Howard years are slightly more diversified in terms of geographic location than Australia's largest export markets on the continent. Of the top 10 largest import source countries, two were in Southern Africa (South Africa and Swaziland), three in North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt), two in Eastern Africa (Kenya and the Congo), and three in West Africa (Gabon, Nigeria, and Cote D'Ivoire).

**Table 4. Australia's top 10 largest merchandise import source countries in Africa 1996-2007, in AUD Million.**

Year	Country by ranking 1 <sup>st</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> and Libya										
	South Africa	Morocco	Swaziland	Algeria	Gabon	Kenya	Egypt	Nigeria	Congo	Cote d'Ivoire	Libya
1996	454	13	0	0	18	13	10	58	0	6	0
1997	473	14	0	0	0	14	13	58	58	5	0
1998	562	23	0	1	20	19	14	0	11	11	0
1999	640	22	0	0	18	18	15	39	24	13	0
2000	851	34	0	5	0	18	15	34	0	10	0
2001	860	38	2	2	0	21	13	1	0	14	0
2002	966	28	33	56	55	23	28	0	0	19	0
2003	1136	31	46	0	0	20	16	0	0	24	0
2004	1250	21	54	0	0	15	35	0	0	20	0
2005	1533	61	60	0	130	15	14	0	4	15	43
2006	1578	52	44	48	0	16	15	0	0	9	0
2007	1347	47	54	151	0	17	17	0	73	13	0
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>11650</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>43</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14b. December 2015.

Notes: Figures have been rounded. Shaded are countries with Australian High Commissions or Embassies.

### V.II.III The Rudd/Gillard Government

Australia's economic cooperation with African states experienced an adjustment change coinciding with the change in Australian government in 2007. While some trade flows followed a steady trend of growth from the Howard years, others only came alive during the Labor years. Again, this should not be taken as implying that such adjustment changes happened because of a change in government, and market forces offer a more likely causal explanation.

Perhaps the greatest change in Australia's economic cooperation with the African continent was an observable attitude change; the changing narrative about doing business in Africa. The Labor government embraced the emerging global narrative of Africa as a place where good business could be done, and a place of commercial opportunities. Almost every speech delivered by a Labor foreign minister on Africa espoused a high degree of Afro-optimism and whilst noting the challenges facing many African countries, chose instead to focus on the opportunities for development and trade.

Whilst Labor's Ministers for Trade did not hold formal JMCs with South Africa, they were interested in supporting trade and economic cooperation. After 2006 there were no JMCs, which were replaced with more ad-hoc and informal arrangements. Such meetings involved senior DFAT officials, and were supposed to happen annually but according to one retired Australian High Commissioner to South Africa "often slip".<sup>135</sup> There were a few during the Labor years in which both Foreign Minister Smith and Trade Minister Crean participated.

Although the Labor government kept trade and commercial engagement talks on a more informal basis, it moved quickly to support Australian commercial interests in Africa regardless of their geographical location, and made this one of the key pillars of its economic cooperation policy. In this context one can cite the already noted establishment of AAMIG in 2011.<sup>136</sup> The establishment of AAMIG resulted from a meeting between industry representatives and Australian government officials including Minister for Trade Simon Crean at the Mining Indaba conference in South Africa in February 2010. Prior to that, industry representatives and government officials would meet informally and on a "non-structured basis" both at the Mining Indaba conference

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<sup>135</sup> Email correspondence with retired senior DFAT official, 11 December 2014.

<sup>136</sup> Renamed to Australia Africa Minerals & Energy Group (AAMEG) in late 2015.

and the ADU, but it became apparent in the early Labor years there would need to be “more than just informal catch-ups”.<sup>137</sup> Hence, the government was supportive of AAMIG’s formation, and maintained regular meetings with its representatives around the Mining Indaba and ADU conferences, as well as in Canberra.<sup>138</sup>

#### The value of the ADU for government support of economic cooperation with Africa

As noted in the preceding chapter the annual ADU conference held in Perth, became during the Labor years a key pillar of the government’s greater engagement with Africa foreign policy, especially pertaining to economic engagement. Since 2009 Labor’s ministers supported the conference by attending almost every year, and Stephen Smith even attended in 2011 as Minister for Defence (Piper 2011). In 2009 Smith set the precedent of attending the ADU and this was followed by other high level governmental attendees such as the Secretary of DFAT Dennis Richardson in 2010, Gary Grey (just days before he was to become Labor’s Special Minister for State in September 2011), Foreign Minister Bob Carr and Kevin Rudd (as a backbencher) in 2012, and again Foreign Minister Bob Carr in 2013.

The utility of the ADU as a key pillar of Labor’s greater economic engagement with Africa policy is arguably best seen through the government’s own framing of the drivers of its engagement with Africa foreign policy. As already noted, Labor’s parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs and trade, Richard Marles, observed in 2013 that Australia’s economic engagement with Africa was driven by the private sector, and by private sector he was alluding to the mining and resources industry. Labor’s foreign policy leaders framed their government’s ‘new engagement’ with Africa in terms of trade and investment “as being driven almost exclusively by the resources and mining sector...” (Pijovic 2013, 106).

At almost every public speaking opportunity focusing on Africa, Labor’s foreign ministers highlighted the large and growing numbers of Australian resources companies operating in Africa, their projects, and the estimated total value of those investments. At his Africa Day speech in May 2008 Stephen Smith spoke of more than 300 Australian resources companies, led by BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto, active in Africa, with existing and prospective investments estimated up to US 15 billion (Smith 2008b). Smith reiterated the same numbers at his ADU speech a year later in 2009, only this time the

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<sup>137</sup> Phone interview with senior Paydirt Media official, 31 July 2014.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with senior AAMIG official, Canberra, 28 October 2014.

figure of current and projected investments had risen to US 20 billion (Smith 2009c). Fronting the AU summit in January 2011, Kevin Rudd highlighted the same set of figures, noting that Australian companies were running some 600 projects in over 40 African countries (Rudd 2011c). At the ADU in 2012, Bob Carr also highlighted the numbers of Australian resources companies operating in Africa and the value of their current and prospective investments (Carr, Bob 2012f).

The Labor government did exhibit a willingness to pro-actively support commercial links and trade between Australia and African countries, and this was also related to its diplomatic cooperation. By 2013 the government had expanded its nominal diplomatic footprint across Africa by establishing diplomatic relations with all 54 African states who are members of the UN, up from 41 when Labor entered office in 2007 (Mickler and Lyons 2013, 3).<sup>139</sup> The government also increased the number of staff working on African issues in Australia and at posts in Africa, and opened two new Austrade offices in Ghana and Kenya (JSCFADT p. 129 para 6.14). In line with its attempts to support African governments in governing their own resources, the Labor government launched at the 2011 CHOGM its Mining for Development initiative. In a further sign of support for building commercial links between the two continents, the government committed in 2012 to opening a first ever Australian embassy in Senegal, which as Foreign Minister Bob Carr (2014b) argued at the time, would “provide a significant boost to Australia's growing commercial and political interests in West Africa”.

While it is impossible to quantify the effects of these initiatives on helping foster greater commercial and trade links with African states, they do exhibit the Labor government's interest and willingness to be proactive, especially given the usual budgetary constraints and Africa's traditionally marginal place in Australian foreign policy. They suggest a strong indication of attitude change.

#### Australia and Africa merchandise trade trends during the Labor years

Australian exports to Africa during the Labor government experienced a steady growth, and largely followed the geographic patterns already established during the Howard years. As Table 5 below shows the largest export market on the continent was South Africa, followed by Egypt, Mozambique, Sudan, and Ghana. Libya which up until 2011

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<sup>139</sup> This was particularly important for the AAMIG represented small and medium tier companies who would operate in countries where Australia did not have diplomatic missions or official representation. At least with official representation there was someone within the Australian government who could be contacted for support, and was nominally responsible for diplomatic coverage of those countries.

and the civil strife in that country housed an Austrade post, did not rate among the top 10 export markets for Australian merchandise in Africa during the Labor years.

As Table 5 indicates when compared to Table 3, there was very little change in the top 10 major export markets for Australian merchandise exports. South Africa, Egypt, Mozambique, and the Sudan remained the four largest export markets during both the Howard and Labor governments, and there were only slight changes in the placements of Mauritius, Ghana, Algeria, Kenya, and Nigeria.



**Table 5. Australia's top 10 largest merchandise export markets in Africa 2008-2013, in AUD Million.**

Year	Country by ranking 1 <sup>st</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> and Libya										
	South Africa	Egypt	Mozambique	Sudan	Ghana	Mauritius	Tanzania	Nigeria	Kenya	Algeria	Libya
2008	2450	359	445	253	174	110	67	42	65	88	51
2009	1497	433	319	312	125	97	102	57	32	40	15
2010	1803	497	375	183	147	97	100	56	39	22	31
2011	1645	561	405	203	173	99	98	45	57	21	9
2012	1523	511	329	253	204	106	80	75	52	4	29
2013	1322	489	421	291	122	94	126	166	95	2	11
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>10240</b>	<b>2850</b>	<b>2294</b>	<b>1495</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>146</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14a. December 2015.

Notes: Figures have been rounded. Shaded are countries with Australian High Commissions or Embassies

In terms of the composition of Australian exports to African states, Table 6 illustrates that Australia largely exported ores and agricultural produce to African countries during the Labor years. This would likely have been the case during the Howard years as well.

**Table 6. Composition of major Australian exports to African states**

Country	Type(s) of major export merchandise
South Africa	Alumina, <sup>140</sup> coal, and wheat
Egypt	Wheat and vegetables
Mozambique	Alumina and wheat
Sudan	Wheat
Ghana	Civil engineering equipment and specialized machinery and parts
Mauritius	Wheat, cheese, and meat
Tanzania	Wheat
Nigeria	Wheat
Kenya	Wheat
Algeria	Meat and dairy produce

Source: Based on DFAT n. d. e, December 2014.

Although there was no great change in the geographic location of Australia's top 10 largest merchandise export markets in Africa, on a relative basis, there was a substantive change in overall volumes of those exports between the Howard and Labor years. As Table 7 indicates, during the six years of the Labor government, Australian merchandise exports to top African export markets were often larger or just equal to the total volume of exports to those same markets during the almost 12 years of the Howard government. While this could be indicative of a number of things ranging from higher inflation rates to higher actual numbers of units exported, it can also suggest adjustment change, providing currency to the perception that trade with Africa during the Labor years was more fruitful for Australian companies than during the Howard years.

<sup>140</sup> Australia's exports of aluminium ores and concentrates (including alumina) to Africa and the Middle East are not published in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) international trade data as they are classified as a 'confidential export'. The major confidential component in this code is Alumina (aluminium oxide), see DFAT 2010c, 8. The reason why these items are considered confidential is because usually there is only a single producer, and reporting the value of trade could reveal much about that company's sales.

**Table 7. Average annual value of Australian merchandise exports to top African markets, in AUD Million.**

<b>African Country</b>	<b>Howard Years average (1996-2007)</b>	<b>Labor Years average (2008-2013)</b>
South Africa	1451	1706
Egypt	488	475
Mozambique	197	382
Sudan	124	249
Mauritius	110	100
Ghana	71	157
Tanzania	62	95
Algeria	61	29
Kenya	57	57
Libya	39	24
Nigeria	27	73

Source: Author calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14a. Dec 2015

Note: Figures have been rounded.

Whilst Australia's exports to Africa, aside from their growing volume, remained largely concentrated in the same African states for both the Howard and Labor years, the country's imports of merchandise from Africa changed significantly during the Labor years. The distinct changes in imports from African countries during the Labor years can be summarised in one phrase: 'thirst for oil'. In 2012, and for the first time in the modern history of Australia's economic cooperation with the African continent, a country overtook South Africa as Australia's number one two-way trade partner (imports + exports) from the African continent (Pijovic 2013, 101). This was a result of Australia's thirst for crude oil from the country in question: Nigeria.

Comparing Tables 4 and 8, one can see that Nigeria, which was the eighth largest source of imports from Africa during the Howard years, became the number one import source country from Africa during the Labor years. Whilst South Africa remained an important source of African imports and ranked second, further significant changes in rankings followed. Gabon displaced Swaziland as Australia's third largest import source

country from Africa, the Republic of Congo became fourth (it was ninth during the Howard years), and Libya became fifth (it had not rated during the Howard years). Only three of these countries (South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt) held Australian diplomatic missions. As Table 9 highlights, these changes were due to Australia's growing imports of petroleum from these African states. An overall trend during the Labor years had seen a decrease in Australia's imports of processed or finished manufactured goods from Africa (such as motor vehicles made in South Africa), and a rapid increase in imports of crude and unprocessed primary goods such as petroleum.

**Table 8. Australia's top 10 largest merchandise imports source countries in Africa 2008-2013, in AUD Million.**

Year	Country by ranking 1 <sup>st</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>									
	Nigeria	South Africa	Gabon	Congo	Libya	Algeria	Morocco	Swaziland	Egypt	Tunisia
2008	0	1591	0	0	0	242	221	60	22	51
2009	245	912	0	0	50	151	28	59	34	16
2010	787	1103	396	202	354	147	52	64	25	15
2011	2046	841	909	683	199	281	91	24	49	16
2012	2630	872	1120	895	1120	0	44	3	54	16
2013	1871	906	976	942	761	82	28	4	26	18
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>7579</b>	<b>6225</b>	<b>3401</b>	<b>2722</b>	<b>2484</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>132</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14b. December 2015.

Notes: Figures have been rounded. Shaded are countries with Australian High Commissions or Embassies.

**Table 9. Composition of major Australian imports from African states**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Type(s) of major merchandise imports</b>
Nigeria	Crude petroleum
South Africa	Passenger motor vehicles
Gabon	Crude petroleum
Republic of Congo	Crude petroleum
Libya	Crude petroleum
Algeria	Crude petroleum
Morocco	Crude fertilisers
Swaziland	Fruit
Egypt	Floor coverings
Tunisia	Clothing

Source: Based on DFAT Country Fact Sheets, December 2014.

Table 10 highlights that similarly to the situation with exports to Africa, Australia's value of imported merchandise from top African source countries was overall greater during the Labor than the Howard years. These changes in export and import values could be indicative of a number of contextual factors such as changes in the global economy and within Africa itself, the global resources boom, and rising prices of the actual merchandise exported and imported. Certainly the rise of Africa as an appealing destination for doing business, and the increase in spending power of African populations would be relevant factors, as would the recognition of Australian companies that profitable business could be done across Africa. Market forces will operate freely in a free-market economy like that of Australia, but it is noteworthy that while traditionally Coalition governments are associated with being more 'pro-business', it was during the Labor years that Australia appeared to trade more with Africa as compared to the long reign of Howard's Coalition government.

**Table 10. Average annual value of African imports from top African source countries, in AUD Million.**

<b>African Country</b>	<b>Howard Years average (1996-2007)</b>	<b>Labor Years average (2008-2013)</b>
South Africa	970	1037
Nigeria	15	1263
Morocco	32	77
Swaziland	24	35
Algeria	22	151
Gabon	20	566
Kenya	17	16
Egypt	17	35
Congo	14	453
Cote d'Ivoire	13	18
Libya	3	414

Source: Author calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14b. December 2015

Note: Figures have been rounded.



## V.II.IV The Abbott Government

The Abbott government maintained a certain degree of continuity in its proclaimed attitude towards supporting greater economic cooperation with Africa. Julie Bishop's trip to South Africa, Australia's most important African trading partner, coupled with her overall Afro-optimist tone when making foreign policy pronouncements regarding Africa (and especially economic cooperation) suggested a continued interest in this aspect of foreign policy engagement. As the head of DFAT's Africa branch, Mr Matthew Neuhaus, stated during a speech at the 2015 ADU, Australia's foreign policy with Africa under the Abbott government would primarily be focused on economic engagement.<sup>141</sup>

The Abbott government also maintained support for cooperation with AAMIG, and with the announcement of the Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, headed by the CEO of Woodside Petroleum, indicated the prominence it accorded to economic cooperation in engagement with Africa.<sup>142</sup> While the Abbott and Howard governments differed in their attitude towards economic cooperation, in that the former was more Afro-optimist and focused on opportunities, Abbott's government did operate within the Coalition's tradition of predominantly focusing on South Africa. It did not support the planned opening of an Australian Embassy in Senegal, and as the following chapter will make clear, when it did find funds for five new diplomatic posts in the 2015 Budget, none of them was in Africa. This was to some extent an indication that it was not as interested as Labor had been in supporting Australia's commercial interests in Francophone West Africa.

### Australia and Africa merchandise trade trends during the Abbott years

As Table 11 illustrates, overall the top African markets for Australian exports during the Abbott government remained more or less unchanged from the Labor years. Given the brevity of the Abbott period this was to be expected. The only notable adjustment change involved Nigeria becoming the fourth top market (eight during the Labor years, and Morocco ranking 10<sup>th</sup> (11<sup>th</sup> during both Howard and Labor years).

As far as imports from Africa were concerned, Table 12 highlights some noticeable changes, fitting the pattern of Australia's imports from Africa being more volatile in

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<sup>141</sup> ADU conference, *Australia Africa Research Forum*, 1 September 2015, author notes.

<sup>142</sup> Woodside was highly active during the Howard and Labor years in exploring for oil across Africa, and had sizeable investments in North Africa.

their levels and source countries than Australian exports to African states. Overall, the top four countries only exchanged ranking. Libya, which was a considerable source of oil during the Labor period, exported no oil to Australia, and Algeria and Swaziland, which had ranked sixth and eighth during the Labor period, dropped off the list. The countries that did not rank during the Labor period but for the two years of the Abbott government became Australia's fifth, seventh, and ninth top sources of imports from Africa, were Ghana, Kenya, and Ethiopia. The major merchandise imported from these countries was gold (Ghana), crude vegetable matter (Kenya), and coffee (Ethiopia).

**Table 11. Australia's top 10 largest merchandise export markets in Africa 2014 and 2015, in AUD Million.**

Year	Country ranking 1 <sup>st</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>									
	South Africa	Egypt	Mozambique	Nigeria	Sudan	Mauritius	Tanzania	Kenya	Ghana	Morocco
2014	1191	481	405	221	186	110	58	88	53	33
2015	1076	444	402	216	71	82	106	63	50	46
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>2276</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>79</b>

Source: Author's calculations based on ABS.5368.0, Table 14a. December 2015.

Notes: Figures have been rounded. Shaded are countries with Australian High Commissions or Embassies.

**Table 12. Australia's top 10 largest merchandise imports source countries in Africa 2014 and 2015, in AUD Million.**

Year	Country by ranking 1 <sup>st</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>									
	South Africa	Gabon	Nigeria	Congo	Ghana	Morocco	Kenya	Egypt	Tunisia	Ethiopia
2014	913	1130	1615	866	137	87	34	39	22	23
2015	1016	506	0	129	6	28	36	29	24	23
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>1636</b>	<b>1615</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>46</b>

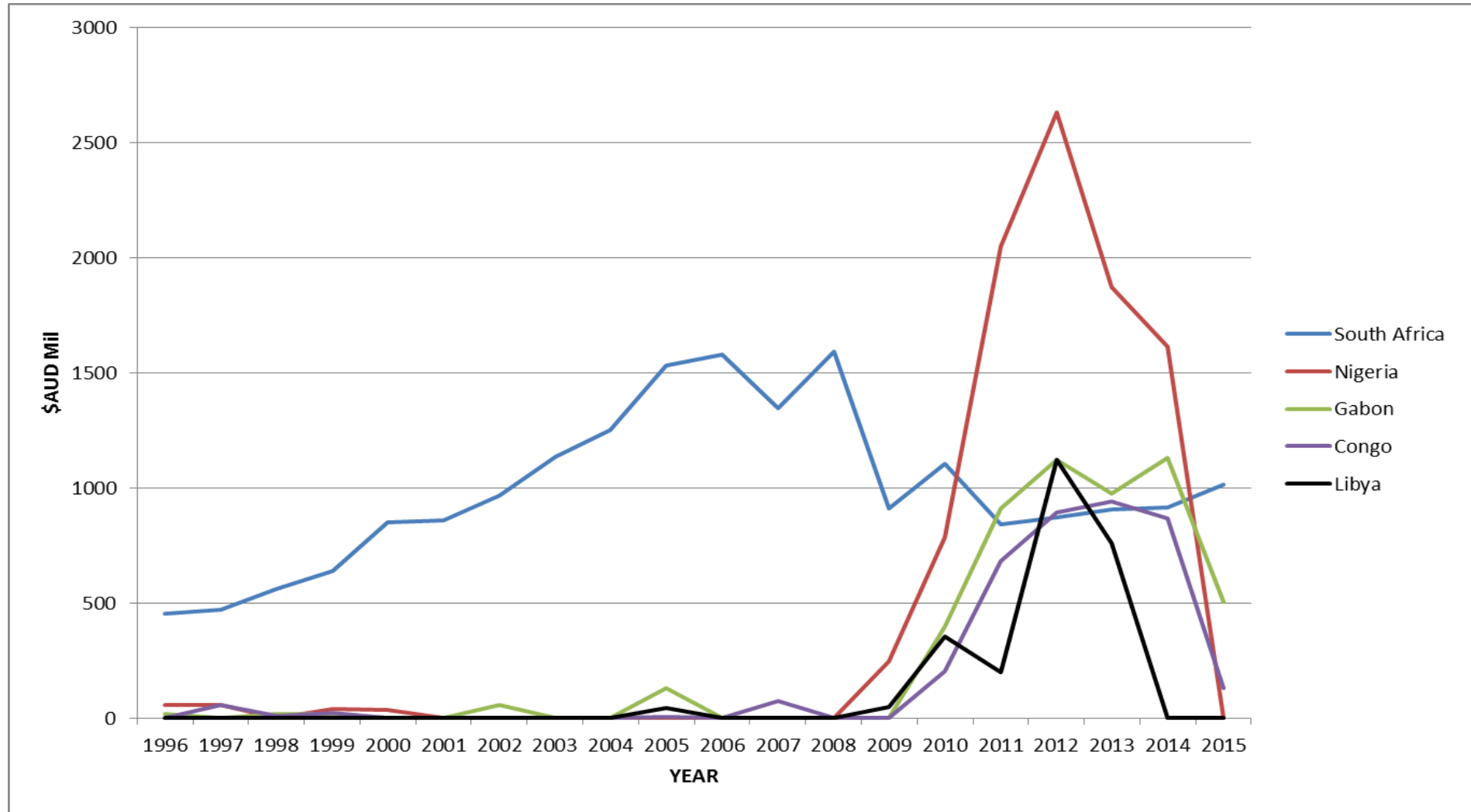
Source: Author's calculations based on ABS. 5368.0, Table 14b. December 2015.

Notes: Figures have been rounded. Shaded are countries with Australian High Commissions or Embassies.

Figure 3 offers a visualisation of the trend of Australia's thirst for African oil peaking in the Labor years. This is a good indicator of the volatility of the commodities market, and Australia's significant imports from Africa, which aside from imports from South Africa, included mostly crude petroleum.

In order to gauge the vibrancy of Australian investments in the African resources sector, especially at a time of slowing global demand for commodities, it would have been interesting to examine the numbers of Australian resources companies and the value of their investments in Africa during the Abbott years. Unfortunately this data is unavailable in the public domain, and the only way of ascertaining these numbers is through the already examined official government speeches (more on this in the following chapter).

**Figure 3. Volatility of Australian imports from Africa 1996-2015, major oil exporting countries and South Africa.**



Note: Data for 2015 end in October.

## Interpreting change in economic cooperation with Africa

As far as adjustment change in economic cooperation with Africa is concerned, exports to the continent for the most part grew steadily between 1996 and 2015, and did not change much in terms of geographic distribution. Australia's most important export markets were Southern (South Africa and Mozambique), and North Africa (Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan).

Imports from Africa were more volatile. South Africa remained the key major import source country offering processed merchandise to the Australian economy (largely motor vehicles). Coinciding with the election of the Labor government, there was a significant degree of adjustment change in other sources of imports as well as their value. From 2008 onwards, Australia's thirst for African oil saw Nigeria, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Libya become highly prominent sources of imports from Africa. Imports from these countries peaked between 2012 and 2014, and exhibited the kind of volatility usually associated with booming commodities cycles.

On a relative basis, both exports to, and imports from, Africa were on the whole greater in value for the Labor years as compared to the Howard years.<sup>143</sup> As noted earlier, this may be indicative of a number of things, mainly associated with African as well as global economic trends. The ability of the Australian government to actively exert a great deal of influence over these trends is questionable. Australia is neither a centrally planned economy, nor is the country's consumption of oil actively strategically governed,<sup>144</sup> allowing one to draw a strong causal connection between government efforts at fostering greater economic trade and that trade taking place. However, it is impossible to exclude the possibility that governmental efforts between 1996 and 2015 may have helped foster greater economic engagement between the two continents.

Examining attitude change offers more tangible conclusions. Aside from three speeches delivered by Howard's Foreign and Trade Ministers highlighting the opportunities of doing business in South Africa, during the Howard years there were no other ministerial speeches highlighting economic opportunities in Africa, or exhibiting an Afro-optimist tone about the continent. The Howard government's overall narrative about Africa had

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<sup>143</sup> Given the short period of the Abbott government such a relative comparison with the Labor years would offer little insights.

<sup>144</sup> As one DFAT official noted "despite oil being seen as this very strategic commodity where you plan your sources of energy, Australia does not seem to work like that" and there appears to have been no involvement by the government in these shifting petroleum import trends. Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 15 October 2014.

less to do with trade and commercial opportunities, and more to do with political, health, and governance challenges.

Aside from supporting economic engagement with South Africa, and eliminating trade barriers for LDCs, the Howard government was reactive in supporting economic engagement with the rest of the continent, and particularly Australian interests in the resources sector. However, one could argue that even if reactive, the government was reasonably quick to support those interests when they became more apparent (or the advocacy became too significant to ignore), which was to an extent exhibited by the opening of additional diplomatic posts in Ghana and Libya in the mid-2000s.

With the election of the Labor government, Australia experienced notable adjustment and attitude change. Hence, there was no discrepancy between the two levels of change. During the Labor years, Australia's imports from Africa exploded and changed in substance; petroleum imports from countries such as Nigeria, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Libya were non-existent and/or very sporadic and idiosyncratic during the Howard years, but experienced a steady boom during the Labor years.

In contrast to the Howard government's reactive approach, the Labor government moved quickly in its first term in power to support Australia's economic interest across Africa, and not just primarily South Africa. Although the government was interested in maintaining close economic links with South Africa, it recognized that the growth of Australian resource companies operating across the African continent required a wider gaze. Hence, it expanded Australia's nominal diplomatic coverage to all 54 African country members of the UN, announced an opening of a first ever Australian Embassy in Francophone West Africa, opened two new Austrade posts in Kenya and Ghana, and utilized the ADU as well as the newly formed AAMIG for supporting Australian resource-based interests in Africa.

The two years of the Abbott government offer an important discrepancy between attitude and adjustment change in the time period under review. While the Abbott government was happy to exhibit an Afro-optimist attitude supportive of greater economic engagement with Africa ('talk the talk'), it was not willing to honour commitments to actions set in motion by the Labor government which would have indicated an unambiguous practical support for that engagement ('walk the walk'). Therefore, the continuity of attitude towards economic cooperation during the Abbott government was inconsistent with its lack of support for opening a new Australian



Embassy in Senegal, which was, as Labor's foreign minister Carr argued, important for supporting Australian economic interests in Francophone West Africa. The adjustment change on this issue did not correlate with the continuity in attitude displayed by the government's support for its 'economic diplomacy' in engagement with Africa. Although different from the Howard government in this Afro-optimist attitude and support for the ADU and AAMIG, as well as recognition of Australian economic interest across Africa, the Abbott government appeared still very much of the mindset that the only relationship that mattered was economic engagement with South Africa.

## V.II.II Development Cooperation

Australia's development cooperation with Africa between 1996 and 2015 experienced a significant degree of volatility in adjustment levels, and change in attitude. In contrast to economic cooperation, development cooperation is completely under the control of a government, and like diplomatic and security cooperation offers a very important insight into a government's willingness and interest in foreign policy engagement. As chapter 4 already indicated, noticeable changes in Australia's development cooperation with Africa in this time period very clearly coincided with, and were driven by, changes in government. While this section will not repeat the overall arguments made in the previous chapter, it will briefly highlight how drastic these changes in both adjustment and attitude were. The data (in tables and graphs) will firstly be presented for the whole period, before discussing changes between each government. Table 13, and Figures 4 and 5 offer a historical overview of Australia's total ODA as well as its ODA to GNI ratio. Table 14, and Figures 6 and 7 offer a historical overview of Australia's total ODA to SSA, as well as its ratio to the country's total ODA.

**Table 13. Total Australian ODA, and as a percentage of GNI, 1989/90-2013/14.**

<b>Year (Financial)</b>	<b>Total Australian ODA</b>	<b>Total Australian ODA</b>	<b>Real Change Over Previous Year</b>	<b>ODA/GNI Ratio</b>
<b>Unit</b>	<b>AUD million</b>	<b>AUD million</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Current Prices</b>	<b>Constant Prices</b>	<b>Percentage change</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
<b>1988-89 (c)</b>	1,194.6	2,418.2	7.7	0.33
<b>1989-90</b>	1,173.8	2,223.1	(8.1)	0.30
<b>1990-91</b>	1,261.0	2,280.3	2.6	0.32
<b>1991-92</b>	1,330.3	2,367.1	3.8	0.33
<b>1992-93</b>	1,386.1	2,444.6	3.3	0.32
<b>1993-94</b>	1,410.8	2,466.4	0.9	0.31
<b>1994-95</b>	1,483.7	2,540.6	3.0	0.31
<b>1995-96</b>	1,556.5	2,589.9	1.9	0.30
<b>1996-97</b>	1,432.0	2,347.5	(9.4)	0.27
<b>1997-98</b>	1,443.0	2,331.2	(0.7)	0.25
<b>1998-99</b>	1,528.6	2,457.6	5.4	0.25
<b>1999-2000</b>	1,748.7	2,740.9	11.5	0.27
<b>2000-01</b>	1,623.1	2,437.1	(11.1)	0.24
<b>2001-02</b>	1,755.1	2,577.2	5.8	0.24
<b>2002-03</b>	1,830.8	2,604.3	1.0	0.24
<b>2003-04</b>	1,973.1	2,710.3	4.1	0.24
<b>2004-05</b>	2,198.1	2,903.7	7.1	0.25
<b>2005-06</b>	2,683.5	3,371.2	16.1	0.28
<b>2006-07</b>	2,978.9	3,563.2	5.7	0.29
<b>2007-08</b>	3,114.9	3,568.1	0.1	0.28
<b>2008-09</b>	3,737.4	4,062.4	13.9	0.31
<b>2009-10</b>	3,864.4	4,159.7	2.4	0.31
<b>2010-11</b>	4,301.7	4,362.8	4.9	0.32
<b>2011-12</b>	4,822.3	4,803.1	10.1	0.33
<b>2012-13</b>	5,053.5	5,053.5	5.2	0.34
<b>2013-14</b>	5,048.9	4,979.2	(1.5)	0.33

Source: DFAT n. d. c, Table 5, December 2015.

Note: Constant price base year is 2012/13.

Figure 4. Total Australian ODA, constant prices, 1989/99-2013/14, in AUD Million.

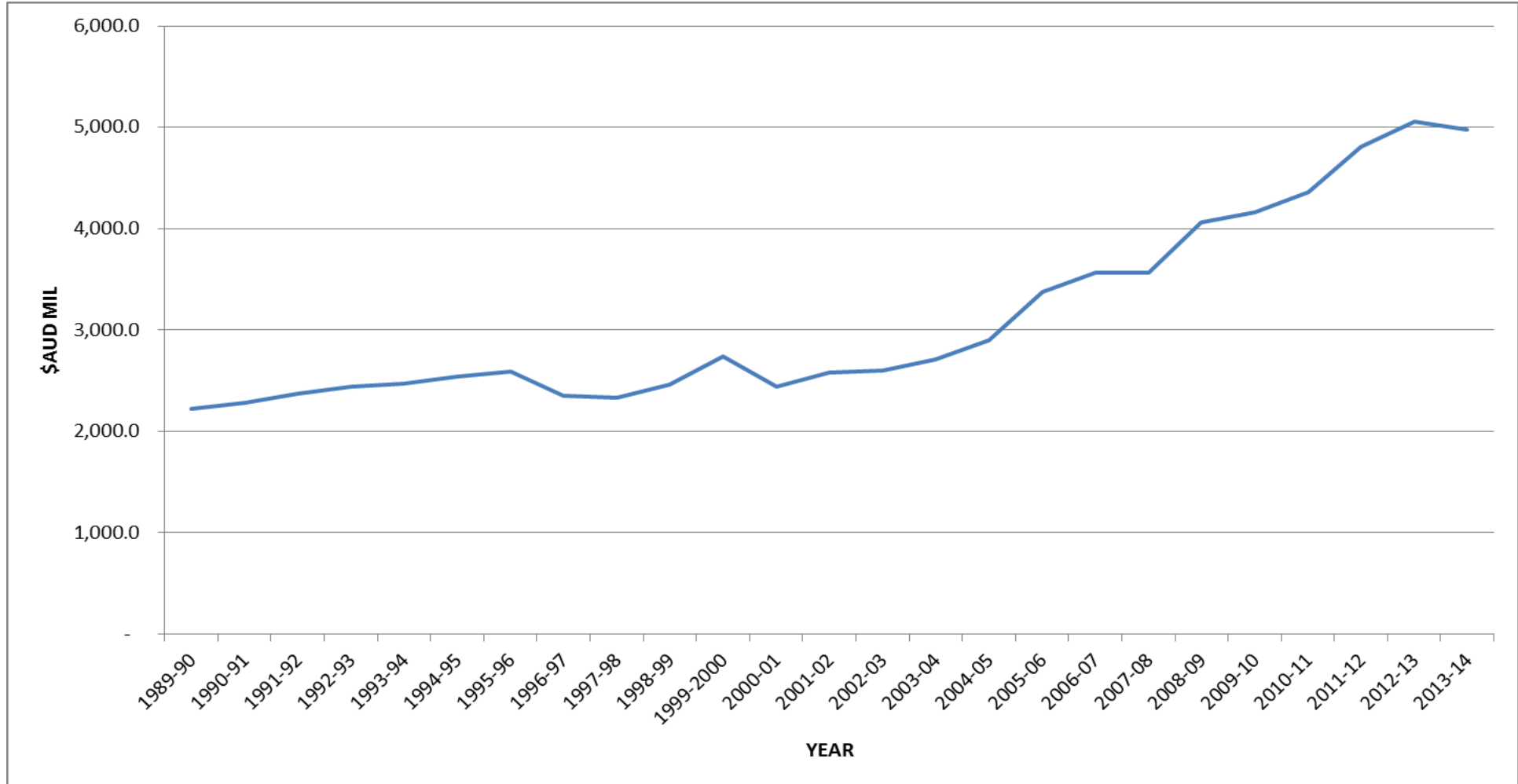
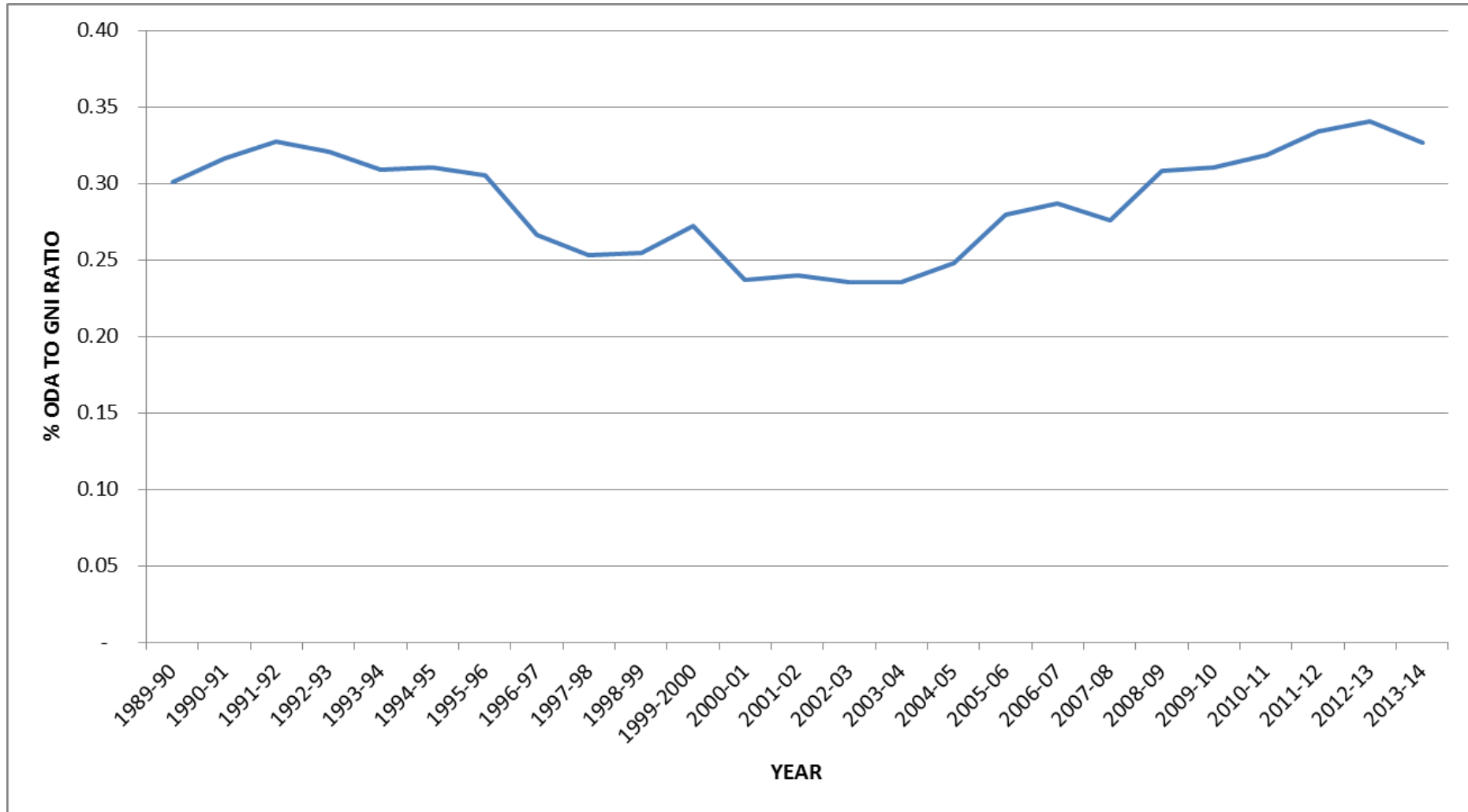


Figure 5. Total Australian ODA to GNI ratio, 1989/99-2013/14.



**Table 14. Total Australian ODA to SSA, and as a percentage of total ODA, 1989/90-2013/14.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Australian ODA</b>	<b>Australian ODA to SSA</b>	<b>SSA to total ODA ratio</b>
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Current Prices</b>	<b>Current Prices</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Data Type</b>	<b>AUD</b>	<b>AUD</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
<b>1989-90</b>	1,173,802.00	103,968.00	8.86%
<b>1990-91</b>	1,261,040.00	78,231.00	6.20%
<b>1991-92</b>	1,330,263.00	102,061.00	7.67%
<b>1992-93</b>	1,386,145.00	106,371.00	7.67%
<b>1993-94</b>	1,410,815.00	90,250.00	6.40%
<b>1994-95</b>	1,484,980.00	98,133.00	6.61%
<b>1995-96</b>	1,567,170.00	101,503.00	6.48%
<b>1996-97</b>	1,432,351.00	79,105.00	5.52%
<b>1997-98</b>	1,443,300.00	63,630.00	4.41%
<b>1998-99</b>	1,531,300.00	55,100.00	3.60%
<b>1999-2000</b>	1,752,343.00	58,037.00	3.31%
<b>2000-01</b>	1,638,895.00	56,038.00	3.42%
<b>2001-02</b>	1,765,815.00	50,540.00	2.86%
<b>2002-03</b>	1,840,697.00	58,127.00	3.16%
<b>2003-04</b>	1,986,447.00	72,607.00	3.66%
<b>2004-05</b>	2,211,078.00	82,921.00	3.75%
<b>2005-06</b>	2,683,500.86	76,852.38	2.86%
<b>2006-07</b>	2,978,866.96	65,694.62	2.21%
<b>2007-08</b>	3,114,931.84	88,348.74	2.84%
<b>2008-09</b>	3,737,372.60	174,169.71	4.66%
<b>2009-10</b>	3,864,407.33	140,530.34	3.64%
<b>2010-11</b>	4,301,188.76	264,183.90	6.14%
<b>2011-12</b>	4,821,752.16	436,763.78	9.06%
<b>2012-13</b>	5,052,106.74	395,176.70	7.82%
<b>2013-14</b>	5,048,907.82	254,441.18	5.04%

Source: DFAT n. d. c, Table 6, December 2015.

Note: Aid to SSA as a percentage of total Australian ODA is based on author's calculations. Current prices are not as good as constant prices for historical comparisons, as they are unadjusted for inflation and reveal only the nominal value of ODA.

**Figure 6. Total Australian ODA to SSA, current prices, 1989/90-2013/14, in AUD '000.**

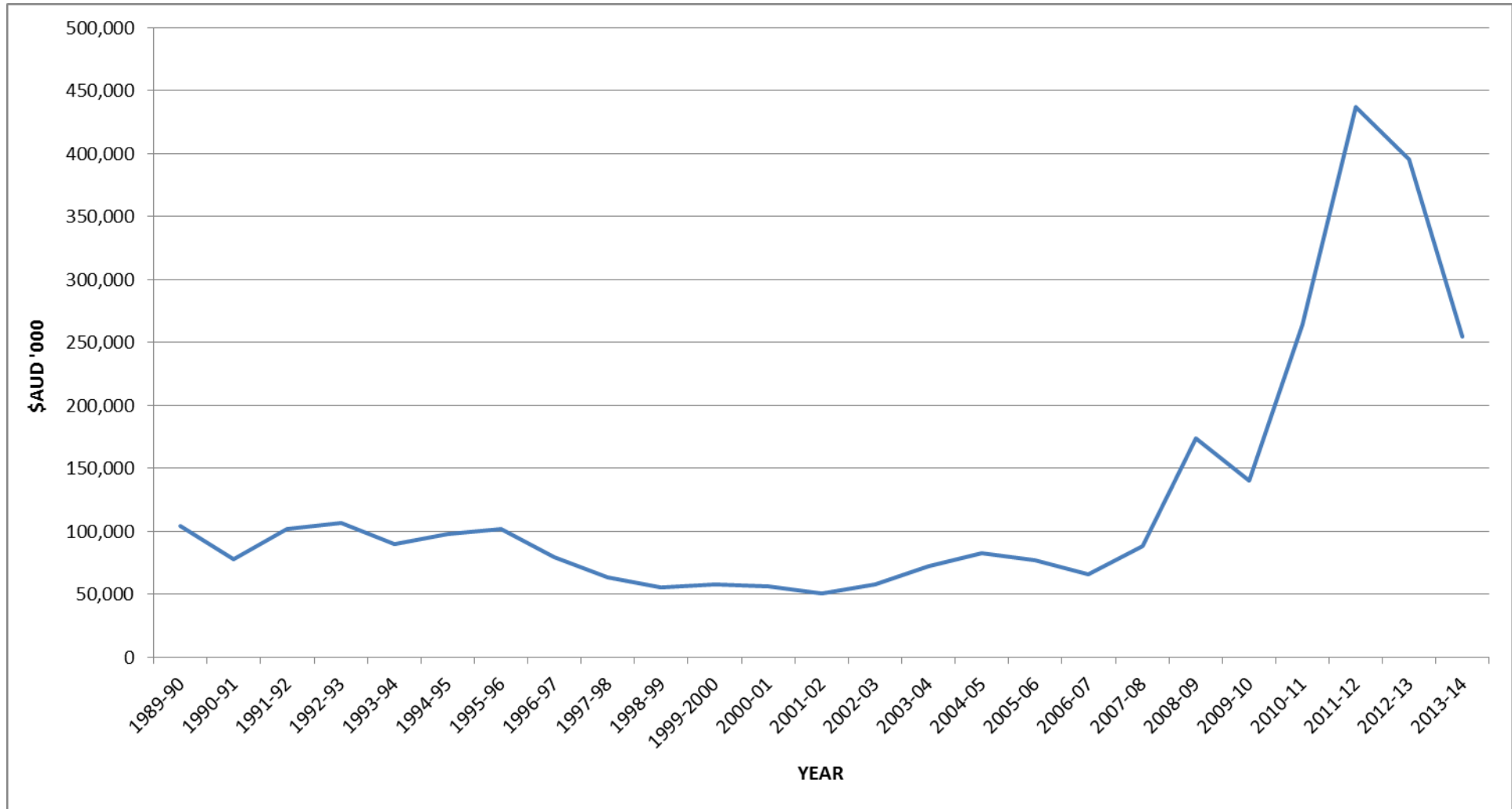
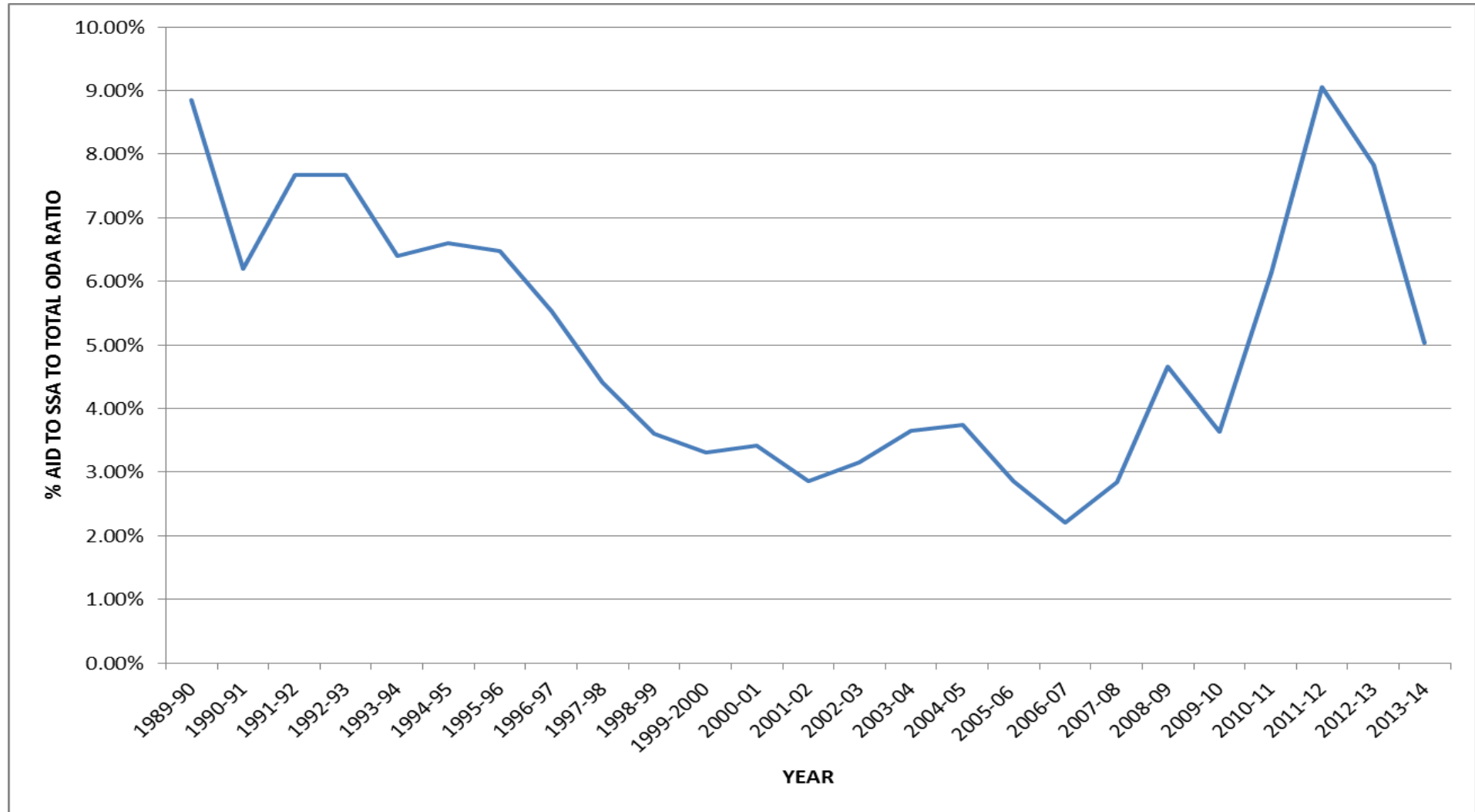




Figure 7. Total Australian ODA to SSA as a percentage of total Australian ODA, 1989/90-2013/14.



As Table 13 and Figures 4 and 5 indicate, Australia's total ODA during the first half of the 1990s grew steadily. The country's ODA to GNI ratio during this time was 0.3% or slightly above. However, in the first two terms of the Howard government the total ODA budget declined, and took some four years to be brought back to levels experienced during the last year of the Keating government. Australia's total ODA rose by AUD 1.2 billion during the Howard years, from around AUD 2.3 billion 1997/98, to AUD 3.5 billion in 2007/08 (constant prices). However, ODA to GNI ratio never surpassed 0.3% during the four terms of the Howard government.

Australia's ODA towards SSA in the first half of the 1990s, with the exception of 1990/91 hovered around AUD 100 million, and while in relative terms steadily declining as a percentage of the country's total ODA, stayed between 7.6% and 5.5% (Table 14, Figures 6 and 7). This changed significantly after the election of the Howard government in March 1996. With the overall downsizing in Australia's total ODA budget, aid to SSA declined as well. Overall, the aid budget to SSA hovered around AUD 50 million until 2003, when it started growing in nominal terms. However, as the ratio data indicates, for the most of the Howard government, Australian aid to SSA was shrinking from 4.4% of the total ODA budget in 1997/98 to 2.8% in 2007/8 (the exceptions being 1998/99 and between 2003-2005) (current prices).

There are several factors which drove this adjustment change in development cooperation, most of which have already been covered in chapter 4 and above. The Howard government's foreign policy agenda had a greater regional focus, and its engagement with Africa was focused mainly on South Africa. This was evident from its further narrowing of the geographic and sectoral focus of Australian aid in SSA to South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, and 'good governance' programs and humanitarian aid. The Howard government published in 2005 a strategy for development cooperation with Africa titled *Australia and Africa. Facing the challenges as partners 2003-07*. The 2005 strategy focused on programs working on 'good governance', basic health and food security, and humanitarian relief.

Perhaps nothing summarises the Howard government's placing and perception of Africa in Australia's overall development assistance program as the following observation:

Australia's assistance to Africa must be placed within the broader context of the development needs of other regions, and the programs of other donors. Australia's aid is focused on the Asia-Pacific region, where Australia has a leading role and special responsibilities recognised by the international

community, while Africa is increasingly the major focus of other international donors (AusAID 2005, 4).

Simply put, Australia had enough to worry about in its own region, and Africa was anyway someone else's development concern. This approach was philosophically consistent with the Coalition's foreign policy outlook, and its emphasis on regionalism, and was reinvoked during the Abbott government to justify its own development disengagement from Africa (see below).

With the election of the Labor government in November 2007, Australia's development cooperation with Africa changed significantly. Firstly, there were considerable adjustment changes. As Table 13 and Figure 4 above indicate, Australia's total ODA budget grew considerably and consistently, and it took the Labor government only half the time it took the Howard government to raise Australia's total ODA by almost the same amount (around AUD 1 billion); from roughly AUD 4 billion in 2008/9 to AUD 5 billion in 2012/13 (constant prices). This increase in aid funding kept Australia's total ODA to GNI ratio above 0.3% during the Labor years, and reaching 0.34% in 2012/13.

In line with a growing ODA budget, Australia's development cooperation with SSA also increased during the Labor years, which as compared to its highest level during the Howard years grew four-fold in nominal terms and almost three-fold as a ratio of total ODA. In 2008/9 Australian ODA to SSA was AUD 174 million, or 4.6% of the total ODA budget, which grew to a high of AUD 436 million and 9% of the total ODA budget in 2011/12, before dropping to AUD 395 million and 7.8% of total ODA in 2012/13. Yes, Australia's total ODA budget was overall growing during the Labor years, but the levels of aid to Africa were still greater as a percentage of total Australian ODA as compared to the Howard years. The only time Labor's development cooperation with Africa was equivalent or lower to anything during the Howard years was in 2009/10, when Australian ODA to SSA was around AUD 140 million (3.64% of total ODA), which was slightly lower than Howard's 2003/4 and 2004/5 aid budgets when aid to Africa amounted to 3.66% and 3.75% of total Australian ODA.

In addition to the significant adjustment change during the Labor years, there was also a high degree of attitude change. The Labor government committed itself to increasing Australia's total ODA to GNI ratio to 0.5% by 2015, and this helped drive adjustment change. The government published in 2010 its *Looking West: Australia's strategic approach to aid in Africa 2011-2015* document which focused not only on basic health,

food security, and humanitarian assistance, but also scholarships and natural resources management (AusAID 2010, 9-14). It was in the context of food security that ACIAR's Africa focused operations exploded in the Labor period to make up almost a quarter of the organization's expenditures, up from around 1% during the Howard years.

There was also a more pronounced change in the geographic focus of aid to Africa which, as Figure 8 illustrates, focused predominantly on Eastern Africa, but due to the UNSC campaign maintained a previously unknown pan-continental presence. As one of Kevin Rudd's foreign affairs advisors argued in an interview for this thesis, Australia's need to secure UNSC membership votes meant that geography did not matter:

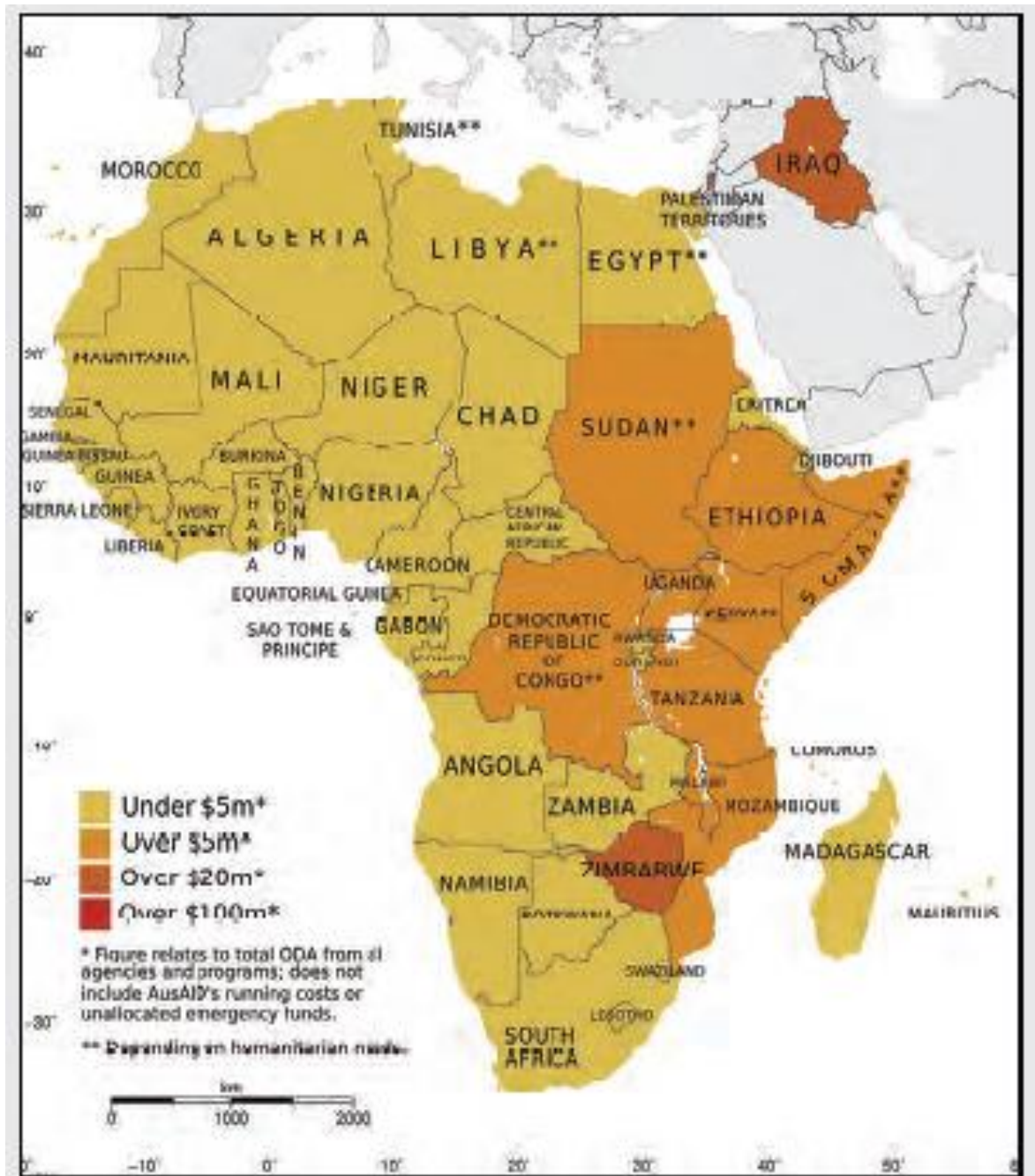
One of the key dynamics of what has changed over the last 20 years has been a shift away from a focus on East and Southern Africa and the Commonwealth states, to a focus on basically everywhere in the region. One of the things that made it difficult to define Australia's interest in Africa, in the Rudd period, was that they were not defined geographically. Because a vote by Burkina Faso was as valuable as a vote by Mozambique...<sup>145</sup>

This necessity for a pan-African approach to development cooperation in support of the UNSC campaign was also highlighted in the 2011 *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*, which as discussed in chapter 4, noted the tension between aid visibility and its effectiveness.

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<sup>145</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

Figure 8. Geographic dispersal of Australian ODA to Africa, snapshot 2010-2011.



Source: AusAID 2011, 55.

In addition to the widening geographic scope for Australian development cooperation with Africa, there were three other important indicators of the Labor government's attitude change. Firstly, in 2010/11 the government enhanced an initiative active during the Howard years, the Australian Partnership with African Communities, and launched it as AACES. Although this was not a new method of enacting greater development cooperation with Africa, the model, inherited from the Howard government's time was enhanced. Secondly, and in the context of a sectoral focus on scholarships and natural resources management in Australian aid to Africa, the government (at the CHOGM in

2011) launched its International Mining for Development initiative, aimed at offering scholarships for (mostly short) courses on aspects of natural resources governance. While the scheme was aimed at all developing countries, many of the beneficiaries were from Africa. The Labor government also moved to enact legislation in support of joining the AfDB, which (if joined and) coupled with the Mining for Development initiative represented a completely new method of pursuing greater development cooperation with Africa.

However, it is important to make clear that the Labor government was not giving more aid to SSA only, but other regions of the world as well. As the thesis has already argued in the previous chapter (IV.II.II), Labor's changing development cooperation with Africa was in addition to its interest in greater engagement with the continent also driven by other factors. Given the Labor government's commitment to growing Australia's aid budget to 0.5% of GNI by 2015, and the pursuit of a UNSC seat in 2012, Australia was during the Labor years overall more generous towards several regions of the world. As Table 15 demonstrates, the greatest beneficiaries of the government's increased aid budget during the Rudd and Gillard years were 'Latin America and the Caribbean', and 'Other Asia', with SSA coming in a close third, just before 'South West Asia'.

**Table 15. Relative average comparison of ODA by region of the world as a ratio of total Australian ODA, Howard Government vs. Rudd/Gillard Governments.**

Region of the World	Howard Government	Rudd/Gillard Government	% change
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.16	0.77	<b>79.2</b>
Other Asia	0.21	0.97	<b>78.4</b>
Sub Saharan Africa	3.47	6.26	<b>44.6</b>
South and West Asia	5.62	9.82	<b>42.8</b>
North Africa and the Middle East	4.18	4.59	<b>8.9</b>
East Asia	27.26	25.98	<b>-4.9</b>
Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands	29.18	24.9	<b>-17.2</b>
Rest of the World	29.9	25.17	<b>-18.8</b>

Source: Author calculations based on DFAT n. d. c, Table 6, December 2015.

Note: The Howard Government span includes aid budgets 1996/7-2007/8; the Rudd/Gillard Government span includes aid budgets 2008/9-2012/13.



The period of the Abbott government again suggests that changes in government drove changes in Australia's development cooperation with Africa. Overall, this period exhibited both adjustment and attitude changes as compared to the Labor period preceding it. Firstly, and in terms of Australia's total ODA budget, after winning election in September 2013, the Abbott government in January 2014 announced a reduction of the 2013-14 budget from Labor's announced AUD 5.7 billion to just above AUD 5 billion (Carr, Bob 2013b; Bishop 2014a). This level was maintained in the 2014-15 budget with total ODA hovering above AUD 5 billion, but the 2015/16 budget cut that by almost AUD 1 billion, with the total ODA budget left at just above AUD 4 billion (DFAT n. d. d, Table 1). The Abbott government implemented the largest cumulative cuts to Australia's total ODA budget ever enacted, as well as the largest cut in a single year, which sliced the ODA budget by 20% (Howes and Pryke 2014).

These cuts hit the Africa budget particularly hard. As Table 16 illustrates although the Labor government in its last development budget cut Australia's total ODA to SSA by AUD 41 million or 10%, the cuts under the Abbott government were more significant. By the end of the Abbott period as compared to the last full-term Labor budget in 2012-13, Australian aid to Africa had overall been cut by some 75%; from a nominal AUD 395 million, to AUD 95 million.<sup>146</sup>

Overall, the Abbott government was less interested in providing aid to the African region, and that attitude could be gauged by its unwillingness to join the AfDB, an important indication of a country's long term interest in foreign policy and development engagement with Africa. Furthermore, there were no new methods of pursuing development cooperation with Africa during the Abbott government, and some old ones, such as the Mining for Development initiatives, did not have their funding renewed (IM4DC 2015).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> These are nominal figures or current prices and as such are not the best tool for comparison as they are not accounted for inflation. However, they are the best figures currently available. The 75% figure represents the total value of cuts comparing the 2012-13 and 2015-16 budgets; the table below indicates year-on-year successive cuts to Australian ODA to Africa.

<sup>147</sup> As of the writing of this thesis the AACES initiative which was due to be completed in mid-2016, was also not scheduled for renewal.



**Table 16. Year-on-year cuts to total Australian ODA to SSA 2011/12 – 2015/16, current prices, in AUD Million.**

	ALP Government cuts			Abbott Coalition Government cuts					
Budget Year	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014-15		2015/16
Total ODA to SSA (AUD Mil)	436 764		395 177		254 441		230 200		95 900
% change from budget to budget		<b>-10%</b>			<b>-35%</b>		<b>-9%</b>		<b>-58%</b>
AUD Mil change from budget to budget		<b>-41587</b>			<b>-140736</b>		<b>-24241</b>		<b>-134300</b>

Source: Author calculations based on DFAT n.d. c, 11; DFAT n.d. d.

Notes: The figures for 2015-16 are estimates, other figures are actual budget outcomes.

### V.III Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to offer an interpretation of change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. The chapter attempted to offer an analysis that was as transparent, rigorous, and systematic as possible given the nature of the source materials and overall difficulties in determining change in foreign policy. While it may at first appear that quantitative data lends itself easily to interpretations of change, this chapter has highlighted the difficulties in using only this type of data for determining change. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to adjustment and attitude change were analysed resulting in the overall conclusion that the period under review does offer strong and unambiguous indications of change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa.

The only aspect of foreign policy engagement which exhibited a strong degree of continuity was security cooperation. Notwithstanding the Labor government's heightened awareness of security issues in Africa, no Australian government in this time period perceived itself sufficiently affected by security and strategic challenges or opportunities emanating from Africa to warrant anything more than a bipartisan approach to providing funds in support of multilateral peace-keeping operations under the UN or AU banner in Africa. No Australian government between 1996 and 2015 displayed a marked difference in its unwillingness to invest ADF personnel in security-related operations in Africa.<sup>148</sup>

On the other hand, the aspects of diplomatic, economic, and development cooperation experienced noticeable changes. On the diplomatic cooperation front an important shift in trends was evident during the last few years of the Howard government, but became fully apparent thanks to changes during the Labor period: after 2003 and especially between 2007 and 2015 foreign policy engagement with Africa was no longer solely defined by the Commonwealth connection. During the Howard years (up until 2003 at least) the Australian government maintained diplomatic engagement with, and interest in, African issues exclusively through the Commonwealth. This was evident from John Howard and Alexander Downer's trips to Africa, as well as their scattered references to African issues in foreign policy pronouncements. However, from the mid-2000s onwards there would be no more high-profile African issues to debate at the Commonwealth, and with the election of the Labor government in 2007, Australia

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<sup>148</sup> Again, this conclusion is based on publicly available data and may not hold for covert and clandestine operations which may have taken place across Africa during the time-period under review.

moved to broaden its bilateral as well as multilateral reach in Africa beyond the Commonwealth connection. In this vein, the opening of an Australian Embassy in Ethiopia allowed Australia to connect more directly and regularly with the AU, and during those years this was the multilateral vehicle of choice for enacting closer foreign policy engagement with Africa. While this change may have partially been underpinned by a lack of high-profile Africa-related issues at the Commonwealth, it was from 2007 also affected by the active efforts of the Labor government in its attempts to widen engagement with the continent.

This chapter has also argued that between 1996 and 2015 there was a discernible change in attitude towards economic cooperation with Africa. While the Howard government mainly exhibited an interest in economic cooperation with South Africa, the Labor years saw an important shift in attitude towards a greater proactiveness in pan-continental support for Australian commercial interests. The Abbott government in its two years in power shifted this back to an emphasis on South Africa, but maintained some of Labor's support for widening the gaze by at least rhetorically acknowledging commercial interests in other parts of Africa. Related to this was a change in perception about Africa as a business destination, from the Howard government's uninterested Afro-pessimism to Labor's pronounced Afro-optimism. The Abbott government exhibited a degree of continuity in its maintenance of this Afro-optimist attitude, but this remained mostly a rhetorical tool, with little action backing it up. This was also the only issue over which a significant difference was found between adjustment and attitude change in the period under review.

Finally, development cooperation with Africa between 1996 and 2015 was particularly volatile and driven by changes in Australian governments. Whereas the significant expansion in Australian aid to Africa between 2008 and 2012 indicated Labor's interest in development cooperation with the continent, especially as compared to what took place during the Howard government, the significant cuts to the Africa aid budget between 2013 and 2015 indicated the Abbott government's clear and unambiguous lack of interest in that cooperation. The Labor years stand out as a time when Australia exhibited the greatest degree of interest in development cooperation with Africa for the whole period under review, and this interest was supported by both rhetoric and action.

Overall, Australia during Labor's tenure was more optimistic about Africa's prospects and engagement between the two continents, and more proactive in attempting to foster

greater foreign policy engagement as compared to both the Howard and Abbott governments.

## CHAPTER VI: Contextual factors underpinning change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the most salient contextual factors that helped drive changes in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015.

As noted in chapter 2, contextual factors emphasize "the context within which political events, outcomes and effects occur", and these are factors "beyond the immediate control of the actors directly involved" (Hay 2002, 95-96). These factors *underpin* but do not by themselves *affect* change in foreign policy because they do not directly determine outcomes, merely helping define the potential range of options and strategies policy-makers can choose. This range of options is uneven and biased, and it is up to policy-makers to exercise their agency in deciding which course of action to pursue, keeping in mind the relevant trade-offs. As some have observed

Foreign policy making is profoundly influenced by the context in which each issue occurs, internationally and domestically. Contextual calculations determine what is at stake for the state and its social values, and define what type of problem the issue represents. Considerations of context inform a policy issue with an appraisal of the array of costs, benefits, opportunities and constraints, its relationship to other policy issues and contemporary initiatives, and its relevance to strategic policy goals and values, and assessments of the significance and utility of courses of action (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 25).

This chapter is structured in two main sections. The first section examines how the end of the Cold War (broadly) and the end of apartheid in South Africa (specifically), coupled with Australia's growing emphasis on regional engagement and an overall global Afro-pessimist narrative all set the scene for a recalibration and change in Australia's engagement with Africa during the first half of the 1990s. The end of the Cold War and apartheid ushered an era of general global deflation of strategic and foreign policy interest in Africa, which was accentuated by various highly detrimental and widely publicized conflicts plaguing Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the DRC, Angola, and the Sudan. This deflation of interest was particularly evident in Australia's foreign policy, and the period of the 1990s can broadly be termed the 'Decline of Africa'.

The second section of the chapter examines how the continental trend of Africa's greater political stability and macroeconomic growth, coinciding with the global resources boom emerging in the early-2000s, all contributed to a growing recognition that Africa was becoming an increasingly appealing destination for business investments. This recognition in turn fed the 'Rise of Africa' narrative as propagated by some of the world's most prominent media outlets, international financial organizations, banking groups and research institutions. It was this recognition of the beneficial changes and greater stability across the African continent, coupled with growing Australian business interests there, that a) helped induce the Howard government in its last few years to react to the need for greater foreign policy engagement, b) made it easier for the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments to argue for, and enact the already described changes in foreign policy engagement with Africa, and c) helped induce the Abbott government to, at least rhetorically, maintain Labor's Afro-optimism regarding economic engagement with Africa.

## **VI.I The Decline of Africa**

The end of the Cold War changed the half century old structure of the international political system from a bipolar to a largely unipolar one. The final disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s had significant repercussions for countries around the world and in Africa in particular. From the early days of decolonization, most African countries were in some way affected by the strategic Cold War rivalry between the US and USSR, and this made Africa arguably more relevant to international politics than would have been the case otherwise. Another issue that kept Africa globally relevant during the Cold War was racism, and the struggle against the last vestiges of institutionalized white-minority governance in Southern Africa.

Some of the most infamous cases of proxy wars between the US and USSR took place in Africa, such as the conflict in Angola throughout the 1980s; and some of the most infamous cases of great power support for dictatorial regimes also took place in Africa, whether it was US support for Samuel Doe in Liberia, and Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire (today's DRC), or Soviet support for Jose Eduardo Dos Santos in Angola, and Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia.<sup>149</sup> As Elizabeth Schmidt (2013, 127) has argued

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<sup>149</sup> On the Americans in Zaire see Clough 1992, Chapter 10; Meredith 2006, Chapter 17. On the Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa see Patman 1990. In general on foreign intervention in Africa see Schmidt 2013.

During the four decades of the U.S.-Soviet competition, anticolonial nationalists, prodemocracy activists, and issues of good governance and development were ignored or opposed if they interfered with U.S. strategic interests. No regime was deemed too corrupt or repressive for American support so long as it allied with the United States in the Cold War.

Or, as others noted in the early 1990s, “For nearly four decades, U.S. policy towards Africa was shackled by the Cold War. From the end of World War II until late 1984, Washington’s interest in the continent fluctuated with changing estimates of the threat posed by real or imagined Soviet gains” (Clough 1992, 2). The same could be said of the Soviet Union and its calculations vis-a-vis the US (Schmidt 2013, 228). Overall, with the end of the Cold War such calculations were no longer necessary and having lost its strategic value “Africa was even more marginal internationally” (Somerville 2015, 179).

The end of the Cold War was relevant to Australian foreign policy towards Africa primarily in that it helped bring about (or speed up) the end of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>150</sup> As the US and USSR relaxed their strategic rivalry in Africa in the second half of the 1980s, Western governments moved more forcefully to condemn and sanction South Africa’s apartheid regime (previously something of a partner in the Cold War battle against communism). As Michael Clough argued, although Ronald Reagan and his administration were stuck in the Cold War mentality and averse to open and high-profile criticisms of the apartheid regime, the relaxing of the Cold War rivalry forced his government to change tack. For example, as late as July 1986 Ronald Reagan attacked the ANC’s anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, labelling their activities as “calculated terror” and arguing that “the South African government has a right and responsibility to maintain order in the face of terrorists”, further reinvoking the country’s strategic value vis-à-vis the fight against communism (Clough 1992, 106). However, such scaremongering was no longer enough to maintain support for the apartheid government:

... as U.S. relations with Moscow continued to improve, it became ever more difficult for the Reagan administration to use the Communism threat in an attempt to disarm its critics. By 1985-86, most senators and congressmen were at least as worried about being labelled “soft on racism” as they were about being declared “soft on communism” (Clough 1992, 106).

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<sup>150</sup> This discussion should not be taken as discounting the value of South Africa’s internal struggle for the end of apartheid.



As already noted in chapter 3, Australia had already by this time (at least rhetorically) been at the forefront of global criticisms of apartheid, and the country's development cooperation with Africa was mainly concentrated on supporting frontline states in the fight against apartheid in Southern Africa (Evans and Grant 1995, 287) . The centrality of the fight against apartheid for Australia's overall foreign policy engagement with Africa during the late 1980s and early 1990s can also be gauged by a quick glance at Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant's book on *Australia's Foreign Relations*. Evans, who was Australia's foreign minister between 1988 and 1996, devoted less than 15 pages to engagement with Africa (out of a total of almost 400), and out of that eight were devoted to Southern Africa and the fight against apartheid. Given the centrality of the fight against apartheid for Australia, the dismantling of white minority rule and the apartheid system in South Africa was highly salient in underpinning change in foreign policy engagement with Africa. This much was confirmed by Gareth Evans in an interview for this thesis where he stated that although the prospect of the end of the Cold War in general "created a more relaxed, fluid, and open environment" in Africa, all of Australia's "eggs were in the South Africa basket" and the fight against apartheid was "the driving dynamic" of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa.<sup>151</sup>

Moreover, since at least the early 1960s, racism and apartheid were the main (and often only) issues Canberra had to consistently deal with in its engagement with Africa, and were particularly prominent for this foreign policy engagement since the early 1970s and Gough Whitlam's vociferous criticism of the apartheid system. Given that the struggle against apartheid was central to Australia's overall foreign policy engagement with Africa, its demise resulted in a recalibration of the nature and intensity of that engagement. As Gareth Evans argued

There was certainly, as foreign minister, nothing like the same intensity of engagement once the South Africa [apartheid] issue had been resolved... We still had an interest, and [Bob] Hawke had a particular interest in the Commonwealth... but it was not centre-front as a policy preoccupation in the way it had been during the apartheid years... So just in the nature of things the intensity of that engagement did fall away. It was not a deliberate choice, just that there were so many other preoccupations elsewhere, and that when a problem is basically solved, and things are looking better, you move on.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

With no more apartheid to fight, Australia's engagement with Africa entered a new phase of lower intensity and less direct policy preoccupation. As the dismantling of apartheid started to gain traction in the early 1990s Australia's development assistance to Southern Africa experienced a decrease, and the Australian High Commission in the frontline state of Zambia was closed. Paradoxically, the country's defence cooperation with African states in terms of actual ADF personnel deployed to Africa was at its height during the early 1990s, but only through UN missions, most notably in Western Sahara, Somalia, and Rwanda, and did not really necessitate the government's high-profile diplomatic preoccupation (in the way that the anti-apartheid struggle did).

There were two other factors which jointly also helped diminish the intensity of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. One was the change in government leadership from Bob Hawke to Paul Keating in the early 1990s. Bob Hawke maintained a strong interest in Commonwealth affairs, and by extension (given its historical centrality for Australia's engagement with Africa) African issues such as apartheid. Even Gareth Evans noted that Hawke took the Commonwealth connection more seriously than either himself or Paul Keating.<sup>153</sup> As one Australian diplomat remembered, when leaving the 1995 CHOGM in Auckland for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Japan, Paul Keating reportedly stated that he was now going to "a real international conference".<sup>154</sup> Keating was "sceptical about the Commonwealth", and Evans (2014, 7) himself did not ascribe the forum much importance in the "larger scheme of things", arguing that "since the South Africa [apartheid struggle] days" the Commonwealth just didn't have the same sort of resonance in Australia.

Also at that time, and running through the 1990s, greater engagement with Asia was "the main game" of Australian foreign policy under both Paul Keating and John Howard (Evans 2014, 7). In the aftermath of Australia's leading role in the founding of APEC, Paul Keating's time in government coincided with a growing recognition of Asia's tremendous economic rise (World Bank 1993). He displayed a very strong focus on regional integration with Asia, and even his government in its last few years was criticized for not proactively increasing engagement with Africa (JSCFADT 1996, 5;

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015; Evans 2014, 6, 7.

<sup>154</sup> Neuhaus 2013, part 1, 3; 2014 part 3, 3. One post-apartheid notable African issue in the Commonwealth during this time was the suspension of Nigeria from the organization, which took place almost immediately after the 1995 Auckland CHOGM. The suspension was over the execution of several environmental activists including Ken Saro Wiwa; see The Commonwealth n. d.

Neuhaus 2013, part 1, 3).<sup>155</sup> As Gareth Evans suggested, in the aftermath of the dismantling of apartheid, Australian interests in Africa during the 1990s were perceived to be minimal, and other foreign policy priorities, such as engagement with Asia, were more pressing.<sup>156</sup> These trends and perceptions were largely maintained by the incoming Howard government, with former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer arguing that

... given the priorities of Australian foreign policy it [engagement with Africa] just did not feature as a high priority, because we did not, we had some, but we did not have huge interest in Africa...compared to other parts of the world, our interests there were fairly modest...I mean in those days the priority for Australia was to build its engagement more successfully with Asia. And consolidate its relationships with traditional partners.<sup>157</sup>

The second factor contributing to the decline in the intensity of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was the overall negative and pessimistic global narrative of Africa as a deeply troubled continent. This was encapsulated by *The Economist* magazine which in May 2000 ran a front page headline titled "The Hopeless Continent" featuring an image of a young African man holding a rocket propelled grenade on his shoulder.<sup>158</sup> In the post-Cold War decade, many African states witnessed economic decline or at best stagnating growth coupled with a number of high-profile humanitarian and man-made disasters, leading *The Economist* (2000) to lament the despair surrounding the African continent. In the context of the raging civil war in Sierra Leone, the magazine generalized about the continent's "many dreadful wars", with Sierra Leone epitomizing "so much of the rest of Africa", also raising the issue of many natural and man-made disasters rocking the continent by concluding that

No one can blame Africans for the weather, but most of the continent's shortcomings owe less to acts of God than to acts of man. These acts are not exclusively African—brutality, despotism and corruption exist everywhere—but African societies, for reasons buried in their cultures, seem especially susceptible to them.

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<sup>155</sup> A search of Keating's speeches in the online prime ministerial archives with the keyword 'Africa' reveals mostly scattered references, and only several substantial addresses on South Africa and apartheid, and Nelson Mandela's presidential inauguration in 1994. For Keating's focus on Asian integration see Keating 2000. Keating's general lack of interest in African issues can also be gauged from Don Watson's portrait of Paul Keating, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, which in over 730 pages offers almost no reference to African issues; one reference each to Rwanda and Somalia, and one to the 1991 CHOGM in Zimbabwe; see Watson 2002.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

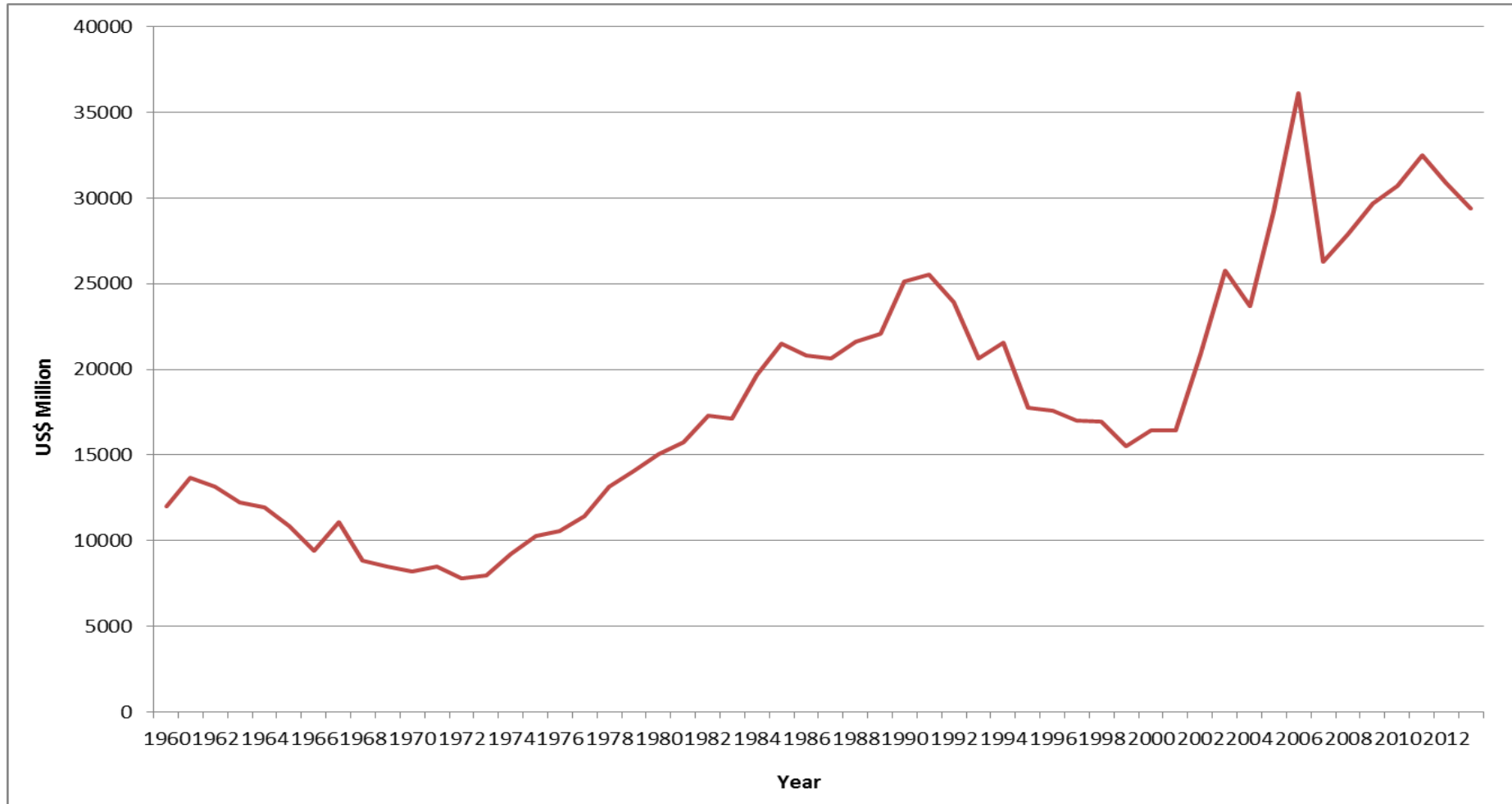
<sup>157</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>158</sup> For other examples of a rather pessimistic view of Africa in the 1990s see Easterly and Levine 1997; Collier and Gunning 1999.

The period between the mid-1970s and 2000 has come to be considered as Africa's "lost quarter century", with the continent's severest economic decline taking place between 1980 and 1995 (Noman and Stiglitz 2015, 3). During this time average per capita incomes in Africa declined steadily, many countries were subject to Structural Adjustment Programs mandated by international donors and financial institutions which appeared to only exacerbate economic difficulties, and the numerous highly publicized conflicts in places like Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra-Leone, Angola, the DRC, and the Sudan, only served to further weaken political and economic governance across the continent (Noman and Stiglitz 2015, 1-29). As Figure 9 indicates, throughout the 1990s the world appeared to be 'giving up' on development cooperation with Africa, and some suggested there was a "growing international perception that Africa is beyond help" (JSCFADT 1996, 5). OECD aid to Africa decreased by around US 10 billion throughout the 1990s, from just over US 25 billion in 1990 to US 15.5 billion in 1999, only increasing to its 1990 levels in 2003. With this in mind, and although the situation was far from uniform across this very heterogeneous continent, much of the global perception of Africa in the 1990s was fairly pessimistic.

The end of the Cold War and apartheid, Australia's increasing emphasis on Asian engagement, and global perceptions of a 'hopeless' Africa all set the context for what has been termed the 'Decline of Africa' in Australia's foreign policy. This is not to suggest that engagement with Africa was a key plank of Australia's foreign policy agenda before this time, but that the struggle against apartheid was an important policy preoccupation which regularly mobilized Australian foreign policy attention towards Africa from at least the early 1970s. With the end of apartheid, all of the above noted issues contributed to a context more biased towards a generally declining and diminishing Australian foreign policy interest in engagement with Africa in the 1990s.

Figure 9. OECD Development Assistance Committee Net ODA to SSA 1960-2013, constant prices, US Million.



Source: OECD 2015.

Note: Constant price baseline is 2012.

## VI.II The Rise of Africa

The second highly salient contextual factor that underpinned Australia's changing foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015 can be termed the 'Rise of Africa'. While the consistent growth of African economies, and greater macroeconomic and political stability were taking place since roughly the turn of the millennium, it was the explicit and then much trumpeted recognition of this trend occurring around the turn of the last decade that formed the narrative of Africa's rise. Two interconnected issues were of key relevance: Africa's general prolonged economic rise, and more specifically the global resources boom that to an extent drove it. The former set the broader context for a more optimistic perception of Africa, while the latter highlighted specifically how Australia's business and commercial interests were related to this context.

The changing narrative of the rise of Africa is perhaps best highlighted by a quick examination of headlines from *The Economist*. Between 1997 and 2015, the magazine ran 19 front page headlines featuring African issues.<sup>159</sup> The already discussed May 2000 headline of "The Hopeless Continent", although prominent in its extreme negativity and pessimism, reflected a pattern by which up until the late 2000s almost all Africa-related headlines were of an Afro-pessimist tone, focusing mainly on the problems with the continent's development, governance, and security.

Fast forward to 2011 and *The Economist* ran a lead story with a markedly different front page title: "Africa Rising – The Hopeful Continent". In a clear example of Afro-optimism the story focused primarily on the beneficial changes sweeping the continent over the past decade. After outlining a "depressingly familiar backdrop" of corruption, kleptocracy, poverty, drought, and famine, the editorial focused on health, technology and communications improvements, Africa's fast-growing middle class, and a steady increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the continent. As the article concluded, "Autocracy, corruption and strife will not disappear overnight. But at a dark time for the world economy, Africa's progress is a reminder of the transformative power of growth" (2011, 13).

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<sup>159</sup> This analysis is based on an examination of *The Economist* website archive, available at [http://www.economist.com/printedition/covers?print\\_region=76980](http://www.economist.com/printedition/covers?print_region=76980).

This narrative of Africa's rise was further confirmed two years later, in March 2013, with a special report and front page story titled "Aspiring Africa", arguing that the continent was in better economic shape than at any other time since decolonization:

Celebrations are in order on the poorest continent. Never in the half-century since it won independence from colonial powers has Africa been in such good shape. Its economy is flourishing. Most countries are at peace. Ever fewer children bear arms and record numbers go to school. Mobile phones are as ubiquitous as they are in India and, in the worst-affected countries, HIV infections have fallen by up to three-quarters. Life expectancy rose by a tenth in the past decade and foreign direct investment has tripled. Consumer spending will almost double in the next ten years; the number of countries with average incomes above \$1000 per person a year will grow from less than half of Africa's 55 states to three quarters (2013, 9).

*The Economist* was not alone in recognizing that trends in Africa were changing. Perhaps surprisingly for a country that places generally marginal importance on African issues, one of the first publications to highlight Africa's rise was Australia's Lowy Institute 2008 report *Into Africa: How the Resources Boom is Making Sub-Saharan Africa More Important to Australia* (Donnelly and Ford 2008). This report may not have had significant global impact in shaping the 'Rise of Africa' narrative, but it had a particular importance for Australian foreign policy by explicitly highlighting Africa's growing appeal for Australian business interests in the resources sector. It also formed the foundation from which DFAT would draw early figures on the estimated value of Australian commercial interests and investments in Africa (Le May 2007; AAP 2008). A more globally renowned (and cited) report was published by the McKinsey Global Institute in June 2010, titled *Lions on the move: The progress and potential of African economies* (Roxburgh et al. 2010). This report was highly influential in helping shape the wider narrative of Africa's rise both globally and in Australia, and this much was observed by a number of DFAT officials interviewed for this thesis.<sup>160</sup>

### What happened between 2000 and 2011 in Africa?

As a number of publications have made clear, there were three overarching factors that helped shape Africa's rise: improved political governance and security, improved macroeconomic stability and sustained economic growth, and the global resources boom. The 2008 Lowy Institute report argued that "improved African fundamentals" such as macroeconomic stabilization and conflict resolution and democratisation,

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<sup>160</sup> For other works helping shape the 'Rise of Africa' narrative see Radelet 2010, Severino and Ray 2011, and Robertson, Mhango, and Moran 2012.



coupled with the growth in commodity prices were some of the prominent reasons why Africa was becoming an important destination for Australian businesses (Donnelly and Ford 2008, 1-13). The McKinsey report stated that while Africa's growth acceleration was helped by the resources boom, it was underpinned by more than just that; "arguably more important" were government actions to end political conflicts and improve macroeconomic conditions (Roxburgh et al. 2010, 1). *The Economist* (2011, 13) echoed such views highlighting that Africa was "at last getting a taste of peace and decent government", while noting that the commodities boom was partially responsible for the fact that "over the past decade six of the world's ten fastest-growing countries were African".<sup>161</sup> As Noman and Stiglitz (2015, 1) summarized, the consensus was that "booming commodity prices and mineral discoveries" as well as "improved macroeconomic management" all made significant contributions to the economic 'Rise of Africa'.

#### *Improved political governance and security*

From the late 1990s onwards, many African states have experienced prolonged political stability and to an extent higher levels of security. While this in itself does not necessarily imply that there has been a general improvement in the quality of political governance across the continent, it has at least allowed for an environment conducive of greater economic activity.

The trend towards conflict resolution continent-wide was an important factor in Africa's rise. With the ending of the long-running conflicts in Angola in the early 2000s, Cote d'Ivoire in the mid-2000s, and at least the diminishing intensity of fighting in the DRC by the late 2000s, many of SSA's major economies were experiencing increasing political stability which in turn helped foster economic growth. As the McKinsey report argued, with the average number of serious conflicts in Africa declining from 4.8 each year in the 1990s to 2.6 in the 2000s, economic growth in conflict-free countries rebounded to some 5% a year (Roxburgh et al. 2010, 12).

#### *Improved macroeconomic stability and economic growth*

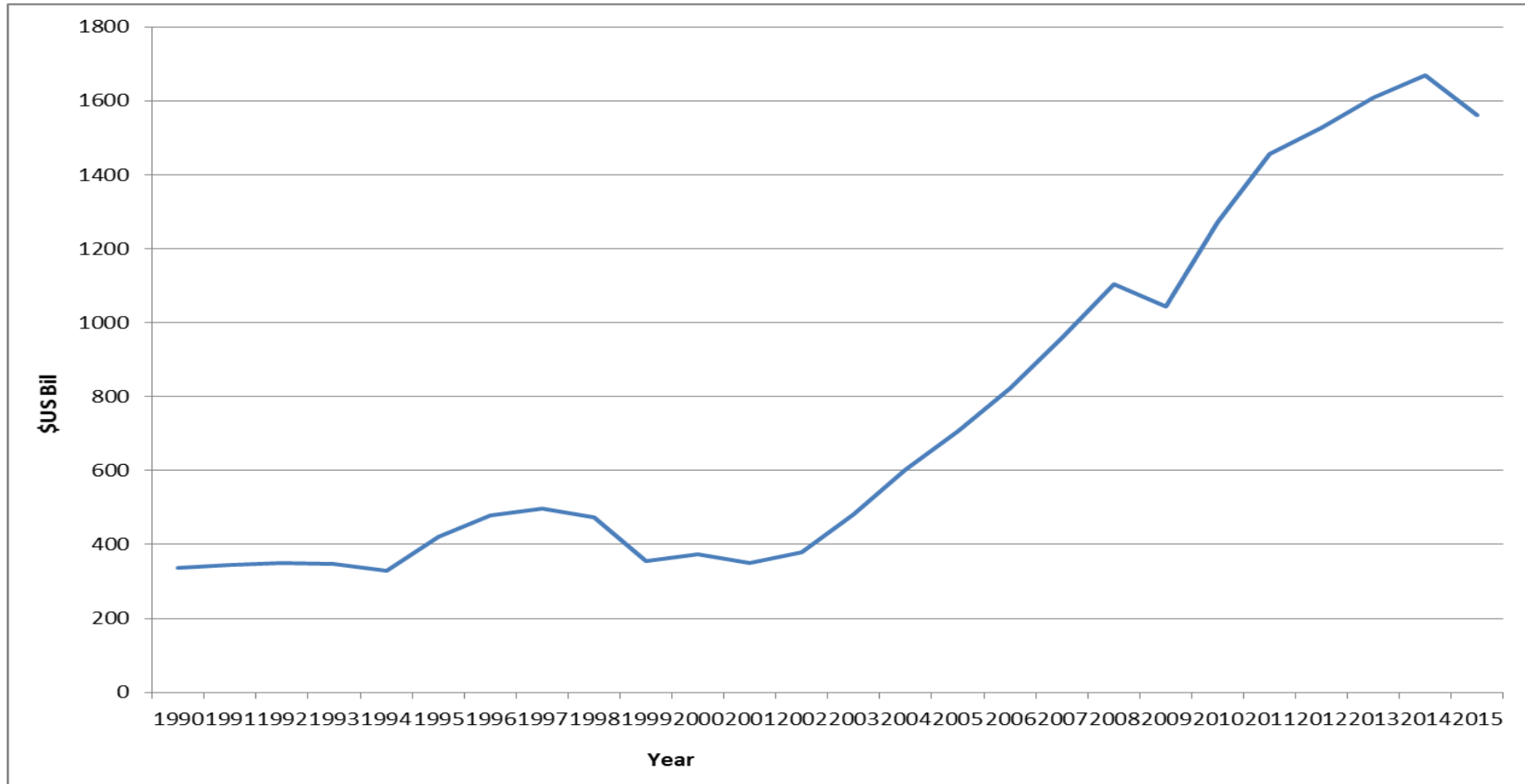
Africa's macroeconomic stability and economic growth have, although starting from a low base, been relatively resilient and steadfast over the past decade, especially as compared to the previous one. As *The Economist* (2011, 76) noted, since regrettably

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<sup>161</sup> For similar views see also Goldman and Sachs 2012.

labelling Africa “the hopeless continent” a decade ago, “a profound change has taken hold”. In short, much of the continent experienced unimpeded economic growth and changes in a range of economic indicators. Firstly, as Figure 10 highlights, while SSA’s GDP largely stagnated through most of the 1990s, from the early 2000s onwards it rose significantly.

Figure 10. SSA's GDP 1990-2015, current prices, US Billion.

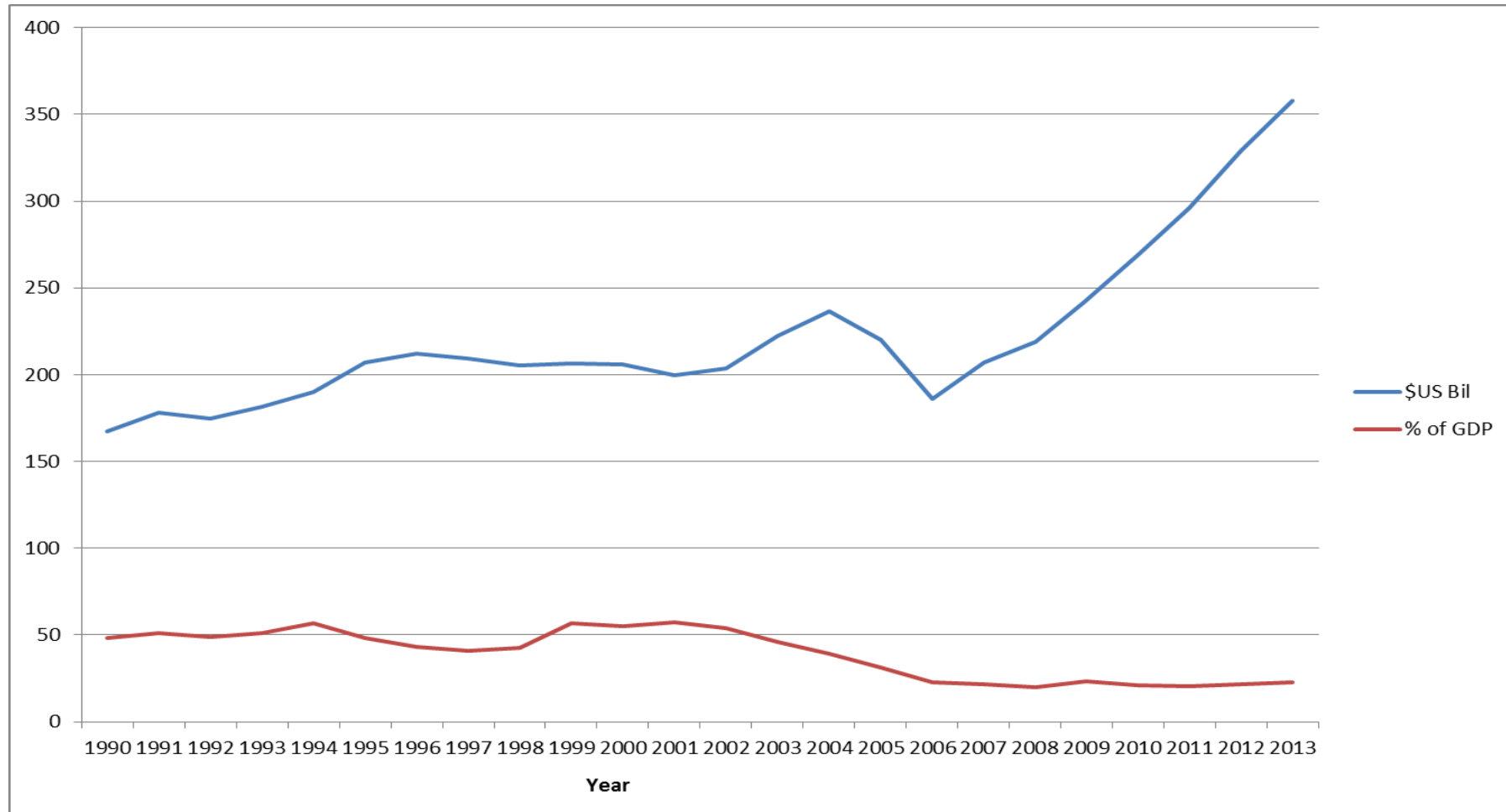


Source: IMF 2015.

Note: Current prices calculated in April 2015.

Africa's economic rise since the early 2000s did not necessarily mean that African governments were less indebted, rather their increasing revenues meant that external debt as a percentage of GDP actually decreased in the 2000s. Highlighted in Figure 11 is SSA's external debt in both total monetary value and as a percentage of GDP. Although external debt actually rose significantly from the mid-2000s onwards (from US 186 billion in 2006 to US 358 billion in 2013), as a percentage of GDP it declined steadily from just above 50% in 2002 to just above 20% in 2013. This is in contrast with the 1990s when external debt was more or less stable at around 50% of GDP.

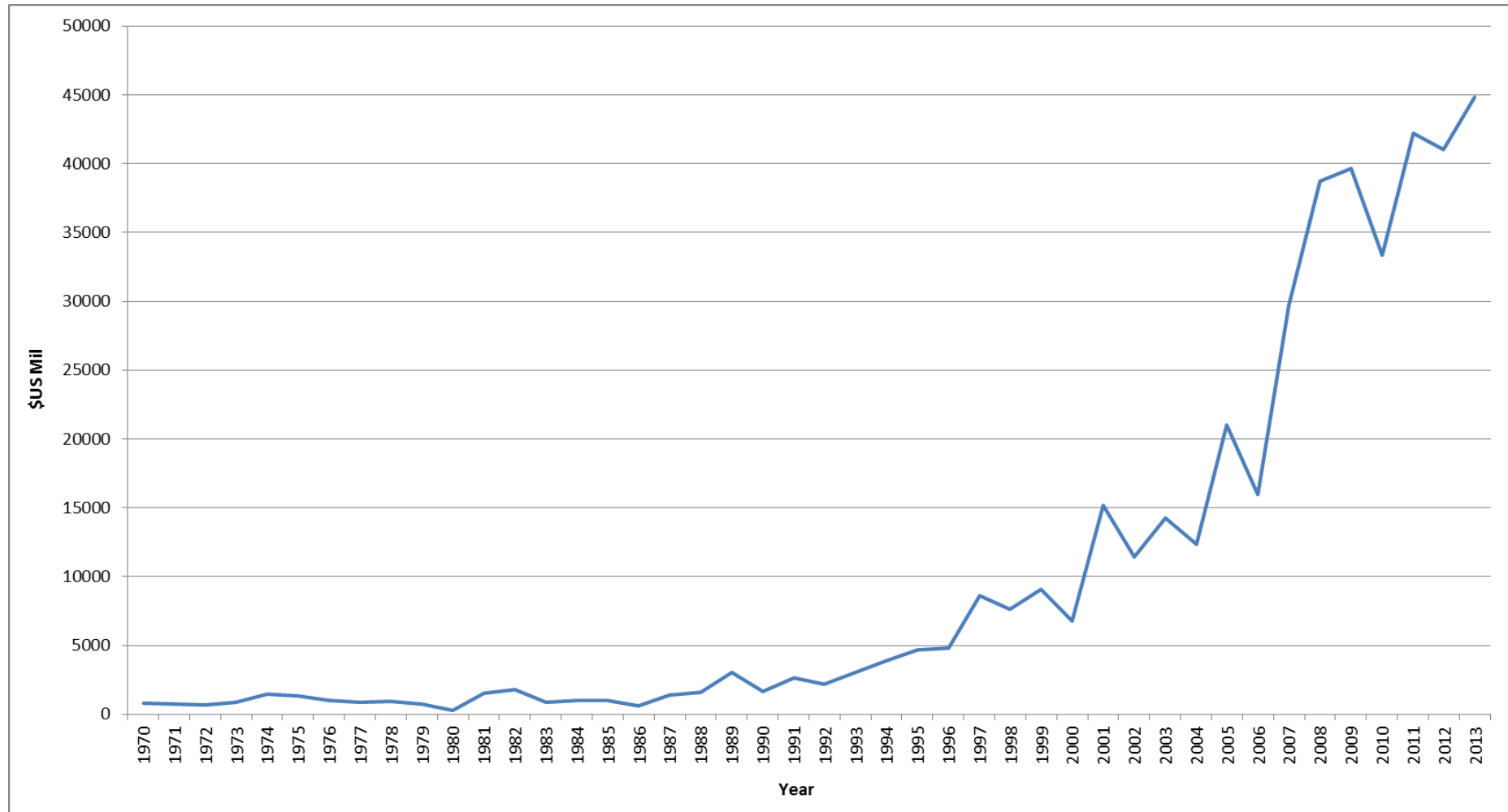
Figure 11. SSA's external debt 1990-2013, as % of GDP and US Billion.



Source: IMF 2015.

Over the 2000s and as Africa collectively became a more appealing destination for business investment, FDI flows increased. FDI flows into SSA rose slightly in the 1990s, but really exploded after 2001 when their value was just over US 1.5 billion, reaching slightly over US 4.2 billion in 2011 (Figure 12). Another and related significant change was the increase in African countries with FDI levels greater than ODA levels. As Figure 13 shows, excluding South Africa, in 1990 there were only two countries in SSA where FDI flows were greater than ODA flows (Nigeria and Liberia). By the turn of the millennium that number had risen to almost 10, and in 2012 some 17 countries experienced greater FDI than ODA inflows. This is one indicator that is particularly helpful in feeding the ‘Rise of Africa’ narrative as it portrays some African countries as becoming less aid dependent and more appealing to international business investments.

**Figure 12. FDI flows into SSA 1970-2013, US Million.**

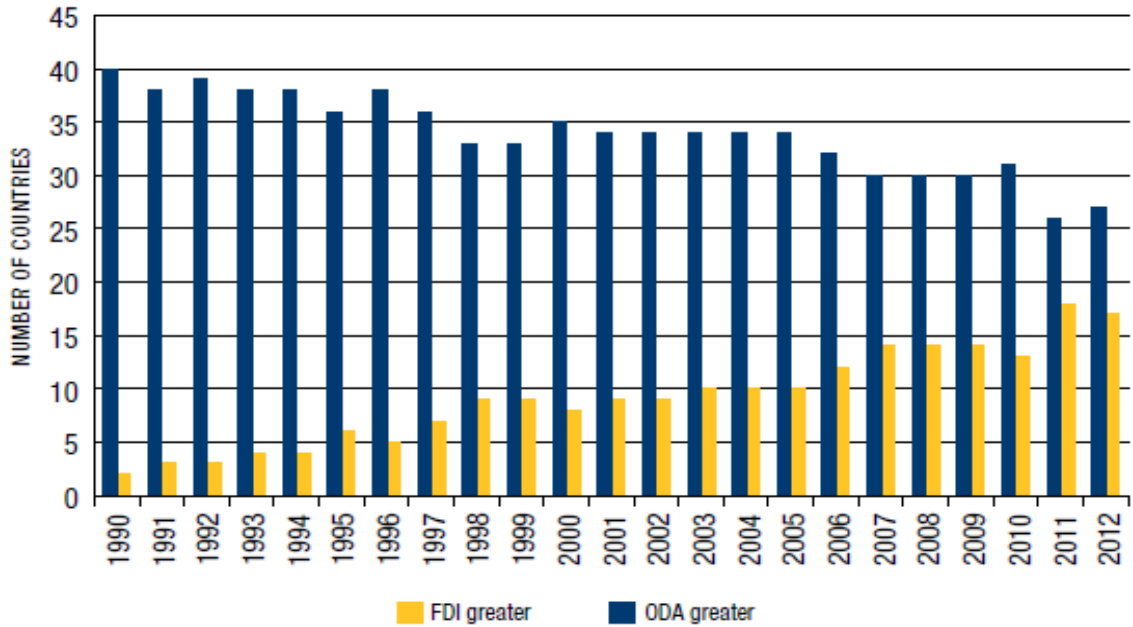


Source: UNCTAD 2015.

Note: Current prices and current exchange rates. Figures are based on UNCTAD World Investment Report 2015.



**Figure 13. SSA inflows, FDI vs ODA, 1990-2012.**



Sources: IMF, World Bank, and authors' calculations.<sup>2</sup>

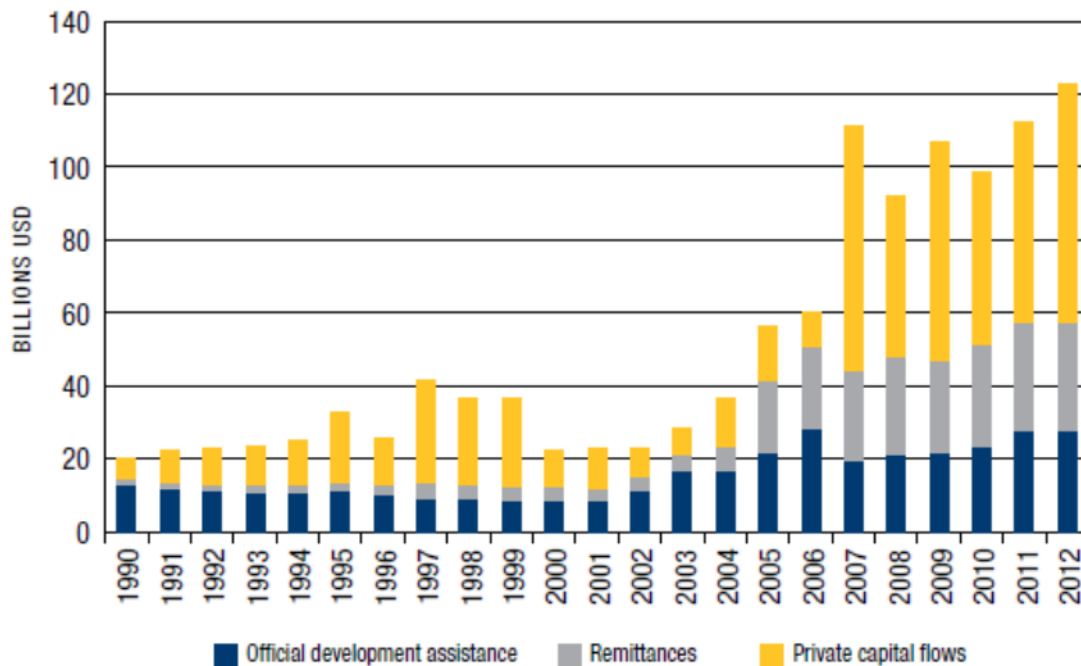
Source: Sy and Rakotondrazaka 2015, 2.

Note: South Africa is excluded.

Something else that partially contributed to Africa's economic growth over the past decade was a changing pattern of external financial flows to the continent.<sup>162</sup> As Figure 14 indicates, two significant changes took place. Firstly, the total value of external financial flows to SSA increased from around US 20 billion in 1990, to over US 120 billion in 2012. Just between 2004 and 2012 that increase was threefold. Secondly, the composition of external financial flows to SSA changed dramatically. In 1990 the composition was around 62% development assistance, 31% gross private capital flows, and around 7% remittances, but by 2012 only around 22% made up development assistance, while 54% were gross private capital flows, and around 24% remittances. While lower-income countries may have still been heavily reliant on development assistance, middle-income countries became increasingly less dependent on aid, and more on private capital flows and remittances.

<sup>162</sup> External financial flows are defined as the sum of gross private capital flows, official development assistance, and remittances; see Sy and Rakotondrazaka 2015, 1.

**Figure 14. Composition of external financial flows into SSA 1990-2012, US Billion.**



Sources: IMF, World Bank, and authors' calculations.

Source: Sy and Rakotondrazaka 2015, 1.

All of these graphs and data indicate that since the turn of the millennium, the African continent has experienced a sustained and relatively robust trend of economic growth. While this growth has come from a very low base, it has continued even after the Global Financial Crisis struck the world in 2007 and 2008 and left many of its developed economies struggling to maintain economic growth.

### *Global resources boom*

Also influencing the economic growth of several African countries from roughly 2003 onwards has been the increasing global demand for primary commodities. Given that the African continent is home to 88% of global platinum reserves, 56% of diamond reserves, 41% of cobalt reserves, 40% of gold reserves, 27% of bauxite reserves, 15% of iron ore reserves, and 10% of global reserves of oil, it is not difficult to see why the global demand for resources became an important part of the economic growth of many African states. This part of the overall story of Africa's rise, and the growing number of Australian resources companies investing and operating across Africa were key factors underpinning the Rudd/Gillard Labor governments' changing foreign policy engagement with Africa. As previous chapters have highlighted, the number of

Australian companies operating and investing across Africa rose significantly from the mid-2000s onwards, as did the reported overall value of their investments on the continent.

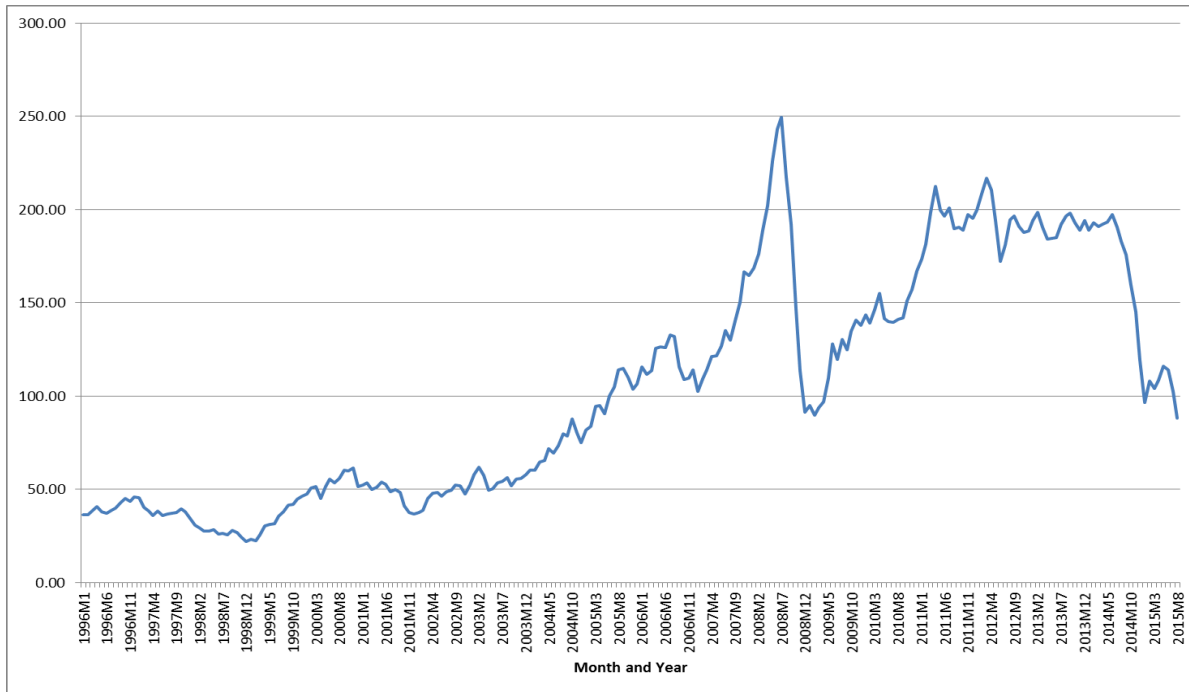
Data compiled in the figures below highlights that commodity exporting countries would have benefitted from the significant growth in commodity prices during the 2000s. Several reports outlining the ‘Rise of Africa’ noted the important role the global resources boom played in Africa’s economic growth. As the McKinsey report argued in 2010

Certainly, Africa has profited from soaring global demand for commodities. Oil prices climbed from less than \$20 a barrel in 1999 to more than \$145 in 2008, enriching Algeria, Libya, and Nigeria and other producers. Prices for minerals, grain, and other raw materials also rose. Not only have African producers benefited from rising global prices, but they also have increased production (Roxburgh et al. 2010, 10).

However, the report (Roxburgh et al. 2010, 10) also cautioned that the growth of the commodities sector explains “only part of Africa’s broader growth story”, a caution echoed by *The Economist* (2011, 77) a year later noting that “only about a third of Africa’s recent growth is due to commodities”.

Figures 15 and 16 show that global fuel prices rose steadily from 2003 onwards, and quite significantly between 2007 and mid-2014; and global metals prices also rose steadily from 2003, experiencing their highest peaks in 2011. Related to this, and exhibited in Figures 17 and 18 we can observe that the time period between 2000 and 2010 also saw African countries significantly increase their oil and gas production.

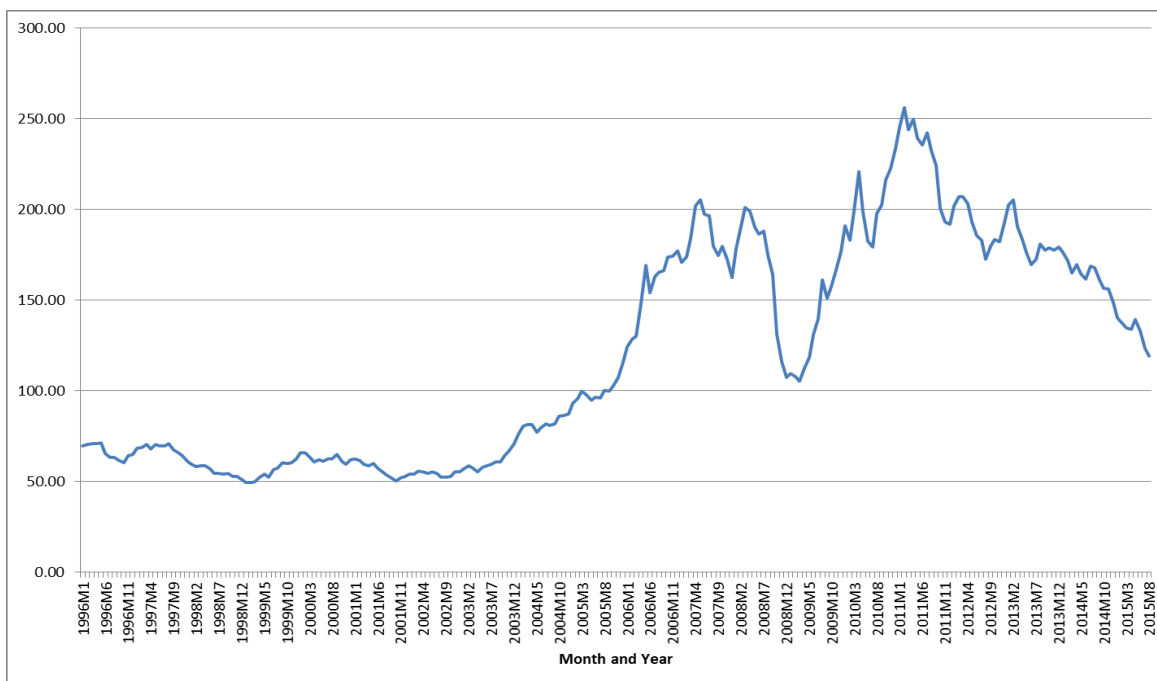
**Figure 15. IMF Fuel Price Index 1996-2015.**



Source: IMF n.d.; based on September 2015.

Note: Index 2005=100

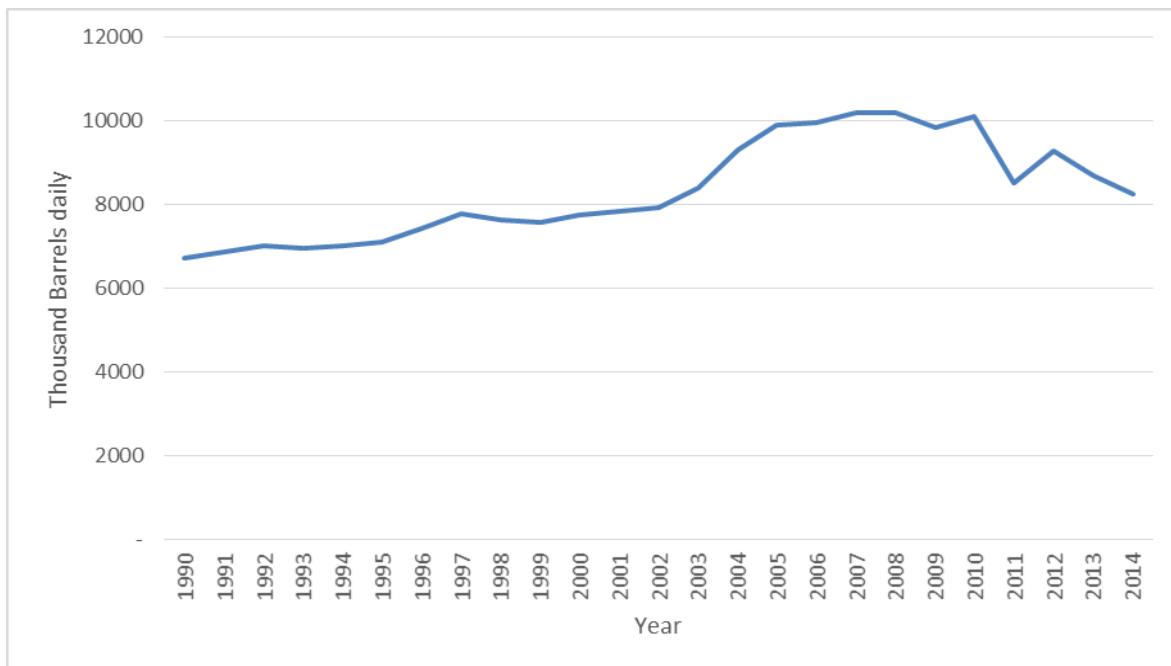
**Figure 16. IMF Metals Price Index 1996-2015.**



Source: IMF n.d.; based on September 2015.

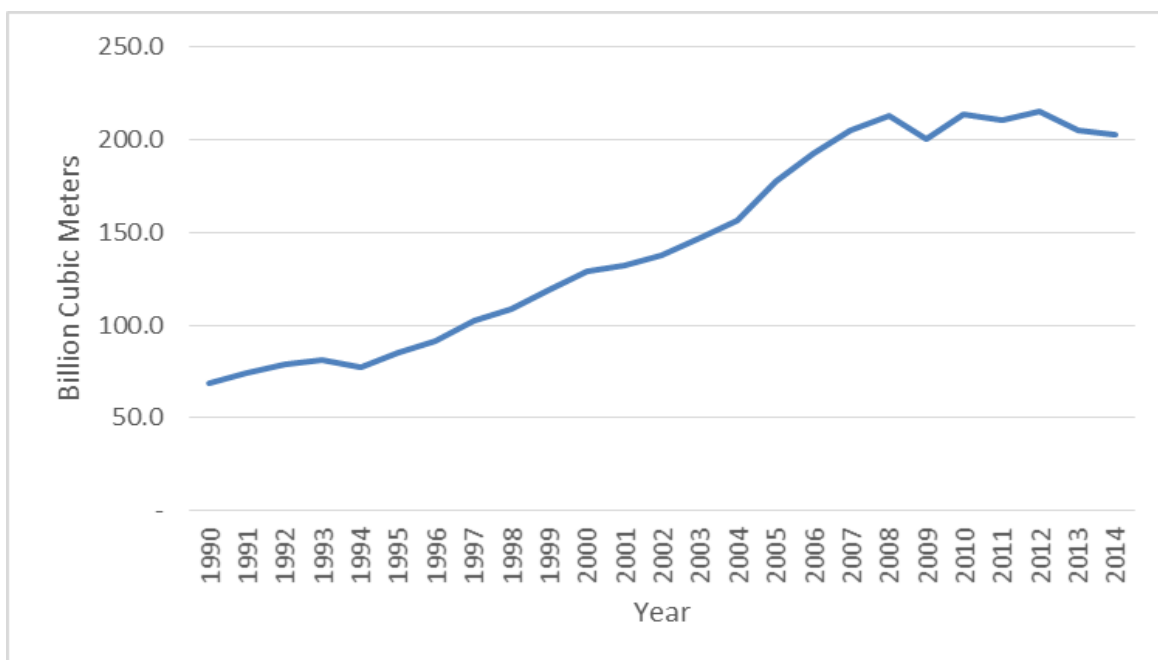
Note: Index 2005=100

**Figure 17. Total Africa oil production 1990-2014, '000 barrels per day.**



Source: BP 2015.

**Figure 18. Total Africa gas production 1990-2014, billion cubic meters.**



Source: BP 2015.

The contextual setting outlined above — Africa’s economic rise coupled with the global resources boom — led to what one senior DFAT official termed “a new discourse about Africa”.<sup>163</sup> While the Howard government was generally slow to react to such developments, the rise of Africa and Australia’s growing economic interests on the continent were not missed by DFAT. As one senior DFAT official with several diplomatic postings in Africa noted, during the mid-2000s, DFAT had suggested to then Foreign Minister Alexander Downer that the country’s diplomatic footprint in Africa should be expanded even beyond the High Commission in Ghana opened in 2004. However, the idea “did not get much traction”.<sup>164</sup>

This ‘new discourse about Africa’, the recognition that Africa’s economic growth was robust and supported by the global resources boom in which many Australian companies were active, made it easier for the Labor government to understand that a greater foreign policy engagement with Africa was beneficial for Australian interests, and push for deepening and widening that engagement. All the individuals interviewed for this thesis highlighted that Africa’s rise coupled with growing Australian resources investments on the continent had an enabling property for greater foreign policy engagement with Africa. The Howard government in its last few years may have started to recognize the importance of these factors, but it was the Rudd government that moved quickly and proactively in utilizing them to enact a changing foreign policy engagement with African states.

The interconnectedness and relevance of all of these factors for Australia’s engagement with Africa was perhaps best summarized by a senior Australian diplomat and one of Kevin Rudd’s foreign affairs advisers, who observed that in addition to Australia’s UNSC membership bid, two key dynamics driving the country’s growing engagement with Africa during the Labor years were the “phenomenal” growth of Australian mining interests on the continent, and “the dynamic of reform within Africa itself”. This diplomat was also deployed to the Australian High Commission in South Africa during the Howard government’s last term and argued that by that time Australian commercial interests in Africa were “front and centre, the most important thing in the relations between Australia and Africa”.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 8 April 2014.

<sup>164</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 15 October 2014.

<sup>165</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 November 2014.

In addition to the real and tangible Australian commercial interests in Africa, what also made it easier for the ALP government to change the course of Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was the global narrative of Africa's rise which focused more on opportunities and positives, than challenges and negatives. As Rudd's adviser argued, in the past "anytime we wanted to move forward [on Africa] somebody would write something in the newspaper saying what a terrible human rights record this range of countries had, or how none of them were governed democratically, or how there were all these military people there, or how corruption was hopelessly endemic." But the reforms within Africa, Australian interests there, and the changed global narrative about the continent all "made it easier to promote Africa" during the Labor years.<sup>166</sup>

### The end of the global resources boom and the Abbott government's engagement with Africa

The global resources boom came to an end in the second half of 2014. The prices of fuel and metals decreased significantly, with oil prices declining by 57% between June 2014 and January 2015, and iron ore prices by 37% in the same period (WB 2015, 5). Given that so much of Australia's commercial engagement with Africa from the mid-2000s was driven by the booming demand for global resources and Australian resources companies' investments in Africa, one could argue that in the absence of that demand Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was bound to experience a diminishing intensity. This by itself would help explain why the Abbott government changed tack on engagement with Africa. If, as Alexander Downer argued (discussed in chapter 2), contextual factors dictate the direction of foreign policy with agency playing no role, then the end of the global resources boom which drove most of Australia's commercial interests in Africa would automatically result in a change in foreign policy.

There are two points to be made here: firstly, while the resources boom may have come to an end in mid to late 2014, Africa's economic rise did not; and secondly and more importantly, the Abbott government's changing attitude towards foreign policy engagement with Africa actually preceded the ending of the global resources boom, and so could not have been driven by it.

As a number of publications on Africa's economic development have made clear, the ending of the booming commodities cycle has and will contribute to economic

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<sup>166</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 November 2014.



slowdown, but will not necessarily end the continent's economic growth.<sup>167</sup> Yes, the economies of Angola, Nigeria, and Mozambique were growing primarily because of natural resources, but the economies of Rwanda and Ethiopia were not (Noman and Stiglitz 2015, 1). Back in 2010, the McKinsey report made clear that Africa's economic growth was based on more than just resources, noting that natural resources directly accounted for around 24% of Africa's GDP growth between 2000 and 2008, and concluding that

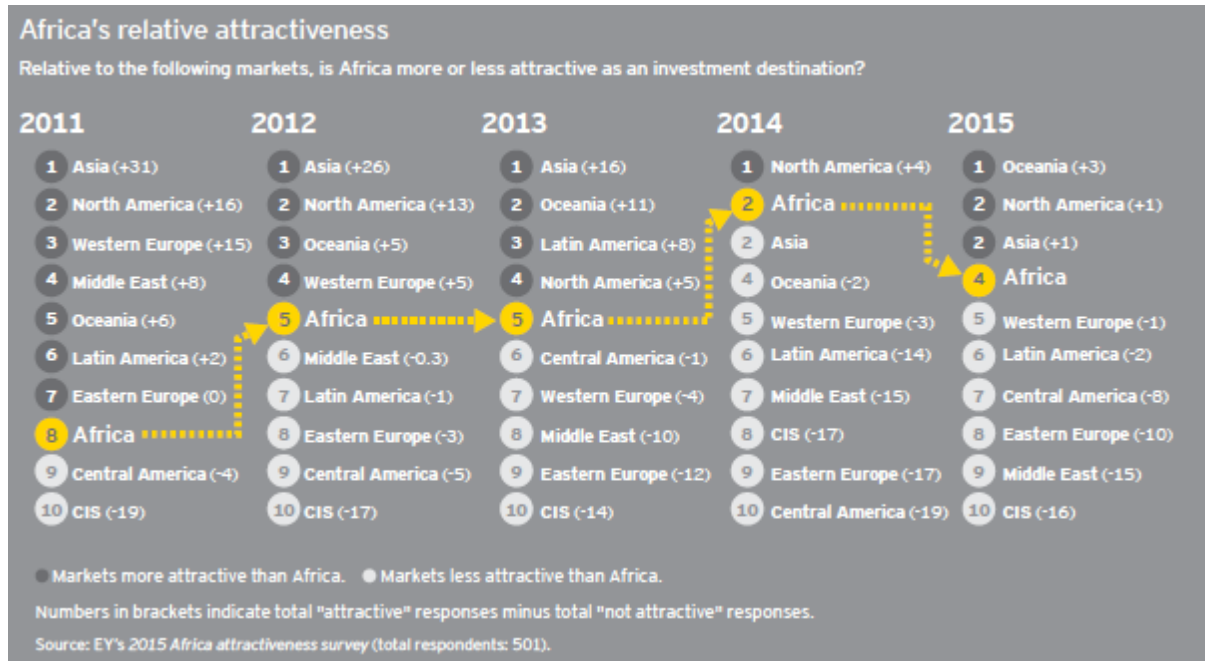
The key reasons behind Africa's growth surge were improved political and macroeconomic stability and microeconomic reforms. To start several African countries halted their deadly hostilities, creating the political stability necessary to foster economic growth. Next, Africa's economies grew healthier as governments lowered inflation, trimmed their foreign debt, and shrunk their budget deficits. Finally, African governments increasingly adopted policies to energize markets. They privatized state-owned enterprises, reduced trade barriers, cut corporate taxes, and strengthened regulatory and legal systems (Roxburgh et al. 2010, 2).

The World Bank has argued that SSA's GDP growth while affected by the end of the global resources boom, was still 4.2% in 2013, 4.5% in 2014, and forecast to rise above that by 2017 (WB 2015, 4, 9). Ernst and Young in its 2014 *Africa Attractiveness Survey* highlighted that notwithstanding the global slowdown in the demand for commodities there was a dramatic improvement in investor perceptions of Africa as a business and investment destination (EY 2014, 6). In 2011 Africa was ranked eighth in attractiveness as an investment destination, climbing to fifth place in 2012 and 2013, coming second to only North America (and on par with Asia) in 2014, before falling to fourth place in 2015 (Figure 19).

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<sup>167</sup> For an example of a debate on whether Africa is genuinely 'rising' in absence of greater industrialization, and based only on trade in commodities see Rowden 2013, and Robertson and Moran 2013.

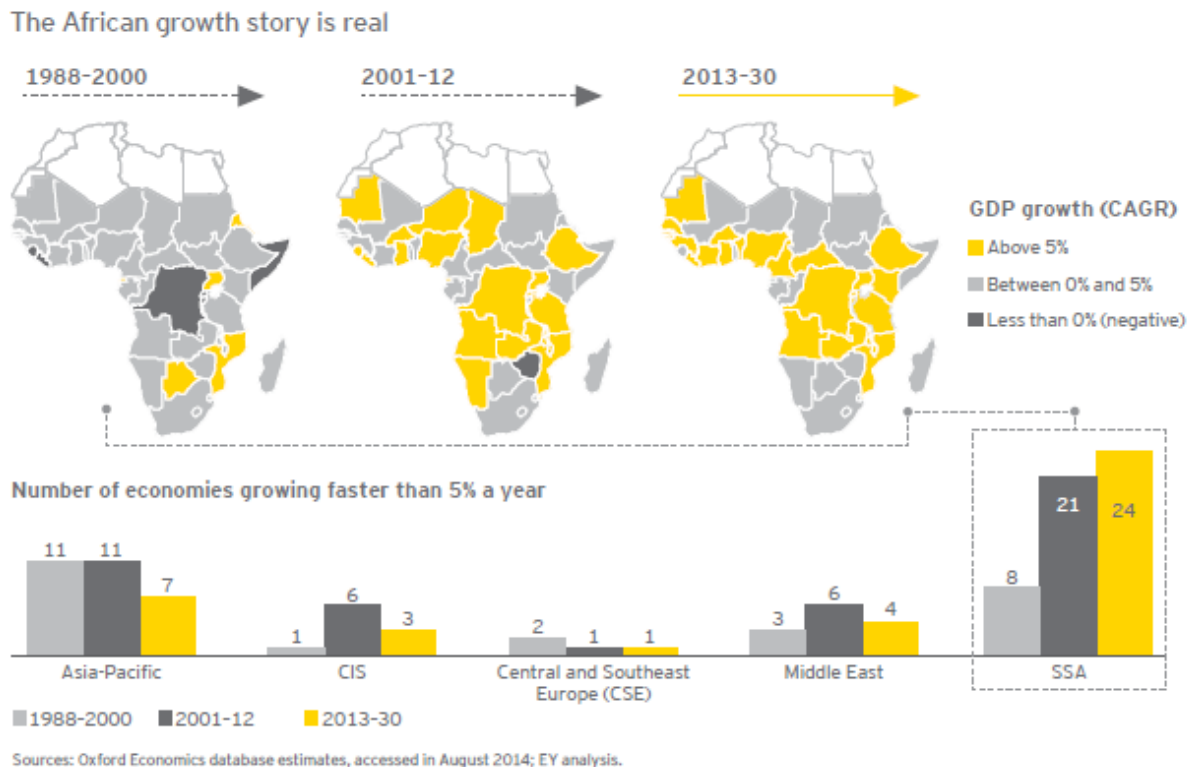
**Figure 19. Africa's relative attractiveness as an investment destination 2011-2015.**



Source: EY 2015, 29.

Although coming from a low base, compared to other areas of the world, Africa's economic growth has been remarkable over the past decade, and as Figure 20 highlights, that growth is forecast to stay strong in the foreseeable future.

**Figure 20. SSA's GDP growth, historical and future projected, 1988-2030.**



Source: EY 2015, 39.

However, one could argue that whether Africa's economic rise was over or not mattered less for Australian foreign policy engagement than whether the global resources boom was over, because most of the country's commercial engagement with African states was driven by the demand for commodities. Here the evidence for a diminishing Australian investment presence in Africa is far from clear. Certainly many resources companies would have suffered because of the downturn in global demand for resources, but it is unclear how significant the drop in overall numbers of Australian companies operating across Africa had been in 2014 and 2015. As the CEO of AusTrade, Bruce Gosper (2014), made clear in his address to the Mining Indaba conference several months after Abbott's Coalition formed government in September 2013, there were still over 200 ASX listed resources companies operating over 700 projects in around 40 African countries, with the current and potential investment value estimated at more than AUD 40 billion. And Foreign Minister Julie Bishop herself made clear in speeches delivered at Africa Day celebrations in May 2015 as well as the 2015 ADU conference, that Australian companies were still highly active in operating across Africa, again quoting some 200 Australian companies operating over 700

projects in around 40 countries with the value of such investments in the “order of tens of billions of dollars” (Bishop 2015d, f). DFAT estimates from October 2015 put the value of these investments at around AUD 30 billion.<sup>168</sup>

It is reasonable to suggest that many small and medium sized Australian resources companies operating across Africa would have experienced significant financial troubles due to the decrease in commodity prices from mid to late 2014 onwards. But the point is that by that time the Abbott government was in office for almost a year, and had already undertaken clear actions which did not correlate with its rhetoric of supporting economic engagement with Africa. While the government was still aware of the significant volume of Australian commercial interests in Africa, even before entering office in September 2013 it abandoned the planned opening of a first ever Australian embassy in Senegal, and then proceeded to successively cut Australia’s aid to Africa. And even if the argument for cuts to the Africa aid budget and opening of a new diplomatic post in Senegal centred on the ‘budget emergency’ and lack of funding inherited from the Labor government, when it did find extra funds in its second budget in 2015, the Abbott government announced the opening of five new diplomatic posts, none of which was in Africa.

Given that by 2015 it was still unclear how much the global slowdown in the demand for resources had actually affected Australian commercial interests in Africa, an examination of *only* contextual factors will not offer clear answers as to why the Abbott government appeared determined to change the nature and intensity of Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa.

### **VI.III Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the contextual factors that have underpinned Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015, and highlighted their salience in helping explain the changing nature of that engagement.

The first highly salient contextual factor which helps explain the changing nature of this engagement in the early 1990s has been termed the ‘Decline of Africa’. There were several issues that fed into this factor, but the most important one was the end of the Cold War and apartheid in South Africa. The end of the Cold War contributed to the global deflation of interest in Africa, and also impacted the dismantling of apartheid in

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<sup>168</sup> Discussion with senior DFAT official, Melbourne, 29 October 2015.

South Africa. Given that Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was since at least the early 1970s dominated by the anti-apartheid struggle in Southern Africa, the ultimate demise of apartheid in South Africa favoured a recalibration in its nature and intensity. Once the apartheid 'problem' was solved, and given the economic woes and military conflicts troubling many African countries coupled with the Keating government's dominant focus on regional engagement, Australia's foreign policy engagement with African issues did not receive the same kind of policy focus exhibited through the 1970s and 80s. Within this context, the Howard Coalition was elected to power in early 1996, and for the remainder of the 1990s exhibited an unambiguous lack of interest in African engagement. Part of that lack of interest was motivated by the contextual setting it found itself in, while as the following chapter will make clear, the other part was motivated by the Howard government's own agency.

The second highly salient contextual factor helping underpin change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa was termed the 'Rise of Africa'. The enduring macroeconomic and political stability experienced by much of the continent since the turn of the millennium coupled with stable economic growth over the 2000s gave rise to a changing global discourse on Africa in the late 2000s. As section two has argued, this discourse was very Afro-optimist in highlighting the economic development of the continent and its increasing appeal as an investment and commercial destination, and contributed to the narrative of a rising Africa. Africa's rise was partially driven by the increasing demand for global resources (particularly minerals and oil) from 2003 onwards. This global resources boom placed Africa on the operational maps of an increasingly growing number of Australian resource companies, who became more active in doing business across the continent, as well as lobbying the Australian government to support their commercial operations.

Within this context, Australia's engagement with Africa experienced slight changes in the mid-2000s, and then significant changes from 2007 onwards. The Howard government from 2004 reacted to the growth of Australian interests on the continent primarily through an opening of diplomatic posts in Ghana and Libya, but outside that still exhibited its 'trademark' lack of interest in African issues. On the other hand, after winning the 2007 federal election, the Labor government moved relatively quickly and proactively to support Australian commercial interests across Africa, but also enhance what were perceived as neglected ties with African states. The contextual factor of the 'Rise of Africa' made it easier for the Labor governments between 2007 and 2013 to

conceptualize and justify foreign policy engagement with Africa beyond just development cooperation (although that was still a major part of the engagement), also embracing the overarching global Afro-optimist narrative.

The chapter also analysed how this second contextual factor may have underpinned engagement with Africa during the Abbott Coalition government between 2013 and 2015. The argument was made that although certainly moving downhill, it was only unambiguously evident that the global demand for resources ‘collapsed’ almost a year into the Abbott government. However, even in the face of such a significant downturn in demand for global resources, the foreign policy speeches delivered by the Abbott government highlighted the enduring strength of Australian commercial interests in the resources sector across Africa, making the extent of the deterioration in Australian commercial operations and investments across Africa unclear. On the other hand, regardless of the fortunes of the resources sector, Africa throughout the Abbott period still featured as a significantly appealing business destination experiencing a steady economic growth, and the wider global narrative surrounding the continent was still one of a ‘rising Africa’.

Hence, introducing the subsequent chapter, this discussion of the Abbott government’s engagement with Africa has aptly highlighted why contextual factors *underpin* but do not necessarily *affect* change in foreign policy engagement. Simply put, contextual factors offer policymakers an unevenly contoured context within which to make decisions, and one which may be more favourable to a certain course of action. But context alone does not *determine* foreign policy decisions and outcomes. Hence, examining contextual factors alone cannot offer comprehensive and satisfactory answers as to why the Abbott government maintained a rhetoric of interest in economic engagement with Africa, while at the same time undertaking actions which indicated a lack of practical support for those interests. In order to understand these inconsistencies between rhetoric and action, it is necessary to analyse how the agency of those tasked with formulating Australian foreign policy has influenced and driven changes in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa. This is the task of the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER VII: Agential factors affecting change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa**

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse how agential factors have driven and affected change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. As explained in chapter 2, agential factors refer to the conduct of actors directly involved in policy-making, implying that it is their behaviour, conduct, and agency "that is responsible for the effects and outcomes" we are analysing (Hay 2002, 98). In the present case, Australia's key foreign policy-makers have navigated the unevenly biased contextual setting they encountered upon securing political office, and made decisions which directly determined change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa.

In examining the agential (cognitive and policy-making) factors, this chapter will discuss the interconnectedness of Australian political party foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers in affecting foreign policy change. It will highlight how foreign policy outlooks frame politicians' thinking about Australia's place in the world, and how such thinking, as espoused in relevant foreign policy documents and speeches, in turn supports and perpetuates foreign policy outlooks. In that sense, the two are mutually reinforcing: Australia's key decision-makers use their party's foreign policy outlooks to frame and justify their foreign policy direction and priorities, thereby also creating traditions of foreign policy outlooks which are in turn invoked by future decision-makers in justifying their own foreign policy direction.

The chapter is structured in two main sections. The first examines the foreign policy outlooks of Australia's two main political forces (LNP Coalition and ALP) and their conceptualizations of Australia's place in the world. This section also discusses the idea of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy suggesting that partisan differences affecting the direction of the country's foreign policy are perceivable on the margins of the foreign policy agenda, as is evidenced by the present study.

The second section discusses the relevance of key decision-makers and their conceptualization of Australia's place in the world for the study of change in foreign policy. It examines the interplay between political party foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers in affecting foreign policy change. It does this by discussing key Coalition and ALP foreign policy documents written between 1996 and 2015 which offer an overarching conceptualization of foreign policy direction and focus, and foreign



policy speeches from the same time which are an expression of how individual decision-makers interpret, adhere to, and justify such conceptualizations.

The last part of this section offers an examination of the relevant personal idiosyncratic factors which may have served to influence foreign policy engagement with Africa. As outlined in the introduction, there are significant methodological issues related to the study of individual decision-makers which highlight the difficulties in studying and relying on individual idiosyncrasies as an explanans of foreign policy decision-making. Such factors are difficult to use as a base for theorizing the importance of individual decision-makers in driving change in foreign policy because they are random and individualistic. However, just because individual idiosyncrasies are difficult to theorize does not make them irrelevant in determining foreign policy change. The importance of such factors for explaining change in foreign policy is well established within the field of FPA, and has over the years contributed significantly to our understanding of how relevant personalities can impact foreign policy decisions.

## **VII.I Foreign policy outlooks and Australia's place in the world**

The importance of political parties in driving foreign policy will depend on many factors, most obviously, the nature of a country's political system. In some multiparty democratic political systems, several parties band together to form coalition governments (e.g. Israel or the Netherlands), and in such a case, foreign policy formulation could depend on negotiating (at times difficult) compromises. On the other hand, in Westminster style (two party) political systems (e.g. UK and Australia) such compromises on foreign policy rarely happen, and the party that wins office is for the most part free to implement its own foreign policy outlook and agenda.

In Australia's political system, the ALP and the LNP Coalition are the two main political forces and both are fond of promoting their distinct foreign policy outlooks. Although foreign policy achievements are built on the work of successive governments, differing foreign policy outlooks can, and do, affect foreign policy decisions. As noted in chapter 2, the purpose of a foreign policy outlook is to offer a vision for the country's place and role in the world. As one commentator has observed, how states imagine themselves, and how others perceive that imagining influences the making of foreign policy (Patience 2014, 211).

Both the ALP and Coalition claim to embody differing understandings of Australia's place in the world, and differing approaches to advancing that status (Baldino, Carr, and Langlois 2014, 19-38). These outlooks can be considered traditions and 'myths' based on the foreign policy behaviour of previous party officials in government (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 150). However mythical they may be, given that the two major parties employ similar means in the pursuit of often bipartisan foreign policy objectives, they can be highly salient determinants of foreign policy behaviour. As this section will argue, the foreign policy outlooks of particular Australian governments, as based on the traditions or 'myths' about their political parties' distinct understanding of Australia's place in the world, have been salient in affecting a changing engagement with the African continent. Simply put, these foreign policy outlooks *as interpreted* by key decision-makers have provided a frame of reference for how and why such changes would take place.

Foreign policy outlooks in Australia have been profoundly shaped by key decision-makers, such as foreign and prime ministers, with the latter holding primary significance. While there may be disagreements between foreign and prime ministers on issues of specific policy decisions, usually the overall direction of policy is determined by the prime minister.<sup>169</sup> As Evans and Grant (1995, 47) have argued, "Australian prime ministers have almost invariably taken a major personal interest in foreign affairs", and "foreign ministers no less than any other ministers take their cue from the prime minister of the day". There is a clear hierarchy in which prime ministers set the tone their ministers are expected to follow. As former Foreign Minister Gareth Evans argued in an interview for this thesis, "when in doubt in making judgements about why political things get done, you don't usually have to look much farther than who is in charge and explanations at the top".<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> One high-profile example of differences on specific policy positions in the time period under review is the difference between Labor's Prime Minister Gillard and Foreign Minister Carr over a November 2012 vote to accord Palestine 'observer status' at the UN. As Gillard makes clear in her autobiography, she was in favour of a 'no' vote, while Carr strongly disagreed, favouring an abstention. In an unusual move, the disagreement was brought before Cabinet which agreed with Carr and Australia abstained from voting. However, this was an exception which proved the rule that prime ministers have the final say in foreign policy decisions. As Gillard made clear, "on significant and sensitive issues", foreign policy decisions are made by the prime minister. See Gillard 2014, 209; Carr, Bob 2014, 231-241, or Coorey 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015. Evans made this point specifically with regards to a question about potential disagreements between Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, and her Prime Minister Tony Abbott on the direction and shape of Australia's foreign policy during the Abbott government.

## VII. I.I The Coalition foreign policy outlook

The conservative side of Australian politics has generally subscribed to a set of ideas about Australia's place in the world broadly described as 'traditionalism'. As Wesley and Warren (2000, 13) have argued, this traditionalism refers to a realist and liberal understanding of international relations, which results in an emphasis on the maximization of the country's power through the maintenance of close ties with culturally, linguistically, and politically similar 'great and powerful friends'.<sup>171</sup> As a result, while there have been slight changes over the past half century, the Coalition's foreign policy outlook is focused more strongly on regional issues, conceiving of Australia as a significant regional power concerned with fostering traditional partnerships with key allies, and preferring bilateral management of foreign affairs (Ravenhill 1998, 321).<sup>172</sup>

Modern foundations of the conservative foreign policy outlook were set during the long reign of Prime Minister Robert Menzies (1949-1966). While there were disagreements between Menzies and his ministers over the direction of the country's foreign policy, Menzies was still the central figure determining its shape and focus. For example, there were disagreements between Menzies and his colleagues over foreign policy and trade issues in the early 1960s, but the prime minister remained the "key figure" for making foreign policy decisions and shaping Australian public opinion on foreign policy matters (Goldsworthy 2002, 128, 134-138, 145-150). Similarly, Alan Watt (1968, 302-303) has argued that between 1956 and Menzies' retirement in 1966, the country's foreign policy was "predominantly that of the Australian Prime Minister", an issue particularly evident during the 1956 Suez crisis which betrayed Menzies' hold over Australian foreign policy. As Watt (1968, 303) noted, Menzies' support for the UK's "disastrous policy" of invading the Suez was "unsuccessfully opposed in cabinet" by Australia's External Affairs Minister R. G. Casey, concluding that the overall "rigidity" of Australian foreign policy in this decade should be primarily ascribed to the personality and outlook of the prime minister.

Robert Menzies viewed international politics through the prism of the conflict between global communism and the West, and argued that in order to meet this existential threat,

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<sup>171</sup> See also Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 11. For Robert Menzies' reference to "great and powerful friends" see Menzies 1970, 44.

<sup>172</sup> As the former adviser to Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, and minister in Tony Abbott's government, Josh Frydenberg (2014, 21-28) argued, the Liberal tradition in foreign policy is centred on three themes: maintenance of the US alliance, regionalism, and pragmatism and bilateralism.

Australia should rely on its traditional alliances, and “the central themes of Australian foreign policy should be support and loyalty to the great protectors” (Ungerer 2007, 543). As Carl Ungerer (2007, 543) has argued “Menzie’s was not an advocate of a particularly activist or independent role for Australia in world affairs”, and many of his Coalition ministers shared such views.<sup>173</sup>

The criticism raised by the Menzie’s-led opposition at the post-World War II Australian Labor government highlights examples of the conservative approach to foreign policy. Menzie’s party often criticized the ALP government for “‘meddling’ in international relations, instead of obeying the dictates of ‘real power’”, and often made disparaging remarks about the ALP’s devotion to internationalism and the ‘experimental’ UN system (Lowe 1997, 63-66; Menzie’s 1946b). In February 1949, the Coalition’s Percy Spender labelled Labor’s then External Affairs Minister Herbert Evatt “an internationalist, not an Australian”, arguing that he was leading the country along a dangerous path of internationalism, sacrificing Australia’s vital interests (Lowe 1997, 66; Spender 1949).

The underlying theme of conservative critiques of Australian foreign policy during those years was one of ‘theory’ versus ‘reality’, highlighting the ALP government’s meddling in international affairs by toying with “theory and procedure”, and “ignoring the realities of the distribution of power” (Lowe 1997, 68; McEwen 1946; Menzie’s 1946a). A good indication of the Coalition’s understanding of the ‘reality’ of international affairs was well articulated during the early 1960s by External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck who argued that “...anyone engaged in foreign affairs must recognize and study the facts of power and also recognize the reality of power politics. We might like it otherwise but we cannot ignore the fact” (quoted in Harper and Greenwood 1968, 33).

Perhaps the clearest and most succinct expression of what would become the Coalition’s preference for bilateralism in foreign affairs was delivered by Robert Menzie’s in his June 1950 *Roy Milne Lecture*. Menzie’s expressed criticism of the UN and the ALP’s ‘outsourcing’ of foreign policy to it, observing the necessity for realist thinking in informing Australia’s engagement with a world still in need of the British Empire restraining other great powers (Menzie’s 1950). Because of his “intellectual distrust of paper constitutions and international organizations such as the United

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<sup>173</sup> For views similar to those of Menzie’s see Casey 1954.

Nations, and his instinctive leaning towards ‘great and powerful friends’”, bilateralism was a natural preference for Menzies’ management of foreign affairs (Watt 1968, 307).

By framing its own foreign policy agenda as more endowed with realism and pragmatism than that of Labor, Menzies’ Coalition set the foundations of its foreign policy outlook still invoked by Coalition politicians today. As the following discussion will make clear, both John Howard and Alexander Downer made repeated reference to their government’s pragmatic and realistic view of the world, and one which preferred bilateral management of foreign affairs. Just like Menzies, Howard was the central figure of Australian foreign policy during his time in power, with some arguing that “even though much of the substance of Howard government foreign policy” was carried out by Foreign Minister Downer, “the Prime Minister’s influence on the conceptual approach to conducting Australian diplomacy” was overwhelming (Wesley 2007, 27, 33). Howard particularly favoured bilateralism not only as a means of foreign policy, but as Michael Wesley (2007, 42) argued, as an “expression of a philosophy and approach to governing” which was deeply rooted in his perception of an “uncertain and messy” world.<sup>174</sup> Tony Abbott’s Parliamentary Secretary and later Assistant Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg (2014), flagged this preference for bilateralism as a key plank of the Liberal tradition in foreign policy.

## **VII.I.II The ALP foreign policy outlook**

Since Herbert Evatt’s proactive role in developing the UN at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, Labor’s approach to foreign policy has traditionally conceptualized Australia’s place in the world as that of an active middle power, keen on utilizing multilateral architectures, and looking beyond just the immediate region for foreign policy engagement and relationships (Evans 1997, 18; Cotton and Ravenhill 2011, 1-2; Whitlam 1961; Hasluck 1980, 207-217).<sup>175</sup> As a result of this foreign policy outlook, Labor governments tend to label themselves as ‘good international citizens’ who see a place for values in foreign policy as well as self-interest, focusing on creative and proactive foreign policy thinking that seeks to lead where possible, rather than simply

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<sup>174</sup> See Howard 2004; also Wesley 2009, 339.

<sup>175</sup> Some have suggested that the first description of Australia as a middle power was by the Coalition’s External Affairs Minister Garfield Barwick in 1964 (Wesley 2009, 335). However, a search of Australian Parliament Hansard archives places the first reference to ‘middle power’ in 1950, and made by Labor’s Kim Beazley in criticizing the Menzies government for rejecting to label Australia as a middle power when in opposition. Hence, the description of Australia as a middle power was well known by at least 1950; see Beazley 1950. Herbert Evatt (1947) made implicit references to Australia’s middle power status in parliamentary speeches in 1947.

follow global trends or the desires of great powers (Evans 1997, 18; Wesley and Warren 2000, 19; Ravenhill 1998, 321; Evans and Grant 1995, 34-35; Parke and Langmore 2014).

However, Carl Ungerer (2007, 551) has suggested that regardless of its political 'ownership', "Australian governments since the mid-1940s have at various times and to varying degrees supported the notion of Australia as a middle power", and "it has been one of the most enduring themes in Australian foreign policy discourse for over sixty years". Ungerer (2007, 540, 550) further noted that "Australia's self-identification as a middle power has been one of the strongest influences on the form and conduct of Australian diplomatic practice" and "the middle power concept is perhaps the closest that Australia has ever come to articulating a self-conscious theory of foreign policy".<sup>176</sup>

Ungerer's point about Australia's identification with middle power status during much of its post-World War II history is evident with regards to the country's activity in the Commonwealth. As observed in the discussion about Australia's engagement with Africa during the prime ministerships of Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, and to an extent Paul Keating, the Commonwealth has served Australia as a key forum through which its middle power credentials were accentuated, and the country's international reputation was enhanced. Even Prime Minister John Howard, who at least rhetorically rejected Australia's middle power status, experienced his most prominent engagement with African issues through Australia's engagement with the Commonwealth.

Given the perceived centrality of the middle power concept in Australia's foreign policy discourse, it is worth briefly reviewing some of its key pillars. As Robert Cox (1989, 827) once observed, a middle power is perhaps best understood as "a role in search of an actor". Such a view is complemented by a significant amount of literature which has over the years critically interrogated the concept in the hope of developing an analytically robust understanding (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal 1994; Ravenhill 1998; Chapnick 1999; Jordaan 2003; Ungerer 2007; Beeson 2011, Sussex 2011; Carr 2014; Patience 2014).

The concept of 'middle powers' has been fraught with definitional problems. As Mark Beeson (2011, 539) noted

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<sup>176</sup> Looking even beyond Australia, Patience (2014, 215) has noted that for some countries, the idea of the middle power has become "an ideology of foreign policy".



‘Middle power’ is not an entirely happy formulation. Like ‘globalisation’ it can obscure as much as it reveals, but like globalisation it can stand as a useful shorthand for a more complex reality. In the case of middle powers, the term refers to a diverse group of states that are neither ‘great’ nor failing, but which occupy a conceptual territory between these extremes, and which are taken to have broadly similar material attributes.

The traditional approach to identifying middle powers has been through the use of quantifiable factors and physical criteria such as geography, population, and economic and military power (Carr 2014, 71-72). However, although such parameters are relatively easy to develop, this approach appears to be out of analytical favour as it has “proved to be of almost no value in predicting or explaining the behaviour of those states classed as middle powers” (Ravenhill 1998, 325).

Eschewing such emphases on material attributes, some of the most prominent work on middle powers sought a definition in behavioural terms. Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal (1994, 19) attempted to identify middle powers by focusing on “their tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, their tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and their tendency to embrace notions of “good international citizenship” to guide their diplomacy”. Building on this, John Ravenhill (1998, 310) argued that “a definition of middle power status can be encapsulated in five ‘Cs’: capacity, concentration, creativity, coalition-building, and credibility”. Hence, the best way of understanding and spotting middle powers is by looking at what they do. This, however, can lead to something of a tautology: “a middle power is just a state that acts like a middle power” (Ungerer 2008, 265; Chapnick 1999, 76; Jordaan 2003, 166).

Related to this behavioural approach is also the idea of a typology of middle powers. Eduard Jordaan (2003) has contributed to this discussion by arguing for a further differentiation between traditional and emerging middle powers, the former coming largely from the developed world, the latter from the developing. However, this has been criticized as further weakening the meaning of the term, with some arguing that

If middle power status means different things for countries of different cultural or economic perspectives, then the term would be of little merit. While there is a need to give greater scope to non-Western middle power states, the move to include additional qualifiers so as to sustain the behavioural definition of middle powers can be taken as clear evidence of the limitations of the behavioural approach (Carr 2014, 75).



A third approach to identifying middle power has been dubbed the ‘identity approach’ which argues that “middle power status is best understood as a deliberately constructed ‘political category’, developed by policymakers” (Carr 2014, 75-76).<sup>177</sup> This has been taken seriously by some scholars in their study of a country’s foreign policy behaviour specifically because the government of the day framed its foreign policy as that of a middle power (Beeson 2011, 565).

Although Australian foreign policy-makers such as Herbert Evatt, Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, and Gareth Evans periodically invoked Australia’s status as a middle power, such conceptualizations of Australia’s place in the world were rare during the Menzies era, or abandoned altogether during the Howard years.<sup>178</sup> The Howard government made a point of distancing itself from the middle power conceptualization and specifically its ‘reverence’ of multilateralism and language of ‘good international citizenship’ (Ungerer 2007, 548-549; Goldsworthy 2001). The problem with this third approach to identifying middle powers, and leading into the following discussion of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy is the issue of whether a country stops being a middle power when its government stops identifying with the term.

### **VI.I.III Degrees of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy**

The academic debate on bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy ran its most prominent course in the 1980s, with the last substantial contribution by Matthews and Ravenhill (1988, 19) concluding that any general statements on bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy “are obviously misleading”. Notwithstanding such cautions, and given the obvious continuity in many aspects of Australia’s relations with the world, it is difficult to fight the notion that the country does indeed, at least to some extent and on certain issues, enjoy a bipartisan foreign policy.<sup>179</sup> As classical writing on political parties and especially two-party political systems has made clear, in order to secure electoral success, major parties will “agree on any issues that a majority of citizens strongly favour”, thereby becoming “catch-all parties” who pursue “votes at the

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<sup>177</sup> Andrew Carr (2014, 79) also offers a fourth approach to defining middle powers; the “systemic impact” approach. This approach “defines middle powers through their ability to alter or affect specific elements of the international system”. While this approach is appealing and perhaps further work might strengthen its analytical robustness, it still appears to focus on quantifiable material factors such as military spending, or the capacity, creativity, coalition-building, and credibility of states. It therefore appears to be a blend of the already existing approaches to the definition of middle powers.

<sup>178</sup> External Affairs Minister Garfield Barwick did refer to Australia as a middle power at least once, but this was not a popular conceptualization of Australia during the Menzies era; see Barwick 1964.

<sup>179</sup> As a rare survey of DFAT staff perceptions about Australian foreign policy highlighted in the early 2000s, out of 242 respondents to the question “Is Australian foreign policy essentially bipartisan?”, some 75% answered yes; see Gynge and Wesley 2007, 315.

expense of ideology”, trying to appeal to an ever wider audience (Downs 1957, 297; Kirchheimer 1966, Williams 2009, 539). This process decreases any distinguishable policy difference between the major parties, relegating such differences mainly to the periphery of their political agendas.

Such ideas about political parties offer a good background to better understanding bipartisanship in Australia’s foreign policy. Both the ALP and Coalition espouse different foreign policy traditions and ideas about Australia’s place in the world, and have utilized them in constructing distinct foreign policy outlooks. However, these foreign policy outlooks do not necessarily exclude similar means of satisfying often similar foreign policy goals, and notwithstanding differing foreign policy outlooks, the structure of international politics and security/economic interdependencies, and the ‘demands of office’ and ‘administrative reality’, imply a certain degree of bipartisanship in foreign policy (Millar 1985, 2; Mathews and Ravenhill 1988, 10).

Several scholars have observed that foreign policy outlooks mostly serve the purpose of party differentiation for electoral purposes, and that in (at least) its main contours Australia’s foreign policy is largely bipartisan (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 150; Albinski 1977, 35). Even Australia’s Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke announced that Australia in fact enjoyed a bipartisan foreign policy (Whitlam quoted in Albinski 1977, 338; Hawke quoted in Mathews and Ravenhill 1988, 11). Kevin Rudd, acting as the ALP’s shadow minister for foreign affairs in 2004, argued that

During the quarter century from the election of the Whitlam Government to the election of the Howard Government, a broad consensus was achieved on the enduring themes of Australia’s foreign policy engagement: our alliance with the US; strong participation in the multilateral system; and a strengthened relationship with our nearest neighbours in Asia and the Pacific. Foreign policy differences tended to be those of nuance, emphasis and tone rather than fundamental policy divergence (ALP 2004, 3).

Writing about Australia’s external policy under Labor in the late 1970s, Henry Albinski (1977, 351) argued that under the Whitlam government there were “real shifts of emphasis in both substance and style from what had been done under L-CP [Liberal Country Party] governments, but continuity was preserved in the basic outlines of Australia’s external policy”. Discussing the same time period, Hedley Bull (1975, 34) noted that “in its perception of our interests and obligations in the world the Labor Government has not made any sharp break with its [LNP] predecessors”. Similarly, discussing the Hawke Labor government in the mid-1980s, T.B. Millar (1985, 14, 15)

could not observe “significant differences” in Labor’s foreign policies as compared to Malcolm Fraser’s Coalition government, arguing that there was an “emerging national bipartisanship” in Australian foreign policy. Even more recent examinations of Australian foreign policy, focusing on the Rudd Labor government’s creative middle power diplomacy, have noted that there “could be little argument” that both ALP and Coalition governments employed multilateral and bilateral means of advancing a bipartisan set of trade and security relationships with a focus on Asian engagement (Sussex 2011, 549).

Given the structure of Australia’s political system and how its two main ‘catch-all’ political parties operate, it can be suggested that Australian foreign policy has in some fundamental aspects enjoyed a high degree of bipartisanship, regardless of how it is defined.<sup>180</sup> This much was reiterated by McDonald (2015, 6) who noted that Australian “foreign policy is more readily characterised by continuity than change, particularly on key issues”. Regardless of their political rhetoric and adherence to distinct foreign policy outlooks, both of Australia’s major political parties accept the same fundamental pillars of the country’s engagement with the world. Both the ALP and Coalition are interested in greater engagement with the Asia-Pacific region; maintaining close ties with major economic and security partners such as the US, EU, China, Japan, Indonesia, and New Zealand; and focusing development cooperation largely on the immediate region and particularly Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands. Hence in its fundamentals (the relationships and issues that are perceived to be of primal and immediate economic and security importance for the country) Australian foreign policy does appear to exhibit a strong degree of bipartisanship overall.<sup>181</sup>

However, on the margins of Australia’s foreign policy agenda, dealing with issues and regions traditionally perceived to be of limited or minimal importance to the country’s economic and security well-being, there are visible partisan differences. As Martin Griffiths (2014, 12) has argued, there are “differences between the two main political parties” and they are “at the margins of foreign affairs”. In the context of the present study, and given Africa’s traditionally marginal status on Australia’s overall foreign policy agenda, such partisan differences are highly salient in explaining foreign policy change between 1996 and 2015.

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<sup>180</sup> For various definitions of bipartisanship see Matthews and Ravenhill 1988, 9-12.

<sup>181</sup> This bipartisanship on the fundamentals of Australian foreign policy has in the past six decades only been tested on issues regarding the country’s involvement in war; Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 150-151, McDonald 2013.

Views on bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy were challenged by Matthews and Ravenhill (1988, 12), who utilized a “survey of the attitudes of 200 Australian leaders towards foreign policy issues” conducted in late 1982 and early 1983, to argue that general statements about bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy can be misleading. Although their study highlighted some important issues, its major limitation was that it was based on a survey of opinions, and did not discuss actual foreign policies and actions taken on issues where personal opinion may have differed from the party’s officially articulated and enacted policy. Nevertheless, Matthews and Ravenhill’s study offers a good starting point for the present examination of partisanship in engagement with Africa. What the study made clear, and is still relevant almost three decades after, is that there are partisan differences on issues traditionally perceived as sitting at the periphery of Australia’s foreign policy agenda.

Matthews and Ravenhill found that on the issue of Australia’s bilateral relations, strong bipartisan support was found for relations with the US, China, Japan, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand. However, there were clear partisan differences on the issue of South Africa’s political importance for Australia. Furthermore, on the issue of the UN’s utility in resolving international and Pacific problems there was strong bipartisanship, while on the issue of the economic and political importance of the Commonwealth for Australia, or the OAU’s helpfulness in solving international problems there were again partisan differences. On the issues of North-South relations and humanitarian concerns (refugees and aid) there was broad bipartisan support, while on the question of race and whether for example, “race relations in Southern Africa were a problem affecting Australia’s vital interests”, there were partisan differences (1988, 12-17).

Keeping in mind the above outlined foreign policy outlooks according to which ALP governments should be more inclined than their Coalition counterparts towards multilateralism and foreign policy engagement outside the immediate region, the analysis of this survey highlights somewhat mixed results. For example, on the question of South Africa’s political importance for Australia, it was the ALP members of parliament (federal and state) who thought the country of less importance than their Coalition counterparts. On the question of the Commonwealth’s economic and political importance it was again ALP members of parliament who found it less important for Australia; but on the question of the OAU’s helpfulness in solving international problems, ALP members of parliament rated it as more helpful than their Coalition

counterparts. Finally, two thirds of ALP members of parliament agreed that race relations in South Africa were affecting Australia's vital interests, as compared to only one third of the Coalition's members of parliament.

Whether these results can be reconciled with proclaimed political party foreign policy outlooks is of secondary importance for present purposes. What they highlight is a snapshot of personal foreign policy preferences from a specific point in time by a wide array of state and federal members of parliament, and it needs hardly pointing out that such preferences are not immutable, and need not reflect the official party position.<sup>182</sup> After all, they would be influenced by a host of issues such as education, previous knowledge of foreign policy issues, personal preferences and values, etc.

Overall, the more important issue recognized by this study is that Australian foreign policy towards certain issues did (and still does) receive bipartisan support, while on others it didn't (and still doesn't). The differing foreign policy outlooks of Australia's two major political parties may indeed be nothing more than electoral differentiation myths, and as far as the core aspects and relationships of the country's foreign policy are concerned, when in government both parties exhibit a very similar foreign policy focus and direction. However, even such myths can be salient drivers of foreign policy change particularly on the margins of the foreign policy agenda, and if they are believed in, adhered to, and invoked by those in charge of formulating and justifying their country's foreign policy direction. As such, these foreign policy outlooks offer enough conceptual material for Australia's foreign policy-makers to construct their own terms of references about the country's place in the world, and how they should go about advancing it. As this study highlights, it is on the periphery of the Australian foreign policy agenda that such myths can be highly salient drivers of substantive change in foreign policy. As Hedley Bull (1975, 32) observed some four decades ago, a substantial difference between the Coalition and ALP's foreign policy outlook had been the latter's attempts to cultivate a special relationship with the countries of the Third World: "It is this aspect of the Labor Government's foreign policy which, more than any other, expresses the Labor Party's distinctive ideology and tradition, and which most divides it from the conservative Opposition".

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<sup>182</sup> As Mark Latham (2014, 55), a previous leader of the ALP has argued, "In understanding party politics, one should never underestimate the constant pressure to comply with the party line and uphold tribal solidarity".

## VII.II Key decision-makers and Australia's place in the world

The roles that foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers play in affecting change in Australian foreign policy are inextricably linked. As already noted in chapter 2 ideas about a country's place in the world are closely linked with what K.J. Holsti termed 'national role conceptions'. As Holsti (1970, 245-246) argued, a national role conception was based on policymakers' own definitions of actions suitable for their state (their place in the world), and role prescriptions coming from the state's environment (expectations of the role that state would play in the world). Since national role conceptions are *negotiated and imagined by relevant key decision-makers*, their agency does matter in affecting foreign policy change.<sup>183</sup>

There have been numerous studies of the impact of individual decision-makers on the direction and conduct of foreign policy. The field of FPA places individuals and the decision-making process at the heart of explanations of foreign policy behaviour (Hudson 2005, 2-3; Holsti 1995, Chapter 11). As Valerie Hudson (2005, 10) has argued "The mind of a foreign policy maker is not a tabula rasa: it contains complex and intricately related information and patterns, such as beliefs, attitudes, values, experiences, emotions, traits, style, memory, national, and self-conceptions". And Hudson and Vore (1995, 218) have further noted that "Under certain conditions—high stress, high uncertainty, dominant position in foreign policy decision making—the personal characteristics of the individual leader can become central in understanding foreign policy choice". Within this tradition, the discipline of Political Psychology has also provided many studies focusing on the role individual decision-makers play in foreign policy-making (Cottam et al. 2010).

In a study of why governments choose to change foreign policy direction, Charles Hermann (1990, 11) noted that major foreign policy change often occurs with a change in government accompanied by the appearance of new leaders, and that leader driven change "results from the determined efforts of an authoritative policy-maker, frequently the head of government, who imposes his own vision of the basic redirection necessary in foreign policy". In the Australian context, Gyngell and Wesley (2007, 84-93) have

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<sup>183</sup> Hans Morgenthau (1973, 104) put it succinctly: "For a nation pursues foreign policies as a legal organization called a state, *whose agents act as the representatives* of the nation in international affairs. They *speak for it*, negotiate treaties in its name, *define its objectives, choose the means for achieving them*, and try to maintain, increase, and demonstrate its power. They are the *individuals* who, when they appear as representatives of their nation on the international scene, wield the power and pursue the policies of their nation. *It is to them that we refer when we speak in empirical terms of the power and of the foreign policy of a nation* (emphasis added)."



highlighted the central role prime and foreign ministers play in the formulation of foreign policy (especially given the executive government's sole responsibility for foreign policy), while T.B. Millar (1969, 63) has argued that the personalities of such individuals do matter in foreign policy-making.

Hermann et al. (2001, 90) have argued that individual leadership matters for foreign policy-making, stating that while some "argue that domestic and international constraints are such that it is more parsimonious to leave leaders out of the explanatory equation altogether", and as scholars moved "to consider how domestic and international constraints can interact in shaping foreign policy in the so-called two-level game, they have reinserted the leader as the negotiator who manoeuvres the government and state toward some foreign policy action". Stemming from such views, there has been a number of studies examining individual personalities and leadership styles of those tasked with foreign policy-making (Hermann et al. 2001; Hermann 2001, Mintz and DeRouen 2010; Renshon and Renshon 2008; Cottam et al. 2010, particularly Chapter 5).

While it may be more parsimonious to leave out individual personalities from the study of foreign policy-making, it is still important to be aware of some relevant issues which can have a bearing on decision-making and the direction of a country's foreign policy. As the last discussion of this section will highlight, the idiosyncrasies related to the personalities of key decision-makers have to an extent been relevant factors influencing Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. This is not to suggest that some policy options would not have been adopted regardless of the person performing the role of key decision-maker, but that the interests and characteristics of relevant personalities have at times made a difference in the overall shape of foreign policy engagement with Africa. Given the often marginal focus and importance foreign policy towards Africa merits in Australia's overall foreign policy agenda, and the lack of strong economic, political, or security interdependencies dominating this policy space, the agency and personalities of such individual decision-makers can be a significant factor in influencing foreign policy.<sup>184</sup>

Given what has been stated about the primacy of both political party foreign policy outlooks and Australian prime ministers in the development of the country's foreign

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<sup>184</sup> This much has already been established by Jansen's study of Australia's foreign policy towards Africa with regards to Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser, but also to an extent by Osei-Amo's study which implicitly linked the two factors of foreign policy outlook and key decision-makers.



policy, it can be posited that if a foreign minister's personal foreign policy preferences are in conflict with their party's foreign policy outlooks or the preferences of their prime minister, it can be expected that the latter two would often prevail over the former in accounting for foreign policy behaviour. The relatively low profile of engagement with Africa on Australia's overall foreign policy agenda potentially allows Australian foreign ministers more leeway in developing policies they may personally prefer, but this can also mean they are unlikely to challenge the party position or the wishes of a prime minister over a policy space of seemingly so little importance.

## **VII.II.I The interplay between foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers**

### **VII.II.I.I The Coalition documents and speeches**

#### Policy documents: Realism, Regionalism, and Bilateralism

An examination of key Coalition foreign policy documents offers a good indication of how political party foreign policy outlooks are invoked to justify foreign policy direction, and how they in turn perpetuate and reinforce such outlooks. As the discussion below will suggest, the Howard government in its two major foreign policy documents invoked and reinforced an established Coalition foreign policy outlook that was again reinvoked by the Abbott-led Coalition in its pre-September 2013 federal election foreign affairs policy document.

In its first term in power, the Howard government published Australia's first ever foreign policy White Paper. Titled *In the National Interest* the document was indicative of the Coalition's heavy emphasis on the Menzies-influenced 'realist' tradition in foreign policy. It dispensed with the 'lofty' language of good international citizenship (not one reference to it in the whole document) that was a hallmark of Gareth Evans' reign as Labor's foreign minister in the early 1990s (Goldsworthy 2001, 10-13), and argued that Australian foreign policy was about "advancing the interests of Australia and Australians" through a clear understanding of the "national interest":

Preparing for the future is not a matter of grand constructs. It is about the hard-headed pursuit of the interests which lie at the core of foreign and trade policy: the security of the Australian nation and the jobs and standard of living of the Australian people. In all that it does in the field of foreign and trade policy, the Government will apply this basic test of national interest (DFAT 1997, iii).

The document was full of references to ‘realistic’, ‘practical’, and ‘hard-headed’ foreign policy which was in line with the Menzies-established foreign policy outlook that had been critical of the ALP’s internationalism, and accepting of a predetermined international order in which Australia would play its part, but not seek to challenge the status quo (DFAT 1997, iii, vi, 14). The document further invoked traditional Coalition foreign policy approaches by arguing that

A central feature of the Government’s approach to foreign and trade policy is the importance it places on bilateral relationships as a means of advancing Australian interests. Bilateral relationships are not an alternative to regional and global efforts. All three approaches must be deployed in an integrated and mutually supportive way. *The greater part of Australia’s international efforts is, however, bilateral, and bilateral relationships are the basic building block for effective regional and global strategies.* Further developing important established bilateral relationships, carefully nurturing newer relationships which engage key Australian interests, and expanding others which offer opportunities for Australia will be the core part of the Government’s diplomatic activity (emphasis added) (DFAT 1997, iii).

This heavy emphasis on bilateralism was followed by a caution on the limitation of multilateralism:

Linked to the Government’s focus on bilateral relations is a *selective approach to the multilateral agenda.* Australia must concentrate its involvement in multilateral issues in those areas where its national interests are closely engaged... Australia must be realistic about what multilateral institutions such as the United Nations system can deliver...(emphasis added) (DFAT 1997, iii).

In building on, and reinforcing, the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook, and in addition to emphasizing a ‘practical’ and ‘realist’ approach favouring bilateral management of foreign affairs, the Howard government also established the dominant geographic focus of its foreign policy:

While the spread of Australia’s interests is wide, each of these interests is not equally important and nor can they be pursued with equal resources. Care is needed in setting priorities. The Asia Pacific is the region of highest foreign and trade policy priority for the Government. Within the Asia Pacific, Australia’s most substantial interests are with the region’s three major powers and largest economies—the United States, Japan and China—and with our largest neighbour—Indonesia. Significant Australian interests are also engaged in our relationships with the Republic of Korea, the other ASEAN states and, in the South Pacific, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (DFAT 1997, vi).

So how did all of this translate into the Howard government’s foreign policy towards Africa? The whole document contained six references to ‘Africa’, one of which was to

do with population pressures on the continent, and the rest with Southern Africa, or more specifically South Africa (DFAT 1997, 30, 67-68). In the context of the Indian Ocean region, the government noted that "... the Gulf states, South Africa and countries of South Asia will be important and growing markets for Australia over the next fifteen years", while in the context of Africa, it stated that Australia's interests "will remain focused on the South African market, which will also provide a base for trading into all the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Government will actively explore opportunities for mining investment and equipment sales elsewhere" (DFAT 1997, 67-68). The Howard government in its early days conceptualized engagement with Africa almost exclusively through commercial opportunities with South Africa, and by extension the Southern African region. Notwithstanding the noticeable growth in the width and breadth of Australian economic, security, and developmental interests since the early Howard years, such a narrow emphasis would be highlighted again by Tony Abbott's Coalition government (see further below).

The Howard government's next key foreign policy document offered a continuation on the theme set in 1997. In 2003 the government published another foreign policy White Paper, titled *Advancing the National Interest*. This document again displayed a traditional Coalition foreign policy outlook similar to what had already been established by the previous White Paper. Australian foreign policy was again portrayed as realistic and pragmatic, its main tasks being the advancement of the national interest, with arguably the major novelty being the heavy emphasis on the fight against global terrorism, an issue that received only marginal attention in the 1997 white paper.<sup>185</sup>

The 2003 White Paper reiterated the Howard government's preference for bilateral management of foreign affairs. While noting that "Australia's bilateral, regional and multilateral policies are mutually supportive means to a common end" and were not "alternatives to each other", the document however stated that

Judgments about priorities are crucial. Not all bilateral relations are equally important for Australia. *Not all regional associations or multilateral activities will enhance the prosperity and security of Australians.* In the United Nations, Australia, like all other members, operates selectively and focuses its effort on the issues most directly relevant to its interests. In a

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<sup>185</sup> For references to 'realistic' and 'pragmatic' see DFAT 2003c, 43, 58, 95, 96, 115; for the fight against terrorism see Chapter 3. The 1997 White Paper contained only one reference to terrorism which was only noted in passing, see DFAT 1997, 2: "It is also in Australia's security interests that chemical and biological weapons be banned and that terrorism be contained."

complex and fluid world, with an enormous and growing international agenda, we must be *pragmatic* and *clear-sighted* about which relationships, which issues and which multilateral activities are most likely to advance the national interest (emphasis added) (DFAT 2003c, 7).

Unlike the 1997 White Paper, the 2003 edition offered the African continent somewhat more attention, and foreign policy towards Africa received one whole page. In the chapter on wider global interests, Australia's interests in Africa were examined with the main issues being Zimbabwe's poor governance, and Australia's aid to Africa. However, the best summary of Australian foreign policy interests in Africa during the Howard years was offered at the very outset of the discussion where the document stated that "Australia's interests in Africa are engaged most directly through our relationship with South Africa and our membership of the Commonwealth" (DFAT 2003c, 110). This one sentence in fact best summarizes the overall focus of Australian foreign policy in Africa through the Howard years. The Coalition did not see any other opportunities for political or security interests or engagement with African states, and given the primacy of economic considerations in foreign policy engagement with the African continent, it is no wonder that engagement with South Africa was the only foreign policy engagement the Howard government cared to sustain. However, even this relationship experienced significant turbulences stemming from the 2002\3 CHOGM suspension of Zimbabwe.

A decade later, and prior to the federal election in September 2013, the Coalition released *The Coalition's Policy for Foreign Affairs* document which outlined its vision for Australia's engagement with the world. The document rather unambiguously invoked the same foreign policy focus and preferences dominant during the Howard years. The emphasis was on advancing "Australia's core strategic and economic interests", the primacy of "economic diplomacy" in the pursuit of those interests, and a traditional focus on deepening "Australia's relations with our region" (The Coalition 2013, 2-3). At first look the main and only novelty in terms of foreign policy direction was a focus on the "Asia-Pacific-Indian Ocean region". This really only meant a greater emphasis on the Indian Ocean region than perhaps had been the case with previous Coalition governments (although the Howard government also talked of a reemphasis on the Indian Ocean in its 1997 White Paper), as the Rudd/Gillard government had already exhibited substantial engagement with the Indian Ocean region. The foreign affairs policy paper made it clear that if elected to government the Coalition would "refocus foreign policy on Australia's true international interests" chief among which

were relations with the US, Japan, Indonesia, China, and India (The Coalition 2013, 4). With regards to Africa, the ten page document contained only one reference to the continent (and none to any African country), again following the tradition of setting it in in the ‘generic’ context of wider global interests: “We will refocus Australia’s foreign policy resources on advancing the national interest by strengthening relations with a wide range of other partners in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Africa” (The Coalition 2013, 5).

### Foreign policy speeches: Heavy regional focus leaves little room for engagement with Africa

*John Howard*

During his tenure as Australia’s Prime Minister John Howard became prominently involved in foreign policy issues only around the turn of the century, firstly with the 1999 East Timor independence crisis, and then the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US. As some commentators have noted, it was towards the turn of the century that John Howard became “more confident in the execution of foreign policy”.<sup>186</sup> Immediately following the September 2001 attacks in the US, Howard invoked the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) to offer Australia’s support for future US military operations, and maintained his interest in such primal security and strategic issues which necessitated Australia’s direct military engagement in the Middle East. Notwithstanding such a high profile interest in very significant foreign policy concerns, Howard’s engagement on foreign policy matters of lesser visibility or prominence was minimal, and as one commentator noted, Howard “sharply narrowed” the focus and agenda of Australia’s foreign policy “to cover only what interested him”.<sup>187</sup> This much is clear with regards to foreign policy towards Africa.

Prime Minister John Howard delivered a handful of major foreign policy speeches.<sup>188</sup> An analysis of the publicly available prime ministerial transcripts archive reveals four such speaking engagements in which Howard expanded on his

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<sup>186</sup> Cotton and Ravenhill 2007, 7; for a contrary view and one that sees Howard exhibiting a strong interest in foreign affairs throughout his political career and before becoming prime minister, see Wesley 2007, 33-35.

<sup>187</sup> Kelvin 2004, 295. For Howard’s foreign policy in general see also Goldsworthy 2001; Baldino 2005; Wesley 2007, 2009; Cotton and Ravenhill 2007.

<sup>188</sup> For the purpose of the present analysis ‘major’ speeches are those which offer a review of the government’s view on the country’s place in the world and its foreign policy priorities, rather than focusing on specific individual relationships and issues.

government's vision for Australia's place in the world.<sup>189</sup> What all four of these have most prominently in common is a heavy emphasis on 'the region' and regional issues, which is in direct accordance with the Coalition's long standing foreign policy outlook outlined earlier.

In his first year in office (May 1997), in a speech titled *Australia and Asia: An Enduring Engagement* John Howard highlighted his government's emphasis on a regional focus in Australia's foreign policy (Howard 1997).<sup>190</sup> That one of Howard's first major foreign policy speeches would display such a regional focus was not an accident. Only a few months later, the Howard government produced its first foreign policy White Paper, and its emphasis on regional engagement has already been analysed above.

Although his speech contained no references to Africa or African issues, and very few to non-regional ones, in fairness to Howard, it was a speech delivered to the Australia-Asia Society, and its focus was naturally more regional than global. By itself this speech should not be taken to reveal an adherence to the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook, but in the context of Howard's other major foreign policy speeches, it is indicative of such an approach to conceptualizing Australia's place in the world.

Howard's next major foreign policy address was delivered in August 2001 and titled *Australia's International Relations-Ready for the Future* (Howard 2001). This speech represents a good example of adhering to the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook in that Howard directly highlighted thinking and ideas reminiscent of Menzies and Spender. Howard invoked as a distinguishing feature of his government its belief in a "pragmatic and clear-eyed defence of the national interest" highlighting several times his 'positive realism' and 'realistic' and 'clear sighted' appreciation of the national interest. In highlighting the Coalition's 'realism' in foreign policy as contrasted with the ALP's 'idealism' or 'meddling', Howard was philosophically connected with Menzies and Spender's criticism voiced in the late 1940s, in which they too distinguished themselves from the ALP by being in tune with the 'realities' of international relations.

In the address Howard further emphasized the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook by unequivocally pronouncing that "the maintenance of strong bilateral relationships remains a cornerstone" of his government's approach to foreign policy,

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<sup>189</sup> While not necessarily Howard's only major foreign policy pronouncements, these speeches are overall representative of his government's general interest and direction in foreign policy.

<sup>190</sup> The speech itself contains some 50 references to 'our region', 'the region', 'Asia-Pacific region', or 'regional'.



and further highlighting that such bilateral relationships in Asia are at the “forefront of our foreign policy focus”. The key bilateral relationships for Australia were with Japan, China, the US, and Indonesia, with the trade relationship with the EU being another issue vital to Australia’s national interests. And in many ways similarly to his previous major foreign policy speech on Australia and Asia, this speech was also dotted with plenty of (almost 20) references to the ‘region’ and ‘regional’ issues.

In the context of the upcoming CHOGM which was to take place later in the year in Brisbane, Howard did make one reference to an African issue; the status of Zimbabwe. In this the prime minister again displayed his government’s already noted Afro-pessimism, and spoke of his government’s worries over the deteriorating political and security situation in Zimbabwe, expressing his disappointment at the country’s refusal to receive a Commonwealth appointed ministerial mission.

Another one of John Howard’s major foreign policy speeches was his address to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in June 2004 (Howard 2004). This speech focused on strategic and defence issues and was overwhelmingly devoted to threats to Australian security, such as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and terrorism. In terms of espousing the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook, the speech reiterated an emphasis on the US alliance and significant regional focus, also discussing Australia’s military involvement in Iraq.<sup>191</sup> Perhaps the most interesting point of the speech came towards the end where Howard reminded his audience that “there can be no retreat into splendid isolation or paradigms of the past” further arguing that “We cannot put a fence around our country or our region” and “We cannot draw back to the illusion of Fortress Australia”. This line of more ‘internationalist’ thinking was employed more for the purposes of justifying Australia’s military involvement in the Middle East and Iraq (which was a significant electoral issue back in 2004), another geographic area of traditionally rather marginal priority for the country’s foreign policy, rather than a call for a general widening of Australia’s strategic and foreign policy focus.

The last major foreign policy speech under review was John Howard’s March 2005 address titled *Australia in the World* (Howard 2005). In this address John Howard, and in full accordance with the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook, focused on issues and relationships that were fundamental for Australia’s security and prosperity.

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<sup>191</sup> The speech contains 20 references to terms such as ‘region’ or ‘regional’.



Great emphasis was given to discussions of Asia and the region, terrorism and the US, China, Japan, Indonesia, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and PNG. The speech contained some 30 references to the 'region' and regional issues and invoked themes of 'realism' in foreign policy, again displaying thinking similar to that of Menzies and Spender some 50 years ago.

In that speech Howard made one reference to Australia's 'global interests', stating that "It is true that Australia's most immediate interests and responsibilities, will always be in our region. But we have global interests that require strong relationships with all centres of power". However, these 'global interests' were exclusively conceptualized as "economic interests":

Australia's largest trading partner, as a single entity, is the European Union. Our largest investment partner is the United States. Our largest export market and our fastest growing economic relationships are in Asia. The Middle East is one of our most rapidly growing markets for advanced manufactures over recent years.

Therefore, on the few occasions in Howard's foreign policy speeches when Australian foreign policy was given a wider conceptualization which surpassed the 'region' and key bilateral relationships, such 'width' was only imagined within the realm of existing trade relationships, and with existing and key traditional trading partners such as the US and EU.

#### *Alexander Downer*

As Australia's longest serving foreign minister, Alexander Downer delivered a number of major foreign policy speeches which reviewed his government's achievements and understanding of Australia's place in the world. In the first few years since coming to power in March 1996, Downer delivered three major foreign policy speeches which outlined his government's foreign policy priorities. All three speeches were very similar (the last two being almost identical copies), and all three highlighted an unambiguous link with the Coalition's traditional regional and security focused foreign policy outlook.

In late November 1996 Downer delivered a speech titled *Australia's Place in the World* (Downer 1996c). The speech outlined four key foreign policy priorities: commitment to the region, enhancement of Australia's security, the country's broader global links, and the government's approach to human rights and humanitarian issues. Downer clearly

specified that the Asia-Pacific region was Australia's "highest foreign policy priority" largely because it was vital to its sphere of economic and strategic interests. On the bilateral front Downer highlighted relations with neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia, and trade and security partners such as China and the US. In terms of 'Australia's broader global links', the area of the speech with potentially most relevance to engagement with Africa, Downer highlighted relations with the EU and made one reference to South America.

In March 1997 and 1998 Downer delivered two speeches before the Joint Services Staff College in Canberra, the latter being an almost word for word copy of the former. In his 1997 speech titled *Australia's Foreign Policy* Alexander Downer again talked about his government's foreign policy priorities and the four pillars of that foreign policy, which were the same as outlined in the 1996 speech (Downer 1997b; 1998a). Australia's highest priority was closer engagement with the Asia-Pacific region, and its bilateral relations with key neighbours and partners. The only novelty here as compared to the 1996 speech was that Downer took a bit more time to outline how the government's defence policy was interconnected with foreign policy not only because of the changing nature of contemporary security concerns, but also because defence policy and defence relationships "play an important role in the achievement of our foreign policy goals" (Downer 1997b). This emphasis on 'securitizing' foreign policy was a common theme in the Coalition's foreign policy outlook which during the Howard years started placing a greater emphasis on national security issues within the realm of foreign policy.<sup>192</sup> In the section outlining broader global links, Downer talked mostly about the EU, with the same one reference to South America.

Setting the priorities for the country's foreign policy in the Howard government's first term in power, Alexander Downer clearly and unambiguously followed the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook which focused heavily on regional issues and the maintenance and enhancement of key bilateral relationships; and prided itself on a 'clear eyed' and 'realistic' assessment of the country's place in the world and the government's acceptance of that place. With such narrow frames of reference for understanding Australia's place in the world, it is little wonder that engagement with Africa did not feature a mention.

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<sup>192</sup> This trend towards greater 'securitization' of foreign policy is also evident in the Howard government's two foreign policy White Papers; for 'securitization' in general see Buzan, Weaver, de Wilde 1998, Chapter 1. For the growing overlap between national security and foreign policy during the Howard years and later see Wesley 2011, 261-272.

Downer's next three major foreign policy speeches were delivered in 2001 and 2002. In March 2001 Downer delivered a speech titled *Australia-Meeting our International Challenges* (Downer 2001). The speech did not feature any mention of an African country or issue and focused on Australia's growing international standing, globalisation, and instability and security concerns emanating from the region. In May 2002 Downer delivered a speech titled *Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge* (Downer 2002a). The speech highlighted the government's upcoming second foreign policy White Paper, elaborated on, and enumerated, the government's achievements since entering office, and focused on challenges such as terrorism and the changing security and economic situation in the Asia-Pacific. Downer made several references to 'realist' thinking: "We are not about trumpeting our own international good citizenry simply for the sake of it. That is a trap for the ideologues and the naive. We are about good international citizenry where it can be shown to deliver tangible results for our interests and those of other people".<sup>193</sup> There were again no references to Africa. Downer's August 2002 address, *Australia's Foreign Policy & International Relations* was a copy of this speech, highlighting the same issues (Downer 2002b).

This section analysing Downer's major foreign policy speeches is divided thematically rather than chronologically. In 2005, Alexander Downer published an article in the *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, which gave an insight into how the government's foreign policy priorities had changed since first enunciated in 1997, but also how they essentially remained the same. Overall, the priorities changed in that there was very little talk of human rights, humanitarian issues, immigration, and broader global engagement, but remained the same in that they focused on bilateralism, the region, and security (with the major change here being a greater emphasis on global and regional terrorism). Where there was mention of issues outside this regional focus, they concerned relations with the expanded EU on trade and security cooperation. The article displayed adherence to the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook by placing a heavy emphasis on bilateral engagements and regional issues, avoiding references to multilateral (and especially UN) cooperation, and espousing a 'realist bent'. Downer argued that "The Government's approach to international affairs remains a pragmatic one, reflecting a clear understanding of how the world works, the strategic environment

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<sup>193</sup> There was also a reference to a realist scholar, with the following quote from Martin Wight: "A foreign minister is chosen and paid to look after the interests of his country, and not to delegate for the human race".

and Australia's place in the international system" (Downer 2005, 7). This was followed by references to Australia's "practical" cooperation being undertaken "regionally and bilaterally" in order to build security and prosperity, which was "...not a matter of theory or academic debate, but the reality of the world today" (Downer 2005, 8). By invoking the distinction between 'academic' and 'theoretical' vs. 'realistic' Downer's speech was reminiscent of Menzies and his colleagues' criticism of Herbert Evatt and the ALP in the late 1940s (discussed above). In discussing how Australia would go about advancing its security and economic interests Downer argued that of "paramount importance" was "the further development of our strong bilateral relationships, in particular with the United States and the countries of our own region". The few references to multilateral activities were related to regional bodies such as ASEAN and APEC (Downer 2005, 10-11). Again, there were no references to Africa or African issues.

Downer's *Australian Foreign Policy Today and Tomorrow* speech delivered in August 2007 discussed the rise of China and India, the relationship with Japan and the US, and regional concerns related to terrorism, fragile states and state weakness, and WMDs. The focus was within the Coalition's traditional frames of reference for Australia's place in the world: looking predominantly at regional issues and focusing on key partnerships, with a clear and unambiguous preference for bilateral management of foreign policy. Hence, Downer's response to the question of how Australia should handle the rise of China and India was "...in some ways, straightforward. We must continue to work to further build our bilateral relationships with those two countries". Downer (2007a) concluded that

One goal of foreign policy is to make sure that your country is well-placed to meet the challenges of tomorrow. To do this we have to remember the key lessons of history. For Australia, this means building our relationships with key countries of Asia and beyond. We have strengthened our relationship with the United States, we have strengthened our relations with the emerging giants China and India, and our relationships with key partners like Indonesia and Japan have new depth to them.

The lack of mention of any form of multilateral engagement in his concluding remarks is noticeable, and in addition to the lack of any references to Africa or African issues, further contributed to the traditionally marginal focus the Coalition paid to engagement with Africa, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

Rounding off the discussion is the analysis of a theme running through three of Alexander Downer's speeches which almost perfectly contrast the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook with that of the ALP. Their overall theme is not only a promotion of the way in which the Coalition saw Australia's place in the world, but also a criticism of the ALP's foreign policy outlook. What all three speeches, delivered in 2003, 2006, and 2007 have in common is that none of them mentions Africa or African issues once; all invoke the Coalition's foreign policy outlook themes of regional engagement, maintenance of close relations with 'great and powerful friends', an aversion to multilateralism while promoting bilateralism, and a clear-eyed, pragmatic, and realistic understanding of Australia's place in the world.

In his November 2003 address to the National Press Club titled *The Myth of Little Australia*, Alexander Downer launched into a criticism of the "bourgeois Left" over what he argued was a diminished view of Australia's place in the world (Downer 2003). As Downer argued, in contrast to those (such as ALP notables Gareth Evans, Kim Beazley, Simon Crean, Kevin Rudd) who conceptualize Australia as a 'small nation' or 'middle power', "My view is that we are not just a "middle power"... We are not a middling nation, but a considerable power.... That notion of a "little Australia" had been the prevailing paradigm throughout the previous Government and remains strong among its remnants [the ALP]". In invoking the crime of being a 'middling nation' Downer also drew a direct line to the kinds of criticisms levelled at the ALP half a century ago by Robert Menzies and Percy Spender. Downer observed that "we proceed from the understanding that our interests are not defined solely by geography", but in justifying this statement only repeated the importance of Australia's relationship with the US, and made one passing reference to markets for Australian goods and services spanning from "South America to the Middle East".

In a July 2006 speech titled *Should Australia Think Big or Small in Foreign Policy* Downer repeated most of his already voiced criticisms of the ALP's conceptualization of Australia in world affairs (Downer 2006a). The speech began with an outline of why Australia should be considered "a significant country" before returning to the theme of the ALP's "little Australia" approach "which has been the driving force of Labor Party foreign policy... Labor seems to have a middle child complex when it comes to our place in the world. We are not "middling" or "average" or "insignificant"... we are a considerable power and a significant country". Rather than thinking small, Downer

argued that Australia should think and act “big in foreign policy” and play a regional as well as a global role.

Although Alexander Downer argued that “Australia’s interests are global in scope and if Australia is to be secure and prosperous we must work globally”, given the overall regional agenda he spelt out, it is difficult to see such statements as anything more than contradictions or at best empty phrases. No areas of the world except for the US (Australia’s key security ally), and Afghanistan and Iraq (countries where Australia was directly militarily deployed in support of US operations at the time) merited a mention in support of these ‘global interests’ and Downer’s concluding remarks left little uncertainty about his government’s self-perceived role for Australia: “Australia is an especially significant regional power in our region. We don’t claim this title as a right, nor did we ever seek it. But the facts on the ground are indisputable”.

In his August 2007 Sir Thomas Playford Memorial Lecture titled *Labor’s Little Australia* Alexander Downer repeated most of his criticisms of the ALP’s foreign policy outlook, and invoked many of the myths associated with the Coalition’s foreign policy outlook (Downer 2007b). Given its delivery during the 2007 federal election campaign it serves as a good example of the electoral differentiation both the Coalition and ALP resort to in order to distinguish their ‘brands’ of foreign policy, and further consolidates the myths associated with both parties’ foreign policy outlooks.

Downer began the speech by talking about an “organisation that never adopts a bold stance when a cowardly and introspective position is available... the Australian Labor Party”. He reminded his audience of “Labor’s perennial belief that Australia is merely a bit player in global affairs, and must not seek to wield any genuine influence on the world stage”, a view that the ALP had “carried through generations of federal leaders and through countless iterations of its foreign policy platform”. In contrasting the Coalition with Labor, Downer argued that his government’s “approach to international affairs has been characterised by realistic, clear-eyed assessments of how the world works, and Australia’s place in the international system”, achieving “tangible outcomes”, reminding his audience of the ALP’s “pattern of weak leadership on international issues, particularly those to do with confronting threats to global peace and security”, and rejecting the ALP’s perceived desire to “place all our eggs in the multilateral basket”. Downer further criticized Labor for its intentions to “downgrade the US alliance”, reduce Australia’s bilateral cooperation, and “outsource much of our



foreign policy decision making to the United Nations”. The ALP was even charged with a calculated policy of “non-engagement with the world” which contradicted Downer’s earlier comments about the ALP deferring foreign policy decision-making to the UN, and its preference for the multilateral management of foreign affairs. Gareth Evans was called out for his repeated description of Australia as a middle power, and for writing a “middling book about it”, and Kevin Rudd was criticized for his own understanding of Australia as a middle power, which was in effect selling the country short. Downer concluded by telling his audience that electing Labor at the upcoming election would risk replacing “our network of strong bilateral relationships with mushy multilateralism”, resulting in Australia losing “its current position of prominence in world affairs” and its voice being lost “amongst the chatter of multilateral bodies, where talk is plentiful but action can be painfully slow”. In offering glimpses of his government’s achievements on the foreign policy front, Alexander Downer repeated that his government recognized Australia’s interests were global and “not defined solely by geography”. However, this recognition was again not supported by much more than a passing reference to “close affinities with North America and Europe”, and support for the US in Afghanistan and Iraq.

### *Tony Abbott*

The Abbott-led Coalition was elected to government in September 2013 with a foreign policy outlook largely reminiscent of the Howard government’s. What the two years of the Abbott government’s foreign policy have made clear is that its outlook was very much in line with, and adhering to, the Coalition’s traditional frames of reference for understanding Australia’s place in the world.

While Tony Abbott had in some way been forced to exhibit more than a passing interest in foreign policy, it was only on high profile issues regarding the fundamental pillars of Australia’s relations with the world that he engaged more substantially in foreign affairs. Abbott mostly made major foreign policy-related pronouncements in the context of national security and the fight against terrorism, and outside this largely left the running of foreign policy issues to his foreign minister.

In his two years as Australia’s Prime Minister Tony Abbott delivered one major foreign policy speech. This could be taken as further evidence of his general lack of foreign policy interests and expertise, and the fact that he largely left the rhetorical framing of his government’s foreign policy direction to his deputy and foreign minister, Julie



Bishop.<sup>194</sup> The handful of speeches touching on foreign policy issues Abbott did deliver offered little strategic vision of Australia's place in the world, and mainly dealt with current topics. If anything can be said of the Abbott government's strategic vision for Australia's place in the world beyond what has already been said about its embrace of the Coalition's traditional foreign policy principles and priorities, it is that with Australia's recurrent military deployment in Iraq in 2014, the already noted overlap and marriage of national security policy and foreign policy had been further strengthened under Tony Abbott.

Tony Abbott made it clear during the election campaign in 2013 that he was in favour of a 'more Jakarta and less Geneva' approach to foreign policy priorities (Shanahan 2013). Such rhetoric was followed by swift action and in early October 2013 Abbott made his first overseas visit to Jakarta. While there he delivered a speech titled *Building an Indonesia-Australia Relationship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Abbott 2013b). However, aside from talking about improving relations between the two countries, there was not much in Abbott's speech that offered any hints as to his strategic vision of Australia in the world.

In a March 2014 address to the Asia Society, Abbott did not offer a 'grand' vision of Australia's place in the world, but hinted at an adherence to the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook of maintaining a strong regional focus (Abbott 2014a). Abbott talked of upcoming trade missions to Japan, South Korea, and China; FTAs; China's overall importance for Australia's economic wellbeing; and the need to further strengthen ties with Asia. This adherence to a traditional Coalition outlook was further strengthened by Abbott's overseas trips in his first year in office, which were all to the region or traditional key bilateral partners: Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Korea, China, US, Canada, UK (Abbott 2014b).

For the most part Tony Abbott's foreign policy speeches were delivered in the context of bilateral relationships with particular countries with the emphasis on trade relations. In an April 2014 speech to the Japan Chamber of Commerce in Japan, Abbott focused on trade and the bilateral relationship between the two countries (Abbott 2014b); in a speech at the Boao Forum for Asia delivered in China he focused on FTAs and selling

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<sup>194</sup> This is not to suggest that the direction of Australian foreign policy was not at this times developed and directed from the Prime Minister's Office and Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, with DFAT serving to a large extent as a policy implementation engine rather than a policy development one; as has been the trend in Australian foreign policy-making from at least the mid-1990s onwards. See Barker 2006; Kelvin 2004, 303; Cotton and Ravenhill 2007, 6; Wesley 2011, 261-271; Barker 2011, 15.

Australia as again “open for business” (Abbott 2014c); and in a June 2014 speech to the US Chamber of Commerce delivered in Washington, Tony Abbott highlighted his country’s ability and willingness to maintain its close alliance with the US, while maintaining a strong relationship with China (Abbott 2014d). In his Japan speech Abbott also invoked one well known theme from the Howard era; that Australia did not need to lose old friends by embracing new ones, echoing Howard’s statements about Australia not having to choose between its history and geography (Howard 2005).

What could be considered Tony Abbott’s one major foreign policy speech was his August 2014 *Sir John Downer Oration*, delivered at the University of Adelaide. After reiterating the various economic statistics which add up to Australia being “big enough to be useful but not so big that we’re intimidating”, Abbott declared that Australia was the dominant power in the South Pacific, and a “country with global interests and some global reach”. Abbott also repeated John Howard’s theme of not having to choose “between our history and our geography” indicating that Australia could remain a staunch US ally and close economic partner to China. The majority of the speech did not reflect on the US-China strategic rivalry, rather the global threat posed by Daesh in the Middle East. In that context, Abbott’s framing of Australia’s ‘global interests’ was wholly within the context of the US alliance and reinvigorated military deployments to the Middle East (Abbott 2014e).

In a speech so centrally focused on global terrorism, Abbott made one reference to Africa. After highlighting the worrying rise of Daesh in Iraq and similar insurgencies such as the Al Nusra in Syria, Abbott noted the “appearance of Al Shebab in the horn of Africa and Boko Haram in Central Africa”. Since these were the only references to African issues in not only this speech, but also the majority of Abbott’s foreign policy pronouncements, it can be argued that Tony Abbott shared the Howard government’s generally uninterested, and Afro-pessimist conceptualization of Africa.

In June 2015 Tony Abbott delivered a speech to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute conference in Canberra, in which he talked of Australia’s “global interests” but these were again framed in the context of military deployments in support of the US’s renewed efforts in Iraq (Abbott 2015). The one ‘oddity’ in this speech was Abbott’s description of Australia as a “good international citizen”, a term which was completely out of favour with the Howard government, and up until that point the Abbott

government as well. However, that was perhaps a ‘slip of the tongue’ on Abbott’s part as he refrained from using the term again during his prime ministership.

### *Julie Bishop*

In her first two years as Australia’s foreign minister, Julie Bishop delivered several major foreign policy speeches which offered a clear insight into her conceptualization of Australia’s place in the world. What is clear from these public pronouncements is that the Abbott government’s understanding of Australia’s place in the world was very much informed by the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook as enunciated by the likes of Spender, Menzies, Howard, and Downer, but also containing a heavy emphasis on the commercial underpinnings of foreign engagements; a feature in line with the Howard\Downer thinking but driven to a new level of rhetorical prominence under Bishop.

Julie Bishop’s first major foreign policy speech was her March 2014 address titled *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World* (Bishop 2014c). The title itself was taken from a book written by R. G. Casey, Robert Menzies’ foreign minister for most of the 1950s. The speech left no doubt that Bishop’s foreign policy would in many ways echo and adhere to the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook: the focus was on the region and regional issues, everything done in foreign policy (including providing development assistance) had to be in the national interest, Australia was back to informing its foreign policy by ‘clear eyed’ assessments and ‘realities’, and the emphasis was back on bilateral relationships. Julie Bishop did note the utility of multilateral engagements, speaking mostly about Australia’s term on the UNSC (which the ALP government won in a bid she had been critical of), and making one passing reference to the importance of the Commonwealth (Bourke 2014; Kehoe 2014; Bishop 2009a, b).

The two ‘innovations’ in Bishop’s speech were her emphasis on “economic diplomacy” as a key principle of Australian foreign policy, and conceptualization of Australia as a “top 20 country”. As Bishop stated “Economic diplomacy is today at the heart of the Government’s foreign policy. Putting our diplomatic effort into boosting trade, growth, investment and business is fundamental in terms of promoting Australia’s national interests”, further arguing that “Australia has always taken a clear-eyed, commercial approach to our links with foreign governments”, which “invariably start with trade”.

And in line with this emphasis on economic issues, according to a number of economic indicators Australia was also a “top 20 country”.

Still, when it came to the fundamentals of the Coalition’s foreign policy, Bishop was unambiguously following in Howard and Downer’s footsteps: “One of the hallmarks of the Coalition’s foreign policy will be the importance we place on bilateral ties with our friends and neighbours – these are the vital building blocks of our international diplomacy with our particular focus on the Indo-Pacific”. The only novelty here was the change in terminology from ‘Asia-Pacific’ to ‘Indo-Pacific’. But perhaps the best summary of Australia’s foreign policy outlook under Bishop was offered in her own words: “Today, I am driving an Australian foreign policy which shares many of the convictions of my liberal predecessors, but with a sharper focus on our region, on economic diplomacy and the temporary alliances, networks, and challenges of today. Geography does dominate our thinking, with the Indian Ocean Asia-Pacific critical to Australia’s national interests”. Australia’s engagement with Africa and African issues did not feature a mention.

Julie Bishop’s focus on ‘economic diplomacy’ as a key pillar of foreign policy was to an extent a novelty in the Coalition’s foreign policy outlook in that such a heavy prominence on the economic and commercial underpinnings of foreign relations was not as visible a feature of the Howard\Downer foreign policy. While Howard and Downer certainly were interested in pursuing greater economic and trade connections through multilateral and bilateral means, the Abbott government took this enthusiasm to a more pronounced level. Firstly, it made a concrete effort to finalize negotiations and sign several bilateral FTAs with Japan, South Korea, and China (Robb 2013; Abbott and Robb 2013; Abbott and Robb 2014a; Abbott and Robb 2014b). Secondly, the policy itself became such a central pillar of Bishop’s approach to foreign affairs that it deserved its own official launch in August 2014. During that launch Julie Bishop delivered a speech which outlined her understanding of economic diplomacy as not only a means of foreign policy, but an equivalent to it (Bishop 2014e). As Bishop stated “It has often been said that foreign policy is economic policy, economic policy is foreign policy. And the Coalition Government has enhanced that truism by promoting what we call ‘economic diplomacy’ as a core concept of our international engagement.” However this emphasis on economic diplomacy although highly suited for engagement with African states, which since the mid-2000s experienced a significant growth of Australian businesses operating there, did not appear to translate into the government’s

greater support for such engagements with Africa. As Bishop made clear towards the end of her speech it was in “our immediate neighbourhood” that Australia’s economic diplomacy had the power to “really transform lives”.

The other key feature of Bishop’s conceptualization of Australia’s place in the world was her rejection of the term middle power, and (unsurprisingly) her embrace of the term she herself coined to describe Australia, ‘top 20 country’. Bishop outlined her thinking on Australia’s ‘top 20 status’ in a number of speeches, most notably a foreign policy address in June 2015 (Bishop 2014b; 2014c; 2015e). Bishop argued that “Over the years, Australia has been described as a middle power. I do not believe that adequately reflects our standing or our level of influence”, before again running through the economic indicators which place Australia as a “top 20 country” (Bishop 2015e).

However, being a ‘top 20 country’ did not necessarily translate into more engagement with African states and issues. On more than one occasion, and especially when speaking about development engagement, Julie Bishop made it clear that her focus was primarily on the Indian Ocean Asia Pacific region. In her June 2015 address to the Lowy Institute Bishop made clear that “We have a particular responsibility to promote stability and prosperity for the nations of the Pacific” where Australia’s contributions could make a difference, contrasting this with Africa where “Evidence shows that our total aid to Africa, before this Budget, made up less than 0.7% of total ODA flows and it is a fact that Europe and the United States have primary responsibility for development outcomes in Africa just as Australia has primary responsibility for development outcomes in the Pacific”.<sup>195</sup> As Bishop made clear during her June 2014 address to the National Press Club on Australia’s new aid paradigm

Our aid program will have an unmistakable regional focus. In the past, it’s been spread far too thinly across the globe for reasons often not related to poverty alleviation, thus putting at risk our ability to achieve results in the geographic region where I believe we have a primary responsibility the Indian Ocean Asia Pacific. We must direct our aid to where we can make the biggest difference and align it with our national interest (Bishop 2014d).

Speaking in April 2015 in New Delhi, Julie Bishop stated that her regional focus was in line with the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook by quoting Percy Spender, Australia’s foreign minister in 1950, who observed that “...Our vital interests are closer to home. It is therefore in Asia and the Pacific that Australia should make its primary efforts in the fields of foreign relations” (Bishop 2015a; see also Bishop 2015b).

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<sup>195</sup> As already highlighted in Chapter 5, this statement was factually incorrect.

To summarize, as Australia's foreign minister under the Abbott government, Julie Bishop's conceptualization of Australia's place in the world offered several key themes. Firstly, Australia was not merely a middle power but more than that. It was an important global and regional player and according to a host of economic indicators, a 'top 20 country'. As the then Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade Brett Mason (2014) stated when delivering a speech on behalf of Foreign Minister Bishop in October 2014, "We are not a middle power – a term, which gives the impression of sitting somewhere in the middle of the 193 members of the United Nations. Our influence – our economic and political influence is so much more than that."<sup>196</sup>

Secondly, the Abbott government preferred a bilateral management of foreign affairs, which was evident in the pursuit of several FTAs with key regional and traditional economic partners such as China, Japan, and South Korea. This preference was further strengthened by the government's heavy emphasis on economic diplomacy as a key pillar of foreign policy engagement.

Thirdly, the overall geographic focus of the Abbott government's foreign policy was very much on the region, and while it was rhetorically conceptualized as the Indo-Pacific region, a review of Julie Bishop's public pronouncements coupled with interviews with senior DFAT officials made clear that such engagements extended to Africa only as far as the IORA members were concerned.<sup>197</sup> Hence, the 'Indo' in the 'Indo-Pacific' referred primarily to India, and only secondarily to IORA members, of which eight are African states (South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, the Seychelles, and the Comoros).

The Abbott government's understanding of Australia's place in the world, exhibiting a heavy regional focus characteristic of the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook, was heavily determined by geography. As Julie Bishop made clear on several occasions, "Geography does inform our thinking", and "geography will be our destiny" (Bishop 2014c; 2015b).

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<sup>196</sup> Bishop did not always reject the term middle power; in one of her first speeches as foreign minister in October 2013, speaking to a Korean audience, Julie Bishop explicitly utilized the term when comparing Australia and Korea: "As two middle powers it is in our joint interests to work together in multilateral forums. President Park has underlined the importance of Korea working together with other countries as a middle power. In fact, at the UNGA last month, the foreign ministers from Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey and Australia met. We call ourselves MIKTA – obvious. And we discussed mutual concerns as middle powers in our respective regions and we intend to meet regularly before other multilateral forums and summits, because we share a common attitude and approach to so many regional and global issues"; see Bishop 2013.

<sup>197</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 10 March 2015.



## VII.II.I. II The ALP documents and speeches

### Policy documents: Middle Power activism

Similarly to the Coalition's foreign policy documents, an examination of key ALP foreign policy documents also offers a good indication of how foreign policy traditions and myths have been invoked to justify foreign policy direction. In the time period under review there were two such documents which highlight the framing of a distinct ALP foreign policy outlook, and help perpetuate the traditions and myths about the party's distinctive foreign policy approach.

The first was the 2004 ALP Foreign Policy Statement issued by Labor's then Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Security Kevin Rudd, titled *The Three Pillars - Our alliance with the US, Our membership of the UN, and Comprehensive engagement with Asia* (ALP 2004). Although the document explicitly utilizes the term middle power only once, it nevertheless offers a review of a traditional ALP foreign policy outlook. It criticizes the conservative approach to foreign policy which maintains that "there are no rights and wrongs in foreign policy – only interests" and "that any debates about morality should be confined to our territorial limits", accepting the world "as it is" and "regarding any attempts at improving the international order as idealistic nonsense" (ALP 2004, 6). This view is contrasted with the ALP tradition which believes that "foreign policy, like domestic policy, is about both interests and values", which allows a country to remain "hard headed" in the pursuit of its interests, while at the same time remaining compassionate and a "good international citizen" (ALP 2004, 6-7).

As the title suggests, the document sets out Labor's three pillars of foreign policy: the US alliance, UN membership, and engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. Of most interest to the present discussion is the prominence afforded to the ALP's traditional adherence to multilateralism (as opposed to the Coalition's emphasis on bilateralism). The document makes clear that "Australia's commitment to the UN multilateral system has enjoyed bipartisan support for half a century", which was based "on the logic that as a middle power, Australia could deliver better outcomes through a multilateral system, both for itself and for states with similar values and interests" (ALP 2004, 93). It further argues that a Labor government would "reaffirm its commitment to the UN and the broader multilateral system" (ALP 2004, 95).



The document also deals with African issues. Although the overall narrative about Africa is fairly Afro-pessimist, concentrating on security and developmental challenges, the document recognizes the need for greater foreign policy and developmental engagement with African issues: “Australian policy makers have largely ignored Africa and Latin America in recent years. This cannot be the case in the future if Australia is to be a fully effective participant in the UN and (in Africa’s case) the Commonwealth. Nor can Australia hope to succeed in future UN candidatures if it attaches a low priority to these regions” (ALP 2004, 89). These ideas are further expanded on with specific policy options: a joint Australia and EU developmental initiative in a specific African country for the purposes of helping meet the MDGs; downgrading Australian diplomatic representation in Zimbabwe and maintaining sanctions against the Mugabe regime; an increase in humanitarian assistance to Sudan (Darfur); and better coordination of the Commonwealth’s contribution to Africa’s development challenges (ALP 2004, 124-125).

The second major policy document was the ALP’s *Constitution and National Platform* adopted in April 2007 as the set of policies for the upcoming federal election. This document sets out in greater detail the ALP’s foreign policy perspectives, and closely adheres to the traditional ALP foreign policy outlook. While again reiterating the ALP’s three pillars of foreign policy mentioned above, it is dotted with references to ‘middle power activism’. It talks of Labor’s “proud tradition of activism in international affairs”, noting that

Labor will make renewing Australia's tradition of creative, middle power diplomacy a priority. While Australia is not a super power, it is nonetheless a significant power with a keen interest in shaping the international strategic order. Labor will practise creative and activist diplomacy by building coalitions with like-minded states to create the political momentum necessary to bring about multilateral diplomatic outcomes in the national interest (ALP 2007, 227).

Such ideas were followed by a review of the importance of the multilateral global rules-based system as encapsulated in the form of the UN and the ALP’s willingness to work within that system, towards its reform, and perpetual importance (ALP 2007, 231-232).

The document also recognized “the increasing importance of the Indian Ocean Rim as a region for achieving the long-term objectives of our foreign and economic policies”, noting that the ALP would “build our relationships with the Indian Ocean Rim and the

emerging economies of Southern Africa” (ALP 2007, 235). This recognition of the need to engage with the African region was made more explicit a few lines later:

Labor will rectify the emerging pattern of Australian disengagement from the African continent. Africa lies front and centre in the international community's global development challenge. Australia must re-engage with Africa and, to this end, Labor will establish an Africa-Australia Council as a vehicle for deepening this country's commitment to some of the poorest countries on the planet. Africa also presents significant opportunities for Australian business—as well as enhancing Australia's multilateral leverage through the UN system (ALP 2007, 236).

Foreign policy speeches: An active Middle Power has interests in Africa<sup>198</sup>

*Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard as prime ministers*

The ALP government had two prime ministers; Kevin Rudd (December 2007- June 2010, and again June to September 2013), and Julia Gillard (June 2010- June 2013). As chapter 5 highlighted, the Labor government's foreign ministers (primarily Stephen Smith and Kevin Rudd) made a number of speeches on engagement with African issues and there is no need to review those again. Rather, this section will examine major foreign policy speeches which outline the Labor government's conceptualization of Australia's place in the world, and touch upon Africa's place in that thinking. This should highlight how compatible it was for these two issues to overlap, and why Labor governments might find it more palatable and easier to justify and promote a foreign policy of greater engagement with Africa than their Coalition counterparts.

During his prime ministerial reign, Kevin Rudd delivered only a handful of major foreign policy speeches; major in that they offered a conceptualization of Australia's place in the world and priorities for its foreign policy. As the main architect of the ALP's foreign policy agenda between 2001 and 2006, Kevin Rudd's views on Australia's place in the world were already well known by the time he became prime minister. In the interest of space, only one prime ministerial speech which asserts the ALP's traditional foreign policy outlook will be noted.

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<sup>198</sup> In the interests of space this section will not review the speeches of Labor's Foreign Minister Bob Carr. By the time Carr became Australia's foreign minister in March 2012, the Labor government's foreign policy direction was already well established and Bob Carr adhered to it, and helped perpetuate its direction. His general adherence to Labor's traditional foreign policy outlook and its interest in engagement with African issues is highlighted in several speeches; see Carr, Bob 2012e; 2013c. In his first Parliamentary speech upon being appointed foreign minister, Carr made it clear that he would adhere to the ALP's traditional foreign policy outlook: “I subscribe to the view that Australia is a creative middle power and an activist middle power that defends its interests—which is after all the essence of foreign policy—but which sets itself a model of good citizenship”; see Carr, Bob 2012a.

A day after his late March 2008 announcement that Australia would run for a UNSC membership seat, Kevin Rudd (2008b) delivered a speech titled *The Australia-US alliance and emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region*. Rudd argued that his country would deploy “creative middle power diplomacy” both regionally and globally, and that his foreign policy intention was to “prosecute a more activist foreign policy agenda” in partnership with the nation’s allies, friends, and through the UN and the “wider community of nations”.<sup>199</sup>

Julia Gillard, who replaced Kevin Rudd as prime minister of Australia in June 2010, did not deliver many major foreign policy pronouncements. This is hardly surprising given her status as someone with “no experience or particular interest in foreign policy” (Wesley 2011, 271). After all, Gillard herself noted that “Foreign policy is not my passion. It's not what I've spent my life doing”, adding on her first international trip as prime minister that “... if I had a choice, I'd probably be more (comfortable) in a school watching kids learn to read in Australia than here in Brussels at international meetings” (ABC News 2010).

Although in her autobiography Julia Gillard (2014, 164) argued that once in the position of prime minister she did “master foreign policy engagements”, by the time she had become prime minister of Australia, the ALP’s foreign policy direction was already well established and she merely perpetuated and reiterated her adherence to the ALP’s foreign policy outlook of middle power diplomacy. As Gillard (2014, 195) also made clear in her autobiography, great Labor governments understood and achieved “the difficult balance that needs to be struck to have impact as a middle power”, and she was determined to do that again during her tenure in office. Hence, in her first policy release on foreign affairs (a policy document dealing with Afghanistan and the global financial crisis) Gillard argued that “We are committed to building on the Labor tradition of active contribution to the world beyond our shores. And we are committed to an activist middle power diplomacy that delivers the best outcomes for Australia and Australians” (quoted in Cotton and Ravenhill 2011, 2).

### *Stephen Smith*

Early in his term as Australia’s foreign minister, Stephen Smith delivered two speeches which spelt out his government’s foreign policy vision. In an April 2008 speech titled *A Modern Australia for a New Era*, Smith reiterated many of the themes previously

<sup>199</sup> All of these ideas were already displayed by Kevin Rudd in opposition; see Rudd 2007a.

enunciated by Kevin Rudd and the ALP's policy documents (Smith 2008a). Smith revisited the themes of Labor's three pillars of foreign policy, and reminded his audience of the ALP's traditional adherence to multilateralism: "We need to take every opportunity available to us in international affairs – working with major powers, globally, regionally, bilaterally and, importantly, taking much greater advantage of international institutions to make a positive contribution to international security...". Smith also noted that Australia should utilize its "active, creative middle power diplomacy", and that "as a good international citizen, Australia can and should do more in the world". Australia was "a significant and considerable nation", and a "regional leader", but it was not a "powerhouse". This is why "regional and multilateral institutions work well for a nation like Australia". Smith openly criticized the Coalition by reemphasizing his government's interest in working with the UN, stating that "we reject the approach of the previous Government in pulling back from contributing to the United Nations". The whole speech contained one reference to "Australia's renewed interests in Africa", but by the time Smith delivered his next major foreign policy speech some four months later, references to Africa were more extensive.

Smith's next major foreign policy speech was delivered in mid-August 2008 and titled *A New Era for Engagement with the World* (Smith 2008c). This was similar to his previous speech, only more extensive in its defence of multilateralism, and more detailed in its references to engagement with African issues. Smith reiterated his arguments about Australia being a "regional leader" but not a "powerhouse or superpower", which meant that regional and multilateral institutions were "essential for a nation like Australia". He also touched on the theme of Australia being a "good international citizen" embarking on a foreign policy shaped by democratic values, respect for the rule of law, and tolerance. After that Smith launched into a protracted discussion of his government's "reinvigoration of Australia's engagement with the United Nations and other multilateral organizations", repeating that bilateral and multilateral management of foreign affairs are not mutually exclusive. In reminding his audience of the ALP's long history of multilateralism, Smith invoked the example of Herbert Evatt's work in the establishment of the UN, and Australia's participation in various UN peacekeeping missions. In discussing the strengthening of ties with regional groupings, Stephen Smith offered a lengthier justification of his government's greater engagement with Africa foreign policy:

The Government is determined to bring a wider perspective to Australia's relations with Africa. Australian minerals and petroleum resources companies discovered Africa last century and it is time that the Australian Government caught up. We want to broaden and deepen our engagement with Africa to reflect our growing trade, commercial and investment links. More than 60% of the United Nations Security Council's agenda is focused on Africa.

### *Kevin Rudd as foreign minister*

During his tenure as Australia's foreign minister, Kevin Rudd delivered several major foreign policy speeches. One of the first ones, delivered in November 2010, and titled *Australia's foreign policy looking west* offered an extensive justification and detailed examination of the government's greater engagement with Africa (Rudd 2010b). The speech itself was not just about Africa but the Indian Ocean region more broadly, and Rudd made it clear that Australia was a "middle power with global interests", such as the stability of the global strategic and economic order, climate change, nuclear non-proliferation etc. He argued that such global interests required Australia to "be active in all the regions and capitals of the world" through what he called "creative middle power diplomacy". In this context of not only being a middle power with global but also "profound regional interests", Rudd elaborated on Australia's commercial interests in Africa, noting that "Our interests in the region therefore require an increasingly activist Australian foreign policy". This speech clearly articulated that it was not only because of the growth in Australian commercial interests in Africa that the government should be engaging with the continent more closely, but also because that engagement was completely consistent with the ALP's traditional adherence to creative middle power diplomacy.

Kevin Rudd's next major foreign policy address was his June 2011 speech titled *Australia's foreign policy priorities and our candidature for the UN Security Council* (Rudd 2011e). This speech is notable not only in its length and detailed discussion of why Australia sought to win a UNSC seat, but for the purpose of the present discussion, also because it elaborated at length on the ALP's traditional foreign policy outlook. Rudd began the speech by arguing that "In the Labor tradition of foreign policy, we always seek to be actors rather than informed bystanders in the unfolding events of our region and the world at large", further arguing that Australia sought to mitigate threats to national security and protect its national sovereignty by doing these things "as a middle power with both regional and global interests", through "creative, middle power

diplomacy”. After covering a number of foreign policy priorities, and reminding his audience (amongst other things) of his government’s “fresh engagement both with Africa and Latin America”, and its reason for launching a UNSC membership bid, Rudd invoked Alexander Downer. He stated that he agreed with Downer’s argument that it was a myth that Australia was a “little country”, arguing that it was indeed a “big country” which in addition to the size of its economy, military expenditure, and aid budget, also had a “capacity for creative middle power diplomacy” and an “ability to form coalitions to bring about diplomatic solutions to global diplomatic problems both great and small...”. In further justifying his government’s pursuit of UNSC membership, Rudd concluded by reminding his audience of the foundation of the UN in 1945 when “Australia, recognised as an influential, capable and responsible middle power, took its place as a member of the first United Nations Security Council”.

Kevin Rudd’s last major foreign policy speech as foreign minister was his November 2011 Charteris Lecture titled *The Australia we can all be proud of* (Rudd 2011j). It was delivered at the fourth anniversary of the election of the Labor government, and used to catalogue his government’s objectives and achievements in foreign policy. He began the speech with a reminder that for Australia, no matter how isolated it may appear, there was “no alternative but to be comprehensively globally engaged”. He then offered his government’s foreign policy vision for Australia’s place in the world which clearly encapsulated all of the traditional ALP foreign policy outlook themes discussed so far: entrenching the country’s “standing as a middle power with global interests and regional interests – committed to the principles of creative middle-power diplomacy”; building new cooperative institutions to support the peace and stability of the Indian Ocean region; expanding formal engagement with “Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East...as part of a broader strategy of global engagement”; and acting as and being seen as a “good international citizen”, by “working in particular through the agency of the United Nations”. Rudd added that “our relations with our immediate region are necessarily the core of our foreign policy”, but that his government had also “deliberately set out to strengthen our relations with regions where our engagement in the past has been thin and where our contemporary interests require greater engagement in the future”, mentioning regions such as the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

This review of major foreign policy speeches highlights the interplay between political party foreign policy outlooks and the agency of key decision-makers. It offers further



exposition on how the myths about the ALP's traditional foreign policy outlook were utilized by individual prime and foreign ministers to inform their thinking on Australia's place in the world, and justify the direction and focus of their foreign policy. Whether these politicians, much like their Coalition counterparts, personally believed in these myths or were simply 'toeing the party line' is to a large extent irrelevant; what is relevant is their publicly pronounced adherence and belief in such foreign policy outlooks. Once on the public record and part of public memory, such pronouncements contribute to a narrative, tradition, and myth of a distinctive contribution which key decision-makers from both political parties help define through their own agency.

## **VII. II.II Key decision-makers and personal idiosyncratic factors relevant to foreign policy engagement with Africa**

The Howard government 1996-2007: John Howard and Alexander Downer

Prime Minister John Howard and his Foreign Minister Alexander Downer remained in their respective portfolios for the full four terms of their Coalition government. Although in the early years of their government Howard may have exhibited less interest in Australia's foreign policy and left its running to Downer, as noted above he appeared to have asserted his influence in foreign policy from the turn of the millennium onwards. Both Howard and Downer remained throughout their time in government two central figures of Australia's foreign policy-making.

It has been observed by several DFAT officials interviewed for this thesis that John Howard largely exhibited a lack of interests in foreign policy engagement with Africa. Howard's foreign policy focus was very firmly on the region and ties to the US, and as one senior DFAT official noted "...for Howard what was important was of course engagement with the United States and the other majors [major countries], and a deeper engagement with Asia. And Africa was simply not on the radar screen".<sup>200</sup>

Howard (2011, 234) himself noted in his autobiography, that upon entering office

I wanted to change Paul Keating's seemingly Asia-only foreign policy focus. To me Asia was the first and most important region of political and economic interaction, but it was not the only one. Australia's foreign relations needed to be rebalanced as, over recent years, we had allowed our traditional links with the United States and the United Kingdom to be taken for granted.

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<sup>200</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.



As the analysis of Australian foreign policy towards Africa in chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated, John Howard engaged with African issues on two notable occasions, both within the Commonwealth context and both related to Zimbabwe. The importance Howard placed on African engagement can to an extent be gauged by an examination of his autobiography, where he substantially discusses African issues only once, in the Commonwealth context, and in three pages (2011, 523-526). Howard's general lack of interest in African issues was even highlighted by Alexander Downer who noted that "I don't think he had very much interest in Africa at all..."<sup>201</sup> Part of the reason why this was so, was because of Howard's conceptualization of Australia's place in the world as influenced by the Coalition's traditional foreign policy outlook, but there was another reason of a more personal nature.

During the 2002 and 2003 Commonwealth discussions of Robert Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe and its suspension from the councils of the Commonwealth, John Howard experienced a particularly bruising relationship with South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki. As Howard (2011, 525) remembered, given the divergence in opinion between the two on Zimbabwe's status he even had to resort to threats to induce President Mbeki to attend a preparatory CHOGM meeting scheduled for September 2002 in Nigeria's capital of Abuja:

After refuelling at the beautiful Seychelles Islands, my aircraft continued on its journey to the Nigerian capital. I then received a message from President Mbeki, informing me that he had decided that he would not attend the Abuja meeting, that it was a complete waste of time and that, in effect, he and others should be left alone to continue their discussions with Mugabe. This was an astonishing communication. I immediately instructed our High Commissioner in Pretoria to convey in the appropriate terms my displeasure at what the South African President was proposing to do. He was to tell the South Africans that this non-attendance would be insulting, as I was already on my way. He ran the risk of doing real damage to the relationships between Australia and South Africa. It was a strong, but justified, response. Mbeki turned up at the Abuja meeting.

Howard and Mbeki's difficult relationship extended beyond just disagreements over Zimbabwe. Firstly, Howard, like Robert Menzies before him, was very much of the "old Commonwealth" mind-set (Neuhaus 2013, Part 1, 14). As Don McKinnon (2013, 11), the secretary of the Commonwealth at the time of the Zimbabwe episode argued, Howard "was old Commonwealth", and McKinnon's "father's generation" when it came to views on the UK, Commonwealth, and British monarchy, all of which were a

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<sup>201</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

result of Howard's personal outlook: "old style...out of the stable of Robert Menzies...". Such an outlook would have from the very beginning made Howard more inclined to have strong views on the values that Commonwealth countries and their leadership should exhibit, and the organization should promote. Since Howard was "not a natural negotiator", this would have made it difficult to avoid confrontation over Mugabe's contentious governance in Zimbabwe, and his country's status in the Commonwealth (Neuhaus 2013, Part 1, 14).

Secondly, Thabo Mbeki (and his governing African National Congress (ANC) in general) did not necessarily look favourably upon Howard or the Coalition government, mostly because of their 'flawed' history with apartheid. John Howard was one of the high-profile Liberal party officials who disagreed with Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser on the Australian policy of sporting sanctions against the apartheid regime, and as leader of the opposition in the late 1980s, Howard was critical of economic sanctions against South Africa, even arguing that the Hawke government's immigration policy was "discriminating against white South Africans" (Walters 1987; Dunn 1987; Ramsey 1999).<sup>202</sup> Hence, some Australian diplomats argued that Howard "had a history which Mbeki had never forgotten. Howard, even during the Fraser years, still supported sporting contacts with South Africa. He was very much from that very conservative side of things", while others confirmed that the ANC's perception of "the Liberals" in general was never that good (Neuhaus 2013, Part 1, 14).<sup>203</sup>

One DFAT official who served in the Australian High Commission in South Africa soon after the 2002/3 CHOGM events stated that Howard and Mbeki "had fallen out very badly" over the Zimbabwe issue, while another DFAT official noted that the whole episode was "the low point. It was very negative for our relations with Africa".<sup>204</sup> Even John Howard (2011, 526) himself concluded in his autobiography that the CHOGM 2002/3 Zimbabwe issue was "just about the most demoralising foreign affairs issue" he touched in his time as prime minister. According to the DFAT official who served in South Africa, the relationship between the two countries deteriorated so much that

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<sup>202</sup> In the lead-up to the 1999 CHOGM in South Africa, John Howard admitted that "he was wrong in opposing sanctions against South Africa in the 1980s"; see Wright 1999.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra, 7 April 2014.

<sup>204</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014; Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 8 April 2014.

Alexander Downer used to state that “our relationship with South Africa was our second worst on earth”, the worst being the relationship with Zimbabwe itself.<sup>205</sup>

After 2003 John Howard never visited any African country, and never dealt with any substantive African issue, only throwing out the occasional denunciation of the Mugabe regime. According to one Commonwealth official intimately involved in the Zimbabwe discussions, Howard came out of the 2003 CHOGM saying “I’ll never meet again”, which could be taken as indicating his overall levels of (dis)interest in African issues (Neuhaus 2013, Part 1, 13). When for the purposes of this research a senior retired DFAT and Liberal Party official who had worked very closely with John Howard was asked whether if re-elected in 2007 Howard would have pursued closer engagement with Africa, the answer was an unequivocal “no”; Howard had a bad experience at the 2002/3 CHOGM, was disillusioned with African leaders because of the whole Zimbabwe affair, and was not interested in African engagement.<sup>206</sup> It is quite probable, as Geoffrey Hawker (2004, 8) has argued, that Howard never shared Malcolm Fraser’s interest in African issues, and his whole involvement in the Commonwealth troika seemed “to have hardened his disdain” for African issues.

In any case, John Howard’s activity in the CHOGM Zimbabwe episode appears to represent somewhat of an anomaly; a prime minister who overall exhibited very little interest in African engagement both prior to and after the 2002/3 CHOGMs, was highly interested and engaged in this foreign policy episode.<sup>207</sup> There are arguably two highly salient reasons explaining this anomaly. Firstly, engagement with the Zimbabwe issue was mandated by Australia’s Commonwealth membership, and this is one of few international fora where Australia can be considered as a seriously powerful and prominent player. This would not necessarily mandate Howard’s personal interest in engagement with the Zimbabwe issue, but what his story of threats to Mbeki in the lead up to the 2002 Abuja meeting reflects, is at least the view that Australia’s status in the Commonwealth should be taken seriously. Mbeki’s non-attendance, as Howard hinted, implied a disregard for Australia’s status within the Commonwealth, and Howard’s overall activity on the Zimbabwe issue could be seen as playing the role that is expected from one of the organizations major players.

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<sup>205</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014

<sup>206</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 12 August 2014.

<sup>207</sup> Although some have argued that Howard’s involvement in the CHOGM troika was “virtually accidental”, see Hawker 2004, 8.

The second reason for Howard's interest and activity could be much more personal and tied to his values. As some have argued, although Howard espoused a realist and pragmatic approach to foreign policy, his foreign policy thinking was nevertheless very much influenced by his system of values, deeply rooted in his conservatism and Methodist upbringing (Wesley 2007, 31-59). This in itself resulted in a paradox; while on the one hand Howard could in 1998 proclaim that he was not interested in exporting liberal democratic governance, and respected "the right of countries to have the system of governance that they think is best for their society", on the other hand, by 2002 he could exhibit very little of that 'open-mindedness' and tolerance in his engagement with Zimbabwe (Howard 1998). This was because, as Michael Wesley (2007, 56) argued, Howard's respect for cultural difference did not mean he was "a believer in the equal value of all national cultures", and there were some "ways of doing things that are better than others". It was this subtle 'cultural superiority' that to an extent drove Howard's interest in engagement with the Zimbabwe issue, and it must be remembered that this was all taking place at the same time as Australia participated in US-led interventions aimed at changing governance structures and regimes in the Middle East. In short, the Zimbabwe episode not only allowed Australia to exercise its 'big player' status in the rare international forum where it could, but it also allowed John Howard to exercise his own values-driven foreign policy.

Alexander Downer followed John Howard in not espousing a great deal of interest in foreign policy engagement with Africa.<sup>208</sup> In an interview for this thesis he noted that Australia's foreign policy towards Africa during his tenure was "a low priority" and "more episodic than strategic".<sup>209</sup> A DFAT official who had served in South Africa during the mid-2000s noted that Downer "barely took an interest in Africa...". According to the same official, the one issue that Alexander Downer did find of interest on the continent was consular support:

A key dynamic of Downer's foreign policy years was his desire to get the consular service more into shape, he thought that was a way of helping earn the Department [DFAT] greater recognition in the public by providing a better consular service and indeed no doubt help his government be re-elected by showing that we were serious about helping Australians

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<sup>208</sup> Neuhaus 2013, Part 1, 4: "Alexander Downer... did not take a particular interest in Africa and what engagement he did have was largely through the Commonwealth...".

<sup>209</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

abroad....So that was the only bit of Downer's foreign policy that really had a pro-Africa edge.<sup>210</sup>

This much was substantiated by another senior DFAT official who was involved in the debates around the decision to open the diplomatic post in Ghana, and even Alexander Downer himself noted when asked about the reasons for the opening of Australia's High Commission in Ghana in 2004 that it was done because "we did not have enough coverage in Africa", and that Australia's diplomatic coverage in Australia was seen as "a bit too limited. We needed to have broader coverage in Africa".<sup>211</sup>

When interviewed for this thesis, Alexander Downer strongly argued that personalities have little to do with foreign policy-making and that if the contextual factors were supportive of greater engagement (i.e. there were more Australian interests in Africa), he too would have increased the government's foreign policy engagement with African states. As Downer noted, Labor's whole 're-engagement' with Africa was really only about winning UNSC membership:

Labor became interested in Africa not because of Africa but because of the Security Council campaign. And we [Coalition government] were not uninterested in Africa, but the heightened activity in relation to Africa was tied up with Australia's Security Council campaign...just because Labor is in the government, because the Labor party is elected (the whole of the bureaucracy does not change in Australia when the government changes), that DFAT suddenly decided 'gosh Africa is the thing, that is where all our interests lie'... or that Stephen Smith or Kevin Rudd decided what really matters in life is Africa... it doesn't matter whether it's Labor or not, it has nothing to do with Labor or not Labor, it is to do with the current issues of the day. It is not part of Labor's ideology to become keen on Africa, it is part of common sense that if you want to get elected to the Security Council you need an African strategy. You cannot get elected without an African strategy.<sup>212</sup>

Australia's longest serving foreign minister certainly did not want to leave the author with the impression of having no affinity for Africa or African issues, noting that Australian interests in Africa during his time were thin, and hence foreign policy focus on the region followed that trend.<sup>213</sup> However, when quizzed about where Africa fitted in his conceptualization of Australia as a significant country and pivotal power (as discussed in the foreign policy speeches section above) he simply stated that "... as a significant country we obviously have global interests, and Africa is included in our

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<sup>210</sup> Both quotes are from the phone interview with a senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 9 September 2014. Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>212</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

<sup>213</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.

global interests”, without elaborating any further.<sup>214</sup> Without wishing to be unfair to the former foreign minister, this did sound like a generic formulation rather than a strategic understanding of Australia’s interests vis-à-vis Africa. In any case, while it may be true that Australian interests in Africa during Downer’s tenure were slim, it can also be argued that the Howard government did not make much of a proactive effort to enhance them (with the opening of the High Commission in Ghana and Austrade post in Libya in 2004 and 2005 being largely a reaction to Australian commercial and consular interests in those regions).

John Howard and Alexander Downer’s personal interests and belief in, and adherence to an overarching traditional Coalition foreign policy outlook all contributed to the direction of their government’s foreign policy engagement with Africa. This is not to suggest that it is *only* because of these two key decision-makers that Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa was what it was during their tenure in office, but that their personalities and foreign policy interests, informed and underpinned by a particular foreign policy outlook and broader contextual factors, all helped contribute to the aforementioned general lack of interest in Africa evident during their time in government.

#### The Rudd/Gillard government 2007-2013: Kevin Rudd and Stephen Smith

Kevin Rudd’s role in bringing about an environment conducive of a change in Australia’s foreign policy towards Africa has already been highlighted throughout the analysis. Rudd was the ALP’s shadow minister for foreign affairs for just over five years between 2001 and 2006, and was the central figure in developing the party’s foreign policy outlook and direction. This much has been highlighted by his authorship of the ALP’s 2004 Foreign Policy Statement, and the record of foreign policy direction his party maintained when in office between 2007 and 2013.

When asked if personalities made a difference in foreign policy-making towards Africa, one senior DFAT official who worked as Kevin Rudd’s foreign policy adviser argued

Well a lot in Kevin Rudd’s case because of his pre-existing interest in diplomacy, and his firm belief of Australia as a global engager... it was not that he loved Africa. Kevin was a) motivated by his Christian religion towards the aid thing [increasing Australia’s total ODA to 0.5% of GNI], and b) because of his sense of the role that Australia ought to play internationally, the Security Council campaign naturally fitted his

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<sup>214</sup> Phone interview with Alexander Downer, 28 October 2014.



worldview...So yes, personalities are important, and particularly in Kevin Rudd's case.<sup>215</sup>

This view was echoed by another senior DFAT official and former foreign affairs adviser to Kevin Rudd while he was prime minister of Australia, who made it clear that personalities matter, because it is up to individuals (such a prime and foreign ministers) to recognize opportunities and shape change in foreign policy by amongst other things exploiting wider contextual factors.<sup>216</sup> Such thinking is consistent with, and reinforces the argument of this thesis that contextual factors have the capacity to obstruct or enable foreign policy change, but that it is up to agents to ultimately shape and define that change. Certainly, when queried about whether it was the executive government (prime and foreign ministers and their offices) or the bureaucracy (DFAT and AusAID) that 'pushed' or 'drove' Australia's renewed engagement with Africa during the Labor years, a number of senior DFAT officers explicitly noted the agency of the executive government rather than the bureaucracy as the key driver.<sup>217</sup>

Kevin Rudd's centrality in driving change in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa stemmed primarily from his personal religious and political disposition (the latter intimately tied to the ALP's traditional foreign policy outlook) towards believing in Australia's need to actively engage with the world, increase its standing internationally, and increase its humanitarian assistance globally.<sup>218</sup> It was because of these factors that Rudd firmly believed in an increase in Australia's ODA, which given the existing developmental challenges there, coupled with the immediate region's saturation with Australian aid, was logically targeted at Africa.<sup>219</sup> Rudd was also a central figure in pushing for Australia's pursuit of UNSC membership, which quite likely would not have happened had he not won the 2007 federal election.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 23 April 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 8 April 2014; Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra, 19 May 2014; Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 30 May 2014; Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra, 12 August 2014; Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014; Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 15 October 2014; Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 23 April 2015.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Bob McMullan, Canberra, 1 June 2016. McMullan argued that Kevin Rudd was "central" to Labor's commitment of increasing Australia's ODA to 0.5% of GNI.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with senior ACFID official, Canberra, 28 August 2014; Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 30 May 2014; for Rudd's Christian influences see also Marr 2010, 10, 60-61.

<sup>220</sup> In an interview for this research Bob McMullan argued that the UNSC campaign would have still most probably happened regardless of Kevin Rudd's role, but that the timing of the campaign was very much determined by Rudd.



However, because he was so closely associated with Australia's UNSC membership bid, some senior DFAT officials, including former Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, have argued that Kevin Rudd was not the main driver of Labor's greater engagement with Africa policy; although he talked it up generically, he was more interested in the UNSC seat, whilst Stephen Smith, on the other hand, was more about African engagement *per se*.<sup>221</sup> While it appears obvious that Rudd left much of the Africa engagement policy to Smith's running, the view that Rudd was only interested in the 'bigger picture' and not African engagement *per se* has been contested by one of Kevin Rudd's former foreign affairs advisers. While Kevin Rudd's affinity for African issues should not be overemphasized, his interest in (or at least acquaintance with) them was at least partly consolidated by his status as a Commonwealth election observer during the 2002 Zimbabwe presidential elections, and according to the aforementioned adviser, Rudd exhibited a significant interest in humanitarian issues in Africa, especially the Darfur situation (as highlighted by his ALP 2004 Foreign Policy Statement), and 'could recite to you the MDGs'.<sup>222</sup>

Kevin Rudd may not have been 'in love with Africa' but he made it clear very early upon becoming prime minister of Australia that his country should have a strategy for enhancing engagement with the continent, and according to one of his former advisers, this strategy was flagged before Rudd made and announced his decision in March 2008 that Australia would run for UNSC membership.<sup>223</sup> In any case, regardless of the degree of Kevin Rudd's personal affinity for African issues, his interest in Australia becoming a greater international player and understanding of his country as an active middle power were key factors allowing him to perceive greater engagement with African issues as a worthwhile foreign policy agenda. This is why, as one of Rudd's foreign affairs advisers noted, "I can't remember ever pushing Africa with Kevin, ever. I did not need to. Because as I said it fitted with his natural agenda".<sup>224</sup>

When asked in an interview for this thesis if he held any particular affinity for African issues, Stephen Smith stated that although he had followed Lancaster House "stuff on

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<sup>221</sup> Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra 12 August 2014. Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014; Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

<sup>222</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 23 April 2015; see also ALP 2004, 87-89. Rudd's ability to remember and marshal ('know his') facts appears to be at least partially confirmed by Marr 2010, 72.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 23 April 2015. This view appears consistent with ALP's 2007 *Constitution and National Platform* which highlighted enhancing foreign policy engagement with Africa as a distinct policy in its own right.

<sup>224</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014

Zimbabwe” [the 1979 negotiations over Rhodesia/Zimbabwe’s independence] during his studies in London, he had done more academic work on India and South East Asia than Africa, and had no great personal affinity for African issues. In his words, it was only after he became foreign minister and started attending the Perth based ADU conference that he developed an appreciation of what was occurring in Africa and Australia, and how all of these strategic and commercial interests were connected. As Smith concluded “...I will not over-egg my affinity for Africa, but there were a number of preconditions which made it easier naturally for me to say ‘this is well worth doing’”.<sup>225</sup>

Some of these preconditions included the already mentioned increase in Australia’s overseas development budget and the UNSC membership campaign. Smith himself noted that given his WA base, his approach to foreign policy was more ‘west coast’ than ‘east coast’, in that politicians from WA are more familiar with looking west than east, and hence naturally more inclined to be interested in the Indian Ocean and Africa, and appreciate that “from a geopolitical strategic point of view Africa is important”.<sup>226</sup> This idea of a ‘west coast’ outlook on foreign policy engagement was noted by several other DFAT officials interviewed for this thesis. One noted that being from WA, Smith would have been very familiar with the growth of Australian commercial interests in Africa, and being a bit closer to Africa would have had a “mental map” which might make that proximity seem more significant from Perth than the east coast.<sup>227</sup> Another official noted that whilst “you would not want to overrate it” there was a perception of a ‘west coast’ foreign policy outlook, which he had even experienced previously with Kim Beazley and Australia’s defence policy [in the 1980s] “which had a greater interest on Africa as well”.<sup>228</sup> This view of Beazley and Smith’s ‘west coast’ perspective was also noted by Gareth Evans.<sup>229</sup> Another senior DFAT official stated that while they would not put too much stock into a ‘west coast’ vs ‘east coast’ approach to Australia’s foreign policy, there was enough significance in it to allow politicians like Stephen Smith and Julie Bishop to focus on the Indian Ocean, and they appeared personally

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<sup>225</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>226</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>227</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 15 October 2014.

<sup>228</sup> Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 13 October 2014.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

committed to changing the language in ‘mainstreaming’ the Indian Ocean’s importance for Australian foreign policy.<sup>230</sup>

Being from WA, Stephen Smith also had a large constituency of Australian businesses operating in the resources industry around Africa. As WA Premier Colin Barnett noted in a keynote address at the 2014 ADU, of the the 220 ASX-listed companies operating across African nations, more than 70% were WA based.<sup>231</sup> Given this constituency, Smith was also very keen to provide personal support for the ADU, first by setting a precedent of ministerial attendance by going there himself in 2009, and then even returning as Defence Minister in 2011.<sup>232</sup> Smith was also invited and attended the ADU conference after retirement from politics in both 2014 and 2015.<sup>233</sup>

As recognized above, Stephen Smith and his office were central in practically implementing the foreign policy of greater engagement with Africa. It was his initiative to visit the AU in January 2009, and according to one retired DFAT official, such a trip had DFAT’s senior management ‘scratching their heads’ at the time.<sup>234</sup> As Smith himself argued it was not surprising that after 12 years of “not much activity”, there was a bit of reluctance from DFAT towards greater engagement with Africa before “people got the message”, and what enabled them to ‘get the message’ was a combination of things: “my resolve that this was important and all of the demands that me and my office placed on the department”, senior management’s recognition of that priority and attempts to find resources to accommodate it, a small group of enthusiastic and committed people working on African issues in the department, “and the UNSC campaign”.<sup>235</sup> Smith maintained in our interview that although the UNSC bid allowed him to “knock down barriers” and concentrate efforts in pursuing this foreign policy engagement, his opinion was consistently that greater engagement with Africa was in Australia’s long-term strategic, political, and economic interest; was consistent with Labor’s traditional foreign policy outlook and values; and was a substantive foreign policy agenda in its own right.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 23 April 2015.

<sup>231</sup> Colin Barnett speech at ADU Conference 2014, author personal notes; see also Merrillees 2014.

<sup>232</sup> Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra, 7 April 2014.

<sup>233</sup> Author’s observations from 2014 and 2015 ADU conferences. Discussion with Stephen Smith, Perth, 2 September 2015.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra, 12 August 2014.

<sup>235</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.

<sup>236</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014. According to a senior DFAT official “Stephen Smith was absolutely crucial in developing a policy towards Africa that eventually delivered us victory [in the UNSC membership bid]. Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 9 April 2014.

Such a view was supported by Gareth Evans who argued in an interview for this thesis that

Certainly the Security Council election concentrated minds on the need to get our act together in Africa. I have absolutely no doubt that that was a key motivating factor for getting focused [on Africa] again, but equally have no doubt that there was a perception that we had a potential base on which to build because of our credibility for everything we had done during the apartheid era and there were a lot of quite serious people who were quite passionately committed to making more of the relationship [with Africa]. The Security Council campaign was the ideal climate in which to pursue those objectives in a very sharply focused way, but with that substructure of commitment there, I think it is absolutely over-cynical to write the whole enterprise off as just Security Council-driven...<sup>237</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that Stephen Smith developed a good rapport with various African ministers he met during his travels to the UN and AU, and this was partially evidenced by the great flurry of visits to Australia by high-level African delegations in 2009. This much was also substantiated in several interviews for this thesis where senior DFAT officials noted Stephen Smith's warm personal relations with several African ministers, with one interviewee concluding that Smith was great at campaigning for the UNSC, partially because of his background as a great political campaigner for the ALP.<sup>238</sup> Smith's colleague and Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance between 2007 and 2010, Bob McMullan, also noted that Smith's ability to develop good relations in 'one-on-one' meetings with African leaders certainly impressed DFAT.<sup>239</sup>

#### The Abbott government 2013-2015: Julie Bishop

Given Prime Minister Tony Abbott's clear lack of interest in African issues, it is questionable what value an examination of his personal idiosyncratic factors relevant to foreign policy engagement with Africa could yield. In his two years as Australia's Prime Minister Abbott exhibited no interest in engagement with Africa, and his foreign policy thinking in general was characterised by a strong domestic political focus. This is not to suggest that Abbott did not engage with important foreign policy issues during his prime ministerial reign, but that he did so on mainly on issues that sit at the core of Australia's foreign policy agenda. These issues, such as the threat from terrorism and support for a resurgent US-led campaign against Islamic insurgencies in the Middle

<sup>237</sup> Interview with Gareth Evans, Canberra, 17 September 2015.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with retired senior DFAT official, Canberra, 7 April 2014; Phone interview with senior DFAT official, 8 April 2014; Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 23 April 2015.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Bob McMullan, Canberra, 1 June 2016.

East, resonate more with the Australian public, and could arguably be more easily exploited for domestic political gains (McDonald 2015). In any case, according to what has already been observed about the centrality of prime ministers in influencing Australian foreign policy, Abbott's personal lack of interest in engagement with Africa would have been important in setting an overarching 'dampener' on his foreign minister's ability to pursue and foster a greater degree of engagement with Africa. That is the background against which the following analysis should be read.

Like Stephen Smith, Julie Bishop is a WA (Perth) based politician, and has been a supporter of the ADU conference.<sup>240</sup> Like Kevin Rudd, she too was a Commonwealth election observer in 2002 in Zimbabwe, so had at least a minimal acquaintance with African politics (Neuhaus 2013, Part 1, 13). Furthermore, it was largely due to Julie Bishop's intervention that back in 2011 the then Abbott Opposition abandoned previously announced intentions to cut the Africa aid budget if elected.<sup>241</sup> According to a senior ACFID official interviewed for this thesis, Julie Bishop had on numerous occasions, both privately and publicly stated to NGOs and the development sector that "I know Africa is important, and I am a politician from Perth and look across the Indian Ocean" acknowledging there was a role for Australia's aid program in Africa.<sup>242</sup> In fact, as the same source noted, even Bishop's thinking on her 'new aid paradigm', which involved utilizing the private sector in boosting development, may have been as a result of contact with Africans: "I have heard it said that Julie Bishop met some [African] foreign minister, maybe it was the foreign minister from Zambia....at the CHOGM in 2011 and he said 'we don't want aid we want trade and investment' and hence that informed her thinking around the new aid paradigm."<sup>243</sup>

Bishop's interest in African engagement or at least open-mindedness to its continued place in Australian foreign policy focus may be at least partially related to, as Stephen Smith suggested, her constituencies in Perth. For example, on her only trip to Africa during the time period under review, visiting South Africa, Madagascar, and Mauritius, Bishop was accompanied by some of her Curtin electorate constituents, and announced new funding for an NGO from that electorate, Australian Doctors for Africa (Bishop

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<sup>240</sup> Phone interview with senior Paydirt Media official in charge of organizing the ADU, 31 July 2014. As noted in previous chapters Bishop did not attend the ADU in 2014 and sent a pre-recorded video message, but did attend the conference in 2015.

<sup>241</sup> A senior ACFID official interviewed for this thesis noted that there was a leak about the proposed cuts, and that they were certain it came from Bishop's office; Interview with senior ACFID official, Canberra 28 August 2014. For the story see *The Australian* 2011.

<sup>242</sup> Interview with senior ACFID official, Canberra 28 August 2014.

<sup>243</sup> Interview with senior ACFID official, Canberra 28 August 2014.

2014h). As Smith observed, “that is a definite ‘Western Australian’ thing. So why would I fall into the company of some ‘mad’ Western Australian miners, it’s a ‘Western Australian’ thing. Why would you take some doctors to Mozambique or Mauritius or wherever she went, it’s a ‘Western Australian’ thing.”<sup>244</sup>

However, as highlighted in chapters 4 and 5, and above, Julie Bishop had in the two years of the Abbott government presided over a foreign policy which on the whole ‘disengaged’ from Africa. To be fair, Australian foreign policy in Bishop’s two years as Abbott’s foreign minister was consumed by a number of high-profile issues. Firstly, there was the double Malaysia Airlines flight disaster (March 2014 disappearance of flight MH370 with 6 Australians on board, July 2014 shooting down of flight MH17 with some 28 Australians on board). Then, Australia was in 2014 arguably more than usually focused on global multilateralism, having a seat at the UNSC, and chairing both the IORA and G20 meetings, which would have kept Bishop busy with a number of high-profile agendas. Australia also re-committed itself in 2014 to another round of military intervention in Iraq, and this too would have consumed a high degree of Julie Bishop’s focus as well.

Nevertheless, as the review of Bishop’s foreign policy speeches above indicates, regardless of her proclaimed support for engagement with African issues, Julie Bishop’s framing of Australia’s place in the world appeared to be foremost dictated by an adherence to the Coalition’s traditional foreign policy outlook, with a rather cynical view of Australia’s engagement with Africa during the Labor years. Bishop’s statements from parliamentary debates in 2009 make clear her cynicism about the government’s pursuit of UNSC membership, with her labelling the exercise as Kevin Rudd’s “personal crusade”, and accusing his government of a “vote buying spree in Africa” (Bishop 2009a, b). While this could be dismissed as mere political rhetoric, as a senior DFAT official working closely with Julie Bishop’s office on African issues made clear in an interview for this thesis, she subscribed to the “cynical” view that Australian engagement with Africa during the Labor years was all about the pursuit of a UNSC seat (echoing Alexander Downer’s sentiments raised above).

Julie Bishop’s ‘west coast’ approach to Australian foreign policy, and her conceptualization of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ were primarily centred on India and to an extent IORA countries, of which the most prominent African one is South Africa. As a DFAT

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<sup>244</sup> Phone interview with Stephen Smith, 25 September 2014.



official also made clear, this was the reason why her first visit to mainland Africa was to South Africa, a country with the strongest historical, and most importantly trade and commercial links with Australia.<sup>245</sup> In this line of thinking, although Bishop's emphasis on the 'Indo-Pacific' was at least rhetorically slightly different from Howard and Downer's emphasis on the 'Asia-Pacific', in practical terms her emphasis on engagement with Africa was very similar to theirs; an engagement with African issues seen primarily through commercial links in general, and links with South Africa in particular.

### **VII.III Conclusion**

The overall purpose of this chapter was to analyse the agential (cognitive and policy-making) factors affecting change in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa between 1996 and 2015. In examining key foreign policy documents and speeches the chapter sought to highlight the interconnectedness of Australia political party foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers in affecting foreign policy change. What the chapter tried to make clear is that foreign policy outlooks and the role key decision-makers play in affecting the direction of foreign policy are mutually reinforcing: decision-makers utilize their party's foreign policy outlooks to frame and justify their foreign policy decisions and direction, and such decisions contribute to creating future foreign policy outlook traditions.

In the present study, these foreign policy outlooks as adhered to, and interpreted, by key Australian foreign policy-makers have been instrumental in shaping the contours, direction, and change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. This chapter has explained how these key foreign policy-makers utilized their political party foreign policy outlooks in conceptualizing the country's foreign policy agenda and priorities, and Africa's place within that agenda. By applying such lenses to their thinking and foreign policy choices, these policy-makers also perpetuated a partisan approach to engagement with Africa. One of the key arguments to come out of this chapter's analysis is that while the fundamental pillars of Australia's foreign policy agenda may enjoy broad bipartisan support, it is on the margins of that agenda that we can observe real partisan differences. Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa offers a clear example of this (Pijovic 2016).

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<sup>245</sup> Interview with senior DFAT official, Canberra, 10 March 2015.



The chapter also argued that while political party foreign policy outlooks as adhered to, and formulated, by key decision-makers are highly salient factors determining foreign policy direction in Australia, there is a need to be aware of the idiosyncratic and highly personal factors that affect the agency of key decision-makers. While in terms of theorizing about the determinants of foreign policy idiosyncratic factors may represent difficult variables (and do not necessarily contribute to parsimony), in terms of offering an empirically rich analysis of a particular policy-making situation or problem, they do offer some additional insights into ‘what else’ drives foreign policy (change).

## CHAPTER VIII: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to examine and explain what drove change in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. While addressing change, and to a lesser extent continuity, in Australia's foreign policy towards Africa, it also highlighted issues of broader relevance for the country's foreign policy in general, as well as the study of foreign policy. This conclusion will firstly reiterate the major arguments made in the thesis, before offering some final observations on the thesis's broader implications and possible future research.

Chapter 2 of the thesis discussed a framework for analysing foreign policy. It was argued that foreign policy is a rather unique policy space in which governmental activities are generally aimed outside the state's borders, but have important domestic and international properties and objectives. Foreign policy covers a whole range of activities operating across various interlinked and overlapping aspects, which for the purpose of analytical clarity were divided into diplomatic and security, economic, and development cooperation. This division into three main aspects of foreign policy, while not definitive and acknowledging major overlaps between the aspects, allowed the thesis to provide a systematic and comparable analysis. This chapter also argued that the determinants of foreign policy decisions are of a structural as well as agential nature, and proceeded to offer a parsimonious model of how foreign policy change comes about. The central argument of this chapter was that in order to understand how and why Australia's foreign policy towards Africa changed between 1996 and 2015, it is necessary to take into account *both* contextual and agential factors.

Chapters 3 and 4 offered historical background to Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa. Chapter 3 outlined Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa up until 1996, aiming to highlight several important themes which contribute to an understanding of Africa's place in Australia's foreign policy. It argued that it was largely during the post-World War II period, and especially during the Coalition governments of the 1950s and 60s that Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa acquired its recognizable contours. Australia's engagement with African states and issues during this period was largely multilateral (through the Commonwealth and UN), and since at least the 1960s, almost entirely focused on race-based governance and apartheid in Southern Africa. Between the 1960s and 90s, Australian foreign policy

towards Africa was dominated by the anti-apartheid struggle, and this had important repercussions for the post-Cold War changing nature of this foreign policy engagement.

Chapter 4 examined developments in Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa between 1996 and 2015. Its purpose was to offer empirical detail upon which the following analysis of change in foreign policy was based. This chapter's main arguments concerned the emphasis and focus as well as the nature of engagement with Africa exhibited by the Howard Coalition, Rudd and Gillard Labor, and Abbott Coalition governments. Given that the Howard government was in power for more than a decade it would be unfair to call its engagement with Africa monolithic, but it was overall 'episodic' and reactive. The Howard government did not conceptualize Africa as a policy space with much relevance past the Commonwealth and South African connections. It was not interested in fostering proactive diplomatic, security, economic, or development initiatives, and up until the mid-2000s maintained only a steady interest in economic engagement with South Africa. Diplomatic engagement with African issues during this time was confined to the Commonwealth. There was a widening of this gaze in 2004 and 2005 with the opening of Australia's High Commission in Ghana and Consulate General in Libya, but these were also largely 'reactive' policies, responding to the growth of Australian consular and economic interests on the ground.

The Labor government's engagement with Africa between 2007 and 2013 displayed a visibly strategic and proactive approach as compared to both the Howard years preceding it, and Abbott government succeeding it. During this time the Commonwealth stopped being Australia's main window into African issues, and this was partially driven by contextual, as well as agential factors. Simply put, there were no major or high-profile Africa-related issues on the Commonwealth's agenda during the Labor years, and the government itself moved to expand Australia's diplomatic contacts with African states both bilaterally as well as through other multilateral fora, particularly the AU. Hence, the government opened an Australian embassy in Ethiopia (also accredited to the AU), two new Austrade offices in Ghana and Kenya, and committed itself to joining the AfDB as well as opening a first ever Australian Embassy in Senegal (covering French-speaking West Africa). The government professed a long-term aspirational policy of enhancing and broadening engagement with Africa, but its engagement was strategically 'supercharged' by two specific short or medium-term policy goals: securing membership of the UNSC in 2012, and increasing the country's total ODA budget to 0.5% of GNI by 2015.

Between 2013 and 2015 the Abbott Coalition government overall exhibited no substantive interest in maintaining Labor's enhanced engagement with Africa. There was rhetorical support for that engagement at least on the economic front, but actions on the diplomatic and development cooperation front quickly exposed the limits of such rhetoric. The Abbott government was happy to generically talk up economic engagement with Africa as an important aspect of the development of African states, but subscribed to a cynical view that renewed engagement with Africa under Labor was wholly driven by the UNSC bid, and once that was over there was no need to proactively pursue engagement with Africa much further. Hence, it abandoned the proposed opening of a new Australian embassy in Senegal, decided not to join the AfDB, and proceeded to cut aid to Africa substantially. The Abbott government appeared comfortable returning to the Howard era's episodic and reactive engagement with Africa.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 formed the main analytical part of the thesis. The purpose of chapter 5 was to highlight and examine changes in foreign policy towards Africa across the three aspects of foreign policy engagement and offer a comparative interpretation of that change across adjustment and attitude change. Adjustment change highlighted the level of effort or input into policy initiatives, while attitude change highlighted perceptions towards engagement with Africa, as well as the changing methods of pursuing that engagement.

On the aspect of security cooperation with Africa between 1996 and 2015 there has been an overall bipartisan continuity in foreign policy. Regardless of the recognition and awareness paid to strategic and security issues emanating from Africa, no Australian government since 1996 considered itself sufficiently challenged or threatened by such issues to contemplate anything more than financial support for multilateral peacekeeping operations on the continent. Some ADF staff were deployed in support of these operations either at UN headquarters in New York or across Africa, but these numbers were always minimal and nothing comparable to ADF deployments in Africa from the early 1990s.

On the other hand, across the aspects of diplomatic, economic, and development cooperation, Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa exhibited notable changes. Compared to both the Howard and Abbott governments, the Rudd/Gillard governments were on the whole more proactive in attempting to foster greater

diplomatic and economic links with African states, and more interested in development engagement with the continent. On this last aspect, Australia's aid engagement with Africa grew throughout the Labor years, reaching its highest levels since at least the late 1980s. The Labor government was also more Afro-optimist in outlook than the Howard government, and this Afro-optimism was to an extent rhetorically maintained by the Abbott government.

Chapters 6 and 7 each in turn examined the drivers of change in foreign policy engagement with Africa. Chapter 6 analysed the contextual factors underpinning a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa since the end of the Cold War. It was argued that these factors *underpin* but do not by themselves *affect* change in foreign policy because they do not directly determine outcomes, merely helping shape the potential range of options and strategies policy-makers can choose. This range of options is uneven and biased, and it is up to policy-makers to exercise their agency in deciding which course of action to pursue.

The first highly salient factor underpinning change in this foreign policy engagement was broadly termed the 'Decline of Africa'. The end of the Cold War in Africa in the late 1980s allowed for greater international pressure to be exerted on the South African government which in the early 1990s helped bring about the end of apartheid. Since the anti-apartheid struggle was so central to Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa for over two decades, apartheid's ultimate demise influenced a diminished intensity in that foreign policy engagement. At the same time changes in Australia's political leadership from Bob Hawke to Paul Keating also signalled a lessening interest in the Commonwealth as well as an increasing focus on regional Asian engagement, which also took some of the intensity out of engagement with Africa. More broadly, the end of the Cold War took away much of Africa's overall international strategic value, further exposing some of the long-standing development issues prevalent in many African countries. This coupled with a string of highly publicized conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, DRC, Angola, and the Sudan contributed to a global narrative of a 'hopeless Africa' running through much of the 1990s.

The second highly salient factor underpinning a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa was broadly termed the 'Rise of Africa'. From the early 2000s onwards, the continental trend of Africa's greater political stability and macroeconomic growth, coinciding with the global resources boom, all contributed to a growing recognition that

things in Africa were changing for the better. This recognition in turn fed the ‘Rise of Africa’ narrative which also influenced the Afro-optimist outlook of the Rudd/Gillard Labor governments. The beneficial changes and greater stability across the African continent coupled with growing Australian business interests there helped underpin a changing foreign policy engagement with Africa from the mid-2000s onwards.

Chapter 7 analysed the agential (cognitive and policy-making) factors affecting change in Australia’s foreign policy engagement with Africa since 1996. In examining agential factors the chapter discussed two issues: the interconnectedness of Australian political party foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers in affecting foreign policy change; and the role individual personal idiosyncratic factors could have played in influencing foreign policy decisions. The overall argument made was that although contextual factors underpin a (changing) foreign policy engagement, it is the active decision-making and agency of specific policy-makers that fundamentally affects those changes by determining their timing, shape, and course.

The chapter also argued that Australian political party foreign policy outlooks frame politicians’ thinking about Australia’s place in the world, and that such thinking, as espoused in relevant foreign policy documents and speeches, in turn supports and perpetuates foreign policy outlooks. This represents a mutually reinforcing cycle: Australia’s key decision-makers use their party’s foreign policy outlooks to frame and justify their foreign policy direction and priorities, thereby creating traditions of foreign policy outlooks for future generations to invoke in justifying their own foreign policy direction.

The Coalition subscribes to a foreign policy outlook which conceptualizes Australia as a significant regional power, overwhelmingly interested in regional engagement and maintaining links with key strategic and economic partners, preferring bilateral management of foreign affairs, and labelled as highly pragmatic and realistic in the pursuit of Australian foreign policy. Coalition governments are comfortable following the dictates of great powers and strive to maintain the established status quo. Because of this foreign policy outlook Coalition governments led by John Howard and Tony Abbott have felt less compelled to proactively seek out foreign policy engagement with African states past traditionally established links with South Africa and the Commonwealth, and found it easily justifiable to exhibit a lacking or sporadic and episodic interest in engagement with Africa.

On the other hand, the ALP subscribes to a foreign policy outlook which conceptualizes Australia as an active middle power which, while equally as interested in regional engagement, is open-minded to actively seeking engagement with issues and countries outside the region, favouring multilateral management of foreign affairs, and labelling the country as a 'good international citizen' which sees a place for values as well as interests in foreign policy. Labor governments seek to transcend the dictates of great powers by actively fostering coalitions of like-minded states to try and influence global affairs and build a stable and rules-based international order. Because of this foreign policy outlook the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments were more compelled or at least willing to seek greater engagement with African states (moving beyond traditionally established links), and justifying that engagement both in its own right, as well as in the context of policy initiatives such as the pursuit of UNSC membership and an expanding Australian aid budget.

With these differing foreign policy outlooks in mind, the chapter also argued that Australia's engagement with Africa since 1996 has been highly partisan. These foreign policy outlooks, as adhered to and interpreted by Australian prime and foreign ministers, have been highly salient drives of change in this foreign policy engagement. This has been the case for two prominent reasons. As was made clear with reference to Otto Kirchheimer's classical writing on 'catch-all' political parties in the two-party Westminster political systems, as parties drive towards the centre of the political spectrum attempting to capture as many votes on as many issues as possible, real and substantive policy differences are often relegated to the margins of their political agendas. At the same time, engagement with Africa has traditionally been perceived as relatively peripheral and marginal to Australia's overall foreign policy agenda. In combination, these two factors highlight why foreign policy engagement with Africa and African issues has since 1996 received such partisan approaches, specifically because it sits on the margins of Australia's broader political and foreign policy agenda. The reason why this partisanship was not evident between the early 1970s and 1990s, was largely because of a bipartisan dedication to the anti-apartheid struggle by both Coalition and ALP prime ministers, and to an extent their pronounced bipartisan conceptualization of Australia as a middle power.

Chapter 7 also examined the idiosyncratic and highly personal factors that have played a part in affecting the agency of key decision-makers on foreign policy engagement with Africa. While such idiosyncratic factors are random and individual, and therefore



difficult to theorize, they are important in informing an empirically rich analysis of foreign policy decision-making, and offer additional insights into 'what else' drives foreign policy (change). In this context the chapter examined idiosyncratic factors relevant to Prime Ministers Howard and Rudd, as well as Foreign Ministers Downer, Smith, and Bishop, and how they could have affected foreign policy engagement with Africa.

An overall argument was made that Australian prime ministers are more likely to engage on foreign policy issues deemed to be of fundamental importance for the country's overall economic and security well-being, allowing their foreign ministers more leeway and space to formulate policies towards issues and areas considered relatively marginal and peripheral on Australia's overall foreign policy agenda. On the other hand, this also means that foreign ministers are less likely to risk or waste time and resources (and political capital) on vigorously pursuing policies towards such marginal issues if the prime minister strongly favours a different course of action, or actively exhibits little interest in them. The prime minister is the central figure in setting the overall direction of Australia's foreign policy, and other ministers (including the foreign minister) take their cue from her/him.

This has had clear relevance for foreign policy engagement with Africa in the time period under review. John Howard was not much interested in African issues, and Tony Abbott's record in office testifies to the same. This would have to an extent influenced their Foreign Ministers Downer and Bishop in their own perceptions of Africa's place in Australian foreign policy, as well as how much attention they should/could attach to African issues. On the other hand, Kevin Rudd as prime minister exhibited an interest in Australia playing a greater role in engagements beyond just the immediate region, and this allowed Stephen Smith to devote a significant amount of energy and time to pursuing engagement with African issues.

John Howard's contacts with African issues came exclusively through the Commonwealth and South Africa links, and Alexander Downer's contacts for the most part followed the same path. There is evidence to suggest that John Howard's bruising experience with South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki at the 2002/3 CHOGMs may have further influenced or re-trenched his lack of interest in engagement with African issues. After 2003 Howard did not deal with any substantive African issues during his remaining four years in office. On the other hand, Alexander Downer may have been

more open-minded to engaging with African issues, particularly with the growth of Australian interests in Africa in the mid-2000s, but he too did not entertain a more strategic and proactive conceptualization of engagement with Africa.

Kevin Rudd displayed a significantly Afro-optimist and proactive attitude towards engagement with African issues, whether for their own value, or in support of broader agendas such as the pursuit of UNSC membership and increase in Australia's aid budget. These specific policies were influenced by his perception of Australia's place in the world and the role it should play globally, as well as his Christian values and the belief in a responsibility to help the world's poor. Closer engagement with Africa was wholly compatible with these goals. This allowed Rudd's Foreign Minister Stephen Smith to more vigorously pursue greater engagement with African states, which Smith was interested in doing because of his own understanding of the geo-strategic and economic interests emanating from Africa. Given his WA base and constituencies, Smith was perhaps more than the average Australian foreign minister attuned to the growth of Australian commercial interests across Africa, and his more 'west coast'-minded thinking on foreign policy helped inform his engagement with Africa.

Tony Abbott, on the other hand, displayed no interest in engagement with Africa and this would have set a general dampener on his foreign minister's abilities to maintain Labor's levels of engagement with the continent. Julie Bishop, with her own WA base and constituents was, much like Stephen Smith, aware of Australian interest across Africa, and interested in looking west for greater foreign policy engagements. However, Bishop's 'west coast' approach to foreign policy extended only as far as India, and possibly IORA member states. In any case, Bishop subscribed to a cynical view of Labor's engagement with Africa being driven exclusively by the expediencies of the UNSC campaign, and 'recalibrated' the country's foreign policy engagement with Africa to re-focus on the only link Australian conservative government's traditionally cared to sustain on the continent: that with South Africa.

#### Wider implications of the study and potential for further research

Approaching the study of Australian foreign policy from what some might term the 'wrong end of the stick', that is examining issues and relationships traditionally understudied and perceived as largely marginal on the country's overall foreign policy agenda, has the virtue of highlighting issues largely missed by those analysing the country's foreign policy towards issues and relationships that 'matter most'. This has

direct relevance for the understanding of Australian foreign policy and how it is made, as well as theorizing about foreign policy in general.

This study shows how on some issues Australia's foreign policy is highly partisan, which problematizes the seemingly accepted view that the country's foreign policy is overwhelmingly bipartisan (regardless of rhetoric, when in government both parties exhibit a continuity of foreign policy). However, this should not imply a rejection of bipartisanship in Australian foreign policy, but its further qualification. As has been argued, Australia's foreign policy exhibits a large degree of bipartisanship towards issues and regions perceived as of primary importance for the country's economic and security well-being, while on issues perceived as marginal or of limited importance for that well-being, there are considerable partisan differences. This has repercussions for the way in which foreign policy is made and the resources devoted to the pursuit of certain policies.

In order to contribute to the robustness of this conclusion and test its wider validity it would be imperative to conduct further research into other areas of Australia's foreign policy also traditionally perceived as marginal or peripheral to the country's overall well-being, to see if they too have been subject to partisanship in foreign policy, at least since the end of the Cold War. Areas such as Latin America, the Middle East, or Eastern Europe are obvious candidates for such a study.

This study's recognition of the differing importance and priority placed on certain foreign policy issues can inform wider generalization about a typology of foreign policy. There is potential for further research on the quantitative and qualitative differences of these two types of foreign policy and specifically how they are different for policy-making purposes. As the current study has suggested, policy-making towards issues and spaces traditionally perceived as marginal and peripheral on the country's foreign policy agenda may be qualitatively different from that towards issues and regions perceived as fundamental pillars of that foreign policy agenda, in that decision-making and change may be more agency-prone. This could be contrasted with the fundamental pillars of a foreign policy agenda which tend to be more structurally bounded and constrained, making change less agency-prone. The independent variables most salient in influencing foreign policy-decisions will vary depending on where the issue/region sits on a country's overall foreign policy agenda.

This study's recognition of both structural and agential factors driving change in foreign policy with Africa also offers broader contributions to the field of FPA, as well as Political Science in general. FPA is an actor-centric approach to analysing the 'why' and 'how' foreign policy decisions are made, placing the emphasis in explaining foreign policy behaviour predominantly on individuals. With its emphasis on the role Australia's political party foreign policy outlooks and key decision-makers play in affecting foreign policy direction, this study offers an important empirical contribution to FPA. It reinforces the importance of actor agency in affecting foreign policy direction and decisions, but given that many key textbooks and case studies in FPA are still predominantly US and crisis-based (usually around war-time decision-making) this thesis's contribution offers further purchase and width to FPA's explanatory utility.

The contribution to FPA lies also in recognition of structural factors influencing foreign policy decision-making. FPA is overwhelmingly actor-focused and this can result in an under-appreciation of structures obtruding or enabling foreign policy decisions. There is no need to treat states as unitary actors in international relations in order to appreciate structural factors driving foreign policy decisions. What this study highlights is that it is possible to focus on individuals in foreign policy-making and account for the 'messiness' of the domestic policy-making environment without necessarily 'black boxing' the state, while at the same time outlining how and why structural factors interact with agents in helping produce foreign policy decisions.

It is this thesis's explicit recognition of the interplay between structure and agency that also offers a wider academic contribution to the discipline of Political Science.<sup>246</sup> One of the advances of the discipline in recent decades has been the move beyond the 'structure vs. agency' debate, towards a greater appreciation of the strategic interplay between both 'structure and agency' in affecting political change. This approach transcends the dualism between structure and agency by outlining the dialectic interplay between the two, which are seen as completely interwoven. The thesis has highlighted how Australian policy-makers (agents) found themselves in certain circumstances and internalized perceptions of their context, consciously adopting strategies and policies which were informed by their assessment of that context (Australia's place and role in

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<sup>246</sup> As Colin Wight (2006, 60) puts it, society has a "real and relatively enduring set of structural properties" which "only manifest themselves in the behaviour of individuals". This means that we need to "take seriously the intentions, meanings and understandings" of those individuals (agents), because "the interplay between these structural properties and the intentions, reasons and meanings provides fertile ground for the development of critical social science".

the world). It also highlighted how that context was itself biased and favoured certain choices over others, and how the agency of these policy-makers (prime and foreign ministers) played a role in determining the ultimate policies adopted. All of this should help strengthen the argument that structural conditions can be changed by the agency of actors, and that the relationship between the two is mutually interrelated: actors are born into existing structures, but by their very agency help change or sustain structural conditions.

#### A final thought on Australia's foreign policy engagement with Africa

I began this thesis by highlighting the need to move beyond simple binary categories of Coalition 'bad' and Labor 'good' in understanding change in Australia's post-Cold War foreign policy engagement with Africa. I hope the reader will judge this thesis as doing justice to the complexities inherent in assessing change in foreign policy, as well as its attempt to explain the changes taking place in this foreign policy between 1996 and 2015.

I have argued that while there have been both structural and agential factors driving change in this foreign policy engagement, the latter were key in affecting and ultimately determining the nature of that change. In the end, individuals do make history. With that in mind, it is likely that partisan political differences will remain highly salient drivers of the nature of this foreign policy engagement in the future, at least until there is a change in the perception of Africa's importance for Australia's security and economic well-being.

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